

Ethnicity in Disney: The representation of ethnic minority groups in Disney films

A qualitative study about the perceptions and experiences of Dutch young adults on ethnic representation in Disney films

Student Name: Dion Biesaat
Student Number: 434782

Supervisor: Dr. G. Evolvi

Master Media Studies - Media, Culture & Society
Erasmus School of History, Culture and Communication
Erasmus University Rotterdam

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ABSTRACT

Disney has been the producer of many children's films and classic fairy tales such as *Cinderella* and *Snow White* for decades. Recently, newer stories have been added such as *Coco* and *Moana*. For several years now, on their streaming service Disney+, the film company has a disclaimer stating that they acknowledge that they have historically discriminated against certain groups and that they used racial stereotypes. This prompted a research into the experiences of people with different ethnic backgrounds about the representation of ethnic minorities in Disney films. The literature is largely lacking in this regard. A lot of research has been done into the influence of gender, but the relation to ethnicity is hardly visible. This research will therefore contribute to the gap that exists in the literature. The representation of different ethnic groups in films has an impact on society as a whole. Public opinion is partly influenced by the media. In conjunction with the audience, various discourses emerge.

In this research, attention is paid to the importance of audience research, because they are seen as active participants who give meaning to what they see. The experience of people and the extent to which they critically look at these films depends on the degree of engagement. Five logics of engagement are discussed that can serve as an explanation to describe how the representation is experienced. Here, the logics of entertainment, social connection and identification are most visible. Audiences mainly watch Disney films to be entertained and they find it important to identify with the characters and the story. As a result, they are less critical of what they see. In addition, it is stated that there are a number of deficiencies in the representation of ethnic minorities, such as underrepresentation, negative framing, stereotyping and normative whiteness. There is a plea for superdiversity, which means that more attention must be paid to individuals instead of the group as a whole. More emphasis should be placed on intra-cultural plurality.

In order to measure the experiences, semi-structured interviews were conducted with Dutch young adults of different ethnic origins. Various sampling strategies were used for this, such as snowball, criterion and purposeful sampling. The respondents indicated that they experience the representation of ethnic minorities as stereotyping. There is a difference between white and non-white characters and it generally has a negative connotation. They do, however, see developments in this respect, whereby in recent years there has been an increasing emphasis on positive aspects in cultural traditions, norms and values, also known as cultural appreciation. In the future, young adults would like to see more diversity and inclusion in Disney films. In addition, they believe that the representation of ethnic minority groups should be more normalized. The study concludes with a number of limitations and suggestions for further research.

KEYWORDS: Disney, ethnicity, minority groups, representation, cultural studies,

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1. Introduction

Disney is one of the largest media conglomerates worldwide and known for the production of numerous animated films. They own different film studios such as: Pixar Studios (since 2006), Marvel Studios (since 2009) and Lucasfilm (since 2012), which have earned them worldwide fame amongst a wide audience with films such as *The Avengers*, *the Star Wars series*, *Frozen* and many more. However, the company has been the focus of criticism and controversy in recent years due to racist stereotypes and overtones in their classic films such as *Peter Pan*, *Dumbo* & *The Aristocats*. This has led to a disclaimer on the popular streaming platform Disney + since last year in which the company acknowledges that they have used racial stereotypes in a negative way and have mistreated people or cultures with that. Disney indicates that they are aware that they have excluded or forgotten some groups and are now looking for ways to tell their story (NPR, 2020). This event has given rise to reflections on the effects and perceptions of representation. From this, the following research question arose: "How do Dutch young adults from different ethnic backgrounds experience the representation of ethnic minority groups in Disney films?". To investigate these different experiences and perceptions, a qualitative method will be used. Interviews will be held with people from various ethnic backgrounds belonging to minority groups to find out how they interpret these representations and what meanings they give to it. A conscious decision was made to research people with a non-Dutch background within the Dutch society. The reason for this is that this research concerns ethnic minorities. The focus is therefore also on individuals belonging to an ethnic minority group. It is important to highlight this side of the story as the assumption is that this is not done enough yet. These people of different ethnic backgrounds have in common that they are all seen as belonging to a minority and that they are the ones for whom representation in the media is often incorrect or inaccurate.

In order to clarify a number of issues, it is necessary to briefly discuss what is seen under the concept of ethnicity in this study. There is often a difference between race and ethnicity. Race generally refers to biological and physical characteristics such as skin colour, while the term ethnicity is often used to describe a cultural identity. Characteristics of this include language, religion and clothing (Worldatlas, 2017). Note that these two terms can overlap and are socially constructed and perceived which means they can differ over time. For this study they are grouped together under the concept of ethnicity. Thus, when this study refers to ethnicity or ethnic minority groups, both racial physical characteristics and cultural identity characteristics are meant. In addition, the notion of different ethnic backgrounds is described as people who have a (partial) ethnic background belonging to an ethnic minority group (CBS, 2021).

A final point that needs some clarification is the notion of the term whiteness and its relation to Dutchness. As mentioned above, racial characteristics such as skin colour also fall under ethnicity in this study. Someone of Dutch ethnicity, that is to say that this person has a common Dutch history,

language and descent, is called Dutch. These people are born in the Netherlands and both parents are too. In general, it can be said that these people have a white skin colour. As a result, the white Dutch person is seen as the majority in this study. People with a full or partial ethnic background from another country, in other words first and second generation people with a migration background, are in this sense defined as non-white and together they form the minority in the Netherlands. This should not be confused with the term nationality. Someone with a (partially) ethnic background can have a Dutch nationality because they live and work in the Netherlands.

The social relevance of this research can be found in the fact that the representation of ethnic minority groups can have an impact on society and the way people / groups think of themselves and each other. Adkins and Castle (2014) argue that persuasion of the public opinion is highest when they are unaware of political or social messages. The popular nature of films, where the viewer expects to be entertained, helps with altering these attitudes. The media, together with the audience, determines the framework in which certain discourses arise. This gives media the power to ensure change or reproduction of certain discourses. This research has the potential to bring about a more inclusive and fairer representation of minority groups within media which can have a positive influence on future generations. In addition, it can be seen that in various areas in the media and entertainment industry there is a movement that stands up for the representation of ethnic minorities. One of these movements is in the field of theatre where there is a call for a more inclusive representation. *The Need for Legacy* (www.theneedforlegacy.nl) is a foundation, consisting of a young generation of makers, that strives to make more colour visible and to bring a forgotten history to light.

The social relevance is further evidenced by The UCLA's Hollywood Diversity Report 2020 which shows that, when looking at different areas of employment in the film sector, in all areas people of colour are underrepresented. People belonging to minority groups accounted for 27.6% of the leads in Hollywood films, whereas the U.S. population of minorities consists of 40.2%. However, the report also shows that there is a change in overall cast diversity. The diversity in films has continued to increase every year since 2011. Most striking is that the number of films with less than 11 percent diversity has dropped from 51.2% to 15.9%. In addition, more films have been produced in recent years where more than 50 percent of the cast consisted of people of minority groups. The report also states that there is a difference in consumer behaviour with these changes. Their figures show that films with a less diverse cast scored lower at the box office than films with a more diverse cast in 2019. This indicates that diversity and representation are topics that are currently relevant in society.

Furthermore, this research is scientifically relevant, because much is written about the influence of media content on audiences (Adkins & Castle, 2014; Panis, Paulussen & Dhoest, 2019; Phillips, 2011; Schmader, Block & Lickel, 2015; Zhao & Postiglione, 2010), but little is known from the perspective of the audience themselves and their perception/interpretation of that content. There has been some literature about Disney films, but this mainly focuses on the influence of gender stereotypes and behaviours amongst young children (Coyne, Ruh Linder, Rasmussen, Nelson & Birkbeck, 2016; Lee,

2009). This research will take a different starting point as it focuses on ethnic representations and their influence and experiences amongst young adults. They are seen as the largest group who uses streaming services such as Disney + (ZIGT, 2020). In recent years, young adults have also expressed their opinion about discrimination and racism in the form of protests, which shows that they are prepared to take action (De Volkskrant, 2020). On top of that, the Dutch context has not been studied yet within the scope of this topic. This needs attention since the Netherland is characterised by multiculturalism and many ethnic minority groups. This research thus adds new insights to the scientific literature and closes the gap. Due to globalization, borders become more blurry which creates more and more diversity within countries. This asks for the creation of a different modernity in which multiculturalism is becoming an increasingly common term. This globalization is characterized by layers of difference, supported by new media such as the internet, in which opinions and perceptions are constantly changing (Kalantzis & Cope, 2006). The investigation into the Dutch context with its ethnic diversity will therefore be a good scientific addition to this development. The results of this research can serve as inspiration for further scientific research into ethnic representation in the media, thereby closing the gap even further.

In addition to the introduction, the further elaboration of this thesis consists of four other chapters. The theoretical framework will be outlined in the second one. Relevant theories are discussed and what is already known about the phenomenon is explained. Subsequently, the method chapter will show which method has been applied and how the sample was created and which sampling strategies were applied. This chapter also discusses the validity, reliability and ethical dilemmas of the research. The next chapter consists of the results. The answers of the various respondents are described and categorized, in order to be able to draw a conclusion on the research question in the last chapter. In this last chapter it will be examined whether the theories from the theoretical framework can be found in the data and whether any new findings have emerged that can be added to the literature. The chapter concludes with a number of limitations and suggestions for further research.

2. Theoretical framework

This chapter will take a closer look at existing theories and looks at what has already been written on the subject. The aim is to describe theories and approaches that are relevant to answer the research question. The chapter can be roughly divided into two parts. The first part will focus on audiences and the way they engage with media texts. The expectation is that the degree of engagement can say something about the way the audience looks at, in this case, Disney films. Different lenses are put forward from which to look, each with its own degree and form of engagement. In the second part, the focus will be on the way in which ethnic minorities are represented. Several deficiencies are presented and explained. The way in which these two parts are connected lies in the fact that they can influence each other. For example, the degree of engagement can say something about the way in which ethnic representation is experienced in Disney films. Conversely, the way in which ethnic minorities are presented can ensure that certain needs are met or not, resulting in a different way of engaging with the films. At last, the concepts of superdiversity and governance mainstreaming are presented that could change the way of representation.

2.1. Engaging audiences and the influence on perception

By approaching the representation of minority groups from the perspective of critical cultural studies, Van Sterkenburg, Peeters & Van Amsterdam (2019) argue that “Media consumption is never straightforward and should be seen as a process of negotiation in which media content gains meaning in interaction with the public / viewers” (Van Sterkenburg et al., 2019, p. 196/197). This highlights the importance of researching audiences and their interpretations/perceptions as they are seen as active participants who can contribute to the hegemonic discourses around ethnicity within their cultural context (Barker, 2003). I will take this perspective as a starting point in this research in order to gather new information and discover in which ways Dutch audiences actually give meaning to these discourses. Van Eijk and Michael (2013) argue that it is important to look at personal knowledge and areas of interest to get a better grip on cultural tastes and behaviour. The relationship between knowledge and the way people interpret the world influences their cultural tastes and preferences. A person's cultural capital guides the way in which cultural products, such as media texts, are understood and ultimately evaluated. The socio-economic background characteristics of people must not be forgotten here.

The extent to which people give meaning to what they see can vary from individual to individual. It depends on the motive or with what desire the audience looks at media and entertainment texts, in this case Disney films. Films are thus seen “as an active engagement medium, rather than a passive consumption medium” (Askwith, 2007, p. 101). This theory is derived from the uses and gratification approach described by Ruggiero (2000) which was developed to study how audiences are attracted to certain media and how that satisfies their social and psychological needs. It can be argued that the degree

of engagement influences the way people evaluate and judge entertainment products. Askwith (2007) distinguishes five logics of engagement, namely: the logic of entertainment, social connection, mastery, immersion and identification. Each mode will be described below and can be seen as paradigms from which to reason. The paradigms represent the different relationships that the audience forms when engaging in media texts. Despite the fact that five different logics are distinguished, they are not mutually exclusive. Some of these paradigms can be seen in relationship to each other, and more logics can apply to the same person. These different modes of engagement may provide an (partially) explanation for the perception of audiences on Disney films and the way that they look at ethnic representation.

The first and most basic logic of engagement that Askwith (2007) describes is the logic of entertainment. It relates to the basic need that people are looking for ways to be entertained. Many years ago, even in the ancient times, it has been proven that people are interested in forms of narrative and enjoy different forms of entertainment (Ruggiero, 2000). It is seen as the most common motive for people to consume media products. In addition, there are a number of other motives that can be mentioned, such as: escaping reality and problems, relaxation, filling free time, experiencing emotional release and sexual arousal and getting intrinsic cultural enjoyment. What can be inferred from this is that the basic motive that people have for consuming media content is the desire for pleasure and satisfaction through entertainment (Askwith, 2007). It can therefore be expected that people are less critical of what they see when their basic need has already been fulfilled. As these people are more interested in the narrative and the entertainment value, it can be expected that they pay less attention to the representation of social and cultural norms or minority groups. However, this is something I expect myself. The results will show whether this is really the case.

The second logic of engagement is the one of social connection. It is argued that people are constantly looking for social interaction in their daily lives. Askwith (2007) argues that media content plays an important role as it can fulfil different social functions. It serves as a basis for conversations and helps to carry out social roles. People can evaluate and discuss with other viewers what they have seen. Opinions are exchanged and a value judgment is given. Another social function, is that people can identify with others and gain a sense of belonging through media texts. Russel and Pluto (in Askwith, 2007) argue that people who have a shared passion for a certain film (genre) or program sooner and faster feel an instinctive connection with each other. It is assumed that this shared passion creates a sense of trust that establishes an implicit relationship with them. For example, if someone has not seen a particular film or program, they cannot talk along with others about it. That person is thus somewhat hindered in having social interaction. The intrinsic motivation to watch that specific film or program therefore lies in the feeling of wanting to belong to a certain group. It is also stated that the more people know of a particular film or program, the more they feel that sense of belonging. Which can result in an in-group of connected audiences and an out-group of less connected audiences (Askwith, 2007). It is therefore expected that people who watch media content for social interaction are already more critical

than people who just watch it for entertainment. It is used as a means to start a conversation. By sharing the experiences with others, new insights can arise. This does not necessarily mean that they also look more critically at (the lack of) representation or the addressing of social issues, but it does offer more space to discuss these matters, depending on own interests and those of the interlocutor.

The logic of mastery can be seen as a third logic of engagement. This form of engagement is based on the public's desire "to master complexities, interpret nuances, and solve the challenges" (Askwith, 2007, p. 104) that media texts present. This underlines what Van Sterkenburg et al. (2019) said earlier that consuming media content is an active process in which meaning making and interpretation by the public are central values. The level of mastery depends on the personal interests and preferences of the public. It may be that someone takes pleasure in predicting the outcome of the story, on the other hand, it may also be that someone gets satisfaction when he or she can recognize references or can apply his or her analytical skills in combination with its own knowledge of the film or the program (Askwith, 2007). When someone is engaged in a media text, according to the logic of mastery, it is expected that this person will also know more about the underlying thoughts and processes in the production of the product. Askwith (2007) calls this kind of mastery extratextuality. It means that people seek for information outside the program or film itself. This eventually helps them interpret and evaluate the narrative of the media text. People are for instance more interested in casting decisions, conflicts and production logistics. The viewer is more aware of what he or she sees, which could result in a different perception than people who are less engaged or in a different way. This has to do with the knowledge acquired by the viewer.

Moving to a fourth logic of engagement, Askwith (2007) discusses the logic of immersion. "Immersion" describes a mode of engagement that satisfies the viewer's imaginative or emotional desires to be "surrounded" or "subsumed" by a (television) program." (Askwith, 2007, p. 109). Two different types of immersion can be distinguished here, namely: textual immersion and extratextual immersion. The first form mainly focuses on imaginative engagement. The viewers long to immerse themselves in the world or story of the film or program. They do this, for example, to be able to escape the grind of daily life or to have certain experiences that they would normally never have. Fans and fandoms often arise from this form of immersion. Extratextual immersion focuses more on emotional engagement, where the viewer is looking for it in matters surrounding the film or program. For this research this form of immersion is most relevant. Some overlap with the logic of mastery can be found here in terms of the viewers knowledge. However the desire or motivations and the way that information is applied are different. The viewer uses the information obtained to get closer to the film or program and the actors in order to create that experience of immersion. Extratextual immersion is a form of engagement in which the audience wants to gain more insight into things such as the production process, the actors and their past and small details that are normally only available to a small insider group. This information is given in the form of behind the scenes clips, interviews with the actors and bonus materials. Because the public gathers this knowledge, they get a sense of belonging and feel part of a

certain community which is also visible with the previous logic of engagement (Askwith, 2007). It is expected that in this mode of engagement the public will be less inclined to think about critical matters such as representation. In first instance it is about imaginative and emotional engagement. As a result, they generally have more knowledge about what they see, but as said before, this is handled differently. What the viewer chooses to see and immerse in is much more selective. The desire or motives are more driven by experiences and feelings rather than by the ratio.

Which brings us to the last logic of engagement Askwith (2007) describes: the logic of identification. This mode of engagement is seen as the most powerful factor for viewer's engagement. It is argued that media content influences the way people form and affirm their own identity (self-identification). McQuail (in Askwith, 2007) mentions different outcomes of engagement with media content for the viewers identification process. It can influence the viewer's self-perception and behaviour. In addition, it can also ensure that someone's own values are reinforced or, on the contrary, invalidated. Previous literature has already shown that media content has the influence to set a certain standard (Friedland & McLeod, 1990 in Trebbe & Schoenhagen, 2011; Coyne et al., 2016). Finally, it is mentioned that engagement with a media text can cause people to relate their own lives to those of the characters in films or programs. Reasons for people to do this lies in the belief that the fictional characters display certain traits that they also see or want to see in themselves (validation). In addition, viewers can have the motive that they can liberate themselves from social bonds in this way (emancipation). Askwith (2007) further states that in this mode of engagement the motive or desire of the audience also lies in the fact that they want to convey their personal preferences and affiliations to others (social identification). This is done, for example, by talking about it with others and looking for like-minded people who think the same. It is stated that audiences engaged in this way with media content are much more interested in themes, characters and values that play out in and around the content (Askwith, 2007). It can be expected from this that these viewers are also the most critical. they not only watch media content as a form of entertainment, but people also involve what they see on themselves and their own values. Especially in the light of this research, it is expected that people who watch films from this mode of engagement have critical opinions about representation.

As described above, the different logics of engagement are expected to result in different responses from audiences to representation in Disney films. It will depend on the motive or desire with which the viewer watches the content and the extent to which he or she evaluates it. The five logics of engagement can therefore say something about the way in which the public experiences media texts and how critically they asses them. However, other matters that can influence the perception of audiences must also be taken into account. Something that is strongly related to this is that cultural preferences, interests and habits and customs are embedded in people's cultural habitus (Van Eijk and Michael, 2013).

2.2. Audience perceptions on representation

Now that it is clear what the role of audiences is, namely that the actively experience and give meaning

to the discourse of ethnicity in Disney films, and that they engage in different ways with media texts, we can move further on the subject of representation. Trebbe & Schoenhagen (2011) and Panis et al. (2019) argue that the representation of certain groups plays an important role in the formation of identities and the integration of ethnic minorities in a society. The perception of the other and one's own group is partially based on the perception of representation in the mass media (Friedland & McLeod, 1990 in Trebbe & Schoenhagen, 2011). The way in which Disney represents certain topics such as gender and ethnicity already influences behaviour and understanding of it from an early age (Coyne et al., 2016). When viewed from a constructivist perspective, it can be said that the public sphere today is largely shaped by the media. The media "... carries a great responsibility in the mediated construction and representation of society in its diversity" (Panis, et al, 2019, p. 13). It is therefore important for minority groups to have the opportunity to express themselves and to be properly represented. It is argued that the Netherlands is one of the countries where the fair portrayal of minority groups in the media plays an important role (Ter Wal, Haenens & Koeman, 2005) which probably will have an influence on audience perceptions. Since November 2020, an amended media law has come into effect in the Netherlands. The law explicitly states that one of the goals is to increase cultural diversity in different types of media platforms (Breemen & Breemen, 2021). King, Ribeiro, Callahan and Robinson (2021) add to this and say that the race of the actors within a film can influence the perception of that film as being relevant or irrelevant to their ethnic group. Another argument is that racial representation serves as a way to demonstrate real-world concepts. This indicates that there are multiple variables that influence the perception of audiences on ethnic representation.

In their research, Trebbe & Schoenhagen (2011) and Panis et al. (2019) focus on mass media in the form of television. Their theory, that representation has effect on the integration and identity formation of minority groups, will be applied in our case to the Dutch multicultural context to see how audiences reflect on that. Lee (2009) argues that the socio-cultural context has an influence on the perception of audiences and the way in which they interpret the images. She argues that Disney uses unrealistic images and body objectifications. In their study Panis et al. (2019) interpret ethnic minorities as people from different ethnic origins that are marginalised in society. I will build upon this definition in my own research when talking about ethnic minorities.

2.3. Deficiencies in representation

To find out where these effects and different perceptions come from, attention must be paid to the flaws in representation. Trebbe and Schoenhagen (2011) state that media representation of ethnic minorities has a number of deficiencies. First, he sees that there is underrepresentation where the representation of ethnic minorities does not correspond with the actual representation of that group in society. A consequence of this is that this group with their customs, traditions and ways of life are more likely to go unnoticed by society. It is more difficult for younger people to be inspired by role models of their own ethnic group (Panis et al., 2019).

Secondly, these groups are often portrayed in a stereotypical way. This is characterized by generalized character traits that are assigned to the group as a whole. Individual personalities are not taken into account. Eschholz, Bufkin and Long (2002) add that minorities are systematically excluded from leading roles in films or that they are assigned to roles that match traditional stereotypes. The medium of film tends to reinforce these social stereotypes, as this increases the way audiences can identify with characters. It is also used as a way to cater the expectations of viewers who have limited experiences with people of another ethnic background. The use of stereotypes in films can therefore say something about the attitudes towards particular social groups. King et al. (2021) describe in their article that exposure to stereotypical images can lead to real-life misconception about people of a certain group. Using and even reinforcing these stereotypes also makes it more likely that people of a particular ethnic minority group are labelled as being part of that group. One-sided and biased attributes are assigned to these groups, which can lead to prejudices and discrimination (Kroon, Trilling & Raats, 2020). However, there is literature (Park, Gabbadon and Chernin, 2006) that disproves this by saying that these stereotypes can also be seen as something that's not necessarily negative. For example in the setting of comedy as it can then be seen as a source of humour. What is also described in this literature is that ethnic minorities are also able to see positive aspects of incorrect representations, because in many cases these representations are based on a kernel of truth that is only exaggerated. It is argued that context and focus play a role in whether a representation is viewed positively or negatively by the audience (King et al., 2021). This shows that there are different thoughts about the use of stereotypes and how it affects the representation of ethnic minorities. However, it can be stated that most literature tends to the negative effects of its use. The results will show whether these different ways of thinking about the use of stereotypes are also visible in the context of this research.

A third deficiency can be seen as stories surrounding ethnic minorities are often negatively contextualized or framed (Trebbe & Schoenhagen, 2011). In the context of Disney films, Setiawati (2016) sees an Americanization of foreign countries' stories in order to be popular culture products. When looking at the Dutch context, this is for instance reflected in Dutch media coverage on negative news issues in which ethnic minorities are often portrayed dominantly. (Ter Wal et al., 2005). This is in line with what Kroon et al. (2020) found in their study. According to them, media content around ethnic minority groups is often associated with a low-status and high-threat level. Kroon et al. (2020) also say that the biased portrayal of ethnic minorities does not correspond to what actually happens in society. An explanation for this disconnection in media coverage can be found in the reliance on episodic frames rather than thematic frames. This is reflected in the way media content related to ethnic minorities is often related to conflict. The minority groups are more often portrayed as the object rather than the subject. Panis et al. (2019) state that minority groups are more often associated with Islam, terrorism and extremism because of this incorrect representation and framing.

The last deficiency is added by Panis et al. (2019), namely "normative whiteness" in media discourse. This means that many political and social issues are viewed from the perspective of white

people. Whiteness is seen as the invisible norm, enabling thinking in terms of *Us*, and ethnic minorities represent the *Other*, thus reflecting and reinforcing social inequality as Zhao and Postiglione (2010) also state. This can be seen, for example, in the Disney film *Pocahontas*. The natives are seen as "savages" and are opposed to white colonists. They are depicted as inferior to the white British colonists. The above mentioned deficiencies can lead to marginalization, separative acculturation and social disintegration (Trebbe & Schoenhagen, 2011). Another effect that can occur is that some sort of racial hierarchy arises in which the majority group is seen as dominant and ethnic minorities are subordinate (Phillips, 2011). The results of this research will eventually highlight which dimensions of representation, as mentioned above, are particularly relevant in the Dutch context.

As already briefly stated, it can be argued and expected that the way ethnic minorities are represented influences the presence of the different logics of engagement. Incorrect or underrepresentation of a particular ethnic group can result in the public's needs not being met. Consequently, the audience may not be able to identify with the characters or the story, for example, making it more difficult for them to engage at the particular level that is described in the logic of identification. The absence of a fair representation of an ethnic minority group can lead to audiences feeling less connected to a particular film or making it less appealing to them.

2.4. Changing representations and perceptions: Superdiversity

To get rid of these flaws and thereby working towards a fairer representation which may lead to changes in audience perceptions and interpretations, one must think within the framework of superdiversity instead of multiculturalism. Since it has the tendency to focus on fixed collective ethnic identities and thinking in commonalities instead of differences between majority and minority groups, argue Panis et al. (2019). In this way, more emphasis will be placed on intra-cultural plurality. The concept of superdiversity makes it possible for the media to place more emphasis on the cultural heterogeneity within different ethnic minority groups instead of focusing on the multicultural character of society. Van Breugel and Scholten (2017) argue that "Labelling separate migrant groups is no longer considered suitable due to the diversification of migrant populations in terms of, inter alia, countries of origin, gender, religion and legal status, and differences between generations of migrants, within ethnic groups and differences in lifestyles" (p. 512). This ensures that members of an ethnic minority group are no longer seen as just part of one social group (Panis et al., 2019). In the Dutch context, the term is also used to make integration policies. Cities such as Rotterdam are characterized by superdiversity as so many different immigrants have come to live there over the years, making it almost impossible to distinguish the majority from the different minority groups. Thinking in terms of superdiversity and acting upon it has resulted in better integration of different ethnic groups (Dekker & van Breugel, 2019). Wallace, Hoover and Pepper (2014) complement on that by saying that diversity management will lead to feelings of being valued. Something that can also happen in Disney films when viewed from this perspective.

Van Breugel and Scholten (2017) offer a way in which this superdiversity can be managed. They call this governance mainstreaming. It is seen as a strategy that ensures that certain topics are not pushed aside into something only for specific actors. By means of this strategy, various complex societal topics are therefore labelled as a concern for all actors. Mainstreaming ensures that a general awareness is created about the relevance of a certain topic with more inclusiveness as a result. The concept of mainstreaming can therefore also be used in the scope of this research and with the production and development of new Disney films. I will draw upon this framework of superdiversity and use it as a tool, since it puts emphasis on different individuals within a group who therefore also differ in meaning making. Eventually this may lead to changes in audience perceptions and representations.

3. Methods

This chapter will explain which method has been used and why it was best suited to answer the research question. The sample is described and justified using different sampling strategies. In addition, the chapter focuses on the way in which the various theories and approaches are translated in the form of an interview schedule. The different concept will then be operationalized. Furthermore, attention is paid to the validity and reliability of the research and how the researcher tries to keep this as high as possible. There will be a brief discussion of ethical dilemmas and finally the chapter will conclude with a description of the way in which the data will be analysed.

For this research, a qualitative research method was used, namely in-depth interviews. This method has been chosen as the aim of this research is not to generalize. Meaning and interpretation are more important to be able to answer the research question. The goal was to gain an in-depth understanding of a social issue, in our case ethnic representation. Experiences of people were therefore important as they give meaning to phenomena through their beliefs, values, feelings and motivations (Hammarberg, Kirkman & De Lacey, 2016). This data is difficult to quantify, because it requires interpretation from individual actors, also including me, the researcher. The method has been developed using the social constructivism approach described by Creswell (2013) as he argues that individuals develop subjective meanings of their experiences. A focus is placed on the participants' views of different situations that are formed by interaction with others and by historical and cultural norms to which they value. Because the respondents had different ethnic backgrounds and therefore also different thoughts, the process of meaning making was approached from multiple viewpoints. As their cultural preferences and interests that are embedded in their cultural habitus influenced their perceptions and knowledge (Van Eijk and Michael, 2013). By means of interviews it was examined whether the experiences were in line with the theory or whether there may be other opinions / interpretations / meanings. The questions that has been asked during the interviews were inspired by the literature of Van Sterkenburg et al. (2019) and Barker (2003).

3.1. Sampling

Different sampling strategies were used to assemble a representative sample, namely: criterion, purposeful and convenience sampling (Creswell 2013). The criterion sampling strategy was used, because all respondents had to meet a few criteria. At first, it was necessary that the respondents have watched Disney films in their lives. For this research, there were no firm requirements on which Disney films the respondents have watched. The research question is related to the public's overall perception of Disney films in general. As already mentioned in the introduction, Disney is characterized by the different studios it owns. The largest studio is Walt Disney Pictures (which also includes Disney Animation Studios). Most films are produced from this studio. Since Disney is associated by many with

films produced from this studio and the Pixar Studios, the focus will be on these two. When a respondent had seen films that fall under the different studios mentioned above, he or she was invited for an interview. It had been decided, as it was expected that the respondents then had sufficient knowledge and background of the subject matter to start a conversation. This was asked verbally when contacting potential participants for the interviews. There were also no strict criteria for the number of men and women who were interviewed, as the focus of this research was not on gender representations or differences. However, a balance was sought, as "evidence suggests that mixed gender groups tend to improve the quality of the research and its outcomes." (Freitas, Oliveira, Jenkins, & Popjoy, 1998 in Nyumba Wilson, Derrick & Mukherjee, 2017, p. 22). Gender can be a factor which influences reasoning, since men and women can draw upon different discourses that they have available (Abu-Lughod, 1997; Barker, 2003).

In addition, the respondents had to fit under the category of "Dutch young adults" to give meaningful contributions. This meant that people between the ages of 18 and 26 were selected to participate. The threshold of 18 years was set, because young people from this age onwards are seen as adults according to the Dutch government, as mentioned in the civil code of law (article 1:233). In addition, the maximum of 26 years has been set, because the report of the Association of Universities of Applied Sciences (2009) shows that young people between the ages of 23 and 26 on average graduate. After that, it is assumed that they enter a different phase of life, namely that of working young professionals. This age categorisation was chosen because it was expected that this group was able to consciously think about representations and the effects on people and society. On top of that, it was expected that this group have experienced the representation and the changes most consciously as they grew up with it and generally have the highest probability of still watching Disney films often.

Furthermore, the respondents were selected on the basis of their ethnic background. An attempt was made to select an as heterogenous sample as possible in which different ethnicities could be visible. This was determined by asking the respondents verbally how they self-represent when gathering participants. If they indicated that they had a (partial) ethnic background belonging to a minority group, they were invited to participate. Ethnic minority groups in the Dutch context are, in this research, defined as people with a migration background. This contains people whose one or both parents are born abroad. This automatically defines the majority as people of Dutch ethnicity, also known as Dutch. The Netherlands is characterized by its multicultural society in which different groups with a migration background live. The four largest non-Western population groups in the Netherlands are: Turks, Moroccans, Surinamese and Indonesians (CBS, 2021) who mostly live in urban areas. The research was therefore also focused on these groups, but not limited by it as there are also many smaller ethnic groups with a migration background in the Netherlands. Both first and second generation residents were included in this study, as long as they identified themselves as belonging to one of these, or other smaller, ethnic minority groups. Persons who themselves were born in a foreign country fall under the category of first generation residents with a migration background. Persons with a second-generation migration

background were born in the Netherlands, but one or both of their parents were born abroad (CBS, 2021). It was expected that the ethnic backgrounds of the respondents led to different, but also shared, interpretations that illuminated this topic from various angles. Ultimately, only respondents with a second-generation migration background were interviewed. It was difficult to find respondents in this age category with a first-generation migration background in the Netherlands. These are mainly their parents who came to the Netherlands as migrants. Unfortunately, they do not fall under the set age criteria.

Finally, the convenience sampling strategy was implemented. This was combined with the snowball sampling strategy which meant that the researcher's own network was used to recruit additional respondents. The respondents were asked if they knew other potential people who would like to participate in the study. The chances of finding potential respondents in his own network were higher, since the researcher is a young adult himself and also identifies himself as part of an ethnic minority group. From this, a representative sample emerged that made it possible to make a general statement about the influence and experiences of ethnic representations on Dutch young adults.

Participants were approached personally by calling or emailing them. In total, 10 interviews were conducted, each lasting between 45 and 70 minutes. Interviews were chosen because this method was more feasible given the presence of the coronavirus. The researcher had more freedom to schedule 1-on-1 conversations and was also better able to adhere to the restrictions. It also wasn't a problem if participants wanted to do the interview online. Eventually, only one interview was done via Zoom. This was not an issue since conducting online interviews also has some advantages. The respondent did not had to travel and the safety of the own environment led to a more relaxed atmosphere. The rest of the interviews were conducted in a face-to-face meeting. The demographics of the respondents are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographics respondents

Respondent nr.	Gender	Age	(partial) Ethnic background
1	Female	25	Surinamese
2	Male	25	Indonesian/Italian
3	Female	27	Kurdish
4	Female	26	Ethiopian
5	Male	19	Surinamese/Indian
6	Male	26	Antillean (Curaçao)
7	Female	20	Egyptian
8	Female	20	Algerian
9	Male	24	Colombian
10	Male	23	Turkish

The respondents that were interviewed were between the ages of 19 and 27. The ratio between men and women was evenly distributed resulting in five men and five women. All respondents had a Western background. This means that they were all born in the Netherlands and therefore also have a Dutch nationality. However, they did not identify as fully Dutch, because one, or both, of their parents have a different ethnic background. They were defined as residents with a second-generation migration background.

3.2. Operationalisation

To be able to measure the different theories, approaches and concepts, a translation had to be made. They had to be converted into concrete questions that could be asked in the semi structured in-depth interviews. The interviews were conducted in Dutch, since this was the native language of the respondents and the researcher as well. Before the interviews took place, an interview schedule was prepared in which the different topics to cover were mentioned. Making an interview schedule is useful in order to ensure that there is consistency across the different interviews (Breen, 2006), which also increases the internal validity. The questions were broad and general so that the respondents could construct their own meanings to it. By using a lot of open ended questions, the respondents were allowed to share their own views and interpretations without being steered in any particular direction (Creswell, 2013).

Questions were asked that related to Disney films in general, but specifically aimed at ethnic minorities within these films. It was also interesting to ask participants in which respects the representations of ethnic minority groups could be changed and how this could be achieved, since it can have an impact on future representations. Topics that were discussed included: the engagement of audiences with Disney films, the portrayal of stereotypes and personal effects, connections to real-life experiences and the way in which representations could (or maybe, should) be changed. Those topics were inspired by the literature provided by Trebbe and Schoenhagen (2011) and Panis et al. (2019) who talk about deficiencies in representation and provides us a way how to look differently at ethnic representation. Some fragments from Disney films, that include the representation of ethnic minority groups, were shown to introduce or stir up various points of discussion. The first clip came from an older Disney film, namely *Aladdin*. In the clip you can see that he is a robber who steals fruit and bread at the market. He gets himself into trouble and therefore has to run for the police. The second clip that was shown came from a more recent film, namely *Coco* in which you could see a lot of emphasis on Mexican cultural traditions such as 'Dia de los Muertos' (The Day of the Dead). The last clip was from the film *Pocahontas*. In this fragment we see British colonist who prepare for battle. They call the native Americans 'savages' because they captured one of their man. Later on we see the native Americans preparing for battle too, saying the same about the colonists.

At the beginning of the interview, the respondents were asked why and in which way they watch Disney films. These questions related to general viewing behaviours. Questions were asked that could

determine with what motive or desire the respondents watch Disney films, with whom they watch it and whether they ever talk about it with others. This was done to find out from which logic of engagement described by Askwith (2007) the respondents look at films. On the basis of these questions, it could be determined to what extent the respondent is critical about what he or she sees and what interpretations they give to that.

Secondly, questions were asked related to the interpretation and meaning of the representation of ethnic minorities. The clip of *Aladdin* was shown, on the basis of which respondents could indicate how they interpreted the clip. It served as an example of how someone of an ethnic minority was portrayed in the early years of Disney. Questions were asked about the way that the character was represented and how the respondents see the representation in general. The four deficiencies mentioned by Trebbe & Schoenhagen (2011) and Panis et al. (2019) were discussed. The questions were used to test whether these deficiencies were also visible in Disney films and in what way or to what extent. For example, questions were asked such as, "What do you think about the way ethnic groups are represented in Disney Films?" and "Do you see differences in the way different groups are represented? How do you see that? ". Other questions were also asked about stereotypes and what is seen as the norm for representation. Respondents were asked whether the representation of ethnic minorities was a good reflection of reality, trying to find out whether they are underrepresented or not.

Subsequently, the contrast between the representations in Disney films and real life experiences was examined. This was introduced by the second clip of *Coco*. This clip was shown because it showed a cultural tradition that also exists in reality. In addition, the clip came from a newer Disney film in which a different form of representation can be seen compared to the first clip of *Aladdin*. The respondents were asked whether they thought if it was important that the representation of ethnic minorities in films were in line with reality and why they thought so or not. Questions were also asked about how they identify with the characters in the film and whether they compare themselves to what they see. In this way it was possible to find out what the influence was of representation on people's daily lives and on their identity formation.

Finally, respondents were asked if there could be made any changes to the representation of ethnic minorities in Disney films and what those changes should be. This was done by asking questions such as, "Do you think the representation of ethnic minorities in Disney films should be changed? Why / why not? " and "How would you like to see the representation of ethnic minorities in Disney films in the future?". The third clip of *Pocahontas* was shown to discuss the way different groups were portrayed in the past and what was good or bad about it. The clip was useful in different ways since it contained multiple themes that were already discussed, such as the connection to reality and stereotypes. The clip served as an evaluation of several discussion points in order to put them into perspective so that the respondents could ultimately form an overall opinion about it. To conclude the interview, the respondents were asked if they could provide a concise and summarizing answer to the research question. They were also given the opportunity to add things to the topics discussed or bring up any

other thoughts. See appendix A: Topic list, for a more extensive and precise elaboration of the questions asked.

3.3. Validity, reliability & ethics

By applying the different sampling strategies it was tended to increase the external validity and reliability of the research. A disadvantage of interviews is that it can be biased. Because the researcher mostly approached respondents from within his own network, the danger lurked that these respondents behaved differently from others who were unknown to the researcher. This may be related to the fact that they give socially desirable answers, because the importance of friendship is also taken into account. To limit this as much as possible, the researcher tried to remain neutral and aloof during the interviews in order to allow a fruitful conversation to arise. Recordings were made to increase the internal validity and only with the permission of the respondents. They were not distributed or shared with others but merely served to analyse and transcribe the interviews. Since the data is collected from a constructivist approach, Creswell (2013) indicates that it is important that the researcher must be reflexive and positions himself in the study. Therefore it must be acknowledged that his own bias has an influence on the interpretation of the data. His cultural background could influence the way he interpreted the different answers of the respondents. The fact is that the researcher himself is also a big fan of Disney films. In his youth he saw many films and today he still watches them. In addition, as already said, he also considered himself as someone with a partial ethnic background, namely Surinamese. It is therefore important to note that the researcher is aware of his own bias and that he knows that his “interpretations flow from his own personal, cultural and historical experiences” (Creswell, 2013, p. 25). An advantage of this can be that he knows where the respondents come from, which makes it possible that they are more open and comfortable due to the shared background.

No major ethical dilemmas were expected to arise. The topics raised were freely accessible for respondents to discuss. Herein also lied the task of the researcher to create a safe environment so respondents felt more comfortable and were able to say whatever they wanted to say. This was achieved by meeting at the homes of the respondents. In addition, the privacy of the respondents was guaranteed and respected. To ensure this, all data of the respondents has been processed anonymously. The real names of the respondents have been replaced by numbers. Before the start of the interview, each respondent had to sign a consent form (see appendix B) which informed them what the research was about, what the risks and benefits were, and what will ultimately be done with the data. By means of this form they indicated that they accepted to participate in the study.

3.4. Data analysis

After collecting the data, the interviews were transcribed and then encoded according to the steps of the open, axial and selective coding as described in Boeije (2010). This was done manually by hand. The goal of this process was to aggregate the interview texts into smaller categories (Creswell, 2013). A

thematic content analysis was conducted to analyse the data. Using an inductive approach, the different patterns that eventually led to certain themes were identified in a recursive process. In the first phase of analysis, the researcher stayed close to the data by categorising the different units. The first familiarization with the data was established by reading the transcribed interview texts carefully and structuring them into meaningful and non-meaningful pieces. In the next two phases the researcher worked towards broader and more abstract themes that were relevant to answer the research question (Boeije, 2010). The concepts and theories mentioned in the theoretical framework formed the basis for the development of main themes. Viewing behaviours were divided into the themes of relaxation/entertainment, social connection and identification which could be connected with the logics of engagement by Askwith (2007). The representation of ethnic minorities could also be divided into three themes, namely: stereotypes, white vs. non-white characters and cultural appreciation. Within these themes, the deficiencies in representation mentioned by Trebbe & Schoenhagen (2011) and Panis et al. (2019) were visible. Furthermore, the themes that emerged from the perceptions of changes in representations consisted of diversity, inclusion and normalisation. This was inspired by the concepts of superdiversity (Panis et al., 2019) and governance mainstreaming (Van Breugel & Scholten, 2017). These themes will be further discussed in the next chapter.

4. Results

In this chapter the results will be discussed on the basis of the pre-prepared interview schedule. First, the results are discussed with regard to watching Disney films in general. An overview of viewing behaviours will be provided. Subsequently, the ethnic representation in these films will be discussed in more detail. Different aspects of ethnic representations come to light. Following are the results on the comparison with reality and the influence on the respondents personally. Finally, this chapter discusses how the respondents felt about the changes in representation and what they would like to see in the future.

Before the start of the actual interview, the respondents were asked how they define an ethnic minority group and what they associate with it. It's important to mention this too as it may have influenced the way they give meaning to ethnic representation in Disney films. For many respondents, the term “ethnic minority” had a negative connotation. It was associated with negative images of people living differently from 'the norm'. Ethnic minority was therefore logically seen by many of them as something that is opposite from the norm. Respondent 1 said: “I think it has to do with the feeling that you belong to the group that is just less big in society or that has a certain disability in society, or is discriminated in society in a certain way. It doesn't necessarily have to be that way, but it's mainly about the feeling of it.” (Respondent 1). In addition, visible external characteristics were mentioned, such as the traditional clothes or skin colour, which determined whether someone belongs to a certain ethnicity or not. A distinction was made between white and non-white with non-whites seen as ethnic minority. Cultural characteristics such as holidays, celebrations and similarities in norms and values were also put forward as indicators for people belonging to a particular ethnic minority. One of the first things that came to mind with respondent 2 was that he associated the term 'ethnic minority' with thinking in boxes and discrimination, as did respondent 4. The general definition that was formed about people belonging to an ethnic minority was that this had to do with their own or their parents' descent that deviated from Dutch descent. This was broadly in line with the definition of ethnicity and ethnic minorities used by the researcher himself which was inspired by Panis et al. (2019).

“The term minority is actually something white. Something that can be said from a white perspective.”
(Respondent 6)

4.1. Disney in general: viewing behaviours

First, the respondents were asked about their knowledge of Disney films in general and their viewing behaviours which resulted in a variety of answers. Many of them grew up with Disney films and often watched them in their youth. They said that this has weakened over the years, but because of Disney's wide reach, it is not possible to ignore it, as respondent 10 indicated. It has turned out that the respondents nowadays also watch Disney films sometimes so they are also familiar with the newer titles

such as *Moana* and *Coco*. It was notable that the respondents often watch the animation films from Disney Pictures. In addition, they were also familiar with one or more films from the Marvel Universe such as *Black Panther*. The reasons why Disney films are still watched varies. On the one hand, it brings a feeling of nostalgia along with it, because the respondents grew up with it. This is also enhanced by the fairy-tale character and the idyllic picture that is sketched in the films. On the other hand, a feeling of recognition arises in many when a Disney film is turned on now. They recognize what they used to see as little children and because of this they gain a new appreciation for the film. This results nowadays in the “oh yeah, I remember that” moments as respondent 8 indicated. However, in some cases, it was the opposite, for instance in the mind of respondent 1. The film *Jungle Book* used to look very different in her imagination, than when she recently put it on.

When asked about the preferences and favourite films, the respondents also differed quite a bit. Respondent 3, for example, indicated that *Aladdin* was her favourite film because it was a bit more exotic and imaginative. She didn't like other films like *Snow White*, because it was a bit further away from her. While respondents 6 and 9 thought *Hercules* was cool, because of the story that the character goes through during the film. Respondent 7 absolutely loved *Mulan*, since there is also an emphasis on gender roles and women empowerment. Respondent 1 could not choose and had several favourites, including *Mulan* and *The princess and the Frog*, these were different films than the classic ones. Furthermore, *Jungle Book* was also mentioned a number of times, since it has such happy songs. In general, respondents categorized Disney films as easy-to-watch films that makes them happy. It does not let them think about all kinds of serious matters, but provides distraction and a relaxed feeling. For respondent 7, watching a Disney film is also a kind of emotional outlet. It gives her a feeling of liberation.

“Disney takes you into a kind of fantasy world where you can disappear for a while. It has a feelgood quality” (Respondent 1)

The way that the respondents watch Disney film is pretty much the same. Generally this is done in company of others such as friends or family which makes it a social event. A few sometimes put on a Disney film by themselves, but this rarely happens. After the film is done, most respondents indicated that they often discuss it with the people with whom the film is being watched. Sometimes little plays were performed in which the characters were acted out, as was the case with respondent 3 when she was younger. An interesting finding was that the films are generally discussed with like-minded people such as family with the same cultural background. However, evaluation does not happen for everyone. Respondent 4, for example, often watches the films alone. To her, it's "just a film" and she doesn't feel the need to discuss it any further. To the question: “How critically do you look at a Disney film?” In general, the respondents answered that they do not look very critically at these kinds of films. Also for the reason mentioned above that these films are often turned on for relaxation and entertainment.

However, there are some aspects that are considered important when watching a Disney film and what motivates the respondents to do so. For example, some find the story very important and the message it carries. Respondent 9 indicated that he thought this was even more important than the representation of ethnic minority groups in the film. According to the respondents, Disney always tries to make the viewer aware of the world around them in some way. It is considered interesting how Disney tries to explain the way things work in society through their message and stories. Others base their choices on the music and how the film was made in terms of design and special effects. There is a difference between then and now when it comes to motivation and critical viewing of Disney films. The respondents indicated that they now look much more consciously at certain aspects of a film than they did in the past. Where in the past some images were seen as normal which were not furtherly considered, the respondents are now a lot more critical of what they see and they also think about it more. However, it has been noticed that this is only the case when they are asked about it. A few find it interesting to look up and discuss things about it, but most watch the film and then leave it for what it is. Respondent 4 said: "I watch it for entertainment. When it's over, I turn it off, and I go back to business as usual." (Respondent 4).

4.2. Ethnic representation

It emerged from the interviews that ethnic minority groups have a number of ways in which they are represented. It turned out that white and non-white characters can be seen in the films in different ways. In addition, stereotyping aspects emerged. Yet there is also a movement that emphasizes cultural glorification.

4.2.1. White vs. Non-White characters

The majority of the respondents indicated that there is a clear difference in the way in which white characters are represented and non-white characters. What was often argued was that non-white characters are generally portrayed in a more negative light than their counterparts. This can be seen, for example, in the developments that the characters go through in the films or how the setting of the time and location is represented. The respondents indicated that there is often a difference between rich and poor and that a hierarchy can be discovered between white and non-white characters when they appear together in a film. The non-white characters are subordinate to the whites who are portrayed in a more superior way. Respondents indicated this, for example, in the clip of *Pocahontas*, where they saw that the British colonists had much better weapons and more modern clothing than the natives who were portrayed very primitive and barbaric. This is also reflected in the fact that white characters often play the lead roles which was especially true in the early days of Disney. The films mainly revolved around the princess who had to be rescued by a handsome prince. In general, these were white men and women with beautiful dresses and expensive jewellery. They lived in a big castle and had people who would work for them. They also often came from wealthy families or were in that sense not poor. Disney

princesses such as Mulan or Pocahontas had it harder in that regard and had to fight for their 'happily ever after'. Respondent 2 made a comparison by saying that stories around white characters often revolved around themes as love and happiness, and that non-white characters were more the subject of troubles. Respondent 8 commented that she noticed that many villains are of foreign descent and that the image of the white male or female is seen as an ideal type. She referred to the classic princesses as in the fairy tales of *Snow White* and *Sleeping Beauty*. She was convinced that white people in a film were more preferred in the past, because that was what people wanted to see. In addition, respondent 3 made a comparison between *Beauty and the Beast* and *Aladdin*. In both films there is a similar scene that takes place on the market square:

"You see that Belle's village is a 'white' village...where everyone shouts 'Bonjour' from their windows and helps each other...which is the best village to live in. In the market (at Aladdin) there is a very different atmosphere, a bit grimmer...you have to do your best to get your bread and everyone is very poor...I think it's easier for the white characters in life in that respect" (Respondent 3)

Not all respondents believe that the portrayal of non-white characters has a negative connotation. Respondent 9 sees that there is a difference, but does not think this is due to the skin colour of the characters. He sees the differences more in the type of obstacles and the way the main character has to overcome them. In it he gave a nuanced answer, since he indicated that this can also be seen in white characters such as Hercules.

4.2.2. Stereotypes

It was also very clear from the various interviews that these non-white characters are often portrayed in a stereotypical manner in Disney films. Examples included that in the clip of *Aladdin* all women wore traditional clothing and it was clearly visible that the characters in *Coco* came from a poor family. In addition, the stereotypes are also reflected in the way of speaking, by means of an accent, and the way in which the different cultures live. It is seen as an easy way of representation in which not all cultural aspects of a particular group are properly taken into account, but where only a part of it comes to light. The identities of the characters are so stereotypically portrayed that it seems as if the social identity of the group as a whole is the same as the individual identity. As a result, the specific culture of an ethnic minority group is lumped together. For respondent 6, it is even more disturbing that Disney wants to be all-encompassing in films where a non-Western culture is represented, but that this does not happen in films with white characters. He thinks that's the problem and says: "What they're trying to do is get the picture of all of Mexico in an hour or whatever. Or to give the image of the whole Middle East. They try to capture all of that in an image of: this is what they are. While if you look at a *Snow White* or *Little Red Riding Hood*. That happens at a location in a forest or whatever. It's actually not the issue there." (Respondent 6). When asked whether these stereotypes were bad or problematic, different answers came

forward. Some of the respondents indicated that this is indeed problematic, because it depicts a certain image of a culture that does not necessarily correspond to how it is in reality. The stereotypes are seen as the norm and based on that people assume what is normal and what is not. This can lead to prejudices about certain groups according to the respondents. Another effect from this is that in reality this picture can also be generalized. Some indicated that children at a young age can be affected by this, which should not be the intention. The respondents do however state that this has never really affected the way in which they think and express themselves. Nevertheless, it is thought that by portraying ethnic minorities in a stereotypic way, a certain image will arise as a standard which puts more emphasis on differences between certain cultures and groups. ‘Normative whiteness’, as Panis et al. (2019) state, shines through in these results.

“In this way you maintain inequalities and thinking in terms of ‘us’ and ‘them’.” (Respondent 10)

Other respondents say that it is not a bad thing that stereotypes are used in Disney films. They see the use of stereotypes as something that emerges logically. According to them, the target group that Disney wants to reach are mainly young children. In order to convey certain things to them, you have to magnify or simplify some aspects. They argue that this is best done by using stereotypes. It also has a comedic aspect to it. Stereotypes in this case serve as a means of communicating differences and similarities. Some respondents feel that this is not what the films should be about. They prefer to see more universal stories that are more focused on the individuals rather than the culture or ethnicity of a group. Respondent 1 states that the use of stereotypes about different cultures is natural. According to her, these stereotypes arise from an interest in the unknown. She adds that the use of stereotypes can be used for educational purposes on young children, with the caveat that they are also taught that not every one of the represented (ethnic) group is like that. She acknowledges the danger of a false and negative representation, but sees in the use of stereotypes an opportunity to learn something about other cultures too in a simple yet effective way. According to her, the danger lies with the extent to which this is discussed in the film and the extent to which this is magnified. Respondent 6 agrees and believes that Disney has an informative function that can confirm or disprove certain stereotypes. He sees that the latter happens more often and finds this a pity. Respondent 7 adds that there could be, so to speak, a hundred people who can counteract the stereotypes, but it only takes one person to confirm it. According to respondent 5, the danger in this is that young children are susceptible to carry the stereotypical image with them as they grow older and thus continue to pass it on and reproduce it. The false/incorrect representation gives a wrong expectation of certain things that subconsciously persists. In addition, too much focus and magnification of cultural characteristics is no longer educational and loses the connection with reality.

The reason put forward by many of the respondents for the stereotyping of ethnic minority groups and the differences between white and non-white characters is that they believe that Disney films

are mainly produced from the "white eyes". This means that the producers, directors and all the people who work behind the scenes are mostly white. In this way you get a Western perception of a different culture. This perspective excludes other possibilities and is so dominant that people often unconsciously go along with it. Cultural features that do not match those of the Western culture are considered interesting. Typical character and cultural traits are assigned to the group as a whole, which ultimately results in stereotypes, according to respondent 10.

"What we learn with the Western perspective is to distinguish. So always wanting to see the difference between you and me when there are many more similarities. That is something in the Western perspective that is problematic and causes bad things in the world. It's always about the difference between you and me and not about the similarities... so if you learn to switch that or play around with that, I think you're going to get more interesting and newer stories." (Respondent 6)

Respondent 6 thus acknowledges that Disney has made a major contribution to the stereotypical image that prevails about certain cultures or people, but in addition he does not fully agree that the films are only produced from a Western perspective. He said that Disney was one of the first to choose to collaborate with people from foreign areas every time they make a film about other cultures or communities and that they are trying to completely delve into those themes and topics. The intentions are therefore well-intentioned and it is argued that Disney takes an active role in reading up and dealing with stereotypes in this way more carefully. The 'wrong' thing about this is that they present it very monochrome. Another explanation comes from respondent 7, who says that the use of stereotypes is due to the prejudices that already prevail in society about other people and cultures we grew up with. According to her, Disney merely portrays what happens in reality.

4.2.3. Cultural appreciation

In recent years, a different way of representation has emerged. In this respect, much emphasis is placed on cultural traditions and their norms and values in ethnic minority groups. All respondents indicated that they approve of this development and say that this line should be continued. Respondent 9 states that he considers it important that cultural aspects of a certain group are approached positively. In this way, there is also more appreciation. It is important to take into account the different cultures and to leave them in their value. The respondents also see this increasingly reflected in this new form of ethnic representation. They think that it's positive that this form of ethnic representation teaches that there are also several other traditions besides the ones they know themselves.

However, there are also negative aspects to be discovered here. According to respondent 10, there is too much focus on cultural traditions and their norms and values. He says that, Disney zooms in too much on certain aspects, which has as a consequence that it also leaves out many other cultural characteristics. The result of this is a fragmented picture of the culture or customs of an ethnic group.

For instance respondent 4 mentioned that in the clip of *Coco* it looked like the ‘Dia de los Muertos’ is the biggest and most important tradition of Mexicans, whereas in real life this probably won’t be celebrated so extensively. Respondent 8 contradicts this and believes that this focus on traditions should be expanded even more by also showing other cultures that are not yet represented. She indicated that she found it interesting to learn about these habits. It gives her a glimpse into another culture she is not familiar with. According to respondent 1, the way in which ethnic minority groups are represented as they are is not a conscious choice, but something that arises from habits or an interest in the things that are unfamiliar.

4.3. Identification

Another topic that the respondents answered was about the extent to which they could identify with the characters in the films and whether they thought this was important for them. Many indicated that they don’t find it very important to identify with the characters, but that they do see it as positive when this is possible. They said that in this way watching a certain film becomes more attractive, because there are some points of recognition. On the contrary there were also a number of respondents who did find it very important that people can identify with characters in the films. They indicated that they do or have done this themselves too. One identified with the inner conflicts of the main characters and the difficulties that had to be overcome. Others looked at external features such as hair and skin colour and tried to identify with the different characters in this way. Respondent 8 shared a story during the interview in which she said that she used to very much want to identify with Disney princesses such as Cinderella. She looked up to them and really wanted to be a princess just like them. That was her ideal of what she should look like. At the same time, she realized that she could never do that, because she did not have such beautiful dresses and she did not live in a castle. The main reason was also that she had a dark skin tone which was different than the skin colour of the princess in the film, who was white. This has had an influence on the way she thought about herself and she also indicated that that influence is still there. For example, she still prefers white models over models with a darker skin tone. Respondent 7 also shared an interesting story in which she told that in her native country, Egypt, there is a culture that sees a whiter skin as more attractive. Various products are on the market for sale to achieve this. According to her, people grow up with the wrong ideal image.

“You grow up thinking that the darker you are, the uglier you are.” (Respondent 7)

This has had an impact on her personally and because of this she sets herself against these kinds of things. That’s why she thinks it’s important that there are also characters like Mulan that people can identify with. Mulan is in fact a character who does not adhere to traditional norms and values and who goes against them. Respondent 7 saw many of the character traits of the character in the film reflected in herself. Respondent 5 agrees with the fact that people should be able to identify with characters, in

fact he argues that everyone should have their own role model to be able to relate to and he believes that Disney bears a great responsibility in this. Another form of identification that was also considered important by some was that Disney creates a world that can be dreamed of with goals and ideals that people can strive for. Hence, some form of realism is desired so that those dreams and goals can actually be achieved. Disney gives them a sense that anything is possible.

4.4 Connection to reality

After discussing the different ways of ethnic representation and the extent to which respondents identified with the characters, questions were asked about how the respondents perceived the relationship with reality. As mentioned before, some believe that Disney has an educational role for children. Logically, these respondents also indicated that they therefore found it important that the image that Disney portrays of certain groups corresponds to how these groups are in reality. This does not only concern the customs and habits, but also the quantitative share of ethnic minorities in society. They think that the representation in the films is too low. In reality, more people of different ethnic backgrounds live in a city or country than we see in the films.

“Of course we all live in the same world. It's a bit crazy to think that you only have white people. Since we all, at least here in the Netherlands, have to deal with the multicultural society, I think that it is a very good start for children too...and that it sets the right tone when there is an up-to-date representation of how a normal society looks like now.” (Respondent 8)

On top of that, respondent 5 also indicated that the stereotyping way of representation can influence certain things in reality. He thinks it could cause people to treat ethnic minorities differently, which could lead to discrimination. A distinction was made between the characters and the story and their relationship to reality. The respondents found it important that the characters corresponded as much as possible with 'real' characters in daily life. There is more room in the story to let the fiction speak. With the exception of a few, such as the respondent above, the respondents indicated that the way in which ethnic minorities are represented in Disney films has or had no direct influence on their personal and daily lives. They do not rule out the possibility that it may have had an indirect effect. This could possibly be reflected in the way they think about certain issues such as ethnicity and gender nowadays. However, they were again convinced that it could affect others, especially young children.

Other respondents indicated that it is not necessary that the Disney film corresponds to reality. They gave the reason for this that it is merely a film and the aim of that is not to imitate real life. According to respondent 9, the approach of Disney films is that they are fiction. So if that's the approach, he doesn't understand why it should correspond to reality. He says:

“I still think that you cannot fully show reality with a film. Reality is usually coloured by the person

writing the story. Because it's a film, it's obviously made bigger than it is. But that doesn't mean it's negative. If you show reality, the film will quickly become boring in my opinion." (Respondent 9)

Disney characterises itself by the way they are telling stories and the lessons that can be learned from it. In addition, most of the films they produce are fairy tales in which it is considered normal that certain things are romanticized. It is therefore logical that it does not correspond to reality. That should not be the case at all, according to respondent 4. Respondent 2 however states that he does find it important that there are elements in the films that could be related to reality, because a lot of films are also set in real places. Think, for example, of *The Princess and the Frog*, which takes place in New Orleans. In this film, there is no explicit emphasis on the characteristic features of that place. It is not overstated, but the influences are definitely visible. In fact, it looks a lot like reality, according to respondent 8. For her, that gave the film added value and made it more believable.

4.5. Changes and future representation

All respondents indicated that they notice a change taking place within Disney and the films they produce. The negative undertones that were more visible in the earlier films increasingly make room for positive representations. Disney moves along with their time and in this way still manages to remain relevant and current. As a result, more and more films are being produced with non-white protagonists. Respondent 10 also indicated that when he looks at the films that Disney is currently producing, these are actually mainly films with tinted main characters. He sees this as a positive trend that leads to more diversity. "The white characters are left out a bit" (Respondent 10). According to the respondents, the reasons for this change in representation lies in the fact that people think differently about issues such as ethnicity these days. We live in a different era than twenty years ago. According to respondent 5, this also has to do with the emergence of social movements such as Black Lives Matters. He also noted that the current generation strives for many progressive and inclusive norms and values in society. A few respondents therefore do not condemn Disney about the way in which they have represented certain ethnic groups in the past. According to them, that was normal at the time and was not looked at so critically. All the more they appreciate that this is being done right now and that Disney is taking an active role in changing their representations. In general, the respondents agree that a positive change is coming up but it must be noted that there are still some who recognize stereotypes in the new films. However, this is no longer seen as problematic, because it contributes to a positive representation. According to respondent 3, the change in ethnic representation must take place in steps. She says that it is impossible to implement a change in one go. The first steps have been taken, but there is still a long way to go with many more steps. Respondent 1 also believes that in the future Disney will also touch upon themes as sexual identity. Respondent 3 added that she hopes that there will also be more representation of people with disabilities.

Different answers were given to the question of what the representation of ethnic minorities should look like in the future. Three main themes could be drawn from this. The first theme is diversity. This is about diversity in the broadest sense of the word. According to a number of respondents, what has not yet happened is that the diversity of the different backgrounds and areas is displayed and emphasized. It is important to promote that people are different. Films with a more ethnically diverse cast are therefore valued more by most respondents than films where this is not the case or to a lesser extent. In addition, the respondents are also looking for diversity in the films on offer. That is, at the moment there are only some films that represent an ethnic minority group, but when you look at all Disney films produced, white characters prevail and this group is the most represented. The ethnic representation of other cultures and groups is increasingly coming to light, but according to them there are still many groups that should be represented. They all say that it is a process that takes time. With so many different ethnicities, it is difficult to include them all in a short amount of time. The expectation is that in ten years this can already be partly made visible in the form of new, ethnically diverse, Disney princesses.

A second way in which the respondents would like to see the representation of ethnic minorities in the future relates to the theme of inclusion. It was stated that there should be a better and bigger mix of characters from different ethnic backgrounds. Ethnic minority groups should be more integrated. An example that was given was that in large scenes with many characters there should also be visible other characters such as Asians and coloured people from minority groups instead of just whites. It must be shown that different cultures live side by side and with each other. Respondent 2 added that he would like to see the representation more like it is in the 21st century with its big multicultural cities where a lot of different ethnicities live. He says: “Not an all-white neighbourhood, but more of today's society. More integration. That everyone lives a little bit together... That a Mexican family just lives in the city and an American couple lives next door to them. A bit like that.” (Respondent 2).

In this way, the respondents hope that less attention is paid to the differences. In addition, some also find it important that there is more emphasis on individual characters than on the group as a whole. The emphasis on the cultural heterogeneity within different ethnic minority groups and not focusing on the multicultural character of society that Panis et al. (2019) describe, shines through in their thoughts. As a last theme, the term normalization was mentioned by the respondents. According to them, in the future it should become normal for different ethnicities to be represented in a fair way in Disney films since that also happens in reality. It should not be what the film is about, but rather be inconspicuously present. Respondent 10 said for instance:

“I think it's fine if a certain ethnic group is chosen for a film, but then there should not be too much emphasis on the customs of that group. I find it more interesting if it is a story of, for example, a boy who goes in search of his father. Ethnicity has nothing to do with it. That can be a white boy or a dark boy.” (Respondent 10)

The respondents see the relevance of a fairer representation in the future due to the constantly changing image of the times and hope that there will also be more awareness about this so that this goal can be achieved in the right way.

5. Discussion and conclusion

The aim of this research was to find out, by means of interviews, how Dutch young adults of different ethnic backgrounds experience the representation of ethnic minorities in Disney films and what meanings they give to it. In this final chapter, the data will be analysed on the basis of existing theories and literature. It will be examined whether the various theories can be confirmed and whether new and interesting findings have emerged from the data. In addition, an attempt will be made to answer the research question. Furthermore, a number of limitations of the research will be discussed and suggestions for further research will be made. An attempt has been made to draw a general conclusion about the experiences of representation of ethnic minorities. However, there were clear differences in opinion on some points in the results, these are also included, in order to come to a full conclusion.

First, we looked at the logics of engagement described by Askwith (2007). The expectation was that a person's degree of engagement with, in this case, Disney films, influences how critically they are about what they see. It has been found that people generally watch Disney films for pleasure, relaxation and amusement. This is described by Askwith (2007) as the logic of entertainment. It is true that when looking at this logic, the representation of ethnic minorities is not looked very critically at. In addition, the logic of social connection is also visible for some audiences. This is reflected in the fact that Disney films are often watched in a group and that they are discussed afterwards with others. People tend to seek social connection by evaluating the things they see. In some cases, the logic of identification was also visible. Some viewers find it important that they can identify with characters in the film. Validation and self-identification (Askwith, 2007) were the two most common forms in this logic of engagement. This often also has a personal impact on them and the way they develop themselves. These three logics of engagement were the most common. Based on this, it can be said that audiences do not look very critically at Disney films in general. It is, however, true that audiences have an opinion about major themes such as gender and ethnicity and that they interpret this in different ways. The theory of Van Sterkenburg et al. (2019) and Barker (2003) therefore applies here. The viewer is an active participant who shapes his or her perceptions through interpretation and they give meaning to what they see. Even though it isn't reflected in the way audiences view Disney films, representation is seen as something important. Audiences do think that racial representation serves as a way to demonstrate real-world concepts and opinions (King et al., 2021).

The logics of immersion and mastery hardly occurred. From this it can be concluded that theories about fans and fandoms are not relevant for Dutch young adults when it comes to Disney films. However, this may be the case with younger generations as Disney mainly makes films for children. It is suggested that other research should prove this. What can be further extracted from the results is that people with a non-Western ethnic background are unconsciously inclined to like films in which ethnic minorities are represented. Motivations to watch a Disney film do not only lie in the representation of

ethnic minorities. Other reasons are also the story and the message it carries. Music and graphic design are factors that also play a role and determines whether a film is considered good or fun. Which actors are included has no influence on the motivation to watch a Disney film.

Finally, there is a small difference to be discovered between men and women and their viewing behaviour (Abu-Lughod, 1997; Barker, 2003). From the results it can be concluded that women generally have more affinity with Disney films than men. They have seen more of them over the years and are more inclined to watch them in the present. Where the men generally only look from the logic of entertainment, women are more engaged through the logic of identification. This could have something to do with the fact that women have more role models to look up to in the form of Disney princesses, as Disney itself is putting more focus on this as well. As Coyne et al. (2016) also stated, gendered stereotypes and ideal images have a greater effect on girls than on boys. On top of that, Disney has also built up a princess franchise in the form of merchandise such as princess dresses and toys, providing more ways for women to engage with the characters (Coyne et al., 2016). Be means of this, a little difference was noticed between men and women in their answers and perceptions.

The representation of ethnic minority groups in Disney films is characterized by a number of aspects. These largely correspond to the deficiencies presented by Trebbe & Schoenhagen (2011) and Panis et al. (2019). First, there is a clear difference between white and non-white characters in the films. There is a hierarchy to be discovered in which the non-white characters are subordinate to the white characters. A consequence of these shortcomings described by Phillips (2011). In addition, Disney films are still dominated by white-skinned characters. Characters from different ethnic backgrounds have it more difficult in the films and have to overcome more obstacles to get a happy ending. The argument put forward by Eschholz et al. (2002) that minorities are systematically excluded from leading roles is clearly reflected in this. On top of that, it can be stated that there is underrepresentation of ethnic minority groups. Disney princesses are mainly white, which results in people from non-Western ethnic origins having fewer role models to look up to. As a result, some cases belonging to a certain ethnic group remain unnoticed, as Panis et al. (2019) also claimed. The idea of normative whiteness is confirmed by the results. It is argued that Disney films are made by white people and that other cultures and ethnic groups are often viewed and depicted from a Western point of view. Here, 'white' is seen as the norm. A consequence of this is that people think in terms of 'us' and 'them'. Characters with a non-Western ethnic background are portrayed next to Western whites. The differences and inequalities between the two are then put against each other. An interesting finding is that the respondents want the representation of ethnic minorities not to focus on these differences and similarities between groups. However, it turned out that they themselves often thought in these terms and thereby unconsciously contribute to the reinforcement of such thoughts. Thinking about 'us' and 'them' thus continues to exist. To change this, the reasoning and evaluation of individuals would first have to change.

Another aspect of the representation of ethnic minorities in Disney films is the extensive use of stereotypes. Generalized character traits are hereby assigned to the group as a whole. Disney ensures

that these stereotypes are confirmed and passed on. Opinions on its use differ and can be divided into proponents and opponents. As King et al. (2021) already said: It depends on context and focus whether the use of stereotypes is seen as negative or positive. This difference in opinions is also visible in the literature. On the one hand, it is argued that stereotypes are necessary and logical to introduce a certain culture in a simple way. On top of that it is stated that it is inevitable since it is impossible to grasp a whole culture or ethnic group in a single film of a few hours. This adds new elements to the thinking of Park et al (2006) who state that the use of stereotypes is not necessarily negative. On the other hand, it is perceived as problematic, because it gives a fragmented image, as Eichholz et al. (2002) mentioned earlier. King et al. (2021) argue that exposure to stereotypes can lead to real-life misconceptions about people of a different group. The results confirm this line of thinking and state that this is indeed the case, resulting in discrimination and exclusion. Overall it can be concluded that the use of stereotypes has a predominantly negative connotation with Dutch young adults. The deficiency that ethnic minority groups are often negatively contextualized or framed (Trebbe & Schoenhagen, 2011) can also be seen. This is especially the case with earlier Disney films. From these films it is seen that the portrayal of ethnic minorities does not correspond with what actually happens in society. Kroon et al. (2020) state that this is due to the focus on certain characteristics instead of the group as a whole, which the respondents agreed upon. Trebbe and Schoenhagen (2011) further mention that the shortcomings can lead to marginalization, separative acculturation and social disintegration. However, these effects are not confirmed in this study. Deficiencies in representation have a slight impact on individuals, but do not extend to larger groups or society as a whole. Another thing that must be noted is that the representation of ethnic minorities is not only characterized by the shortcomings mentioned above. The more recent Disney films are also characterized by a form of representation in which cultural glorification occurs. Positive aspects are approached here and there is an emphasis on traditional norms and values and cultural traditions. It must be said that this is a trend that has only been seen for a number of years. A part of the public also thinks that the emphasis is too much on these traditions. They would rather see the stories about other themes that are not culture-bound.

The results also showed that audiences are striving for more inclusion and diversity in Disney films. Thinking in terms of superdiversity, as Panis et al. (2011) mentioned, clearly emerges from this. It can be concluded that there needs to be a greater focus on intra-cultural plurality. Different ethnicities and cultures must be represented side by side and with each other in Disney films. Thinking about persons as belonging to a certain ethnic group must give way to a form of representation in which individuals and their own character traits come forward. The relevance here lies not in the multicultural character but in the heterogeneity within a certain ethnic group. According to Dutch young adults it is important that different ethnic groups integrate more in Disney films, as Dekker & van Breugel (2019) stated. They see the ethnic representation as a relevant topic that needs to be further addressed in the film industry. It is important to them that more awareness is created on the representation of ethnic

minorities and that this is done in the right way. This is in line with the governance mainstreaming of superdiversity that Van Breugel and Scholten (2017) also mentioned.

A final conclusion that can be drawn has a somewhat more contradictory character. On the one hand, it can be concluded that the representation of ethnic minorities in Disney films has little personal influence on Dutch young adults. The argument presented by Trebbe & Schoenhagen (2011) and Panis et al. (2019) that representation in mass media helps to form identity and that the perception of one's own group and that of another is based on representation, is therefore invalidated. A few allow themselves to be influenced by the images they see, but the vast majority see the representation of ethnic minorities and their own development as two separate and independent things. On the other hand, it is argued that Disney has a teaching role and that they should therefore also take into account the way in which they represent ethnic minorities in their films. It is thought that this can influence the behaviour of young children and the way they think about certain things later on, as stated by Coyne et al. (2016). These are two apparent contradictions since it could be argued that young adults were also children at some point in their life and should therefore also be influenced by this. Unfortunately, no unequivocal answer can be given. What has been shown is that young adults now look more consciously at ethnic representation than when they were younger. The contradiction mentioned above can therefore be explained by the fact that they were probably unconsciously influenced when they were younger and are now aware of this at a later age. The fact, however, is that they now are just not affected anymore by these images of representation.

In summary, the answer to the research question: "How do Dutch young adults from different ethnic backgrounds experience the representation of ethnic minority groups in Disney films?" is as follows: It can be concluded that Dutch young adults generally regard the representation in Disney films as predominantly negative with differences between white and non-white characters and the use of stereotypes. They do see changes in recent years that have increasingly positively coloured their experiences. They argue that Disney is on the right track of a fairer and more inclusive representation, but would like to see more diversity and inclusion of different ethnic groups. In addition, ethnic minority groups need to be normalized in films.

5.1. Limitations and suggestions

This research has indicated changes and wishes about the future of ethnic representation. It partly fills the gap in the literature on the representation of ethnic minorities. Various parties can respond to this and thus work towards a more inclusive representation. However, there are also a number of limitations attributable to the research. A limitation of the method used is that the results given are based on the respondents' experiences which means it's pre-eminently subjective and variable. Because many different opinions have emerged and efforts have been made to narrow them down to draw a general conclusion, certain points may have been lost in the analysis and processing of the data. During the study, only people with a (partial) non-Western ethnic background were interviewed. This was a

conscious choice, but for a follow-up study it would be interesting to also interview white Western individuals. In this way, the subject of ethnic representation can be discussed from both sides and an overall picture can be drawn. The different opposites can be contrasted and compared with each other. Another option is to further expand this research with the existing research group by adding the factor of gender. The results have shown that men and women engage in different ways with media texts and therefore experience the representation differently. Furthermore, it was repeated several times that the influence of ethnic representation may have a greater influence on children. A suggestion would therefore be to base a follow-up study on this target group. Finally, this research can serve as the starting point of a larger investigation into the opinions and perceptions of people living in a multicultural society. As Kalantzis and Cope (2006) point out, countries are increasingly characterized by ethnic diversity. This research would therefore also be applicable to other countries with the same context in order to provide a global picture of (changing) perceptions of ethnic representations. The concept of superdiversity and governance mainstreaming could be used for this as a framework from where to reason.

As revealed in this study, there are still many possibilities to close the gap in the literature. This emphasizes the relevance of this thesis, as it can be seen as a first step in this direction. It is important to research ethnic minorities and their experiences of representation, as this is a phenomenon that will continue to change and has not yet received the attention it deserves.

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Appendix A: Interview schedule

1. Introduction

The interviewer will give a general overview of the research and the interview. He will also ask some general demographic questions.

- Name
- Age
- Gender
- Ethnicity: In terms of ethnicity and "white" vs. "non-white", how do you interpret/identify that?
- What are ethnic minorities? Explanation
- Explanation of research
- RQ: "How do Dutch young adults from different ethnic backgrounds experience the representation of ethnic minority groups in Disney films?"
- Anonymity
- Recording/consent form

2. Logics of engagement

Questions will be asked related to the way respondents watch Disney films. The motivation and desire with which the respondent look is asked to find out from which logic of engagement they watch.

- What is your favourite Disney film?
- Why do you watch Disney films in general?
- With what motivation or purpose do you watch Disney films?
- Do you ever talk to others about Disney films? Which themes are then discussed?
- Who do you watch Disney films with? Alone or with others?
- What is most important to you when you watch a Disney film? (story, actors, looks, etc.)
- Do you ever look up or watch something related to a certain Disney film? Do you want to know more about Disney films than just the film itself (Behind the scenes and bonus material)?
- How critically do you look at Disney films? How is that shown?
- If you could immerse yourself in a Disney film, which one would it be? Why? Example
- Is there anything you would like to change in your favourite film?

3. Giving interpretation and meaning to representation

A video clip will be shown (Coco) as an example. Respondents are asked how they interpret the clip and what meanings they derive from it.

- Do you identify with characters when you watch a Disney film? Is that important to you?
- What do you think of the way ethnic groups are represented in Disney films? Example
- Do you think that the representation of ethnic minority groups is problematic?
- Does the representation of ethnic minority groups affect you personally? If so, how?
- Why do you think that ethnic minority groups are represented in the way that they are?

4. Deficiencies in representations of ethnic minorities

Another video clip (Aladdin) will be shown showing how characters belonging to an ethnic minority group are represented. Subsequently, questions will be asked about shortcomings in representation.

- What did you just see in the clip? How do you think the character is represented?
- Do you see differences in the way different groups are represented? Where do you see that?
- Do you find the way ethnic minorities are represented stereotypical? Why/why not? How do you see/not see that?
- Do you think that the representation of ethnic minorities in Disney films is a good representation of reality? Why/why not?
- Do you think that ethnic groups are represented positively or negatively?
- In terms of ethnicity: What do you consider white and non-white characters? How do you interpret that?
- How do you think “non-white” characters are represented in comparison to “white” characters?

5. Representations in contrast to real life experiences

A connection will be made with the representations in the films and the respondents own real life experiences Clip: Pocahontas.

- Does the representation of ethnic minorities affect your daily life?
- Do you ever compare your own life with that of the characters in Disney films? Why / why not? If so, how? Example
- Do you think that it is important that the representation in films is in line with reality?
- What do you think about the reflection of cultural characters compared to real life persons?
- Do you see any differences or similarities with the way ethnic minority groups are represented in films compared to reality? What are those differences / similarities?

6. Changing representations (superdiversity)

The questions below look at the opinions of the respondents about the changes in representation and the way in which they might want to see it change themselves.

- Is there a change in the way ethnic minorities are represented?
- When you watch older and newer Disney films, do you see a change? Which one do you like the most? Why? Can you give some examples?
- Do you think the representation of ethnic minorities in Disney films should be changed / adjusted? Why / why not?
- How would you like to see the representation of ethnic minorities in Disney films in the future?
- What do you think are the influences on the change in representation? What do you think of this?

7. Closure

Some closing questions will be asked. The respondent will be thanked for his/her participation.

- Summary: To make sure I understood everything correctly I would like to summarize the topics discussed.
- Thoughts about the subject: Do you want to add something to the things that are discussed?
- Recommendations or suggestions
- Thank you for participating
- Contact details

Appendix B: Consent form

CONSENT REQUEST FOR PARTICIPATING IN RESEARCH

FOR QUESTIONS ABOUT THE STUDY, CONTACT:

Dion Biesart
Pyriet 5
dion.biesart@hotmail.com
06-81395432

DESCRIPTION

You are invited to participate in a research about the representation of ethnic minorities in Disney film. The purpose of the study is to understand how people of different ethnic background interpret this representation and what meanings they give to it. I'm looking for audience perceptions.

Your acceptance to participate in this study means that you accept to be interviewed. In general terms,

- the questions of the interview will be related to logics of engagement, relations to real life and changes in representation
- your participation in the experiment will be related to acknowledge a deeper understanding of ethnic representation
- my observations will focus on perceptions and interpretations

Unless you prefer that no recordings are made, I will use a audio recorder for the interview.

You are always free not to answer any particular question, and/or stop participating at any point.

RISKS AND BENEFITS

As far as I can tell, there are no risks associated with participating in this research. Yet, you are free to decide whether I should use your name or other identifying information, such as ethnicity and gender, not in the study. It could be that there will be risks by identifying the people who participate in this study. For that reason—unless you prefer to be identified fully (first name, last name, occupation, etc.)—I will not keep any information that may lead to the identification of those involved in the study. I will only pseudonyms to identify participants.

I will use the material from the interviews and my observation exclusively for academic work, such as further research, academic meetings and publications.

TIME INVOLVEMENT

Your participation in this study will take 45-60 minutes. You may interrupt your participation at any time.

PAYMENTS

There will be no monetary compensation for your participation.

PARTICIPANTS' RIGHTS

If you have decided to accept to participate in this project, please understand your participation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation at any time without penalty. You have the right to refuse to answer particular questions. If you prefer, your identity will be made known in all written data resulting from the study. Otherwise, your individual privacy will be maintained in all published and written data resulting from the study.

CONTACTS AND QUESTIONS

If you have questions about your rights as a study participant, or are dissatisfied at any time with any aspect of this study, you may contact –anonymously, if you wish— the researcher of this study (e-mail, phone number and name mentioned above)

SIGNING THE CONSENT FORM

If you sign this consent form, your signature will be the only documentation of your identity. Thus, you DO NOT NEED to sign this form. In order to minimize risks and protect your identity, you may prefer to consent orally. Your oral consent is sufficient.

I give consent to be audiotaped during this study:

Name	Signature	Date
------	-----------	------

I prefer my identity to be revealed in all written data resulting from this study

Name	Signature	Date
------	-----------	------

This copy of the consent form is for you to keep.

Appendix C: Sample of code list

In the table below you'll find a summarized and simplified list of the different main codes and themes that emerged from the analysis. Note that this is a selection and not all codes are included.

Topic	Themes	Codes	Quotes
Logics of engagement	Entertainment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nostalgia • Recognition • Emotional satisfaction 	<p>“Yes, I think mainly the nostalgic feeling that you recognize from it, like oh yeah, that’s from the past. I like that very much and those films are also easy to watch. They are often happy too. You don’t go to bed crying. It’s also a bit relaxing for me. I think it’s aimed at making you feel happy” (Respondent 3)</p> <p>“I think that has to do with the childish and fairy-tale-like nature of the film. If you think: I want to see something that makes me happy and something that is for children of all ages. That’s one reason why I’ll put on a Disney film. Also because I have those moments of oh yeah, I remember that.” (Respondent 8)</p>
	Social connection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation • Social gathering • Family connection • Friends connection 	<p>“I used to watch it with my sister or at children’s parties that you all went to the cinema. In such a setting.”(Respondent 2)</p> <p>“Oh yes, I do that quite often actually. I am someone who often evaluates and often discusses the film afterwards. Because I do think that it has to meet my expectations in a way and if it doesn’t then, yes, then I think it’s a bad film. So afterwards there is always a review what I thought of it and what I thought about it. And indeed I often discuss that with my friends or with my girlfriend or with others with whom I have watched the film.”(Respondent 10)</p>
	Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Character identification • Story identification • Validation • Emancipation • Self-identification 	<p>I don’t know if I mean recognition but maybe more acknowledging. Because I could really bond with a Cinderella, but I also knew that I could never be her...I think it’s important that it’s a world you can dream about. Like: Oh I can be that too or I want to become that too, this is what I’m going to look for. That there is some form of realism to be found somewhere. Whatever I can find or apply</p>

			<p>in my own life.” (Respondent 8)</p> <p>“Well, I identify much more on an ethnic level. If you look at those ethnic princesses for example, it's really on a level of I get you, I get your struggle. But if you're talking about just all the others, it's more on a trauma level or a woman's level. There is always something I can relate to.” (Respondent 7)</p>
Perception of ethnic representation	White vs. non-white characters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hierarchy • Negative vs. positive • Life satisfaction 	<p>“You don't just have to show one side. Also the other side. You should not willfully want to portray a certain group that way. That's not fair. If you glorify one and subordinate the other in representation.” (Respondent 5)</p> <p>“They (non-white characters) are presented as a kind of problem. Like he has to steal the melon with his monkey. You won't see a white guy stealing something. Those are more princes or important people. Usually there is nothing tinted about it.” (Respondent 2)</p>
	Stereotypes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simplification • Exaggeration • Romanticized • Generalisation • Western perspective 	<p>“I find that difficult with stereotypes because look, everything is magnified except the white men and all the others are all exaggerated, almost that it's not even true. A person of colour can't always dance very well and act crazy.” (Respondent 4)</p> <p>“Not everyone in Mexico does it this way. It is indeed again a kind of image created that everyone in Mexico will do it. Suppose they make a film about the Netherlands: Would it be about windmills, clogs and cheese? That's the first thing I think of.” (Respondent 1)</p>
	Cultural appreciation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural traditions • Norms and values 	<p>“Well, I totally agree with this, because there's just very little talk about it. There is a lot of talk in films about a lot of white traditional things, such as Thanksgiving and Christmas, and all those things. In this way there is much more cultural appreciation for other traditions which are also important and that it is not just those very big holidays and such.” (Respondent 7)</p> <p>“Yes, there is indeed emphasis on a special day. And you can also see the difference,</p>

			<p>he is still young, the grandmother is a bit older. As far as I'm concerned in that culture, the older people put a little more emphasis on traditions and culture than the new generation. So what you see here is a grandmother who wants to give her grandson a message and she wants to teach him something. She wants him to understand how it all works. As far as I'm concerned, that's pretty well represented. It really gives a picture of what that tradition is like and that it is important for Mexicans. Then you learn as a non-Mexican that that also exists and that it is apparently important there.” (Respondent 9)</p>
	Connection to reality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Real life events • Setting • Struggles and obstacles 	<p>“But I think that in things like traditions and how people interact with each other, how they really live together, that it doesn't quite match reality.” (Respondent 8)</p> <p>“Normally I'd say, I'd rather watch something closer to reality, but being Disney I'd rather watch something that's magnified or works in extremes, because that's just a bit part of that world, so to speak. Also with, for example, colours, colours are just a bit brighter than in real life, but that's purely when I think of Disney that I think of that: really the extremes and big.” (Respondent 1)</p>
Future and change	Diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difference in ethnicity • Quantity of ethnicity 	<p>“But that there is still little mixture in cultures, so it is always a block of that culture, a block of the other culture instead of a Surinamese with a Dutch person in one scene and that goes well.” (Respondent 3)</p> <p>“And then multiple cultures will be visible. Then the western world will be more open to other cultures.” (Respondent 5)</p>
	Inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fair representation • Integration 	<p>“That it's more inclusive, you know, so that all those princesses can come together without talking about differences, but more about similarities, that it doesn't matter anymore where someone comes from, or whatever, in the story, that it is not the main theme, anyway.”</p>

			<p>(Respondent 6)</p> <p>“I think later on we can work again in a way of it's just that there are multiple cultures living together. That is normal. Now we're going to create a story that doesn't necessarily have anything to do with their ethnicity, but that you play together and that's normal. So it doesn't have to be that big of a deal that we're making a film about black people or we're making a film about Hindu people or Mexicans. But we just have this array of cultural differences and ethnicities in a film and with that we're going to make a story.” (Respondent 8)</p>
	<p>Normalisation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiculturalism • Modernisation 	<p>“If you look at the Netherlands, for example, you also see many different ethnicities living together. I think that should be more normalized in Disney films as well. That it is therefore becoming normal for different ethnicities to be seen side by side. In that sense I mean normalization more like integration. That it doesn't have to be about that, but that it is just normal that it is there.” (Respondent 10)</p> <p>“Yes, exactly, and not necessarily of: whether you are a boy or a girl, but that there are also a lot of things in between for a lot of people. I think Disney will eventually go that way and show that a bit more. But that is of course something that is just very much of this time. Which is really really coming up now, but I think they'll eventually go there and I don't necessarily think it's a bad thing, that they're not there yet. Those are just things that have come up recently and Disney is just going along with that.” (Respondent 1)</p>