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ush Wilson Professor in Arts and Sciences, Washington University

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'rofessor of Anthropology and Linguistics (Emerita), University of

English with an Accent

Language, ideology, and discrimination in the United States

Second Edition

Rosina Lippi-Green

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

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Teaching children how to discriminate 7

(What we learn from the Big Bad Wolf)[1]

> We are faced first-off with indexical facts, facts of observed/experienced social practices, the systematicity of which is our central problem: are they systematic? If so, how?
>
> Silverstein (1992: 322)

> "Poor little guy! He just makes mistakes. He doesn't know any better. I'll just have to be patient and teach him the right way to do things," said Mickey.
>
> Disney Inc., "Mickey Mouse and The Boy Thursday" (1948)

Storytellers, Inc.

This chapter is about the ways children are systematically exposed to a standard language ideology by means of linguistic stereotypes in film or television entertainment.

Stories are more than entertainment, of course. Stories are in fact essential to the species and "second in necessity apparently after nourishment and before love and shelter" (Price 1978: xiii). As all human beings dream, we also all think and structure our understanding of the world in terms of narrative. A child takes in his or her family and community's stories and begins to experiment with storytelling at a young age. This process is crucial to socialization; thus, it is fair to say that storytellers have a crucial role to play in the lives of children.

Since the early twentieth century, the broadcast media have steadily increased in importance as agents of socialization. While we tend to think of Disney as a magical kingdom (mostly because Disney has convinced us this is so), in fact it is first and foremost a large and complex corporation. As such, its first and primary concern is its shareholders, and shareholders are primarily interested in profit, something a former head of Disney made clear in a memo to his staff: "We have no obligation to make history. We have no obligation to make art. We have no obligation to make a statement. To make money is our only objective" (Rowan 2005; Stepakoff 2007: 170).

To maintain and increase its customer base, Disney constantly reintroduces children to their world view. What sets Disney apart from other corporations is the fact that all this goes on in an indulgent atmosphere where critical discussion is actively discouraged (Giroux and Pollock 2010; Ward 2002). For example, while there may be scattered protests about gender roles, racism and historical inaccuracies in Disney films, those complaints never seem to have much of an impact on box-office numbers.

Giroux suggests reasoning for pursuing the questions raised here:

> Questioning what Disney teaches is part of a much broader inquiry regarding what it is parents, children, educators and others need to know in order to critique and challenge, when necessary, those institutional and cultural forces that have a direct impact on public life.
>
> (2001: 10–11)

To look at this from another angle, most people reading this book will consider themselves to be free of racism. If that is truly the case, then a question comes up that few people are comfortable discussing: in this enlightened twenty-first century, how is it that inequality persists?

Bonilla-Silva suggests that this conflict (we are not racists; racism persists) is one that the privileged resolve by looking elsewhere for explanations – the concept of market forces is a favorite stand-in or pretext for racism, as will be seen in Chapter 14 when employers are asked directly about the way field workers are hired. In this way the dominant group develops standardization ideologies which can be called upon when the conflict becomes too visible for comfort (Bonilla-Silva 2009: 3–11). The privileged have become expert at talking about race without talking directly about race. This is something to keep in mind while reading this chapter.

The purpose here is not to condemn Disney or any other producer of animated film;[2] but neither is it reasonable to simply overlook, rationalize or laugh off discriminatory and exclusionary behaviors, especially given the ubiquitous presence of Disney in the lives of children. That is, while nothing may be gained by latching onto what seem to be trivialities, neither is any progress made by refusing to look more closely at systematic patterns that have a profound impact on the way children come to see the world.

To discuss Disney's role in the socialization of young children, it is first necessary to demonstrate that their products have a regular, systematic effect on children on a day-to-day basis, and that children are influenced by the content of what they are seeing.

The ubiquitous mouse

In a 2009 report, the Nielson Company[3] calculated that children aged 2–5 watch more than 32 hours of television each week, while the 6–11-year-olds watch slightly less. These figures include what they call time-shifted programming (broadcasts recorded to be viewed at another time) and digital video. Roberts and Foehr (2004: 324) found that 4-year-olds spent about 60 percent of their total media time (which includes everything from video games to reading) in front of television or movie screens. With the rapid increased exposure to additional types of digital media, these numbers jumped significantly between Roberts and Foehr's (2004) and Robert's (2008) reports.

In the present day, safeguards have been put in place to protect the youngest and most vulnerable from unhealthy or dangerous everyday items such as toys, food, and clothing. The broadcast entertainment industry is subject to the same kind of inspection, but in a way that is far less consistent. Some producers of child-focused materials have an extraordinary amount of unquestioned access to children, and relatively little or perfunctory oversight. Disney is probably the most prominent of the companies who rely on reputation and nostalgia to deliver a message.[4] It is also true that a great deal of overtly discriminatory

aterial has come out of all the animation studios from the earliest days of the industry. here is a large body of animated short films or cartoons that denigrate, trivialize or mock he mentally ill, the handicapped, Native Americans, African Americans, Africans, Asians, Middle Easterners, Eskimos, Italians, Latinos, Jews, the English, Irish, Scots, Russians nd just about every other nationality and ethnicity.

Disney is the focus here because it holds such a large share of the market; for example, mong its holdings are five film studios in addition to a majority share in twenty different elevision stations (Giroux and Pollock 2010: 285).

There is another kind of authority that Disney has claimed for itself that is rarely cknowledged or questioned. That is, Disney has systematically appropriated traditional tories and retold them in ways that isolate and exclude other storytellers and cultures. Zipes refers to this as the *Disney Spell*:

> It was not once upon a time, but at a certain time in history, before anyone knew what was happening, that Walt Disney cast a spell on the fairy tale, and he has held it captive ever since . . . [He] used his own "American" grit and ingenuity to appropriate European fairy tales [so that] his signature has obfuscated the names of Charles Perrault, the Brothers Grimm, Hans Christian Andersen, and Carlo Collodi.
>
> (Zipes 1995)

In my own experiences teaching Disney film I have come across students who are under he impression that *Beauty and the Beast* was conceived and written in 1990 specifically to e animated in the Disney studios. They are surprised and sometimes unsettled to learn hat the story was originally titled *La Belle et la Bête* (first published in France – in French – in 1740). At various points I have had students who assumed that *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* (Irving 1819) and *Winnie the Pooh* (Milne 1926)[5] originated with and belong to Disney.

Stories are retold, by everyone, again and again; in this, Disney has not broken any sacred ground. The problem is that Disney appropriates and reinterprets stories and legends with significant meaning and importance to specific cultures without acknowledging what they are doing. This habit of appropriating cultural icons is not limited to English language stories; for example, the Chinese have expressed dismay over Disney's appropriation and remodeling of one of China's most beloved legends in *Mulan* (Dong 2010). Disney's versions are often the first and sometimes the only versions children see and hear. And because the sociocultural values are consistent from film to film, the cumulative effect is considerable.

The film that has garnered the most severe criticism in this regard is *Pocahontas* (Buescher and Ono 1996; Dundes 2001; Edgerton and Jackson 1996; Jhappan and Stasiulis 2005; Ono and Buescher 1996, 2001). Some have condemned Disney's version of this film: "Disney commodifies the past into digestible bits of information for the U.S. palate . . . Indeed, Pocahontas transforms an historical abomination into kid's candy – genocide into a contemporary romance" (Ono and Buescher 2001: 35).

Others are simply dissatisfied with the historical inaccuracies, but even those who take note will often just shrug, as in the *Globe and Mail*'s (1994) review of a live-action Disney film *Squanto*. The reviewer acknowledges the liberties Disney took but notes that "history is written by the winners, and you can't get much more victorious than Daddy Disney" (5 November 1994, as cited in Schaffer 1996). There is often debate and difference of opinion about Disney's portrayal of American Indian history. In the case of *Pocahontas*,

while most were critical of the film, there were a few who thought it showed positive and forward movement in the way native cultures are portrayed. These contrasting views play out both inside and outside Native American circles.[6]

The fact that children are exposed to broadcast media of all kinds on a regular, systematic basis has been established. Now the question must be: so what? Little kids – so this argument goes – don't really pay much attention to details, there's so much going on. They couldn't possibly be taking notes from Bugs Bunny or King Louie on how to be prejudiced. But children – even very young children – are tireless observers of human behavior, and research indicates that they do indeed take in what they see and put it to use.

Language acquisition is part and parcel of cognitive development more generally. While one part of the 4-year-old's mind is sorting through strategies for passive constructions, another is working on categorization and category awareness. Categorization is a universal cognitive strategy, a tool humans use to cope with the complexity of the world. It is also the very cornerstone of stereotype and following from that, prejudice (Brown 2010). Some aspects of learning to differentiate and categorize are not well understood, but it is clear that children use similarity in this process. Furry creatures with four legs – dogs, goats, horses – are all doggies or waggies or something similar to 2-year-olds. By age 4, the same child can identify a dog reliably. The important thing to note here is that children see patterns in the data the world presents on a day-to-day basis, and those patterns are put to use.

That is, children are not passive vessels who sit in front of the television and let stories float by them. What they take in is processed and added to the store of data on how things – and people – are categorized. Children absorb things both abstract and concrete. Rice and Woodsmall (1988) conducted an experiment in which 3- and 5-year-olds were shown two 6-minute animated television programs. Included were twenty words which were not known to the children prior to the viewing, in normal conversational context. After a single viewing of the two clips, 3-year-olds gained an average of 1.56 new words, while 5-year-olds retained 4.87 new words.

Now given this general and vastly simplified information about children, language, cognition, and identity, consider the fact that by age 4, some children begin to exhibit prejudicial attitudes (Persson and Musher-Eizenman 2003: 531). In fact, numerous studies indicate that preschool children not only categorize by race, they also demonstrate bias (Aboud 2003, 2005; Katz 2003). Working with children between the ages 3 and 5 in a racially and ethnically diverse day care center, Van Ausdale and Feagin (2001) found that the children used racial categories to identify themselves and others in conversation, to include or exclude others from activities, and to "negotiate power in their own social/play networks."

The use and manipulation of language variation to establish character are long-established practices in storytelling; Disney is by no means the first or only practitioner. Long before Disney came on the scene, stage actors used language accent to draw characters quickly, building on well-established, preconceived notions associated with specific regional loyalties, ethnic, racial alliances or economic status. This shortcut to characterization means that certain traits need not be laboriously demonstrated by means of a character's history and actions and an examination of motive. The blatant use of stereotypes in any kind of storytelling (print, small or large screen, stage) may sometimes be used for satirical effect, but more usually stereotypes indicate lack of imagination, laziness, bias, or some combination of the three.

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The wolf's backstory

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However, the issue here is not the quality of the storytelling; more important is the way storytelling behaviors and reactions reflect deeper beliefs and opinions. As we will see, stereotypes do not have to be overtly negative to be problematic and limiting.

The wolf's backstory

In 1933, while the U.S. was in the depths of a severe depression, Walt Disney's animators created a short cartoon which would make an $88,000 profit in the first two years of its release (Grant 1993: 56). By 1930 there were some 20,000 motion-picture theaters in business, serving 90 million customers weekly (Emery and Emery 1988: 265) and the price of admission was approximately 25 cents.[7] Thus Disney's animated *The Three Little Pigs*, a familiar story with a message of hard work in the face of adversity, was widely seen from the early days of entertainment film. The theme of good triumphing over evil was clearly a timely and popular one, and one that has not gone out of favor: Disney's *The Three Little Pigs* is still shown with regularity, in part or whole, on Disney's cable television channels. It has also been released numerous times on video, laserdisc, and DVD, in at least four distinct editions.

One of the topics which is often discussed in relation to this particular Disney animated short is a scene included in the original release, in which the wolf – in yet another attempt to trick the pigs into opening the door to him – dresses as a Jewish peddler (Grant 1993; Kaufman 1988; Precker 1993a). Kaufman interprets this in a way that is deferential to Disney:

> Ethnic stereotypes were, of course, not uncommon in films of the early Thirties, and were usually essayed in a free-wheeling spirit of fun, with no malice intended. By the time the film was reissued in 1948 . . . social attitudes had changed considerably.
> (Kaufman 1988)

Kaufman's claim that such stereotypes came across as fun and free-wheeling with no malice intended cannot be taken at face value and must be examined more closely. It serves as an excellent example of the general inclination to isolate Disney from critical commentary.

Disney's caricature of a Jewish peddler stands out for the way it mirrors the anti-Semitic propaganda coming out of Germany in the same time period. Disney would not allow a screenshot of the original animation of the wolf as Jewish peddler to appear in this book (or anywhere else, for that matter). This refusal to allow reproduction of the image protects their corporate image, but it also stifles discussion about the role of animated film in the socialization of children and the history of anti-Semitism in the U.S.[8]

It is likely that many younger readers are not familiar with the visual stereotypes that were so common prior to World War II. These images include features which are visual shorthand for *Jew*, a context that is provided by the poster in Figure 7.1. The poster was designed to advertise an exhibition called *The Eternal Jew* (*Der ewige Jude*) in Germany in the late 1930s (Hippler *et al.* 1940, directors).

The similarities between the Disney version of the Big Bad Wolf as Jewish peddler and the Nazi propaganda are more than simply striking. Both images have large hook noses, straggly beards and wear side locks; both wear long black coats and a dark hat similar to those worn by some Orthodox Jews; both hold out a palm full of coins, a common way to invoke the stereotype of Jews as unscrupulous and greedy moneylenders. We know that,

Figure 7.1 The Eternal Jew

Source: Poster: Exhibition Der ewige Jude. Reprinted from Getty Images

because all of these virulent anti-Semitic statements were published openly in the "The Eternal Jew" exhibit itself, and also in the film based on the exhibition. This text which accompanied one set of still shots from the film provides a representative sample: "While millions of long-established native Germans were propelled into unemployment and misery, immigrant Jews achieved fantastic wealth within a few years. Not by means of honest work, but rather through usury, swindling, and fraud" (Hippler 1940: translated from the original German by this author).

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There is no direct evidence that the Disney animators and film makers shared in any of these beliefs, but still it is not possible to overlook the similarities of the images produced.[9] Kaufman (1988) recounts that the anti-Semitic depiction of the wolf as a Jewish peddler remained intact until *The Three Little Pigs* was re-released in 1948, 14 years later. At that time the Jewish peddler was replaced with an all-around rough guy, and then only because of pressure from the Hays Office, which brought the issue of Jewish sensibilities and the Holocaust to Disney's attention.[10] Grant (1993: 54) reports that Disney later admitted that the original scene was in bad taste.[11]

In addition to the visual clues, the actor who supplied the voice for the wolf used a distinctive Yiddish accent to make the stereotype complete.[12] That is, while Disney did change the animation in 1948, the peddler's Yiddish accent was left intact for much longer. At an unspecified date the segment was finally revoiced: "[I]n case the Yiddish dialect of the original scene might itself be found offensive, the dialogue was changed as well. Now the Wolf spoke in a standard 'dumb' cartoon voice" (Kaufman 1988: 43–44). This means that even after that part of *The Three Little Pigs* was reanimated to remove the offensive stereotyped image, the wolf continued to *speak* with a Yiddish accent. Thus the underlying message rooted in anti-Semitism and fear of the other was maintained, establishing a link between the evil intentions of the wolf and Jewish identity. Grant also relates that the newer animation and dialogue still leaned on more general stereotypes and fears, in that the "disguised wolf no longer has Hebraic tones or mannerisms, instead saying: "I'm the Fuller brush-man. I workin' me way through college" (Grant 1993: 54).

Grant and Kaufman both claim that the original image of the Wolf-as-Jewish-Peddler had been edited out upon urging of the Hays Office. In 1997, I bought a VHS tape of three classic Disney cartoons from an official Disney store, however, and found, to my surprise and disquiet, that the original animation of the Wolf with a yarmulke and side locks, large nose and peddler's pack was intact. How – and why – this release of the cartoon came to include this particular redacted scene is unclear.

In 1992, a similar controversy would arise over the portrayal of characters in Disney's *Aladdin*, a movie set in an imaginary, long ago Arabic kingdom. An offending line of dialogue in an opening song "Where they cut off your ear if they don't like your face/It's barbaric, but hey, it's home" was partially changed in response to complaints from the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (AAADC), but as the representative of the AAADC pointed out, the accents of the characters remained as originally filmed:

> [They] particularly objected to the fact that the good guys – Aladdin, Princess Jasmine and her father – talk like Americans, while all the other Arab characters have heavy accents. This pounds home the message that people with a foreign accent are bad.
> (Precker 1993b)

Talking the talk

Any actor necessarily brings to a role his or her own native language. In many cases, the variety of English (we are still focused here on film and theater in the United States) is irrelevant to the characterization and can be left alone. Some actors are infamous for never trying to portray an accent other than their own, regardless of the nature of the story or the character. Jimmy Stewart, John Wayne, Ricky Gervais, Diane Keaton all made or make public statements about their unwillingness to attempt an accent other than their own.

More often, however, the director and actor, working together, will target a particular social, regional or L2 accent, perhaps because it is intrinsic to the role and cannot be sacrificed. U.S. audiences may or may not suspend disbelief when Robin Hood sounds like he grew up in Nevada, but it would be harder to cast someone with an upper-class British accent as Ronald Regan or Richard Nixon and not do serious harm to credibility, audience expectations and reception.

In a similar way, non-native speakers of English who come to the U.S. to be actors bring their L2 accents to their work. This accent may restrict the roles they can play, or they may have roles written or rewritten to suit the immutable nature of their accents (Arnold Schwarzenegger, Djimon Hounsou, Javier Bardem, Penelope Cruz, Chow Yun-Fat, Marion Cotillard, Benecio del Toro, and Juliette Binoche provide examples). American actors may undergo accent training of various kinds in an attempt to learn to imitate what they need for a particular role, although there are many examples where this effort fails despite expensive and careful tutoring, even in the limited way it is asked of them during filming.

What is particularly relevant and interesting in this context, however, is the way that actors attempt to manipulate language as a tool in the construction of character, sometimes successfully, sometimes not. Educational programs for the training of actors for stage and screen often include classes on speech, dialogue, and the contrivance of accent. Simply put, with a lot of hard work and good editing it may be possible to fool some of the people, some of the time.

The materials used in actor-oriented accent courses are interesting in and of themselves, because the approach often includes not just the mechanics and technicalities of one particular regional or foreign accent, but also issues of content and approach.

> Dialect actors must avoid going so far with certain speech traits that they end up creating ethnic or linguistic stereotypes . . . language or dialect background does not dictate character actions. Characters with accents must have the same range of choices available to them as characters whose speech is identical to yours.
>
> (Karshner and Stern 1990: Preface)

This is an enlightened and realistic position, certainly. Other materials prepared for actors are not always so even-handed, as seen in *Foreign Dialects: A Manual for Actors, Directors and Writers* (Herman and Herman 1943 [1997]). The pointers on how to imitate one particular national dialect (an abstraction in itself) are chock full of stereotypes. The 1997 edition has been stripped of the worst passages but some stereotypes remain, such as the advice on how to talk like an Irishman: "The pace is a bit faster than American but this is because of the Irishman's ability to voice his thoughts quickly and easily and also because of his habit of falling back on verbal clichés and other hackneyed expressions" (Herman 1997: 67).

Of course, a person using Herman's book to learn a particular accent for a particular role on stage or screen would not necessarily buy into Herman's characterizations of whole nations. But it's not adult viewers at the center of this discussion; we are looking at entertainment media and the way children are bombarded with stereotypes.

In a film set in a country where English is not spoken, the writers and director have to come to an initial decision: they could hire actors who are native speakers of the language that is spoken in that setting and use subtitles; they could have the dialogue spoken in English, each actor using his or her native variety and simply abstracting away

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The issue of recognizable voice act
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Table 7.1 Animated characters speal

Setting	*Character*
France	Lumière
	Stove
	Cherie
Elsewhere	Louis
	Unnamed

from the question of logical language spoken; or the more common approach, at least in recent times: Native English-speaking actors speak English, but sometimes take on the accent of the language they would logically be speaking in the time and setting of the story.

If a French accent is meant to remind viewers that the story is taking place in France, then logic would require that all the characters in that story speak with a French accent. But this is not the case in animated or live action; for the most part, in movies set outside English-speaking countries only a few actors will contrive the accent of that country. The decision about which actors will try to sound French, for example, is not random, but follows logically from the dominant stereotypes (or in some cases, from the actor's native language). Consider Disney's *Beauty and the Beast* (Trousdale and Wise 1991, directors) set in France (Table 7.1). All of the major characters speak English with American accents with three exceptions: the sexy chamber maid, the amorous butler, and a temperamental cook are voiced by actors contriving French accents.

The exact opposite approach was taken with *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, also set in France; in this case, there were no French accents used, but those voice actors who were portraying the dark-skinned Romani took on inconsistent and unidentifiable L2 features.

A final consideration that is very relevant to analysis of language manipulation in these films has to do with a new direction in casting that began in the 1960s with the production of *The Jungle Book*. This was the first animated feature in which voice actors were cast on the basis of public recognition and popularity. Actors and musicians who had already established a personality and reputation with the movie-going public were drawn, quite literally, into the animation and story-telling process so that the relationship between voice, popularity, language and characterization in Disney film entered a new era. This strategy was not greeted with enthusiasm by all film critics:

> [B]reathing heart and soul into a film is not so easily accomplished. *The Jungle Book* lacked this quality, and substituted for it a gallery of characters whose strongest identity was with the stars who provided their voices. The animators enjoyed working with people like George Sanders, Louis Prima, and Phil Harris, and incorporated elements of their personalities into the animated characters. Audiences naturally responded, so the animators felt justified in continuing this practice. "It is much simpler and more realistic than creating a character and then searching for the right voice," [producer] Reitherman contended.
>
> (Maltin 1987: 74–75)

The issue of recognizable voice actors will be relevant in the discussion of AAVE language features in specific films.

Table 7.1 Animated characters speaking French-accented English

Setting	*Character*	*Role*	*Film*
France	Lumière	Maître d', steward	*Beauty and the Beast*
	Stove	Chef	
	Cherie	Chambermaid	
Elsewhere	Louis	Chef	*The Little Mermaid*
	Unnamed	Waiter	*The Rescuers*

Time and place

Disney's animated films are set in a wide range of places and time periods (Table 7.2). It must be noted that in some cases Disney seems unconcerned with the setting and time and simply puts modern-day people and sensibilities in exotic places. *Tarzan* takes place in the Victorian era, somewhere on the African continent – which we must take on faith, as there are no local (African) humanoids in speaking roles. *The Lion King* is set in Africa, but again the story does not involve human beings; here we know it is Africa because the writers go out of their way to remind the audience. *The Jungle Book* is set in India, with a single human character – Mowgli – to establish that this story is set somewhere else. In extreme cases the film makers seem to want to draw on the atmosphere and cultural awareness associated with specific times and places, but the more pressing concern is how to engage the interest of the viewers by making the setting familiar and comfortable.

In all of these movies, the logical setting dictates a particular language or set of languages, but there is no attempt to try to build those social behaviors into the story. It makes a certain amount of sense to set aside issues of logical language use and simply tell the story in English, especially if the audience is very young. However, in most cases the directors or actors continue to draw on language-focused social differences to establish character. A case in point here is Tarzan's best friend, another smart-aleck sidekick with a strong Brooklyn accent (voiced by Rosie O'Donnell).

The Emperor's New Groove (Dindal 2000, director) is probably the most extreme case of a disconnect between the proposed time and place and the way the story is told. *Groove* is set in Incan Peru, a fact that is never explicitly named or identified in the film itself (Silverman 2002), but was spoken about freely when the creative staff were interviewed. Animators and producers talked at length about research into Incan culture and the fact that they went through many centuries of archeological artifacts to find those which appealed to them as supportive of a light-hearted, comedic plot. Silverman, an archeologist, estimates that as it is presented the film contains elements that span 3,000 years and 275,000 square kilometers of space (ibid.: 309). As a result, "In Disney's hands, *Groove* so significantly departs and appropriates from the archaeologically known Inca Empire and other pre-Columbian civilizations of ancient Peru, that it is a textbook example of hyperreality and simulacra." The terms *hyperreality* and *simulacra* are often used in media studies; simulacra are copies of an original that no longer exists, or as in this case, that never existed to begin with. That is, Disney's ancient Peru looks as though it is meant to be a copy of the original, but in fact is created out of whole cloth. Baudrillard (1994: 1) calls this *hyperreality*, or a map that precedes the territory it supposedly describes.

Table 7.2 Disney's animated films over space and time

Displaced in time; outside the U.S.	*Mythical, fantastic or science fiction settings*	*Here and now*
Nineteenth-century India and Africa	Atlantis	New Orleans
Sixth-century China	Outer space	African savannah
Seventeenth-century Persia	Unnamed kingdoms	Australia
Fifteeenth-century Peru		California
Ancient Greece		
Ice Age North America		New York

It could be argued that represent Incan culture. Im to establish an unusual and day U.S. in narrative strate

This is a case where all attempts at an accent that nothing to do with that tim in so far as they will mesh w assimilation and objectific culture of its history and tri 90 minutes.

The unfortunate result c many more than once – will version they will ever be ex learn in more detail about people.

Animated films offer a un over subordinate cultures a ferred view of the world as r (assumed) innocence and in available to them and a gre

> As non-photographic a the basic cinematic exp function and essence o intangible and imagina

A study of accents in anima mirror the evolution of nati World War II, Russian sp (Natasha and Boris meet R hostilities with Iran and Ira people of color and minorit

In the following discussio animated film, the hypothes a vehicle by which children specific social groups, and t are particularly adept at thi called *A Spoonful of Sugar*.[13]

Disney feature films

A large-scale study was carr acters in 24 full-length anin everything available at tha available). For this second,

It could be argued that *Groove* is simply a well-intentioned but failed attempt to represent Incan culture. Images and icons might be seen as nothing more than an attempt to establish an unusual and exotic setting. In fact, the feel of the film is distinctly present-day U.S. in narrative strategy, social conventions, humor, and language.

This is a case where all voice actors use their own varieties of English. There are no attempts at an accent that would evoke Incan culture, because the story, in reality, has nothing to do with that time and place. The goal seems to be to evoke other cultures only in so far as they will mesh with the expectations of an American audience. This is done by assimilation and objectification, and the result is children's film which strips an entire culture of its history and trivializes what is left behind. And accomplishes all this in some 90 minutes.

The unfortunate result of all this is that the majority of children who see this movie – many more than once – will retain Disney's version of Incan culture because it is the only version they will ever be exposed to. Few American students will have an opportunity to learn in more detail about the more complex – and interesting – history of the Incan people.

Animated films offer a unique way to study how a dominant culture reaffirms its control over subordinate cultures and nations by re-establishing, on a day-to-day basis, their preferred view of the world as right and proper and primary. Precisely because of animation's (assumed) innocence and innocuousness, the film makers have a broader spectrum of tools available to them and a great deal more leeway:

> As non-photographic application of photographic medium, [animators] are freed from the basic cinematic expectation that they convey an "impression of reality" . . . The function and essence of cartoons is in fact the reverse: the impression of reality, of intangible and imaginary worlds in chaotic, disruptive, subversive collision.
>
> (Burton 1992: 23–24)

A study of accents in animated cartoons over time reveals the way linguistic stereotypes mirror the evolution of national fears: Japanese and German characters in cartoons during World War II, Russian spy characters in children's cartoons in the 1950s and 1960s (Natasha and Boris meet Rocky and Bullwinkle), Middle Eastern characters in the era of hostilities with Iran and Iraq. All of this in addition to long-standing prejudices against people of color and minority religious groups.

In the following discussion of systematic patterns found in a defined body of children's animated film, the hypothesis is a simple one: animated films entertain, but they are also a vehicle by which children learn to associate specific characteristics and life styles with specific social groups, and to accept a narrow and exclusionary world view. In fact, they are particularly adept at this precisely because they do entertain, an irony that might be called *A Spoonful of Sugar*.[13]

Disney feature films

A large-scale study was carried out for the first edition of this book, in which 371 characters in 24 full-length animated Disney films were analyzed. The 24 films represented everything available at that time on VHS (DVD technology was not yet commonly available). For this second, revised edition, an additional 14 films were watched and

analyzed (Table 7.3).[14] To be included, a film had to be: (1) fully animated – no live action; (2) full length (i.e., not a short film or cartoon); and (3) produced by Disney. This last restriction excludes films that were produced by Pixar but distributed by Disney, a step taken for the sake of consistency.

Even a cursory look is enough to get a sense of the range of social and linguistic stereotypes Disney presents to young children repeatedly. Before the advent of the VCR, repeated viewings of *Cinderella*, for example, was simply not possible. Since the technology boom, however, Disney films can be rented or purchased and watched over and over again, so that the messages and morals become deeply ingrained (Buescher and Ono 1996; Edgerton and Jackson 1996; Giroux and Pollock 2010; Lacroix 2004). With this comes the merchandising storm. In the months prior to the release of any full-length animated film, Disney begins to release marketing tie-ins, which include "toys, apparel, accessories,

Table 7.3 Disney animated films included in the 1997 and 2010 studies

1997 study	*2010 study*	*Animated full-length feature*	*Release year*	*$US gross*
X		*Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*	1937	184,925,485
X		*Pinocchio*	1940	84,300,000
X		*Dumbo*	1941	2,500,000
X		*The Reluctant Dragon*	1941	Not available
X		*Bambi*	1942	102,797,000
X		*Cinderella*	1950	85,000,000
X		*Robin Hood*	1953	9,500,000
X		*Peter Pan*	1953	87,400,000
X		*Lady and the Tramp*	1955	93,600,000
X		*Sleeping Beauty*	1959	9,464,608
X		*101 Dalmatians*	1961	153,000,000
X		*The Sword in the Stone*	1963	22,182,353
X		*The Jungle Book*	1967	141,843,000
X		*The Aristocats*	1970	55,675,257
X		*The Rescuers*	1977	48,775,599
X		*The Fox and the Hound*	1981	43,899,231
X		*The Great Mouse Detective*	1986	23,605,534
X		*The Little Mermaid*	1989	111,543,479
X		*Duck Tales: Treasure of the Lost Lamp*	1990	18,075,331
X		*The Rescuers Down Under*	1990	27,931,461
X		*Beauty and the Beast*	1991	171,340,294
X		*Aladdin*	1992	217,350,219
X		*The Lion King*	1994	328,539,505
	X	*Pocahontas*	1995	141,579,773
	X	*The Hunchback of Notre Dame*	1996	100,138,851
	X	*Hercules*	1997	99,112,101
	X	*Mulan*	1998	120,620,254
	X	*Tarzan*	1999	171,091,819
	X	*The Emperor's New Groove*	2000	89,296,573
	X	*Atlantis: The Lost Empire*	2001	84,052,762
	X	*Lilo & Stitch*	2002	145,771,527
	X	*Treasure Planet*	2002	38,120,554
	X	*Brother Bear*	2003	85,336,277
	X	*Home on the Range*	2004	50,026,353
	X	*Chicken Little*	2005	135,386,665
	X	*Meet the Robinsons*	2007	97,822,171
	X	*Bolt*	2008	114,053,579
	X	*The Princess and the Frog*	2009	104,374,107

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Stereotypes (whether o
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- *The Hunchback of Notre*
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1963	22,182,353
1967	141,843,000
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1981	43,899,231
1986	23,605,534
989	111,543,479
990	18,075,331
990	27,931,461
991	171,340,294
992	217,350,219
994	328,539,505
995	141,579,773
996	100,138,851
997	99,112,101
998	120,620,254
999	171,091,819
000	89,296,573
001	84,052,762
002	145,771,527
002	38,120,554
003	85,336,277
004	50,026,353
005	135,386,665
007	97,822,171
008	114,053,579
009	104,374,107

footwear, home furnishings, home décor, health, beauty, food, stationery and consumer electronics" (The Walt Disney Company Fact Book 2008, http://goo.gl/P9UrJ).

Stereotypes (whether or not language and accent are manipulated) are not subtle, ranging from *Lady and the Tramp*'s cheerful, musical Italian chefs to *Treasure of the Lost Lamp*'s stingy, Scottish-accented McScrooge. In the post-1997 films this trend continued; for example, Disney continues to portray side-kicks as scrappy inner city tough guys with hearts of gold. Consider the following:

- *Bolt* (Howard and Williams 2008, directors), in which the side-kick street-smart character is a cat voiced by Susie Essmann, a native of Brooklyn.
- *Mulan* (Bancroft and Cook 1998, directors) where the main character has a small, very scrappy guardian dragon called Mushu voiced by Eddie Murphy. The illogic of a sidekick who speaks twentieth-century AAVE in ancient China seems to have been secondary to the need for this particular character type.
- *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*'s (Trousdale and Wise 1996, directors) Quasimodo has only three friends, stone gargoyles (inanimate objects who become animated for him alone) two of which speak American English with distinctly urban accents (Hugo, voiced by Jason Alexander, and Laverne, by Mary Wickes).

While Disney did not hesitate to include an AAVE-speaking sidekick in *Mulan* (set in ancient China), someone involved in the production of *Brother Bear* (Blaise and Walker 2003, directors) balked at that particular jump in logic. Instead, the odd side-kick characters – two moose – speak with the caricatured Canadian accent made popular by the fictional *Great White North* SCTV hosts Bob and Doug McKenzie (comedians Rick Moranis and Dave Thomas). Note also that in all of these cases, the characters who speak with stigmatized accents appear in animal or inanimate form, a pattern that will be seen elsewhere as well.

Original study methodology

This body of animated films was chosen because the Disney Corporation is the largest producer of such films, as seen in Figure 7.2. Together Disney and the rest of the Buena Vista empire[15] produced about half of the one hundred top grossing animated films between 1980 and the present, which means that they took in about 6 trillion US dollars in that time period, for one set of films only. Clearly Disney reaches many people, and a good proportion of them are children. This would be reason enough to study their films, but they are also the most highly marketed and advertised of the field.

The movies listed under the label 1997 in Table 7.3 were analyzed by a group of advanced graduate students and myself. In that process, each character was coded for a variety of language and characterization variables. The detailed linguistic description for each character consisted of a mix of phonetic transcription, quotes of typical syntactic structures, and marked lexical items.

In cases where an actor is clearly contriving an accent, a decision was made as to what language variety was most likely intended to be portrayed. For example, a poorly executed British accent was still counted as such for the creators and (most) viewers. In *Aladdin*, one of the minor characters, a thief, speaks primarily Midwestern or West Coast American English, but also has some trilled r sounds – definitely not a feature generally associated

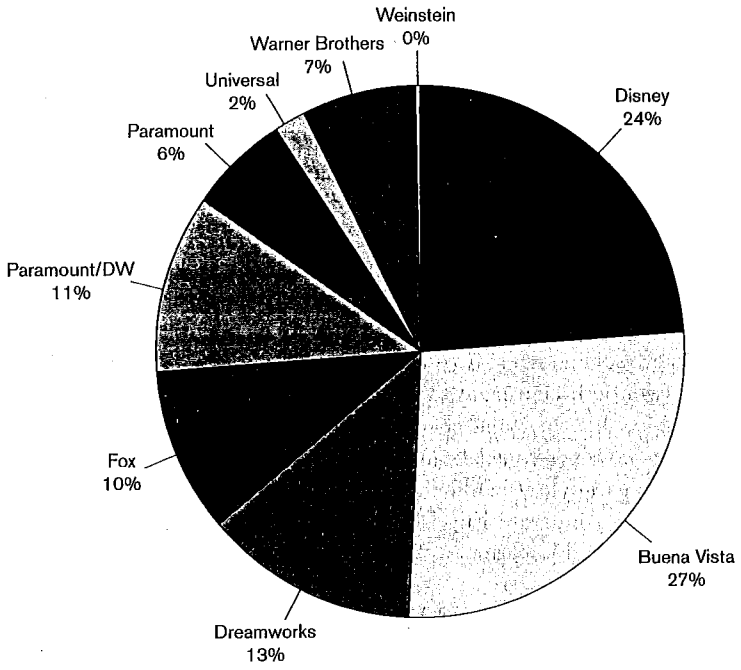

Figure 7.2 Percent of $12.8 billion (total box office gross) by studio, for the top 100 grossing animated films, 1980–2010

Source: http://boxofficemojo.com

with American English. This particular character's accent was still classified as *SAE, however, since only one atypical feature appeared in his phonology. Another character whose speech exhibits features from two or more dialects is Cogsworth, the butler/clock in *Beauty and the Beast*. He speaks with a contrived British accent in which some American features crop up unpredictably; thus, though it is not an accurate imitation of a middle- or upper-class British dialect, for the purposes of this study it is classified as such.

COMPANION @ WEBSITE

Disney's world

Of the 371 characters with speaking roles in the 24 movies examined in 1997, 259 or 69.8 percent are male (Figure 7.3). Female characters make up the other just over 30 percent. A look at the way female and male characters are deployed, overall, indicates that within the proportions established, they are equally distributed as major and minor characters. Female characters are rarely seen at work outside the home and family; where they do show up, they are mothers and princesses, devoted or (rarely) rebellious daughters. When they are at work, female characters are waitresses, nurses, nannies, or housekeepers. Men, conversely, are doctors, waiters, advisors to kings, thieves, hunters, servants, detectives, and pilots. The situation is roughly the same in the newer films added to the analysis (but see the discussion of *The Princess and the Frog*).

The universe displayed to young children in these films is one with a clear division between the sexes in terms of life style and life choices. Traditional views of the woman's

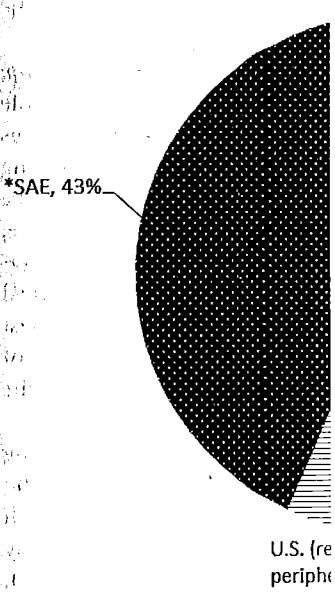

Figure 7.3 371 animated characte

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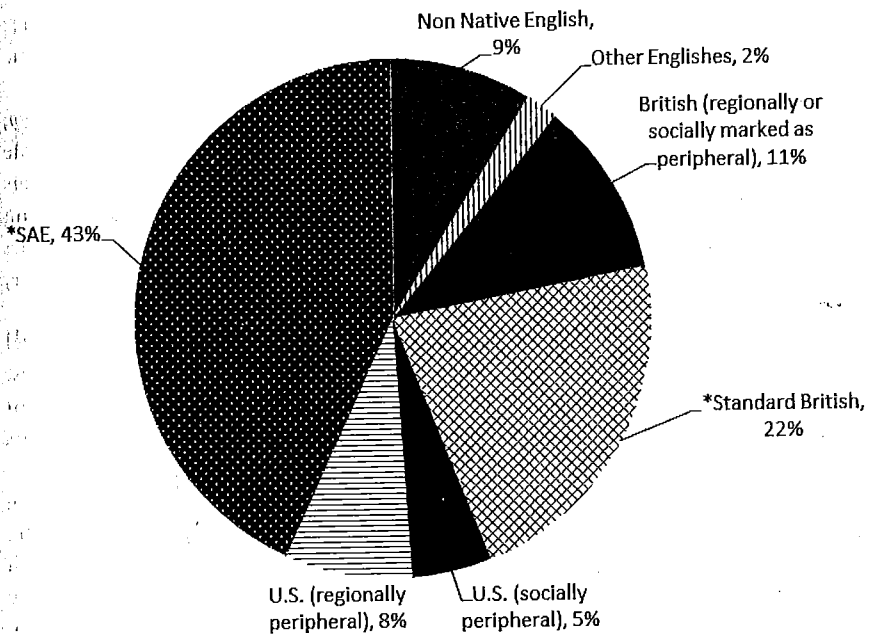

Figure 7.3 371 animated characters by language spoken

role in the family are strongly underwritten, and in Disney films, from *Snow White* to *Meet the Robinsons*, the female characters see, or come to accept, their first and most important role in life as that of wife and mother. What does an examination of language use have to add to this observation? What do characters, male and female speak?

For the most part (43.1 percent) they speak something approximating *SAE. Another 13.9 percent speak varieties of U.S. English which are associated with particular geographic area, racial, ethnic or economic groups. Less stigmatized varieties of British English are spoken by 21.8 percent.

While 91 of the total 371 characters occur in roles where they would not logically be speaking English, there are only 34 characters who speak English with a foreign accent.

The tendency to use foreign accents to convey the setting of the story is confirmed by these distributions; there are twice as many characters with foreign-accented English in stories set in places like France and Italy.

Of particular interest are the two movies set in Africa, *Tarzan* (Buck and Lima 1999, directors) and *The Lion King*. It is not unreasonable to assume that for stories set in Africa the logical language would not be English. There is no acknowledgement of this fact in *Tarzan*, but some of the characters in *The Lion King* are derived from Swahili. The good-natured but dumb warthog is called Pumbaa, or *simpleton*; Shenzi, the name of the leader of the hyena pack, means *uncouth*.

However, the only character who actually uses traces of Swahili and a contrived Swahili accent is Rafiki (Swahili for *friend*), the wise and eccentric baboon who fulfills the role of spiritual guide. Why there are not more characters in these settings who speak with an accent is a logical question, and one which will be addressed below.

Some 90 percent of all the characters speak English natively, with an American or British English or Australian accent. However, a closer look (Figure 7.3) makes it clear that

60 percent of all the characters appear in stories set in English-speaking countries; thus, a significant number of English-speaking characters appear in stories set outside the U.S.

Sometimes these are Americans abroad, as was the case in *Treasure of the Lost Lamp*; sometimes these are characters who are not logically English-speaking, given their role and the story, as is the case for all the characters in *Aladdin*. Here three language settings are considered: stories set in English-speaking lands, those set in non-English-speaking countries, and finally, those set in mythical kingdoms where it would be difficult to make an argument for one language or another as primary (*The Little Mermaid*, for example, seems to take place in a Caribbean setting) (Figure 7.4).

Since a contrived foreign accent is often used to signal that the typical or logical language of the setting would not be English, it is not surprising to see that the highest percentage of characters with foreign-accented English occur in the second type of language setting. But it is also significant that even more characters with foreign accents appear in stories set in the U.S. and England (Figure 7.5).

The breakdown of characters by their language variety (Figure 7.4) becomes interesting when we examine that variety in relationship to the motivations and actions of the character's role. Disney films rely heavily on traditional themes of good and evil, and with very few exceptions they depend also on happy endings. Characters with unambiguously positive roles (185 of them) constitute 49.9 percent; those who are clearly bad or even evil, only 19.4 percent. The remainder is divided between characters who change significantly in the course of the story (always from bad to good) and those characters whose roles are too small and fleeting to make such a judgment (86, or 23.2 percent of the total).

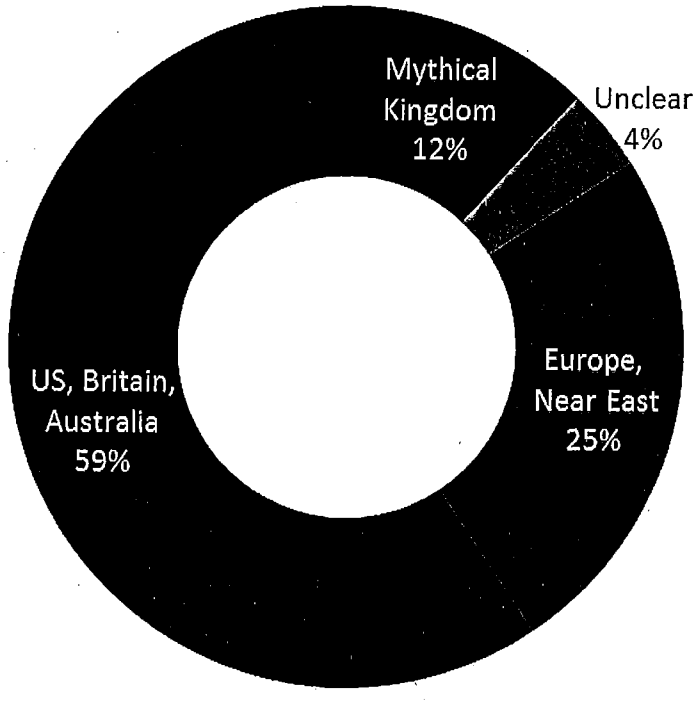

Figure 7.4 Animated film distribution by story setting

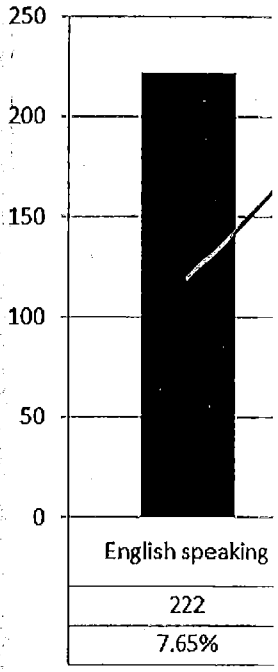

Figure 7.5 Character distrib

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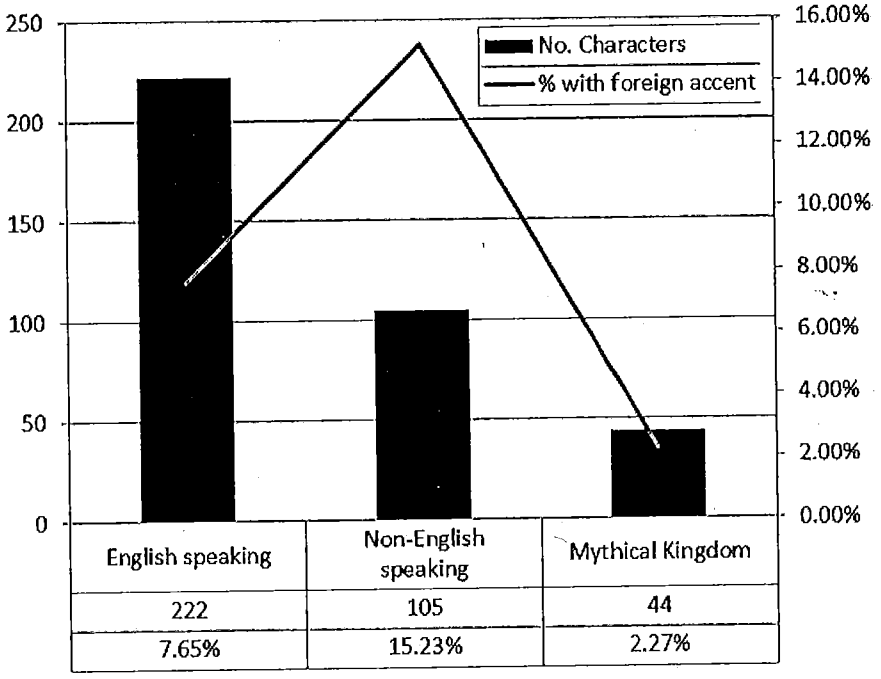


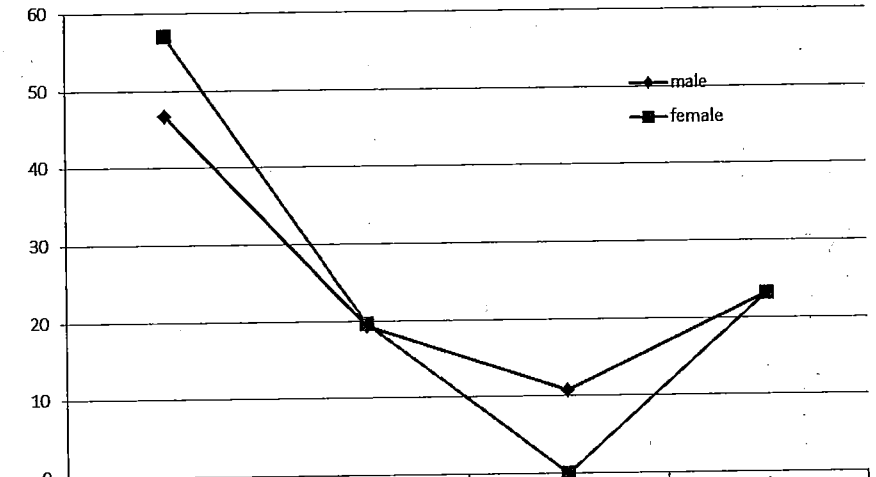
Figure 7.5 Character distribution by story setting

Further, female characters are more likely to show positive motivations and actions (Figure 7.6). Unlike male characters who sometimes are bad and then become good, bad females show no character development. At this point it seems that there is no relationship between non-native English accents and the portrayal of good and evil.

There are 72 characters who are truly bad, in major and minor roles. They include the poacher and would-be child-murderer Percival McLeach in *Rescuers Down Under* with his contrived Southwestern accent and idiom ("purty feather, boy!" "I whupped ya'll!" "Home, home on the range, where the critters 'r ta-id up in chains"), and the whip-and-cleaver-wielding Stromboli of *Pinocchio*, with his threats of dismemberment, incredible rages, and florid, contrived Italian accent. Of these evil 72, however, a full 85 percent are native speakers of English; almost half are speakers of U.S. English. Bad guys with foreign accents account for only 15 percent of the whole (Figure 7.7 and Table 7.4).

Taken in context, however, this impression cannot stand firm. In Figure 7.8, which compares positive, negative and mixed motivations (the marginal characters have been removed for the sake of this discussion) by major language groups, it becomes clear the overall representation of persons with foreign accents is far more negative than that of speakers of U.S. or British English. About 20 percent of U.S. English speakers are bad characters, while about 40 percent of non-native speakers of English are evil.

Additional interesting patterns come forward when we examine the representation of specific languages linked to national origin, race, or characterization.



	positive	negative	mixed	unclear
male	46.7	19.3	10.8	23.2
female	57.1	19.6	0	23.2

Figure 7.6 Characters by sex and motivation

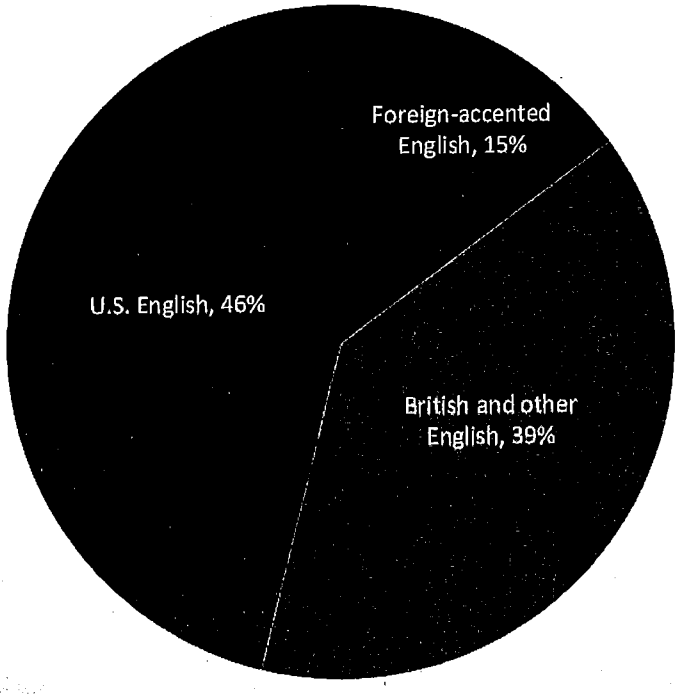


Figure 7.7 Negative characters by variety of English

Table 7.4 Characters by langua

Motivations:	*Positive*
U.S.	122
British	53
Foreign	10
Total	185
(%)	49.9

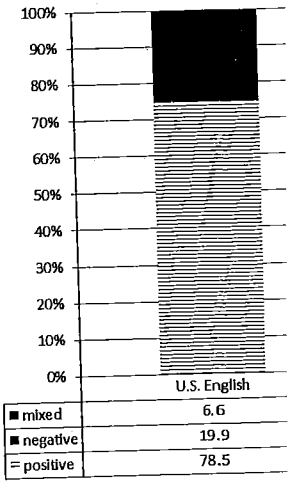


Figure 7.8 Animated characte groups

Getting the hang of

Race and ethnicity are pa company has repeatedly ar the most glaring missteps people of color more gene Italians (*Lady and the Tram and Tramp*, *Mulan*, *The Ar* (*Dumbo*, *The Lion King*, *So* and savage Native Americ

Table 7.5 is an attempt fulfill one or more of the f

- The voice actor is Afri
- The voice actor was n race.
- The animated charact
- The animated charact salient markers (that i in origin).

Table 7.4 Characters by language traits and evaluation of motivations, N = 371

Motivations:	*Positive*	*Negative*	*Mixed*	*Unclear*	*Total*	*(%)*
U.S.	122	33	11	42	208	56.1
British	53	28	11	37	127	34.8
Foreign	10	11	6	7	34	9.2
Total	185	72	28	86	371	
(%)	49.9	19.4	7.5	23.2		100

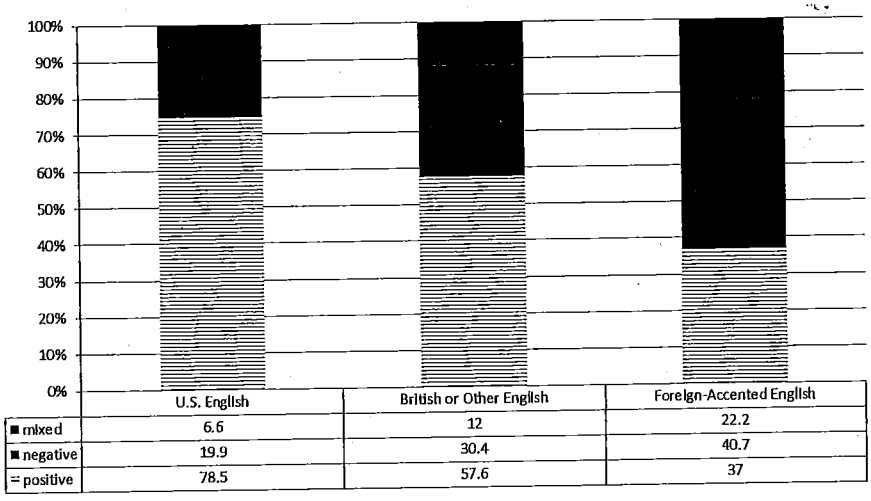


Figure 7.8 Animated characters by positive, negative, and mixed motivations by major language groups

Getting the hang of Technicolor

Race and ethnicity are particularly sensitive issues in all Disney animated films. The company has repeatedly and soundly offended different segments of the population, but the most glaring missteps have to do with the representation of African Americans and people of color more generally. Examples include irresponsible Latinos and gregarious Italians (*Lady and the Tramp*, *Oliver and Company*, *The Lion King*), nefarious Asians (*Lady and Tramp*, *Mulan*, *The Aristocats*), smart-mouthed, lazy, disrespectful African Americans (*Dumbo*, *The Lion King*, *Song of the South*, *The Princess and the Frog*, *The Little Mermaid*), and savage Native Americans (*Peter Pan*, *Pocahontas*).

Table 7.5 is an attempt to draw together all characters from the animated films who fulfill one or more of the following categories:

- The voice actor is African American.
- The voice actor was most likely cast on the basis of voice recognition, regardless of race.
- The animated character is Black either in actuality or symbolically.
- The animated character speaks English with some degree of AAVE inflection or other salient markers (that is, the character's English would be heard as African American in origin).

Table 7.5 African American animated characters

	Character								Voice actor			Setting
Film	*Name*		*Animal/human*	*Behavior evaluation*	*Race/ethnicity or appearance*	*Characteristics of English: sounds like? voice profiling?*	*Contrived?*	*Voice recognition?*	*Actor*	*Actor's race/ethnicity*	*Native Language*	*Logical language*
Dumbo	Crows	Jim Crow	a	m	Black	AAVE	n	u	Cliff Edwards	African American	English	English
		Straw Hat	a	m	Black	AAVE	n	u	Jim Carmichael	African American	English	
		Dandy	a	m	Black	AAVE	n	u	James Baskett	African American	English	
		Glasses	a	m	Black	AAVE	n	u	Nick Stewart	African American	English	
Jungle Book	King Louie – Orangutan		a	m	Red	Scat/AAVE	n	y	Louis Pima	Italian American, Anglo	English	Hindi*
The Fox and the Hound	Big Mama – Owl		a	p	Grey	AAVE	n	y	Pearl Bailey	African American	English	English
The Aristocats	Scat		a	p	Black/Grey	Scat/AAVE	n	u	Scatman Crothers	African American	English	English
Atlantis	Dr. Joshua Strongbear Sweet		h	p	Black	*SAE	n	n	Phil Morris	African American	English	English
The Lion King	Simba – Lion		a	p	Brown/Tan	*SAE	n	u	Jonathan Taylor (cub) Matthew Broderick (adult)	U.S., Anglo	English	Swahili*
	Scar – Lion		a	n	Black/Tan	*SBE	n	y	Jeremy Irons	British	English	
	Timon – Meerkat		a	p	Tans	U.S. New York urban	n	y	Nathan Lane	English	English	
	Pumbaa – Warthog		a	p	Browns	U.S. urban	u	u	Ernie Sabella	U.S., Anglo	English	
	Mufasa – Lion		a	p	Brown/Tan	*SAE	n	y	James Earl Jones	African American	English	
	Nala – Lion		a	p	Tans	*SAE	n	n	Niketa Calame	African American	English	
	Shenzi – Hyena		a	n	Dark Grey	US Urban AAVE	n	y	Whoopi Goldberg	African American	English	
	Banzai – Hyena		a	n	Grey	US Urban LatiN	n	y	Cheech Martin	U.S. Latino	English	
	Rafiki – Mandrill ape		a	p	Multi	Pseudo Swahili accented	y	u	Robert Guillaume	African American	English	
	Zazu – Hornbill		a	p	Multi	*SBE	n	u	Rowan Atkinson	British	English	
	Sarabi		a	p	Pale Tan	*SAE	n	u	Madge Sinclair	African American	English	
The Princess and the Frog	Tiana		h	p	Black	South/AAVE	n	u	Anika Nni Rose	African American	English	English, Creole, Cajun
	Prince Naveen		h	p	Dark	Foreign accent, U	y	n	BruNCampos	Brazilian	Portugese	
	Dr. Facilier		h	n	Black	M Cajun, Creole, English	n	u	Keith David	African American	English	
	Mama Odie		h	p	Black	French Creole	u	u	Jenifer Lewis	African American	English	
	Eudora (Tiana's mother)		h	p	Black	South/AAVE	n	y	Oprah Winfrey	African American	English	
	James (Tiana's father)		h	p	Black	AAVE	n	u	Terrence Howard	African American	English	
	Buford (Tiana's boss)		h	n	u	m	u	u	Michael Colyar	African American	English	
	Ray (firefly)		a	p	n/a	Cajun	u	n	Jim Cummings	U.S. Anglo	English	
	Louis – Alligator		a	p	Green	AAVE	n	n	Michael-Leon Wooley	African American	English	

The ability to identify an individual's race or ethnicity on the basis of voice alone is a phenomenon that has been referred to as linguistic profiling, a topic that will be taken up in more detail in the discussion of discrimination in the housing market.

Baugh's work on linguistic profiling and the role of vowel shapes, intonation, timing and voice quality in social and racial identification becomes potentially relevant in this context (Thomas and Reaser 2004). Unfortunately, no studies have been done, to date, of the way linguistic profiling might work in an entertainment setting such as animated films.

It needs to be stated quite clearly that this discussion does not include the sum total of all African American actors who have ever had speaking roles in Disney animated film. For example, a thorough examination would require close study of *The Song of the South*, which Disney has yet to release on VHS tape or DVD for reasons that may or may not have to do with concerns about image and racism.

The most ideology-laden of the films examined here is probably the *Lion King*, which fulfills all four of criteria listed above. *The Lion King* is set in Africa, which may be the reason why many of the voice actors were African American. Of the three major roles, two of the voice actors are Anglo (Simba and Scar, his uncle), and one is African American (Mufasa). Mufasa is voiced by the immediately recognizable James Earl Jones; Mufasa's evil brother Scar is voiced in an exaggerated and distinctly effeminate British English (Jeremy Irons). This falls into a well-established practice of rendering evil geniuses as Brits (see, for example, *Aladdin* and *Bolt*), but it also portrays homosexuality as evil, untrustworthy, and inauthentic. Scar is also the only lion with a black mane.

But it is the casting of the primary character – Simba – which stands out. As cub and as an adult lion, Simba is voiced by Anglos. That is, the prince, the son of African Americans, is white, a fact that did not go unnoticed by the critics and scholars who consider race and ethnicity (Benshoff and Griffin 2009; Martin-Rodriguez 2000; Sun 2008; Walker 1994),[16] gender issues, sexuality and sexism (Benshoff and Griffin 2009: "Case study: The Lion King") or class, power and hegemony (Gooding 1995; Morton 1996; Sun 2008).

What the directors and producers were thinking when they cast the voice actors cannot be known; if notes on this process exist, they are not available to researchers, nor do the producers respond to requests for interviews. Nor is there any way to know which voice actors were considered for the role of Simba, whether young African American actors were considered and auditioned, or if the entire pool of candidates was Anglo. It is unfortunate that so much of the process remains out of the public eye, as that information would provide invaluable insights.

More subtle is stratification of characters voiced by actors who are recognizably African American. James Earl Jones (Mufasa) has a deep and commanding voice without AAVE intonation or grammatical structure; Whoopi Goldberg shifts in and out of AAVE as the leader of the pack of hyenas who do Scar's bidding. Thus the message is a familiar one: AAVE speakers occupy the dark and frightening places, where Simba does not belong and should not be; he belongs on the sunny savannah where *SAE speakers like his father live.

The three primary hyenas who threaten Simba are composed of the AAVE-speaking Shenzi, Ed, a hyena who slobbers and grunts without any language, and Banzai, voiced by Cheech Martin. Martin shifts in and out of Latino-accented English, throwing in Spanish at one point (*¿que pasa?*) to make sure there is no mistake about his ethnicity.

At the same time, none of the characters, whether they speak *SAE or AAVE, show any clear connection to things African with the exception of the wise baboon, Rafiki, who occupies a special but peripheral role in the film's story.

Other types of entertainment media use these same strategies, of course, as bell hooks has observed:

> [It is the] current trend in producing colorful ethnicity for the white consumer appetite that makes it possible for blackness to be commodified in unprecedented ways, and for whites to appropriate black culture without interrogating whiteness or showing concern for the displeasure of blacks . . . white cultural imperialism . . . allows white audiences to applaud representations of black culture, *if they are satisfied with the images and habits of being represented.*
>
> (hooks 1996: 223)

The role of King Louie – an orangutan – in *The Jungle Book* provides an example of another kind of stereotype: the African American entertainer, the jokester or trickster. Louis Prima, who voiced the role of King Louie, was an Italian American who grew up in New Orleans in the early twentieth century and spent a lot of time with the blues and jazz musicians, primarily African Americans, in the French Quarter. Given his musical training, background and reputation for scat singing, it's not surprising that movie viewers generally believe that King Louie is voiced by an African American. This might be seen as a fairly neutral case of linguistic profiling.

Much has been made of King Louie and his manipulation of Mowgli, the only human being in this story. He convinces Mowgli and the audience that he has one goal in life, and that is to be the one thing he is not: a human being, a man. African American males who are not linguistically assimilated to the sociolinguistic norms of a middle and colorless United States are allowed very few possibilities in life, but they are allowed to want those things they do not have and cannot be.

Other infamous stereotypes occur in *Dumbo* (the shiftless, aimless but friendly crows who advise Dumbo speak and sing AAVE – one of them is called Jim Crow); and *The Fox and the Hound* where the protective and wise Big Mama is voiced by Pearl Bailey.

While in the first study 161 *SAE speakers appear in proportions of 43.1 percent humanoid, 54.4 percent animal and 2.5 percent inanimate creatures (such as the talking teapot in *Beauty and the Beast*), all AAVE-speaking characters appear in animal rather than humanoid form. Given the low overall number of AAVE speakers, however, it is hard to draw any inferences from that fact. The issue is further complicated in that every character with a Southern accent appears in animal rather than humanoid form as well. Further examination of unambiguously positive and negative characters indicates that a full 43.4 percent of 90 characters in human form show negative actions and motivations while only 18.6 percent of the 156 animal characters are negative.

This correlation of African American to animal held true until *Atlantis: The Lost Empire* (Trousdale and Wise 2001, directors) and the character of Dr. Joshua Strongbear Sweet. Dr. Strongbear Sweet is presented in human form, clearly African American in appearance. Like Mufasa, Dry Strongbear Sweet doesn't use AAVE features so that another correlation is maintained: powerful, educated = *SAE.

Following *Atlantis*, Disney made some progress away from these stereotypes with *Lilo & Stitch* and the 2009 film *The Princess and the Frog*. *Lilo & Stitch* stands apart for its sensitive portrayal of Hawai'i, Hawai'ian culture and people of color. The difference here had to do with the way the film was made: Chris Sanders and Dean DeBois were given "near-complete creative control as co-writers, storyboard artists and directors – a first for a Disney film" (Davis 2002). Lilo, her older sister and her sister's boyfriend have features

that are not Anglicized, and their lives are neither romanticized nor trivialized; they all speak with Hawai'i Creole (HC) intonation and rhythms, and HC is heard now and then in the background. The one African American character is Cobra Bubbles, a social worker who looks a great deal like a professional weight lifter. His looks are frightening and his voice – distinctly African American – is imposing, but this character is in fact one of the good guys, sincere in his concern for the orphaned sisters. Unfortunately Disney did not repeat this unusual arrangement, and the usual style of production oversight was restored for *The Princess and the Frog*,

The story is set in New Orleans in the 1920s, and features a young African-American woman as the main character, one who has both father and mother as the story opens.[17]

The issue of language variety and accent was made somewhat easier for Disney because all the characters – humanoid and animal – speak a variety of English marked, at the very least, as Southern. It's important to recognize that the film makers made an effort to acknowledge the wide variety of language and language varieties spoken in New Orleans and environs in that time period: beyond African American English, there are also speakers of Southern American English, Cajun and French Creole. How well they handled these various languages is a subject worthy of close examination, and cannot be undertaken here.

The language of the main African American characters is only slightly distinct from that of their Anglo counterparts, in part because the voice actors restrict themselves to intonation patterns. There are no AAVE grammatical constructions or idioms that would make that Anglo/African American differences more distinct. One of the strongest speakers of AAVE – Tatiana's father – dies before the story ever really starts.

The issue of language variety is sidestepped in the case of the Prince, as well. The character, while charming and handsome, as are all the Disney princes, is also not American. Neither is he African American, nor is he Anglo. The voice actor is a native of Brazil, which freed the writers and directors of dealing with the issue of AAVE. Many critics and commentators took note of this equivocation, pointing out that by turning both prince and princess into frogs, the issue of color could be set aside. Some see this as a maneuver by Disney to anticipate and nullify the potentially explosive topic of miscegenation (Gehlawat 2010: 424). Others took a more sarcastic tone: "They say it ain't easy bein' green, but it's certainly a hell of a lot easier than being black" (Foundas 2009). Commentary on the web was often emotional and angry, as was the case on Black Voices, an AOL discussion forum where commentators faulted the prince's light skin color. Commentator Angela Bronner Helm wrote: "Disney obviously doesn't think a black man is worthy of the title of prince. His hair and features are decidedly non-black. This has left many in the community shaking their head[s] in befuddlement and even rage" (as quoted in Barnes 2009).

Lovers and mothers

Romance is a major plot device in many of Disney's animated films. Of the 24 stories examined in the first study, 13 depend in part or whole on the development of a relationship between a male and a female character which has not to do with friendship, but love and mate selection. Those characters who are young and in search of a potential mate or love interest provide some of the most interesting material in these films overall. There has been much commentary in the popular press on the extreme and unrealistic portrayal of young people's physical beings, for both sexes. Doe-eyed heroines with tiny waists and heroes with bulging necks and overly muscular thighs have been roundly

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Table 7.6 The language of moth

Language
*SAE
Socially marked U.S.
Regionally marked U.S.
British
Socially or regionally marked Briti
Foreign accented English

Table 7.7 Lovers and potential lo

Language variety	*Male*
*SAE	Gaston (*
The Beas
Bernard (
Down Un
Aladdin (*
Prince Ch
Prince Ph
Prince Eri
Snow Wh
Simba (*Th*
Socially marked U.S.	Jock O'M
Non U.S. English	Robin Ho
Jake (*Res*
Pongo (*1*
Roger Ra
Foreign accented English	

criticized, with little effect. There is little or no discussion of the language spoken by lovers, however.[18]

In spite of the setting of the story or the individual's ethnicity, lovers and mothers speak mainstream varieties of U.S. or British English, with some interesting exceptions (Tables 7.6 and 7.7). Of the male characters, only two can be said to be logically and certainly speakers of U.S. English: Bernard who appears twice (*Rescuers* and *Rescuers Down Under*) and Jock (*Lady and the Tramp*). All the other characters are speakers of British or Australian English, or of languages other than English. The languages of the three princes (from *Cinderella*, *Snow White* and *The Little Mermaid*) are debatable: the Disney version never specifies where these magical kingdoms are located (whether in the country of the story's origin or elsewhere).

Two of the male romantic leads speak socially marked varieties of U.S. English: in *The Aristocats* O'Malley (voiced by Phil Harris, a popular entertainer and singer of his day and cast on the power of voice recognition) does nothing to change or disguise his own English, which is rich in those characteristics which are often thought of as "working class" (simplified consonant clusters, double negative constructions, and other stigmatized

Table 7.6 The language of mothers and fathers in Disney animated films

Language	*Mothers*	*Fathers*
*SAE	15	8
Socially marked U.S.	–	–
Regionally marked U.S.	–	1
British	2	8
Socially or regionally marked British or other English	2	4
Foreign accented English	1	1

Table 7.7 Lovers and potential lovers in Disney animated films

Language variety	*Male*	*Female*
*SAE	Gaston (*Beauty and the Beast*)	(no mate)
	The Beast (*Beauty and the Beast*)	Belle (*Beauty and the Beast*)
	Bernard (twice) (*Rescuers*, *Rescuers Down Under*)	–
	Aladdin (*Aladdin*)	Jasmine (*Aladdin*)
	Prince Charming (*Cinderella*)	Cinderella (*Cinderella*)
	Prince Philip (*Sleeping Beauty*)	Aurora (*Sleeping Beauty*)
	Prince Erik (*The Little Mermaid*)	Ariel (*The Little Mermaid*)
	Snow White's Prince (*Snow White*)	Snow White (*Snow White*)
	Simba (*The Lion King*)	Nala (*The Lion King*)
		Lady (*Lady and the Tramp*)
Socially marked U.S.	Jock O'Malley (*Lady and the Tramp*)	(no mate)
Non U.S. English	Robin Hood (*Robin Hood*)	Maid Marion (*Robin Hood*)
	Jake (*Rescuers Down Under*)	(no mate)
	Pongo (*101 Dalmations*)	Perdita (*101 Dalmations*)
	Roger Radcliff (*101 Dalmations*)	Anita Radcliffe (*101 Dalmations*)
Foreign accented English		Miss Bianca (twice) (*Rescuers*, *Rescuers Down Under*)
		Duchess (*The Aristocats*)

phonological and grammatical features). This is also the case with Jock from *Lady and the Tramp*. Both of these characters are prototypical rough lovers, men with an edge who need the care and attention of good women to settle them, and both are rewarded with such mates – females who speak non-stigmatized varieties – because they prove themselves worthy. There are no male romantic leads with foreign accents.

There is even less variation among the female romantic leads. There are no rough, working-class equivalents of O'Malley and Jock. In fact, there is only one unambiguous case of a character who would logically speak U.S. English: Lady of *Lady and the Tramp*. The use of a typical or logical language for the part and background of the character is clearly less important in this case than a consistent portrayal of an ideal lover and potential mate which stresses the lack of "otherness."

However, there are two female characters (one of which occurs in two movies, *Rescuers* and *Rescuers Down Under*) with foreign accents, but they are both voiced by the same woman, Eva Gabor. The Gabor sisters were widely known and recognized in U.S. culture in the 1950s and 1960s for their glamor and demanding behavior in many highly publicized affairs with rich men. They were recognizable on the basis of their Hungarian accents, and they brought with them a set of associations about sexually aware and available females that resulted in typecasting. The roles that Eva Gabor voiced for Disney were thus of elegant, demanding and desirable females and as such have to be considered separately from other characters with foreign accents.

COMPANION @ WEBSITE

In short

Film producers like Disney are primarily concerned with engaging the audience and filling seats in the theater. As professional storytellers they understand a great deal about characterization, plot, setting, and all the other elements that make or break a production. Is it too much to expect film makers to consider other issues, as well? Does the storyteller have any obligation to the viewers? These are questions that cannot be answers in this context, but they require close consideration.

As one of the primary storytellers in the life of American children of all colors and ethnicities, Disney's films have a deep and long-lasting effect on socialization and the development of identity – for both self and other. There is a growing body of scholarship which looks at Disney in a wider context and without apologist rhetoric, and that work makes clear how systematically Disney animated film goes about setting up conceptions of good and evil with strong correlations to race and ethnicity. (Giroux's *The Mouse that Roared: Disney and the End of Innocence* (2010) provides an overview of this literature.) The manipulation of accent is part of that process, and it works very well.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

- Compile a list of Disney characters who speak English with a clear Anglo-New York City area accent. What do these characters have in common? Look at sociocultural characteristics, personality traits, motivations, style, and role in the plot. How do your findings support or contradiction the idea that stereotype does not have to be overtly negative to be limiting and prejudicial?

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Notes

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5 Disney bought the rights
6 Paula Giese provides a c
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7 In 1924, tickets averaged
dropped again during th
above $1.00 for the first t
8 Giroux provides more bac

- Murnane (2007) proposes that Disney films can be used in the classroom to teach multiculturalism. See: http://www.historycooperative.org/journals/whc/5.1/murnane.html. Choose one of the Disney animated films and outline a middle school lesson plan that would accomplish such a goal. Be sure to include some aspect of language use and accent manipulation and to cite the sources of your information.
- Read "Demonizing in Children's Television Cartoons and Disney Animated Films," a short quantitative study of the concept of evil in Disney films (Fouts *et al.* 2006). How do the findings of this paper contradict or support the data and conclusions drawn in this chapter?
- Consider the way you and others talk about Disney. Do you hear phrases such as "allowances have to be made for the times," or "that's the way things were," or "everybody felt that way," or "come on, it's supposed to be funny"? Where do such reactions originate, and are they meant to move discussion forward, or to shut down discourse and critical analysis? For close readings of examples of this kind of reasoning, see especially Hill (2008).

Notes

1 Since the first edition of this book appeared in 1997, formal study of all aspects of the Disney empire has grown significantly (Doherty July 21, 2006). Of the work released over the last decade, perhaps most relevant to the issues raised here is Giroux's *The Mouse that Roared: Disney and the End of Innocence* (2010: 2nd edn).

Over that same period of time, Disney has released a number of full-length animated films. Given technical limitations, it is not possible to include those films in the quantitative analysis used for the pre-1997 films, which remains intact. Instead, I have viewed and analyzed the newer films, and where they best fit into the discussion, I include my qualitative analysis.

2 Fisch (2005) presents arguments for the constructive aspects of television viewing for children, who are exposed to positive role models and educational exercises in programming such as *Sesame Street*.

3 Nielsen Media Research produces Nielsen ratings to measure U.S. television audience size and composition.

4 Of course, other broadcast entertainment venues for children are not given a free pass. Consider the widely broadcast accusations of homosexuality among *Teletubbies* and *Sesame Street* characters (*New York Times*, February 11, 1999; Mikkelson 2007), or of satanic worship in the *Harry Potter* books.

5 Disney bought the rights to *Winnie the Pooh* after Milne's death in 1956.

6 Paula Giese provides a compilation of Native American comments and discussions about Pocahontas on her website at http://www.kstrom.net/isk/poca/. Note also that Russell Means, a Native American rights activist, was very vocal with his unconditional praise of Disney's version of Pocahontas. His opinion is rendered suspect, however, because he took a prominent acting role in it.

7 In 1924, tickets averaged a quarter; by 1929 the average price was 35 cents. Prices dropped again during the Depression. In 1965, the average movie ticket price rose above $1.00 for the first time (Picture Show Man n.d.).

8 Giroux provides more background on the way Disney has limited access to its archives