Discussions on cultural racism
Analysis of American reviews of controversial Hollywood movies

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DISCUSSIONS ON CULTURAL RACISM: ANALYSIS OF AMERICAN REVIEWS ON CONTROVERSIAL HOLLYWOOD MOVIES

ABSTRACT

By erasing discourses of race, new racism switched the focus from race to culture, originating a new type of racist ideology called cultural racism, which is utilized to explain social status differences between White and non-White people a product of cultural deficiencies rather than a product of White discrimination. Since cultural racism finds its legitimization on stereotyped ideas of what the essence of a culture is, the act of harmfully appropriating other cultures – that is representing them or using their elements improperly – becomes extremely relevant. Contemporary popular American cinema still tends to represent almost exclusively White perspective, without taking into account other cultures' experiences or representing them problematically. Hollywood productions, like other media, contributed profoundly to spread simplified notions of race and stereotypes and in representing minorities and such misrepresentation and exploitations of minority groups' cultures keep happening in Hollywood. A Qualitative Content Analysis and Foucaultian Discourse Analysis were conducted on 54 movie reviews to answer the research question how are cultural racism and cultural appropriation discussed and defined in American newspapers, magazines and movie reviews websites' articles that are about six Hollywood movies (*The Last Airbender*; *Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time*; *Exodus: Gods and Kings*; *Pan*; *Doctor Strange; Ghost in the Shell*) that were released between 2010 and 2017? The results showed that references and discussions over issues related to cultural racism and cultural appropriation are not the primary focus of the articles, but are indeed present. Such discussions showed consciousness towards cultural racism and in some cases an open acknowledgment of the racial politics still being perpetuated in certain fields. Nevertheless, such acknowledgment is often expressed implicitly, in some cases followed by justifications or counterbalanced by positive reviews. The study also showed that the concept of culture is not brought forward often, while, on the contrary, there is higher presence of framing the discourses related to issues like misrepresentation and cultural racism in terms of race.

KEYWORDS: *New racism, Cultural racism, Color-blind ideology, Cultural appropriation, Representation in media, Representation in Hollywood*

Table of Contents

1. Introduction

1.1. New racial ideology and cultural racism

The way the idea of racism is approached and discussed in the United States of the 21st century is definitely different from how this notion was conceptualized in previous times. The type of racism that was active throughout the nineteenth century up until the 1950's and can be defined as "old racism" (Bonilla-Silva, 2000), has been replaced by a newly developed type of racial ideology. The usage of the world ideology is not random. A way of thinking can be defined as an ideology when a group of people shares and believes it as inherently true and acceptable as a set of beliefs (Griffin & Benshoff, 2011). What this thus means is that it is not just an attitude that belongs to an isolated group of people, but it has infiltrated daily life and people's common sense. Labeling new racism as an ideology does therefore make sense and represents the best way to define it, as it has become the norm for Whites in the Western world (Bonilla-Silva, 2000). Bonilla-Silva (2000) also outlines characteristics of new racism as follows. Firstly, this new racial ideology includes the notion "of cultural rather than biological difference" (Bonilla-Silva, 2000, p.188). What this means is that while old racism was mainly concerned with highlighting differences in terms of biological racial superiority, new racism shifted the focus. Its central concept is that of culture and cultural differences.

Secondly, it makes an abstract and decontextualized use of the neoliberal and individualist ideology as a way to justify inequalities. As will be discussed more in depth in the next chapter, new racism tends to adopt notions like fairness, freedom and meritocracy without properly contextualizing them. This means such terms are used as absolute concepts, abstracting them without acknowledging that racial inequality is still massively active and hiding such inequality behind the idea of fairness for everybody (Bonilla-Silva, 2000). This is very relevant because fairness and meritocracy became some of the main tools used to maintain the social structure and inequalities established by old racism. In other words, invoking values such as reward by merit, when for instance privileging a White person over non-White, is used as a way to justify such privilege. Basically, tendencies that are born out of racism are covered up and given legitimacy by appealing to the concept of fairness for everybody, both Whites and non-Whites, despite the fact that there still is a great racial inequality (Bonilla-Silva, 2000; Lewis, 2001; Simpson, 2010).

Understanding the shift from the concept of race to that of culture is critical, when discussing new racism. This is true for two reasons. First, because cultural differences have become the new way employed to justify racist behaviors whose main goal is to keep one group

separated from another. Second, because since the old notion of race was based on the idea that some groups were genetically superior, the fact that now the target of intolerance has shifted to the concept of culture creates the impression that discriminatory behaviors are not in their essence racist. As Bonilla-Silva (2000) clearly puts it, the new racial ideology is such that politicians that have clear racist tendencies can freely state they are not racists because they are only concerned in maintaining "the culture and values that have made their respective countries great nations" (p.189). The neoliberal frame within which this ideology exists helps the process of legitimization and justification of racist practices.

The change in conceptualizing the phenomenon of racism thus corresponds also to a change in the ways racism is perpetuated in Western countries. Discourses about new racism are particularly relevant within the context of American society. Race has always played, and still holds, a significant role within the structure of the society in the United States and in shaping the life outcomes of specific parts of the population (Smith, 1992). Historically, the country was structured on a bi-racial order, (that would be the group of White people opposed to all the other groups) and therefore all the groups that would stand on the non-White side, that is Native Americans, Blacks, Asians and Latinos, shared a similar experience (Bonilla-Silva, 2004). The situation the United States find themselves in represents some of the most important contradictions that define the new racial ideology. On the one hand, within the American society there is the spread idea that the United States have become a post-racial country, and this fact seems to be commonly accepted as almost a dogma (Bonilla-Silva & Dietrich, 2011). The election of Barack Obama in 2008 played a great role in reinforcing this idea of a post racial country and it speared to send the message that, as explained by Bonilla-Silva (2015), people's race did not represent a factor of discrimination in opportunities anymore. On the other hand, though, the reality is different and there is still a great disparity between the principles of fairness for everybody and the actual lives of minority groups. (Bonilla-Silva & Dietrich, 2011; Feagin, 2006; Griffin & Benshoff, 2011). One of the reasons as to why this happens is that, as already mentioned, new racism operates as a functionally working ideology. What this means is that, as it happens when an ideology works properly within a society, it permeated the way people think and conceptualize society to such a point that they are not able to tell the difference between objective thrust and socially constructed opinions (Griffin & Benshoff, 2011). Just like old racism, also cultural racism therefore now operates on different levels, and it is perpetuated, oftentimes unconsciously, even in social situations of daily life.

The focus put on culture consequentially also raised a series of new issues and discourses around such concepts, like that of cultural appropriation. The introduction of the concept of

cultural appropriation, which will be more largely defined and discussed in the second chapter of this research, is not recent. Discussions around cultural appropriation within the world of the Arts have been taking place for decades and has been happening for centuries, as artists have continuously borrowed ideas from one another, stories, motifs, thus always engaging with some act of appropriation (Young, 2008).

This same concept though, within the new contest of cultural racism, has started to assume new meanings, implications and consequences and therefore the way in which it is discussed is greatly different from how it was approached in older times. As culture is something that plays such a primary role in the way people conceptualize the world, it is clear how much influence a culture that is dominant can hold. In other words, maintaining cultural dominance means having the power to impose one's specific perspective on another and consequently also a social structure and order. When taking this into account, it is easy to understand why having cultural hegemony becomes extremely relevant also on a political level. This holds all the truer in contemporary society, where, as stated, culture has more and more become an extremely crucial tools to justify the preservation of social inequalities. Politics and culture are therefore two concepts that are very strongly intertwined, with culture being often built into politics and playing an important role in today's political landscape (Büyükokutan, 2011; Ziff & Rao, 1997).

As culture is thus becoming a concept with such a big influence and political role in the structure of society, consequentially the way in which cultures belonging to minority groups are portrayed in the media becomes crucial, as it will be shortly introduced in the following section.

1.2. Media, representation and racial politics
The fact that culture can often be linked to politics is extremely relevant when it comes to representing certain specific cultures or groups that belong to other cultures. This is because, as will be better discussed in the next chapter, when cultural traits are used as a tool to exclude and disadvantage certain parts of the population the way in which these part's culture is represented becomes crucial. Spreading false and biased representations, ideas and negative stereotypes on a cultural group can in fact lead as a consequence to a worsening of the real-life conditions of said group. Media have always represented one of the main ways through which people have been able to know about the world and get in touch with distant phenomena that were not necessarily a part of their own reality or experience. This role that media detained has been furthered even more with their mass diffusion. For this reason, they also play an active part in conveying ideas that are usually aligned with the dominant political-economic norms and that reflect the

ideological and cultural biases of context which emanates them (Bennett, 1996; Griffin & Benshoff, 2011). Like the other media, movies as well play a great part in constructing specific views on notions such as race, gender, sexuality and class and spreading them in popular culture. It therefore comes as no surprise that Hollywood productions constitute an important source to get an idea of the way minority groups have been seen and treated throughout the decades in the United States (Griffin & Benshoff, 2011).

One of the most common problematic aspects of movies that portrayed minority groups was oversimplified stereotyping (Erigha, 2015, Griffin & Benshoff, 2011; Lo, 2001). Stereotyping is problematic because it creates a perception about other individuals that is not always correct and might have a great, negative impact when these perceptions are accepted and used as a tool to privilege one group over another (Griffin & Benshoff, 2011). The portrayal of some groups who were once heavily stereotyped in movies definitely followed a positive progression, like in the case for instance of Black people (Gallardo, 2013). Nevertheless, stereotyped representations are only one of the several issues that still exist and arise when different cultures and racial groups are represented on the big screen. One of the most important, which also stands at the opposite pole from stereotyped representation, is lack of representation.

The scarcity of appropriate and meaningful presence in movies of representatives of the non-White groups has recently been more and more outed and accused of being a result of racial politics. These politics are used by the dominant group to keep the disproportion of access to the vehicles of transmission, such as the media, that are crucial to spread specific discourses and minimize the extent of subordinated groups' inequality and marginalization (Doane, 2006). Connecting the way cultures are portrayed to politics that tend towards a racist attitude is something that makes sense within the cultural racism era. Since culture has become one way to keep discriminating minority groups while advantaging the interests of mainly the White population, more and more attention is being paid to not only episodes of stereotyped representation, but also to those when certain cultures are not represented at all. It is interesting to notice how this lack of representation can happen in two different ways, both problematic. One way is to exclude the culture or the minority group all together from, for instance, a film story. Another way, which has recently started to be more and more pointed out and criticized, is to use a certain culture's characteristics or material without representing nor giving proper credit to the group to which the material originally belonged. When this happens, it can be referred to as cultural appropriation (Matthes, 2016; Rogers, 2006; Young, 2008; Ziff & Rao, 1997). In the case of movies this happens when, for instance, the plot includes characters or

elements that belong to a non-White / minority group but that members of such group are not hired and that White actors are casted instead.

As the concept of culture becomes more and more central to discussions about inequality, there has also thus been an increase in the receptivity of audiences to these themes. For this reason, some recent Hollywood productions that were released in the last decade have been the object of several controversies as they portrayed different races and cultures in a way that has generally been contested. Since these were movies produced on a big budget intended for an extremely large, potentially worldwide audience, it is clear why it is crucial to analyze the way they portray different races. The problems that arise from the depiction of other races and from the reproduction of stories that belong to or are about non-White cultures can be framed in the new racism/color-blind ideology and are connected to discourses of cultural racism and cultural appropriation.

1.3. Social and scientific relevance and research question

As previously discussed, Hollywood movies are an extremely important part of popular culture and have a major role in constructing meanings and conveying specific messages (Griffin & Benshoff, 2011). It was also stressed how media in general paly a primary role in spreading and reaffirming discourse that are functional to the dominant group. It is thus also crucial to understand whether and how possible racist or discriminatory behaviors displayed in Hollywood movies are discussed in other mass media. In this research, the focus will be on newspaper and magazine articles with movie reviews.

There are different reasons as to why this topic is worth researching. Firstly, starting from a social level, the research is relevant because it can provide an insight on what space and relevance the issues of cultural racism and cultural appropriation receive in American media coverage. Secondly, because understanding how discourses of race, culture and minorities are discussed by American media can be a step to also understand some of the power dynamics and politics still going on in American society. When using the word "discourse" it is important to remember how this does not solely mean debate. Rather, what should be intended by discourse is the attempt to control and influence others' perceptions of the social reality (Doane, 2006). What this thus mean is that both racial and cultural discourses are tools used by individuals and institutions to frame specific issues and reinforce their ideological and political advantage (Doane, 2006).

On a scientific level, this study will then contribute to providing an empirical definition of cultural appropriation, which is a concept that has been defined by academics but mostly

from a philosophical perspective. The research would make a contribution by analyzing it from a different one and researching how it is conceptualized in a different context. Moreover, as the discourses around race and culture are changing new definitions might be necessary. The study will therefore also contribute to understand how the more general concepts of racism and culture are changing, evolving and developing in contemporary American society and how they are offered and presented to the public.

The question that will drive the research will therefore be: how are cultural racism and cultural appropriation discussed and defined in American newspapers, magazines and movie reviews websites' articles that are about six Hollywood movies (*The Last Airbender*; *Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time*; *Exodus: Gods and Kings*; *Pan*; *Doctor Strange; Ghost in the Shell*) that were released between 2010 and 2017? To answer this research question, the study will be conducted with qualitative methods, using Qualitative Content Analysis and Foucaultian Discourse Analysis to analyze movie reviews on online articles collected on the two major movie reviews online sources rottentomatoes.com and rogerebert.com.

The next chapter of this dissertation, *Theoretical framework*, will provide the theoretical background to the empirical research. Thus, it will firstly contextualize it by broadly addressing the issue of racism and cultural racism within the United States. That is, it will be concerned with the attitude of the American society towards racial and cultural minorities and it will explain more in depth the dynamics that happened during the passage from traditional racism to new racism. Within this context, the chapter will also outline definitions for the concept of color-blind ideology and explain how it links to the issue of contemporary cultural racism. After this, the chapter moves on with introducing the concepts of culture and cultural appropriation, providing definitions and critical points of discussions. Lastly, it will proceed on discussing the characteristics and the issues related to cultural representation and appropriation in Hollywood movies and how they can impact society as a whole.

The third chapter, *Methods*, will present the methods adopted to conduct the research. It will provide the description and explanation of the chosen methodological approach and therefore justify the choice by showing why the selected method was considered as the most appropriate to carry on this kind of research. After this, it will describe what kind of data will be used for the research. This will also include how the collection of the data was conducted, the justification of the choices made while selecting the relevant data, discussion on the amount of units collected. Then, the chapter will have a dedicated subsection to describe the operationalization of the analysis.

The *Results and Discussion* chapter will then be used to report the results found from the analysis of the data and show how they connect and relate to the research question and the answer. It will firstly start with the presentation of the findings, focusing on the most important elements to notice and then proceeding to describe and discuss such findings more in depth. The first results to presented will be those drawn from the quantitative content analysis. This analysis showed that references and discussions over issues related to cultural racism and cultural appropriation are indeed present in the articles to a certain extent. Nevertheless, such discussions are not the primary focus of the articles and there is a greater attention put on technical aspects of the movies. Secondly, the chapter will present the results of the Foucaultian Discourse Analysis. It will discuss the findings related to the definitions used in the data to describe concepts related to cultural racism and cultural appropriation. Then it will also discuss more in detail the ways – in terms of linguistic and stylistic choices – the data engage in discussions related to cultural racism and cultural appropriation.

The *Conclusion* chapter will provide firstly a summary of the findings and a clear answer to the research question. It will then provide the final overlook on the study, making a point to stress again how the findings resulted from the analysis can be related to the broader theoretical background and what can their implications be. Lastly, it will address the limitations of the study and provide some suggestions on future fields of research.

2. Theoretical framework

This chapter will lay the theoretical basis for the present research. That is to say, it will provide a description of the theoretical frame within which the current study takes place. Perspectives will be presented and definitions provided in order to give an overlook of what are the main current positions in the new racism debate and also to familiarize with important concepts related to this topic. Firstly, this chapter will provide an introduction on the broader topic of how current American society relates to racism and cultural racism. Therefore, the first subchapter will be concerned with presenting definitions to these concepts, explaining the different aspects of new racism, how it operates in contemporary society and why it is a crucial issue to discuss. The second paragraph moves on to focus on perspectives and discussions on the concepts of culture and cultural appropriation. Starting from arguments on the definition of culture and the problems arising when different cultures meet each other, the section will then provide a more in depth look on the matter of cultural appropriation, analyzing how it can be defined, classified and why it can be problematic. Finally, the third subchapter will present issues of cultural appropriation and racial misrepresentation in Hollywood movies, providing an explanation as to how it links to the specific topic of this research. This chapter thus constitutes an important bridge between the research and the broader context it belongs to. It provides a theoretical background to the whole thesis and thus helps further explaining the relevance of the topic researched. It will also be useful to clarify some concepts and ideas that will be later deployed in the following Methods and Results chapters.

2.1 The American society and new cultural racism

Debates over racism within the American society are nothing completely new. Since the founding of the country, and even earlier with the colonization of the Americas in the fifteenth century, the United States of America have based their whole economic and political system on the oppression of minorities (Feagin, 2006). The abolition of slavery in the second half of the nineteenth century and the end in the 1960's of the system of segregation that was established by Jim Crow Laws represented only juridical steps toward an equality of rights. These important goals were signs that new ideas were spreading and that they were leading towards equality. Victories like these makes it undeniable that great changes in a positive direction have happened in the United States. Nevertheless, this does not mean that the contemporary American society has reached a state of full and complete equality between its citizens. A large number of academic studies (e. g. Belletti & Wade, 2008; Bonilla-Silva, 2000; Bonilla-Silva & Dietrich,

2008; Bonilla-Silva & Dietrich, 2011; Feagin, 2006) analyzed this issue. They showed how racism and prejudices are still a reality within the U.S. society and how people of color are still highly discriminated in all societal institutions, from trial courts to workplaces. The institutionalization of racism, which can also be referred to as institutionalized discrimination (Griffin & Benshoff, 2011), has led to one major consequence. That is, racism has become something subtler and less explicit (Smith, as in Bonilla-Silva & Dietrich, 2011). There are different reasons why this new collocation of racism is highly problematic. Firstly, because it allows racism to be deployed without people actually noticing it. Secondly because, as a consequence of this, it becomes more difficult to spot and eradicate. One important event that played a major role in reinforcing this idea of the United States as a society finally free from racism was the election in 2008 of Barack Obama. Obama's election as the 44th American president has been celebrated as the unmistakable evidence of how race was not a discriminating factor for opportunities of Black (and non-White) people in the new America (Bonilla-Silva & Dietrich, 2011).

To better understand the significance of this episode and the relevance of the consequences that it implies for the future of racism in the U.S. it is necessary to frame it within what Bonilla-Silva (2000) identifies as a post-racial era. The main characteristic of this post-racial American society is the color-blind ideology, which represents the starting point of the new, current form of racism. This color-blind ideology can be described as a way to approach the concept of race, which denies its salience and tends to reprimand whoever talks about race (Hall, 2008). In the frame of new racism belongs also the concept of cultural racism. Cultural racism is strongly linked to the color-blind ideology and it can be seen as its consequence. It ultimately constitutes a form of racial ideology, but, in line with the color-blind ideology, it does not use the concept of race itself. Rather, the attention is switched from race to culture. In other words, what this means is that the idea underpinning cultural racism is not that non-Whites are inferior human beings, as traditional racism professed. What cultural racism targets as element of discrimination are the cultural practices of minorities and non-White people, which are presented as biological and therefore deployed as a way to justify race-based inequality (Taguieff, 2001).

Another important strategy deployed by new racism to justify White predominance is to invoke the ideals of equality, freedom and meritocracy in a way that is abstract and completely decontextualized. What this implies is that White people now do not justify their privileged position by claiming their superiority on non-Whites anymore. Rather, they defend it by claiming to be acting in the name of fairness and equality for everybody. In other words, they convey the

message that the success a person reaches in his or her life is the product of only their own virtues, as if racism could never be in the picture when it comes to a Black or Latino person's failures. This is precisely what Bonilla-Silva (2000) identifies as "color-blind racism", which is the major tool used by White people in the U.S. to maintain and justify the contemporary racial order (Bonilla-Silva & Dietrich, 2011).

Both color-blind racism and cultural racism are important concepts that help explain and define the context of new racism, and both of them ultimately underpin the idea that the social status non-Whites live in is not a result of White racism, but rather it originates from non-White people's cultural deficiencies, like for instance lack of values (Hughey et al, 2015). As direct consequence of this, discourses about racism in the United States in the post-racial era might seem redundant because racism operates in a much subtler way from "traditional" racism. As further evidence, a numerous series of tragic episodes that saw Black people being victimized by police brutality happened in the last few years, and similarly a number of studies (e.g. Dominguez et al., 2009) showed that to a great extent people of color – that is, African-, Latino-, Asian, Native-America descent (Hall, 2008) – are still in fact disadvantaged in several spheres of their life, from education, to workplace, to justice. As already stated, other studies researched and discussed the presence of racism in American society and its manifestation. Feagin (2006) in *Systemic Racism* points out how events and episodes of racial violence and oppression have been a part of America's "extremely racist history" (p.xi) for as long as the United States of America existed, including the current days. He talks of a country that was founded and designed on White-on-Black oppression (with "Black" including also other people of color). American society is therefore still shaped and constructed in the form of a racial hierarchy (Feagin, 2006) that is still incredibly alive and bears great consequences in the lives of minorities.

Ultimately, the main point all the aforementioned studies highlight is that racism has been extremely internalized by contemporary American society and made such a part of everyday behaviors that it is hard to realize it is happening. This perspective helps explaining for instance why serious episodes of racism are still in large part covered up and why political parties hesitate to address racial issues and do not take strong positions to eradicate them (Feagin, 2006). The internalization of racist practices and mindsets is also the reason why there is a general tendency among Whites to believe that what lays behind minorities' scarcer opportunities is not discrimination (Bonilla-Silva & Dietrich, 2011). Rather, White people tend to justify this gap as a product of a wider number of other factors, such as class, poverty or segregation-culture. This position is what Bonilla-Silva & Dietrich (2011) define as minimization of racism and can be seen as one of the main consequences of new racism.

There is also another reason as to why it is problematic to claim that factors such as those mentioned above are what is truly behind differences among Whites and non-Whites. This argument in fact assumes that race and, for instance, class are two independent elements, which is not the case. People's conditions of life are extremely intertwined with race and racial stratification (Bonilla-Silva & Baiocchi, 2011). To have a clearer idea of how American society's structured in terms of racial stratification, Bonilla-Silva (2004) presents the following hierarchical model. He suggests a tri-racial system where the hierarchical scale has White people at the top, "honorary Whites" in the middle and "collective Black" at the bottom (pp. 932). In the first category of "Whites" are included "traditional" Whites, new White immigrants, assimilated Latinos and light-skinned multiracial subgroups. The group of "honorary Whites" is an intermediate racial group comprising most light-skinned Latinos, Japanese, Chinese and Koreans Americans, Asian Indians and most of Middle Eastern Americans. Finally, at the bottom we find the "collective Black". This group includes Blacks, dark-skinned Latinos, Vietnamese, Cambodians, Laotians and Filipinos. This model is interesting to keep in mind also because it gives an overview of what are the different groups that are usually referred to as minorities. In this regard, it is important to clear what is meant by the term "minority". As Griffith & Benshoff (2009) highlight, the usage of the word minority in informal everyday conversations as way to describe groups who are marginal to the privileged group holds a problematic implication. It implies they are numerically smaller than the group who holds the power, which is not always the case. For this reason, the term minority group should rather refer to types of people who hold less social power (Griffith & Benshoff, 2009).

In conclusion, one of the most important consequences brought by the diffusion of the color-blind ideology and new racism is represented by the creation of a socio-economic-political system that is racist at its core and on a practical level, although not formally and institutionally. This means that American society keeps being essentially designed for White people and continually produces an environment that is hostile and oppressive for people of color (Hall, 2008). A similar point is made by Griffin and Benshoff (2011), who argue that the position of some cultural theorists – that is that the only way to finally overcome issues related to race and culture is to stop discussing them – is often used to actually ignore or re-write and downplay America's racist past and present. The fact that discourses on race are less recognized as social concepts in contemporary America does not mean they have disappeared from its society, nor that they have no more relevance in it. As the United States are still greatly dealing with

divisions based on race, it is more than ever important to discuss race when debating concepts such as culture or politics (Griffin & Benshoff, 2011).

2.2 Cultural appropriation

As discussed, one of the major consequences of the spreading of the color-blind ideology has been that of shutting down explicit and public debates around the concept of race. However, since racism and discrimination are still a reality in the American society, most of the discourses that were once connected to racism have now been shifted to the concept of culture (Bonilla-Silva, 2000). Providing a clear definition to the concept of culture is not easy. As conceptualized by Young (2008) culture is just "a collection of people who share a certain range of cultural traits" (Young, 2008, p.15) and he argues the impossibility of being essentialist about a notion like culture. Especially in the era of globalization, not only it is hard to define what a culture is but it is also becoming more and more difficult to differentiate one culture from another. Appiah (as in Young, 2008) raises questions over the usefulness of such term in a world like the contemporary one, where there has been an increasing overlap of cultures. He dismisses as rather futile the claims of groups in the United States, such as African-Americans and immigrants, to recognize and separate their cultural distinctiveness in a time where society is more and more homogenous. The problem in defining culture lays in the fact that different conceptualization can lead to different social consequences.

According to Rogers (2006) there can be risks both in highlighting the hybrid nature of contemporary cultures and in trying to research authenticity and purity. In the first case, on the one hand hybridization can positively picture a world where elements of different cultures are freely shared. On the other, it risks perpetuating acts of cultural exploitation, as it delegitimizes the claims of culture ownerships from minorities. In the second case, preservation of cultures' authenticity risks to reinforce separation between cultures and thus underpins dynamics of subordination. Nevertheless, it might represent a way for members of a subordinate group to re-appropriate their identity and resist processes of assimilation and exploitation.

The main reason behind such ambivalences lays in the fact that cultural exchanges as innocent practice in which people share their cultural elements without any political, economic or power implications is an idealization of a practice that probably never happened under such conditions (Rogers, 2006). In other words, the idea of a world-wide society where cultures are mixed and blended together underpins the assumption that this mixing process happens without any kind of hierarchy between cultures. The way in which cultures meet and interact can therefore become highly problematic when taking into consideration hierarchies and power gaps

existing between them. Cultural appropriation is one of the main notions connected to these issues.

The problems in defining what cultural appropriation is and whether it should be contested or not are very much linked with the issues in defining the very concept of culture and reflect the same ambiguities. The largest study on the topic of cultural appropriation was conducted by the philosopher James O. Young (2008), who provided some major guidelines on how to define and classify the concept and the acts of cultural appropriation. In Young's (2008) perspective cultural appropriation can concern a large range of different items, from anthropological data to genetic material to religious material. This thus means that, although there might be some overlapping among the different categories (i.e. an appropriated artwork that also has a spiritual meaning), cultural appropriation of the arts is only but one of the ways in which this phenomenon can manifest. Young (2008) suggests three possible types of cultural appropriation: object appropriation, content appropriation and subject appropriation. The first one occurs when "the possession of a tangible work of art is transferred from members of one culture to members of another culture" (Young, 2008, p.6). A painting of an indigenous artist sold in Japan, for instance, constitutes an act of object appropriation. Then there is content appropriation, which happens when an artist from a culture uses an idea that was originally expressed by an artist coming from a different culture. The last form of appropriation, subject appropriation, does not concern an artistic product. Subject appropriation happens when outsiders of a culture represent aspects, institutions or individuals who belong to another culture (Young & Brunk, 2009). In other words, it occurs when outsiders depict the lifestyle and culture of insiders.

Just like the case of exchanges between cultures, questions similarly arise on whether acts of cultural appropriation should be considered something damaging or not. Young (2008) considers it harmful when it can be seen as theft or assault. The first case, theft, might happen if outsiders take "without permission a property that rightfully belongs to insiders" (p.63). Particularly interesting, when he talks about theft, is Young's (2008) take on the appropriation of intangible goods, that is intellectual properties. What he argues is that abstract properties such as for example ideas for stories or designs and in general expressions of artistic ideas cannot belong to a specific culture nor person. Even if he does not dismiss completely the argument that some intangible goods like traditional songs or story can be a culture's collective property, Young (2008) still denies that artists appropriating these types of goods (by for instance translating a traditional story) are acting wrongly. He rather argues that this kind of appropriation is harmful

and can be considered theft only when it causes damage to the members of that culture, but this happens, in Young's (2008) opinion, only very seldom.

He then continues describing the second harmful cultural appropriation practice, that is assault. An act of cultural appropriation can be seen as assault when misrepresentation occurs. Misrepresentation can be defined as the act of representing a specific culture by giving a portray of it that is not truthful, is pictured distortedly and creates or perpetuates false impressions and stereotypes of that culture. There are different reasons as to why misrepresentation can be harmful (Young, 2008). Members of one culture misrepresenting members that are insiders of another one can in fact be offensive, undermine the culture as a whole and can be considered as an attack (Young, 2008; Young & Brunk, 2009). Something very important highlighted by Young (2008) is how the process of harmful misrepresentation does not flow in two directions. What this means is that may the case occur of a minority culture misrepresentation a dominant group, this act cannot be seen as damaging as the opposite case. The reason behind it is that minority groups, whether they be numerically or socially overpowered, are exposed and vulnerable in a way politically and numerically dominant groups are not (Young, 2008). The opposite case of misrepresentation, that is faithful representation, might be harmful just as well. An accurate representation of a culture made by another one might in fact bring success to the latter rather than the first. What this might result in is an economic damage to the original culture whose cultural elements were exploited. In its most extreme form, representation might lead to the ultimate threat for a culture, that is destruction by assimilation (Young, 2008; Young & Brunk, 2009).

However, Young's (2008) overall argument is that cultural appropriation is something that has always happened in the field of arts and only rarely the process of borrowing became harmful or offensive, as in the aforementioned cases. To the objection that indigenous cultures are disadvantaged and have been often victim of appropriation, Young (2008) responds that it was not the appropriation of artistic content itself the main element that led to this oppression. Basically, what he argues is that cultural appropriation is different from racism and xenophobia and it is the latter two that need to be considered as the main sources of the injustices bore by minorities. In general, made exception for the few cases that have been illustrated here, Young (2008) thus considers cultural appropriation arts as something not threatening and, on the contrary, almost necessary for the flourishing of the arts.

Young's (2008) conclusion is not commonly shared though, and there are other scholars who disagreed with his position in their studies. Matthes (2016) also researched whether cultural appropriation in the arts should be considered morally wrong or not. What he argues is that there

is a mismatch between the opinion of philosophers such as Young who debated on the topic and the concerns raised by scholars from different disciplines. The main issue he highlights is that cultural appropriation has the potential power to "oppress and silence" (Matthes, 2016, p.345) as it takes away the voice from the legitimate owners of a culture's element. For this precise reason, cultural appropriation is seen by many scholars as always morally objectionable in its very essence and therefore also defined as the denial of cultural specificity. That is the denial of the right of members of a culture to have their traditions and histories told from within and not by the mediation of another culture's members (Todd, as in Matthes, 2016). Consequentially to this definition, Matthes (2016) argues that it is possible to talk about cultural appropriation only when members of a dominant cultural group appropriate elements of a marginalized group and not the other way round.

This perspective also resonates with Rogers' (2006) argument, according to which every act of appropriation is strictly linked to the socio-economic-political contexts wherein it occurs and can both have an impact on it and in turn be shaped by it. The reason why this occurs is that every type of communicative relation, including acts of communication and cultural appropriation, occurring between two groups reflect the sociopolitical positions occupied by the groups involved (Fiske, as in Rogers, 2006). What this means is basically that when two groups, or two cultures, dialogue or exchange properties with each other, they are not doing so standing on the same level but rather the way each interacts with the other will correspond to its power within society. For this reason, the relations of power between groups become the main element Rogers' (2006) uses as basis for his classification of cultural appropriation acts. According to his model, there are four different types of appropriation acts: cultural exchange, cultural dominance, cultural exploitation and transculturation. The first case takes place when two cultures exchange their tangible or intangible goods on a level of roughly equal power. Cultural dominance happens when a subordinate cultures uses elements of a dominant culture because the dominant culture imposed them on the subordinate one. The third type of appropriation act, cultural exploitation, refers to when a dominant culture makes use of elements of a subordinate group without reciprocity, permission or compensation. Lastly, transculturation is the creation of cultural elements by multiple cultures in such a way that it is very problematic to confer the ownership of the element to only a specific single culture.

It is clear how the premises from which Rogers (2006) builds this classification is very different from Young's (2008) standpoint. Contrariwise to Rogers (2006), Young's (2008) perspective does not take into account socio-economic and political factors to classify acts of cultural appropriation and only focuses on distinguishing when it is possible to say that one

culture appropriated another by introducing the general notions of outsiders and insiders. Scholars (e. g. Matthes, 2016) observed and discussed a problem intrinsic to this classification though. The issue with dividing members of a culture into insiders and outsiders is that using such distinction might lead to that very cultural essentialism that Young (2008) himself rejects. Matthes (2016) refers to cultural essentialism as the action of creating criteria for cultural membership that ultimately construct boundaries that are perceived as essential or necessary. First and main consequence of these criteria is thus the fact that cultures are represented as homogeneous and static. In this sense, cultural essentialism is not dissimilar, and it is also as equally dangerous, as stereotypes and misrepresentation. The reason why cultural essentialism is problematic is that it tends to conceptualize culture as strictly bounded to a person's essence (Rogers, 2006), as if an individual was connected to a specific culture almost in a genetic biological way. Since one of the main characteristics of new racism, as mentioned in the previous section, is that it justifies race-based inequality by seeing cultural practices as biological (Taguieff, 2001), what essentialism might lead to is cultural stereotyping and fetishization (Rogers, 2006).

This section analyzed how cultural appropriation is broadly defined as the exploitation of an element that belongs to a subordinated culture by another dominating culture. Cultural appropriation is contested for two main reasons. Firstly, because it might lead to the enrichment of the dominant group which appropriated something from a culture, without benefiting the other group. Secondly because it might lead to misrepresentation or fetishization, both harmful and threatening for minorities groups as they lead to stereotypes and cultural essentialism, which is, ultimately, another form of racism.

2.3. Representation and cultural appropriation in Hollywood
When stating that artists very rarely engage with harmful cultural appropriation, one of the points Young (2008) makes is that it is the processes of assimilation and imposition of one's culture on another that represent the real threat for subordinated cultures. He also emphasizes how these impositions usually come essentially from big corporations, such Disney or Sony, which commodified culture and not smaller artists. He is not the only one who connects cultural issues to the usage media make of culture and who highlights their role within American society. Mass media such as television, magazines, movies and now the internet have been a central part of American culture since the 19th century. They also represent the main source of information about other cultures. Therefore, this means that the way they represent other cultures holds a great power and strongly shapes the public, mainstream perception of the people who belong to a

specific group. Media images that daily reinforce skin-color bias can have serious implications in all fields of public and social life, included for instance the workplace, where whether or not a person's skin is light or dark can be of a great relevance (Harrison et al., 2008).

In this context, one form of cultural appropriation, using Young's (2008) classification, becomes particularly relevant and problematic: subject appropriation. According to Young and Haley (2009), subject appropriation happens when member from one culture, such as for instance artists working within different types of media, represent elements or people belonging to another culture. Once again, one of the main risks connected to this practice is misrepresentation, and this, as it was already discussed in the previous paragraph, is a damaging and often offending form of cultural appropriation (Young & Haley, 2009). Misrepresentation of subordinated groups in Hollywood movies is something that happened more often than not.

Countless examples can be provided as proof of how filmmakers, since old Hollywood's times, carried on the practice of portraying people from other cultures in a stereotyped way that deeply harmed them (Young and Brunk, 2009). Whether it is a clearly negative portrayal or a sympathetic one, the risks of damage for subordinated cultures is still similar. To mention an example, one can think of the depiction of Native Americans, cruel and savage in old Westerns, good and wise in the movie *Dance with Wolves* (1990). Both of these representations can be harmful, as they carry on simplistic stereotypes that bring no benefits to the minority group. (Lutz as in Young and Brunk, 2009; Young and Haley, 2009).

The same thing happened with the representation of other cultures and races. Different studies have been conducted on the role of non-White people within Hollywood production, how they are presented and what kind of interactions and relations are usually portrayed between non-White and White people. In the case of African Americans for instance, even in more recent times there has still been a high reluctance in movies to hire a Black person as main protagonist without pairing them up with a White person (Guerrero, as in Gates, 2010). The role usually saved for Black actors is that of sidekick and especially in old Hollywood movies Black characters were always represented in a stereotyped way and never in leading roles (Griffin & Benshoff, 2011). Even when more recently mainstream cinema presented Black protagonists, still they are presented only in such ways that are somehow relatable with White audience's experience (Gates, 2010). That is to say, the usage of Black-White relationships in Hollywood movies was mainly a way to maximize box-office profits and attract a wider audience rather than moved by a real interest in portraying realistic and believable Black characters (Gates, 2010; Johnson, 1959). The main result of this practice has therefore been the creation of

stereotyped Black characters in movies whose otherness is always contained so that it does not pose a threat to White dominance.

This is the same conclusion reached by Gallardo (2013) in her analysis of the role of Black protagonists in Hollywood sci-fi productions, presenting an argument that challenges the notion that the "color blind" society meant the end of discourses and issues of race. Analyzing famous Hollywood sci-fi movies, such as *The Matrix*, *I, Robot* and *I am Legend*, her study aims to show how the way Hollywood portrays Black characters is still a product of "White apprehension" (Gallardo, 2013, p.221) and even if apparently there has been a positive progression in the roles given to Black characters, ultimately their blackness is contained and commodified. Therefore, Black actors still have to struggle to express themselves within an environment where the decision makers, such as directors, writers, players, and so on, mainly White and therefore Black experience is strongly disadvantaged and almost always reinterpreted under a White perspective (Gallardo, 2013).

The fact that the portrayal of other cultures made by Hollywood highly relies on essentialism (Hiramoto, 2010) is something that can be seen even better in the way Hollywood movies perpetuated representations of Asian people. Probably even more than with Black culture, the term Asian culture holds an extremely wide range of different realities. The adjective Asian can refer to people coming from different countries, each representing a different lifestyle and with its own tradition. Nevertheless, this distinction almost never made it to the big screen, and Hollywood created the label of the "Asian character" who would hold the same characteristics, no matter if Indian, Korean or Japanese, and perpetuated a very stereotyped and generic idea of what "Oriental" is (Griffin & Benshoff, 2011).

Just like what happens with Black characters, Asian characters as well have thus been usually represented with specific traits that remained unchanged and ultimately served the goal of idealizing the concept of Asian and reassuring the White audience of the safeness of "the other" (Hiramoto, 2015). What this means is that the presence of Asian people or Asian cultural elements within Hollywood movies have been made extremely exotic and stereotyped in order to make it fit within the White social order. One of the evidence of this argument is the fact that Asian characters have been either used to show martial arts action as a source of entertainment for White audiences or portrayed as nerdy, asexual and feminine (Hirose & Pih, 2010).

Next to the tendency to show an exotic and sensationalized East, Hollywood also carried on a stable tradition of making non-Asian heroes appropriate Asian cultural elements. Starting from the 1970's, a first wave of Asian influenced action films brought the spreading of non-Asian stars playing characters who could skillfully master martial arts such as for

instance Chuck Norris and non-Asian characters have been protagonists of martial arts movies such as *Karate Kid* (1984) or the more recent *The Last Samurai* (2003) (Hiramoto, 2015). As it is clear, there is therefore again a tendency to narrate Asian experience as well through a non-Asian standpoint, reinforcing this way White hegemony.

Hollywood appropriation of Asian cultural elements goes beyond the field of martial arts, and it is visible also in other types of productions. An example of this can be found in Hollywood remakes made in more recent years of Japanese products, such as animation movies. In line with positions explained earlier, that claimed fetishization to be one of the main consequences associated with misrepresentation, the study of Posadas (2014) as well highlights how these sorts of remakes run the risk of fetishizing the notion of what is authentically Japanese.

Even when Japanese productions are taken and brought to the West, still the products introduced to American screens are always highly adjusted and domesticated. Animes are usually localized by changing the names of the character from Japanese names to American ones, removing any ethnic marker. In general, the tendency is to cover as many traces that could link the final product to its original source as possible (Posadas, 2014). The practice of changing original storylines, settings and characters and distancing them from the original source has been referred to as "white washing" and casting choices have been one of the main elements of these productions that have been accused of it (Posadas, 2014). Therefore, what ultimately happens is that what seems to be an appreciative tribute to another culture becomes a highly modified and "white-washed" product where elements of the other culture are only used as a tool to profit on the appeal of the exotic, but are intrinsically products made by and for a White audience. Under this perspective the concept of white washing becomes extremely intertwined to that of cultural appropriation and might be defined as one of its consequences. It is the ultimate way to take and then exploit elements coming from another culture by using them without making any, or appropriate, references to it.

Media as popular as Hollywood movies hold a strong power to naturalize their own conventions and induce the audience to be an accomplice in the process (Hiramoto, 2015) and in more than one case misrepresentations within movies had devastating effects on the popular understanding and treatment of minority groups (Griffin & Benshoff, 2011). This is one of the main reasons as to why the tendency to standardize certain groups' behaviors, or using elements of other culture in a decontextualized or distorted way is extremely problematic. Stereotypes can be used to maintain a specific social order and favor one group on another

(Griffin & Benshoff, 2011) and therefore the way a powerful media like Hollywood chooses to depict non-White realities is crucial.

This chapter introduced the concepts of cultural racism and cultural appropriation, providing definitions and describing how they are connected to each other. It also introduced the concept of color-blind ideology, which is referred to as one of the main ideas underpinning new racism. This ideology is used as a tool to put aside discourses of race and undermine the idea that racial politics still have a big influence in numerous decisions happening within American society. By erasing discourses of race, new racism switched the focus from race to culture, originating a new type of racist ideology called cultural racism. Cultural racism consists of seeing cultural traits as biological and therefore it is utilized to explain social status differences between White and non-White people rather than a product of White discrimination, a product of cultural deficiencies. Cultural racism is therefore one of the reasons behind numerous contemporary racial politics and is linked to the concept of cultural appropriation, which was explored in the second paragraph of this chapter. Understanding the issues around the concept of cultural appropriation, along with its connection to cultural racism, is key to also grasp the role of these two phenomena in issues of representation. This chapter mentioned the risks run by the creation of criteria to define what should belong to a culture and what not, the main one being cultural essentialism, which can lead to misrepresentation and stereotypes. Hollywood productions, like other media, contributed profoundly to spread simplified notions of race and stereotypes and in representing minorities like Native Americans, African Americans and Asian Americans. These misrepresentation and exploitations of minority groups' cultures keep happening in Hollywood. Since cultural racism finds its legitimization precisely on stereotyped ideas of what the essence of a culture is, the act of harmfully appropriating other cultures – that is representing them or using their elements improperly – becomes extremely relevant. Contemporary popular American cinema still tends to focus almost exclusively on White experience and perspective, either ignoring other cultures' experiences or representing them in a problematic way (Gates, 2010).

3. Method

3.1 Methodology

A qualitative approach was selected as the most appropriate to conduct the present study. There are several reasons as to why this was considered more effective than a quantitative approach to answer the research question. The focus of this research is to find out in which ways the concepts of racism and culture are framed and discussed. The main goal is thus to find out the main patterns in the framing and contextualization of these concepts. In other words, this means that, in order to understand what are the general meanings that are being conveyed with specific themes, the attention has to be focused on specific elements, such as the way in which specific themes are presented. Given such nature of the research it is thus clear that a quantitative study would not represent the appropriate way to answer the question.

Not only the nature of the research question affected the choice of method, but also the type of data set. As it will be explained more in depth and details in the following sections, the data set for this research is constituted by newspaper and magazines' articles. When analyzing this kind of data, it is important to remember that articles are written within a specific social, economic and political context. Therefore, they are the product of a delimited situation that conveys the view of those who write. The most relevant part of the analysis of a material like this is therefore represented by the way in which specific topics are discussed, or, to put it in another way, the words that are used to talk about them. This type of data is extremely suitable for a qualitative study also because of some typical characteristics of qualitative analysis, which are flexibility and openness (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Language and discourses are in fact not always straightforward or lacking in ambiguities. For this reason, a qualitative approach is essential to wholly and fully grasp all the different nuances of meaning, as it provides the possibility to analyze not only what is being said but also silences or implicit elements of the discourse (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002).

Two qualitative methods combined, used at different stages, were considered as the most appropriate to use to examine the data in detail: Qualitative Content Analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis. Qualitative content analysis was the primary method used in the present study. As already stated, the sample material is constituted by articles. Permitting to systematically describe a selected aspect of the meaning in qualitative data, that is those that are related to the research question, is one of the main characteristic of Qualitative Content Analysis (Schreier, 2013). This means that this method allows to research the topic in an extremely specific and detailed way, so that every nuance of meaning that is relevant to the research

question can be properly explored. The strictness of the coding process required in Qualitative Content Analysis also works better to reach the aim of the research question. The goal is to find out how concepts related to cultural racism are defined in the collected data, in other words it is to find how they are discussed. The fact that Qualitative Content Analysis is a method that allows to reduce the amount of material (Schreier, 2013) makes it more suitable to abstract the information on the data and find out definitions. This method, whose steps will be illustrated in depth in the following sections, was the first to be used to analyze the data set and assess in which ways discussions cultural racism happen in the material at hand.

Following this first analysis, discourse analysis was also conducted. The decision to conduct a discourse analysis as second step after a qualitative content analysis was taken because of several considerations. Qualitative content analysis could provide more general patterns, but since discourses around culture and racism can be deeply related to dynamics of power, critical discourse analysis was considered useful to bring forward specific details that would be flattened out by Qualitative Content Analysis. In other words, discourse analysis was used to analyze even more in depth not only the words used to discuss specific controversial issues, but also to take into account for the final findings and interpret other aspects of the language used in the data that could be relevant in influencing how the topics discussed are framed. These elements would be for instance linguistic artifices like irony or sarcasm or even silences. Discourse analysis was therefore considered as the best method to compliment QCA, as its deep engagement with texts can ultimately provide insightful findings and provide enlightenment on their significance (Antaki et al., 2003). More precisely, a foucaultian approach to discourse analysis was picked. The reason for this choice lays in this approach's ultimate aim, which is extremely suitable for the goal of the present research. Foucaultian Discourse Analysis's main concern is in fact analyzing linguistic details and specific discourses in depth. Focusing on words and exploring the way in which messages are conveyed allows to better grasp the power dynamics such messages and discourses create or underpin (Machin & Mayr, 2012).

This kind of approach, that is the combination of two methods in a complementary way, was drawn from the study of Gough (2006), where the author used both Qualitative Content Analysis and discourse analysis to analyze the discourses around the notion of masculinity in U.K. newspapers. This method was thus considered interesting and appropriate for the present research, as it approached the same type of medium and aimed to a similar goal.

3.2 Data Collection
3.2.a The selection of the movies

The dataset of the research is constituted by movie reviews retrieved from American review websites about the following movies: *The Last Airbender*; *Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time*; *Exodus: Gods and Kings*; *Pan*; *Doctor Strange; Ghost in the Shell*. All of these movies, released between 2010 and 2017, were selected because they all have been subjects of controversies related to the choices operated by the producers of the movies in assigning the roles to actors and actresses and the lack of racial representation within the cast. Each of these movies' release was followed by heavy criticism from fan communities as well as public opinion on social networks such as Twitter or Tumblr.

When *The Last Airbender*'s cast was announced, protests sparked between Asian-American activists and fans of the original TV show that inspired the movie. The reason of indignation laid in the fact that Caucasian actors had been casted instead of Asians, as it should have been given the original ethnicity of the characters on the show. At the chant of "Support fair casting!" three L.A. based organizations, Racebending.com, The Korean Resource Center, and Media Action Network for Asian Americans (MANAA), organized a protest outside the ArcLight Hollywood theater while the movie was screening in 2010 (Nelson, 2009; Solomon, 2010).

The casting choices for *Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time* were heavily criticized by fans and fair casting supporters as well. Despite the story taking place in Persia, that is modern-day Iran, White American actor Jake Gyllenhall and British actress Gemma Arterton were picked to portray the two main characters of the movie.

Similarly, rage sparked in 2014 at the release of the movie *Exodus: Gods and Kings* (Lee, 2014). This movie once again featured an almost exclusively White cast to play characters in Egyptian and Middle Eastern roles (the movie is about the biblical episode of Moses freeing the Israelites people from slavery). Numerous people showed their disapproval by creating the hashtag #BoycottExodus on Twitter.

In 2015, a petition online was created to protest the casting in the movie *Pan* of the White actress Rooney Mara as Tiger Lily, who is a native American in the original novel. The petition asked Warner Bros. to "stop casting white actors to play characters originally written as people of color!" and on a goal of 100.000 supporters it was able to gain 96.138 (http://www.thepetitionsite.com/).

Doctor Strange producers' casting choices ignited protests as well, when British actress Tilda Swinton was chosen to play Stephen Strange's mentor, the Ancient One. As in the comics this character is a male, swapping his gender and giving the role to a woman has

been praised as empowering, but the movie adaptation completely ignored the fact that the Ancient One is originally Tibetan. This led Tibetan activists to gather outside movie theaters during the screening hours of the movie. The matter became even more controversial, and political, when movie's screenwriter himself decided to justify the choice by declaring that including Tibet would have meant the alienation of the Chinese market. This declaration sparkled even more indignation and furious comments were posted by people on social media like Twitter addressing the issue and protesting against censorship (Fang, 2015; Fuchs, 2016).

The same situation happened with the movie *Ghost in the Shell*. The Japanese cult animation picture, adapted to a Hollywood movie in 2017, starred American actress Scarlett Johansson as the main protagonist of the story, Japanese major Motoko Kusanagi. In this case as well fans of the original work opened a petition called "Dreamworks: Stop White Washing Asian Characters!" to ask the replacement of Johansson with a Japanese actress. Other reactions were sparked on social media, like the artist/writer/photographer Jon Tsuei, on April 15th 2016, going on a twitterstorm to speak up against the Westernization of a story that is intrinsically Japanese and the website Nerds of Color launching the #WhiteWashedOut campaign (Jacobs, 2016; Lee, 2015).

3.2.b The collection of the articles

To retrieve the articles for the research two different popular American movies reviews websites were used. These two websites were chosen because they are two very popular websites that are among the most largely used sources for opinions on movie releases.

The first website used to collect the articles was rottentomatoes.com (https://www.rottentomatoes.com/). *Rotten Tomatoes* is one of the most popular American websites for movie rankings and reviews, and, as stated in the "About Us" section, it is the "leading online aggregator of movie and TV show reviews from professional critics". Each movie has, in its description page, a *Critic Reviews* section. In this section, the website collects movie reviews that featured on several magazines and newspapers. As opposed to the *All Critics* sub-section, there is also a *Top Critics* one, which was the section used to retrieve the articles. The articles were retrieved here rather than from the *All Critics* section because in *Top Critics* there would be a higher chance to find more accredited newspapers, which was the type of newspaper selected for the analysis, as opposed to tabloids. Among the review articles listed in this section, 8 articles for each movie where selected, collecting therefore a total of 48 articles. The criteria used for choosing the newspapers were the following. The newspapers and the magazines should be somewhat comparable, that is they would have to be elite publications and

not tabloids. As it was previously discussed, media can play a crucial role in spreading the worldview of the dominant group and in shaping the public perception of certain groups of people or realities. Moreover, the way in which a topic like cultural racism can often related to specific politics. For these reasons, it was considered relevant for the present study to focus on renowned publications that enjoy a more respected position and can be more descriptive of the power dynamics within a society. The articles featured should be longer than 300 words, as this was considered the minimum amount of words to get relevant amount of information about the topic of study. The final list of daily newspapers and magazines consists of 14 popular and accredited publications that have been rewarded multiple times for their excellent journalism. Namely, *The New York Times, New York Post, Entertainment Weekly, The Washington Post, The Chicago Tribune, The Atlantic, San Francisco Chronicle, TIME, Los Angeles Times, The Philadelphia Inquirer, New York Daily News, Houston Chronicle, Rolling Stone, The New Yorker.*

One review for each movie was then collected from the American website "rogerebert.com" (http://rogerebert.com), thus for a total of 6 reviews. Roger Ebert was one of the most successful and best-known movie critics in cinema history. Being the only movie critic to win a Pulitzer prize, he was the most trusted one by movie-goers also thanks to his ability of being, as put it in the article of his obituary by *The New York Times*, "a critic for the common man" (Martin, 2013). Reading the reviews that feature on his website is thus extremely relevant for two reasons. Firstly, because of the popularity of his reviews. The fact that his work was well known means in fact that his website was not an elite channel, but on the contrary a media used by a large group of the people interested in specific movies. Secondly, because his opinions were popularly perceived not just as advice on whether or not to go watch a movie, but also as instructions on how to reflect and think of the movie that was seen (Martin, 2013). Even President Obama said in a statement reacting on Ebert's death that "for a generation of Americans… he was the movies" (as in Martin, 2013.) Although Ebert died in 2013 and therefore he could not review some of the movies taken into consideration in this study, the relevance of the website still stands and as it is the most popular American review website it is important to analyze the reviews that are featured in it.

The total amount of textual data is therefore of 54 units, with 48 articles collected from newspapers featured on *Rotten Tomatoes* and 6 articles retrieved from rogerebet.com. This was considered to be a sufficient amount to have both heterogeneous data and also reach saturation. As the selected method of analysis is qualitative, heterogeneity of the data is one of the goal of

this research. One of the most important elements in qualitative research is in fact disposing of a large set of material that can reflect the diversity of the data (Schreier, 2013).

The time period covered by the articles embraces seven years. The oldest reviews of *The Last Airbender* are from June 30th 2010, while the most recent of latest movie *Ghost in the Shell* are from 30th March 2017. The period taken into account includes almost entirely the years of the Obama administration, which according to studies on cultural racism represented a turning point for the affirmation of the colorblind ideology. It is therefore interesting to analyze how cultural racism and cultural appropriation are discussed in this period. Moreover, analyzing data that cover almost a decade can provide insights on whether there have been changes in the way such issues are discussed.

3.3 Data analysis I: Qualitative Content Analysis

The first method used to analyze the data was Qualitative Content Analysis. After having collected the articles, the next step was to select an initial sample of articles to conduct the pilot phase of the coding process. The aim of this phase is to find out all the possible relevant categories that might come up from the data and might constitute the final coding frame. Therefore, heterogeneity of the sample articles is considered an important criterion and the selection should cover all type of data and all the data sources (Schreier, 2014). For this reason, one article for each movie was picked. Each movie was in fact released in a different year and also represented a different controversial aspect of the topic at hand. As the newspapers and magazines used to retrieve the articles were similar in style and reputation, selecting a specific source was not considered a crucial aspect. Therefore, the sources were picked randomly. At the time of this initial trial coding, the movie *Ghost in the Shell* had not been released in theatres yet and for this reason articles about it could not be included. This did not represent a problem, though, as the major critiques directed at this movie's casting choices were the same as *The Last Airbender*. Therefore, the initial coding frame was created by using articles from the following sources: rogerebert.com; *The Chicago Tribune; The New Yorker; Los Angeles Times; Entertainment Weekly*.

After selecting these articles, they were segmented. The segmentation was mainly formal, but sometimes two different formal segments were put together, as this was considered most the appropriate thing to do when segments were thematically or semantically identical (Schreier, 2013). To start coding the data, a provisional concept-driven coding frame was designed. This frame included five main categories, which represented

those aspects this research was most interested in studying. The categories were the following: *Opinions on the movie; Casting; Plot description; Cultural appropriation; Other.*

The main idea behind the design of this frame was to cover the discourses made about the movies on three different levels. The first level was the movie in general. This level would allow to research what the general patterns when framing these movies are, that is whether the films receive overall positive or negative reviews and what are the aspects that are mostly praised or criticized. The second level was the casting choices. This category, crucial for the research, would allow to analyze in depth what is being said about the cast for these movies and how the topic is discussed. Finally, the plot level would allow to gather information on how the plot and the characters of these movies are framed. While reading a review, the way characters and plot are presented can in fact have a negative or positive influence on the overall perception of the movie. The following table shows the subcategories of each category within the coding frame presented in Table 3.1:

Table 3.1: First provisional coding frame

Category	Subcategory
1) Opinions on the movie	1) Negative
	2) Ambiguous
	3) Neutral
	4) Positive
2) Casting	1) Fit casting
	2) Good performance
	3) Bad performance
	4) Casting contested
3) Plot description	1) Mere plot
	2) Ridiculed
4) Cultural Appropriation	
5) Other	

After conducting this first trial, the frame was expanded and refined, but coding 5 other articles was considered necessary, as several subcategories were still too generic and did not work properly to provide a precise overall view of the data. This second round resulted in the coding frame showed in Table 3.2:

Table 3.2: Second provisional coding frame

Category	Subcategory
1) Critiques	1) Overall bad movie
	2) Worse than original source
	3) Technical aspects
2) Positive aspects	1) Overall good movie
	2) Technical aspects
3) Casting	1) Contested racial choice (Implicit - Explicit)
	2) Fit casting
	3) Good performance
	4) Bad performance
	5) Actor/ess unfit for the role for non-racial reasons
4) Story	1) Plain description
	2) Negatively presented plot
	3) Ridiculed plot
	4) Linked to contemporary politics
	5) Negative character presentation
	6) Ridiculed character presentation
5) Extra remarks	1) Generic
	2) Positively impactful
	3) Negatively impactful

To test whether or not this frame could work for the whole data set, a last round of trial coding was conducted on 5 other articles. The final coding frame was therefore created, presented in Table 3.3:

Table 3.3: Final coding frame

Category	Subcategory
1) Critiques	1) Movie as a whole
	2) Technical aspects
	3) Worse than original source
	4) Racial/cultural matters
2) Positive aspects	1) Movie as a whole
	2) Technical aspects
3) Casting	1) Reference to race but no critique on casting choices
	2) Reference to race and casting contested
	3) General critique with no reference to race
	4) No reference to race and bad performance of miscast actor/ess
	5) No reference to race and good performance of miscast actor/ess
	6) Reference to race and casting contested but performance reviewed nicely
	7) Reference to race and casting contested and performance reviewed badly
	8) Contested implicitly
	9) Criticism on roles for people of color
	10) Context for issues on casting choices
	11) Plain presentation of cast
4) Story	1) Description
	2) Ridiculed
	3) Criticized (race/culture reference – other reasons)
	4) Linked to contemporary politics
5) Extra remarks	1) Generic
	2) Positive
	3) Negative

Several factors and different considerations influenced the decisions taken to go from the first provisional frame to the building of the final one. Firstly, the initial category *Cultural appropriation* was deleted altogether, as none of the analyzed data for the trial coding explicitly used this term nor discussed the issue extensively or in detail. When later on in the analysis a few references were found that framed casting issues within the larger discourse of cultural appropriation, or mentioned other kinds of issues found in the moves and connected to racial or cultural matters, they were included in the *Critiques* category. The initial category *Opinions on the movie* was split into two different categories, one focusing on the critiques directed at the movies, another on the element praised. This choice was made as it was considered relevant to analyze more in depth and specifically which were the aspects of the movies received negatively and which positively. Narrowing the focus down to these two elements might in fact lead to assess whether the data present aimed critiques that target larger issues within the movie and its production or whether what is mainly criticized are technical aspects.

The category that was expanded the most was the *Casting* one. The first coding frame presented a very concise range of subcategories which was necessary to revise. This category is the core of the coding frame. It was designed in order to get an insight on how discourses about race and culture, and issues of misrepresentation, are discussed, and even if they are presented at all. As already discussed in the previous chapter, one of the main traits of the color-blind society is to avoid mentioning and acknowledging the existence of racial politics or racial-related bias behind certain choices and behaviors that happen within society. As Hollywood's casting choices fit this picture, one of the main aim was finding out whether or not the data address the issue implicitly or explicitly. Therefore, it is clear how the category *Casting* is the one which most than the others is essential to answer the research question, and thus had to be refined accordingly. The subcategories were created so that every aspect of the way the data discuss this matter would be covered. That is, firstly, whether there is a reference to problematic choices but without criticizing them, or the issue is addressed and criticized. Then it was also important to create subcategories that would focus on how the work of the miscast actor or actress is described. Four possible types of description were considered. The first two are represented by the article giving a plain positive or negative opinion on the performance of an actor or actress without mentioning or problematizing the choice of that person for that role. The third and fourth scenario see the article reviewing badly or positively a certain performance and at the same time referencing the issues involved with the casting choice.

The subcategories covering this aspect were very important, because the way the job of miscast actors is reviewed matters. In fact, if for instance a review indeed mentions the problems related to casting a White person for a role that was supposedly for an Asian one but then is enthusiastic about their performance, that might have as consequence to dismiss somehow the problem or making it appear less relevant than it actually is. The rest of the subcategories covered other aspects of the discourses made around casting choices and the way the cast was described.

The fourth initial category *Plot description* was renamed in the final frame *Story*. The choice was taken after the decision of grouping within this category everything that was connected to both the characters and the plot. Also, in the intermediate provisional coding frame (that is the one that resulted after the coding of 10 articles) sub categories were created that distinguished between comments made on the plot and comments made on the characters, resulting therefore in five different subcategories. For the final coding frame, they were collapsed and the focus was shifted. Differentiating between a comment made on a character and one made on an aspect of the plot would not extremely relevant for the present research. Rather, what was considered important was the way the story as a whole was reported. Characters and plot are both relevant parts of the narration of a story, therefore they were considered as one entity and the subcategories were made functional to assess how these two elements are framed, that is for instance whether they are merely described or reviewed as ridiculous. Just like the case of reviewing actors and actresses, providing a positive or negative opinion on the story of a movie can be impactful, as it might influence how the problems related to miscasting are perceived.

Lastly, the category *Extra remarks* was created to group all the additional information that is provided and does not belong to any of the other categories. The subcategories were created so that they could help in assessing whether the additional information were only generic or impacted negatively or positively on the overall perception of the movie.

3.4 Data analysis II: Foucaultian Discourse Analysis

After conducting Qualitative Content Analysis, the data were additionally studied with Foucaultian Discourse Analysis. As already mentioned, combining these two methods was considered the best way to wholly grasp the multifaceted approaches to issues related to cultural appropriation and misrepresentation and to operate an in-depth analysis on the words used to discuss and define them.

Despite being open to the possibility of new categories or subcategories arising from the analysis, the main categories were designed beforehand, so that each one of them would

cover one aspect among those the research aimed to investigate. Again, the main aim of this part of the research was to make light on what specific words are used in the data to express and describe concepts related to the broader issue of cultural appropriation and how are they framed. This means analyzing, for instance, whether potential controversies are talked about implicitly or explicitly, whether critiques happen thanks to tools such as irony and sarcasm, or whether there is a preference for structured and elaborate argumentations. In other words, great attention is given to every element of the discourse that might influence how certain social issues are framed in the articles and therefore also received and perceived by the audience.

The categories that were prepared were the followings.

1) *Definitions*: the purpose of this category was to group together all those words that might provide a definition to concepts related to any controversial issues about matters such as culture or race. For instance, if a specific adjective is used to describe a controversial racial choice, it would be assigned to this category.

2) *Signs of agreement:* within this category belong all those linguistic elements that are used in the data to express agreement on a third part's opinion It might in fact happen that some articles do not provide a detailed argumentation on controversial aspects of the movie, but still they take a stand by explicitly agreeing with the opinions of other people that they are reporting. The ultimate aim of this category is to compliment the first one by providing an overview of the different words used to describe the perspective of people raging about certain choices made during the production of the movies.

3) *Mocking expressions:* this category was designed to gather those elements that conveyed a sense of denigration and ridiculing towards aspects of the movie. For instance, adjectives whose result is to present a character under a negative light, by making him look ridiculous, belong here. This category was important, as it provided a detailed overview of the context and general tone of numerous articles.

4) *Non-verbal elements: irony and sarcasm:* in this category belong all those bits that convey irony and sarcasm, again providing insights on the context within which controversial issues were discussed.

5) *References to culture*: this category gathers those discourses where there is an explicit reference to matters such as culture and race and groups all the different ideas and concerns that are connected and raised about how these elements have found a place in the movies.

4. Results and Discussion

As it was stated in the first chapter of this dissertation, the research question the present study aimed to answer is how are cultural racism and cultural appropriation discussed and defined in American newspapers, magazines and movie reviews websites' articles about six Hollywood productions released in the last 7 years. The first goal of the research was therefore to discover how these two concepts were framed, defined and in which way they were referred to in the data. In this chapter, I will present and discuss the findings that resulted from both the Qualitative Content and the Discourse Analysis of the data set. Firstly, the results of the content analysis will be presented, along with the results of specific categories from the discourse analysis that were considered more relevant to discuss within the content analysis. Then, the presentation of the other findings from the discourse analysis will follow. A general overview of the findings will first be provided, along with tables, to quickly highlight most relevant and interesting aspects of the results. Everything the analysis brought forward will be discussed by highlighting how and why it is relevant in the light of the research question. At the end of the chapter there will be a quick summary of the findings, while the conclusions on the implications of such findings and the answer to the research question will be provided on the next chapter.

4.1 QCA: Main findings

Overall, the coding frame designed to analyze the articles proved to be adequate and it worked very well to gain insights on how the 54 reviews presented the movies. It also allowed to focus on interesting aspects of the way the data discussed the controversies related to them. The following table (Table 4.1) shows the distribution of the codes, presenting the categories in decreasing order:

Table 4.1: Overall of the findings

CATEGORY	SUBCATEGORY	TIMES FOUND
Story	*description*	316
Extra remarks	*generic*	308
Critiques	*technical aspects*	135
Critiques	*movie as a whole*	116
Extra remarks	*negative*	115
Story	*ridiculed*	85
Story	*criticized (other reasons)*	69
Positive aspects	*technical aspects*	65
Casting	*reference to race and casting contested*	48
Casting	*generic positive*	38
Positive remarks	*movie as a whole*	36
Casting	*no reference to race and bad performance of miscast actor/ess*	30
Casting	*no reference to race and good performance of miscast actor/ess*	23
Casting	*reference to race but no critiques on casting choices*	15
Casting	*worse than original source*	14
Casting	*general critique with no reference to race*	13
Casting	*plain presentation of cast*	9
Casting	*reference to race and casing contested but performance reviewed nicely*	8
Casting	*contested implicitly*	8
Critiques	*racial/cultural matters*	8
Story	*link to contemporary politics*	6
Casting	*context for issues on casting choices*	5
Story	*criticized (race/culture references)*	5
Casting	*reference to race and casting contested and performance reviewed badly*	3
Casting	*criticism on roles for people of color*	2

Firstly, the most important point to focus on are the subcategories that were the most recurrent. As it can be noticed from Table 1 above, the articles analyzed conveyed mainly two types of messages on the movies reviewed. One was the description of the story, that is the plot. The other consisted of remarks on the movies that provided general additional information, on for instance the directors or details on how the movies were produced. Thus, in the articles collected most space was dedicated to providing descriptive or informational messages about the productions reviewed rather than to other aspects. However, the next most numerous types of messages delivered were critiques on the movies, both on a technical and general level, and additional information that framed the movies, or aspects connected to them, in a negative way.

In the light of these first findings, the analysis was narrowed down to focus on only the findings related to the category *Casting*. As already mentioned before, this category is extremely relevant for this research, and for this reason it was considered crucial to examine more in depth the findings within this category and discuss them separately from the rest of the data. The following table (Table 4.2) presents the rank of the subcategories for this category:

Table 4.2: Results within the category *Casting*

SUBCATEGORY	TIMES FOUND
reference to race and casting contested	48
no reference to race and bad performance of miscast actor	30
no reference to race and good performance of miscast actor	23
reference to race but no critiques on casting	15
general critique with no reference to race	13
plain presentation of cast	9
reference to race and casting contested and performance reviewed badly	8
contested implicitly	8
context for issues on casting choices	5
reference to race and casting contested but performance reviewed nicely	3
criticism on roles for people of color	2

As it is visible from table 4.2, the findings show that, when talking about something related to the movies' casting, the majority of the reviews' segments did so by openly making a referencing to the racial aspect and by framing it in a negative way. Interestingly though, the findings also show that there is a high part of the data that, even when criticizing the performance of a miscast actor, does not make any reference to issues connected to their race. The fourth and fifth most recurring subcategories are also interesting though for a different reason. Both subcategories indeed show a lack of contestation towards the controversial choices made for these movies that sparked so much controversy and rage in other media. What is thus

straightforwardly evident with a first look at the findings about the *Casting* category is that even if part of the data (61 times) makes references to controversial casting and criticizes it to a certain extent, there is nevertheless an important part of the data where this clear and explicit contestation is missing (103 times). These main findings will be now discussed more in depth and other aspects will also be highlighted in order to interpret them and utilize them to answer the research question.

As stated, the findings show that the type of information that is mainly present within the reviews that were analyzed is either of generic nature or delivers descriptions of the plot of the movie. This finding is interesting because it highlights that the main goal of these reviews is essentially to give readers an overview of the movies. What the articles thus mainly provide are pieces of information that can make readers aware of what the movie is about in terms of plot. By doing so they ultimately make the choice to make the review more informative, rather than to straight away focus on and discuss specific controversial aspects of the production.

Looking at the next three most recurrent subcategories, that is *critiques on technical aspects, critiques on the movie as whole* and *negative extra remarks*, this point is demonstrated even more. In the articles, a great amount of space has been reserved to giving opinions and remarks on the movies reviewed as cinematic products, rather than as object of controversy, once again proving how the focus of the articles was on providing readers with information they could expect from a typical movie review. What is particularly interesting though, is that the highest types of comments on the movies were critiques or information that somehow would cast a negative light on the movie.

Thus, despite a high amount of descriptive and general information (624 times), there was also a high presence of negative critiques (366 times) that somehow balance the otherwise neutral tone of the articles. The following quotations illustrate some of the numerous types of negatively impactful information found for the subcategory "Negative remarks" and how they range from negative comments to a director's previous works to remarks that suggested and anticipated a bad review coming: "*Prince of Persia* got the go-ahead from an administration at Disney that was sent on its way last year" (Lumenick, 2010*);* "But that familiarity doesn't mean there aren't surprises to be had, and not always welcome ones" (Turan, 2014). Even when there was not a critique on a specific aspect of the movie, still a lot of additional information was given that overall contributed to frame it in a negative way. The discourse analysis showed that such negative framing happened in mainly two ways: by adding a numerous amount of mocking words and ridiculing expressions while describing the movies and also with a large use of irony. A big part of the articles in fact presented a subtle sarcastic tone which tended to

create the impression that what was being reviewed should not be taken seriously. The denigration of the movies happened, again, on several levels, like for instance on the work of the directors, as the following quotes show: "At least for now Mr. Shyamalan's attempt to conjure a realm of myth and adventure out of special effects and long expository speeches might serve as a textbook chapter on How to Do It Wrong" (Gleiberman, 2010*)*; "The dominant emotion in "Pan" is the desperation of the filmmakers" (Scott,2015*);* "Scott is not reinventing the wheel here. Rather, he's invented the biggest, shiniest, noisiest wheel imaginable, then he runs over us with it rather than inviting us along for the ride" (Lemir, 2014). There are also denigrating comments that convey the overall impression the reviewers had on the movie: "There's a formula here to be studied for future movies. Just take whatever they did in "Pan" and do something else" (LaSalle, 2015*).* The same thing happened with the ironic parts, which were related to not only one aspect of the movie, but were used as a way to convey negative opinions on different aspects: "I close with the hope that the title (*The Last Airbender*) proves prophetic." (Ebert, 2010); "After 94 minutes — was that all? I could have sworn it was days" (Gleiberman, 2010); "If there has been a duller, more stagnant action film released this decade, I managed, thank God, to miss it". (Orr, 2010).

Furthermore, it is interesting how the critiques that did not provide general negative information or remarks on the movie as a whole, but aimed more in detail to specific aspects of the movies, mainly targeted technical aspects, such as direction, writing, 3D, special effects. If on one hand the high amount of negative critiques might seem to go along with the numerous protests that these movies sparkled, rather than going against them, still, the way in which these negative opinions are delivered can be considered problematic.

The presence of numerous opinions on technical aspects of the movies itself might be expected. The data consisted of reviews and it was therefore predictable that they would focus on this side of the production. Nevertheless, there were several other reasons why these movies have been criticized and received negatively by for instance fans or fair casting supporters. The way the stories were narrated and how the characters in them were portrayed were the major points highlighted in online discussions and platforms as the biggest flaws and problems with these movies:

DreamWorks has cast Scarlett Johansson in their adaptation of Ghost in the Shell. The franchise originates from Japan where the protagonist is Motoko Kusanagi, a Japanese cyborg. This casting is significant because we're seeing Hollywood continue the trend of whitewashing roles from source material that features Asian leads […] When stories with

Asian heroes are "Americanized," the whitewashing is an integral part of the process– reinforcing stereotypes of Asian Americans as inherently less American. (Lee, 2015)

A world that was filled with Asian and indigenous influences now features white actors as the good characters, brown-skinned actors as the bad characters and people of color from various backgrounds as the extras. I have a problem with whiteness being the baseline, the norm. […] *The Last Airbender* was a great opportunity to showcase the talent of Asian actors and actresses. (Sammy, 2010)

What this means is therefore that it is not really the technical quality of these movie that made them look bad in the public eye, rather other elements. Nevertheless, the negative comments observed on the articles targeted aspects of the movies that are independent to some of the most pressing issues that made these movies become controversial. As stated already, this process might be problematic. That is because putting the emphasis on the technical side of the production might become a tool to justify controversial choices in the case of well-produced movies and thus become a way to dismiss the discussions related to representativeness. Even if in most of the data this sort of dismissal tended to happen implicitly, it was more explicit in some articles where the movies were mainly presented in a positive light: "Tilda Swinton, not quite the old Asian guy as the Marvel comics imagined, but in this case talent trumps fidelity to an ethnic cliché." (Phillips, 2016). Therefore, as illustrated by this quote, if on the one hand there was a prevalence in the data of negative opinions about the movies, still in proportion way less attention was paid to all those specific reasons that made the movies very controversial in other public discourses.

Another interesting finding concerns the subcategories for the category *Story*. The main way in which elements such as the plot and the characters of the movies were presented in the data was quite denigrating or described with a mocking tone. What can be observed is thus another high presence of elements and information that contribute to cast a fairly negative light on the movies. Characters' description illustrates such strategy:

[…] a waterbender played by Nicola Peltz and her hunky brother (Jackson Rathbone, also featured in "The Twilight Saga: Eclipse"), who look like they escaped from a road company of 'The Chronicles of Narnia.' (Lumenick, 2010)

He looks about as comfortable in a headdress as he might if a pelican were standing on his head" (LaSalle, 2014) or also "In affect and costuming, Peter's comrade in the bowels of King Blackbeard's Mines is a cowboy variation on Indiana Jones. (Phillips, 2015)

and also other remarks on parts of the story such as "When Dustan is falsely accused of murdering the king, the shit (or the PG-13 equivalent) hits the wind machine" (Travers, 2010). These examples draw attention to the way characters' description help presenting the stories as not completely serious and slightly ridiculous. Within the parts about the plot as well the discourse analysis showed that denigrating terms, ridiculing images, unflattering comparisons and a frequent use of irony were often use to highlight aspects of the plot, story and characters that were considered flawed or without much sense. For example:

But first Aang has to learn how to also bend water, earth and fire as weapons — and stop the firebenders […] as well. Or something like that. (Lumenick, 2010)

The adding of "something like that" at the end provides a bad connotation for the plot, because it implies that it is not worth describing in more detail. Similarly, remarks like "Fair enough, since Persia reaches "from the steppes of China to the shores of the Mediterranean," but it's even more impressive since it's all within a day's journey from the capital city." (Ebert, 2010) or "The names of the movie's characters seem to have been created by a random-word generator" (Ebert, 2010) refer to aspects that were considered illogic or sloppy. Other examples include parts like

Someone who believes "you can tell a lot about someone by looking them in the eye" (who knew?) Moses decides to interview some Hebrews himself. (Turan, 2014)

where the "who knew?" in brackets is used as a way to provide a critique on the over-simplicity of the script. Short bits such as "But waits it gets worse" also express a negative opinion on what was described up to that point and also anticipate other bad remarks to come.

When mocking the story, there were also a lot of comments on the characters, and it is interesting to see how a lot of these comments target the physical appearance of the actors or, more in general, the way they were dressed and their make-up. This is noticeable in parts like:

He looks about as comfortable in a headdress as he might if a pelican were standing on his head. (LaSalle, 2014)

Plus, this may be the most orange movie ever made: Working in Morocco and on London soundstages, cinematographer John Seale's chief inspiration appears to be the heat lamps at Arby's. (Phillips, 2010)

or others with characters' descriptions like "Dastan's eyeliner-lovin' uncle Nizam (*Ben Kingsley*)", "Moses (Christian Bale), has his doubts about the impetuous, heavily eyelinered heir.", "a spray-tanned Joshua"; (Lumenick, 2010; Lumenick,2014; Nashawaty, 2014), or quotes like

Mara, perhaps embarrassed at playing a Native American princess clad in a midriff-baring rainbow outfit, barely registers onscreen. (Sims, 2015)

Princess Tiger Lily (Rooney Mara, "Avatar"-ing it up in Native American drag and kabuki makeup). (Lumenick, 2015)

These quotes show ways in which the broader topics of miscasting and misrepresentation were dealt with and talked about in the data. Next to more explicit references, the reviews often adopted an implicit approach by using irony and ridiculing descriptions. These tools are utilized in the data as a way to, implicitly, point out the inappropriateness of how some characters have been represented and thus highlighting the reviewers' disagreeing with such choices.

One of the main reasons why the discussion of the main overall results was important is that it helps understand what is the context within which the articles placed more focused references on the movies' cast and other controversial issues related to cultural and racial politics. In other words, analyzing the elements around parts of the data that were more interesting for this study– that is the parts that would talk about the casting and would reference some of the debates and controversies raised by the movies– offered an idea of how these discussions were framed and how much space was reserved to them. In this sense two main conclusions can be drawn from the analysis. Firstly, a higher attention was paid to generic information, descriptions of the plot, technical aspects, and stories and characters. In this sense, the data did not show contents that differ from what could have been expected from traditional

movie review about less polemical movies. Secondly, the findings show that among the ten most frequent subcategories, only one dealt with the *Casting* category. This can be interpreted as a sign that references that more controversial aspects of these movies found a secondary position in the data. Therefore, according to the results, the reviews seem to be primarily used as a way to present the movie and provide an opinion on it as a cinematography product to the audience, rather than as a tool to touch more specific and controversial topics.

4.2 QCA: Casting category
Among the categories, the one about casting was enabled to analyze more in depth how themes surrounding the casting of the movies were discussed in the data and to see if issues surrounding racial and cultural politics would be brought up. It was therefore extremely relevant for the goal of the analysis. For this reason, this subchapter will be focused on discussing the results found within only this one category.

Looking at the results, the coding showed a prevalent amount of parts within the data which openly referred to some of the controversial matters that emerged from the choices operated for the casting of these movies and that explicitly criticized them. This could be noticed in the data in part like

[Shyamalan's] first inexplicable mistake was to change the races of the leading characters; on television Aang was clearly Asian, and so were Katara and Sokka, with perhaps Mongolian and Inuit genes. Here they're all whites." (Ebert, 2010)
And for a story set in ancient Egypt, there is a puzzling dearth of Middle Eastern and African faces. (Nashawaty, 2014)

It's a rewrite that leaves the number of Asian speaking roles at exactly one, the monastery's librarian. And this in a movie that mostly takes place in Nepal and Hong Kong. (Whitty, 2016)

The presence of these kinds of contestations, which not only highlights the issue of unfair casting itself but also presents it as something problematic, signals a fair amount of receptivity and openness to these kinds of themes.

Nevertheless, next to this high presence of parts in the data that openly contested the casting choices and pinpointed the problems associated with changing the characters' race, there was a great number of parts that overlooked such aspect. Once again, these findings can

be seen as problematic. The lack of references or explicit non-critiques to discussions that happened related to how some races and cultures were represented in the movies runs the risk of undermining the relevance of such topics. Likewise to what was argued when analyzing the overall results, in this category as well the high presence of critiques made towards the performances of the miscast actors holds a double significance. On the one hand, they contribute to frame the work of people who were publicly accused of being miscast negatively. That is relevant because, as already discussed above, praising their good work might become a way to dismiss the root of the issue, that is the representation was twisted. This openly happened in some cases, like for instance in some articles about the movie *Ghost in the Shell*, where some remarks made towards the main miscast actress Scarlett Johansson were positive ("Like the greatest screen goddesses, Scarlett Johansson rises above it all." – Dargis, 2017). On the other hand, the fact that so many judgements were made on the work of the miscast performers on a mainly technical perspective underlines the tendency to focus on elements such as the quality of the performance in a decontextualized way. That is to say, attention was paid mainly on the performance and the choice of a specific actor or actress was reviewed as a standalone piece without pointing out its relationship with the wider social context within which that choice happened. This finding is strongly in line with how new racism operates. As discussed previously, decontextualizing and stressing an alleged meritocracy were some of the tools often used to justify politics that are culturally and racially discriminating (Bonilla-Silva, 2000; Lewis, 2001; Simpson, 2010). The dismissal and justification of racial politics happened implicitly in the parts belonging to the subcategory *no reference to race and good performance of miscast actor* such as

Swinton inhabits the sorceress with her trademark oddity and cutting humor. It takes only a careful tilt of her head or blithe remark to Strange to believe this woman has lived for hundreds of years. (Bastien, 2016)

[…] Arterton's performance, a balance of passion, beauty and high spirits that in many scenes saves the day. (Sharkey, 2010)

I can express my satisfaction, if not my surprise, that Johansson […] should rise to the challenge of playing a butt- kicking bionic woman. (Chang, 2017)

However, on other parts, there was an explicit presentation of talent as enough reason to justify miscasting. This is what happens within the subcategory reference to *race and casting contested but performance reviewed nicely*. Even if the parts belonging to that category are scarce, they are nevertheless a sign of the tendency to hide behaviors that could be related to racism or cultural racism behind the value of meritocracy. In extracts like the following: "[…] but Johansson isn't a liability in Ghost in the Shell. She's its great strength." (Zacharek, 2017) or "It's a near-perfect piece of acting even as it exposes the profound imperfection of the system." (Chang, 2017) Johansson's ability is explicitly presented as enough reason to pick her as the main lead, although the protagonist of the original manga and anime was Japanese. In some parts of the data, there is even a presence open defenses towards some of the movies' accusations (e.g.: "One can lob many gripes at Airbender, but lack of ethnic diversity is not one of them" – Rickey, 2010). This explicit justification reinforces the idea previously discussed that in new racism meritocracy and talent are values used in an abstract way.

Proceeding with the rest of the results, one thing that is very noticeable is the significantly inferior amount of parts that linked the review of the performance to discussions about racial politics compared to the parts where these matters were not brought up. The subcategories *reference to race and casting contested and performance reviewed badly* and *reference to race and casting contested but performance reviewed nicely* were in fact among the least frequent and confirmed a tendency noticed across the overall data set. Namely, the tendency to use technical criteria as the main tool to measure the movies' quality. This is relevant because even when reviewing a performance badly, doing so without also referencing to other issues might not be enough, as it was already argued other times before. If the reference is missing, the problematic aspect of why some actors are chosen to play roles they are not fit for can be lost. Explicit critiques and references are important because they focus on the specific problem at hand and also create a higher possibility of creating more awareness on the issue by making it explicit.

In regard to this point, one clarification needs to be done. In the articles, the parts that belong to the subcategories *no reference to race and good performance of miscast actor* and *no reference to race and bad performance of miscast actor* were usually mixed with parts that belong to the *reference to race and casting contested*. Therefore, when performances were reviewed only on a technical level, there had usually already been a mention to some of the controversial aspects of the casting choices. Stressing this is important because whether an article presents only technical opinions (which happened only in the case of the articles about *Prince of Persia*, where overall 14 parts offered technical opinions on the performances of the

miscast actors, but none ever references to their miscasting) or mixes them with broader critical points – which was the case for most articles – can convey a different message. Nevertheless, the findings show that the mixture between descriptive and critical presentations of the cast is quite balanced. For example, in the reviews about the movie *Ghost in the Shell* 15 segments were coded as *reference to race and casting contested*, while a total of 14 segments belonged to the other two subcategories (that is *no reference to race and good performance of miscast actor* and *no reference to race and bad performance of miscast actor*). For the movie *The Last Airbender*, 6 segments explicitly contested the casting choices, while 8 segments focused on the quality of the performances. What this ultimately shows is that, in line with what was already argued before, there was still a substantial part of the data that made no references to broader controversies.

This conclusion is supported also by the overall balance between all the parts that make references to matters of race and culture (81) and all those where no references happen or happen implicitly (83). Moreover, it is important to stress that even if the data present more parts that frame the cast and the performances in a negative way (101) than positive (63), the parts that contained explicit critiques to casting choices (61) were greatly inferior to the parts where there was a total lack of discussion (103). What can be noticed by these findings is therefore that the data presented a greater amount of descriptive information, or technical judgements, rather that engaging in deeper critical debates.

Another interesting aspect observed in the findings that is worth mentioning, and that is the presence of the subcategory *contested implicitly*. To understand why and how it is relevant that the analysis of the data generated this subcategory, it is important to refer back to one of the points brought forward during the presentation of the new racism ideology. As it was previously discussed, among the main prerogatives of the way new racism is perpetuated there is the fact that it does not openly acknowledge and avoids mentioning cultural racism or even the concept of racism itself. What is particularly remarkable in the findings is that this very tendency was brought forward by the analysis. The presence of extracts where critiques to the casting choices were made only in an implicit way, by using rhetorical tools like irony, shows that indeed in some cases there is a propensity to address and expose specific issues only in a very subtle way. For instance, in *The Atlantic'*s review of the movie *Exodus* the article states: "We have Christian Bale as Moses, which feels almost as strange to type as it does to witness onscreen" (Orr, 2014). As can be noticed, the reference is not completely clear, and it takes some pre-knowledge on the controversies raised by the casting of the movie to understand the

critique to the main lead's pick. Another implicit reference to the ethnicity of a miscast actress can be found in *Pan*'s review by *The Chicago Tribune*:

> Blackbeard's war against the natives, a multiculti gaggle led by lily-white Tiger Lily
> (Rooney Mara, co-starring her midriff), grinds on in another part of this cesspool. (Phillips,
> 2015)

The adding of "lily-white" is used as a way to focus the attention on how a White actress has been chosen to play the role of a Native American. As in *Exodus*' case though, the reference is completely implicit and there is not any additional information that might provide a background to sparkle further discussions.

One last interesting observation can be made on the distribution of the parts with reference to race in each movie's set of reviews. The results for the subcategory *reference to race and casting contested* show a difference in the amount of times these parts are recurring in the data. Remarkably, the reviews for the movies *The Last Airbender* and *Prince of Persia*, both released in 2010, show a very low presence of parts that were classified within the subcategory *reference to race and casting contested*. *The Last Airbender* presented 6 parts belonging to such subcategory while *Prince of Persia* presented none. There is a very different situation within the reviews for the movies *Doctor Strange* and *Ghost in the Shell*, which came out in 2016 and 2017. These last two movies' reviews presented overall a much greater amount of parts that discussed and contested the choices made in terms of casting and were much more criticized than the other productions. In the case of *Doctor Strange* 16 parts were coded within the subcategory *reference to race and casting contested* while for *Ghost in the Shell* 15 parts. This fact is interesting for two reasons. Firstly, because it suggests an increase throughout the years of the attention dedicated to these discussions in renowned outlets. The second element to notice is that, remarkably, while being the most critical about the casting choices, the reviews for *Doctor Strange* and *Ghost in the Shell* still presented the highest amount of positive comments. The amount of parts with positive remarks on the movie as a whole and the technical aspects resulted in a total of 4 for *The Last Airbender*, 8 for *Prince of Persia*, while 46 for *Doctor Strange* and 24 for *Ghost in the Shell*. On the one hand, the larger amount of references to casting issues signals that there is the possibility that specific complaints are starting to assume more and more relevance. On the other hand, the large presence of positive reviews on the two productions exposes the tendency to counterbalance the exposure of controversial aspects with positive remarks.

To conclude, the results showed that the newspaper and magazine reviews analyzed did present references and discussions over topics such as cultural appropriation and cultural racism to a certain extent. Even if the majority of the data brought these issues up within a general negative framing of the movies, the attention was nevertheless focused more on providing opinions on the technical quality of the productions. The references to casting issues provided by the articles happened in an explicit way in some cases, but a great amount of parts make such addressing indirectly or implicitly. It is also important to notice how the two most recent productions, *Doctor Strange* (2016) and *Ghost in the Shell* (2017), while being those which present the highest amount of references to casting issues, still present the highest number of praises and positive remarks. Putting discourses related to cultural racism within such a positive frame is extremely relevant and significant to the legitimization of cultural appropriation. Discussing technical quality over providing an appropriate explanation of how racial and cultural politics in Hollywood can be a key role in such context. The analysis thus provided a glimpse on what is the overall balance between the engagement in critical discussions and the focus put on the technical quality or other aspects about the movies.

4.3 Foucaultian Discourse Analysis

As the QCA provided an insight on how are discussions over cultural appropriation, cultural racism and miscasting framed and approached within the data, the FDA was used to get more in depth into the words and expressions used to define these issues. The main findings of the discourse analysis provided insights on the words used to refer to concepts related to cultural racism and cultural appropriation and also on the way in which the controversies sparkled by the movies were presented. Moreover, the analysis showed different ways to present miscasting and the discussion of the related issues. The main approaches found were four: apologetic or dismissing (1), quick reference (2), more elaborated one (3), providing a broader frame in terms of Hollywood traditional practices (4) and lastly openly referencing to cultural appropriation and broadening the discourse from only casting choices to themes about cultural exchanges (5).

4.3.a Definitions

The definitions provided refer for the most part to the casting of the movies, which makes sense given that it is the main element that was singled out when people protested. To introduce the presentation of the problems raised by casting choices, the data present expressions like "inexplicable mistake" or casting that "makes no sense" (Ebert, 2010) or "wildly miscast" (Lumenick, 2014). There is also the usage of terms such as "controversy" and "controversial adaptation" (Phillips, 2016; Phillips, 2017; Stewart, 2016; Stewart, 2017;

Zacharek, 2016) which straightaway contribute to put the discourses surrounding the casting within a problematic frame. There is also the usage of more general terms to point out the flaws in the casting, although the word itself does not hold any explicit meaning related to the specific issue at hand. This happens for instance with the very vague adjective "strange" – "when you think the casting can't get any stranger" (Orr, 2014) – and the general description of the cast as "an almost unmitigated disaster" and "a haphazard assortment of performers". Such usage of generic wording to describe the casting choices is interesting because not directly referencing to topics like misrepresentation shows a tendency to either overlook them or not giving them proper relevance. Once again, this finding pinpoints that indeed references to racial politics are often addressed only implicitly.

The terms "whitewashed" and "whitewashing", described once as a "significant issue" (Zacharek, 2017 on *Ghost in the Shell*), were very frequent, and used as the most common way to describe the action of picking White actors to play roles meant for people of other ethnicities. There were also expressions and definitions explicitly referring to race like "racially insensitive casting" (Lumenick, 2014) or not "racially appropriate casting" (Corliss, 2010), often using the definition of "racial politics" (Bastien, 2016; Bastien, 2017; Chang, 2017) – called in one case "queasy" (Bastien, 2017), a strong term to indicate feeling sick that emphasizes the strong disagreement of the reviewer towards such racial politics and presents them almost as something disgusting – to provide a name for this phenomenon and also in some cases taking a clear standpoint with statements like "the racism threading the movie". As the following quote shows, there is also a mention to appropriation and underrepresentation: "West's long fascination with, and appropriation of, Eastern mysticism, Asians are underrepresented" (Zacharek, 2016), but the concept cultural appropriation was explicitly used only in one case. These definitions just presented are thus some of the definitions provided to address the choices operated for the production of the movies. They show that racial politics and cultural racism are strongly linked with issues related to miscasting. Therefore, cultural racism and cultural appropriation are constructed in the majority of the data mainly as concepts that refer to issues of representation, rather than also presenting them as more complex realities. The literature clearly points out how cultural racism and cultural appropriation are pervasive phenomenon that also relate to issues of how other culture's elements are used and how the perception of such culture is spread throughout society (Young, 2008; Ziff & Rao, 1997). In the articles though cultural racism and cultural appropriation are connected more to representativeness, rather than opening discussions on the different implications issues connected to such representativeness can have on a societal level. As it was showed, the usage of the exact expressions *cultural appropriation* and *cultural*

racism was rare. Therefore, the definitions overall do not reflect the way in which some racial politics are connected to broader power structures and can be used to silence or speak for marginalized groups, which is an important point in the literature (e.g. Matthes, 2016). The term *whitewashing* was the most used to describe the choices operated for the casting of the movies. Such phrasing is interesting also because it draws the attention not on the cultural aspect, but rather the racial. The concept of race is thus indeed very present, as it comes forward from the other definitions found in the data. Such a large use of the concept of race instead of culture is of particular relevance for the study. One of the main points of the studies on cultural racism and color-blind ideology is that the terminology used to discuss social inequalities tends to avoid references to race or skin color is avoided (Bonilla-Silva, 2015). The study brought forward though that in renowned news outlets terms related to the concept of race and "whiteness" are indeed still part of the language used.

4.3.b Apologetic and dismissing approach

It is interesting to notice how the most important key concepts that belong to theoretical discussions about cultural appropriation were present and mentioned in the data. Nevertheless, in the biggest part of the data there was a tendency to talk more specifically about the casting choices, rather than linger on broader analysis and mentions of the wider context within which these casting choices were operated. Some reviews though presented a more complex argumentation and in some occasions the data also made a quick reference to Hollywood historical background in matters like fair casting and racial politics. These types of more structured argumentations were collected in the category *References to culture,* which will be discussed later in this chapter.

In some reviews, the presentation of the casting choices was also introduced by an overview of the reactions of people on the blogosphere, and these bits were another source from where to gather information about how the articles referred to the controversies while reporting third parts' opinions. The category *Signs of agreement* grouped these pieces of information and helped acquiring a more complete perspective on the range of expressions used to frame issues of miscasting. Parts like: "This fiasco has deservedly generated advance criticism" (Lumenick, 2010); "It's understandable that people were angry about the whitewashing of Egypt." (Merry, 2014) or quotes like:

Asian Americans, I hear your agitation. […] Yes again, it's a shame the film's producers couldn't find suitable Chinese youngsters among the 500 million or so on earth. (Corliss, 2010)

[…] the loud cries of whitewashing that the casting of Hollywood stars in a fundamentally Japanese product has justifiably provoked. (Greenblatt, 2017)

show that in numerous cases the controversies raised from the casting choices were presented as legitimate and understandable.

What is interesting to find is that several of these sentences, while acknowledging the legitimacy of these instances, make also a point later on to present the issue as less problematic then what people made it out to be. In this sense, the discourse analysis was very useful to confirm, and explain in more detail, things that were noticed with the QCA. Namely, the dismissal of some issues for different reasons, like for instance the ability of the actor or because the movie was not well made and therefore it does not matter if the appropriate racial group did not have the chance to star in it. For example, a comment like the following is particularly relevant because it is hard to analyze in terms of what it delivers, as it presents contrasting information:

A cursory glance at Hollywood's whitewashing history makes this choice fairly indefensible, and yet: Swinton, who's basically her own species, makes an excellent ageless mystic. That's not an excuse, but it's the truth. Also, it's nice to see a little gender-swapping in the notoriously macho comics world (but then again, our doctor lead could just as easily have been a woman). I'm not complaining, though. (Stewart, 2016)

The ambivalence of this quote lies in the fact that it states that a choice is "indefensible" while in actuality defending it. It creates confusion on whether there is a negative critique on the choice to change the ethnicity of the character or a praise. Such ambiguity can be seen as a discursive strategy to make a reference to a problem while not taking a clear stand and therefore failing to unequivocally oppose the system within which such problem is created. The process of using other people's cultures and re-elaborating them so that they can better fit within the appropriating culture's frame is one of the ways brought forward by the literature in which cultural appropriation can be harmful (Posadas, 2014). The quote presented above shows that there seems to be the idea within the predominant group that modifying the original material is

legitimate when such change resonates with the society appropriating it. There are other parts similar to this:

> You can relax, bloggers. The dearth of racially appropriate casting in the U.S. simply means that fewer Asians were humiliated by appearing in what is surely the worst botch of a fantasy epic [….] (Corliss, 2010)

> It's understandable that people were angry about the whitewashing of Egypt. But no aspiring actor of color should think of this as an opportunity missed so much as a bullet dodged. (Merry, 2014)

What happens in all of these quotes is that other reasons are brought forward in order to move in the background discussions about racial representation. A statement like "it is not an excuse, but it's the truth" tends to sound precisely like an implicit justification and the final "I'm not complaining though" highlights even more the primary role given to other factors over fair casting. This same attenuating effect was also visible in the quotes that presented the miscasting as almost a lucky occurrence for underrepresented minorities since the movie turned out to be of poor quality. In a quote by *the TIME* something similar happens, but even more explicitly:

> Although the casting of Scotswoman Swinton as the Ancient One, originally an Asian character, caused some controversy when it was announced, Swinton is so totally weird and out-there that her features and skin color are practically beside the point. (Zachareck, 2016)

In such statement, there is a clear stretch of how numerous other elements should be taken into account, and misrepresentation is presented as definitely not the most important one.

4.3.c Quick references and more elaborated ones

Always within the category *References to culture*, the discourse analysis also showed two other ways in which the articles addressed the issues around the miscast roles and provided information about it. Numerous articles make only a quick reference, not spending much time elaborating further on the subject, as in the following quotes:

> […] Tiger Lily (Rooney Mara), the only Caucasian among a multi-cultural band of insurrectionists. (Travers, 2015)

[…] he fights an endless war with Neverland's native peoples, led by Tiger Lily (played by the decidedly white Rooney Mara). (Sims, 2015)

And for a story set in ancient Egypt, there is a puzzling dearth of Middle Eastern and African faces. (Nashawaty, 2014)

In these examples, there is an open reference to and also a hint of a critique towards the way the movie handled the representation of the characters. The critique is once again made implicitly, mostly with the use of irony. For example, putting the emphasis on the ethnicity of the actress selected by stating "the only Caucasian" or "the decidedly white" is a way used to point out how such element contrasts with the ethnicity the character should have belonged to. Despite the presence of points of criticism though, these references still do not engage deeper with the discussions that the topic might raise. On the other hand, other articles presented explicit, more elaborated critiques on, for example, the argument of meritocracy brought forward as a justification for the casting choices:

[The director] also said he believed that the actors selected were the best people for the parts. But they aren't, and that's true not just because of racial veracity. (Merry, 2014)

In another article, the following bit:

If the only way you can bypass these issues is to whitewash the part (yet keep the Asian setting and vague mysticism), the problem isn't the character, it's your lack of imagination as a creator. (Bastien, 2016)

constitutes another explicit critique to *Doctor Strange*'s director' statement about how actress Tilda Swinton was casted for an Asian role so that the character would not fall into stereotypes. Other articles explicitly mentioned the issue of underrepresentation and even added questions as a way to reflect further on the matter:

Swinton is terrific, but given the lack of decent Asian parts, why whitewash this one? It's a rewrite that leaves the number of Asian speaking roles at exactly one, the monastery's

librarian. And this in a movie that mostly takes place in Nepal and Hong Kong. (Whitty, 2016).

4.3.d Widening the discourse: historical framing and references to culture
The miscasting issues were also sometimes presented by providing a frame to them, that is offering some sort of background on traditional racial politics followed by Hollywood:

The star of the movie is the box office insurance. Here's why the casting controversy isn't a deal breaker to me. (Phillips, 2017)

The casting of "Exodus," with mostly American, British and Australian actors in Middle Eastern and African roles, has raised some eyebrows, and while these choices represent a failure of imagination and sensitivity, they are also consistent with that old, stale tradition. (Scott, 2014)

The addition of this type of information is relevant because it creates a stronger link between the contingent miscasting situation and the broader situation of traditional Hollywood choices. By doing so, such information contributes to widening the perspective and hints at the existence of a larger social context to which racial politics belong. There are two implications in the way such information are conveyed though. On one hand, they expose Hollywood's traditional choices in terms of casting and representation, which were often targeted and criticized also by part of the literature (e.g. Griffin & Benshoff, 2011; Johnson, 1959). On the other hand, insisting on the fact that misrepresentation and miscasting have been practices Hollywood always followed might lead to a normalization of such practices. This is even truer for expressions like "the casting controversy isn't a deal breaker to me." (Phillips, 2017), presented in the quote above. The emphasis on how issues related to casting are not surprising in fact conveys the idea that they are normal and therefore tends to diminish their importance.

All the data discussed until now focused solely on the casting choices, that is even when discussing whitewashing and misrepresentation they do so relating these issues to the miscasting of the actors. Even if only in a few cases, the data also present some parts that do something different though, by straightforwardly linking the miscasting to the concept of cultural appropriation. What happens in these part is that they not only put the emphasis on the miscast roles, but also start discussing how the original non-western material was used and the problematic aspects of the final, reinterpreted material. This was found only in the articles

referring to *Ghost in the Shell*, and once in one article for *Doctor Strange*. One example is thus provided by the following quote on the *Ghost in the Shell*'s review on rogerebert.com:

Director Rupert Sanders and his collaborators aren't married to recreating the influential manga or its 1995 anime adaptation wholesale. This isn't inherently a problem. But how they choose to change this material is. […] "Ghost in the Shell" jettisons the complex preoccupations of the source material in order to traffic in a distinctly American story about heroic individualism. (Bastien, 2017)

Later on, the article states:

Ghost in the Shell makes the troubling decision to use Japanese culture, visual flourishes, and source material but decides that a Japanese actress as the lead would be a step too far. (Bastien, 2017)

Unlike the examples discussed so far, in this text there is an explicit reference to exploiting a culture without representing nor crediting it properly.

It's an ongoing narrative unavoidably fraught by two-plus decades of cultish devotion and cultural appropriation. The elephant in the cineplex is that history: A tale that began with the landmark 1989 Japanese manga anthology, […] before arriving—sleek, streamlined, and suddenly much more Caucasian—in theaters this week. (Greenblatt, 2017)

It's a pretty cynical, if predictable, Hollywood move: Take the spirit of the Japanese creation, transplant it into a white body and hope the operation's a success. (Stewart, 2017)

These quotes can be connected to more general discourses about exchanges between cultures and the difficulties that might arise when elements of one culture are transplanted and re-elaborated by another. There are other few bits in which the same relation can be found. For example, this quote:

[…] like so much in "Ghost in the Shell" — the toddling geishas, the Asian extras — it helps to reduce an entire culture to a decorative detail. (Dargis, 2017)

displays a reference and a critique to the tendency to fetishize and simplify complex cultures in order for them to be malleable to Western changes. Similarly, bits like

> You also can't ignore that "Doctor Strange" is essentially the story of a white man who travels to an "exotic" land, whose culture and people he doesn't respect let alone know the language of. (Bastien, 2016)

again connect to the theme of underrepresented cultures used only as an embellishment.

The theoretical background about cultural racism makes a clear point of how discourses about culture are used as a way to perpetuate discrimination without bringing the concept of race forward, and therefore hiding the racism behind such discrimination. It was interesting to notice how in the findings the concept of race was actually brought forward more often than that of culture. "Inexplicable mistake to change the races"; "white actors", "ethnic correctness", "racial politics", "racially appropriate casting" are but some of the ways used in the data to discuss the miscasting of the movies. The concept of colorblindness, crucial within the context of new racism, cannot be applied to the data. When discussing miscasting, there is a much bigger focus on the concept of race than that of culture. This finding is relevant because it shows that race is still a very well mentioned and utilized notion, despite new racism ideology's claims supporting the idea that race is an outdated concept within the contemporary American society. If on the one hand the data thus show that the concept of race is the main one used to discuss issues of representativeness, still the results pinpoint some other concepts that were discussed in the existing literature about new racism. The fact that dismissal and justification were found as approaches to casting controversies confirms the attitude of new racism's discourses to underplay the role racism still holds in American society. This type of approach is relevant because, on a societal level, it constructs the idea that acts of misrepresentation are something justifiable. Relating the miscasting of the actors in the movies to traditional Hollywood politics leads to a similar consequence. It presents the practicing of cultural politics and whitewashing as frequent and predictable, therefore normalizing it. Ultimately what both these ways – that is dismissing or justifying the casting choices and contextualizing them in Hollywood's history – can lead to is a greater acceptance, on the majority group's part, of specific politics that harm minorities.

The problematic aspect of cultural racism and cultural appropriation, which is something existing theory discusses in depth, is nevertheless also brought forward by part of the data. As it was previously shown with examples, there were cases in which cultural appropriation is indeed

constructed and presented as something harmful and also related to the broader context of intercultural exchanges. Existing studies often discussed the difficulty in distinguishing what should be considered cultural exchange from cultural appropriation, as absorbing cultural elements of another culture within a social contexts and re-using them is inevitable (Appiah, as in Young, 2008; Matthes, 2016; Rogers, 2006; Young, 2008, Ziff & Rao, 1997). Especially in the era of globalization, whose very essence is based on materials, information and cultural elements' circulation and exchanges (Ueno, 1999), this line tends to become even finer. Nevertheless, as previously discussed, the way in which a culture belonging to a minority group is represented by the predominant one holds great significance because it can have consequences for the subordinated group. The data that discussed more in depth the misrepresentations in the movies connected such misrepresentation to this precise problem. They broadened the discourse by pointing out how one of the biggest representation's flaws in the movies consisted in using elements of other cultures mainly as an eye-catcher and modifying them to such point that it completely obliterates the original culture. Such tendency to fetishization was discussed also in the literature. The analysis therefore brought forward that in part of the data there is an aligning between how cultural appropriation is defined and problematized in the literature and how it is presented and spread to the public and in society. This means that some articles constructed the idea of cultural appropriation and whitewashing similarly to the way in which theory does. By doing so, they highlighted more clearly than in other parts of the data the societal implications of certain choices. In other words, some articles explicitly referred to what are the risks and the consequences entailed in certain choices operated on other cultures' material.

5. Conclusion

The goal of this study was to research how a selection of quality American newspapers and movie websites reviewing six Hollywood productions released between 2010 and 2017 and which raised controversies for their casting choices defined cultural appropriation and how they discussed cultural racism.

Using both Qualitative Content Analysis and Foucaultian Discourses Analysis, 54 articles retrieved from the American websites rottentomatoes.com (48) and rogerebert.com (6) were analyzed. The two methods combined allowed to gain insights on how discourses about cultural racism and cultural appropriation are conducted in elite American media on two different levels. Firstly, the Qualitative Content Analysis was useful to understand the context within which subjects like cultural appropriation, cultural racism, racial politics were brought up. Furthermore, it allowed to gain knowledge on the space the reviews dedicated to discussions about race and on whether these discussions are put more on the foreground or not. Secondly, the Foucaultian Discourse Analysis allowed to focus more in detail on the way the concepts in the articles are expressed and the messages conveyed in them. Both cultural appropriation and cultural racism were mainly discussed within the data in relation to the casting issues of the movies. That is to say, the main issue about the movies pinpointed by the reviews was that of misrepresentation. The discussions around cultural appropriation and cultural racism mainly happened when the casting of the movies was brought forward. Only in a very few cases cultural appropriation was presented as a concept inclusive also of other aspects, such as the use the movies make of other cultures' material. Moreover, the very expressions "cultural appropriation" and "cultural racism" were present but not used frequently. Rather, "whitewashing" was the most common way to define the process of switching the race of a character or modifying elements of a particular culture in order to fit Western standards. Cultural racism was therefore presented as a concept strongly linked to issues of representativeness of minority groups.

Overall, in the data the concepts of cultural racism and cultural appropriation and discussions linked to them, concerning the way in which some minorities are misrepresented and the way in which minorities' cultures are exploited – were brought forward and did find a space. Nevertheless, the analysis also showed that these discussions were not given a primary space within the reviews. That is to say, cultural racism, cultural appropriation and whitewashing were concepts introduced by the reviews but were however not the primary focus

of the article. Despite this though, the biggest part of the data indeed pointed out the importance and relevance of such topics.

The literature about cultural appropriation and cultural racism presented points and arguments that were of great use for the research. They provided a started point to design the research but were also crucial to interpret the results. Interpreting the findings in the light of the existing theory was also a very important step to give the results a meaning within the broader social context. As was stated in the introduction to this study, conducting such research to provide some insights on the space issues of cultural racism receive in American media would be relevant because it would also deepen the understanding of the attitude towards discourses of race and the power dynamics going on in the American society. The outcome of the analysis of the articles showed that indeed discourses of race still happen, and also that the concept of race has not been completely replaced by the concept of culture. The findings also displayed that the articles present awareness about the perpetuation of racist practice. Even when the data presented a dismissal of the claims about the unfairness of the casting choices conducted for the movies, still the reviews explicitly show consciousness about the fact that such choices are aligned with the traditional racial politics followed by Hollywood for decades. The amount of space provided by the articles to such discussions is not prevalent though. This fact can be interpreted as a sign that renowned official media are not used as platforms to provide in depth details and elaborate expositions on the issues of new racism, representativeness and cultural appropriation.

In conclusion, the main points that the study showed were firstly that the concept of culture is not brought forward often, while, on the contrary, there is higher presence of framing the discourses related to issues like misrepresentation and cultural racism in terms of race. Such discourses in the articles showed a certain degree of consciousness towards issues related to cultural racism and in some cases an open acknowledgment of the racial politics still being perpetuated in certain fields. Nevertheless, such acknowledgment is often expressed implicitly, in some cases followed by justifications or counterbalanced by positive reviews. Moreover, the findings showed that the primary focus of the articles was not directed to providing in depth information about matters of cultural appropriation, but rather discussing the movies in terms of cinematographic quality. Overall, these findings are relevant because they suggest that some of the dynamics of new racism highlighted in the literature are actually at play also in American's elite newspapers and magazines and popular outlets.

Although the study was conducted carefully and the data analyzed in what was considered the best way to explore as in depth as possible the subject at hand, still there are

limitations to the results achieved by this research. Firstly, as this was a qualitative study, the research did not aim for generalizability. Although still relevant, the findings occurred from this analysis are not necessarily applicable to nor describe the approaches taken by other movie review articles featured in other newspapers or magazines. The amount of data analyzed could therefore be noticeably widened in order to get more information on the subject that was researched and bring out new aspects that this study could not grasp. Beside the quantity of the data, the study was also limited by the type of articles selected. For this research the focus was put only on reviews of the movies, excluding other types of articles. Nevertheless, there is the possibility that other articles featured in some of the newspapers and magazines used for data collection. That is to say, it could be relevant to take into account also articles that did not review the movies, but only targeted and discussed the controversies connected to them. Moreover, also different kind of online non-official sources should be taken into account to study the way in which the concepts of cultural racism and cultural appropriation are constructed in and by the society. Officially renowned media can offer an idea of the approach taken by official media revenues, and thus provide a better insight on the politics behind such approach.

Limiting the study to these type of data though might not be enough to fully explain how the concepts analyzed with this study are being defined and are circulating in American society. Therefore, the analysis of data retrieved from for example websites run by privates, personal blogs and non-profit organizations might be extremely interesting and relevant. It would widen the field of research as well as provide a more complete overview on how discourses around race, cultural racism and cultural appropriation are being led within the society. Broadening the research to non-official revenues would also help to compare and observe whether and how the way in which the subject is approached differs from the line followed by elite newspapers and magazines. The present study did mention how in some cases people's claims and discussions online were not properly complemented by the way in which the articles talked about the movies reviewed. The comparison between discourses of cultural appropriation held on elite media and those held by people on other platforms thus constitutes a necessary step in wholly understanding the way in which such concepts are being constructed, used and discussed in American society.

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Appendix B: Complete QCA's final coding frame

Category 1: Critiques

Subcategory *movie as a whole:*

Description: Segments with negative critiques aimed at the movie in general terms, making remarks on the production in terms of overall impressions of the watching experience.

Examples: "'The Last Airbender' is an agonizing experience in every category I can think of and others still waiting to be invented." (Ebert, 2010); "You walk out of "Pan" feeling flattened, and bummed out." (Phillips, 2015)

Subcategory *technical aspects***:**

Description: Segments with negative critiques aimed at aspects of the productions concerning the technical side, such as direction, visual effects, quality of 3D, editing, screenplay, cinematography, etc.

Examples: "The parting of the Red Sea, unfortunately, is a digital washout." (Scott, 2014); "He keeps the camera rammed close to the action and to the actors' faces, and the battles have been diced into bits by no fewer than three editors." (Phillips, 2010)

Subcategory *worse than original source:*

Description: Segments with negative critiques on the way the productions used and changed elements of the original material the movie was inspired by.

Examples: "Although "Prince of Persia" stimulates the circulatory and nervous systems, it engages none of the higher faculties of game play." (O'Sullivan, 2010); "Trying sampling a Nickelodeon clip from the original show to glimpse the look that might have been." (Ebert, 2010)

Subcategory *racial/cultural matters:*

Description: Segments with critiques aimed at aspects of the movies that were considered problematic because of cultural representation reasons.

Examples: "It's a pretty cynical, if predictable, Hollywood move: Take the spirit of the Japanese creation, transplant it into a white body and hope the operation's a success." (Stewart, 2017); "At first, the fact that they can speak to one another comes across as an inventive flourish, but like so much in "Ghost in the Shell" — the toddling geishas, the Asian extras — it helps to reduce an entire culture to a decorative detail." (Dargis, 2017)

Category 2: Positive aspects

Subcategory *movie as a whole:*

Description: Segments with positive critiques aimed at the movie in general terms, making remarks on the production in terms of overall impressions of the watching experience.

Examples: "In the end, it's a very pretty movie that pulls you into this futuristic world." (Douglas, 2017); "By eschewing the usual stories of technologically-gifted playboys and noble super soldiers for a world ruled by magic, "Doctor Strange" feels fresh." (Bastien. 2016)

Subcategory *technical aspects:*

Description: Segments with positive critiques aimed at aspects of the productions concerning the technical side, such as direction, visual effects, quality of 3D, editing, screenplay, cinematography, etc.

Examples: "This is the rare film that earns its 3-D surcharge." (Stewart, 2016); "The stunt work is consistently exciting and well filmed, by director Mike Newell." (O'Sullivan, 2010)

Category 3: Casting

Subcategory *reference to race but no critiques on casting choices:*

Description: Segments where there is a reference to the racial and cultural belonging of the cast, as well as references to issues related to representation and miscasting. There is no further elaboration though on such themes and no contestations are provided.

Examples: "Whitewashed? Apart from the film's look, the film's biggest strength is in the performances by Patel (Anglo-Indian), Curtis (Maori), and Aasif Mandvi (Anglo-Indian)." (Rickey, 2010); "The Ancient One, for instance, is now female and Celtic, instead of the racist Fu Manchu stereotype of the original." (O'Sullivan, 2016)

Subcategory *reference to race and casting contested:*

Description: Segments where there is a reference to the racial and cultural belonging of the cast, as well as references to issues related to representation and miscasting. There is further elaboration on such themes and contestations are provided.

Examples: "Actually, the actors who voice the Asian roles in the TV series are Caucasian too — but never mind that, because, yes again, it's a shame the film's producers couldn't find suitable Chinese youngsters among the 500 million or so on earth." (Corliss, 2010); "And for a story set

in ancient Egypt, there is a puzzling dearth of Middle Eastern and African faces." (Nashawaty, 2014)

Subcategory *general critique with no reference to race:*

Description: Segments where there are critiques aimed at the cast of the movie but for reasons that are not related to racial and representation choices.

Examples: "As Moses grapples with his existential crisis, he's visited by God in the form of a petulant young boy with a British accent — a casting choice I suspect many will find problematic, mystifying, or just plain laughable." (Nashawaty, 2014); "Behind Bale, the rest of the cast is an almost unmitigated disaster, a haphazard assortment of performers who often seem to be inhabiting different movies altogether." (Orr, 2014)

Subcategory *no reference to race and bad performance of miscast actor/ess:*

Description: Segments where there are no references to the racial and cultural belonging of the cast or to issues related to representation and miscasting, and there is a negative review of the performance of miscast actors and actresses.

Examples: "It certainly doesn't help that Christian Bale plays Moses in mostly stiff and detached fashion." (Lemir, 2014); "Saddled with such stubbornly instrumental dialogue, it is little surprise that Shyamalan's cast members creak listlessly through their lines." (Orr, 2010)

Subcategory *no reference to race and good performance of miscast actor/ess:*

Description: Segments where there are no references to the racial and cultural belonging of the cast or to issues related to representation and miscasting, and there is a positive review of the performance of miscast actors and actresses.

Examples: "But the studio's latest, *Doctor Strange*, wouldn't work as well it as it does (and it mostly works very, very well) without Benedict Cumberbatch and Tilda Swinton — two actors, who in addition to being intelligent, top-shelf stars both project a slightly alien, otherworldy air." (Nashawaty, 2016); "Johansson is a fine actress in general. But why is she particularly terrific when she's playing a futuristic cyborg, as she is here, or a sexually predatory yet anguished alien *(Under the Skin)*, or a regular human whose capabilities have been enhanced by sci-fi fantasy drugs *(Lucy)*?" (Zacharek, 2017)

Subcategory *reference to race and casting contested but performance reviewed nicely:*

Description: Segments where there are references to the racial and cultural belonging of the cast or to issues related to representation and miscasting, but there is a positive review of the performance of miscast actors and actresses.

Examples: "It's a near-perfect piece of acting even as it exposes the profound imperfection of the system" (Chang, 2017); A cursory glance at Hollywood's whitewashing history makes this choice fairly indefensible, and yet: Swinton, who's basically her own species, makes an excellent ageless mystic. (Stewart, 2016)

Subcategory *reference to race and casting contested and performance reviewed badly*:

Description: Segments where there are references to the racial and cultural belonging of the cast or to issues related to representation and miscasting, and there is a negative review of the performance of miscast actors and actresses.

Examples: "Mara, perhaps embarrassed at playing a Native American princess clad in a midriff-baring rainbow outfit, barely registers onscreen, dimly smiling at Captain Hook's lame efforts to flirt with her." (Sims, 2015); "But they aren't [the best people for the parts], and that's true not just because of racial veracity." (Merry, 2014)

Subcategory *contested implicitly*:

Description: Segments where references to the racial and cultural belonging of the cast and contestations on the choices operated in the movies in terms of representation and casting are done but implicitly.

Examples: Blackbeard's war against the natives, a multiculti gaggle led by lily-white Tiger Lily (Rooney Mara, co-starring her midriff), grinds on in another part of this cesspool. (Phillips, 2015); "We have Christian Bale as Moses, which feels almost as strange to type as it does to witness onscreen" (Orr, 2014)

Subcategory *criticism on roles for people of color*:

Description: Segments with elaborations and negative critiques related to the roles non-White people are given on the screen.

Examples: "Rachel McAdams is hamstrung as Strange's gal Friday at the hospital, while the Kathmandu lair has only one speaking Asian character, Wong (Benedict Wong), whose main characteristic is that he refuses to laugh." (Stewart, 2016); "Yes, Japanese actor "Beat" Takeshi Kitano plays Major's boss, but he's on-screen for all of 10 minutes." (Stewart, 2017)

Subcategory *context for issues on casting choices:*

Description: Segments that supply background information on the controversies raised by the movies and also on the reasons behind the casting choices that were criticized.

Examples: "For the past few weeks, you and your allies in ethnic correctness have clogged the blogosphere with complaints about the casting in M. Night Shyamalan's live-action movie version of the Nickelodeon animated series Avatar: The Last Airbender." (Corliss, 2010); "The screenwriter C. Robert Cargill has said that some of the changes involving the sorcerer, originally from Tibet, stemmed from concerns that depictions of Tibetans might anger China, a movie market powerhouse." (Dargis, 2016)

Subcategory *plain presentation of cast:*

Description: Segments where there is only a plain presentation of the role played in the movie by the miscast actors and actresses.

Examples: "Christian Bale is Moses, raised as Ramses' brother and protector and eventual adversary." (Phillips, 2014); "Gyllenhaal plays the grown-up Prince Dastan, adopted as a resourceful street kid by a sixth-century Persian king." (Schwarzbaum, 2010)

Category 4: Story

Subcategory *description:*

Description: Segments that neutrally describe the plot, the characters or other aspects of the movies related to their story.

Examples: "Her job is to fight dark forces with the ability to hack not just into computer networks but into human brains." (Zacharek, 2017); "He wants to help free his people, but he also feels a residual kinship with Ramses, a bond that must be severed completely." (Scott, 2014)

Subcategory *ridiculed:*

Description: Segments that describe in a ridiculed way or mocking tone the plot or the characters or other aspects of the movies related to their story.

Examples: "The focus of Prince Dastan's acrobatic exertions, which career from ninja-like moves to the wall-bouncing gymnastics of parkour, is a special dagger he has stumbled upon." (O'Sullivan, 2010); "But he keeps quiet — a smart move since Ramses is the kind of short-fused sociopath who peacocks around the palace with a cobra draped around his neck." (Nashawaty, 2014)

Subcategory *criticized (race/cultural reference):*

Description: Segments where there are negative critiques to aspects of the story that can be related to issues of cultural appropriation and representation.

Examples: "Ghost in the Shell" jettisons the complex preoccupations of the source material in order to traffic in a distinctly American story about heroic individualism. (Bastien, 2017); "You also can't ignore that "Doctor Strange" is essentially the story of a white man who travels to an "exotic" land, whose culture and people he doesn't respect let alone know the language of." (Bastien, 2016)

Subcategory *criticized (other reasons):*

Description: Segments where there are negative critiques aimed at specific aspects of the story like the plot or the characters and that are not related to issues of cultural appropriation and representation.

Examples: "Even more problematic is the film's representation of God not as a burning bush, though one is briefly seen, but as a petulant 11-year-old boy (Isaac Andrews) with an English accent." (Lumenick, 2014); "Significant plot points whiz by in this movie equivalent of speed-dating." (Rickey, 2010)

Subcategory *linked to contemporary politics:*

Description: Segments that establish a connection between elements of the plot of the movies and elements of contemporary society and politics.

Examples: "No worries. The Iraq parallels in the script by Boaz Yakin, Doug Miro and Carlo Bernard are soon kicked to the curb." (Travers, 2010); "Dastan and his brothers have been misled to believe it's hiding the ancient equivalent of weapons of mass destruction (some things apparently never change in the Middle East)". (Lumenick, 2010)

Category 5: Extra remarks

Subcategory *generic:*

Description: Segments with extra facts and information on generic and miscellaneous topics and aspects of the productions that keep a neutral tone.

Examples: Not unlike many Hollywood treatments of highly regarded source material, Sanders' movie is neither a rigidly faithful adaptation nor a bold departure. (Chang, 2017); "If you want a

list of comics-derived spectacles less successful and worthy than this one, 'Suicide Squad' heads the list." (Phillips, 2017)

Subcategory *positive:*

Description: Segments with extra facts and information that cast a positive light on the movie.

Examples: The film has a decent pedigree. (Scott, 2015); "It's also a bit of a relief to have a single superhero on screen again, instead of the usual supermano-a-mano fights and all-star Avenger assemblies." (Whitty, 2016)

Subcategory *negative:*

Description: Segments with extra facts and information that cast a negative light on the movie.

Examples: "Prince of Persia" got the go-ahead from an administration at Disney that was sent on its way last year. (Lumenick, 2010); After spending the past decade making bad movies, writer-director M. Night Shyamalan has branched out in "The Last Airbender." (LaSalle, 2010)