

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the introduction to the study, which consists of the background of the study and the research questions of the study. Moreover, this chapter also provides the aim of the study, the scope of the study, the significance of the study, clarification of the study, and a concise explanation of research method, data collection, and analysis used in the study.

1.1. Background of the Study

Disney animated films produced by Walt Disney Animation Studios have been regarded as children's entertainment for many years until today. The popularity of Disney animated films makes the films to be regarded as the icons of childhood for the last century (Bazzini et.al, 2010). One of the icons of Disney animated films is the franchise of Disney princesses which began with *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* in 1937 (May, 2011). The Disney Princesses franchise is the films about female main characters that are either naturally born as princesses or end up marrying the royal families in the end of the film (Guizerix, 2013). The representation of these female main characters is interesting to explore since it may affect the children's conception towards women in general.

According to Malfroid (2009), parents tend to generally regard Disney animated films as innocent. In fact, repeated scenes over many years from the films may influence the children in perceiving the conceptions of gender, class, and ethnicity (Malfroid, 2009). These repeated scenes can also construct the representation of gender, race, ethnicity or even class through various portrayals of the main characters. As Stewart and Kowaltzke (2007) suggest, representation consists of repeated elements that appear in the film. The more the elements are

repeated, the more the representation seems normal or natural (Stewart & Kowaltzke, 2007).

The ways women are represented in Disney animated films are interesting to study. There are several studies that have discussed women, gender, and race representation in Disney films. England, Descartes, and Collier-Meek (2011) studied gender representation in 9 Disney princess films to examine the princes' and princesses' characteristics in the perspective of traditional masculinity and femininity. The result shows that male characters show more androgynous characteristics and have less change in gender portrayal, although female and male roles have changed over time (England et.al, 2011). Another study on Disney films that is conducted by Guizerix (2013) examined the evolution of Disney princesses' roles in 10 animated films about princesses. The finding shows that the princesses in Disney films have experienced several developments in terms of physical appearance, relationships and cultural heritage (Guizerix, 2013).

In the earlier films produced by Disney animation studios, the female main characters are dominated by white-skinned women. Disney's films that have non-white female main characters just emerged at the end of the 20th century. In relation to the representation of women, this phenomenon is interesting to study since there is still an ongoing question whether the representation of women is also influenced by racial categories such as race and skin color. May (2011) studied 6 Disney films, *The Little Mermaid* (1989), *Beauty and the Beast* (1991), *Pocahontas* (1995), *Mulan* (1998), *The Princess and the Frog* (2009) and *Tangled* (2010), to investigate whether race has an effect on gender portrayals. The finding shows that Disney's women of color were represented as more masculine, but egalitarian in the recent films.

However, a comparative analysis of the representation of white and non-white women in relation to skin color produced by Disney in the 21st century is not widely accessible. Thus, the writer is intrigued to examine the representation

of Merida and Moana, two female main characters in *Brave* and *Moana*, who are different in terms of skin color and ethnicity. The study is also relevant to real life since film often serves as the representation of reality (Heintz & Stracey, 2006). By knowing the message that a film tries to convey, people will be able to know the reflection of reality.

Brave (2012) is chosen because Merida, the female main character, is the latest Disney's white princess produced by Disney Animated film in the 21st century. Merida is also unique in terms of her physical appearance and personal traits compared to the previous princesses since she shows a more tomboyish aura. As what Guizerix (2013) states, *Brave* represents a milestone in Disney films since the female protagonist is unique and is not romantically attached to a man in the end of the film. Similarly, *Moana* is also chosen because the female main character, Moana, does not have a love line with a man like the previous Disney women usually have. Released in December 2016, *Moana* is also the latest non-white female main character in the film who has a role as the daughter of the tribal chief. Moana needs to save her island from the curse because of the stolen stone which is believed as the heart of the mother nature of *Te Fiti* Island. *Brave* and *Moana* are chosen because both of them are 3D animated full-length films produced by Walt Disney Studio in the 21st century.

Based on the reasons above, this study aims to examine the representation of white and non-white women in Disney animated films *Brave* and *Moana*. Since this study will compare women representation, the study will investigate how Disney's white and non-white women are represented in the films. Representation in film has been considered important since the images, symbols, and narratives in films and other media can lead people to think of how an individual constructs their social identities and how they come to the idea of what it means to be male, female, black, white, etc. (Brooks & Hebert, 2006). By studying the representation of Disney's women by skin color, this study is expected to develop

the perception towards white and non-white that are presented by Disney animated films in this era.

1.2. Research Questions

This study is conducted to answer these following questions:

1. How are Disney's white and non-white women represented
2. What meanings can be made from the representation?

1.3. Aims of the Study

The aims of this study are as follows:

1. To investigate the representation of Disney's white and non-white women.
2. To examine the significance behind the representation of Disney's white and non-white women produced in this era.

1.4. Scope of the Study

The analysis of the representation of women in Disney films, namely *Brave* (2012) and *Moana* (2016) will be limited around the main female protagonist in both films. The characters that will be analyzed are both the leading female main characters, namely Merida in Disney's *Brave* and Moana in Disney's *Moana*. Merida will be the representative of white women and Moana will be the representative of non-white women in Disney animated films produced in the 21st century. However, the analysis of other supporting characters will also be presented briefly to support the analysis of the representation of Disney's white and non-white women.

1.5. Significance of the Study

The findings of this study are expected to reveal the representation of white and non-white princesses in Disney's films produced in the 21st century. Moreover, this study is also expected to broaden the study on the representation of women based on skin color in popular animated films through the analysis female main characters' characterization.

1.6. Research Method

This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach because it aims to examine the representation of white and non-white women in Disney films, and to reveal the meaning behind the representation. The aim of this study is in line with the purpose of qualitative research which attempts "to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p.3). Therefore, qualitative research method is chosen because this study aims to investigate white and non-white women representation and to reveal the meaning behind the representation of women that Disney puts in its animated films.

1.7. Data Collection and Data Analysis

The data for this study is collected through selected scenes that contain the appearance of Merida and Moana, two female main characters respectively in Disney's *Brave* and *Moana*. The data are collected through watching the films and taking screenshots containing the appearances of Merida and Moana. The data is reselected based on the similar context occurring in both films. Moreover, the selected screenshots are categorized into several tables according to methods of characterization proposed by Boggs and Petrie's (2008). The data are analyzed using Boggs and Petrie's (2008) framework methods of characterization in films and are supported by using *mise-en-scene* elements proposed by Corrigan (2010) and Bordwell and Thompson (2010). Moreover, the findings are discussed by considering the issue around white and non-white women to reveal the

significance behind Disney's white and non-white women representations in *Brave* (2012) and *Moana* (2016).

1.8. Clarification of Terms

1. **Animated Film** "is a series of images which are shot one frame at a time. Between the exposures of each frame, the animator changes the subject being photographed. It is distinguished from live-action ones by the unusual kinds of work done at the production stage." (Bordwell & Thomspson, 2010, p.370).
2. **Representation** "is an essential part of the process by which meaning is produced and exchanged between members of a culture and involves the use of language, signs and images." (Hall, 1997, p.15).
3. **Characterization** "is a process by which the author gives a description for all of the characters she or he makes." (Reams, 2015, p.4).
4. **Mise-en-scene** "translated as what is put into scenes which refers to all those properties of a cinematic image that exists independently of camera position, camera movement and editing" (Corrigan, 2010, p.51).
5. **Whiteness** "is a location of structural advantage and of race privilege. It is a 'standpoint', a place from which white people look at ourselves, at others and at society. It also refers to a set of cultural practices that are usually unmarked and unnamed." (Frakenberg, 1999, p.1).
6. **Domestic and Public Spheres Concept** "defined a male sphere that was public, concerned with the regulated world of government, trade, business, and law, and women's sphere that was domestic, encompassing the unregulated realm of home, family and child rearing." (Kuersten, 2003, p.16).

1.9. Organization of the Paper

This study is organized in this following organization:

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Aulia Khairunnisa, 2017

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE REPRESENTATION OF DISNEY'S WHITE AND NON-WHITE WOMEN IN BRAVE (2012) AND MOANA (2016)

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ABSTRACT

This section provides a summary of the study, which presents brief information regarding the content that will be elaborated further in the next sections.

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

This chapter contains the background of the study, research questions, aims of the study, significance of the study, research method, data collection and analysis, clarification of terms, and organization of the paper.

CHAPTER II: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This section presents several theoretical frameworks that are used as the theoretical foundation for this study. It also contains several relevant previous studies that the researchers have found in the earlier studies.

CHAPTER III: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter deals with the methods used in conducting the study, including data collection and data analysis.

CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This chapter consists of the findings of the study and the discussion on the significance of the study to answer the research questions of the study.

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter sums up all the information from the previous chapters and concludes the study based on the result of the analysis. This section also provides recommendations for further studies.