

From Snow White to Pitch Black:
Gender and Racial Stereotyping of the Disney Princess

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Abstract

Women are often portrayed with stereotypical female traits in media, such as in the animated Disney films that include the Disney Princess Line. The purpose of this study is to identify gender and racial stereotypes in the portrayal of the princesses in Disney princess films and to analyze how these stereotypes have developed and changed over time. The princesses that are analyzed by means of a content analysis are Snow White, Aurora, Pocahontas, Mulan, Tiana, and Merida. To recognize ethnical and racial stereotypes, traits identified by Katz and Braly (1933), Karlins, Coffman, and Walters (1969), and Tan, Fujioka, and Lucht (1997) are used, while traits identified by Williams and Best (1990) are used to recognize gender stereotypes. Both gender and racial stereotypes are found in the analyzed films and the results show that they changed over time. The early princesses Snow White and Aurora possess only feminine traits, while the other princesses show a mix of masculine and feminine traits. The latest princess, Merida, even has far more masculine traits than feminine traits. Disney uses racial and ethnical stereotypes with moderation and care but one can argue that Tiana, as the first black princess, lacked black traits and screen time, while Merida has too many Irish traits.

Keywords: Stereotypes, Gender, Gender roles, Race, Ethnicity, Love, Disney,

Princess, Femininity, Film, Animated film, Representations

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Introduction

The introduction of photography and filmography has put women in the spotlights. Books and studies are filled with the way women are influenced by the way they are portrayed in films and photos and how positions and actions of women influence the way they are pictured and how they are stereotyped. There is, for example, discussion over the use of skinny and anorexic(-like) models in the fashion industry and the infeasible role model and the stereotyping of women's physical appearance they stand for. Animated films form a special genre in which the protagonists vary from animals and fantasy figures to human figures. Yet, animated films form no exception when it comes to stereotyping the human figures. When Snow White sings "someday my prince will come" in the movie *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* from 1937 she expresses not only her own day dream, but she also depicts the stereotype of a passive woman waiting for her Prince Charming.

This thesis aims to discuss the "evolution" of the Disney princess, through an analysis of the portrayal of the female heroines in the Disney princess films with a focus on gender and racial stereotyping. This study will focus on princesses that are part of the "Disney Princess Line," a franchise that markets the merchandise of eleven Disney princesses from Disney princess films. The princesses that have officially been added to this line are Snow White, Cinderella, Aurora, Ariel, Belle, Jasmine, Pocahontas, Mulan, Tiana, Rapunzel, and Merida. The releases of the eleven official princess films can be divided into three eras: Disney released three princess films between 1937 and 1959, five films between 1989 and 1998, and three films since 2009. The first five Disney princess films starred Caucasian princesses, but in 1992 the first non-white princess was part of the cast of Disney's *Aladdin*, whereupon another three princesses from ethnic minorities followed. These were, respectively, a Native

American princess and an Asian princess in the 1990s and an African-American princess in 2009.

The focus of this thesis will be on gender and race in the Disney Princess Line. A study into the field of gender and race in Disney films is not new. For example, Dawn Elizabeth England, Lara Descartes, and Melissa A. Colier-Meek studied “the portrayal of traditional masculine and feminine characteristics” of the princes and princesses’ characters in nine Disney films and concluded that all films depict stereotypical gender roles (555). Jack Zipes, who studied the way Disney adapted old fairytales, criticizes the way Disney portrayed women as helpless without the presence of a man (60). Another example is Mia Adessa Towbin et al. who studied twenty-six Disney animation films regarding “gender, racial, and cultural stereotypes” and concluded that they have “persisted over time” (19). My research will contribute to the existing research in this field as it focusses solely on the portrayal of the princesses in the Disney Princess Line and, as new films are produced by Disney all the time and this study will include Disney’s latest princess film *Brave*, this study will give an up-to-date idea of the “evolution” of the Disney princess. I want to take a closer look at the visibility of stereotypes in the Disney princess films and examine how the stereotyped image of the princess has changed over time and whether or not ethnicity has its influence on the portrayal. The research question to this thesis is: how are gender and racial stereotypes used by Disney in the portrayal of the princess and have the gender stereotypes changed over time? To answer this question it is important to come to an understanding of common gender and racial stereotypes and which of these stereotypes can be recognized per film.

For my research, I will use the following films: *Snow White* (1937), *Sleeping Beauty* (1959), *Pocahontas* (1995), *Mulan* (1998), *The Princess and the Frog* (2009), and *Brave* (2012). The princesses in these six films are significantly different from each other regarding

ethnicity as well as femininity and with this corpus two films from each of the three periods will be part of the research which is desirable to study a development. *Snow White* was Disney's first princess film, which is why this seems a suitable starting point. Aurora (*Sleeping Beauty*) is, like Snow White, a Caucasian princess. The film was released more than twenty years after *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, in a time when society had undergone big changes regarding the position of women. It is interesting to examine how this change in society is reflected in *Sleeping Beauty*. Pocahontas was the first princess based on a historic character and it is the first time that Disney portrayed a Native American woman as a protagonist. It is worth examining which stereotypes Disney used in portraying Native Americans. *Mulan* is relevant because this film breaks through the predictable portrayal of a princess as a traditional woman as Mulan dresses up like a man in order to join the army. *The Princess and the Frog* will also be part of this research, to examine in what ways the portrayal of an African-American woman comes with racial stereotyping. The last princess that will be analyzed is Merida from *Brave*, the most recent film that has been added to the Disney Princess Line. This will make the examination of the development of the Disney princess regarding race and gender accurate and up-to-date. Moreover, Merida is a white princess, which makes it desirable to add her to this research in order to compare the stereotyped gender behavior of the princesses in relation to their ethnicity.

This study will start with the theoretical framework and the methodology in the next chapter, in which the work of Daniel Katz and Kenneth Braly plays an important role. I will explain which methods I will use for my analysis and why. The subsequent chapter is devoted to the literature review of stereotypes in general as well as gender and racial stereotypes in media. I will continue this thesis with an analysis of the six films mentioned before with a main focus on the princesses' behavior, appearance, ideals, and actions in relation to

stereotypes. This thesis will continue with the discussion, in which the findings of the analysis will be interpreted, and finish with the conclusion.

Theory and Method

Theoretical Framework

In socio-psychology, stereotypes have been defined as “standardized conceptions of people, primarily based on an individual’s belonging to a category (usually race, nation, professional role, social class, or gender) or the possession of characteristic traits symbolizing one of these categories” (Schweinitz 4). Daniel Katz and Kenneth Braly explored stereotyping in 1933 in a landmark study in which they were “investigating the public and private nature of attitudes toward racial and national groups” (282). Their research, involving one hundred university students, was repeated by many scholars, like Bayton (1944), Karlins, Coffman, and Walters (1969), Maykovich (1971), and Clark and Pearson (1982). Katz and Braly asked the students to select twelve traits from a list of eighty-four, which they thought applied the most to specific races or nationalities. In that way they were able to distinguish the characteristics of stereotypes that were frequently attributed to different races and nationalities. Katz and Braly examined ten racial and national groups of which four are useful for this study, namely “Americans” which is used to analyze the early princesses Snow White and Aurora. The second group is “Negroes”, which was in the 1930s still a commonly used word for African Americans, to analyze Tiana. The “Irish” is the most fitting group to analyze the Celtic princess Merida and the “Chinese” will be used to analyze Mulan.

These studies of ethnical stereotypical traits have their limitations. Their outcome is the view of a survey group of one hundred Princeton students from, respectively, 1933, 1944, 1971, or 1982. This means that each survey group involved participants of equal level of education and of, approximately, the same age. One can therefore question whether the outcome is representative for the American population in general. However, Katz and Braly concluded that the stereotypical traits the students assigned to specific races and nationalities

were “consistent with the popular stereotype [...] found in newspapers and magazines” (285). They also took “the degree of agreement in assigning characteristics to the ten racial and national groups” into account and their conclusion was that “the voting [was] far from a chance selection” (285). A small remark on the issue is that the respondents had to choose from a list of traits. It is, therefore, possible that the researchers influenced the participants by putting words in their mouths.

Despite these limitations, current studies of ethnical stereotypes are often still based on traits and many scholars use a methodology based on the Katz and Braly model to analyze “stereotype content” (Galinsky, Hall, and Cuddy 5). I recognize the limitations of this type of research and I am aware of the negative effects of stereotypes. I certainly do not want to revive these stereotypes, but in the light of my research the study of Katz and Braly on stereotypes functions as a useful foundation.

Table 1 shows “the twelve traits most frequently assigned to the various racial and national groups by 100 Princeton students” (Katz & Braly 2840). For the purpose of this study this table is limited to Americans, African Americans (Negroes), Irish, and Chinese.

Table 1: The twelve traits most frequently assigned to various racial and national groups by 100 Princeton students (1933)

AMERICANS	NEGROES	IRISH	CHINESE
Industrious	Superstitious	Pugnacious	Superstitious
Intelligent	Lazy	Quick-tempered	Sly
Materialistic	Happy-go-lucky	Witty	Conservative
Ambitious	Ignorant	Honest	Tradition-loving
Progressive	Musical	Very religious	Loyal to family ties
Pleasure-loving	Ostentatious	Industrious	Industrious
Alert	Very religious.	Extremely	Meditative
Efficient	Stupid	nationalistic	Reserved
Aggressive	Physically dirty	Superstitious	Very religious
Straightforward	Naive	Quarrelsome	Ignorant
Practical	Slovenly	Imaginative	Deceitful
Sportsmanlike	Unreliable	Aggressive	Quiet
		Stubborn	

Source: Daniel Katz and Kenneth Braly p. 284-285

The Katz and Braly study does not include stereotypes for Native Americans, so traits for the analysis of Pocahontas come from Alexis Tan, Yuki Fujioka, and Nancy Lucht as included in Appendix B. They did research on the stereotyping of Native Americans by college students by means of questionnaires (Tan, Fujioka, and Lucht 265). They categorized the stereotypes ascribed to Native Americans in positive, negative, and neutral stereotypes.

Trait based studies, based on the Katz and Braly model, have also been used to examine gender stereotypes. One of those studies was performed by Deborah L. Best and John E. Williams, both professors of psychology, who conducted “their 14-country study on sex role ideology with university studies” in 1990 (197). Best and Williams concluded in this study that gender stereotypes “refer to the psychological traits and behaviors that are believed to occur with differential frequency in the two gender groups” and that they “provide support for traditional sex role assignments and may serve as socialization models for children” (197). The traits for both the male stereotype and the female stereotype, as outcome of their study, are given in table 2:

Table 2: Pancultural Gender Stereotypes: Samples of Highly Stereotypic Items

Male Stereotype	Female Stereotype
Active	Affected
Adventurous	Affectionate
Aggressive	Anxious
Ambitious	Attractive
Autocratic	Charming
Coarse	Complaining
Courageous	Curious
Cruel	Dependent
Daring	Dreamy
Dominant	Emotional
Energetic	Fearful
Enterprising	Feminine
Forceful	Fussy
Independent	Meek
Inventive	Mild
Logical	Sensitive
Masculine	Sexy

Progressive	Shy
Robust	Soft-Hearted
Rude	Submissive
Self-confident	Superstitious
Stern	Talkative
Strong	Timid
Tough	Weak
Unemotional	Whiny

Source: Williams, John E., Robert C. Satterwhite, and Deborah L. Best p. 519

This study has its limitations as well because the survey group only contained students, but the survey was not limited to only American students but held among university students from fourteen countries, therefore it gives a broader, international view.

The results of the previous mentioned studies are lists of traits, commonly used in recent studies, for ethnical and for gender stereotypes, which also can be used in this study.

Methodology

A content analysis will be done on the six Disney princess films mentioned in the introduction. This will be conducted by watching all the movies from DVD and by reading the scripts of the films to search for themes regarding stereotypes of gender and race. These themes or motives are formed by texts and/or images whereby the focus will be on the princesses Snow White, Aurora, Mulan, Pocahontas, Tiana, and Merida.

“The twelve traits most frequently assigned to various racial and national groups by 100 Princeton students” (table 1) will be used to establish the theme upon which racial stereotypes are built. This table will be expanded by the findings of Karlins, Coffman, and Walters regarding racial and ethnical stereotypes (Appendix A), which is a 1969 duplication of the original Katz and Braly study. Later duplications, like that of Clark and Pearson, did not include all races and nationalities and did not differ very much from that of Karlins,

Coffman, and Walters, so the latter is useful. For Snow White and Aurora the American traits are used, for Mulan the Chinese and for Merida, as a Celtic princess, the Irish traits. The traits for the analysis of Pocahontas, as already mentioned, come from Tan, Fujioka, and Lucht as included in Appendix B. The traits under female stereotypes in table 2 “Pancultural Gender Stereotypes: Samples of Highly Stereotypic Items,” will be used to recognize gender stereotype themes.

The analysis of the examined films includes the recognition of specific traits in the behavior of the princesses. These traits will be accompanied by one or more examples in order to establish its legitimation. In the analysis, the found traits will be shown in italic and will be accompanied with an (m) for male stereotypes, (f) for female stereotypes or (r) for racial and ethnical stereotypes. The results of the analysis per princess will be compared and interpreted in the chapter “Discussion”.

Literature Review

Stereotypes

Stereotypes are often used in films. In many Hollywood films there is a “love-interest” who hooks up with the protagonist in the end. The setting in many Westerns is a small town with dusty roads, where tumbleweeds are rolling. Bombastic music usually accompanies heroic actions of brave characters, and scary music reveals an upcoming frightening scene in a thriller. Stereotypes in plots, settings, and music are used to leave the viewer on familiar ground and the box-offices happy. The same goes for characters in movies as, for example, accountants in a film often wear glasses and a suit and lead an overall boring life. Studies of the use of stereotypes in films have been growing to a vast collection over the past one hundred years, but they almost always use other fields of scholarship to define stereotypes. In literature there is no unanimous definition of the word “stereotype.”

Different fields of scholarship use different definitions which have different meanings. Jörg Schweinitz, a German film theorist, uses three examples of definitions: “prejudiced and socially widespread ideas about foreigners,” “linguistic formulas that take the form of standardized expressions,” and “naturalized recurrent patterns of narration” (3). When it comes to people, Walter Lippmann, who introduced the term “stereotype” (Schweinitz 4), argues that we use stereotypes because we cannot be really familiar with every person, so “instead we notice a trait which marks a well-known type, and fill in the rest of the picture by means of the stereotypes we carry about in our heads” (33). According to Lippmann, people use stereotypes to get “an ordered, more or less consistent picture of the world, to which our habits, our tastes, our capacities, our comforts and our hopes have adjusted themselves” (35). According to Schweinitz, Katz and Braly argued that “the term is [...] generally associated with making judgments, and stereotypes are often ascribed the status of inappropriate

judgements” (5). Before we really get to know someone we are thus inclined to compartmentalize someone and impute them with attributes and behaviors belonging to the specific compartment, based on race, class, profession, or gender.

An undesirable effect of stereotyping is that it frames people in categories of which some are considered as the “other.” According to Homi Bhabha this “otherness [...] connotes rigidity and an unchanging order” (18), which means that stereotypes are repeated in the same form over and over again. They stress the differences between people and it is this “fixity” that make stereotypes dangerous (Bhabha 18). Bhabba argued that stereotypes were used in the era of colonization for obtaining arguments in favor of colonialization and to maintain the status quo between the colonizer and the colonized. Stereotypes are used to maintain the dominance created by the dominant party out of fear of losing this dominance. Stereotypes survive in our society because they are repeated continuously, we use existing stereotypes to form our ideas and perceptions of certain groups and individuals (Bhabha 18).

Gender Stereotyping

Gender studies flourished after the rise of feminism in the 1960s and 1970s. These studies were not concerned with biological differences, but with the social context of gender roles. According to Gail Bederman, “gender – whether manhood or womanhood - is a historical ideological process” (7) or as Simone de Beauvoir put it before her, “one is not born, but rather becomes a woman” (249). It goes without saying that the same goes for men. Gender differences, in a social and psychological sense, are mainly determined by the social interferences at a specific moment in time and at a specific place, for instance the inferior position of a woman in current Saudi Arabia in relation to the man that differs from the far

more equal position of a woman in current America, but resembles the position of women in America in the eighteenth century.

Mass media shower their audience with stereotypical images of men and women. The media is very influential when it comes to shaping their viewers' values and norms, beliefs, and behaviors. This starts at a very young age when young children see (animated) films starring beautiful princesses in their beautiful dresses who do domestic work, dance around, and wait to be found by their prince with whom they will live happily ever after. Due to this, many girls want to grow up as princesses. Still, there are girls who do not want to play with dolls in their pink princess dresses but rather build treehouses in filthy clothes. This type of girl is called a "tomboy" ("Tomboy" def. 1). This nickname underscores that stereotypes of women already apply to young girls; labeling these girls as tomboys implies that when a girl does not behave like a "real" girl, according to society's norms, she is considered to be more of a boy. Kevin Durkin has studied the knowledge young children have about sex-stereotypes and the influence stereotypical gender depictions on television have on these children and their beliefs. He found that children between the age of four and nine already have knowledge on gender role division (Durkin 356). Durkin states that "the more sex stereotyped television children are exposed to, the more sex stereotyped their own attitudes and beliefs become" (356). Thus, the way gender roles are depicted on television influences the mindset of children.

Many Disney princess films give girls the idea that they will find their ultimate happiness once they are married. Nancy F. Cott claims that "[f]rom the founding of the United States to the present day, assumptions about the importance of marriage and its appropriate form have been deeply implanted in public policy" (2). The Disney animation features imply that it is the most important goal for a woman to find a husband, or, more often, she just waits

till he finds her. The idea that the woman is expected to stay at home and take care of the household and the children seems old-fashioned. However, in a study Beth Wiersma conducted, using 16 Disney animation films, she found that the female characters did domestic chores six times as often as the male characters (qtd. in Towbin 24) and Susan D. Witt found that “[on television] men [are] portrayed as inept when handling children’s needs” (qtd. in Towbin 21). Such images provide the audience with superseded views when it comes to gender roles.

Already since the 19th century, feminist movements have fought against unequal relations between men and women. There have been three so-called “waves” of feminist thought and activism since then. The first wave feminist movement that lasted from 1849 up until 1920 mainly fought for women’s suffrage (Hewitt 3), while the second wave feminists, during the 1960s and 1970s, focused on much broader issues like, among other things, abortion, birth control, and working women (Hewitt 5). The so called third wave feminist movement started in the early 1990s and “continues the efforts of second-wave feminism to create conditions of freedom, equality, justice, and self-actualization for all people by focusing on gender-related issues in particular” (Snyder 192).

During the second feminist wave, feminist film theory developed (Erens xvi). Theorists embarked upon studying the role of women in films and examined, among other things, “how the female characters related to the history of the era, how these characters were stereotyped, how active or passive they were, how much screen time they were allotted, and whether they served as positive or negative models for women in the audience” (Erens xvi). Despite the fact that feminist movements have achieved numerous goals in their fight for women’s rights (Epstein 118), the research by Dr. Stay L. Smith, Marc Choueiti, Elizabeth Scofield, and Dr. Katherine Pieper into gender roles in films between 2007 and 2012 shows

that only 28.4% of the speaking characters in one hundred examined “top-grossing fictional” features in 2012 was female (1). Moreover, it is important to state that there does not seem to be a positive development given the fact that the percentage of women on the silver screen has only decreased since 2007 (Smith et al. 3). Women may well cover 50 percent of the population, they are still underrepresented in television and film.

When girls become teenagers, they will get confronted with images of the “ideal” woman that “adult” media exhibits. When such images of women get imprinted into one’s mind all the time, it is difficult to dissociate from this idea. Smith et al. also examined sexualization in relation to gender and came to the conclusion that female characters show bare skin more often than their male counterparts (5). A striking detail is that teenage girls (between 13 and 20 years) exhibit nudity most frequently (5). As a consequence, women can be looked upon as sexual objects from a young age onwards. Another study of Smith, Choueiti, and Pieper shows that age and appearance play an important role in the portrayal of women. The focus on these two factors “becomes particularly problematic as we examine how females fare in the workplace, where perceptions of competence may be linked to aspects of appearance” (Smith, Choueiti, and Pieper 7). Films thus add to the idea that one has to be beautiful to be successful.

The picture of the man going off to work and the woman as a stay-at-home mom is still present in contemporary films. A study of Smith et al. found that in the ten most popular American films released between 2010 and 2013, only 23.2 % of the female characters had a job compared to 46.3% of the American women who actually had a job in the real world in 2012 (Smith, Choueiti, and Pieper 6). Smith analyzed 120 films produced worldwide in total for her study and comes to the conclusion that more than three-quarters of the characters who held a job were male and thus less than a quarter was female (Smith, Choueiti, and Pieper 8).

Thus, traditional gender roles are much more visible in motion pictures than they are in the real world. Similar research was done by Beth Wiersma, who studied how many jobs were held by male and female characters in 16 Disney animated movies. Her findings were that 24 jobs were held by men, while only four women worked outside the home (qtd. in Towbin 24). A lack of women in the work field on the screen is a problem according to Smith as films can play a decisive role on the next generation (Smith, Choueiti, and Pieper 8). Moreover, Smith states that “it appears that female executives are an endangered species in international films” (Smith, Choueiti, and Pieper 10). Important positions in films are held 10 to 16 times more often by men (Smith, Choueiti, and Pieper 14). By reinforcing these stereotypes the possibilities for women seem limited and women who do not fit the stereotype are still exceptional.

Racial Stereotyping

The first European racist claims that black people were inferior to white people and that ancestors of black people were apes occurred in the sixteenth century (Vogt qtd. in Cox 11). Those claims could be deadly because the Roman Catholic Church did not condone the view of other origins of different races. According to West, “[...] biblically based accounts of racial inferiority flourished, but the authority of the church prohibited the proliferation of nonreligious, that is protomodern, accounts of racial inferiority” (99). The racial difference of white and black men developed from Muslim slavery. James H. Sweet argues that “[b]y the ninth century, Muslims were making distinctions between black and white slaves” (145), whereby white slaves were much more valuable, because of the possibility of ransom, than black slaves. Sweet further states that “[t]his early distinction, which identified blacks as subordinate Others, was not limited to slaves” (146). Sweet quotes an eleventh century

Muslim historian, Sd'id al-Andalus, who attributes characteristics to black people “[who] lack self-control and steadiness of mind and are overcome by fickleness, foolishness, and ignorance” (146), which can be seen as stereotyping of black people. This view was elaborated in the fifteenth century Muslim world where people thought that “blacks were suited to slavery because of their animal-like characteristics” (Sweet 147). This point of view was adopted by the Spaniards and the Portuguese, as Sweet explains: “[o]ver time, Iberian Christians became acquainted with the Muslim system of black slavery and adopted the same sets of symbols and myths” and was extended with Christian superiority (149).

The religious feeling of racial inferiority and particularly black inferiority legitimized the use of slaves in the New World and in the sixteenth century the Americas became the continent of slavery. Thousands of black people were taken from the African continent by force and shipped to be sold as slaves in the newly occupied land. Sweet stated that “[t]he Catholic Church [...] embraced a belief in the natural inferiority of peoples of color” (158). The master and slave relationship between the white and the black in the US invoked the superiority of white men that did not fade with the abolition of slavery. The “separate but equal” doctrine and Jim Crow laws separated black people, who were not allowed in “white” establishments, transportations, and schools. Already before the abolition, the stereotypes of the childlike Sambo and his counterpart Nat Turner were born: “Sambo was the obedient slave who did his work, bowed and scraped, was submissive, [...] faithful and affectionate to those who are just and kind to him” (Wynter 151), while on the other hand “[t]he ‘rebellious’ stereotype of Nat Turner legitimated the use of force as a necessary mechanism for ensuring regular steady labor” (151). These stereotypes of black men survived, especially in the Southern states. Because white slaveholders were able to use black women sexually whenever

they pleased, Higginbotham argues that the stereotypes of black women includes terms as “promiscuity” and “passion” (263).

White stereotyping of Native American women contains the same terms in the stereotypical “squaw”. Based on nineteenth century studies of Iroquois kinship the view was held “that descent through the mother originally arose because of the inability to identify fathers in the stage of promiscuous intercourse” (Smits 300), thus defining Indian women as promiscuous. In the seventeenth century, the Indian princess myth emerged, as Bird points out: “[t]he American Indian princess became an important, nonthreatening symbol of White Americans’ right to be [in America] because she was always willing to sacrifice her happiness, cultural identity, and even her life for the good of the new nation” (72). Later on, in the nineteenth century, the myth elaborated with more emphasis on the sexuality of the Indian princess, “the society permitted portrayals to include sexual references (bare and prominent bosoms) for females even when tribal dress and ethnography denied the reality of the reference” (Green qtd. in Bird 72-73).

This kind of racial stereotyping is common in popular mass media as well. Television and film are dominated by white males (Hunt 28). For a long time, racial minorities hardly got any screen time and when they did play a part in a television series or a film their portrayal was stereotyped (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights 4). In the 1960s, the Civil Rights Movement advocated for more blacks on television. This led to an investigation by the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights concerning the “portrayal of minorities and women on network television” in the seventies, whose report concluded that “despite advances made in portrayal [...], minorities and women -particularly minority women- continue to be underrepresented in dramatic programs and on the news and their portrayals continue to be stereotyped” (ii). The stereotyping of characters is explained by television theorists and critics because of the lack of

time in television series for character development: “the characters must be portrayed in ways which quickly identify them” which “creates a distorted view of reality by oversimplifying situations and stereotyping characters and then repeating them endlessly” (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights 27). Black men and women are, for example, often labeled as lazy in the media, but this negative stereotype does not seem in place according to Kimberly R Moffit: “according to a 1992 *U.S. News & World Report* article, for most of the 20th century, there were more Blacks in the workforce than Whites” (61). This shows that it is difficult to change stereotypes once they are imprinted in society’s mind, even if they are proven to be wrong.

Analysis

For the actual research, six princesses from six Disney films are analyzed concerning the gender and racial stereotypes they contain. The findings of my research are presented in charts that indicate whether a specific gender or racial stereotype is present in the portrayal of the princess (Appendix C and Appendix D). I will now continue with a textual analysis of each film, in which the most remarkable stereotypes that were found will be mentioned, accompanied with one or more examples from the film.

Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs

Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs (1937) was the first Disney princess film the Walt Disney Company created. The film is based on the fairytale *Sneewittchen*, which is the 53rd fairytale in the first edition of *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* which was published in 1812 by the Grimm brothers. Their story is about a little princess who is envied by her stepmother because of her beauty. The stepmother decides to let the huntsman kill the little princess, but he backs out and leaves the girl alive, but alone, in the forest and forges proof for the queen that he has killed the princess. The little princess wanders through the forest in panic until she finds a little house that belongs to seven dwarfs. The seven dwarfs kindly take the little princess into their home. Yet, the stepmother finds out, by using a magic mirror, that the little princess is still alive and tricks her into a bite of a poisoned apple. This bite causes the princess to go into a sort of comatose state which is ultimately broken by a prince. The little princess and the prince are wed immediately afterwards.

The film follows the plot of the fairy tale in its broad outline, Disney deviates, however, from the original story on several occasions. For instance, in the original fairy tale Snow White is only seven years old (Grimm and Grimm 239). This seems a very young age

to get married, but Jennifer Ward argues that in medieval times, children of noblemen sometimes married even before the age of seven and “that there are a number of instances where children were married at the age of nine or ten, but in most cases marriages took place when they were in their teens” (13). The original fairy tale stays close to the custom of medieval young marriages. In the film the age of Snow White does not become clear, but she must be older than seven because of the obvious blossoming of breasts. According to Nicole Arthur, Snow White is “not a cover girl, but a pretty pubescent girl” (Arthur qtd. in Yzaguirre 28-29).

Although the princess of the fairy tale is probably modeled after a European princess, there is no hint of her offspring in the film. For the analysis of racial stereotypes (r) the traits that are attributed to “Americans” are used, because Disney’s princess was transformed into an American according to Zipes: “[a]fter all, Snow White was his story that he had taken from the Grimm Brothers and changed completely to suit his tastes and beliefs. He cast a spell over this German tale and transformed it into something peculiarly American” (Zipes 347).

The first time that Snow White enters the screen she is scrubbing the stairs of her father’s castle dressed in rags. Her clothes and her activity do not make her look like a princess. She is working hard which hints to being *industrious* (r). She was forced to do this work by her jealous stepmother, who hoped that the working life would diminish the beauty of the princess. Snow White seems to reconcile herself to her situation, showing some clear female traits like *meek* (f), *dependent* (f), *submissive* (f), and *weak* (f). Snow White has not planned to take matters in her own hand for her future. She wishes a man will sweep her away and she depends completely on her ability to attract a man and marry him.

The theme of Snow White as a housemaid is not part of the original fairy tale. Disney seems to have added this theme to magnify the stereotype of the white American housewife,

who is the master of the house while the man is working. This theme is also visible in the scene when Snow White enters the cabin of the seven dwarfs. The first thing she notices in the cabin is that the table is untidy. She is aghast by the mess she sees: “look at that fireplace, it’s covered with dust. And look, cobwebs everywhere” (*Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*). In this scene, the idea of the woman as the person responsible for the household is very much reflected when Snow White expresses that one would expect their mother to clean the house and instantly comes to the conclusion that they probably do not have a mother since the house is so dirty.

Snow White shows that she knows how to behave like the perfect housewife and mother as she instantly summons the animals to clean up the house together with her, which shows her *practical* (r) and her *efficient* (r) side. In her relationship with the dwarfs, Snow White shows a mother-like *dominant* (m) strike when she insists that the dwarfs wash their hands before supper and when they resist she is peremptory. In the original fairytale, the cabin of the dwarfs is extraordinary well-organized, tidy, and clean, contrary to this scene in the Disney film. It seems that Disney altered this scene as well, to make it more suitable to the stereotypes of white American males and females. Snow White offers to clean, wash their clothes, and cook in return for accommodation. She does so while the dwarfs work in the mines, which again shows her *dependency* (f). Jack Zipes states that “[t]he dwarfs can be interpreted as the humble American workers, ... [whose] determination is the determination of every worker, who will succeed just as long as he does his share while women stay at home and keep the house clean” (349). In this regard, Snow White can be considered *conventional* (r).

In the scene where the Huntsman is about to kill Snow White, her helplessness is displayed again. She does nothing to prevent the event from happening and seems to accept

her fate while crying her eyes out. This underscores her dependency on others, not able to take matters into her own hand and it shows she is *weak* (f). Again, Walt Disney has changed the original Grimm fairy tale, in which Snow White persuades the huntsman not to kill her using her feminine side and beauty (Grimm & Grimm 239). Disney seems to prefer the traits *dependent* (f), *fearful* (f), and *weak* (f). Snow White depends on the animals in the woods and she depends on the dwarfs to get a place to live.

Snow White is portrayed as *attractive* (f), as from the moment the prince lays eyes on her, he is drawn by her appearance and clear singing voice. During that encounter Snow White shows she is *shy* (f) but aware of the fact that she is attractive which she gives away with a gesture with her dress. Throughout the entire film Snow White is dreaming of this prince. She sings that “someday [he] will come” and prays that her dreams may come true, which is proof of her being *dreamy* (f). It is hard to tell why she is talking about dreams, in plural, when the only dream she ever talks about is to be found by her prince charming.

Both in the first scene and in the scene where she cleans up the mess in the cabin of the dwarfs, Snow White sings while working and looks happy while doing her domestic chores. This gives the audience the idea that domestic work is a grateful job and a fun thing to do for a woman, which seems another hint from Disney that underscores the traditional division of gender roles.

Snow White seems to grow up without companion of peers, for she never has contact with friends or family in the film. Her only companions are animals to whom she is kindhearted, showing an *affectionate* (f), a *mild* (f), and a *soft-hearted* (f) side. Steven Coppens suggests that Disney let Snow White and other princesses alone in an awkward situation to let them know that they are naive and to become stronger in a future family situation (Coppens 60-

61). In the end Snow White leaves that awkward situation and her new companions, the dwarfs, without hesitation and follows her unknown prince to live her life happily ever after.

Sleeping Beauty

Disney's *Sleeping Beauty* is based on the fairy tale *Dornröschen* (Grimm & Grimm 225-229). This fairy tale is based on a seventeenth century French version, namely Charles Perrault's *La belle au bois dormant* (*The Sleeping Beauty in the Woods*). In the story of the brothers Grimm, a long-wished-for princess is born, which causes the royal family to give a big party. Because of the lack of golden plates they only invite twelve of the thirteen fairies in the kingdom. At the party the invited fairies ornate the girl with good features, like beauty and goodness. The not invited and wrathful thirteenth fairy wrecks the party and casts a spell on the little princess: before her sixteenth birthday she will prick her finger on the needle of a spinning wheel which will lead to her death. After the angry fairy has left there is only one fairy left to lay a wish on the poor girl. She is not able to undo the spell but she can replace death for sleep. Although the king bans all spinning wheels out of his kingdom, it proves worthless when the princess, at the age of fifteen, discovers an old lady spinning in an abandoned room in one of the castle's towers. She immediately falls asleep and soon afterwards the king and his entourage fall asleep as well. A big hedge of thorns make the castle of the king inaccessible, until a prince manages to reach the princess. He kisses her and she wakes up like all the rest of the people in the castle. The prince and the princess marry and live happily ever after.

Like in *Snow White*, Disney altered the fairy tale of the brothers Grimm in various ways. Zipes states that "Disney 'Americanized' the Grimm's texts by celebrating the virile innocence of male power; the domestication of sweet, docile pubescent girls; and the virtues

of clean-cut, all –American figures and the prudent, if not prudish life” (60). The story of the princess growing up as the peasant girl Briar Rose under the care of three fairies is not part of *Dornröschen*. Princess Aurora is completely cut off from her family which again supports the claim of Coppens that Disney’s princesses often live alone in awkward situations (60-61). Aurora lives in a remote place and is taken care of by fairies, similar to Snow White who was living with the dwarfs.

Aurora has gotten a lot of features from her fairy godmothers. Therefore, she is *affectionate* (f) towards the animals. Like Snow White, she is dreaming of the prince that sweeps her away, which shows she is *dreamy* (f). She meets the prince from her dreams in the woods and at first she acts *shy* (f) and *timid* (f), but she is not as shy as Snow White who fled away on seeing her prince. Aurora actually talks to him and agrees to meet him later that night which shows that she is *self-confident* (m). The prince, prince Phillip, is obviously touched by the fact that Aurora is *attractive* (f), *charming* (f), and *feminine* (f). In the scene right after her encounter with the prince, Aurora shows that she is *submissive* (f), *weak* (f), and *dependent* (f). When the fairies tell her that she is a princess and has to go to the palace right away, Aurora does not want to go for she does not want to skip her date with the prince, but she does nothing against it except burst into tears. This shows that she is, at least a little, *whiny* (f). She, however, follows the fairies which shows she is *meek* (f) as well. Another stereotypical female trait she possesses is *curiosity* (f) as she is easily led by the light to the tower with the spinning wheel, however one can argue that she is hypnotized by it. At the spinning wheel she shows again that she is submissive because she follows the command of the old lady to prick her finger without questioning.

Aurora is put to sleep by magic and can only be saved by a kiss of true love. This is very close to the story of Snow White. Although the young couple had only a brief encounter

in the woods, the kiss of prince Phillip is that kiss of true love. As in *Snow White*, the princess has fallen in love at first sight. The idea that Disney delivers to its audience is that when mister right comes along, a woman can live happily ever after and it should not take more than one brief encounter. The message seems that women cannot be happy on their own, they need a man to take care of them.

The film *Sleeping Beauty* was not as successful as its predecessors, *Snow White* and *Cinderella*. Fredericks states that “[t]he drastic failure of this film was perhaps caused by a changing society where the females were beginning to once again, step out of the role as homemaker” (Fredericks 39). Disney seemed to have stayed with the traditional division of roles between men and women one film too long.

Pocahontas

Disney’s *Pocahontas* is said to be based on the Native American character Pocahontas who was born in 1596, but the story Disney made about Pocahontas is hardly based on reality. Cornel Pewewardy, a Native American professor of Indigenous Nations studies, describes *Pocahontas* as “politically correct yet historically incorrect, sexist yet feminist, and both ethnographically sensitive and ethnographically suspect” (171). The 1995 film *Pocahontas* tells the story of the Indian princess Pocahontas, whose father, Chief Powhatan, has found her a suitor, his best warrior Kocoom. Pocahontas, however, is not planning on marrying Kocoom and falls in love with an English settler, John Smith, instead. The story then revolves around the (forbidden) blossoming love between her and John Smith. When John Smith is about to get killed by Chief Powhatan, Pocahontas saves him and admits in front of Smith and her father that she loves Smith. In the end, however, she let him sail back to England while she stays home where she is “needed” (*Pocahontas*).

This story is historically inaccurate as the real Pocahontas did not reject her father's suitor, she, in fact, got married to one of the tribal members when she was a teenager. She met John Smith when she was eleven years old, instead of the nineteen years she is in the Disney film, and he only played a little part in her life. According to John Smith's diaries, Pocahontas did save his life but there is no account that they were romantically involved (Robbertson 553). A couple of years later, when Pocahontas was eighteen she was lured on a British ship where she was held prisoner. She eventually "married British colonist John Rolfe" and died three years later (Pewewardy 171-172). Thus, Disney adapted the story by focusing on a romance between Pocahontas and John Smith, which had not actually existed.

The image that is created of Native Americans in Disney's *Pocahontas* is not only that of the noble savages who are devoted to nature but also that of the ignoble "savages" who are eager to start a war against the English settlers. That the Native Americans are frequently called "savages," "heathens," and "primitive" in the film, can be considered racism as such terms have negative connotations and stem from white supremacy (Pewewardy 172-173).

The main character, Pocahontas, is portrayed as a *sexy* (f) woman. She wears a short one-shoulder dress which reveals much of her skin as, for example, "the slit of the skirt shows much of the thigh" (LaCroix 221). Her outfit, however, was not the fashion Native Americans were known for wearing in the seventeenth century as Pewewardy states: "the type of dress worn by the Disney Pocahontas would have been very sexist during her time in history" (172). Her short dress shows her athletic and mature body type well, which is according to LaCroix "the most compelling feature of her physical depiction" (220). The Walt Disney Company has given Pocahontas the appearance of an athlete with "long, strong legs, and a developed bust. She retains, however, the slender waist like the others, which adds to the overall mature and voluptuous look of the character" (LaCroix 220). Debra Merskin argues

that Pocahontas is “presented as sexualized Indian Princess type” (135), one of the two most common stereotypes of Native American women. The Indian princess “conveys natural, wholesome, virginity, and freshness” (133). According to John Smith himself, the Powhatan girls were naked except for a few leafs (qtd. in Perdue 4).

Throughout the whole film Pocahontas is displayed as an *adventurous* (m) and *active* (m) woman, who is also a bit *dreamy* (f). We see her dive off a high cliff into the waters, run through the woods, and swim and canoe in the river. She does not want to follow the beaten track, but wants to find out what is “around the river bend” (*Pocahontas*). This can be illustrated with a scene of the film in which Pocahontas is canoeing and the river splits in two. She then has to decide whether she continues canoeing the calm river or she turns to the wild and unsteady river. She dares to choose the unknown and thus chooses the latter one. This has also to do with a dream Pocahontas repeatedly has of a spinning arrow, of which she is determined to find out its meaning. This search guides her decisions to choose a different path, as she says to her father: “I think my dream is pointing me down another path” (*Pocahontas*). It eventually leads her to John Smith, whose compass is represented by the arrows. Thus, like the other princesses, her goals are represented in her dreams.

To discover the meaning behind her dream, Pocahontas turns to grandma Willow, a talking tree. When Pocahontas is in need of advice she turns to the tree, which she can hear talking. This shows that she is *superstitious* (f) and *spiritual* (r). It also reflects the stereotype that Native Americans are *nature-oriented* (r), which “is evident in Pocahontas’ relationship with animals, the trees, the water, and the wind- which we see blowing frequently through the character’s hair” (LaCroix 220-221).

Pocahontas has a *strong* (m) personality, which becomes clear from her reaction to her father’s statement that the warrior Koccoum has asked for her hand. Pocahontas dares to

oppose her father's decision and even secretly meets with her other admirer, John Smith. According to Pewewardy "this probably would not have happened during the time period portrayed in the movie, as it was a cultural norm for tribal members to adhere to any strict orders from their leaders, especially during a time of war" (172). It might not be historically accurate but Disney does answer the demands for stronger and more independent princesses. Especially when she actually chooses someone else, someone from outside her circle and own culture, Pocahontas acts like an independent woman. It is like Do Rozario puts it: "[she] desire[s] change and openness and so [she] choose[s] a "bad boy", a forbidden prince who contrary to the custom of the kingdom and will force the kingdom to become less insular" (54). She defies her father, like she does again when he wants to execute John Smith and her father eventually acknowledges and accepts that Pocahontas has a mind of her own.

That Pocahontas dares to object to her father speaks for her *courageousness* (m). Not only does she object to his choice of partner for her but also when it comes to his decisions regarding the settlers. When Chief Powhatan is about to kill John Smith, Pocahontas is brave enough to jump in front of Smith to protect him. She tells her father: "If you kill him, you'll have to kill me too" (*Pocahontas*). In this film, it is the princess who saves her love interest instead of the other way around. Pocahontas risks her own life for the man she loves and convinces her father not to attack the settlers which shows that she is, besides brave, *soft-hearted* (f) and *progressive* (m). She does not consider the English settlers as enemies like the other members of the Powhatan tribe do. Her actions, however, might not be driven by the progressive views she holds, but it could be just the love she feels for one settler that makes her reaction towards the English settlers come across as open-minded. I agree with Lauren Dundes who states that "[w]hile their love resulted in peace, it was a consequence, not a driving force behind the detente between the Indians and the white settlers" (355).

Love is the driving force behind Pocahontas' actions. Like her predecessors, Pocahontas quickly falls in love with John Smith, even though they do not speak the same language. Although it is obvious that they are in love, Pocahontas does not immediately yield to this feeling. It does not seem that finding a husband is her most important goal in life. This becomes completely clear when Pocahontas chooses her people above going to London with John Smith. However, before she had met John Smith she was restless and searching for her destiny. It seems she was only really happy when she was with John Smith. By making the decision to devote herself to her people "she follows a stereotypic female script" (Towbin 24). She seems strong at first, but in the end she still behaves as is expected from women in her culture. It is like she does not dare to choose John Smith. This decreases the strength she shows throughout the rest of the film. It is like LaCroix states: "Pocahontas presents herself as strong-willed and independent, but, when it comes down to it, she chooses her loyalty to and the need of her own people over her desires" (224). This represents the Native American stereotypes of *caring* (r) and *family-oriented* (r). It is eventually the love for her own culture and people that makes her decide to stay at home.

Mulan

The character of Disney's Fa Mulan is based on the legendary character Hua Mulan from the story *The Ballad of Mulan* in which Hua Mulan dresses up like a man to sit in for her sick father in the army. When Mulan, from the Disney film, hears that her father, who is old and has trouble walking, must join the army, Mulan decides she will go instead. When her parents are asleep she cuts off her hair, disguises as a man, and secretly leaves the house to join the army, which shows that she is *inventive* (m). She is accompanied by a cricket and a small dragon, named Mushu. In the army, which is under the command of Li Shang, Mulan

has trouble adjusting herself to her new gender. However, she eventually turns out to be the best warrior of all and, until her true gender is discovered, she is loved by her colleagues.

Mulan is raised in a culture where people feel strong about family honor. For girls it is important to find a husband and make a worthy wife. Fa Mulan is such a girl who has reached a suitable marriage-age and therefore she must visit the matchmaker. It is important for a girl's future to impress the matchmaker, but Mulan is a sassy and clumsy girl. She arrives too late for her appointment with the women who will bathe her and do her make-up to make her look like a bride. At the match maker, Mulan is making a mess of it as well. She, for example, spills the tea that she has to pour in a cup to show that she can be a perfect wife, but Mulan does not resemble an elegant wife at all. She obviously does not behave like the perfect woman to society's standards and the matchmaker shouts at her: "You may look like a bride but you will never bring your family honor" (*Mulan*).

Mulan's beauty, solely, is thus not enough to get married. Disney did not emphasize Mulan's feminine characteristics, "her attire covers most of her body throughout the film, and her cleavage, waist and legs are in no way accentuated by what she wears" (Yzaguirre 53). Although Mulan has to look like a bride, her ability to cook and to bear children is more important. Unfortunately, Mulan is not even capable of pouring a cup of tea and according to the matchmaker she is "too skinny, not good for bearing sons" (*Mulan*), which immediately stresses the gender relations. Giving birth to a son is worth more than to a daughter.

China is clearly depicted in *Mulan* as a male culture and it is important for women to know their place in society. The Chinese people are portrayed as very *conservative* (r), Mulan however is far more *progressive* (m). It looks like Mulan does not know the boundaries within her culture, like her father tells her: "I know my place, it is time you'll learn yours" (*Mulan*). For a girl she is too intelligent, too stubborn, and too *talkative* (f). Women are not supposed to

oppose men and have to be raised with the thought that they should “hold their tongue in a man’s presence” (*Mulan*). When Mulan speaks out, in front of the boys in the army, that the ideal girl must be intelligent and “always speak her mind” (*Mulan*), which shows her *ambitiousness* (m), her fellow soldiers could not disagree more: “nah!” “A girl worth fighting for” is “paler than the moon, with eyes that shine like stars” and it is important “what she cooks like” (*Mulan*). Men and women are not represented as equal partners in this film. This is not depicted by Disney as something positive however, as the story revolves around a girl who “refused to fit into a stereotypical female role; instead, she disguises herself as a man and goes to war in place of her father” (Towbin 36-37). The film proves with this that women can also be *tough* (m) and *strong* (m).

It turns out, in fact, that the girl in the army is the bravest of all. She is *active* (m) and *forceful* (m) enough to not be exposed. Mulan shows that she can be *aggressive* (m) towards the enemy. That is why she is able to save Shang and the other soldiers from getting defeated by the Huns. That she risks her own life to save the others shows that she is a *soft-hearted* (f) girl as well. When the soldiers and the commander eventually discover that she is a girl, their gratitude quickly turns into rage. It is a pity that when Mulan thinks Shang is about to kill her for her betrayal, all her bravery is suddenly gone and she rests with her fate. The fact that she went to the army without permission and with the possibility to be discovered shows that she can be *deceitful* (r) and *sly* (r) and that she is *daring* (m) and *adventurous* (m). *Courageous* (m) is a stereotypical male trait and Mulan is at her bravest when she is pretending to be a man, when it is discovered that she is a girl she acts *weak* (f) and *submissive* (f).

Mulan’s actions derive from the fact that she thinks she is worthless and a disgrace to her family. All she wants is to look in the mirror and “see someone who was worthwhile” (*Mulan*). She was “anxious for the opportunity to prove herself in the world and bring honour

to her family” (Youngs 311). In Mulan’s world women should act strictly conform their gender role, but Mulan did not want that. She tried to prove that she is more than a girl who is ready for marriage and to serve her husband. Although she succeeded in this, when she is offered to take seat in the council as the first woman, she decides to return home where the gender roles are still the same as when she left (Limbach 125). This shows that *loyalty to the family* (r) is yet very important to her, but this comes with *traditional* (r) views and behavior. Gwendolyn Limbach states that “[t]he yearning for home nullifies Mulan’s self-sufficiency and rebellion against the gender norms that home represents” (126). When she sees her father again, she kneels for him, showing that she conforms to the traditional gender role and “[places] herself fully under the dominion of patriarchal power” (Limbach 126).

Mulan is the first princess that is not guided by finding her true love. It does play a part in the film because it is what her family wants and society expects, but Mulan never dreams of becoming someone’s wife. Until the last scene it looks like Disney has made progression by not following this stereotypical female plot, but in the end Mulan’s potential husband, commander Li Shang, shows up. The film might not end with a marriage but it certainly leaves the viewer with the expectation of it. Like Gillian Youngs states: “Mulan’s story ends with strong indications that her efforts in the battlefield have brought her the prize of a partner” (312).

The Princess and the Frog

The 2009 movie *The Princess and the Frog* stirred up a lot of emotions in the United States, because more than seventy years after *Snow White*, Disney introduced a princess that was of African American descent. Almost immediately after its release it got a discussion going in the media and on the Internet about the new black princess. Neal A. Lester describes

that critics stumbled over her name, Tiana, which was too ethnic and over her degree of blackness (299).

Disney's storyline is related to Grimm's fairy tale *The Frog Prince (Der Froschkönig oder die eiserne Heinrich)* which is the first story of the *Kinder-und Hausmärchen*. Its relation emerges already in the opening scene where the mother of Tiana is reading this fairy tale to the young Tiana and her friend Charlotte. *The Princess and the Frog* is only remotely connected to *The Frog Prince* in the sense that the protagonist kisses a frog which turns out to be a prince. The Disney film bears more resemblance with the book *The Frog Princess* from E.D. Baker, published in 2002.

In the *Princess and the Frog*, Tiana grows up as the daughter of hard working African American parents in New Orleans in the 1920s. Her mother, Eudora, earns her money as a seamstress, while her father, James, works double shifts to make ends meet, while he dreams of having his own restaurant. Years later, when Tiana's father has passed away, Tiana adopts his dream of owning a restaurant and she is willing to do anything to reach that goal. She works double shifts and saves every penny of her earnings and while she is singing that she is "almost there", she kisses a frog, that claims to be a prince who can help her fulfil her dream, but she turns into a frog herself, instead. After wanderings and many adventures in the bayou, including voodoo and a trumpet playing alligator, the frogs fall in love and after marrying and kissing each other they turn back into humans. Princess Tiana and Prince Naveen open a restaurant and work in it happily together.

Already in the first scene the contrast of class and race is set very clearly. Eudora, the mother of Tiana, works for mister Labeouf, a very wealthy southerner, who lets Eudora sew a dress for his daughter Charlotte every week. When Tiana and her mother drive by bus from the Labeouf estate to their own house, the houses change from big and luxuriant to small and

sloppy when they approximate their home. This was closer to reality in the 1920s than interracial friendships or marriages and blacks buying their own, high class restaurant. As Lester points out, “while the language, cultural rhythms, and architectures deliberately imitate and recreate the New Orleans familiar, the reality of the 1920s race relations during America’s Jim Crow era and especially with “the anti-miscegenation laws on the books at the time” is ignored or selectively airbrushed” (Lester 301). As pointed out, there was much to do about race issues in the United States, despite the fact that Tiana and her prince are displayed as frogs for the greater part of the film. This could hinder detection of both gender and race characteristics, but, as usual, Disney is able to blend human characteristics in with animal appearances splendidly.

When Tiana is grown up she is shown as a hardworking woman who works double shifts to earn enough money to make her dream come through, against all odds. She rejects the invitation from friends to have fun. She shows she is *active* (m), *ambitious* (m), and *enterprising* (m). She wants to be independent but she depends on others to make her dream come true, so the main trait is *dependent* (f), “[a]lthough Tiana is intelligent, soft-spoken and articulate, physically attractive, well-mannered, industrious, self-sacrificing, morally upstanding, energetic, assertive, curious, persistent, and resourceful, she has to go through two white male bankers for the loan to purchase her warehouse space to realize her restaurant-owing dream.” (Lester 302). Tiana being intelligent is the opposite of the racial stereotype of blacks being stupid and ignorant.

Tiana is *attractive* (f), she attracts the prince both as a frog and as a human. She is *curious* (f) for she kisses the frog. Her curiosity wins over her deep aversion for frogs. The other mentioned characteristics seem to be more in line with the racial traits of the American white stereotype, which shows that Disney has tried to avoid the pitfall of emphasizing the

conventional stereotyping of black people, which are in many occasions the opposite. At the same time it bears the suspicion that Disney really wanted Tiana to be a stereotypical white woman, who is just painted black for commercial purposes. Lester concludes the same for the prince: “[h]e was a European with a tint; it was insulting to every black person watching that movie that Disney did not have the courage to place a real black man in this regal position” (Lester 304). Tiana’s dream is the major plotline and proves that Tiana is *dreamy* (f). She is also *superstitious* (f) (r), because she wishes on stars, she kisses the frog, and she believes in voodoo.

In *The Princess and the Frog*, like in *Snow White* and in *Sleeping Beauty*, Tiana is occupied with work that is conventionally associated with women. Tiana waits tables and is seen cooking and doing other household chores: “the princess, like her mother, made a successful career from traditionally feminine labor. In addition, she is shown sweeping and cleaning several times, actions not seen since the early Disney films” (England, Descartes, and Collier-Meek 564). They add that this return of domestic work in a Disney film is accompanied by the first African American princess which is adding to the already ongoing racial debate (564).

In the end Tiana and her prince live together happily ever after while running their restaurant. The message of Disney is still as clear as it was in 1937, luck and happiness in life depend on the fact that the woman finds herself a man and marries him. Contrary to earlier Disney films Tiana did not fall in love at first sight. This was surely impossible because her prince was already a frog when they first met. Her prince was not like the Prince Charming from the earlier movies, Prince Naveen was an obvious womanizer and player and proud of it. It was Tiana who was the bravest, resourceful, and fiercest most of the time.

Brave

Merida is the latest Disney princess added to the princess franchise. She is the protagonist in the Disney/Pixar film *Brave*. Unlike the previous princess stories, this story is not based on a fairytale or historical character. From the beginning it is clear that Merida is a different princess than the ones we have seen before. When she celebrates her birthday as a young child (her age is not given, but she is probably not older than seven), her father gives her a bow as a birthday present. Merida could not be happier, for all she wants is to become good at archery. Then the story skips approximately ten years and we see Merida as a teenager, she is still active, adventurous, and has her own will. She does everything she can to prevent her parents from arranging her marriage, for which all the clans are invited. She turns to magic to change her mom's personality but instead a spell turns her mother into a bear. The story continues with Merida trying to undo her mother from the spell. Her mother, the bear, is seen by a clan member and Merida's father and all the men of all the clans give chase. Merida's father wants to kill the bear, who happens to be his wife, which Merida is trying to prevent by fighting her father. At that moment Mor'du, a big bear who cost Merida's father his leg ten years ago in a fight, shows up. Merida's mother, as a bear, succeeds in killing Mor'du. The admittance of Merida that it was her fault to let a witch change her mother into a bear reverses the spell. The arranged marriage is off and her mother, who is now less strict, is seen accompanying Merida on a wild horse ride.

Merida does not have the typical princess' appearance with her wild, uncombed, and curly hair. According to Sarah Wilde the fact that "her hair is [...] wild and free demonstrat[es] her physical desire for freedom of self" (142). Her waist does not seem as small as the waists of her predecessors. Just like the other princesses she wears a dress

throughout the film. According to Wilde the choice for a blue dress could be because “blue is resembled to be more masculine” (142). The fact that her appearance is different from her predecessors seemed to be a problem for the Disney’s marketing department, “during Merida’s transition into the princess line, Disney molded Merida’s image to resemble the other princess in the franchise, regressing her to glossy hair and a slimmer waist” (Wilde 143). They did not reckon that touched a sore spot, so they quickly withdrew the action when both fans and the creator were furious. This creator, Brenda Chapman, complained to the Marin Independent Journal: “It’s horrible! Merida was created to break that mould — to give young girls a better stronger role model — a more attainable role model — something of substance, not just a pretty face that waits around for romance” (Liberatore par. 1). Chapman makes clear that Disney’s intentions with *Brave* were to break the mould and to step away from the traditional role models and stereotypes in earlier movies.

As mentioned before, Merida is, at least not yet, waiting for a man in her life to make her happy. Merida is breaking the pattern by being *independent* (m). She, for instance, complains about her mother, “she is in charge of every single day of my life” (*Brave*), and makes clear that she does not want to marry when she shouts: “I want my freedom” (*Brave*). The examples show that, when things do not go her way, she *complains* (f) as well. Merida shows that she is *active* (m) and *energetic* (m) when she rides through the woods on her horse, while firing arrows all the way. Her climb to the Queen’s Tooth to drink from the Fire Falls shows she is *courageous* (m) and *daring* (m) as her father claims that “only the ancient kings were brave enough to drink the fire” (*Brave*). Her courage is further underscored when she puts up with the giant bear Mur’do, shooting arrows at him to protect her family. Merida is *superstitious* (f) (r), for she follows the Will o’the Wisps, convinced that they will lead her to her fate and Merida almost instantly believes that the woodcarver is a witch. On both

occasions Merida shows she is *curious* (f) too. She is *affectionate* (f) and *soft-hearted* (f) to her family, especially to her little brothers, to whom she secretly serves cookies under the table. With the help of her brothers, Merida smuggles her mother, who has then already changed into a bear, out of the castle, which shows she is *inventive* (m) and *imaginative* (r). Merida is a *self-confident* (m) girl as Danielle Morrison states: “[she is a] new breed of Disney princess - one brimming with self-confidence” (19).

Merida’s character appears to match with the stereotypical image of the Irish. She is not pictured with an aggressive character but she stands tall in danger and she does not shrink away from violence against the bear Mur’do. She even takes up the sword against her father to protect her mother. So where Merida shows some kind of *aggressive* (r) and *pugnacious* (r) traits, the clans, including her father, seem masters of those traits. They are constantly fighting each other and besides being aggressive and pugnacious, they are portrayed as *quarrelsome* (r). Merida definitely inherited some of the latter because she is frequently quarrelling with her mother. She shows on several occasions that she is *quick-tempered* (r), especially in the relationship with her mother. The most striking example is that she tears up her mother’s tapestry with her sword when her mother wants to marry her off. Merida is *stubborn* (r) which she shows by not giving in to her mother’s wishes about marriage. When Merida constantly pulls a lock of hair from underneath her hood or invariably puts her bow upon the table, both against her mother’s wishes, she also shows her stubbornness. Merida is *industrious* (r) in the sense that she can hardly sit still at her mother’s lessons and that she is very active when she is free, riding on horseback, shooting her arrows, and climbing rocks. It takes a while but finally Merida is *honest* (r) about her mistake to buy a spell of the witch in order to change her mother.

Merida is the first princess of the princess franchise who does not want to marry a prince, but Disney did not make it that hard for her when you look at the possible candidates, as Rachael Michelle Johnson points out: “all three of her suitors are comically unattractive” (30). It makes one wonder what Merida would have done if one of them was a real hunk. Marriage was still a central theme in *Brave*, but Disney shifted in this film from the standard relationship between a prince and a princess to the relationship between a mother and a daughter.

Discussion

The Disney princess films are created stories, often based on fairytales or historical legends. They are not realistic tales, with all their magic, but the films use various stereotypes which are visible in our current world view.

The appearance of the princesses are very similar to each other, with their skinny posture and light skin tone, only Tiana and Pocahontas are clearly darker but then again the Chinese Mulan has a pale skin. They have a tiny waist, big eyes, and long hair (except for Snow White). Only Pocahontas has broader shoulders and hers and Merida's waists seem less tiny than that of the other princesses. However, according to scholars, the bodies of all princesses are out of proportion (Guizerix 44). Being a woman comes with a dress in Disney for all the princesses wear one, except for Mulan when she is pretending to be a man and Tiana when she is a frog. Pocahontas, Mulan, and Merida move like athletes while the other princesses move like elegant ballerinas (Saladino 12). Tiana is elegant in the few moments she is actually a human being and has more ballerina features. As a frog she shows she can be an athlete as well.

Disney has received criticism because of its lack of diversity but did not introduce the first non-white princesses until the 1990s. Even though the princesses share many physical characteristics, according to LaCroix, the white and non-white princesses differ in their representation of women, he states that "the elements of physique, costuming, and iconography construct a representation of the White women as romantic, delicate, and demure, whereas the women of color are depicted as physical, ethnic, and exotic/sexual" (223). A difference between the Caucasian princesses and the princesses of color is, among other things, the clothes they wear. The colored princesses show more skin, this is especially visible in Pocahontas. The long dresses of the white princesses "represent the White

characters as more demure and conservative, while associating the women of color with the exotic and sexual” (LaCroix 222), which is in line with the promiscuity and passion that accompanies the stereotypes of black and Indian women (Higginbotham 263; Smits 300).

The appearances of the princesses follow the mood of the moment in which the films were produced, whereas the earlier princesses are drawn more girlish and with the chastity of the 1930s and the 1950s, Pocahontas is a female, who resembles the supermodels of the 1990s. Mulan, however, is exceptional because she hides all of her sexuality, in male clothing but likewise in her female outfit. Tiana is, like Pocahontas, sexy, but in a more sophisticated and an unemotional way. Merida shows that her appearance is less important, portraying the multilateral fashion trends of the twenty-first century. Disney shows that the emphasis of women on their appearances is shrinking.

Not only has the attention to the princesses’ appearances changed over time, the activities and companionships of the princesses have changed as well. Snow White does not grow up with peers and is mainly occupied with domestic work while singing with her animal friends. Even in the house of the dwarfs, Snow White stays at home to do domestic work while the dwarfs are off to work. Aurora has basically the same occupation, there is, however, less emphasis on her domestic chores, maybe because her screen time is limited. Mulan is also portrayed as growing up without friends and she is educated to become a good housewife but she is very bad at it and becomes a male soldier instead. Pocahontas has a female friend with whom she grows up. She is occasionally pictured as working in the field with her female peers but has enough time to explore the woods and the rivers on her own. Tiana is portrayed as an ambitious girl, working double shifts as a waitress to make her dreams come true. She has friends but she simply does not have the time to hang out with them. After her adventure as a frog she is working in her own restaurant. She goes beyond the notion of simply working

and desires a career in which she owns her own restaurant. She “does not simply want to be a waitress, which breaks the traditional female gender role” (Johnson 22). Merida, on the other hand, is not ambitious. Her only ideal seems to be independent and free. She likes to ride on horseback and to fire shots with her bow and arrow. Like Pocahontas, she likes to climb the rocks. Merida hates the lessons of her mother, like she is rejecting school and rather learns from experience.

Disney has shifted from the dependent housewife stereotype from before WWII, to the self-confident woman who takes matters in her own hand, with or without a man. Tiana is the prototype of the ambitious, independent woman, who sets aside friendships or children to achieve her goal. Those women do not reject men, but only if they do not interfere with their ambition. Merida, I think, will do fine as a diplomatic ruler of her people when she comes of age. She still has to find herself and the adventures life can bring, as many young people nowadays want, like all the young female backpackers of this time, who are travelling around the world.

Love, accompanied by marriage, is the recurrent and important theme in all the analyzed Disney princess films. In the first two movies the princesses are dreaming of their Prince Charming and they fall in love at first sight when such a prince comes into their lives. Aurora faces an arranged marriage, but has the luck that she loves the husband she is forced upon. Their luck and happiness in life depended on marriage and their husband. Mulan and Pocahontas did not dream about princes. Their happiness did not depend on a love interest, but when John Smith came into Pocahontas' life, she fell in love very quickly. Where the ending of *Mulan* suggests that she will live happily ever after with a partner, Pocahontas chooses her responsibilities to her people above love. Pocahontas, like Aurora, is facing an arranged marriage, but, before they can be wed, her husband to be dies. Unlike Aurora,

Pocahontas rejected the arranged marriage, but it stays unclear if she would have been able to stop it. Tiana meets her future husband when he is a frog and it is not love at first sight. She does fall in love when she is a frog though and their marriage is very important because it turned out to be the key to get human again. For Merida, love and marriage are not yet important, while her freedom and independence is. She is the first Disney princess who does not fall in love. Rozario's remark that "in Disney's world it all seems so natural that this prince on his white horse should fall in love at first sight with a girl dressed as a scullery maid who sings to a bird" (38) seems to fit almost all of the analyzed films. In almost every analyzed film the prince immediately likes the appearance of the princess enough to hit on them. The princess, in turn, falls quickly in love with him as well, only Merida rejects all her suitors and ends up alone. One can question why Disney chose three suitors who were all not attractive at all. Merida's feminist belief would have been stronger, in my opinion, if she had resisted a proposal of a very handsome prince. Marriage and love have evolved in the Disney films from the most important thing in life to get happy to a side issue that can exist with other meanings in life.

Snow White and Aurora were two medieval or renaissance princesses. Princesses in that time married at a young age as Snow White and Aurora did. It were times of kings, castles, superstition, and witchcraft which all got a place in the first two Disney films. It is highly unlikely that princesses were doing domestic work, so that does not fit in the era of those Disney films. Chinese habits and surroundings are portrayed in *Mulan*, for example the custom of matchmakers was part of the ancient Chinese culture (Buckley Ebrey and Bonnie Smith 73). *Pocahontas* is set in the time the first British settlers reached the coast of what is now the US and the first encounters between Indians and settlers arose. The nobleness of the Indians in *Pocahontas* seems a bit exaggerated as is the immediate gold rush of the settlers. In

reality, the relationship started with more curiosity instead of animosity. Tiana is placed in New Orleans of the 1920s and the image of the time is well displayed, with its musical *laisse faire*. The “Great Gatsby”-like monsieur Labeouf fits well in that time. On the other hand it is hardly imaginable that white and black people intermingled and that Tiana was able to serve monsieur Labeouf in a restaurant with black customers and a black chef. In those times, facilities like restaurants for black and white were strictly separated due to the “separate but equal” doctrine and the Jim Crow laws that derived from it. Merida is set “in fourteenth-century Scotland, a time and place where women were known to be strong-willed and—as the movie’s title suggests—brave” (Garabedian 23). Disney seems to take the era and place the films are set in into account. Disney is, however, less accurate when it comes to black and white relationships in history. It would have suited Disney better when it would not have brushed the “separate but equal” doctrine completely under the rug.

The screen time of the princesses varies. While Snow White is almost constantly on screen, alternately shared with her stepmother, Aurora has little screen time. In *Sleeping Beauty* most of the screen time is for the good and the bad fairies and the prince, while the prince in *Snow White* is almost absent. Mulan and Pocahontas both have much screen time, as Tiana has but she is a frog for the greater part. As a real princess, Tiana has little screen time, which diminishes her role as the first black princess. Merida has a lot of screen time because almost all of the film revolves around her actions. It seems that the screen times varies in every movie. It is a pity, Disney granted Tiana so little screen time as a real black protagonist, because it loads suspicion that Disney does not want African Americans to be really important main characters.

Disney progressed when it comes to gender stereotypes. As the analyses show, the characteristics of Snow White and Aurora correspond largely with the feminine traits, with an

occasional characteristic that is considered as a masculine trait. Pocahontas possesses a considerable amount of feminine traits but also a considerable amount of masculine traits. Mulan has predominately masculine traits and few feminine traits. This can be partly explained by her pretending to be a man most of the time. Like Pocahontas, Tiana owns a mix of masculine and feminine traits, showing she is an independent and ambitious woman. Merida shows she is the stereotype of a new girl, one who is a match to any man and in no way inferior to him. Her attributes correspond overly with masculine traits, while she possesses only few feminine traits.

Four characteristics of Snow White are recognized of the stereotypical American. Because of the lack of screen time, it was hard to find a single characteristic of Aurora recognised to fit in a specific racial stereotype. The analysis shows that Pocahontas has nine traits that can be recognized as stereotypical Native American traits. For Mulan six traits of the Chinese stereotype are found. Tiana has some traits that fit in with “Negroes”, but she has more traits that suit a white American, which supports my remark that Tiana is more a white woman painted black. Merida has almost all the characteristics of the stereotypical Irish and the ones she misses are easily pinpointed to other characters in the film. While the Disney Company seems to have found a way to get rid of conventional stereotyping of gender, it seems they have fallen into the pitfall of ethnical stereotyping. In the first four analysed films ethnic stereotyping was moderate and serves the story’s background. In the *Princess and the Frog* one might say that there is too little mentioning of typical traits that stereotype or characterize blacks and in *Brave* the Irish stereotype is, in my opinion, too obvious.

Conclusion

Women have been in the spotlights since the introduction of photography and film and people have been exposed to stereotypes of women that filmmakers want them to see, ever since. The Walt Disney Company is a master of animated films and besides animals, animated humans are characters in their films. Like any other filmmaker, Disney uses stereotypes in their films, of which the Disney princess films are a special line.

The purpose of this thesis was to examine how gender and racial stereotypes are used in the portrayal of the Disney princess and if those stereotypes changed over time. After analyzing six princess films it became clear that Disney used stereotypes seventy years ago in the portrayal of Snow White and that stereotypes are still visible in contemporary Disney princess films, but they have changed. Since Snow White, the Disney princesses have become more masculine. The number of stereotypical feminine traits has reduced, while the masculine traits for the princesses have increased. Fifty years after their first princess film, Disney stepped back from the white leading princess and their princesses became more diversified. Pocahontas, Mulan, and Tiana represented the colored women who also grew up with Disney's films and now, finally, had princesses to identify with. Disney uses a moderate form of ethnical and racial stereotyping, with an exception of its latest princesses. Tiana may be a little too less of an African American woman, while Merida may be too much of the stereotypical Irish.

It seems that the Walt Disney Company always wants to be on the safe side. After introducing brave new gender stereotypes, they seemed to have missed the point with the racial stereotypes in the latest movies. Disney wanted a black princess for marketing reasons and to silence the critics of racism. Disney came up with a black princess with very little screen time and maybe too few black characteristics for black girls to identify with. It was

safe enough to be a marketing success but it was not enough to silence the criticism. Disney already introduced the new stereotype of the independent woman with Mulan, Pocahontas, and Tiana, little by little. Disney gave a boost to this stereotype in the film *Brave* but diminished the impact by letting the princess be an overly stereotyped Irish girl.

We can only hope for a brave new Disney who will show us a recognizable black princess, which she stays the entire film. We can only hope for a brave new Disney who stays out of too much ethnic and racial stereotyping. The first step is set, millions of girls are growing up with the independent mind of Merida. They will set the new future stereotypes for race and gender in a brave new world.

Limitations

The limited number of analyzed films is a limitation of this study, besides the limitations mentioned in “Methodology”. I examined six out of the eleven official princesses, two films per era. I was able to sketch a broad idea of the changes that had occurred in the past seventy-eight years by viewing six films, but for an absolute accurate observation of the evolution one should analyze all eleven princess films. Another limitation is that I was the only person who chose the examples in my analysis and connected them to the stereotypical traits, which reduces the objectivity of my study.

Recommendations for Further Research

For further study, I would recommend to analyze what ethnical and gender stereotypes are used for the prince and if and how those stereotypes have changed. I would recommend to study the development of ethnical and gender stereotypes of future Disney films. I would like

to see if Disney will come through with the promises that seems to be included in the steps already taken.

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Appendix A: Racial Traits Karlins, Coffman and Walters

Traits most frequently assigned to various racial and national groups by 100 Princeton students in 1933, 1957 and 1967.

Americans

	1933	1957	1967
Industrious	48	30	23
Intelligent	47	32	20
Materialistic	33	37	67
Ambitious	33	215	42
Progressive	27	27	17
Pleasure loving	26	7	28
Alert	23	9	7
Efficient	21	8	15
Aggressive	20	—	15
Straightforward	19	—	9
Practical	19	26	12
Sportsmanlike	19		9
Individualistic"	—		15
Conventional			17
Scientifically minded			15
Ostentatious			15

Negroes

	1933	1957	1967
Superstitious	84	41	13
Lazy	75	31	26
Happy-go-lucky	38	17	27
Ignorant	38	24	11
Musical	26	33	47
Ostentatious	26	11	25
Very religious	24	17	8
Stupid	22	10	4
Physically dirty	17		3
Naive	14		4
Slovenly	13		5
Unreliable		19	6
Pleasure loving'			26
Sensitive			17
Gregarious			17
Talkative			14
Imitative			13

Irish

	1933	1957	1967
Pugnacious	45	24	13
Quick tempered	39	35	43
Witty	38	16	7
Honest	32	11	17
Very religious	29	30	27
Industrious	21	8	8
Extremely nationalistic	21	20	41
Superstitious	18		11
Quarrelsome	14		5
Imaginative	13		3
Aggressive	13		5
Stubborn	13		23
Tradition loving			25
Loyal to family ties			23
Argumentative			20
Boastful			17

Chinese

	1933	1957	1967
Superstitious	34	18	8
Sly	29	4	6
Conservative	29	14	15
Tradition loving	26	26	32
Loyal to family ties	22	35	50
Industrious	18	18	23
Meditative	19		21
Reserved	17	18	15
Very religious	15		6
Ignorant	15		7
Deceitful	14		5
Quiet	13	19	23
Courteous			20
Extremely nationalistic			19
Humourless			17
Artistic			15

Source: Karlins, Marvin, Thomas L. Coffman, and Gary Walters. p. 4-5.

Appendix B: Racial Traits Native Americans

Adjectives and Statements Used to Code TV Portrayals of Native Americans.

Positive	Negative	Neutral
Wise	Savage	Different
Proud	Violent	Mystic
Friendly	Stupid	Dancing
Caring	Less Intelligent	Indians
Traditional	Dumb	Medical
Family-Oriented	Poor	Quiet
Nature -Oriented	Drunken/ Alcoholic	Middle Class
Pioneers	Uncivilized	
Spiritual	Gang Members	
Loving	Dysfunctional Families	

Source: Tan, Alexis, Yuki Fujioka, and Nancy Lucht. "Native American stereotypes, TV portrayals, and personal contact." *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 74.2 (1997): 265-284.

Appendix C: Charts of Gender Traits of Analyzed Disney Princesses

Found female traits per princess

Female traits	Snow White	Aurora	Pocahontas	Mulan	Tiana	Merida
Affected		x				
Affectionate	x	x			x	x
Anxious	x					
attractive	x	x	x		x	
charming	x	x				
complaining		x				x
curious	x	x	x	x	x	x
dependent	x	x			x	
dreamy	x	x	x		x	
emotional	x	x				x
fearful	x					
feminine		x				
fussy	x	x	x			
meek	x	x				
mild	x					
sensitive			x	x		
sexy			x			
shy	x	x				
soft-hearted	x		x	x	x	x
submissive	x	x		x		
superstitious	x		x		x	x

Found male traits per princess

Male traits	Snow White	Aurora	Pocahontas	Mulan	Tiana	Merida
active			x	x	x	x
adventurous			x	x	x	x
aggressive				x		x
ambitious				x	x	
autocratic			x	x		x
coarse						
courageous			x	x	x	x
cruel						
daring			x	x	x	x
dominant	x					x
energetic			x			x
enterprising					x	
forceful			x	x		x
independent			x			x
inventive			x	x	x	x
logical						
masculine						x
progressive			x	x	x	x
robust			x			
rude						
self-confident		x			x	x

Appendix D: Charts of Racial Traits of Analyzed Disney Princesses

Racial traits Americans	Snow White	Aurora	Pocahontas	Mulan	Tiana	Merida
industrious	x				x	x
intelligent				x	x	
materialistic						
ambitious					x	
progressive			x		x	
pleasure loving						
alert						
efficient	x					
aggressive						x
straightforward						
practical	x				x	
sportsmanlike			x	x		x
individualistic						
conventional	x					
scientifically minded						
ostentatious						

Racial traits Negroes	Snow White	Aurora	Pocahontas	Mulan	Tiana	Merida
Superstitious	x				x	x
lazy						
happy-go-lucky						
ignorant						
musical					x	
ostentatious						
very religious						
stupid						
physically dirty						
naïve	x				x	
slovenly						
unreliable						
pleasure loving						
sensitive						
gregarious						
talkative				x	x	
imitative						

Racial traits Irish	Snow White	Aurora	Pocahontas	Mulan	Tiana	Merida
pugnacious						x
quick tempered						x
witty						
honest						x
very religious						
industrious	x					x
extremely nationalistic						
superstitious	x				x	x
quarrelsome						x
imaginative						x
aggressive						x
stubborn				x		x
tradition loving						
loyal to family ties			x	x		x
argumentative						x
boastful						

Racial traits Chinese	Snow White	Aurora	Pocahontas	Mulan	Tiana	Merida
superstitious	x				x	x
sly				x		
conservative				x		
tradition loving				x		
loyal to family ties				x		
industrious						
meditative						
reserved				x		
very religious						
ignorant						
deceitful				x		
quiet						
courteous						
extremely nationalistic						
humourless						
artistic						

Racial traits Native Americans	Snow White	Aurora	Pocahontas	Mulan	Tiana	Merida
Wise						
proud						
friendly	x	x	x	x	x	x
caring	x		x	x		
traditional			x	x		
family-oriented			x	x		
nature-oriented			x			
pioneers						
spiritual			x			
loving			x			
savage						
violent						
stupid						
less intelligent						
dumb						
poor						
drunken/alcoholic						
uncivilized						
gang members						
dysfunctional families						
different			x			
mystic			x			
dancing						
indians						
medical						
quiet						
middle class						