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DISNEY'S PORTRAYAL OF NONHUMAN ANIMALS IN ANIMATED FILMS BETWEEN 2000 AND 2010

by

OANA LEVENTI-PEREZ

Under the Direction of Dr. Marian Meyers

ABSTRACT

This paper used the constant comparative method to examine the 12 animated features released by Disney between 2000 and 2010 for: (1) their representation of nonhuman animals (NHAs) and the portrayal of race, class, gender, and speciesism within this representation, (2) the ways they describe the relationship between humans and NHAs, and (3) whether they promote an animal rights perspective. Three major themes were identified: NHAs as stereotypes, family, and human/NHA dichotomy. Analysis of these themes revealed that Disney's animated features promote speciesism and celebrate humanity's superiority by justifying the subordination of NHAs to human agency. Furthermore, while Disney's representation of NHAs remains largely anthropocentric, most of its animated features do not reflect the tenets of animal rights.

INDEX WORDS: Animal rights, Animation, Anthropocentrism, Anthropomorphism, Disney, Cultural studies, Hegemony, Humanism, Ideology, Gender, Class, Race, Speciesism, Stereotype

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by

OANA LEVENTI-PEREZ

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

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in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

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Oana Leventi-Perez

2011

DISNEY'S PORTRAYAL OF NONHUMAN ANIMALS IN ANIMATED FILMS BETWEEN 2000 AND 2010

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Table of contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS…...……..……v

INTRODUCTION……...1

LITERATURE REVIEW……....6

1. A Historical Look at the Disney Company and its Animated Feature Films…....…….6

How Walt Taught Mickey to Obey…….6

Animated Movies……..….11

The Disney golden age…….…….....11

The movie factory……..…17

Team Disney……..…22

2. Cultural Studies……..…….. 28

Culture, Ideology, and Hegemony……28

British Cultural Studies and the Politics of Representation…….….36

Class, Gender, and Race Representations in Disney Animated Films ……..….. 41

3. An Overview of Animal Rights Philosophy……..……49

4. The Communicative Power of Nonhuman Animals in Film and Animation…….…..58

METHODOLOGY……...….65

1. Sample Films…….……68
2. Character and Plot……..……69
3. Analysis……...……...84

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION…….……..86

1. Nonhuman Animals Are Portrayed as Stereotypes……..…..87

Nonhuman animals stereotyped according to their species……...…87

Nonhuman animals as human stereotypes……...…. 91

2. The Family Unit Is Described in Anthropocentric Terms……..…..95

3. The Human and NHA Realms Are Fundamentally Divided…….99

Domestication……..……102

Nonhuman animals as pedagogical ……..... 104

Speciesism, Disney's new racism ……..…….106

The naturalization of hierarchies ……109

CONCLUSION……111

REFERENCES……119

Introduction

Since becoming famous in the 1930s, the Walt Disney Corporation has shrewdly constructed imaginary characters, story lines and themed fantasy spaces which, by tapping into transcultural myths of magic and innocence, allowed the corporation to build a strong reputation for quality goods and services and capture the imagination of children and adults worldwide (Budd, 2005). Disney's products cut across age groups as adults consume Disney products together with their children in an effort to recapture fragments of their lost childhood, and, in doing so, introduce their offspring to the same mainstream American values and ideals they cherished growing up (Vasko, 2001). Starting with the well-known Mickey Mouse and continuing with Dumbo, Bambi, and later with the Lady who fell for the Tramp and the lion destined to be king, Disney has populated its world with anthropomorphized nonhuman animals (NHAs) who, through their gendered, ethnic, and racialized identities teach their adoring audience important lessons about the Western world view, its value system, and dominant presuppositions.

Indeed, NHAs play a key role in creating for Disney an aura of childhood innocence and the general perception that Disney's products are wholesome and family-centered. However, a more critical look at the corporation reveals how "Disney has its corporate finger in more sociocultural pies than perhaps any other twentieth century producer of mass entertainment" (Smoodin, 1994, p. 2). Several studies have identified recurring themes in both Disney animated movies and comic strips, which relate mostly to representation and ideology. According to Dorfman and Mattelart (1975), Disney ideology includes the representation of Third World people as "noble savages" (p. 44) and the glorification of consumption. Artz (2002) argues that

Disney's animated features promote consumerist values and ideologies supportive of capitalist globalization.

Little research, however, examines the representation of NHAs in Disney animated movies. Disney's reach into the lives of children is unsurpassed by any other media conglomerate, thereby giving it an unparalleled opportunity to shape children's and adults' views of their world – and NHAs.[1] Indeed, Vasko concludes, "Disney holds an almost sacred place in the lives of many Americans" (2001, p. 2). In the light of the fact that hundreds of millions of people watch Disney films or home videos every year (Giroux, 1999), and given that Disney films have tremendous reach in popular culture and have emerged as important moral educators (Ward, 1996), the depiction of NHAs in Disney films warrants further examination. By anthropomorphizing its NHAs, Disney goes beyond giving them human attributes by also inscribing them into gendered, racial, ethnic, and classed categories (King et al., 2010). Given that racism, sexism, and speciesism are "interconnected, mutually reinforcing systems of oppression and ways of organizing the world" (Adams, 2007, p. 202), the representation of NHAs must be analyzed not only within the context of gender, race, and class but also within their relationships to human animals so as to better understand how speciesism may work within Disney films. Thus, this study will analyze the ways in which the animated movies released by Disney between 2000 and 2010 depict NHAs, the human - NHA relationship, and whether these Disney films promote animal rights. It extends the existing literature by examining 12 Disney

[1] "*Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*" is considered one of the highest grossing animated films in history, with profits of $782,620,000 adjusted for inflation. It is followed by "*101 Dalmatians*" with a revenue of $717,405,900., and " *Fantasia*" with $596,252,200, while, "*Lion King*" and and "*The Jungle Book*" also rank among the highest grossing films in the history of animated movies with profits of $554,524,300 and $529,021,800 respectively. More recent productions, such as "*The Princess and the Frog*" and "*Tangled*," continue to top the charts with revenues of $104,400,899 and $ 200, 821,936.(The Numbers Animated, n.d.).

animated full-length feature films for (1) their representation of NHAs, including the portrayal of gender, race, class and species within this representation, (2) the ways they describe the relationship between humans and NHAs, and (3) whether Disney animated movies promote an animal rights perspective.

This study will add a unique perspective to the existing literature about Disney, as well as contributing to our understanding of popular media's depiction of NHAs. In addition, given that media are sources of social education for children who use popular stories and fairy tales in order to make sense of themselves and their surroundings, parents can benefit from this research by having a clearer understanding of the values animated Disney films teach their children. Furthermore, animal rights activists and organizations stand to benefit in that this research can help guide their communication with both young and adult audiences. Third, scholars may benefit by integrating this research into the emerging body of literature which studies the advancement of animal rights in animated films. Also, communication scholarship on race, class, and gender can be expanded in order to include species.

The first section of the literature review that follows presents an overview of Disney's animated features from the 1920s to 2000, and explores the main political, economic, cultural, racial, and ethnic implications of these films. The emergence of Walt Disney's role as a moral educator is discussed in order to explain the pedagogical dimension attributed to his work, while the main debates surrounding the representation of both human and NHA characters in these films are explored. Thus, this section attempts to locate this study within the broader context of earlier Disney studies and provide a new perspective with which to examine Disney films using an animal rights framework.

Disney's ideological apparatus is further examined in the next section, which discusses the links between power, ideology, and representation as they are conceptualized within the field of cultural studies. It will show that Disney's characters embody racial, ethnic, and gender stereotypes, while his white, American, middle-class perspective and royalist ideology are reflected in these films. The dominant ideology as exhibited in Disney films thus becomes the framework for understanding the ideological implications of Disney's portrayal of NHAs.

After arguing that popular culture represents a central site for the negotiation and reproduction of competing discourses regarding humans, the discussion is extended to the discourses surrounding NHAs which populate the public arena. Disney's representation of NHAs requires an understanding of the hegemonic conceptualization of the human-NHA relationship. Thus, the paper describes the animal rights movement, its philosophical diversity, and its attempts to challenge the dominant ideology which situates NHAs as a resource for human use. Lastly, the communicative power of animation is addressed in order to show how Disney's animated NHAs can be made to convey desired ideological meanings.

This study builds on the existing research which addresses the portrayal of Disney's human and NHA characters, borrows from the methodologies used to describe the representation of human characters and applies an animal rights perspective to the analysis of Disney's representation of NHAs in term of gender, race, class, and speciesism. Furthermore, an animal rights framework will be used to analyze Disney's conceptualization of the human-NHA relationship and to describe the attitudes towards NHAs that Disney's movies promote. The constant comparative method will provide the methodological approach through which the NHAs that populate Disney's animated features will be analyzed.

Literature Review

A Historical Look at the Disney Company and its Animated Feature Films

How Walt Taught Mickey to Obey

The Disney Company started in the early 1920s as a small enterprise launched by Walt Disney and his brother Roy (Watts, 1997). While the ultimate origin of Mickey Mouse remains unknown, some researchers believe that Walt Disney conceived the Mouse during a train trip in the late 1920s (Brockway, 1989), while others contend Mickey was a product of intense brainstorming sessions between Walt and his fellow animator and friend Ubbe Ert Iwerks (Watts, 1997; Mosley, 1985). At the time, Disney was desperately trying to re-launch his animation business and was looking for a character that would make him successful. Disney's new creation enjoyed increasing popularity after his appearance in the first sound animated film, *Steamboat Willie*, in 1928 (Brockway, 1989). By 1933, Mickey was established as an international star and, as such, was expected not only to entertain audiences worldwide, but also to set a positive example (Ostman, 1996; Sammond, 2005). A strong connection between Mickey and the image of idealized childhood was constructed by Disney early on, and this association has contributed to Disney's emergence as an important moral educator (Ward, 1996).

DeCordova (1994) notes that the Mickey Mouse films emerged against a complex set of debates about the role of cinema in children's lives, as reformers were attempting to set up regulations which would control this aspect of children's leisure (in Smoodin, 1994, p. 202). Smoodin (1994) points out that, from early on, Disney's films managed to achieve a privileged position in the children's entertainment arena because "in Mickey Mouse, the cultural interests of

children, the business interests of the film industry and the political and cultural interests of reformers seemingly emerged" (p. 203). Along the same lines, Ostman (1996) argues that Mickey's canonization began early on when Disney animators lamented it was becoming increasingly difficult to put their character in comic yet completely inoffensive situations: "He's such an institution that we're limited in what we can do with him. If we have Mickey kicking someone in the pants, we get a million letters from mothers scolding us for giving their kids the wrong idea" (Brockway, 1989, p. 29). Indeed, as Ostman (1996) emphasized, Mickey was expected to act properly at all times and, if he occasionally engaged in morally questionable behavior, numerous letters would arrive at the Disney Studios from concerned citizens who felt that the nation's moral well-being was in Disney's hands.

A review of existing literature has identified two main factors which contributed to the creation of Disney's role as a moral educator. The first factor refers to Disney's construction of childhood, children, and animals. Sammond (2005) emphasizes the crucial role Disney played in evolving definitions of childhood, while Booker (2009) goes a step further to argue that Disney equates childhood with a nostalgic time of innocence, wonder and magic, while maturation is associated with the loss of innocence. Furthermore, deCordova (in Smoodin, 1994) argues a strong connection exists between Disney's merchandising efforts, the debate surrounding cinema's role in children's lives and the canonization of Mickey Mouse. DeCordova explains that Disney used a vast array of toys (which, according to the rhetoric of the day, were considered educational) to consolidate children's attachment to animation. Furthermore, many of these toys (including, of course, Mickey Mouse figurines) represented or included representations of NHAs of some sort. In this respect, deCordova (1994) argues that there has been a significant cultural investment in the association of childhood with animality,

with forms of children's culture such as toys, zoos, circuses and children's literature all built on this investment. Furthermore, the author references the links that Romanticism established between children and nature (where nature represents innocence, authenticity and vitality) in order to show how the association of children with NHAs conflated the paradigmatic distinctions between child and adult and animal and human. As reformers at the time were attempting to reinforce the distinction between children and adults, which modernity presumably threatened, they superimposed this distinction on the more culturally stable separation between the human and animal realm: "Mickey's association with animality and particularly with the iconography of toys worked to counterbalance his modernity and place him more on the side of traditional childhood" (p. 213). In conclusion, it can be argued that by the merchandising of Mickey Mouse, Disney put the child back into bourgeois categories of childhood.

The second factor which contributed to the creation of Disney's virtuous image is the close association of the company and its products with its founder, Walt Disney. In this respect, Smoodin (1994) and Watts (1997) emphasize how the figure of Walt Disney was discursively produced in popular American periodicals of the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s, when a variety of celebratory articles, press releases, and marketing strategies were used by the studio to build "a larger-than-life" image for Disney (Watts, 1997, p. 144). Both researchers discuss the various dimensions of Walt Disney's public image as an independent artist consumed by his work and not concerned with monetary gains, a uniquely American genius comparable to George Gershwin and Irving Berlin, a modern reincarnation of Aesop and, above all, a major purveyor of moral values: "Disney as a moralist combined the roles of the educator, the child psychologist, and even the theologian" (Watts, 1997, p. 145). Furthermore, a product of such a multifaceted personality, Disney's work became more than just trivial entertainment: according to

contemporary critics, Mickey Mouse cartoons skillfully blended humor with modern mythology, while *Snow White*'s Biblical references transformed the fairytale into a highly educational tale of sin and salvation (Watts, 1997).

Brockway (1989) states that Walt Disney's image resonated with the American public as it represented the very embodiment of American middle-class values: "Disney was attuned to the soul of Middle America; he shared its values himself, and was exceptionally sensitive to its changing moods" (p. 30). Smoodin (1993) and Sammond (2005) go a step further and show how the construction of Disney's image as the quintessence of all-American virtues helped boost the consumption of this image:

> In a fantasy in which the qualities of the producer appeared to pass directly through his product to the consumer, Disney offered through his-its public relations the distinctly (and specifically) middle-class virtues of deferred gratification, self-denial, thrift, and perseverance naturalized as the experience of the most average American alive, and distilled through the rigorous and highly regulated process of animation. (Sammond, 2005, p. 78)

However, in the last two decades, as the field of film studies has gradually become aligned with a branch of cultural studies which analyzes networks of power, the relation of the cinema to other disciplines, especially social sciences, has become the focus of attention. Disney's importance and its connection to economics and international politics are being reexamined, as well as its role in the construction of national character (Smoodin, 1994). In this respect, in an effort to "reverse-engineer Walt Disney the self-made man," Sammond (2005, p. 28) argues that the proverbial Uncle Walt that circulated in the American public imaginary was as much a creation of his own corporation as all the other famous characters, such as Mickey Mouse,

Bambi or Dumbo. Sammond (2005) argues that the story of how Walt Disney, a man with a clear vision, a large heart and sound, middle-class Protestant values, struggled and succeeded through hard work and determination is actually the company's most famous and enduring self-promotional story. Furthermore, according to Sammond (2005), the almost mythical aura which surrounds Walt's existence and his numerous and sometimes conflated attributes justifies his role as a creator of ostensibly good products for children and celebrates his own commodification:

> As Walt Disney gradually transformed into Walt Disney Productions and Walt Disney Enterprises, the man and the company became the mutually sustaining embodiments of a fantasy of capitalist self-control, one in which the management of one's personal resources promised a near-absolute control over the disposition of one's life as an adult. This was (and is) the middle-class American fantasy of personal development, one in which the child so masters its attitudes and behaviors that in its adult life it becomes the master of its own fate, rather than a worker in the production of the social and material capital of others. (p. 26)

Walt's persona was discursively constructed by the Disney Corporation and mass media reports in order to enhance consumption of Disney products. Walt Disney's early efforts to establish himself as a moral educator and endow his products with an everlasting "Mickeyesque-aura of Uncle Walt and wholesome family entertainment" (Artz, 2002, p. 1) were apparent in how the merchandising of toys played on the association between children and animals and contributed to heightening Disney's appeal to children. Through Mickey's canonization and his association with traditional images of childhood as a time of innocence, authenticity, and magic, Disney juxtaposed consumption with educational enrichment. The positive connotations of the act of consumption were further enhanced by Walt and Mickey's alignment with middle-class

American values: by consuming Walt's products, the public was appropriating his tale of success, constantly reassured of the value of hard work, self-denial, and perseverance.

The next section will continue to explore the development of the Disney discourse by taking a historical look at the animated features released by the company from 1930 to 2000 and by outlining the main political, economic, cultural, racial, and ethnic debates which surround these films.[2] It will be shown that Disney's characters and story-lines are well-grounded in contemporary realities as they reflect and soothe the audiences' concerns and fears vis-à-vis the Great Depression and the Cold War. Furthermore, it will be shown that the representation of Disney's human and NHA characters alike is complicated by racial stereotyping and Disney's white, middle-class perspective, while the portrayal of gender and class within this representation is problematized by Disney's domestic view of women and the royalist ideology which pervades his work. The following section helps to inform this study's examination of the human-NHA relationship in Disney films, as well as its exploration of the role of gender, race, and class in the portrayal of Disney's NHAs.

Animated Movies

The Disney golden age

While Artz (2002) contends that "animation is central to Disney's economic strength and cultural influence" (p. 1), Booker (2009) emphasizes the impact of early Disney animated films on the entertainment industry, describing how they established many of the conventions that have dominated children's film for decades. The late 1930s mark the beginning of the golden age of Disney animation, a time when Uncle Walt produced his first five animated features,

[2] The animated features released by Disney from 2000 to 2010 will be examined in a later section.

which Eliot (1993) calls "the crown jewels of Disney's animated film career" (p. 20). Watts (1997) states that the pioneering series of feature-length animated films produced by the Disney Studios between 1937 and 1942, which includes *Snow White*, *Pinocchio, Bambi*, *Dumbo* and *Fantasia*, is not only a central part of the filmmaker's legacy but also illustrative of Disney's Depression-era politics by featuring storylines where characters overcome hardships through hard work, thus carrying the promise that a better future is always possible. Furthermore, Eliot (1993) emphasizes that each of these films reflects the overarching theme of Disney's animated movies: the sanctity of family and the tragic consequences when that sanctity is broken. Eliot defends his claim by showing how the main characters of these films enter the narrative with major personality defects externalized by lost or missing parental figures, and how their search for these figures eventually becomes a quest to acquire spiritual wholeness.

In this respect, Disney's first animated feature, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs,* released in 1937, "begins to show the beginnings of what would come to be a well-developed discourse of Disney animated films, embodying a number of fundamental assumptions about the world and children's relationship to it" (Booker, 2009, p. 5). Booker (2009) contends that Disney associates innocence with "a constellation of images involving the natural, the real, and the authentic" (p. 6), the cult of authenticity being a main recurrent theme of Disney animated films. This theme is reflected in most Disney characters, starting with Snow White, who face threats which prevent them from occupying their natural, rightful place in life as princesses and princes. Whereas Sammond (2005) contends that Disney's films "embodied the archetypal American rags-to-riches story" (p. 30) and Watts (1997) interprets the dwarfs' joyful celebration of their labor as "the triumph of the (literally) little guy" (p. 84), Booker (2009) found that Disney animated movies do not entirely reflect the mainstream ideology of American capitalism.

Instead of exemplifying how, through hard work, anyone can enjoy virtually unlimited upward mobility, Booker (2009) found that most of the protagonists of early Disney animated films are born noble and predetermined for greatness, which reflects what he calls a "medieval view of individual identity and social history" (p. 7), where identity is determined by birth in an ideally stable society. In conclusion, Booker (2010) claims that Disney's work is fraught with contradictions as their aristocratic characters contradict the liberal bourgeois vision which they have indirectly claimed to promote.

Disney's second feature-length movie, *Pinocchio* (1940), is Disney's most overtly didactic film which "chronicled a quest for stability, self-definition, and humanity within a threatening environment" (Watts, 1997, p. 84). Both Watts (1997) and Sammond (2005) agree *Pinocchio* was a parable which fitted the Depression-era world: it gave both children and parents the illusion that, through hard work, they will be able to leave their humble lives behind and replace them with happier (and wealthier) ones. Watts (1997) emphasizes that, at the time, reviewers praised the movies' social and moral lessons, which showed how Pinocchio was setting an example for the public to "follow the path of bravery, truthfulness, and unselfishness" (p. 87).

Booker (2009) states that while *Pinocchio* was an expensive film to produce it did not perform well at the box office, and it is therefore surprising that Disney would subsequently embark on producing two experimental, avant-garde, aesthetically innovative films: *Fantasia* (1940) and *Dumbo* (1941). *Fantasia*, which is essentially a series of music videos, marks Disney's efforts to participate in the political debate which surrounds cultural elitism (Watts, 1997). Watts (1997) notes that, while Disney's experimental concert worked to caricature elitist elements of high culture and deflate the dignity of classical music, it balanced mockery with

reverent accents while refraining to embrace social egalitarianism, like other Disney features from this era.

Dumbo, which Booker (2009) calls "a stunning masterpiece, the pinnacle of the artistic achievement of the Disney company and one of the aesthetic high points in the history of American film" (p. 14), was a great commercial success, which saved the company from financial ruin. The film features mostly NHA characters. The main protagonist is an elephant with oversized ears who does not speak and communicates with the audience solely through nonverbal expressions. Dumbo is a helpless baby elephant who has to endure the hardships of a circus life and, much like a human baby, needs his mother for guidance and protection. Given that it unveils the harsh life NHAs have to endure in circuses, it can be concluded that Dumbo advances an animal rights (anti-circus) message. Commentating on the use of NHAs in film, Booker (2009) contends that "animated animals (presented so as to appear friendly and unthreatening to humans) have an innocence that makes them especially appealing to children. These animals can serve as stand-ins for children, and thus the films need not have children as characters" (p. 2).

Furthermore, while discussing the social ramifications of the film, Watts (1997) argues that *Dumbo* is "packed with the most powerful populist punch" (p. 89) as the main hero embodied "the virtuous, defenseless underdog who struggles against arbitrary forces, bucks up his courage, finds his way to productive work, and ultimately joins with other marginalized figures to overcome their oppressors" (p. 90). Booker (2009) also points out, however, that *Dumbo* marked the end of Disney Studios as an artistic innovator and its transformation into a corporate film factory.

Dumbo was followed by another film featuring NHA characters, *Bambi (*1942), which shows no human characters at all and portrays "man" as a dangerous off-screen presence which disturbs the main character's tranquil environment (Booker, 2009). Booker (2009) states that, while *Bambi'*s style of animation is more realistic and somehow less interesting than that of *Fantasia* and *Dumbo,* the film's focus on the accurate depiction of NHAs living in their natural habitat makes it a significant forerunner of Disney's most important products in the coming years: nature documentaries. Lutts (1992) reinforces the historical significance of the film by stating that:

> One of these characters, Bambi, has played and continues to play a key role in shaping American attitudes about and understanding of deer and woodland life. It is difficult to identify a film, story or animal character that has had a greater influence on our vision of wildlife than the hero of Walt Disney's 1942 animated feature, Bambi. It has become perhaps the single most successful and enduring statement in American popular culture against hunting. (p. 160)

Disney's royalist ideology, which informs much of its work, is also reflected here: Bambi is the son of the stag who rules the forest and, as such, was invested by birth with the right to become a prince himself (Booker, 2009). Indeed, as mentioned above, Disney movies are wrought with aristocratic characters that have been wrongfully displaced, join the company of friendly NHAs (especially mice) and sing as a means of dealing with injustice. Watts (1997) contends that Bambi's ideological theme mirrored that in *Pinocchio* by portraying a similar quest for self-definition and family coherence, except this time within a natural setting.

While none of the classic Disney features explicitly advanced a political agenda, Disney's social and ideological values pervaded the structure and narratives of these films.

Disney mirrored its audiences' needs and aspirations during the Great Depression by introducing didactic narratives featuring characters who overcome hardships through perseverance and hard-work. The main themes of the Disney oeuvre are reflected in these early productions: the sanctity of family, which conveys Walt's strong family values and reinforces his status of moral educator; the cult of authenticity, which explains the plethora of displaced aristocratic characters on a quest for self-definition and stability; and the ability of innocent characters who experience harm and are unfairly wronged to overcome injustice.

From 1930 to 1942, Disney's films solidified the construction of an idealized image of childhood previously sold to the audiences through Mickey Mouse. Innocence continued to be associated with images depicting the natural world. Films such as *Dumbo* (1941) and *Bambi* (1942) featured mostly NHA characters that evoked feelings of nurture and compassion in the audience. The association of childhood with animality conflates the distinction between animals (who, like children, are innocent and authentic) and humans (who have lost their innocence and threaten the magical world of the children -NHAs). Furthermore, the animal rights messages which pervade these films are based on this association: *Dumbo* made a strong statement against animals used in entertainment, while *Bambi* sent anti-hunting messages. The next section will show how the representation of both human and NHA characters is further problematized by racial and gender stereotyping, which are aspects of the representation of NHAs this study explores. In addition, this stereotyping has implications for the human-NHA relationship in Disney films.

The movie factory

By the early 1940s, Walt Disney was trying to move beyond a strike by his disgruntled employees and surpass the war's economic hardships, concomitantly attempting to map out a new creative direction for his work. Watts (1997) asserts that Disney's appointment as a member of the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs and his diplomatic trips to South America provided the basis for a series of animated shorts on regional themes which were then reconfigured into two longer Disney movies*: Saludos Amigos* (1943) and *The Three Caballeros* (1944). According to Watts (1997), these films, which were interpreted by critics as cultural propaganda efforts , allowed Disney to reinforce America's superiority as he used them to "recast the world subtly in the image of the United States" (p. 246). Furthermore, Watts adds, just as the Depression-era Disney films eased the public's financial worries, the Cold War productions mirrored contemporary hopes and anxieties. Disney's subsequent productions, including films such as *Song of the South* (1946), *Fun and Fancy* (1947), *Melody Time* (1948), and *The Adventures of Ichabod and Mr. Toad* (1949), clearly demonstrated Disney's artistic decline as they were "plagued by inconsistency, varying wildly in quality as episodes of inspired imagination gave way to insipid, stale, mediocre stretches of work" (Watts, 1997, p. 249).

During the 1950s, Walt Disney Productions experienced a remarkable burst of activity, which included the production of animated features, live-action films and shows for the new medium of television (Watts, 1997). Watts (1997) argues that, in the postwar era, following a more general trend which compelled Americans to define their social and political values, Walt Disney had become increasingly preoccupied by family issues. His engagement with this trend, Watts (1997) contends, has had powerful social resonances and has resulted in what he calls a "Disney Doctrine: a notion that the nuclear family, with its attendant rituals of marriage,

parenthood, emotional and spiritual instruction, and consumption was the centerpiece of the American way of life" (p. 326). Whereas earlier animated productions portrayed splintered families and focused on the young's perilous quest for stability (such as *Pinocchio*, *Dumbo* or *Bambi)*, postwar Disney animated films had a greater emphasis on celebrating domestic stability and bliss.

Cinderella (1950)*,* Disney's first animated movie to be introduced during the postwar economic boom, was interpreted by Booker (2009) as an allegory about the opulent capitalist system. The fairy godmother, Booker (2009) contends, is a stand-in for the emergent capitalist system as she produces a wide array of luxurious goods which vanish into thin air in a matter of seconds, just as the tenuous capitalist wealth can suddenly melt back into the thin air from which it came. However, given her aristocratic origins, Cinderella's rightful place in the world is restored in the end: she marries a wealthy prince, and the viewer is left assuming that she is about to regain access to all the material goods the fairy godmother temporarily made available to her. De Rozario (2004) contends that many Disney studies traditionally portray princesses (and women in general) as caught in an aggressively patriarchal society. For example, Cinderella follows the path of submission by not challenging the status quo, choosing to accept her fate and finding passive outlets for her sorrow, such as retreating in nature and singing to birds. Along the same lines, Watts (1997) concludes that Cinderella's ending celebrates marriage and family bliss by assuming that the heroine's predetermined role in life was that of a wife.

Along with *Cinderella, Alice in Wonderland* (1951) advocates the use of imagination instead of political action and advises individuals to accept the status quo (Booker, 2009). Booker (2009) notes that the film has also been criticized for its depiction of women; the Queen

of Hearts is portrayed as a large, masculine woman who steps outside of her subservient domestic role and becomes a threat to delicate, feminine Alice, who ends up returning to her "proper" place having learned the perils of abandoning her domestic sphere.

The next two animated films released by Disney, *Peter Pan* (1953) and *Lady and the Tramp* (1955), both carry messages about maturation and the acceptance or responsibility, with women being the first to mature and provide anchors for rebellious immature men. Spector (in Kamalipour, 1998) describes *Lady and the Tramp* as an "All-American story, complete with a message of morality and democracy" (p. 46), where the aristocratic dog Lady overcomes all barriers in order to realize her love with Tramp, a poor, average Joe. However, Spector (in Kamalipour, 1998) criticizes the animated feature for the racial stereotypes it promotes, arguing that the dangerous Siamese cats with slanted eyes, a strong accent and poor grammar are a striking example of a negative portrayal of Asian Americans. Spector concludes that, even though Disney movies are often acclaimed as exhibiting positive social values, a critical viewing of their animated films reveals that they in fact reflect racist stereotypes typical of the times in which they were produced.

Sleeping Beauty (1959) was the most expensive animated movie ever made, meant to become the ultimate achievement of Disney animation (Watts, 1997). Even though the film featured elaborately realistic details and heavily stylized medieval images, it was not a box office success. Artz (2002) argues that *Sleeping Beauty*'s failure is due to the lack of NHA sidekicks in the film, adding that Disney's anthropomorphized NHA stars add appeal for young viewers and comic relief for the older ones. Furthermore, while discussing the representation of NHAs in Disney comic books, Dorfman and Mattelart (1975) argue that NHA-like traits provide characters with an innocent, playful air and help children better identify with them. However,

they continue by stating that it is not the use of NHAs in Disney comics that needs to be scrutinized, but the human traits that they are endowed with:

> Disney uses animals to trap children, not to liberate them. The language he employs is nothing but a form of manipulation. He invites children into a world which appears to offer freedom of movement and creation, into which they enter fearlessly, identifying with creatures as affectionate, trustful, and irresponsible as themselves, of whom no betrayal is to be expected, and with whom they can safely play and mingle. Then, once the little readers are caught within the pages of the comic, the doors close behind them. The animals become transformed, under the same zoological *form* and the same smiling mask, into monstrous human beings. (p. 41)

By using their imagination, children have the ability to retreat to a world of their own: they play games governed by rules and laws which do not reflect socio-economic realities, are apolitical, and often express the children's need for peace and harmony (Dorfman & Mattelart, 1975). According to Dorfman and Mattelart (1975), in order to protect their happiness and innocence, children need to be sheltered from the evils of the world and from "political or ideological contamination" (p. 146) which governs the adult sphere. Attempts to politicize the domain of childhood should be sharply criticized, Dorfman and Mattelart (1975) contend, and they point out that Disney introduces politics in comic books by populating its narratives with anthropomorphized NHAs. Nonhuman animals, like children, live outside of history and politics, thereby becoming convenient symbols of an autonomous and asocial sphere. However, when NHAs represent human types, they automatically become grounded in socio-political realities and vehicles through which children are ideologically conditioned (Dorfman & Mattelart, 1975).

Commenting on Dorfman and Mattelart's analysis of the role played by NHAs in Disney's comic strips, Baker (1993) contends that their book, *How to Read Donald Duck*, operates on a double standard: on one hand, it associates the NHA with a source of natural innocence (with which children easily identify), and, on the other hand, it depletes the NHA's presence in the text of any significance by interpreting it solely through a human prism. For Dorfman and Mattelart's anthropocentric analysis, NHAs become significant only because they are half-human monsters who propagate narratives of capitalism, racism, and colonialism.

The release of the *Jungle Book* (1967) marks what Booker (2009) calls "the height (or depth) of Disneyfied racist Orientalism" (p. 29). Booker argues that the film's Americanization of Kipling's work, which includes providing the jungle NHAs with familiar American personalities and ethnicities, can be interpreted as a form of cultural imperialism. Furthermore, the film's representation of monkeys similar to African Americans is considered one of the most racist sequences in Disney movies outside of *Song of the South* and *Dumbo's* racial representation of a group of crows. Booker (2009) argues that, while associating African Americans with crows and monkeys is shockingly racist by twenty-first century standards, at the time such associations might not have been so obvious for the Disney producers who were still mourning Walt's death in late 1966.

One of the few moderately successful animated films released by Walt Disney Pictures in the 1980s is *The Fox and the Hound* (1981). Booker (2009) states that the film was produced by a team of younger animators and based on contemporary material (a 1967 novel by Daniel Mannix). While *The Fox and the Hound* contains more social commentary, anti-hunting messages, and critiques of prejudice then other Disney films, its anti-racist message is only

partially progressive: the ending of the film implies that different races can live in harmony as long as they do not intrude into each others' spheres.

Just as the Depression-era Disney films of the 1930s eased the public's financial worries, in the highly charged political atmosphere of the Cold War, productions mirrored Americans' hopes and fears as Disney once more became "an influential architect of mainstream values" (Watts, 1997, p. 284). The representation of women as helpless and passive, as well as the racial stereotypes associated with the representation of Disney's anthromorphised NHAs were highly criticized. As the next section illustrates, Disney's subsequent narratives marked a turn of the studio towards multiculturalism, featuring independent, determined, and agile female characters that were no longer exclusively white. Despite this seemingly emancipatory approach, it will be shown that Disney continues to racially code the representation of both human and NHA characters and transmit a value system which naturalizes hierarchy and prohibits even the most adventurous female characters from fulfilling their destiny outside of the domestic realm.

Team Disney

In 1984**,** following a time of financial difficulties, the company's management changed, and the new executives who helped revive Disney came from either Paramount Pictures or the Marriott Company. Michael Eisner, former head of Paramount, became head of the new "Team Disney" (Vasko, 2001), but it was not until the release of *The Little Mermaid* in 1989 that Walt Disney began to recover some of the aura of its old glory days in movie animation.

While *The Little Mermaid'*s storyline is based on one of Hans Christian Anderson's fairytales, Disney imposed its own footprint on the film by adding a stereotypically happy ending characteristic for their animated features and refashioning the mermaid princess in a way that

better suited contemporary, more emancipated audiences (Booker, 2009). De Rozario (1994) argues that early Disney films constructed princes and princesses according to traditional codes: they wear old-fashioned costumes, act gracefully and gender-appropriate by hunting and riding horses (princes) and singing and dancing ballet (princesses). However, Team Disney's construction of princesses was more "democratic" (p. 46), as their heroines assumed less traditional roles. For example, Pocahontas is very athletic and able to dive off waterfalls and run cross-country, while *The Little Mermaid*'s Ariel rescues Eric from drowning. According to De Rozario (1994), Ariel, *Aladdin*'s Jasmine and Pocahontas perform an opposite social journey to Walt's traditional princesses: they do not aspire to regain aristocracy but escape its constraints as they opt for a forbidden mate who brings openness to their insular kingdoms. "Heroism, egalitarianism and autonomy are slipped into the conventions of Disney princesshood", concludes De Rozario (1994, p. 47).

Beauty and the Beast (1991), the first animated film to be nominated for a Best Picture Oscar, was introduced by Disney as a powerful statement against the shallowness of a society which judges people based on looks. However, even if the main heroine, Belle, is more assertive and independent than traditional Disney female characters, she is still young and beautiful, much like the Beast, who turns out to be a disguised handsome human prince (Booker, 2009). Booker (2009) adds that magically animated objects, including a teapot, a clock and a candelabrum, play a key role in the film, once again reinforcing "the consumerist worship of commodities" (p. 55).

Disney's next hit, *Aladdin* (1992), was sharply criticized for racially coding its representation of good and bad: while the positive characters have Aryan features, the negative ones all have physical traits which are easily identifiable as Arabic (Booker, 2009). Booker (2009) contends that, while *Aladdin* announced the beginning of a multicultural phase in the

production of Disney animated film, the studio's central perspective remains white, middle class, and American: "the film indicates the way in which "multicultural" for Disney often means merely "bicultural" with mainstream white American culture representing what might be called "normal" culture, while all nonwestern cultural perspectives are lumped into one exotic heap at the other pole " (p. 57). Along the same lines, Artz (2004) compares Disney's animated elites to middle and upper-class white youth in the United States who, being at the top of the class structure, enjoy more freedom and opportunities than their poorer non-White peers. Artz (2004) criticizes *Aladdin* for drawing a favorable picture of social hierarchy, with characters who serve the narrative's social order portrayed as positive while the ones who try to reverse it are invariably negative (Artz, 2004): Aladdin and Jasmine are young, good looking and speak with an American accent; the Sultan of Agrabah speaks with a British accent and his jovial and benevolent allure resembles that of Santa Claus; and Jafar has a thick Arab accent, an aquiline nose and is tall, dark and threatening. Artz (2004) concludes that naturalizing hierarchy is a common tendency of many Disney animated features, including *Mulan, Tarzan, Pocahontas* and *The Lion King,* where rules change among the elite (from Sultan to Aladdin or from Mustafa to Simba), but the rulers and ruled remain; in the end, the characters happily assume their predetermined social roles.

Aladdin's box office success stimulated the Disney company to invest nearly $80 million in the production of its next animated feature, *The Lion King* (1994), which, states Booker (2009), was the highest-grossing animated film released up to that time, both domestically and internationally. Despite its rampant box-office success, *The Lion King* has also been sharply criticized for being a racist, sexist and homophobic film (Ward, 1996). Furthermore, Ward

(1996) argues that the intense positive and negative reactions stirred by this animated feature lie in the movie's use of mythic narrative:

> When a narrative, which moralizes, builds on myth, the result is axiological advocacy; the story, while it may entertain by virtue of being a narrative, promotes certain values over and against others. It does so supported by the power of the mysterious, common cultural ideas, and references to the sacred, spiritual, or transcendent. (p. 3)

While conducting an analysis of newer Disney movies, Booker (2009) argues that the common thread which ties productions such as *The Little Mermaid* (1989), *Beauty and the Beast* (1991) and *The Lion King* (1994) together is a feeling of nostalgia for earlier films: "Further, given the tendency in the Disney universe to make nostalgia a quest for authenticity, this phenomenon implies that the earlier films are symbolically regarded as authentic classics, while the later films are postmodern pastiches of the earlier classic films" (p. 37). Booker's claim is supported by Ward (1996), who contends that *The Lion King* (1994) blends themes from *Hamlet*, *Bambi* (1942) and *The Jungle Book* (1967), with the overarching motif being a contemporary concern with perpetually immature men.

Disney's next production, *Pocahontas* (1995), is seen by Booker (2009) as a departure for a Disney animated feature in that it is based on a real historical figure, a Powhatan girl who befriended English colonist John Smith and improved relationships between Native Americans and the colonists. Booker (2009) contends that *Pocahontas*' positive depiction of the Native American, coupled with the negative traits attributed to the colonists, reverses the cultural dichotomy established by *Aladdin*. Artz (2004) maintains that, while this neocolonialist text deals with the survival of two hierarchical orders (colonialist and indigenous), John Smith's saving the Powhatan and his intentions to civilize Pocahontas imply the dominance of the

colonialists over the natives. Furthermore, Artz (2002) states that *Pocahontas* is illustrative of Disney's tendency to portray secondary characters with variations appropriate to either the hero or the villain: those who aid the hero/heroine are invariably cute, friendly NHAs; characters that support the villain have distinctive negative traits. The collective population is represented as a passive, motionless mass, which "illustrates their passive role in both the narrative and Disney's social vision" (Artz, 2004, p. 20).

Disney's next animated feature, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1996) is considered by Booker (2009) to be one of the most overtly political films in the Disney repertoire, because it focuses not only on the persecution of the hunchback Quasimodo, but also on the racist oppression of gypsies in fifteenth-century Paris. Furthermore, Booker (2009) contends, Disney gives Hugo's story a happy ending so as to make the story fit for children. Disney's next two features, *Hercules* (1997) and *Mulan* (1998), also disregard historical facts and filter the narrative through contemporary popular culture in order to make the stories more entertaining and appealing to children, a technique that, Booker (2009) says, "participates in a particularly obvious way in the slow erosion of historical sense to which Disney's films have been contributing since Snow White" (p. 63).

Tarzan (1999), a huge success at the box office, is considered the last film of the Disney renaissance, as subsequent films declined in commercial appeal and artistic skill (Booker, 2009). Booker (2009) states that, in order to avoid politically charged issues such as racism and colonialism, the makers of *Tarzan* chose to populate Africa with NHA characters entirely and structure the film around the typical Disney opposition between the natural (represented here by the good gorillas) and the unnatural (portrayed by the invading ruthless humans). Despite Disney's efforts to maintain a neutral political tone, Artz (2002) contends that the representation

of the main characters transmits a value system: Tarzan is muscular and athletic, yet naïve due to growing up in the jungle and needs Jane's teaching him, just as the Western world civilizes America. Yet, he saves Jane, who needs the protection of a man.

While this section took a general look at Disney's animated features from the 1920s to 2000 and identified some of the main political, economic, cultural, racial, and ethnic implications of these films, the next section will further explore Disney's human and NHA representation in an effort to interrogate their ideological workings. Popular culture is a central site of hegemonic struggle. Thus, the links between power, ideology, and representation will be explored in order to determine whether Disney promotes narratives of oppression or liberation, and whether it advances diversity or modes of thought and behavior conducive to a highly homogenized social order. The following discussion of the working of ideology will show how ruling ideas represent dominant societal interests, and how the (often negative) representations of class, gender, and race in popular culture reflect both the point of view of their producer and the values of the dominant social groups. Furthermore, the role of the mass media in consolidating hierarchies of power and disseminating ideologies will also be examined to show how representation constructs meaning, and how meaning influences actions and perceptions. These discussions will be useful in reflecting on whether Disney's representations of NHAs reflect White hierarchical anthropocentric patriarchy (Adams, 1990), or whether they establish themselves as sites of resistance by dismantling common preconceptions associated with speciesism, racism, sexism, and classism.

Cultural Studies

Culture, Ideology, and Hegemony

Nelson (1992) contends that "cultural studies holds special intellectual promise because it explicitly attempts to cut across diverse social and political interests and address many of the struggles within the current scene" (p. 1). Indeed, in an attempt to define the discipline, Babe (2009), Storey (2003) and Lee (2003) acknowledge that cultural studies is not a monolithic body of theories and methods but rather an evolving discourse, marked by controversies and debates, which reacts to changing historical and political conditions. Furthermore, given that capitalist industrial societies are unequal in terms of ethnicity, gender, race, sexuality, and social class divisions, researchers (Kellner & Durnham, 2001; Storey, 2003) agree that media and culture today represent central sites for the negotiation and reproduction of these divisions.

> Forms of media culture such as television, film, popular music, magazines and advertising provide role and gender models, fashion hints, life-style images, and icons of personality. The narratives of media culture offer patterns of proper and improper behavior, moral messages, and ideological conditioning, sugar-coating social and political ideas with pleasurable and seductive forms of popular entertainment. Likewise, media and consumer culture, cyberculture, sports, and other popular activities engage people in practices which integrate them into the established society, while offering pleasures, meanings, and identities. Various individuals and audiences respond to these texts disparately, negotiating their meanings in complex and often paradoxical ways. (Kellner & Durham, 2001, p. 1)

Johnson, Chambers, Parvati and Tinckwell (2004) contend that cultural processes represent an important site for the negotiation of social relationships, where possibilities for social betterment can be either opened up or closed down. They note that issues of representation involve debates between the assertions of popular culture and those who question dominant structures:

> The first stemmed from experiences of being misrepresented and misrecognized – as a woman, gay man, black person – in public media or commercial forums, such as advertising, or political versions of the nation or academic knowledge. This common experience often quite directly fuelled a kind of cultural study that interrogated dominant representations and hegemonic cultural formations. The critique of the dominant, however, has had a second side: the aim to secure the representation of marginalized or subordinated groups, spaces or themes in various ways. (p. 14)

Contemporary criticism has forced us to acknowledge that there are no "innocent" texts, and that, as artifacts of the established culture and society, all cultural products carry meanings, values, biases, and messages (Kellner & Durham, 2001). Furthermore Kellner and Durham (2001) note that cultural texts (especially entertainment) contain representations, often negative, of class, gender, race, sexuality and other social categories, which are saturated with social meanings and often embody different political discourses, advancing competing positions on topics such as sexuality, the state or religion.

> Culture in today's societies thus constitutes a set of discourses, stories, images, spectacles, and varying cultural forms and practices that generate meaning, identities, and political effects. Culture includes artifacts such as newspapers, television programs, movies and popular music, but also practices like shopping, watching sports events, going to a club,

> or hanging out in the local coffee shop. Culture is ordinary, a familiar part of everyday life, yet special cultural artifacts are extraordinary, helping people to see and understand things they've never quite perceived, like certain novels or films that change your view of the world. (p. 6)

Concepts such as "power" and "ideology" force consumers of cultural texts to acknowledge their biases and embedded values, and recognize how they reproduce both the point of view of their producers and, often enough, the values of the dominant social groups (Babe, 2009).

The concept of "power" is central to many areas of contemporary cultural studies (Gibson, 2007; Lewis, 2008; Nelson, 2000). While issues of power have taken backstage in certain domains of cultural aesthetics and postmodernism, for most scholars in the discipline it remains a key concept (Gibson, 2007). Lewis (2008) contends that many of the most important studies of culture examine social injustice and inequity, and reflect the lasting influence that Marx's revolutionary views on power and social relationships have on many generations of radicals and critical thinkers. Furthermore, while Marx's theories on production, division of labor and class welfare have lost some of their relevance in contemporary culture, it is the Marxist notions of power and ideology that contemporary cultural theorists find valuable for their work (Lewis, 2008; Oswell, 2006).

Hawkes notes that the term "ideology" was born around the political debates of the French Revolution and has gradually acquired several meanings. According to Barker (2004), the concern of contemporary Western Marxism with the concept of ideology began as an exploration into the reasons why exploitative systems of economic and social relations, such as capitalism, were not being overthrown by working class revolution. The main question asked in this context, Barker (2004) contends, was whether the working class suffered from "false

consciousness" (p. 97), which in fact translates to a bourgeois world-view which caters to the interests of the capitalist class. In *The German Ideology* (1932), while attempting to explain how working classes conceive the notion of freedom, Marx argues that the very conceptualization of this notion is determined by the ruling classes who attempt to transform social values that serve their interests (such as obedience, loyalty to authority, and commercialism) into universal values and general conditions for goodness (Lewis, 2008).

Furthermore, Marx uses the base and superstructure metaphor to explain the relationship between economy and culture, arguing that the cultural superstructure is shaped and determined by the economic base or mode of production (Barker, 2004). This view forms the basis of a perspective known as cultural materialism, where culture is understood to be inherently the domain of ideology:

> It is noteworthy that for Marx a mode of production is held to be "the real foundation" of legal and political superstructures and that it determines the social, political and cultural. Thus, the economic mode of production or "base" shapes the cultural "superstructure" so that, for Marxism, culture is the consequence of a historically specific mode of production. As such it is not a neutral terrain because the class-based relations of production express themselves as political and legal relations. Here culture naturalizes the social order as an inevitable "fact" so obscuring the underlying relations of exploitation. (Barker, 2004, p. 13)

While Lewis (2008) contends that the primacy of economy in Marx's theory limits his view of culture, Kellner and Durham (2001) highlight how Marx and Engels' critique of ideology, aimed at showing how ruling ideas reproduce dominant societal interests, is still applicable today: while, during the capitalist era, the values of individualism, profit and competition reflected the

ideology of the new bourgeois class, in today's high-tech global capitalism ideas which promote a globalized technologized unrestrained free-market further the interests of the governing elites.

For classical Marxism, intellectuals and cultural producers are employed by the ruling class in order to produce and propagate ideas which serve the dominant institutions and ways of life. Therefore, the biases which cultural texts carry should perpetually be scrutinized: "Moreover, the more one studies cultural forms and representations, the more one sees the presence of ideologies that support the interests of the reigning economic, gender, race or social groups, who are presented positively and idealized, while subordinate groups are often presented negatively and prejudicially" (Kellner & Durham, 2001, p. 7).

Antonio Gramsci, an Italian Marxian thinker, further revised the Marxist tradition by developing a criticism of the State as a hegemonic superstructure of power (Zompetti, 1997). Oswell (2006) notes that Gramsci conceived the State as including both governmental and political institutions, as well as civil society (i.e. media, church, family, etc.), and maintains that there are two types of power which operate within the State: coercive power (domination) and directive power (hegemony). In this respect, social orders are founded and reproduced with some institutions and groups, such as the military and the police, violently exerting power in order to maintain rules and social boundaries, while other institutions, such as the media, schools and religion, induce consent to the dominant order through establishing the hegemony of a distinctive type of social order, such as communism, fascism, or market capitalism (Kellner & Durnham, 2001).

> For Gramsci, then, culture –and importantly the popular culture of the nation- comes under the rubric of the modern State and is identified as a central aspect of hegemonic struggle. In order to maintain control in a society, a ruling group needs not only to control

> governmental and political institutions, but also to have hegemonic direction of civil society. (Oswell, 2006, p. 44)

Zompetti (1997) describes Gramsci's conceptualization of the concept of hegemony as "a type of power relationship between the dominant center of power and its subaltern (oppressed communities) periphery" (p. 69) and states that hegemony is attained through inducing the consent of the majority of subordinate groups to a given socio-political order. Furthermore, Oswell (2006) contends that alliances are not established by the use of physical force but through culture, as Gramsci talks about engaging with people through often unconscious day-to-day traditions, practices, and customs which articulate the popular culture of a nation. Barker (2004) describes how, according to Gramsci's conceptualization, ideology is embodied in ideas which support the power of particular social classes:

> Here, ideology is not separate from the practical activities of life but provides people with rules of practical conduct and moral behavior rooted in day-to-day conditions. Ideology is understood to be both lived experiences and a body of systematic ideas whose role is to organize and bind together a bloc of diverse social elements, to act as social cement, in the formation of hegemonic blocks. Though ideology can take the form of a coherent set of ideas it more often appears as the fragmented meanings of common sense inherent in a variety of representations. Within this paradigm common sense and popular culture become the crucial sites of ideological conflict. (p. 97)

Therefore, while the Marxist tradition envisioned the proletariat rising up and overpowering the bourgeoisie, Gramsci's theory of hegemony conceptualized the migration of the periphery towards the center celebrating inclusion rather than disdain for the upper-classes (Zompetti, 1997).

Theories of ideology and hegemony were further developed by a group of Marxist scholars organized around the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research in the 1930s (Kellner & Durham, 2001). Once the Nazis came to power in Germany in 1933, the Institute moved to New York, and the experience of life in the United States profoundly impacted the School's thinking about the production and consumption of culture (Storey, 1999). Furthermore, according to Lewis (2008), the Institute practiced a critical theory which blended Marxist social criticism, aesthetics and Freudian psychoanalysis. Its most preeminent members were Max Horkheimer (1895-1937), Theodor Adorno (1903-69), and Herbert Marcuse (1898-1979). Walter Benjamin (1892-1940) is also associated with the Frankfurt School despite the fact his work remains distinct.

Unsatisfied with Marx's primary focus on economic matters, the School sought to create a critical interpretation of society that moved from economics to the cultural realm (Weaver, 2005). Kellner and Durham (2001) contend that the Frankfurt School inaugurated critical studies of mass communication by establishing the media as a propaganda tool for interest groups who used them to further their own interests and domination. In 1947, Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer conceived the term "culture industry", which described the products and processes of mass culture, and identified cultural homogeneity and predictability as main features of cultural products (Storey, 1999). According to the Frankfurt School's conceptualization, the culture industry reflects the consolidation of commodity fetishism and thus moulds human consciousness and shapes the tastes of the masses by instilling false needs and working to exclude real needs, as well as alternative concepts or theories (Strinati, 2004). Lewis (2008) notes that the Frankfurt School intellectuals considered the "culture industry" the principal agent of control and social conditioning, and argued that it distracted the American public from

important political issues, had a vested interest in hierarchies of power, and disseminated ideologies supporting capitalist economics and the rights of privileged elites.

However, Walter Benjamin, one of the School's members, fostered a more optimistic and activist view of the potential of the media to promote progressive political ends (Kellner & Durham, 2001; Weaver, 2005). In "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", Benjamin inverts the focus of Adorno's work and argues that the new technologies, such as photography and film, release art from the possession and control of the bourgeoisie and create a new kind of spectator, able to critically dissect cultural forms and render intelligent judgment on them (Lewis, 2008). According to Lewis (2008), Benjamin argues that the "aura" of an object of art is compromised by the work's reproducibility and that the authority (the author) of the text can no longer be sustained in the face of mass distribution and mass consumption. Therefore, while Adorno conceptualizes the culture industry as able to create standardized texts which manipulate obedient, disempowered audiences, Benjamin finds that the act of consumption holds libratory promises and contends that capitalism contains the seeds of its own demise.

Criticisms of the Frankfurt School address the fact that their analyses are pessimistic and hold an overtly monolithic view of the culture industries (Strinati, 2004; Barker, 2000). However, given that forms of cultural and media analysis respond to developments within Western capitalist societies, the work of this group of intellectuals can be read as an articulation of a theory of state and monopoly capitalism that became dominant in the 1930s (Kellner & Durham, 2001). Kellner and Durham (2001) explain that the culture industries discussed by Horkheimer and Adorno were a form of cultural organization parallel to Fordism[3] as a mode of

[3] Named after Henry Ford, Fordism refers to a social theory which dictates that workers be paid higher wages in order to afford the products offered by the industrialist, creating an economy that runs fill-circle.

industrial production, which was characterized by uniformity of needs, thought and behavior. Therefore, during this period, mass culture and communication were vital to producing the modes of thought and behavior appropriate to a highly homogenized social order.

This relation between hegemony and ideology constitutes a central focus for cultural studies. As shown above, while early Marxist versions of the concept of ideology associated its usage with the dominant class's efforts to maintain their power, later, more extended versions of the concept introduced issues related to gender, age and ethnicity to those pertaining to class. Barker (2004) contends that "other uses of the concept grasp ideology as justifying the actions of all groups of people so that marginal and subordinate groups also have ideologies in the sense of organizing and justifying ideas about themselves and the world" (p. 98). The next section of the paper discusses the rearticulation of popular culture brought about by cultural studies in the 1970s and 1980s, focusing on the appropriation of feminism, critical race theory, and other theoretical models which allow for an examination of the way in which cultural texts can either promote narratives of oppression or establish themselves as sites of resistance.

British Cultural Studies and the Politics of Representation

Accounts of British cultural studies begin with Raymond William's theories of culture and society in *Culture and Society* (1958) and *The Long Revolution* (1961), continue with Hoggart's analyses of the connections between British working- class language, beliefs, gender relations, and rituals and working-class institutions, such as pubs and sporting events, in *The Uses of Literacy* (1958), and with E. P. Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963) (Grossberg, Nelson, & Treicher, 1992). The key institutional moment for the school of cultural studies, which has become a global phenomenon of great importance, was the

inauguration of the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural studies (CCCS) in 1964. Under its director Richard Hoggart (1964-1968) and his successor Stuart Hall (1968-1979), the Birmingham School developed numerous critical perspectives for the analysis, interpretation, and criticism of cultural artifacts, and adopted a Marxian approach to the study of culture, influenced mainly by Barthes, Althusser, and Gramsci (Barker, 2004). Furthermore, Barker (2004) contends that, while the initial focus of CCCS was on "lived" culture, with an emphasis on class cultures which drew from the work of Hoggart and Williams, in time the group came to focus on the "interplay of representations and ideologies of class, gender, race, ethnicity, and nationality in cultural texts, especially concentrating on media culture" (Douglas & Kellner 2001, p. 15). They were among the first to study the effects of popular cultural forms on audiences, and to also explore how audiences interpreted media culture in varied ways and contexts.

Kellner (1995) notes that, similarly to the Frankfurt School, British cultural studies focused on the intersections of culture and ideology, and conceptualized culture as a mode of ideological reproduction and hegemony. However, one of the main differences between the two approaches was that British cultural studies rejected high/low culture distinctions by valorizing cultural forms such as film, television and popular music, which had been dismissed by previous approaches to culture. Kellner (1995) emphasizes that Raymond Williams, together with other members of the Birmingham school, are responsible for the rejection of the term "mass culture", which they considered elitist and contemptuous of the masses and their implicitly low culture. Furthermore, British cultural studies overcame the limitations imposed by the passive audience envisioned by the Frankfurt School, and advanced the notion of an active audience that creates and interprets meanings.

Grossberg et al. (1992) contend that, situated at the intersection of Marxism, semiotics, and various sociological and ethnographic traditions, the work of the Centre culminates with several large bodies of work which include subcultural theory and media studies based upon a model of encoding and decoding. As it developed into the 1970s and 1980s and while fostering a renewed interest in Gramsci, which emphasized articulation and the struggle for meanings, British cultural studies successively appropriated feminism, critical race theory, gay and lesbian theory, and other theoretical modes which allowed for an examination of the ways in which cultural texts promote either sexism, homophobia, or other forms of oppression, or establish themselves as sites of resistance and struggle against these phenomena (Kellner, 1995). In this respect, the concepts of representation and ideology are crucial in Hall's approach to the analysis of society and culture, as he deploys the concept of "articulation" in order to explain the processes of ideological struggle (Rojek, 2003). While Rojek (2003) explains that "articulation refers to any practice establishing a relation among resources that modifies identity" (p. 125), Storey (2010) further describes this concept:

> Hall's use plays on the term's double meaning to express and connect: first, it is an "articulation" in that meaning has to be expressed (the "text" has to be made to signify); second, it is an "articulation" in that meaning is always expressed in a specific context (connected to another context and the text could be made to signify something quite different). A "text" therefore, is not the issuing source of meaning, but a site where the articulation of meaning – variable meanings – can be made. And because "texts" are "multi-accentual" they can be articulated with different "accents" by different people in different contexts for different politics. In this way then, meaning, and the field of culture

> more generally, is always a site of negotiation and conflict; an arena in which hegemony may be won or lost (p. 4).

Kellner (1995) contends that, with a postmodern turn in cultural studies, there was an increased engagement with the politics of representation. In this respect, cultural studies takes a constructionist approach to representation (Storey, 2010; Rojek, 2003), arguing that, as things are unable to signify by themselves, they have to be represented through culture, and it is this representation (through processes of description, conceptualization and substitution) which actually constructs the meaning of what is represented. From a Foucauldian perspective (as developed in British cultural studies), representation always takes place in a discourse, which organizes what can and cannot be said about a text. McKerrow (1989) further explains that Foucault's analysis focuses on the relationship between knowledge and power, and on the way in which power operates within an institutional apparatus which is not only inscribed in a play of power, but also linked to different co-ordinates of knowledge. More specifically, Foucault argues against the classical Marxist theory of ideology, which reduced the relation between knowledge and power to a question of class, and contends that the concept of discourses resists this reductionism and allows for a wider conceptualization of power. Foucault (cited by Hall, 1997, p. 44) defines discourses as:

> [A] group of statements which provide a language for talking about – a way of representing the knowledge about – a particular topic at a particular historical moment…Discourse is about the production of knowledge through language. But…since all social practices entail *meaning*, and meanings shape and influence what we do – our conduct – all practices have a discursive aspect.

Hobbs (2008) explains that Foucault's conceptualization of discourses refers not only to language, but also to ways of thinking and practices, as discourses frame ways of thinking about certain topics, things, and objects. Furthermore, when a discourse is manifested in different areas, such as language, institutions and practices, then that discourse reflects a "discursive formation" (p. 7). It is Foucault's analysis of discursive formations which complicates the popular image of the media as a purveyor of reality and contends that, instead, the media are infused with discourses which define the meaning of media representations. Hall (1997) discusses some of Foucault's implications for understanding representation:

> It is discourse, not the subjects who speak it, which produces knowledge. Subjects may produce particular texts, but they are operating within the limits of the *episteme*, the *discursive formation*, the *regime of truth*, of a particular period and culture. Indeed, this is one of Foucault's most radical propositions: the "subject" is *produced* within discourse. This subject of discourse cannot be outside discourse, because it must be subjected to discourse. It must submit to its rules and conventions, to its dispositions of power/knowledge. The subject can become the bearer of the kind of knowledge which discourse produces. It can become the object through which power is relayed. But it cannot stand outside power/knowledge as its source and author. (p. 35)

Storey (2010), following Foucault, argues that representation has become a key concept in cultural studies. The next section of the paper will discuss the way class, gender, and race are represented in Disney's animated films.

Class, Gender, and Race Representations in Disney's Animated Films

Researchers have examined Disney's role as a moral educator and have moved beyond treating its films as pure entertainment to question the diverse representations and messages which populate Disney's products. Bell, Haas, and Sells (1995) note that Disney's aura of innocence, which pervades its conservative view of the world, masks a strong relationship between entertainment and pedagogy. Along the same lines, Lacroix (2004) and Giroux (1996) agree that Disney films help children understand their own identity as well as their place in the world, while King et al. (2010) note Disney's importance in providing both children and adults with a reinforcement of ideologies concerning gender roles, race, and sexuality.

> Thus, as socializing agents, these films guide children (in the United States) through the complexities of highly racialized and sexualized scenarios, normalizing certain dynamics while rendering others invisible. In fact, we argue that these films teach children how to maneuver within the terrain of "race" and "sexuality." It is our contention that films, in their role as agents of socialization, provide children with the necessary tools to reinforce expectations about normalized racial and sexual dynamics. (p. 11)

Several film and feminist critics have noted the paucity of types of characters and the limited agency of Disney female characters in both past and recent Disney films (Bell et al., 1995; King et al., 2010; Lacroix, 2004). Bell (1995) finds that the construction of women's bodies in Disney animation is an effort to align audience sympathies with different stages of the feminine life cycle, "marking the middle as a dangerous, consumptive, and transgressive realm" (p. 109). While analyzing six animated features, which she considers the "nest eggs of Disney's empire" (p. 107), and which include *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937), *Cinderella* (1950), *Sleeping Beauty* (1959), *The Little Mermaid* (1989), *Beauty and the Beast* (1991) and *Aladdin*

(1992), Bell criticizes the "somatexts" by looking at the stories told by Disney women's bodies. Bell's findings reveal that the animation of race and ethnicity was unproblematic in early Disney movies, as main female characters were endowed with anglo-saxon features which adhered to Hollywood's contemporary beauty standards: they were young, pretty, slender, white, and graceful. However, representations of class were more explicit, Bell (1995) contends, as Disney's main female characters all moved along gracefully and practiced classical ballet, which in Disney's world signifies royal bearing. Furthermore, middle-aged women are represented by Disney as *femme fatales*, dark, treacherous, independent and dressed in extravagant costumes. They usually fulfill the roles of witches or evil step-mothers (who, like in the case of *Snow White,* envy the younger heroine for her looks) and end up being killed or defeated. Finally, older female characters are depicted as gray and wrinkled, plump, frumpily dressed, and often clumsy. Bell's (1995) analysis reveals that Disney's representation of women is similar to the treatment of the feminine life-cycle in the hegemonic social discourse and reenacts existing stereotypes about women's bodies.

The progression of the presentation of female characters in Disney films has been traced by numerous researchers (Bell, 1995; Brydon, 2009, Hoerrner, 1996; Lacroix, 2004; Sumera, 2009). Bell (1995) contends that, even though early Disney heroines such as Snow White and Cinderella were represented as helpless and passive, their portrait was complicated by the strength, discipline, and control traditionally associated with classical ballet dancers. Hoerrner's (1996) study of eleven Disney animated films revealed that more contemporary characters, such as *Beauty and the Beast*'s Belle and *The Little Mermaid's* Ariel, are more vocal "in opposing unfair treatment they experienced" compared to older characters who "suffered injustices without uttering a complaint" (p. 41). Lacroix (2004) and Bell (1995) complicate Disney's

representation of women by arguing that, even though Belle and Ariel depart from the gendered stereotypes of the folk tales by being active, intelligent, and assertive, they still resemble earlier Disney characters such as Snow White and Princess Aurora of *Sleeping Beauty*, not only due to physical traits such as milky white skin and delicate features, but also because they continue to fulfill the same destiny of marriage and acquiring wealth. Brydon (2009) agrees that Disney sends conflicting messages about agency through female characters like Ariel, who pursues her dreams despite the potential for patriarchal punishment, yet in exchange gives up not only her independence and the companionship of other women, but also her voice. Sumera (2009) echoes the concerns regarding the apparent feminism flaunted by contemporary Disney characters, and argues that Disney fairy-tale narratives of the 1990s support a patriarchal culture:

> There is evidence of patriarchal codes as well as opposing feminist characteristics within Disney animated feature narratives […]. Starting with the sassy Ariel of *The Little Mermaid* (1989), the intellectual and sophisticated Belle of *Beauty and the Beast* (1991), right down to the strongly independent *Pocahontas (*1995) and *Mulan* (1998), such feminist qualities fronted by the heroines are foregrounded to mask Disney's engrained conservatism, evidenced in its films by its stringent adherence to the patriarchal order. Patriarchy remains intact and feminism masquerades within the Disney fairy-tale narratives of the 1990s. (p. 40)

Lacroix (2004) contends that an increasing emphasis on sexuality and the exotic is evident in the construction of the female characters beginning with *The Little Mermaid* and culminating with *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, especially in the female characters of color. In this respect, characters such as Pocahontas, *Aladdin*'s Jasmine, and *The Hunchback of Notre Dame'* s Esmeralda appear more physically and sexually mature than their predecessors, with the

costumes and iconography not only referencing the character's ethnicity, but also constructed in such a way to privilege physical characteristics. Lacroix (2004) notes that while Jasmine's "harem-esque look of her off-the-shoulder, cut-at-the-midriff blouse" calls to mind some of the iconography associated with the orientalization of Middle Eastern women, Esmeralda's frugal costume also reflects a stereotype of her ethnic background (gypsies allegedly wear revealing costumes), and concludes that these representations encourage viewers "*to look* at Jasmine, Pocahontas, and Esmeralda in different and more voyeuristic manner than the White heroines. They embody the exoticized *Other* woman – one whose sexualized presence is privileged above all else" (p. 222).

Commenting on the representation of Native American women in the media, Bird (2008) notes that it seemed "ironically appropriate" that the first mainstream movie to have an Indian woman as a main character was a cartoon: Pocahontas's role therefore became "the ultimate in unreality" (p. 185). Furthermore, Disney's version of the tale veered away from the tragic story of the brutal crimes against Native Americans and echoes old imagery associated with an embellished relationship between Indians and Whites, which is perpetuated in the process of reducing guilt. Pocahontas persuades her father to make peace despite the Indians' best interests, and accepts the loss of her lover in this process as an inevitable sign of "progress" (Bird, 2008). Furthermore, the cartoon implies that Pocahontas taught John Smith respect for nature, and thus had a strong impact on the way in which the American nation developed. Bird (2008) contends that these assumptions perpetuate a sentimental collective fantasy that lacks historical support, much like the costume Disney animators created for Pocahontas is denied by ethnographical references regarding tribal dress. Furthermore, Pocahontas is actually drawn with features that were modeled from an Asian American actress (Vasko, 2001), while it is the character's hair that

plays an important role in the iconography of the character by reinforcing the stereotype of the Native Americans' unique relationship with nature. Pocahontas's hair is frequently blowing in wind, which is also her spiritual mother (Lacroix, 2004). Commenting on Disney characterization, Henke (2008) notes that the real Pocahontas would have been barely 12 years old and naked with a shaved head, in sharp contrast with the mature, sexualized Barbie doll figure Disney constructed. Despite being introduced as a feminist rendering of the story, Bird (2008) contends that "Disney's *Pocahontas* breathed new life into an Indian Princess stereotype that never really disappeared" (p. 196). Dundes' (2001) analysis of *Pocahontas* revealed similar findings, as she suggested that the representations of women have not changed in recent movies, they have only become disguised.

Disney's *Mulan* (1998) appeared to be another modern feminist tale, one in which Disney seemed to have improved their perpetuation of cultural stereotypes, which include the Native Americans in *Peter Pan* (1951), the Chinese disguised as evil Siamese cats in *Lady and the Tramp*, African Americans and women in *The Jungle Book* (1967), and Arab men and women in *Aladdin* (1992) (Henke, 2008). Henke's (2008) analysis of *Mulan* reveals that Disney's account of the ancient Chinese poem strays away from the original story as well as its cultural traditions, and bombards the audiences with historical and cultural misinformation. While American feminist audiences may interpret Mulan as a woman who finds her independence and challenges patriarchal conventions, Henke contends that Disney offers an ethnocentric viewpoint which assumes that American beliefs and traditions are universally shared and annihilates respect and appreciation for diversity: "Recreating other cultures from a western standpoint, as Disney has done with *Mulan*, denies the legitimacy of other cultural traditions, stories, and values" (p. 135).

King's et al. (2010) analysis of the ideologies and meanings embedded in contemporary Disney, Pixar, DreamWorks, and Twentieth Century Fox animated films revealed that "race and gender have shifted, taking on superficially positive qualities, which seemingly affirm and empower difference *and* retain significant force as a means of projecting fantasies, policing deviation, arranging hierarchies, grounding identities, and reinforcing exclusions" (p. 5). King et al. (2010) expanded on Wasko's (2001) claim that Disney anthropomorphizes NHA characters, and contend that Disney also racializes them in the process. Not only are Disney's NHAs endowed with human traits, but they embody stereotypes associated with different minority groups, such as Blacks, Asians or Latinos. King et al. (2010) contend that racialization takes place on many levels within animated films and that it serves as a tool that teaches children to maintain racial ideologies and thus reinforces the status quo. Furthermore, King et al. (2010) contend that movies such as *Tarzan* (1999) and *The Lion King* (1994) present a natural ranking of species and articulate a vision of white human supremacy. In this respect, *Tarzan* is a film set in Africa that does not feature any black people and is replete with Eurocentric renderings, while *The Lion King*'s treacherous hyenas speak with an inner city African American dialect, evil Uncle Scar's mane is black, while Timon is a stereotyped Jew.

King et al. (2010) conclude that Disney's attitudes towards women and people of color have not changed much along the years. They highlight similarities between *Peter Pan* (1953) and *Pocahontas* (1995), two animated features released by Disney 42 years apart. An in-depth reading of the two narratives reveals how in both cases white males rescue Native American females, and thus whiteness, masculinity, and heterosexuality continue to be celebrated in Disney's recent narratives. They contend that, despite the fact that overt expressions of racism

and sexism have become taboo in contemporary society, stereotypes continue to be perpetuated in different ways:

> […] humor and intention increasingly "excuse" racist and (hetero)sexist thought and action; the rhetoric of emancipation and equality has been recorded to protect those in power (reverse racism); universalism and equivalence bleed out the differences that make a difference, converting identity, tradition, and/or community into a resource, a style, an experience equally available to all [...]. In this context, animated films render their "others" through superficial features and essentialized qualities (distinctive fashion, pattern of speech, architecture, or relationship to nature), affirm universal humanity, erase power, and above all else accentuate the positive. (p. 21)

The immense popularity enjoyed by Disney's animated films across the globe shows that both children and adults are avid consumers of its products and ideas. Indeed, as Walt taught us, the pedagogical nature of entertainment cannot be neglected: as a purveyor of middle-class American culture and values, Disney goes beyond making children laugh to providing them with important lessons about the world and their place in it. It was shown that Disney's oeuvre mirrors the dominant beliefs, concerns, and values of the American society and has evolved along with them. Its animated features explored the worries of the Great Depression and the fears of the Cold War alongside with the American people. Disney used mindless racial stereotyping back when it went unchecked, and carefully disguised it when it became subject to much scrutiny. They allowed women to be emancipated along with everyone else, but shoved them back into the kitchen at the end of the day. They embraced multiculturalism, but made sure they racially coded the representation of "good" and "bad" through racialized human and NHA characters.

Indeed, popular culture represents a central site for the constant negotiation and reproduction of competing discourses regarding both humans and NHAs. Disney's association of children with NHAs challenges deeply ingrained preconceptions regarding the distinction between human and NHAs and allows for an animal rights agenda. In order to explore the ways the human-NHA relationship is conceptualized by Disney and allow for a better understanding of Disney's representation of NHAs, the next section describes the animal rights movement and the ways it challenges the dominant ideology, which situates NHAs as a resource for human use. The communicative power of animation will then be addressed in order to show how the presence of NHAs on screen adds appeal for young viewers and comic relief for adults, while the resemblance between NHAs and human babies makes it harder for viewers to relate to "real" nature.

An Overview of Animal Rights Philosophy

With the intention to avoid cruelty derived from the tyranny to which NHAs were subjected in the industrial era, the nineteenth century witnessed the rise of animal "welfare laws" (Simonson, 2001). These laws promoted humanitarian treatment of NHAs and prohibited "unnecessary suffering" (p. 14). However, given the fact that the definition of the terms "humanitarian" and "unnecessary" was a matter of the owner's interpretation, these laws were subjective, maintained the inferiority of NHAs, and justified NHA exploitation.

The birth of the animal rights movement is often dated around 1975, when utilitarian philosopher Peter Singer first published *Animal Liberation*. According to Ito (2004), Singer's work started the debate over the moral consideration of NHAs. Furthermore, Simonson (2001) notes, some narratives stress discontinuity between animal rights and their predecessors, the animal welfare organizations. While animal *welfare* is about kindly and humane treatment, animal *rights* advocates a more radical agenda: NHAs should not be used at all because, like humans, they can feel pain. In this respect, *Animal Liberation* exposed the two biggest causes of NHA suffering for the first time: experimentation and the breeding of NHAs for food (Singer, 1990). Singer popularized the term "speciesism" in order to describe "discrimination of a living being based on his/her species" (Freeman, 2009, p. 82).

Freeman (2010) contends that speciesism is rooted in the humanist principles which govern Western societies and "celebrate humanity's specialness and define it in opposition to animality" (p. 2), while Roberts (2008) provides a historical and critical examination of the theories and practices which establish human superiority over NHAs and lead to the domination of certain classes and groups. Roberts (2008) describes how the human-animal distinction was outlined early in Western thought by Aristotle, Descartes, and Kant, who excluded NHAs

completely from the human sphere and categorized them as "others." Thus, NHAs were not only considered inferior to humans, but, in certain respects, "failed humans" (p. 6). This classification enabled further exclusions, as those who demonstrated inadequate qualities deemed "human"- such as reason, intelligence, and moral conscience - could be relegated to the realms of animality. While discussing the anthropological perspective which uses binary oppositions such as subject/object to conceptualize the relationship between humans and NHAs, Baker (1993), Roberts (2008) and Freeman (2010) agree that comparisons to NHAs remain largely pejorative. While Baker (1993) emphasizes that this attitude toward NHAs is typically a projection of attitudes towards groups of humans considered inferior, Roberts (2008) concludes:

> As we have seen previously, to systematically attribute demeaning, animalistic tendencies to types or groups leads inevitably to maltreatment of those groups, ranging from exclusion to outright slaughter. The reason for this is simple: animals, generally speaking, do not have to be treated in the same way as humans. Their entire natural history demonstrates their inferiority, and this inferiority, via theoretical tinkering, popular prejudices, and just plain bad science, can be transferred effortlessly from one species to another. (p. 40)

Roberts (2008) emphasizes that the animalization[4] of certain groups (such as the mentally ill, criminals, and colonized populations) continued well into the twentieth century and was primarily intended to achieve mastery over those groups. Along the same lines, Freeman (2010) concludes that speciesism, as an arbitrary social construction, operates on the basis of

[4] In Roberts' conceptualization, the term *animalization* refers to "the course of action that grew out of a number of theories aimed first at establishing human superiority over animals and then at the domination of certain classes or groups – a process that sought to ascribe, both "philosophically" and "scientifically", the presumed inferiority and brutality of various animals to these groups and classes" (p. x).

discrimination and enables hierarchies which often lead to the mistreatment of the "inferior group" in order to satisfy the interests of the "superior" group. Freeman (2010) proposes the use of non-speciesist terminology to promote true respect for animals and offers the term *humanimal* for humans which "reveals that the term *animal* is literally a part of *human*" (p. 5). Freeman (2010) notes that the term *animal* should not be used to reinforce the human-animal dualism but, on the contrary, to acknowledge the animal natures of both humans and NHAs as a positive attribute and not a shameful trait. The term *nonhuman animal* is used in many critical animal studies as a way of reconciling the apparent distinction between the human and the nonhuman realms.

Within Singer's utilitarian framework, "the desired equality is equality in the consideration of interests, meaning that the interests of every being affected by an action are to be taken into account and given the same weight as the like interests of any other being" (Singer, 2001, p. 33). According to Ito (2004), Singer champions NHA protection and a vegetarian diet mainly because it is against the utilitarian moral principle to make NHAs suffer from using them in scientific experiments or as raw material for food production. Overall, Singer's thesis was considered utilitarian and individualistic. His animal welfare stance, which focused more on reducing suffering than on saving lives provoked many objections among environmental philosophers and animal rights advocates. For example, Freeman (2010) contends that Singer's conceptualization of sentience implies the existence of a hierarchy, in that some NHAs, especially mammals, are usually considered more worthy of moral treatment than others, like oysters and insects, and that the hierarchy is always imposed by humans, serves their interests, and allows them to maintain their privileged status.

On the other hand, Tom Regan's "The Case for Animal Rights" is considered by many a rigorous defense of an animal rights position (Varner, 2002). Regan (1983) states that "the fundamental wrong is the system that allows us to view animals as our resources, here for us – to be eaten, or surgically manipulated, or exploited for sport or money. Once we accept this view of animals - as our resources - the rest is as predictable as it is regrettable" (p. 13). Regan argues that improving the conditions NHAs live in is not sufficient, and the only course of action which would right the wrong of our treatment of farmed NHAs is the total dissolution of animal agriculture. Furthermore, Regan proposes the rights view as a moral theory based on the inherent value that both human and NHAs share. His conceptualization of harm is a lot less open to interpretation than Singer's, as Regan agues that all beings that are capable of having desires have the moral right not to be harmed (Varner, 2002). Therefore, Regan situates the animal rights movement as part of the human rights movement as both human and NHAs are "experiencing subjects of a life" (p. 20). Regan advocates the right of NHAs to be treated with respect regardless of their usefulness to others, and takes an abolitionist stance by arguing against the use of NHAs as resources. To accomplish this goal, he calls for a joint effort of people involved in education, publicity and politics to produce a change in mentality which would precede a change in action.

Feminist care theorists[5], however, have questioned several premises of the animal rights position (Donovan & Adams, 2007). First, the focus of the movement on the similarities between humans and NHAs and the erasure of significant differences is considered similar to the "equal rights" approach of the American system of law, which fails to acknowledge and address the

[5] Care-focused feminism is a branch of feminist thought which is critical of the way in which the act of caring is socially engendered to women and thus devalued.

differences between men and women and their unique realities and issues. Second, feminist care theorists contend that the application of the rights theory to NHAs is based on the assumption that we live in a society of autonomous beings, and the interdependent support system in which humans and NHAs (particularly domesticated ones) operate is disregarded with no obligation of care for those unable to live independently. Third, the animal rights approach denies the emotional ties which exist between humans and NHAs, claiming that feelings (most commonly love) do not constitute an appropriate basis for ethical treatment. The failure of the animal rights movement to acknowledge caring as a motivating factor for many animal activists and to address its gendered nature – it is women's duty to be caring, while men do it only by choice- is demonstrative of "the gendered emotional responses inherent in a patriarchal society" (Donovan and Adams, 2007, p. 202).

The animal rights movement also has been criticized by Noske (2004) for its lack of environmental awareness and for critiquing objectification and exploitation solely on the basis of sentience. Noske contends that animal advocates ignore the strong relationship between NHAs and their environments, and do not make the criticism of technology, urbanism, and nature destruction a priority. Also, Noske accuses animal activists of imposing human ethics on their NHA companions, turning them unnaturally into vegetarians, and promoting consumption of unsustainable plant cultures which are marketed by the same globalized agro-industrial complex that commercialized meat products. She defines the view of portraying NHAs as isolated city dwellers that live outside of an ecological context as "individualistic reductionism" (p. 356).

By contrast, Noske argues, the deep ecology movement is appreciative of the wonders of nature and denounces certain technological advances and modern practices as being detrimental to the environment. The term "deep ecology," coined by Arne Naess in 1973 in his "The

Shallow and the Deep: Long-Range Ecology Movements" article, refers to a comprehensive world-view which sees humans as part of an organic whole and dismisses the adversarial relationship between humans and nature (Devall & Sessions, 1985). Deep ecology criticizes Western culture for being individualistic, socially programmed, and competitive. Furthermore, positioned in sharp contrast with the dominant worldview of technocratic industrial societies, deep ecology denounces the increased obsession of Western culture with the idea of dominance. In an effort to promote an ecological consciousness and see beyond the contemporary value system, this philosophical system takes the idea of equality a step further by arguing that all organisms and entities in the ecosphere, including plants and NHAs, are equal in intrinsic worth. Furthermore, their value is independent of their utilitarian value to humans. Biocentric equality, a fundamental principle of deep ecology, refers to the idea that "all things in the biosphere have an equal right to live and blossom and to reach their own individual forms of unfolding and self-realization within the larger Self-realization" (Devall & Sessions, 1985, p. 122). While Singer claimed that it is sentience which justifies moral treatment of NHAs, and Regan considered consciousness to be the key factor (Freeman, 2009), deep ecology proposes the abolition of all human imposed hierarchies which deem others more or less worthy of moral treatment. Following this philosophical tradition, humans are urged to live with minimum impact on other species and the Earth, allowing all other entities to reach their full potential. Furthermore, deep ecology favors ecosystems over the well being of individuals.

Deep ecology also has its critics. Tom Regan (2001) calls this philosophy "environmental fascism" and argues that contemporary environmental efforts are not successful because they focus on the whole and not the part and it is respect for individuals that in turn produces respect for communities. Furthermore, Noske (2004) notices a strange contradiction

within the deep ecology movement: though it acknowledges that modern human practices are very exploitative of nature, the movement is not sympathetic to exploited NHAs and shows disdain for beings that no longer lead natural lives in their appropriate ecosystems.

Kheel (2008) identifies holism as the dominant philosophy which guides both nature ethics and the environmental movement, and she criticizes the focus of holist nature philosophers on "species", "the ecosystem" or "the biotic community" (p. 2) to the detriment of individual beings. Kheel (2008) maintains that the focus on the larger "whole" (p. 2) reflects a masculinist orientation which lacks care and empathy for individual NHAs. Kheel (2008) describes how masculinist traits (most commonly rationality, universality, and autonomy) are generally opposed to traits perceived as female (nonrationality, particularity, and dependence) and how a series of dualisms emerge from theses contrasting traits. Kheel (2008) contends that these dualisms, which include culture/nature, male/female, good/evil, domestic/wild, subject/object, and human/animal are united by a common theme: "transcending the female-imaged biological world" (p. 3). Keel (2008) argues that the idealized notion of transcending the biological realm as a decisive step in the process of masculine maturation involves not only separation from the female world, but also from the entire realm of nature. By leaving their homes and mothers and engaging in acts of violence such as hunting, fishing, and war, men prove their heroism and worth.

Adams conducts an ecofeminist analysis of what she calls "our current racist patriarchy" (p. 203) and identifies several dyads[6] which organize the Western world according to a "sex-species system" (p. 203). Adams (2007) contends that:

[6] The dyads identified by Adams include: man/woman, human/animal, white/"colored," mind/body, reason/emotion.

> The species barrier has always been gendered and racialized; patriarchy has been inscribed through species inequality as well as human inequality. The emphasis on differences between humans and animals not only reinforces fierce boundaries about what constitutes humanness, but particularly about what constitutes manhood. That which traditionally has been seen to distinguish humans from animals – qualities such as reason and rationality – has been used as well to differentiate men from women, whites from people of color. Species categorization is one aspect of a racialist patriarchy. "Man" (read: white man) exists as a concept and a sexual identity through negation ("not woman, not beast, not colored" – that is, "not the other"). (p. 203)

It therefore becomes apparent that speciesism, sexism, and racism remain interconnected, mutually reinforcing systems of oppression. Roberts (2008) describes how contemporary social and sexual suppression of women involves subtle forms of animalization, which surface most obviously through attacks and criticisms regarding their determined duty as mothers and child-bearers. Furthermore, Roberts (2008) argues that the presumed shortcomings which continue to be mostly associated with blacks involve low intelligence (often ascribed to animals), the stud-like sexual behavior of an animal in heat, and a natural tendency for crime (which stems from their animal-like inability to control their actions and impulses). Roberts (2008) concludes that there are no significant differences between popular perceptions of the modern-day black and the historical black conceived as demon, outcast, and bestial presence in white society.

Despite its philosophical diversity, several basic tenets of the animal rights movement emerge. The continuity between the human and the NHA condition and the abolition of speciesism represent the main foci of the movement. Besides emphasizing the equal moral rights of all sentient beings (human and nonhuman), animal rights acknowledges the intrinsic value

held by NHAs regardless of their utilitarian value to humans and their right to be free from confinement, use, or abuse by humans. Given that NHAs are capable of suffering the same way humans are, it is morally unacceptable to inflict physiological or psychological distress on NHAs. Treating human and NHA pain differently is considered a speciesist and discriminatory practice by the animal rights movement. These basic views inform the methodological approach of this study given that my analysis will inquire whether animal rights principles are represented in Disney's animated features and whether these principles are evident in Disney's portrayal of the human-NHA relationship.

The Communicative Power of Nonhuman Animals in Films and Animation

The types of programming which most often feature NHAs are wildlife documentaries and animation (including animated films and short cartoons). According to Chris (2006), watching wildlife film and television usually gives the viewer a sense of making a good, superior media choice, due to the educational value that is generally attributed to this type of programming. Chris (2006) points out that the images of animals and their habitats found through television are real, but also "absolutely different" (p. 7) from real animals and places in that they are constructed to portray dominant narratives, reflect the economics of the film and television industries, and, more recently, the geopolitical conditions concerning the state of the environment. Chris (2006) criticizes the environmental messages of wildlife documentaries, contending that, even though they introduce audiences to the negative consequences of human culture, they present nature and NHAs as eternal and resilient and evade discussion of concrete causes of destruction.

Chris (2006) also notes that, from the 1890s to the late 1930s, wildlife films focused on emphasizing the differences between humans and NHAs. By introducing white British and American citizens who gained control over the natural world by exploring exotic locations and taming or killing wild NHAs such as lions and elephants, the narratives established the superiority of the colonizers over nature. At the same times, early wildlife films emphasized the animalistic inferiority of indigenous people who, much like wild NHAs, needed to be "tamed" and "civilized." As TV sets became common in every American household in the 1950s, it became even easier for entertainers to exploit remote corners of the globe, feature exotic species of NHAs, and appeal to them as a source of family entertainment and education (Mitman, 1999). Mitman (1999) contends that two economic relationships with NHAs sustained nature as a

commercial commodity in the 1950s: pet keeping and tourism. By creating a sense of interaction with the wild animals featured on television, the producers created a sense of personal involvement for the audience: through the screen, which now brought nature as never seen before into their homes, audiences could participate in feeding orphan bobcats, teach apes how to perform tricks, or rescue orphan lion cubs. Mitman (1999) contends that caretaking practices, around which many of the shows revolved, closed the gap between human and NHAs and offered escape and respite from the stress of daily life.

Furthermore, wildlife documentaries and television drew on the conventions of popular genres such as dramas and comedies, used dramatic narration and music to create a sense of immediacy and involvement, and focused on turning NHA characters into celebrities. By assigning them names and personalities, which set them apart much like domestic pets, producers anthropomorphized NHAs and created human narratives for them to star in. Chris (2006) identified parenting and growing up as central themes of wildlife programming starting with the 1950s. Most narrations made regular analogies between NHAs and humans centering on "family" life and presented a collage of images showing interactions between NHA mothers, fathers, and their cubs which fit the storyline but were rarely based in reality (Chris, 2006). Chris (2006) contends that this trend has continued to dominate the genre, as more recent productions, including Discovery's *Planet Earth* (2006) and National's Geographic *Ocean's Deadliest* (2006) feature anthropomorphized NHAs that live out human narratives. Although narratives which feature humans living close to nature and NHAs, such as *George of the Jungle* (1997) or *Tarzan* (1999) have also become popular and their themes suggest cross-species identification and the possibility of a harmonious human-NHA relationship, Chris (2006) notes that their theatrical distribution remains scant, with the exception of an emerging specialty market. Regarding the

general evolution of wildlife film and television, Chris (2006) concludes that, whereas the genre's discourse initially situated NHAs as objects and assumed an anthropomorphic framework (attributing human characteristics to NHAs and speculating about their emotions), it eventually became zoomorphic and started focusing on using knowledge about NHAs to explain human behavior. The symbolic representations of NHAs in popular culture are also addressed by Baker (1993) who emphasizes that, often times, the stereotypes associated with these representations reflect the anthropocentric perspective of humans drawing on NHA imagery to make statements about humanity.

Along with wildlife documentaries and television, animated films are another genre in which NHAs play a central role (Wells, 2002; Artz, 2002). Wells (2002) situates animation among the most important creative art forms of the 21st century and emphasizes its representational versatility, which oscillates between reproducing lifelike movements and privileging other forms of expression. The free form of motion, identified by Wells (2002) as one of the key aspects of animation, undermines the coherence of "realist" premises and purposefully juxtaposes expected (plausible) and unexpected (implausible) scenarios, actions, characters, or environments, either for comic purposes or to engage the audience in a more challenging mode of visualization. Incongruous elements are also used by animators as a means of critique and parody and in order to challenge social norms and general expectations. Leslie (2002) also comments on animation's suitability for non-representational images (involving fantastic worlds and characters), and contends that animation's continuous process of erasure and reconstruction mimics the imaginative and playful realm of childhood with its endless possibilities.

Wells (2002) contends that Disney used the freedoms of animation to make its authorial presence known in order to distinguish its films from others. He defines "disneyfication" as "a

method by which to read a film, or series of films, with coherence and consistency, overriding all the creative diversity, production processes, socio-cultural influences and historical conditions which may challenge this perspective" (p. 88). Discussing what he calls the "disneyfication of the animal" (p. 174), Baker (1993) argues that the representation of NHAs in a visual form is based mostly on stereotypes and stupidity, which reflect the contemporary shift in popular culture from text to readily available, easy to decipher, trivial images. Furthermore, by anthropomorphizing NHAs, Disney supplements its narratives but also disturbs their logic by "bringing to light the disruptive potential of the story's animal content" (Baker, 1993, p. 139). Wells (2002) agrees that anthropomorphized NHAs provide a narratological space for comedy and contends that human-like NHAs are used in animated films in order to reconcile the challenges associated with representing adult behavior in children's programming (especially related to sex and violence) and argues that unpleasant or socially unacceptable behavior becomes "cute" as fictive NHA behavior.

Wells (1998) further notes that early 1920s' animations, such as *Felix the Cat*, catered to a fantasy-hungry audience and crossed the lines between rational and irrational discourse by allowing characters to escape the "real world" with its ideological and moral constraints and advance radical, alternative agendas. Even though Disney's early cartoons also featured a predominantly abstract style, as his studio grew and different techniques became available, Disney became interested in the development of animation as an industry. As he acknowledged that full-length animated features could not be sustained by the series of gags featured in the animated short at the time, he focused his creative energies on developing a more realistic style. Wells (1998) uses Eco's (1986) term "hyper-realism" (p. 7) to define Disney's animation style, which aspires to echo the realism of live-action films, while featuring fantasy spaces, fairy-tale

characters, and speaking NHAs. Furthermore, Wells highlights the paradox contained by this medium, noting that "animation is a *completely fake* medium by virtue of the fact that it does not use the camera to *record* reality but artificially records and creates its own" (p. 25), thus offering unreality as real presence.

Along the same lines, Artz (2002) contends that animation is central to Disney's cultural influence and explains that, by "blurring the imminent margin between fiction and reality," it provides the material and technical basis for creating the "*Magic Kingdom* of Disney content" (p. 41). Furthermore, by escaping the rigors imposed by the natural world, animated characters and settings can be easily adjusted to convey desired meanings. While discussing the defining characteristics of Disney animation, Artz (2002) found that these include the use of music, naturalized scenes and settings, anthropomorphism, and the appropriation of cultural codes from traditional tales. In this respect, Disney animation "entertains and instructs because it offers a cinematic escape from reality by presenting recognizable narrative and imagistic fictions as if they were or could be reality. In part, the fantasies and their narratives are shielded from external critiques because they are based on widely-accepted cultural myths and morals" (Artz, 2002, p. 41).

Pallant (2010) contends that the animated features released by Disney over the last decade mark a shift from the hyperrealist conventions associated with the studio's earlier output towards a more heterogeneous and progressive style of animation classified as the "Neo-Disney period" (p. 103). Pallant (2010) claims Disney's focus on cartoonality opens new possibilities for visual humor, as in *The Emperor's New Groove*'s Kuzco and Pacha defying the laws of physics and floating in thin air, and notes Disney's "good" and "bad" binary with characters who exhibit both "good" and "bad" qualities such as Kuzco and Kronk, *Lilo and Stitch*'s Lilo and

Stitch, *Treasure Planet'*s Long John Silver, and *Brother Bear*'s Kenai. According to Pallant (2010), other features which distinguish the Neo-Disney period include a newfound maturity in tackling reproduction (i.e. *The Emperor's New Groove* shows a woman in an advanced state of pregnancy) and changes in the characters' physiognomy (i.e. the characters in *Atlantis: The Lost Empire* are angular and muscularly defined, while those in *Lilo and Stitch* have softly shaped, rounded features).

Disney's animated features are created to appeal to both children and adults. Indeed, Walt Disney himself commented on how using humor, which he calls "an international sixth sense" (p. 327), is effective for appealing to broad audiences and how NHAs in particular are a good source of entertainment, especially when they are introduced as clumsy and elicit feeling of compassion from the audience. In this respect, Disney noted how humor in feature length animations "deals more with awkwardness, especially the kind in which the antics of young floundering animals become *cute*. The compassionate laughter that such actions arouse is probably our most admirable human response to what is broadly ludicrous" (p. 327). According to Mollenhoff (1989), children are particularly captivated by animation because it visually stimulates their emotions, appeals directly to their animistic thinking, and provides them with a level of experiential meaning which cannot be reproduced outside of the non-cinematic realm. Furthermore, the presence of NHAs' on the screen adds appeal for young viewers and comic relief for the older ones. While Artz (2002) contends that, indicative of Disney's naturalistic style, NHAs are almost always anthropomorphized in order to instantiate the fiction of human characteristics in animal behavior, Forgacs (1992) notes that NHAs are also "anthropomorphically transformed to resemble human babies" (p. 365) in order to bring out nurturing feelings of affection in both young and mature audiences. Whitley (2008) makes a

similar point while discussing Disney's rendering of wild nature as "disarmingly cute" (p. 3) in films such as *Bambi* and *Finding Nemo*, and concludes that this technique is double edged: while it plays on the young viewers' emotions and makes it easier for them to identify with the NHA characters, it also makes it harder for viewers to relate to the "real" nature which has not been "carefully manicured and stage managed as a spectacle" (p. 3).

As modern society has become increasingly distanced from nature, the representation of NHAs in wildlife documentaries and animated movies has become increasingly anthropomorphized. Images of real animals and their behaviors are replaced with sanitized expressions of traits humans think NHAs have, or attribute to them in order to justify abuse and exploitation. As these false representations of NHAs are reproduced in the media, they become the standards for understanding NHA behavior. Upon watching Disney's narratives, it becomes plausible that young rabbits and deer not only look a lot like human babies but act like them too, poking fun at each other in a world populated by animal "friends." Meanwhile, "the animals of the mind remain with us, while real animals have been marginalized" (Tapper, 1988, p. 56).

NHAs play a key role in creating an aura of childhood innocence for Disney, while the animal rights messages which pervade its animated features are based on the association of children with animality. Thus, Disney's juvenile, anthropomorphized, animated NHAs blur the boundaries between fiction and reality and can easily be adjusted to convey desired meanings. The representation of NHAs is further problematized by racial, gender, and speciesist stereotypes which reflect a hegemonic white, hierarchical, anthropocentric patriarchy and organize the world according to a "sex-species system" (Adams, 2007, p. 203).

Methodology

This study uses the constant comparative method to analyze the representations of NHAs which populate Disney's animated features. It extends the existing literature by examining the 12 full-length animated features released by Disney between 2000 and 2010 for: (1) their representation of NHAs, including the portrayal of gender, race, class and speciesism within this representation; (2) the ways they describe the relationship between humans and NHAs; and (3) whether Disney animated movies promote an animal rights perspective. The goal of this paper is to provide a comprehensive look at all the most contemporary animated Disney feature films whose representation of NHAs has not been analyzed to date.

An animal rights framework will be applied to this analysis in order to critically evaluate the status of NHAs in Disney's representations and their place in the world. This study will draw on an animal rights discourse, as well as on previous research concerning speciesism, race, class, and gender in Disney films, to determine whether Disney's animated features reflect the mainstream ideology and whether they attempt to challenge it. The use of the constant comparative method requires that the themes emerge from the texts examined. However, the research discussed previously informs this analysis. Therefore, in order to explore the ways in which the human/NHA relationship is defined in these movies, I will assess whether the tenets of the animal rights movement are represented in the films. These include the view that human and NHAs are equal in body and mind (meaning they are equally sentient and imbued with physical and emotional needs), that they enjoy the same moral rights (such as life, liberty, and the ownership of their bodies and offspring), and that NHAs should not be discriminated against based on their status as nonhumans. Furthermore, I will explore the attitudes toward NHAs that Disney movies promote. I will assess whether the movies advance speciesism, which is whether

they imply the superiority of humans over NHAs, of certain species of NHAs over others, and whether they enable human-imposed hierarchies which favor exclusion and lead to the maltreatment of other groups. Speciesism will also inform my analysis of how gender, race, and class are represented in the films. For example, female NHAs may be represented as passive and in need of help, while male NHAs are shown as the predators and saviors. At the same time, the comic, buffoon-like animals may draw on racial stereotypes or may get into trouble when they fall in love with someone outside their social class. Thus, this study asks whether the discursive sources of power, inequality, and bias are embedded in the texts (animated features).

While providing an overview of Disney's animated features, Artz (2002) contends that Disney narratives feature specific characters, events, and perspectives instead of others in order to imply and communicate a particular meaning, and that by introducing some characters as entertaining, humorous, or dramatic, Disney "suppresses" other characters or events presenting them as "less important, less entertaining, indeed, uninteresting, even boring" (p. 4). This study will therefore analyze NHAs according to if, when, and how they speak, according to their visual depiction, and according to their interactions with other NHAs and with human characters. In order to question the various elements which create meaning within the texts, attention will also be given to the larger context which frames the stories in order to identify wider social structures, cultural practices, and any inscribed hierarchies, particularly as they may relate to gender, race and class, as well as between humans and NHAs.

This study will employ the constant comparative method (CCM) in order to organize the films' themes and patterns into categories. According to Glaser and Strauss (1967), CCM is an inductive method of grounded theory development which involves several steps. Glaser and Straus explain that, upon identifying a phenomenon of interest, the researcher proceeds to outline

a few concepts, principles, or features of the phenomenon, keeping in mind that decisions regarding initial data collection and analysis are based on one's initial understanding of the phenomena and are subject to change as the process evolves. Fisher (2006) notes that "data gathering and analysis proceed concurrently and are interactive, the activities being guided by the considerations of the phenomenon of interest" (p. 65). Furthermore, the CCM involves the creation of as many categories of analysis as possible, while constantly comparing pieces of data to all other pieces of data which are either similar or different. Tesch (1990) acknowledges the importance of constant comparison, which she calls "the main intellectual activity that underlies all analysis in grounded theory" (p. 96), and notes that the method of comparing and contrasting is crucial for all the stages of analysis, such as forming categories, establishing the boundaries between them, and finding patterns and relations.

Boeije (2002) notes that comparisons increase the internal validity of the data by enabling the researcher to better describe the variety that exists within the subject under study. Glaser and Strauss (1967) also acknowledge the benefits that this method provides:

> Using the constant comparative method makes probable the achievement of a complex theory that corresponds closely to the data, since the constant comparisons force the analyst to consider much diversity in the data. By *diversity* we mean that each incident is compared with other incidents, or with properties of a category, in terms of as many similarities and differences as possible. (p. 114)

Given Disney's role as a moral educator and its ongoing influence on both young and adult audiences, critical discourse analysis provides a critical lens for reflecting on the place held by animals in Disney's world, whereas CCM allows for the categories of themes and patterns within the films to be examined. Thus, I will look for themes and patterns to emerge from the films so

that they can be placed into a category which will constantly be compared and contrasted to other categories until final themes and patterns are determined in this inductive process.

Sample Films

All full-length animated feature films released by Disney from 2000 to 2010 are included in this analysis. The 12 films that were released by Disney from 2000 to 2010 are: *Dinosaur* (2000), *The Emperor's New Groove* (2000), *Atlantis: The Lost Empire* (2001), *Lilo and Stitch* (2002), *Treasure Planet* (2002), *Brother Bear* (2003), *Home on the Range* (2004), *Chicken Little* (2005), *Meet the Robinsons* (2007), *Bolt* (2008), *The Princess and the Frog* (2009) and *Tangled* (2010). The movies selected for investigation were produced by Disney in collaboration with Pixar and include features which use traditional animation (such as in *Lilo and Stitch* and *The Emperor's New Groove*), computer-animated films (such as in *Chicken Little* and *Bolt)*, as well as features which blend both techniques (*Dinosaur* and *Tangled*). Furthermore, only animations released in theatres will be analyzed; sequels and spin-offs released straight to DVD were be excluded from this study. Analysis of these 12 films provides a current and comprehensive look at Disney's view and representation of NHAs during the past decade. Disney's texts are culturally significant because they are consumed in high volume and enjoy wide distribution and worldwide popularity. Furthermore, viewership of these films continues to grow, spurred on by sequels and marketing tie-ins (Giroux, 1996; Lee, 2008). While *Dinosaur* (2000) enjoyed the second best debut for an animated feature after Disney's *Lion King* (1994), the feature films *Chicken Little* (2005), *Brother Bear* (2003), *Lilo and Stitch* (2002), and *Tangled* (2010) were also box office hits (The Numbers, Records, n.d.). Furthermore, several films enjoyed increased publicity while receiving Oscar nominations: *Lilo and Stitch* (2003), *Treasure Planet* (2003) and

Brother Bear (2003) were nominated for "Best Animated Film" in 2003, while *The Emperor's New Groove* (2000) and *The Princess and the Frog* (2009) received "Best Music" nominations in 2000 and 2009, respectively (The Numbers, Oscars, n.d.)

Character and Plot

Dinosaur, a 2000 animated film set 65 million years ago during the Cretaceous Period, blends traditional and computer-generated animation to realistically depict the adventures of Aladar, an iguanodon. Aladar was separated from his mother as a hatchling and raised on an island by a clan of lemurs. A meteor shower forces the dinosaur and his adoptive family (grandfather Yar, mother Plio, brother Zini, and sister Suri) to abandon their idyllic home and join a herd of dinosaurs on their journey to reach the nesting grounds, which they believed were left untouched by the meteors.

The herd is led by iguanodon Kron and his lieutenant, Bruton. Aladar and the lemurs befriend three elderly dinosaurs, Baylene, Eema, and Url, and are accompanied by Eema's dog-like pet Ankylosaurus. Kron and Bruton adhere to strict Darwinistic[7] principles urging the others to move forward at a fast pace and showing little sympathy for the older and weaker members of the herd who battle exhaustion, high temperatures, and lack of water. Aladar helps the older dinosaurs continue their journey and finds water, arousing the romantic interest of Kron's sister, Neera.

After Bruton is injured by a pair of carnotaurs, Kron moves the herd leaving Aladar, the lemurs, and the older dinosaurs behind. Bruton sacrifices himself to let them escape another confrontation with the carnotaurs. After wondering through caves, they reach the breeding

[5] An evolutionary theory which claims that natural selection is the main mechanism of evolution.

grounds only to notice that the old entrance had been blocked off by a wall of rocks. Aladar finds the herd on the other side being commanded by Kron to climb the wall and gets attacked by Kron for suggesting an alternate route. While the two fight for leadership, the carnotaur attacks again and kills Kron, who became vulnerable by not sticking with the rest of the herd. In the end, we find Aladar, Neera and their offspring enjoying life in the nesting grounds together with the lemurs and the other dinosaurs.

The Emperor's New Groove was released in 2000. Silverman (2002) argues that, while the film does not prioritize historical authenticity and refrains from making specific references about the geographical or historical settings of the story, it is based primarily on the Inca Empire, which developed into modern-day Peru. Architectural details, sun worship, and llamas as domestic beasts in the film are all aspects of Incan culture. However, Silverman (2002) notes, other elements, such as wheels and boy scouts, are used solely for humorous effect and add to the lack of historical authenticity for which Disney is notorious.

Furthermore, Silverman (2002) maintains that Disney's appropriation of character names is done without any regard for their cultural significance. While Emperor Kuzco's name is similar to "Cusco," the capital city of the Inca Empire, Disney's use of "K" in Kuzco is notable given that this letter does not exist in the Spanish alphabet. Furthermore, Pacha is not an appropriate name for a peasant of the Inca Empire: it is a complex concept which denotes the union of the world, time, and place, which is found in the name of the ninth Inca emperor, "Pachacutec" (Silverman, 2002). Lastly, Chicha (Pacha's wife) is the name of a beer consumed in the Andes, while Yzma is similar to "Yschma", an important prehispanic establishment.

The film features Kuzco, a spoiled, self-centered teenage emperor who plans to build his extravagant summer house, Kuzcotopia, on a site currently occupied by a small village. He

informs Pacha, the headman of the village, about his plans and dismisses him when he tries to protest. Later on, Kuzco fires his advisor, Yzma. She becomes angry and devises a plot to get rid of the emperor and become the ruler of the empire. The plan fails due to her dim-witted lackey, Kronk, who, instead of killing Kuzco, mistakenly turns him into a llama and sets him free.

The emperor, now a beast of burden, stumbles upon Pacha, who agrees to help him get back to the palace provided he builds Kuzcotopia somewhere else. Kuzco feigns agreement, and the two embark on an adventurous journey as they attempt to escape their pursuers (Yzma and Kronk), turn Kuzco human, and reinstate him as an emperor. Therefore, an alliance is formed between two disempowered categories: peasants and beasts of burden. Once they defeat Yzma and turn her into a little cat, Kuzco repents for having mistreated Pacha and builds a small cabin on a hill next to his house. When discussing the ending of the film, Silverman (2002) notes that a previous version of *The Emperor's New Groove*, which concluded with Kuzco building Kuzcotopia at Pacha's village, was met with criticism by environmentalist and popular musician Sting, who contributed to the film's musical background. Producers listened to the criticism and decided to replace the huge summer house with a smaller, more environmentally friendly one, which would have less of an impact on the local community. Silverman (2002) considers the producers' decision to "respect indigenous cultures" (p. 315) ironic, since the Disney team's construction of large theme parks has often been met with opposition by local communities, which the powerful Disney empire often ignored.

Atlantis: The Lost Empire is a 2001 science fiction production set in the eve of World War I. The opening sequences show how, when threatened by a tsunami caused by their tempering with technology, the center of Atlantis is protected by a mysterious energy shield,

while the Atlantean Queen is forced to leave her family behind as she is summoned by a higher entity referred to as the Heart of Atlantis and disappears into the sky.

The focus then turns to Milo Thatch, a young linguist who shares his grandfather Thaddeus Thatch's fascination with Atlantis. Milo believes he has found a mistranslation of an ancient manuscript which places Atlantis near Iceland but the only one who believes him is millionaire Preston Whitmore, who sponsors an expedition to seek out Atlantis. After many hurdles, the expedition finally reaches Atlantis and the crew are brought before the King and his daughter, Kida, who speak perfect English. A friendship quickly forms between Kida and Milo, who is asked to translate several murals and discovers that the Heart of Atlantis serves as the main source of energy for the city and its people. Milo also discovers that the crew were in fact a group of mercenaries who wanted to steal the power source and return it to the surface. He manages to save the princess and chooses to remain with her in Atlantis, while his friends return to the surface and give Mr. Whitman an Atlantean crystal and a note from Milo.

Lilo and Stitch, a semi-science fiction animated film produced by Disney in 2002, is set in the present day on the Hawaiian island of Kauai. The main characters are Stitch, a fugitive alien who hides on Earth, and Lilo, an orphan Hawaiian girl who lives with her sister. Stitch (initially called Experiment 626) was created on planet Turo by Dr. Jumba Jookiba as part of a series of genetic experiments. Designed to be smart, aggressive, and virtually indestructible, he was tried by the galactic governing body, found to be a threat and exiled on a desert asteroid. He escapes on the way and ends up on Earth, where he is mistaken as a dog and taken to a kennel.

He is adopted by Lilo, an orphan in need of a friend. Lilo is portrayed as a rather unusual young girl: she likes taking photos of "fat, White tourists," feeding fish peanut butter sandwiches, and conducting voodoo rituals to punish her mischievous peers (Berggreen and

Lustyik, 2004). According to Berggreen and Lustyik (2004), *Lilo and Stitch* offers a non-traditional view of the family which reflects Hawaii's social norms, where many families consist of several generations and other relatives. In this respect, the word *ohana* means family, which includes members not related by birth. Nani, Lilo's older sister, is trying to juggle her new responsibilities and Lilo's main care-taker, find a job, and convince Cobra Bubbles, their appointed social worker, that Lilo does not need to be put in a foster home. Despite making *ohana* one of its major focuses, Berggreen and Lustyik (2004) contend that the film excludes other positive aspects of Hawaiian culture and reinforces stereotypes: Nani is perpetually unemployed, struggling, and dealing with social services, while her boyfriend is a fire-dancer. Furthermore, the white characters, which include the fat, unpleasant tourists and Mertle, a ruthless bully, are portrayed negatively and in opposition with the native Hawaiians.

The aliens decide against destroying Earth because it is a wildlife preserve they had been using to rebuild the mosquito population, which they consider an endangered species. Furthermore, given that the mosquito's food of choice is humans, the aliens consider preserving Lilo's life important because she is part of the food chain. Therefore, the Grand Councilwoman orders Jumba and Agent Pleakley, an earth specialist, to capture Stitch discreetly. The reversal of the status of mosquitos from pests to an endangered species and the associated preservation efforts (which replace common extermination practices) are used for a humorous effect. Also, the comical absurdity of sparing humans so that mosquitoes can feed properly adds even more levity to the idea that NHA life could be more important than human life.

Lilo attempts to civilize Stitch, teach him about love and family (*ohana*), and encourage him to behave like Elvis Presley, who she considers a model citizen. Stitch's antics, while helping him escape Jumba and Pleakley, also jeopardize Nani's chances of getting a job and

keeping Lilo. The girls' house is destroyed in a fight between Stitch and Jumba, and Lilo is captured by the aliens. Stitch rescues her and is forgiven by the Grand Councilwoman, who admits that he had become civilized and bonded with his new family, and allows him to live his exile on Earth with humans as his wardens. She also orders Jumba and Pleakley to remain on Earth under Cobra's supervision (a former CIA agent), and become integrated in Lilo's *ohana*. Stitch, an alien disguised as a dog, is evaluated against anthropocentric standards. His behavior can bring him redemption only when it becomes civilized enough: he has to learn how to talk, respect social norms of behavior, and bond with humans in order to be deserving of a life. The moral of the story valorizes human civilization as the supreme standard for everyone, dogs and aliens alike.

Treasure Planet is a 2002 animated science fiction production set on Montressor, an imaginary planet populated by humans and aliens alike. The film depicts Jim Hawkins' maturation tale, as he turns from a naughty teenager into a brave and responsible young man. After a spaceship crashes near the inn his single mother runs, Jim takes possession of a map which leads to Treasure Planet. Accompanied by astrophysicist Dr. Delbert Doppler, Jim embarks on a journey to find the treasure and rebuild the inn. The ship commissioned by Dr. Doppler, "RLS Legacy," is commanded by Captain Amelia and her sharp and devoted First Mate, Mr. Arrow, while the crew is a colorful bunch secretly led by the ship's cook, cyborg John Silver. Although Jim was initially weary of Silver, as he had been warned of a cyborg's dangerous presence, the two end up forming a close father-son relationship.

As they reach Treasure Planet, the crew prepare to take over. Jim and his friends manage to escape but Captain Amelia is injured. She forms a close relationship with Dr. Doppler, who becomes her caretaker. The fugitives befriend B.E.N, an abandoned robot who has lost his

memory, but end up captured by Silver and the crew shortly thereafter. Jim is forced to use the map and finds the treasure, but an explosion causes everyone to run for their lives. Silver saves Jim, and, on the way home, Jim repays Silver's generosity by him letting him escape. The cyborg shows his gratitude by handing the boy enough jewels to rebuild the inn. The films concludes with a party at the restored inn, where Amelia and Doppler are shown married with children, while Jim, now a military cadet, still holds a strong bond with Silver, whose face he sees smiling at him from the clouds.

Some of the alien characters resemble NHAs through their appearance and behavior: dog-like Dr. Delbert Doppler is intelligent and loyal, cat-like Captain Amelia is agile and independent, and spider-like crew member Scroop is dangerous and cunning and ends up murdering Mr. Arrow. Furthermore, Dr. Doppler is Jim's best friend and does not get along well with Captain Amelia (the same way dogs and cats stereotypically have an antagonistic relationship), although the two resolve their differences in the end and become a happy family.

Brother Bear, a 2003 animated feature set in post-ice age North America, features the maturation tale of Kenai, a young Inuit[8] boy who is about to receive his sacred totem. Unlike his older brothers, Sitka and Denhai, who received the eagle of guidance and the wolf of wisdom, Kenai is disappointed to receive the bear of love. Shortly thereafter, the three brothers pursue a bear they saw stealing salmon, and Sitka is killed in a confrontation provoked by reckless Kenai. When Kenai decides to avenge his brother and kills the bear, Sitka's spirit appears in the form of a bald eagle and transforms Kenai into a bear. Denhai arrives just in time to find Kenai as a bear, and, assuming he is the one who killed his brother, sets out to get him.

[8] A group of indigenous people who inhabit the Arctic regions of Canada, Denmark, Russia, and Alaska.

As the tribesmen believe that all creatures are created through the Spirits who appear on a mountain in the form of an aurora, Tanana, the shamans of the tribe, advises Kenai to return to the mountain and ask Sitka to turn him back to his human form. King et. al (2010) contend that Disney portrays indigenous people as having a harmonious, spiritual relationship with the natural world and characterize these representations as "imperial nostalgia" (p. 56), which denotes a penchant for the freedoms, values, and life-styles destroyed through conquest and colonization: "Importantly, these stories, intend to acknowledge humanity and respect difference, favor the figure of the noble savage, binding the indigenous other tightly to nature as an ill-fated alter/native to and necessary pedagogic resource for Euro-American civilization" (p. 56).

As Kenai begins his life as a bear, he realizes he can understand other NHAs talk. He meets two brother moose, Rutt and Tuke, and a chatty bear cub named Koda. The two bears strike a deal: if Kenai accompanies Koda to a salmon run, he will in turn take Kenai to the mountain. The two end up forming a close friendship and, as they reach the salmon run, they become part of the tightly knit family of bears who lives there.

One night, as Koda describes his mother's death, Kenai realizes he is the one who killed her. He feels guilty and runs away. When Koda finds him and learns the truth, he leaves heart-broken but is convinced to return. He finds Kenai threatened by Denahi and fearlessly rescues him. After finally understanding his lesson of love, Kenai reciprocates by saving Koda and is turned back into a human by Sitka. He asks to be transformed back into a bear so he can look after Koda and the two go on to living a happy life as bears.

Home on the Range, a 2004 animated musical set in the Old West, features a trio of dairy cows who attempt to save their farm from foreclosure. Maggie, a cow who had lost her previous home because cattle rustler Alamida Slim stole all of her owner's cattle, is sold to Pearl, a kind,

elderly lady who runs an idyllic farm called "Patch of Heaven." Their tranquility is disturbed by the news that Pearl has three days to pay the bank $750; otherwise she will lose her farm and all the NHAs.

Maggie convinces the other cows on the farm - proper Mrs. Calloway and easy-going, tone deaf, Grace - to try to win the money at the fair. As the cows are trying to find their way, Rico, a bounty hunter, is getting ready to pursue Slim. Buck, the sheriff's horse, idolizes Rico and is thrilled when chosen as the bounty hunter's replacement horse. When Maggie finds out the reward for capturing Slim is exactly $750, she convinces the other cows to go after him themselves. Once again, humor results from the reversal of roles (cows attempting to capture the rustlers), and from the interactions between the three cows, who often tease each other: Maggie, who is very assertive, brave, and direct, does not always get along with Mrs. Calloway, who is old-fashioned, likes to lead, and doubts their chances of success.

Buck gets sent back to the sheriff following a misunderstanding and becomes determined to capture the cattle rustler by himself and prove his worth to Rico. The cows meet a peg-legged rabbit named Lucky Jack, who leads them to Slim's hideout mine. The cows capture Slim, but he manages to escape. When Buck finds out that Rico had been working for Slim all along, he decides to help the cows capture him. They get to Patch of Heaven in time to unmask Slim, collect the reward money, and save the farm, where they all live happily ever after (no NHAs are ever killed for food on Pearl's farm).

Chicken Little is a 2005 computer-animated film based on the fable *The Sky Is Falling*[9] and set in the town of Oakey Oaks, inhabited entirely by anthropomorphized NHAs. The film

[9] *The Sky Is Falling* is a Western folktale that features a chick who believes the world is ending when an acorn hits its head. The chick decides to tell the king and is accompanied by other animals on his journey. There are

begins with Chicken Little ringing the school bell and causing a general panic. He later reveals that he was hit in the head by a piece of the sky shaped like a stop sign, which lead him to believe the sky was falling. No one, including his father, believes him, and, unable to find the "piece of sky," Chicken Little becomes the laughing stock of the town.

One year later, Chicken Little is still unpopular, and his only friends are outcasts like him: the ugly duckling Abby, who has a secret crush on Chicken Little; the unusually large pig, Runt of the Litter, who suffers from anxiety attacks; and a fish who wears a helmet full of tap water and is unable to speak, named Fish out of Water. They are bullied by Foxy, a fox who is popular with the other kids and is a baseball star. Attempting to restore his reputation and regain his father's respect, Chicken Little joins the school's baseball team and, to everyone's surprise, scores a home run and is declared a hero.

After celebrating the victory with his dad, who is a widowed former high school baseball star, Chicken Little stumbles across the same "piece of sky," and finds out that it can blend perfectly into the background. He calls his friends over for help and they discover it is part of an UFO. Chicken Little rings the school bell again to alert the town. As the crowd gathers, the aliens disappear before everyone can see them.

After being ridiculed once more, Chicken Little and his friends stumble across an orange child left behind by the aliens and see a whole fleet of aliens descending on the town and vaporizing everything in their path. Chicken Little finally listens to Abby's advice and confronts his dad about his lack of trust in him, which makes his apologetic father have a change of heart and promise to take his side in the future. Chicken Little realizes that the alien child needs to be

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alternative endings to the tale, and, therefore, the moral of the story is changing: the versions which end with the chick reaching the King teach the audience to be brave instead of acting like a "chicken", whereas the versions where all the animals get eaten by a cunning fox conclude that one should not believe everything one hears.

returned, and, with the help of his father, manages to take him to his parents. In return, the aliens restore everything and everyone they vaporized, except for Foxy, who comes back as a nicer Southern Belle who later enamors Runt. Chicken Little becomes a hero, and the film concludes with him and his friends watching an exaggerated Hollywood version of their adventure.

Meet the Robinsons is a 2007 computer-animated movie which features Lewis, a young inventor. Lewis lives in an orphanage and is consumed by his work, which constantly keeps up his roommate, Mike Yagoobian (Goob), and causes him to fall asleep during an important Little League game. Lewis invents a memory-scanning machine and presents it at the school's science fair. One of the other exhibits at the fair involves several frogs, NHAs commonly used in science experiments. It later becomes obvious that the girl handling the frogs is actually attempting to teach them how to sing. As the viewer gets a glimpse of the future, it is revealed that, as the girl becomes an adult, her passion for teaching music remains alive: the frogs end up in an orchestra and play music not by croaking but by using instruments. While *Meet the Robinsons* reveals the potential of science to be both beneficial and dangerous, the use of NHAs in science experiments is never questioned. Although the frogs are not hurt or mistreated while being taught how to perform, the greater question of why their training is necessary in the first place is not addressed. Also, while these frogs happily play instruments on stage to entertain humans, most other NHAs used in experiments suffer a much more terrible fate, an aspect also ignored in this film.

At the fair, Lewis is approached by Wilbur Robinson, who reveals that a man wearing a bowler hat (Bowler Hat Guy) has stolen a time machine which he wishes to find. Concomitantly, the Bowler Hat Guy sabotages Lewis' scanner and then steals it. While trying to find the memory scanner, Lewis and Wilbur fly in a time machine to the year 2037. They end up at

Wilbur's house, where Lewis meets the Robinsons: an eclectic, fun-loving family, where all the members are adopted. The family is served by a gigantic octopus, who acts as the butler. They reveal that Wilbur's father, Cornelius, is a famous inventor, currently away on a business trip. They offer to adopt Lewis as well, but change their mind when they find out he is from the past.

Upset, Lewis runs away and stumbles upon Bowler Hat Guy and his robotic spider-like hat, Doris, who lures the boy into his time-machine by promising to take him to his mother. Instead, he takes him back in time to their old orphanage and reveals that he is actually Goob, whose life became miserable after he fell asleep during the Little League game. Goob and Doris, one of Lewis' abandoned inventions, plagiarize Lewis' memory scanner and subsequently rewrite history.

After mass-producing the memory-scanner, Goob also mass-produces Doris, and the evil robotic hats take control of their wearers, turning the world into a dark, industrialized, machine-controlled empire. In the meantime, Lewis manages to repair the memory scanner, shows Goob the bleak future, and causes Doris to disappear by promising to never invent her. After Wilbur and the rest of the Robinsons reappear, Cornelius advises Lewis to keep moving forward and let go of the past. Shortly thereafter, Lewis returns to the present where he helps Goob win the baseball game. He then returns to the science fair and he continues to work on his inventions, fulfilling his destiny.

Bolt, a computer-animated comedy released in 2008, is a sharp critique of the entertainment and pet industries. Bolt, who was adopted as a puppy from an animal rescue shelter, has become famous: together with a girl named Penny, he stars on a hit television series called "Bolt." In the series, Bolt has superpowers which he uses to defeat the evil Doctor Calico. In order to get a more realistic performance, the producers lead Bolt to believe that the plot and

his superpowers are real. Therefore, Bolt spends all his time on the set in a constant state of alert trying to protect his beloved Penny, as he is led to believe she is constantly in danger. Penny cares about Bolt as well, feels bad abandoning him in a trailer every night, and is regretful that he never gets to do "things normal dogs do."

One night, as Bolt believes Penny was kidnapped, he escapes through a window and applies the movie plot to the real world trying to find her. He stumbles across an ally cat, Mittens, who exploits pigeons for food and remains skeptical of Bolt's superpowers. Bolt has a hard time adjusting to the real world and realizes he is unable to use his superpowers. Mittens compensates for his identity crisis by introducing him to regular dog activities, like acting cute and begging for food. On their way they meet Rhino, a fearless hamster who lives in a ball. Being a huge fan of *Bolt*, he decides to join their team.

Mittens refuses to enter Hollywood, which she considers a fake, sterile, loveless place, and reveals that she was once a house cat but was abandoned and left in the streets alone and declawed. Bolt remains faithful to Penny, whom he calls "my person," and continues to look for her on his own. When he finally arrives at the studio and sees her embracing his replacement, Bolt leaves brokenhearted. Mittens overhears Penny declaring her love for her missing co-star and reveals the truth to Bolt. At the same time, Bolt's replacement accidentally sets the studio on fire, and Bolt rushes to save Penny. After the accident, Penny quits the show and adopts Mittens and Rhino. They move to a rural home where they are able to enjoy a simple, quiet lifestyle.

The Princess and the Frog is a 2009 animated musical set in New Orleans in the Roaring Twenties[10] and inspired by the Brothers Grimm's *Frog Prince* fairy tale.[11] The release of *The*

[10] This is a phrase used to describe the social, artistic, and cultural dynamism which characterized the 1920s.

Princess and the Frog was awaited with much anticipation, Lester (2010) notes, given that it introduced Disney's first African-American princess. Media and critical focus on this film was so intense that preproduction criticisms led to significant changes in the plot before the feature was released: the title (originally *The Frog Princess*) was changed, and the protagonist's name (originally "Maddy") and profession (chambermaid) were also changed (Lester, 2010).
The released version's main character is Tiana, a waitress who aspires to fulfill her late father's dream and open her own restaurant, "Tiana's Place." She is introduced as a hard working, ambitious girl, who is discriminated against by the business community because of her young age and gender.

Prince Naveen of Maldonia, who had been transformed into a frog by The Shadow Man, convinces Tiana to kiss him, thinking she was a princess. Instead of lifting the curse, she becomes a frog herself. Upon escaping in the bayou, they meet Louis, a trumpet-playing alligator who wishes to become human and play music without scaring the audience, and Ray, a sentimental Cajun firefly enamored with the Evening Star he calls Evangeline. They turn to Mama Odie, the voodoo queen of the bayou, for help. She informs them that Naveen must kiss Charlotte before midnight to become human again, refuses to turn Louie human, and advises them to search deep in their heart for who they really are.

While Tiana and Naveen fall in love, they fail to defeat The Shadow Man and his army of demons in time. Ray dies after trying to help them and becomes a star next to Evangeline. Tiana and Naveen accept their fate and marry with the help of Mama Odie. As Tiana becomes a

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[11] This is the story of a princess who loses her golden ball in a pond and gets it back with the help of a frog who asks to be allowed to eat off her plate and sleep on her pillow in return. She reluctantly agrees and, three days later, the frog turns into a handsome prince with whom she lives happily ever after.

princess, the two resume human form after she kisses Naveen. They open the restaurant Tiana had been dreaming of, and allow Louie to play jazz, even though he remained an alligator.

Tangled, a musical released in 2010, is based on the fairy-tale *Rapunzel*[12] by the Brothers Grimm. Rapunzel, a princess with magical hair, is kidnapped after birth by evil Gothel and locked in a tower in the woods. Gothel raises Rapunzel as her daughter and uses the powers of Rapunzel's hair to stay young. Rapunzel lives in complete isolation with no companion except Pascal, her chameleon friend. Each year on her birthday, Rapunzel watches the lanterns released in the sky by her parents, the king and the queen, and hopes for a chance to see them closer.

In the meantime, thieves led by Flynn Rider manage to steal the precious tiara of the missing princess, and they are forced to run into the woods to escape the Royal Guards. After ditching his accomplices, Flynn stumbles upon Rapunzel's tower and climbs it only to be knocked out with a frying pan by the princess, who hides his satchel containing the tiara. Rapunzel strikes a deal with Flynn: she will give him back the tiara if he takes her to see the lanterns. He is forced to agree and the two embark on a perilous journey pursued by Gothel, Maximus (the horse of the Chief Royal Guard who acts much like a hunting dog), Flynn's two accomplices, and the king's guards.

Flynn and Rapunzel, with the help of her magic hair which glows when she sings, manage to escape their pursuers, befriend Maximus, and arrive at the castle in time to see the lanterns. The two fall in love, but Gothel devises an evil plan to make Rapunzel believe that Flynn is only helping her to get back the tiara. Brokenhearted, she returns to the tower where she

[12] *Rapunzel* is the story of a young girl who is taken away from her parents by evil Gothel and locked up in a tower for the rest of her life. Every day when she comes to visit her, Gothel climbs on Rapunzel's long hair, the only access way into the tower. One day, a prince hears the girl sing and the two fall in love. When Gothel finds out, she cuts Rapunzel's hair and chases her into the woods. The prince is blinded in the confrontation with Gothel, but Rapunzel's tears restore his sight and the two live happily ever-after.

realizes she is the missing princess and that Gothel is not her real mother. As Flynn arrives, he finds Rapunzel tied up and he ends up stabbed by Gothel. Before dying, he manages to cut Rapunzel's hair which turns brown and loses its powers. Gothel starts aging rapidly, falls out of the tower, and turns to dust, while Rapunzel's tears bring Flynn back to life. In the end, Rapunzel is reunited with her royal family and marries Flynn, while Maximus becomes a respected official on the Royal Guard.

Analysis

The CCM was used to identify recurring patterns and themes within the texts. The 12 animated feature films released by Disney between 2000 and 2010 were viewed by the researcher several times and notes were taken on the conversations and camera shots involving NHAs. The notes were then used for establishing themes regarding the representation of NHAs in terms of class, gender, race, and species, the representation of the human-NHA relationship, and attitudes toward NHAs.

The researcher utilized explicit coding and analytic procedures and followed the four stages of the CCM as outlined by Glaser (1965). The first stage involved comparing and coding events and descriptions to place them into categories. For the purpose of this study, the appearance of NHAs on screen, the description of NHAs, NHA behavior, and human and NHAs interactions were coded. When coding, the researcher constantly compares categories, thus generating theoretical properties of the category (Glaser, 1965). The second phase of the CCM as described by Glaser (1965) involves integrating categories and their properties and comparing each new item with the theoretical properties of a category. In this study, initial categories were

"NHA description", "NHA behavior" and "human/NHA interactions." As the body of data became larger, subcategories were added. Categories then became more descriptive, such as "NHAs as pedagogy," "NHAs as family," or "NHAs stereotyped according to species." The third phase, delimiting the theory, requires the researcher to address two requirements of theory:1) parsimony of variables and formulation; and 2) scope in the applicability of the theory to a wide range of situations (Glaser, 1965). As theory developed and the categories became theoretically saturated, CCM restricted the coding and theorizing tasks for the researcher by making it easier to decide which events warrant consideration and whether they fit into an existing category or a new one. Also, the macro trends within the data became more obvious and allowed the researcher to formulate the initial stages of theories. Lastly, the writing of theory, the last stage of the CCM outlined by Glaser (1965) required the researcher to use the notes gathered during the coding process as a guide to completing the analytic process. Each major category turned into a section title and the coded data became a resource for supporting claims and pinpointing data for future hypotheses (Glaser, 1965).

Findings and Discussion

Three major themes were identified: (1) NHAs are portrayed as stereotypes; (2) the family unit is described in anthropocentric terms; and (3) the human and NHA realms are fundamentally divided. Analysis of the themes indicated that Disney's animated features promote speciesism not only by perpetuating negative stereotypes associated with different species of NHAs, but also by celebrating humanity's superiority and justifying the subordination of NHAs to human agency. Furthermore, social hierarchies structure both the human and nonhuman realms as leadership and royalty are naturalized in Disney's features. Furthermore, despite the large number of NHAs present in the examined features, Disney's representation of NHAs remains largely anthropocentric, and, with few exceptions (*Brother Bear*), does not reflect the tenets of animal rights. Thus, Disney uses anthropomorphized NHAs to make statements about humanity, teach the audience anthropocentric values such as humility and respect for the working class, and fails to convey any significant lessons about real NHAs.

The theme of NHAs as stereotypes contains two subthemes: NHAs stereotyped according to their species, and NHAs as human stereotypes. Disney's animated features reproduce common (and often inaccurate) negative traits associated with different species of NHAs in popular culture, and exacerbate them for comic effect. Thus, as the next section will discuss, Disney reinforces the widely-recognized contemptuous speciesist and sexist stereotypes which not only allow humans (males) to maintain emotional distance from other categories, such as women and NHAs, but also justify guiltless abuse.

Disney's representation of the family unit also reflects anthropocentric principles. While recent narratives promote diverse family units which incorporate nonhuman members, inclusion in the family depends on the acquisition of certain anthropocentric traits: as long as they become

civilized, cooperative, and productive, NHAs and aliens alike are welcomed into Disney's circle of love. With the exception of *Brother Bear*, which carries a stronger message of universality and inclusion, Disney's features fail to accurately represent the natural world and adapt their conceptualization of families to include truly diverse members.

The theme of human/NHA dichotomy contains two sub-themes: (1) domestication and (2) NHAs as pedagogical. Among Disney's characters, some appear in NHA form but communicate and act like humans, while others are transformed into NHAs and learn valuable lessons before becoming human again. However, as fluid as they might appear at first, the human and the NHA realm remain fundamentally divided. Not only does Disney define happiness in anthropocentric terms by equating it with reclaimed royalty, social validation, and business success, but its animated features also imply the inferiority of the NHA condition. In a world where human male aristocrats rightfully belong at the top of the social pyramid, NHAs remain subordinated to human agency and rendered dependent through domestication. Also, while transformation into an NHA is perceived as a punishment, characters go through this formative experience only to learn how to be better humans and regain access to the human condition, failing to learn and promote appreciation for the NHA realm.

Nonhuman Animals Are Portrayed as Stereotypes

NHAs stereotyped according to their species

Disney's animated features reproduce common stereotypes associated with NHAs in popular culture. This section will show how different species of NHAs, such as pigs, spiders, and fish, are depicted through highlighting one stereotyped NHA, and how this representation

enhances the comic appeal of the films. Furthermore, the vast majority of Disney's NHA characters are anthropomorphized and inscribed with stereotypical human characteristics that evoke such categories as "white female" and "English elderly lady." The second part of this section will show how Disney's representation of NHAs reinforces gender stereotypes.

The dominant characteristic of Disney's pigs is their largeness, as is the case of Ollie (*Home on the Range*), who is as round as the "O" at the beginning of its name suggests. Sometimes, this feature is exaggerated for comic effect. Runt of the Litter (*Chicken Little*) is portrayed as an enormous piglet, clumsy due to his size, who often destroys things by accident while trying to navigate a world too small for him. The comic dimension of Runt's character is further emphasized by his warm, sensitive nature, which sharply contrasts with his intimidating size: he is sensitive and apologetic and is prone to anxiety attacks, becoming a nervous eater when under stress.

In its animated features, Disney constantly introduces spiders (and, by extension, all spider-like creatures) as negative, dangerous characters. For example, *Treasure Planet*'s spider-like crew member, Scroop, is one of the most dangerous mercenaries, as he secretly kills Mr. Arrow by cutting his lifeline during a storm and lets Jim take the blame. *Meet the Robinson*'s Doris, a bowler hat that transforms into a bionic spider, is also the most dangerous character in the movie. Doris and Goob (also known as the Bowler Hat Guy) are the film's evil duo who attempt to rewrite history and ruin Lewis' career as an inventor. Given that Groob is not very smart and has a tendency to ruin their plans, Doris often guides his actions and acts as the master-mind. Once they manage to change the past and Groob mass-produces Doris, the spider-like hats take control of their wearers and end up conquering the world. In this dystopian future, where mankind is controlled by machines (the bionic hats they wear), the world becomes a dark, scary industrial

empire. Lastly, *Chicken Little*'s alien characters, which are perceived as threatening for the most part, use giant spider-like vehicles to move around on Earth, chase Chicken Little and his friends, and conduct a destructive search for their missing child. At the end, when the aliens are shown outside of their vehicles, it is revealed that they are orange, fluffy, much smaller, and become a nonthreatening presence.

Fish are mostly represented as a passive part of the food chain and deprived of individuality, while their utilitarian value to both humans and other NHAs is reinforced throughout the films. In *Brother Bear,* both humans and bears are shown fishing, eating salmon, and fighting over it in several instances. Furthermore, *Atlantis*' Doctor Joshua Strongbear Sweet (an African-American/Native American medic) explains he does not fish because he does not enjoy eating the fish, and not because he wants to spare them: "I hate fish. I hate fish: hate the taste, hate the smell, hate them all good bones." Finally, Louis, the alligator who wishes to become human (*Princess and the Frog*) states his desire to eat "human foods," like fish. The only individualized fish character, Fish out of Water (*Chicken Little*), is also rendered voiceless because he wears a helmet full of water and is unable to communicate directly with the audience. The only ones able to understand his gurgling are the other characters, who translate his emotions for the viewers and speak for him: when someone taps on Fish's helmet, Chicken Little intervenes for him: "Don't tap, they don't like it when you do that."

Although the findings of this study do not indicate these are recurring themes in the movies released by Disney over the last decade, other species of NHAs, such as birds, chicken, rabbits, frogs, foxes, sheep, turkeys, goats , and geese are portrayed according to the dominant stereotypes which represent them in popular culture. For example, while birds fly or walk into windows (*Chicken Little*), chicken scare easily and tend to become hysterical (*Home on the*

Range's Audrey). Also, Disney pokes fun at rabbits either for the large number of babies they produce (in *Chicken Little* and *Brother Bear*) or while reversing the "lucky rabbit foot" stereotype: Lucky Jack (*Home on the Range*) wakes up one the morning and comes out his hole only to become peg legged after being chased by a coyote, picked at by birds, and almost eaten by a snake. In Disney's *Princess and the Frog* (2009) and *Meet the Robinsons* (2007) frogs are portrayed as repulsive, dumb NHAs, science experiments, and singers. For example, both Tiana and her friend Charlotte LaBouff attempt to hit Prince Navene (as a frog) with a book when they first spot him. Furthermore, when faced with her new ability to eat flies, Tiana (as a frog) states: "There is no way I am kissing a frog *and* eating a bug the same day." Also, when Tiana and Navene manage to escape, the frog catchers acclaim: "They're like no frogs we have ever seen; they are smart." Lastly, frogs are used by Lewis' sister in a science fair (*Meet the Robinsons*), and are then trained to perform in an orchestra – they do not croak, but sing like humans.

Along the same lines, *Chicken Little*'s Foxy Loxy relentlessly bullies Chicken Little and his friends and acts with cruelty and cunning, a behavior often associated with foxes in popular culture. Also, Mr. Woolensworth (whose name indicates his use to humans), a sheep language teacher, appears as dull as the class he teaches. While counting sheep is considered a boring, sleep-inducing activity, Mr. Woolensworth manages to put his students to sleep by having them practice "Mutton", in which everything sounds like "baaa." Turkey Lurkey (*Chicken Little*) embodies a speciesist trait commonly associated with turkeys: stupidity. As the mayor, Turkey Lurkey (whose name is as silly as he is) is constantly escorted by bodyguards and advisors who dictate his every action and comment. Thus, Lurkey has no agency due to his limited intellect, and he seems quite content with his role as a puppet. Lastly, Jeb, an unfriendly old goat who guards his collection of empty cans (*Home on the Range*) enacts one of the dominant

characteristics attributed to goats in popular culture – grumpiness- while Goosey Loosey (*Chicken Little*) is very gossipy, as geese are believed to "talk" a lot.

Nonhuman animals as human stereotypes

Before launching the discussion on the human stereotypes identified in Disney's animated films released over the last decade, the context in which NHAs appear has to be addressed. While some of Disney's films, like *Chicken Little* (2005), *Dinosaur* (2000), *and Home on the Range* (2004) are populated mostly with NHA characters, their narratives mirror human culture. For example, *Chicken Little* (2005) is set in a small town called Oakey Oaks, which could easily be any small town in America. Even though Oakey Oaks is populated entirely by NHAs, their representations render them easily identifiable with different human typologies: Turkey Lurkey portrays the politician who reads all his statements off cue cards and is always surrounded by bodyguards; Foxy Loxy is the school bully; Buck Cluck is the single father struggling to raise his son; while Chicken Little, Abby, and Fish are marginalized at school because of their physical appearance. While the characters preserve some of their NHA attributes, these are used to achieve a comic effect (chameleons function as traffic lights and change colors accordingly, and goats are used as lawn mowers). Furthermore, NHA characters make clear statements which identify them with humans. For example, the dog who works as a reporter begins his broadcast by saying "ladies and gentlemen" (although he is surrounded entirely by NHAs), Abby reads "women's' magazines," and the coach organizes the teams as "popular kids" versus the "unpopular kids." Also, *Dinosaur*'s (2000) Zini refers to Neera as Aladar's "girlfriend," and Eema has a pet-like companion, Url, with whom the little lemurs like playing.

Some NHA characters represent ethnic stereotypes. For example, in Home *on the Range* (2004) Mrs. Calloway has a British accent, wears a hat, and embodies most of the stereotypical traits associated with British people: she believes she is superior to the other NHAs, appears snobbish and very proper, and gives easy-going Maggie the cold shoulder. Mrs. Calloway also mediates conflicts and keeps the other NHAs in line: she scolds the little pigs (who, like human children, are playful, mischievous, and like watching tricks) and delegates some of her responsibilities to Grace by allowing her to settle the dispute between the piglets and the grumpy goat, who likes hoarding empty cans. *Dinosaur*'s (2000) Baylene embodies another proper older female with a British accent, who, as the last-remaining Brachiosaurus on Earth, carries herself with much grace and dignity. Also, *Brother Bear*'s (2003) moose brothers, Rutt and Tuke, have Canadian accents. They act goofy, make silly remarks, and get in trouble often, because, presumably, like Bob and Doug McKenzie,[13] they are not very smart. Lastly, *The Princess and the Frog'*s (2009) firefly, Ray, reproduces negative stereotypes about Cajuns. Ray is unsophisticated and toothless, but has a big, loving heart.

The most obvious human stereotypes used by Disney in the representation of NHAs are gender stereotypes. Female NHA characters are evaluated in term of their physical attributes, are represented mostly as mothers and care-takers, and are very talkative. For example, Abby Mallard has been nicknamed "Ugly Ducking" and marginalized for her looks (she wears braces, has asymmetrical features, and a speech defect). Abby reads a lot of women's magazines which emphasize "talking" as a problem-solving strategy, while the three cows in *Home on the Range* (2004) chatter a lot. Proper Mrs. Callaway disagrees with Maggie's brash ways and with her

[13] These are two dim-witted brothers who embodied all the stereotypes associated with Canadians in a 1980s show called "Great White North"

"not lady-like" tendencies to belch and curse. Also, the female cows take care of Pearl (who in return cares for them), of the other NHAs on the farm, and of each other; Plio (*Dinosaur*) takes care of Aladar as a baby, of her lemur children, and she nurses Bruton when he gets injured; Mittens (*Bolt*) looks after Bolt, while Neera's main role is that of mothering Aladar's offsprings (*Dinosaur*). Lastly, *Chicken Little*'s Foxy Loxy is introduced as a mean bully, who dresses like a boy and picks on the other students. After being transformed by aliens into a Southern belle, Loxy starts wearing dresses and hats and becomes very sweet. Thus, looks and docility characterize Lox's new "lady-like" identity.

While mothering and caretaking are the main responsibilities attributed to female NHA characters, male NHAs pride themselves on physical strength and agility while replacing talking with action as a strategy for success. Aladar (*Dinosaur*), Kron (*Dinosaur*), Brutus (*Dinosaur*), Max (*Tangled*), Buck (*Home on the Range*), and Buck Cluck (*Chicken Little*) are just a few of the male NHA characters whose representations include strength, courage, endurance, and physical agility as main attributes. For example, Chicken Little (*Chicken Little*) is concerned about his small size and about the possibility of going bald: "I am already small, and, on top of that, I don't think I could handle being bald." His dad, Buck "Ace" Cluck, is a former athlete who is action-oriented and has trouble communicating with his son over anything other than sports. He perceives the ability to resolve problems through talking as a feminine trait. Acknowledging his inability to have a heart-to-heart talk with his son, he turns to a picture of his dead wife and sighs: "Chloe, if only you were here, you would know what to do."

Disney associates the representation of NHAs with both speciesist and sexist stereotypes. Disney's pigs are all fat, its spiders (and spider-like creatures) are all evil, while fish lack individuality and are portrayed as an amorphous food group for both humans and other NHAs.

Although Disney's NHAs retain some of their NHA attributes, it is the human characteristics which predominate in their representations. Disney's anthropomorphized NHAs appear integrated in social structures which resemble human society and where they perform stereotypical gender roles.

The gender divide, one of the most fundamental social divides created by human agency, reinforces women's roles in reproduction and support activities and limits their roles in leadership, where supposedly men excel. While discussing the stereotypes reflected in the symbolic representation of NHAs in popular culture, Baker (1993) argued that they are used to emphasize the anthropocentric perspective of humans and draw on NHA imagery to make statements about humanity. Indeed, Disney's anthropomorphized NHAs remain a reflection of human desire: both Max (*The Princess and the Frog*) and Buck (*Home on the Range*) dream of becoming successful by joining human police forces, Chicken Little (*Chicken Little*) seeks social recognition and success, while Neera (*Dinosaur*) fulfills her destiny by becoming a mother and remains submissive to her brother and then to Aladar, the new leader of the herd.

The Family Unit Is Described in Anthropocentric Terms

The theme of family has been exploited by Disney starting with its first animated film, *Snow White* (1937), and continues to be strongly represented in recent productions. While absent mothers and fathers predominated in Disney's early narratives, subsequent productions focused on nuclear family units as the center of the American way of life. This section will show that, while the theme of the missing parent and that of orphan children continue to be strongly represented in the 12 animated features released by Disney over the last decade, the representation of families has been expanded to include nontraditional family units, whose

members belong to both the human and the NHA realms. For the purpose of this study, the theme of "family" was only examined in connection to NHAs, the focus being on family units which incorporate or consist entirely of NHAs.

Diverse family units are introduced in several of Disney's narratives. *Home on the Range* (2004) features Pearl, an elderly human who runs a small dairy farm called "Patch of Heaven." No human members of her family appear in the film; instead, she considers the NHAs on the farm (including cows, pigs, chicken, and a goat later joined by a horse and a rabbit) as her family. When the sheriff suggests she sells her NHAs to raise the money needed to save the farm from foreclosure, Pearl replies angrily: "They are family. You don't sell family." Her relationship with the NHAs is based on love, and they joyfully perform the duties on the farm working together. While the NHAs do not speak directly to Pearl, she does to them, and they are able to understand her and other humans perfectly. While "Patch of Haven" is pictured as a safe, happy place for NHAs to roam freely and live sheltered from the threat of being eaten (as the movie implies NHAs elsewhere are used for food), discursive practices which situate NHAs as resources for human use are prevalent in the film. This point is elaborated on in a following section which addresses the domestication of NHAs and human-imposed hierarchies.

Another non-traditional family, which consists of humans and aliens, is featured in *Lilo and Stitch* (2002). Stitch,[14] an alien who disguises himself as a dog, is adopted by Lilo, an orphan Hawaiian girl who is raised by her older sister, Nani. Though Stitch appears ruthless and destructive in the beginning, Lilo manages to teach him love and manners and transform him into a "model citizen," using Elvis Presley as a role model. Once Stitch is civilized, he earns a spot in

[14] Although Stitch is an alien, he can viewed as an NHA in this film because he adopts that role within the family and is "domesticated" just like a real dog.

Lilo's *ohana* (family), which, following Hawaiian social norms, is extended to include members not related by birth. Family is a central theme of this film, as much of the action revolves around Nani's efforts to keep custody of Lilo and prevent Social Services from placing her little sister in foster care. Furthermore, *Lilo and Stitch* (2002) blends stereotypical views of Hawaiian culture (Lilo and Nani are orphans, Nani is always unemployed and struggling to make a living, Social Services are involved in their life) with atypical conceptualizations of the family unit extended to include aliens. In the end, not only do Lilo, Nani, and Stitch remain together, but their happy family incorporates two other aliens, Jumba and Pleakley, who help rebuild their house.

Dinosaur (2000) also introduces a cross-species family unit: Aladar, a dinosaur, was adopted and raised by a family of lemurs. While grandfather Yar was initially reluctant to adopt Aladar because he perceived him as a threat, Plio used her maternal instincts to nurture the baby dinosaur and suggested a solution: "It's ok - we'll teach him to hate meat." Indeed, Aladar grows up perfectly integrated in the family of lemurs, and, as the film unfolds, his character becomes living proof that "nurture" can leave a strong imprint on the development of one's personality. However, one concern regarding Aladar's future persists: during the lemurs' courtship ritual, Plio anguishes over Aladar's inability to find a mate.

During a meteor attack (which some scientists believe caused the extinction of dinosaurs), Aladar rescues his family and continues to care for them throughout their journey towards the nesting grounds. When reunited with other dinosaurs, Aladar assumes a caretaker role once more, as he looks after the older dinosaurs that have a hard time keeping up with the herd. He distinguishes himself through his kind nature, which goes against the strict adherence to Darwinism manifested by the rest of the herd. The perilous journey through the desert plays a formative role for Aladar, who rescues the herd, finds a mate, and eventually becomes the leader.

The dinosaurs and lemurs are later shown living in their nesting grounds, bringing a new generation into the world: it is suggested that Aladar was able to reach his full potential and fulfill his destiny (with mating being a central part of the maturation process) only after being reunited with his own species.

The theme of "family" is strongly represented in *Brother Bear* (2003), in which a reckless young man goes through a transformative journey which concludes with him assuming the role of big brother for an orphan bear cub, Koda. The "family" theme is first introduced as human, brotherly love between Sitka, Denhai, and Kenai, who take care of each other, with Sitka sacrificing his life to save his little brother in a fight with a bear. As Kenai sets out to avenge his brother and kills the bear, he is transformed into a bear himself. Whereas bears were initially perceived as a threatening, unwanted presence that destroyed the human family unit, with Kenai's transformation, viewers are introduced to the NHA perspective, and the theme of "family" is expanded to incorporate NHAs. Kenai bonds with Koda and learns the meaning of the totem he had received (the bear of love). After realizing he had killed the cub's mother and left Koda without adult guidance, supervision, and protection (which cubs need, just like human children), Kenai chooses to remain a bear so he can take care of Koda. Both Koda and the viewers witness Kenai's transformation into a human and then back into a bear, and the fluidity of the boundaries between the human and the NHA realms suggests that feelings such as "brotherly love" are applicable to both humans and bears. Even though Koda knows Kenai was human and used to hate bears, he allows him to become his "big brother" and they form a tight family united by love.

The theme of family continues to play a central role in Disney's recent animated films, while human and NHA absent parents (*Chicken Little, Treasure Planet, Meet the Robinsons, The*

Princess and the Frog) and orphans (*Dinosaur, Brother Bear*) continue to predominate. Just like their predecessors in *Jungle Book* (1967), *Lion King* (1994), and *Tarzan* (1999), Disney's young heroes embark on a formative journey where they mature by overcoming hardships, oppression, bigotry, and often end up falling in love. Furthermore, a close association of childhood with animality persists, as young NHA characters remain perfectly identifiable with human children (and less so with real NHAs). Characters such as Chicken Little, Koda, Suri, and Aladar are easy for children to identify with because they have young voices, are playful and inexperienced, while their need of protection evokes nurturing feelings in the audience.

A newer trend is reflected in that Disney's recent narratives introduce family units comprised of very diverse members. By doing so, Disney extends the traditional view of the nuclear family and emphasizes the universality of love, which can unite humans and NHAs, different species of NHAs, and humans and aliens. A closer looks at Disney's family units reveals, however, the existence of certain anthropocentric prerequisites members have to meet in order to become integrated in the family. For example, Stitch (*Lilo and Stitch*) needs to become "civilized," learn how to talk (English), and follow socially acceptable behavior in order to be accepted into Lilo's family. Also, the NHAs that Pearl raises (*Home on the Range*) are considered "family" while they live on a dairy farm, where they are used as resources and produce goods for human consumption. In order to fit in with the lemur clan, Aladar has to stop eating meat and replace his predatory tendencies with a nurturing, cooperative attitude, a transformation which is similar to the process of domestication of wild animals by humans. Lastly, *Brother Bear*'s Kenai has to repent for his mistakes in order to become Koda's brother (feelings of guilt are associated with human subjects). The anthropocentric principles which tie Disney's atypical families together undermine the non-speciesist message of universality which crosses all boundaries. Indeed,

Disney's characters have to act in ways which are universally likable: be civilized, cooperative, productive, and repentant. Only then can they become members of the (human) family. The speciesist principle reflected in Disney's recent animated films will be elaborated on in the next section, which addresses another prevalent theme identified in the films: the human/nonhuman dichotomy.

The Human and NHA Realms Are Fundamentally Divided

In the 12 animated feature films in this study, the human and the nonhuman animal realms appear as fundamentally divided. Despite the fact that many NHAs take on human personalities while several human characters are transformed into NHAs, which might indicate a crossing of the human/NHA divide, Disney's world is organized according to speciesist principles which affirm the superiority of humans over NHAs. The human/NHA dichotomy becomes most obvious when human characters become NHAs, perceive this transformation as negative, and invest all their time and energies into regaining their human form (except for *Brother Bear*'s Kenai who chooses to remain a bear but still seeks recognition among humans). This section will also describe Disney's implied hierarchies dominated by human male aristocratic characters, where happiness and success (which lead to the resolution of conflicts and to happy endings) are defined in anthropocentric terms and include reclaimed royalty, social validation, and business success.

For example, in *The Princess and the Frog* (2009), Tiana and Navene are on a quest to regain their human status: after being turned into frogs by Dr. Facilier, the two embark on a perilous journey in search of Mama Odie, the voodoo queen of the bayou. Tiana and Navene are accompanied on their journey by Louis, an alligator who wants to become human in order

succeed in the world of entertainment, inaccessible to him in his NHA form. Although Louis loves to play jazz and dreams of being a performer "out there jamming with the big boys," his audience is frightened when he appears on stage. Navene lures him into joining their search by implying this problem could be solved by asking the voodoo queen to make him human: "If only you were smaller, less toothy, you could play jazz to adoring crowds without scaring them." When they find Mama Odie, she advises them to "dig a little deeper" and find out who they really are and what they need in order to be happy, and she refuses to turn Louis into a human. Mama Odie's message that despite their looks, anyone can be happy if they find themselves, does not resonate with the characters until the end of the film, when firefly Ray dies trying to help them become human again.

As Tiana and Navene's plan to regain their human form fails, they accept their fate as frogs and are married by Mama Odie. As they kiss, they become human again. In the end, they validate their union in the human world through a festive wedding, and Tiana opens her restaurant, allowing Lois to play jazz. Although their experience as frogs taught them important lessons, Tiana and Navene fulfill their destiny by living a Disneyesque fairy-tale life as royal humans and successful entrepreneurs.

The Emperor's New Groove (2000) debuts with a rhetorical question: "Can you believe this llama was once a human being?" The narrator informs the audience that the lonely, miserable lama they see used not only to be human, but, above all, a king who lived a life of luxury and self-indulgence. Kuzco goes from being the self-centered ruler of the Inca Empire to being a llama, and the movie relates his struggle to regain both his human status and his royalty. Pacha, a peasant who lives close to nature as a llama herder, becomes his only ally as Kuzco experiences the loneliness and exclusion associated with life as a beast of burden. However, in

the end, Kuzco reenters the human realm, regains his authority as an emperor, and rewards the human who helped him. Even though the emperor did not enjoy his experiences as a llama, he makes no attempts to better the lives of these beasts of burden in his kingdom: the ending also reveals Kuzco's new-found respect for the working class,[15] which he previously lacked as evidenced by his ruthlessly dismissing his long-time advisor, along with rejecting Pacha's pleas to build his summer house somewhere else.

Brother Bear's Kenai is very disappointed when receiving the "bear of love" as his sacred totem because he looks down on bears for being "thieves." He is transformed into a bear by Sitka as a punishment, and then focuses his efforts on becoming human again. However, the theme of the human/NHA dichotomy is only partially expressed in *Brother Bear* (2003), given that the explicit message of the film is equality between humans and NHAs. However, the implicit connotations of the film remain anthropocentric, as Kenai's nature remains human even in his bear form: he experiences human emotions like guilt and needs validation from his human tribe although he became a bear.

Human characters are turned into NHAs either by accident (Kuzco into a llama), by having been cajoled into it (Tiana into a frog), by punishment with a pedagogical value (Kenai into a bear) or through revenge and a mischievous plot (Navene into a frog). This transformation is perceived as negative and is later reversed during the happy resolution of the conflict. The distinction between the human and the NHA realms, with the first being superior (more desirable) to the later, is emphasized, while power structures and hierarchies become apparent. For example, conquering the threats which prevented them from occupying their natural place in

[15] The term "working class" was used in this context because of Kuzco's choice of vocabulary –that he "fires" his advisor is illustrative of capitalist class division.

life, Kuzco regains his place as an emperor and Navene as a prince. Also, Aladar becomes the leader of the herd replacing Kron, another male leader. Furthermore, Disney's films are populated by nameless inhabitants, such as the kingdoms ruled by Kuzco or Rapunzel's parents, the inhabitants of New Orleans, and the other dinosaurs in Aladar's herd that remain undistinguished and completely subordinated to their rulers whose joys and sorrows they share. The same trend is reflected in the films populated entirely with NHAs, where those who do not speak are subordinated to the speaking ones. For example, most of the dinosaurs in the herd (*Dinosaur*) do not speak and passively follow either Aladar's or Kron's orders, while Url, Eema's dog-like pet, also remains voiceless.

The findings of this study also indicate that nonhuman animals are considered inferior to humans on Disney's hierarchical ladder, and humanity remains celebrated in the films' happy endings. Furthermore, the relationship between NHAs and humans is characterized by a power imbalance, with NHAs subordinated to human agency. The theme of subordination will be explored in further detail in the following section.

Domestication

In the 12 animated features released by Disney between 2000 and 2010, humans represent the ultimate authority - they decide the NHAs' fate. This theme of subordination is strongly represented in the films and is expressed most commonly in relation to domesticated NHAs. Domesticated NHAs, "species in which the evolutionary process has been influenced by humans to meet their needs," are raised in captivity and rendered dependant on humans, who control every aspect of their life from food procurement to reproductive practices (Convention on Biological Diversity, About, n.d). Domesticated NHAs are used for a wide range of reasons,

which include food production, transportation, protection, trade, and scientific research, and it is their utilitarian value that justifies their exploitation. Disney's representation of the natural world had been criticized before for its exclusive reliance on the male-normative viewpoint which assumes that all animals are meant to be domesticated and subordinated to human agency (Vasko, 2001; Adams, 1990). This study found that this trend has remained unaltered, as the animated films released over the last decade continue to feature wild animals as domestic pets. For example, Rapunzel has a pet chameleon (*Tangled*), Mama Odie has a pet snake she uses as a cane (*The Princess and the Frog*), an octopus serves as a butler, and frogs perform as entertainers (*Meet the Robinsons*).

Furthermore, Disney reinforces the view of NHAs as commodities. For example, Pearl (*Home on the Range*) owns the farm and all the NHAs who live on it, their fate depending on her ability to pay the mortgage. Bolt (*Bolt*) belongs to an entertainment studio, and, after a series of adventures, his ownership is transferred to Penny, alongside with Mittens and Rhino. The frogs (*Meet the Robinsons*) belong to Lewis' sister and are either used as science projects or for entertainment; Buck (*Home on the Range*) belongs to the sheriff and is then given to Rico; Charlotte La Bouff (*The Princess and the Frog*) owns a kitten and a dog; and Lilo uses Stitches' certificate of ownership (which was given to her when she adopted him as a dog) to save him from the aliens by proving he (lawfully) belong to her (*Lilo and Stitch*). As these examples illustrate, the view of NHAs as transferable property for humans pervades Disney's films. Despite the fact that many of these NHAs are treated well and considered "family" , they are still owned by humans and expected to fulfill the roles assigned to them. Thus, the NHAs on Pearl's farm happily donate their milk, eggs and other products to Pearl, Lewis' frogs are content to perform in an orchestra, llamas serve as beasts of burden, fish are used for food, Buck and

Maximus assist humans with transportation and warfare, while Pascal entertains Rapunzel by playing hide-and-seek and helps her pass the time.

Numerous characters, including Bolt, Buck, Pascal, Stitch, Ray, Maggie, Mrs. Callaway, Grace, Lucky Jack, and Maximus prove their courage and worth by rescuing humans. Bolt rescues Penny; Buck, Maggie, Grace, Ms. Callaway, and Lucky Jack all help capture Slim and save Pearl's farm; Maximus and Pascal help Flynn and Rapunzel; Ray dies helping Tiana and Naveen; while Stitch redeems himself by saving Lilo and her sister. Thus, Disney fails to acknowledge the basic interests and rights of NHAs outside of their utility to humans. The negative consequences of domestication are rarely addressed in Disney's animated features which normalize the practice of breeding NHAs for exploitation purposes.

Besides representing NHAs as subordinated to human agency, Disney's features suggest that useful life lessons are hidden in the NHA realm. The next section will show how the transformation of humans into NHAs has an anthropocentric pedagogical value which helps the human gain better human qualities with little to no positive consequences for the NHAs.

NHAs as pedagogical

After being transformed into NHAs, humans learn important lessons and are able to correct some of the main character flaws which plagued them prior to their transformation. The main themes are that of learned humility and respect for the working class. After becoming NHAs, humans lose their dominant status, become vulnerable, and form alliances with other disempowered characters, which teach them that working class people have qualities worthy of their respect. In the end, the NHA experience has a pedagogical value in that Disney's characters become better humans and learn how to better value other humans.

For example, before being transformed into a llama, emperor Kuzco (*Emperor's New Groove*) used to be immature and self-centered, adored pampering and luxury, abused his authority, and had no respect for his employees. He fired Yzma unexpectedly and without any good reason, and completely disregarded peasant Pacha's plea to spare his land and build his vacation house elsewhere. Kuzco goes from being an omnipotent emperor to a beast of burden, and he allies himself with Pacha, the peasant he once carelessly dismissed. As a llama, Kuzco finds himself lonely, disempowered, and neglected. Once restored to his human form, Kuzco becomes more caring and respectful of peasants: he not only fulfills Pacha's wish but becomes close friends with him and his family, an unlikely alliance for his previous persona.

Along the same lines, *Princess and the Frog*'s (2009) prince Navene goes from being handsome and sought-after to becoming a far less likable frog that females attempt to hit, chase away, and have much trouble kissing. Navene starts by looking down on Tiana for being a waitress, but falls in love and marries her after their experience as frogs. As frogs, both Navene and Tiana learn important lessons which help them become happier and more successful in their life as humans: the prince starts appreciating money and hard work, while Tiana learns that there is more to life than just hard work.

In order to escape Jumba and Agent Pleakly, Stitch disguises himself as a dog in *Lilo and Stitch* and is adopted by Lilo. During the time spent as her pet, Stitch overcomes his destructive tendencies, bonds with Lilo and Nani, and learns how to speak. When captured by aliens, the Grand Councilwoman notices his new skills and forgives him because he has become a civilized creature. Finally, *Brother Bear*'s (2003) Kenai has to achieve the meaning of his sacred totem in order to become a man, which he fails to achieve in his human form but attains as a bear.

Kenai's existence as a bear teaches him the meaning of love and helps him become a respected member of his human tribe, even though he then chooses to remain a bear.

In their NHA form, humans (and, in one instance, an alien) learn fundamental human qualities, such as humility, friendship, as well as respect for the working class. By transforming humans into NHAs, Disney places humans in a disempowered position which "punishes" them for being ignorant, conceited, and disrespectful. Furthermore, Disney equates happy endings with the reversal of this transformation and with the human becoming a better individual who usually rewards other humans who have helped him along the way. With one exception (*Brother Bear*), this transformation does not seem to teach the characters much about (real) NHAs or carry any positive consequences for the NHA realm. The next section will show how Disney's speciesist discrimination serves to perpetuate bias and discrimination.

Speciesism, Disney's new racism

There have been many instances of racism identified in Disney's animated features. For example, *The Jungle Book's* (1967) gorillas sound like African-Americans*, Oliver and Company*'s (1988) troublemaker Chihuahua is Latino, while *Lady and the Tramp*'s (1955) malicious Siamese cats portray Asians in a negative light. Racial stereotyping continued in some of the more recent releases: *The Lion King*'s (1994) hyenas speak in an inner city African-American dialect, *Aladdin* (1992) portrays Arabs as dangerous and cunning, while *Tarzan* (1999) is set in Africa, but does not feature any black people.

While similar blatant expressions of racism were not evident in Disney's latest animated features, this analysis revealed a more subtle form of discrimination: speciesism functions as a new form of racism. The Oxford English Dictionary (1993) defines *racism* as the "belief that all

members of each race possess characteristics, abilities, or qualities specific to that race, especially so as to distinguish it as inferior or superior to other face or races" (p. 937). This definition is not significantly different from Freeman's (2010) description of speciesism as an arbitrary social construct which operates on the basis of discrimination and enables hierarchies which often lead to the mistreatment of the "inferior" group so as to serve the interests of the "superior" group. The belief that certain beings are inherently inferior to others still pervades Disney's films and has become most evident in the categorization of species in terms of a hierarchy which fills in for racism.

Discussing the parallels between speciesism, sexism, and racism in the elevation of white male rationality, Patterson (2002) describes how the domination of NHAs paved the way for the domination of humans. Cruel technologies such as pens, cages, collars, ropes, and branding irons which were initially used to exploit animal slaves were later applied with equal cruelty to human slaves. Thus, domination of humans over others (i.e. blacks, Jews, women, and NHAs) begins with the denigration of the victims: the arguments European colonialists used to legitimate the exploitation of blacks (the rationale that they were less human and inferior to white Europeans in their ability to reason) are the same justifications humans use to exploit NHAs. Thus, Patterson (2002) contends, the oppression of blacks, women and other groups is grounded in the argument that biological inferiority predestined them for servitude: "alleged rational beings (i.e. elite, white, western males) pronounce that the Other (i.e. women, people of color, NHAs) is deficient in rationality in ways crucial to their nature and status, and therefore are deemed and treated as inferior, subhuman, or nonhuman" (p. 51).

Disney's speciesist discrimination functions on two levels. On one hand, it reaffirms the superiority of humans over NHAs and justifies their oppression. The assumed superiority of one

group over another resulted in the naturalization of domestication, subordination and inferiorization of NHAs. Furthermore, this model of domination justifies treatment of "Others" (NHAs) in a way that humans would never be treated; farming NHAs and using them for food, science, and entertainment become socially acceptable practices. Thus, subordinating NHAs to human agency and assuming ownership of their bodies justify acts of violence and disrespect which would be deeply sanctioned when directed towards humans.

On the other hand, speciesist discrimination serves to portray certain species of NHAs in a negative light without making any distinctions between individuals. Following Disney's rationale, all spiders are evil because they are spiders, all pigs are dirty and gluttonous because they are pigs, and turkeys are dumb because, well, they are turkeys. These hasty generalizations serve to cultivate fear and disdain towards certain species of NHAs and justify their extinction and domination.

The naming of differences is salient when power is threatened. Through essentialist strategies, groups can assert their superiority and deny others access to power and resources (Josey, 2007). Just as racism is based on the idea that members of certain ethnic groups are superior to others, speciesism assigns different rights to beings on the basis of their species membership and overlooks basic similarities which unite the human and NHA realms, such as sentience. Both views imply assigning different moral consideration to beings for arbitrary reasons and are part of a coherent set of ideas which legitimize oppressive social practices and reinforce the unequal distribution of power and resources.

The naturalization of hierarchies

In the animated features released by Disney over the last decade, class distinctions are reinforced and perceived as acceptable as long as leaders are "good." Thus, it is not hierarchy and class structure that are challenged, but the character defects of the rulers; as long as "bad" rulers have been replaced or have remedied their shortcomings, ever-lasting happiness and prosperity are restored in Disney's world.

Several of Disney's heroes and heroines are destined to rule and occupy their rightful place at the top of the social hierarchy once their evil opponents have been defeated. For example, Rapunzel (*Tangled*) returns to her royal family after escaping Gothel. Both human and NHA characters join forces to help her escape the tower and fulfill her royal destiny: Maximus helps Flynn escape and gives him a ride, Flynn fights Gothel, while Pascal causes her to trip and fall from the tower. Throughout the film, attention focuses on Princess Rapunzel and those around her, while the inhabitants of the kingdom are portrayed as a homogenous mass and lack individual voices. Similarly, the action in *The Emperor's New Groove* (2000) revolves around the emperor Kuzco and his quest to regain his human form and royal status, while *The Princess and the Frog* (2009) follows Tiana's transformation into a frog and back into a human and her accession to royalty through marriage to a prince, Naveene. All these features celebrate the attainment of royalty and the existence of a class hierarchy that positions royalty as deserving of their status, which is inherently desirable. Those who oppose and threaten royals are always portrayed as evil characters who seek to gain accession to wealth or other goods through immoral means: by threatening the well-being of the ruler, they endanger the happiness of the entire kingdom.

Furthermore, even though social standing is overtly equated with power, class structure is never questioned in Disney's features. Instead, class hierarchies are reaffirmed and naturalized. Thus, instead of advocating for an egalitarian society, Disney celebrates rulers as long as they are "good." For example, *The Emperor's New Groove's* Pacha never questions the fact that his future and that of his entire family depend on Kuzco's whims. As long as the emperor is willing to spare his house, Pacha is happy to oblige and order is restored in Disney's universe. In *The Princess and the Frog*, Tiana is able to open her restaurant only after marrying a prince. However, her lack of credibility and options before marriage are never questioned and her situation is considered a happy, desirable one in Disney's world: as long as a young, pretty woman marries a handsome, reformed prince and gains access to money and prestige, what more could one ask for? Similarly, *Tangled*'s Flynn is transformed from a poor thief to a wealthy prince by marrying Rapunzel, while Max also manages to move up in the world after helping the princess and becoming a respected official on the royal guard. Lastly, ruthless Kron (*Dinosaur*) is replaced by benevolent Aladar because the voiceless herd needs a brave ruler to give them directions. Being associated with the leader is empowering and rewarding.

Conclusions

As one of the largest transnational media corporations in the world, Disney produces animated features which have an unsurpassed access to children, whom they not only entertain but also educate. Under the guise of wholesome family entertainment, Disney teaches children important lessons about the world by offering them an ideological framework for interpreting divisions, such as gender, race, and class, all while celebrating humanity's specialness and superiority over NHAs.

While discussing the use of NHAs in films, Baker (1993) emphasized their inability to represent themselves and described their anthropocentric portrayal as reflecting the concerns of the humans who represent them. Barker (1993) concluded that Disney's visual representation of NHAs is not committed to creating "true meaning" (p. 128), but focuses on dominant representations and understandings of NHAs. Baker (1993) maintains that the pleasure audiences derive from such representations not only reaffirm human domination over the nonhuman realm, but also shows how much this domination is enjoyed. Benson (1983) contends that negative stereotypes of both human and NHAs legitimize abuse, as they facilitate the removal of the stereotyped groups from moral consideration.

This study extended the existing literature by examining 12 Disney animated full-length feature films for: (1) their representation of NHAs, including the portrayal of gender, race, class and species within this representation; (2) the ways they describe the relationship between humans and NHAs; and (3) whether Disney animated movies promote an animal rights perspective. The findings support Baker's claim that anthropomorphized NHAs are "a useful graphic device for making more palatable a narrative which is essentially about human values and identities" (p. 139) by illustrating how Disney portrays NHAs by drawing on speciesist and

gender stereotypes in order to increase the readability of their texts and make them more entertaining. Furthermore, as Disney perpetuates contemptuous stereotypes which allow humans to distance themselves emotionally from certain species, it fails to acknowledge the true nature of the different NHAs who populate its narratives and represent them fairly. The representation of NHAs is further oversimplified by the implied assumption that one individual is representative of the whole species, a fallacy which disregards the immense diversity which characterizes the NHA realm.

For example, the dominant characteristic of Disney's pigs is their largeness, and one reference is made to them being "sloppy" (*Home on the Range*). Indeed, pigs are commonly described as dirty and fat, and associations between humans and pigs usually have negative connotations. Remarks such as "you are fat as a pig," "you eat like a pig," "you are lazy as a pig" or "you sweat like a pig" describe unsubstantiated insults used to describe negative human behavior. Leach (1964) concludes that "we rear pigs for the sole purpose of killing and eating them and that is rather a shameful thing, a shame which quickly attaches to the pig itself" (p. 51).

In reality, pigs are clean, lean NHAs, which only become large when overfed by humans for commercial purposes. Nowadays, Coats (1989) contends, most U.S. pigs experience lifelong confinement. Those kept until they reach slaughter weight are restricted to overcrowded wire cages which allow them no movement and cause many of them to become crippled. Naturally inquisitive, social, and active, pigs suffer greatly from their imprisonment (Hill, 1990). In their natural environments pigs like to forage and commonly avoid mud holes (which become their "home" in modern confined feeding operations), which they only use in hot summer months to cool their body temperature. Since they lack sweat-glands, they are unable to "sweat like a pig."

Similarly, Disney's portrayal of spiders and spider-like creatures as evil and dangerous reflects a common negative stereotype which justifies their annihilation. For example, Disney's Scroop (*Treasure Planet*) and Doris (*Meet the Robinsons*) intentionally harm others and are subsequently annihilated, which resolves some of the negative tension in the plot. However, in reality, the majority of spiders are harmless to humans, as is the venom they produce to capture their prey (Foelix, 1996). According to Foelix, out of around 38.000 known species of spiders, only 0.1% to 0.3% can cause significant mortality (p. 25). Furthermore, spiders whose venom has not evolved to harm large vertebrates such as humans use their defense mechanism rarely and only when threatened. Moreover, most studies of spider bites are retrospective and not confirmed by eye witnesses, confirming the hypothesis that they are a very rare occurrence (Diaz, 2004). By portraying spiders and other species of NHAs, such as foxes (*Chicken Little*'s Foxy Loxy) as cruel, Disney implies that these NHAs make a conscious and intentional choice to inflict pain on others, a behavior dominant among humans and rare (or nonexistent) in the nonhuman realm.

Disney justifies the exploitation of NHAs not only by reproducing false negative stereotypes, but also by failing to acknowledge the negative consequences associated with domestication and the view of NHAs as resources for human use. For example, the harsh realities faced by farmed animals are not addressed in any the 12 features examined, although several feature cows, pigs, ducks, and chicken among the main characters. While *Chicken Little*'s (2005) NHA characters live in an entirely anthropomorphized setting which reproduces human society, *Home on the Range's* (2004) domestic NHAs live in an idyllic farm called "Patch of Heaven," which is radically different from most dairy farms one encounters today. In this atypical setting, NHAs are able to roam freely, are not separated from their offspring, are not used for food, and have a

very affectionate relationship with their caretakers. Furthermore, the NHAs joyfully fulfill all the farm duties together with Pearl, singing and dancing in perfect harmony. Pearl describes her farm as "a little patch of heaven way out West," the term "heaven" suggesting a perfection or utopia unattainable on Earth. The uniqueness of the farm and of the way NHAs are treated there is further emphasized when, faced with the threat of foreclosure, the sheriff suggests that Pearl sells the livestock. Pearl replies, scandalized "They are family. You don't sell family," and almost faints from the anger the proposition causes her. Shortly thereafter, Jeb expresses his concerns that they are all going to be eaten, while the other NHAs show disbelief and Audrey replies "But who would eat a chicken?"

Indeed, the chicken's ignorance is rendered funny, while food jokes are made by almost all the NHA characters. Jeb calls the piglets "cocktail wieners," Maggie compares her cold welcome to "the frozen food section" and advises the piglet with the apple in his mouth to "stay away from the luau," and the cows' slaughter is referred to "as the big round-up in the sky." Meat consumption is not only normalized (most NHAs are aware that humans eat meat) but also taken lightly by the NHAs, who joke about it rather than criticize it. Domestication is also trivialized and poked fun at: when the cows get to town, Grace wonders about what she sees: "There are no fences. What keeps the people from roaming?" Ms. Callaway promptly replies that "They appear to be domesticated; it does not appear dangerous at all." While the negative characters are punished in the end (the cattle rustlers are captured) and the NHA lovers rewarded (Pearl gets to keep her farm), the overall message of the film does little to support animal rights. Besides normalizing meat consumption and domestication, Disney contributes to distancing the audience from the realities of factory farming by focusing on the pastoral image of an idyllic farm, where NHAs are happy to live and work for their human owner in a capitalist market

economy driven by productionist values. While meat consumption is something to be joked about - funny even for the NHAs – imminent realities associated with this practice are ignored. As images of slaughter might be too strong for films aimed at children, the discomfort experienced by farmed NHAs can (and should) be expressed in ways which would nevertheless force audiences to confront their meat and make them feel responsible for their choices. For the most part, Disney limits its description of NHAs to false stereotypes which often reflect negative human behavior such as gluttony, lack of hygiene, or evil plotting for monetary gain. Sadly, Disney makes no effort to paint an accurate picture of NHAs behavior. Instead of reverting to ethnic and gender stereotypes and reinforcing socially acceptable purposes for killing animals, Disney should focus on keeping the representation of NHAs authentic and unbiased, so that the unaltered NHA can truly serve as valuable pedagogies for younger and older audiences.

In the 12 features examined, the interests and well-being of humans guide the actions and aspirations of the NHAs, as Disney fails to acknowledge their intrinsic value, independent from their value to humans. Buck (*Home on the Range*) sheds tears of joy when Rico rides him, Maximums (*Tangled*) fulfills his dream of joining the guards, Louis (*The Princess and the Frog*) wants to play the trumpet on the stage, Bolt, Mittens and Rhino (*Bolt*) are rewarded for saving Penny, and the list continues. As they seek recognition from humans, Disney's NHAs appear happy to live under their authority - they know and accept their place in the world. Thus, cows never wonder why there are tied up to carriages, horses find it natural to provide transportation and serve in warfare, and Pearl's hens eagerly donate their eggs. The ideas that NHAs have a right to be free of oppression (for example, llamas should not be beasts of burden), confinement (NHAs should be allowed to ream feely, as do humans), and use (cows should not be forced to donate their milk to humans) do not appear in Disney's features.

Two notable exceptions are *Bolt* (2008), which condemns the use of NHAs in entertainment, and *Brother Bear* (2003), which acknowledges that "we are all the same, brothers to each other." Out of the 12 features examined, *Brother Bear* is the only film which advanced the idea that humans and NHAs are equals on earth and in the afterlife. *Brother Bear* revealed how NHAs are able to love and hurt the same way humans are, and featured the only human character that chose to remain a bear. While all the other families featured by Disney were united by human ideals and exclude true diversity, *Brother Bears's* Koda and Kenai become brothers, united by universal love that knows no distinctions. Thus, to be part of Kenai's family, Koda does not have to acquire human characteristics, although he does end up making human friends. Overall, the message of the film promotes the idea that treating NHAs differently because they belong to a different species is morally wrong, and that NHAs are sentient beings who have the same rights as humans.

While overt forms of racism are on the decline in Disney's latest animated features, more subtle forms of discrimination perpetuate prejudice and abuse. Both racism and speciesism function as a combination of prejudice and power and represent modes of exclusion, subordination, inferiorization, and exploitation. Forms of violence, which underlie the assumption of superiority and dislike of other beings that are deemed inferior because of their identity, species membership, appearance, and physical characteristics become justifiable through the naturalization of this ideology. By replacing racist assumptions with speciesist ones, Disney solidifies the view that there is a hierarchy of worth which places human interests and needs above those of NHAs, renders human suffering more important than animal suffering, and establishes a hierarchy of NHAs whereby some are seen as more deserving than others.

While evaluating Disney's representation of NHAs, one must acknowledge the complexities of this representation. Thus, while the findings of this study revealed the lack of animal rights messages in most of the animated films released by Disney between 2000 and 2010, animal welfare messages about humane domestication are present in these features. For example, Pearl (*Home on the Range*) treats the NHAs on her farm kindly, does not use them for money, and does not expect them to be highly profitable. Although the film does not support the abolishment of animal farming in favor of a vegan diet, it does advocate for humane farming practices which leave the NHAs unharmed. Furthermore, by ignoring the harsh realities of modern factory farming, Disney acknowledges that a realistic representation of slaughter is inappropriate for young audiences. Instead, Disney conveys a strong message by providing children with the heart-felt perspective of cows, goats, and chicken who are afraid of being eaten.

As a children's story genre, Disney's animated features appeal to mythological representations of NHAs which abound in popular culture and are rarely accurate. As most fairy-tales, Disney's stories have (improbable) happy endings where humans and NHAs alike enjoy a much better fate than they likely would in reality. While this is not surprising for a children's genre, the fact that Disney has long been criticized for its representation of race and gender justifies the scrutiny of speciesist representations in their animated features.

Are chameleons happy to be pets? Are cows on dairy farms happy to live there? Do we measure NHAs worth and valor according to their capacity to rescue/please humans? Is it better to be a human than an NHA? The answer to these questions is "yes" according to Disney, and "no" according to animal rights activists. By being "Disneyfied," NHAs change their appearance and behavior to a point where nothing but a carcass remains, a carcass which Disney fills with gestures, attitudes, and words which carry almost nothing of the *real* NHA. Is it as if

Disney views NHAs as anthropomorphized hybrids? “Kill” is a harsh word, which does not go well with Disney’s happy vocabulary. Whether we chose to use “softer” verbs, such as “transforms” or “changes,” the fact remains that Disney’s NHAs remain subservient to humans the same way Disney’s women are subservient to men, and Disney’s narratives reproduce and justify oppression. All is well when it ends well, and so, as the curtain falls and Disney arms us with yet another dose of happy denial, we remain convinced that all is well in the world. But what about all the dairy cows like Maggie, what about the declawed orphan cats like Mittens, and what about all the hunted bear cubs like Koda? Rest assured, Disney says, they are all part of the happy ending. At least, Disney got the ending part right.

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