

Walt Disney's Moana "We are Polynesia"

A CDA of Disney's representation of the Polynesian culture inside Moana

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ABSTRACT

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Disney is known for their family animation movies with a non-western or indigenous cultural background. Nevertheless, Disney is basically very influential for the perception of cultures by a global audience. Many studies have proven that Disney's depiction of a certain represented culture has not always been that clean. Of course two side notes are that Disney does make movies from an American dominant perspective and second, there is no such thing as a 'real' or 'correct' culture.

Now, with the movie Moana freshly released in 2016, Disney took a step in the indigenous Polynesian culture. This research uses a thorough Critical Discourse Analysis to analyse how Disney portrays Polynesia and the Polynesian culture inside four selected samples of the movie Moana. This analysis is combined with the theories and concepts of Americanisation, Disneyfication and cultural appropriation to find out mixtures of the portrayed Polynesian culture with American and Disney values.

Interesting findings were that Disney indeed portrays a hotchpotch of many cultures that can be found in Polynesia. Disney took care of highlighting the culture in the general storyline, in the characters and in the small details. Disney uses details of Polynesian mythology and the history around the ancient voyagers and wayfinding techniques for the storyline. What Disney emphasises is the importance of family, their history and their culture. Disney always portrays the culture with a certain emission of power and pride.

However, the American dominancy is still noticeable. For example, the depiction of the coconut and the plumeria flower are signs of Americanised Polynesia. The American and Disney values are all visible during the whole movie and can be found in quotes, gestures and behaviour of characters as Moana, the ocean and demigod Maui. Especially Maui is being portrayed as the 'American dominant hero' even though Maui is considered to be a honoured and popular Polynesian demigod.

Keywords: Disney, Moana, Culture, Disneyfication, Americanisation, Cultural appropriation, Critical Discourse Analysis

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1 Introduction

The Walt Disney Company is one of the biggest American media and entertainment companies in the world. Since 1930 Disney has manufactured stories suitable for every age, representing different topics, storylines and cultures and all provided with a "happily ever after". These are movies that are popular in all over the world and that gives The Walt Disney Company a powerful position in the entertainment industry (Wasko, 2001).

A representation of other cultures than the American culture can be a huge challenge for Disney as it has the chance to lead to a wrong understanding of the culture by outsiders and offended people. Especially children are susceptible to cultural misconception and children are Disney's largest target group on which to focus their movies and merchandising. Many studies have already emphasised misrepresentations of cultures or offending stereotypes made by Disney throughout the years (Giovanni, 2003; Tian & Xiong, 2013; Benhamou, 2014; Setiawati, 2016; Streiff & Dundes, 2017). Thanks to the advent of multiculturalism in the United States in the 90s (Gordon, 1996), Disney tried to portray non-western cultures in their movies again such as Aladdin (1992), Pocahontas (1995) and Mulan (1998). The movies got some criticism along the way that were mostly based on stereotypes, gender roles and an offending hybridisation with the American culture.

With the movie Moana released in 2016, Disney took a step in the ancient Polynesian culture. Moana was exposed to a large and broad audience what led the movie to turn out to be the fourth biggest non-Pixar movie and therefore can be called a blockbuster (Mendelson, 2017). Some cultural misunderstandings have already appeared in the news online; the inhabitants of the Pacific Islands of Polynesia were not happy with the look and especially the shape of demigod Maui. His large body emphasises obesity by the Polynesian men and the Polynesians feel offended by this statement. According to CNN (2015), the Pacific Islands is the nation that is slated to be the most obese nation in the world (The Guardian, 2016; CNN, 2015). Next, by releasing a costume in the form of Maui's body for kids, the South Pacific inhabitants felt offended because they felt it was violating a cultural tradition around the deep meaning of Polynesian tattoos that is unique for each person. It is disrespectful to wear somebody else's tattoos (BBC, 2016).

For what has been found in literature studies about cultural representation by Disney, a peer-reviewed study around Moana could not be found. Considering the time difference between the last movie that portrayed a non-western culture in 2003 and the release of Moana in 2016, it is interesting and important to investigate how Disney portrays Polynesia and its culture and what the connection is with Americanisation and typical Disney values.

2 Background information

The Walt Disney Company started in 1920 when Walt Disney and his brother started creating Mickey Mouse cartoons. Disney grew gradually, independent and manufactured different kinds of stories, characters and experiences that reinforce key elements of the American culture since 1930. Today Disney remains a dominant and influential player in the market of children and adult entertainment business in the world (Wasko, 2001). Disney is therefore also a dominant influencer upon other cultures. Moana is the newest animation movie from Disney portraying the indigenous Polynesian culture. The movie is produced by Walt Disney Animation Studios and directed by John Musker and Ron Clements, two American senior males (IMDB, 2016). Musker and Clements wanted to portray Polynesia and the culture right and took a number of steps to achieve that. Starting with creating a proper voice-cast which consist mostly of South Pacific actors. Most are from New Zealand and some are from Hawaii, Maori and Samoa. For example, Dwayne Johnson (The Rock), a famous American actor and wrestler, is originally descendant from Samoa (Moana, 2016; Dwayne Johnson, 2017).

For proper Polynesian inspiration the filmmakers went on two trips to the islands of Polynesia (Robertson, 2016). The first trip was more story focused. For example the filmmakers discovered that Polynesian voyagers had stopped sailing for a 1,000 years after sailing for 3,000 years. The reason for this gap of voyaging is still a mystery and is called 'the long pause' (Kirch, 2002). The filmmakers also encountered the many stories and achievements of popular Polynesian demigod Maui and decided to include Maui in the storyline. According to Westervelt (2010), Maui is a demigod that appears in many Polynesian folkloric tales. However, the many Polynesian stories do slightly defer from the Polynesian islands. This also applies for the many stories around demigod Maui and his achievements (Westervelt, 2010).

The second trip was all about research upon environment, attributes, habits, music, dance and visuals specifically. About Moana's island Motunui, the directors tell Robertson (2016) that the island is not real but an art-directed amalgam of various South Pacific islands as Samoa, Fiji, Tetiaroa, Tahiti, Bora Bora, New Zealand and Moorea. All the islands belong to Polynesia, which is the biggest island area in the South Pacific compared to Melanesia and Micronesia (The Conversation, 2017). One found misconception related to the portrayed Polynesian island is the appearance of the plumeria flower that actually came to Hawaii after the first encounter with Europeans. Osnat Shurer considers this being a modern update that adds a splash of colour (Robinson, 2016; Davesgarden, 2013). To treat the culture with respect, the filmmakers decided to work with locals, which became the work group called the Oceanic Story Trust for five years. The Oceanic Story Trust contains a group of Polynesian native people among two choreographers, a master tattooist, an archaeologist, a filmmaker

from Samoa, some elders, a wayfinder and a fisherman. The group gave the filmmakers insights and critiques on portraying the culture. Producer Osnat Shurer explained that the plan was not to make a documentary which means they will not be precise with the Polynesian culture. The only thing what they wanted to ensure is to be respectful with the given inspiration (Loria, 2016). For example Disney did decide to implement the deep meanings of Polynesian tattoos. According to Krutak (2013), Polynesian tattoos do represent deep meanings that mostly men wore. The filmmakers also learned that the ocean is more than just water. The ocean, what is basically called 'Moana' in the Hawaiian and Maori language, gives life to the islands and connects all the islands together. Polynesians talk gentle to it as if it was a living soul. That is how the filmmakers came to the idea of making the ocean a character (The Walt Disney studio, 2016).

For inspiration on music and dance, the filmmakers visited the Pacific Island Music Festival in Polynesia where people celebrate traditional dances, costumes, and food (Barone, 2016). To get the dances as authentic as possible, Disney hired choreographer Tiana Liufau who introduced Disney to several typical Polynesian dances (Funtastic life, 2017). For the music, the filmmakers collaborated with Opetaia Foa'I who comes from Samoa and who is the founder and lead singer of the New Zealand band called Te Vaka (Opetaiafoai, n.d.). All the songs are therefore sung in the Samoan language (The Disney Wiki, n.d.). Next, the challenge of the costumes was laid in the hands of visual development artist Neysa Bové. In an interview with Kucharski (2016), Neysa Bové mentions that she only had two fabrics called 'tapa', which is made from the mulberry tree bark, and 'pandanus leaves' to work with. These two fabrics are considered to be the ones the Pacific Islanders were using for clothes. Also Neysa Bové mentions that the colour red and red feathers played an important role since it refers to a royalty status. Another challenge was all about portraying the tradition behind wayfinding and navigation with the stars right. The sky and ocean play a major role in Polynesia because the voyagers used both for navigation. According to The Conversation (2017), Disney was detailed with the portrayal of typical ancient Polynesian positional astronomy and celestial navigation. This corresponds with the traditional way of sailing in Oceania that can be called wayfinding (Paine, 2013). According to Paine (2013), the voyagers used celestial navigation and techniques for reading the water and analysing the behaviour of birds. The Conversation (2017) analysed the possibility of Moana measuring Orion's Belt what concludes that they were sailing to East, reconciles with the fact that stars are not fixed in time.

Even though Disney is armed with the Oceanic Story Trust, some anthropologist still find they depict racial stereotypes inside the movie. For example, the article of Herman (2016) on the website Smithsonian depicts the little creatures Kakamora with their coconut armours: "Coconut' is also used as a racial slur against Pacific Islanders as well as other brown-

skinned peoples. So depicting these imaginary beings as 'coconut people' is not only cultural appropriation for the sake of mainstream humour, but just plain bad taste." According to the Racial Slur Database, coconuts are in fact depicted as a racial slur. It describes dark-skinned people from the outside, who are trying to be 'white' from the inside, just like the appearance of the coconut (RSDB, n.d.). Next, Herman (2016) also mentions the shape of Maui. Maui is more or less depicted as a teenager on the verge of manhood with a slim and average body while Disney has portrayed Maui with a large body that could represent obesity and with a masculine and confident behaviour (Westervelt, 2010).

3 Aim and research questions

The aim of this master thesis is to find out how Disney represents Polynesia and the Polynesian culture in the movie Moana. It is expected that the values of Americanisation and Disney are mixed up with the values of the Polynesian culture. The literature review contains studies about other relevant Disney movies and about Moana that will act as the foundation of the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). To make the aim of the master thesis as clear as possible, the following main research question has been formulated:

How does Walt Disney's movie Moana represents Polynesia and the Polynesian culture?

The main research question will be answered by doing a thorough CDA upon four chosen samples with scenes from the movie Moana. After picking out Polynesian cultural characteristics, these will be analysed and linked to the background information and the literature review. The literature review consist of peer-reviewed studies on cultural portrayal in other Disney movies and of studies on Moana. To get an answer on the main question, two sub questions are formulated with a brief explanation:

- 1. "What kind of Polynesian cultural characteristics can be found inside Moana?"

 This first sub question will focus on how Polynesia is portrayed by Disney in the movie and if this portrayal can be related to Polynesia, the culture, history and mythology. The use of the concept of cultural appropriation will be taken into account.
- 2. "What kind of Americanisation and Disney values are visible inside Moana?"

 The second sub question is all about the representation of Americanisation and the Disney values within Moana and how it influences the portrayal of the traditional Polynesian culture. The use of Americanisation and Disneyfication will be taken into account.

3.1. Research importance

The importance of this research lays all in remembering the importance of representing another (non-western or indigenous) culture correctly. An incorrect representation of a culture can only cause criticism and negativity from inhabitants of the specific culture and is a big source for creating stereotypes in the minds of the global audience. The study can help make viewers aware of what could be Polynesian culture and what could be Americanisation. For example, parents regarding to showing Moana to their children and the influence it will have on their perception. Disney is a large company established in the United States of America that has a big influence upon global media. In this global media, Disney is a role model for American popular culture. According to Setiawati (2016), people do not always realise the messages of Disney inside the movies that are considered to be Americanisation and consumerism. Moana will be the first glimpse into Polynesian culture for many children across the world. Parents and teachers should be well aware of the depiction of a certain culture by another culture to minimise stereotypes, racism and discrimination by adults and children.

4 Literature review upon previous research

This chapter contains a thorough introduction to the study field. Previous studies about cultural representation about other comparable Disney movies and about the movie Moana are analysed and will be used as a foundation for this study. The Walt Disney Company is a popular subject to base different kind of studies on, since it is known by the whole world and can be seen as a role model for the American culture. This gives Disney a certain power for influencing culture, norms, values and thoughts on certain topics. Non-western cultural representation in Disney movies turned out to be a trend in the 90s and the beginning of the 21st century. Nine popular animation movies with a represented cultural otherness distinguished from time and space have been released to date. Movies such as Aladdin in 1992 (Arabic), Brother Bear in 2003 (Native American of the Pacific Northwest) and recently Moana in 2016 (Polynesian) (D23, 2018). Moana is the first digital animated movie after 13 years that represents a non-western culture.

To gather information about the above-mentioned topics online desk research will be done. For instance, by consulting Jönköping University's library and the online database and by using other online databases such as Google Scholar, Google Books, Communication Source, EBCSO, ProQuest, Sagejournals and DiVA Portal. Keywords to find the right information were the actual title of the movie such as 'Moana', 'Pocahontas', 'Aladdin' and 'Mulan', compared with search words as 'Disney', 'Culture', 'Americanisation', 'representation' and 'Disney formula'. For example: 'Moana' AND 'Disney' AND 'Culture' OR 'Cultural representation'. Particular source types were excluded such as newspapers, blogs,

podcasts and websites and some source types were included such as trade journals, scholarly journals and dissertations and theses.

4.1 Disney culture studies

The portrayal of cultures in Disney movies is a popular topic for empirical studies. In all the found studies Disney has been mentioned as an icon for the American culture that can dominate a minority culture portrayed in their movies (Tian & Xiong, 2013; Ragnhage & Wendel, 2015; Giovanni, 2003; Yin, 2011; Setiawati, 2016; Robertson, 2016; Benhamou, 2014). This is understandable when you consider that Disney has a global and varying target group and is therefore an influencing factor on their audience's interpretation of other cultures. Children are especially sensitive to this. For example, Russell Means (n.d.), who is a Native American activist who worked with the production of Disney's movie Pocahontas, explained the following: "Because it's Disney, millions of children forever are going to see this in their most formative years, and it's going to affect how they see my people and our culture all the way through their lives" (As cited in Wasko, 2001). According to Schweizer (1998), around 74 percent of children have the urge to copy what they have seen in movies (Schweizer, 1998). This means that children mostly accept the animated stories of Disney as the truth and do not question the representativeness of the shown culture. Schweizer (1998) believes that children identify themselves with characters in movies and this can influence their perception of cultures in the world.

For what is known about the represented non-western and/or indigenous cultures in the Disney movies, the terms 'cultural imperialism', 'American domination' and Americanisation is often used. For example Setiawati (2013) explains "...in its efforts to expose viewers to other cultures, the storytelling can leave people that are culturally aware or sensitive with a sense that the films are merely bastardisation from the original tales and culture. It also promotes a sense of west over east or white supremacy. It is in line with the definition of Americanisation as the term used for describing the influence of the United States of America on the culture of other countries" (p. 81). Other theories that came across in several studies were transculturalisation, Hofstede's theory of cultural dimensions and the Orientalism theory of Edward Said (1978). The Orientalism theory describes the attitude of western cultures within using stories of other traditions and cultures for the western's own sake. Orientalism is one of the first works of analysing mediated western-styled representation of otherness, which means other cultures. It briefly means the western style of dominating and restructuring over the 'Orient'.

The three Disney movies Pocahontas, Mulan and Aladdin from the 90s are highlighted in previous research regarding to the strong visibility of non-western cultural

representation, Americanisation and gender equality roles. All three movies received criticism about wrong cultural portrayals and the presence of cultural stereotypes. The movie Mulan appears in most of the studies (Tian & Xiong, 2013; Setiawati, 2008; Yin, 2011). Common used methods are CDA and the semiotics tools of Norman Fairclough or other textual tools (Fairclough, 1995), descriptive studies and content analysis. Tian and Xiong (2013) describe the cultural relationship between Disney's Mulan and the original Chinese story; The Mulan Ballad. One of the conclusions was that Disney's Mulan is a mixture of different Chinese cultures with the ballad as the basis of the story. For instance, Mulan is set in North-China, while Mulan's fathers name 'Fa' is Cantonese and some bridal used makeup and hairdressing inside the movie are based upon China's marital culture.

Tian and Xion (2013) also mention the concept of Disneyfication and the Classic Disney Formula of Wasko (2001). Thoroughly explained, Disneyfication consists of implementing the Classic Disney Formula, which distinguishes a typical Disney movie from other movies. This formula consists of the typical Disney values and strategy that forms a product into a Disney product. Mostly it contains the transformation of an already existing cultural, folkloric or historic story or theme into a Disney version (Wasko, 2001). For example, the story of Snow White from the Brothers Grimm or The Little Mermaid from Hans Christian Andersen, which are structured totally different than the Disney versions. This Disneyfication can also cause questions of gender, race and culture representation (Wasko, 2001). Especially gender role portrayal can be seen as a popular Disney value in their formula. The portrayal of gender roles underwent a long development throughout the years Disney has been producing movies. Stone (1975) mentions that Disney female characters are stereotypical in a way of being innocent beauties with patience and obedience and Davis (2013) explains that the stereotype of 'the perfect daughter' is mostly presented in the movies. Portraying women in movies with no American culture background can be seen as a form of Americanisation, or in other words Disneyfication. For example, Pocahontas who was portrayed as a Native-American "Barbiedoll" with a sexy and feminine figure that falls in love with the first highly blonde English man. Or the Arabic princess Jasmine in the movie Aladdin, portrayed as the sexy and gracious belly dancer (Setiawati, 2008; Benhamou, 2014).

Referring back to the study of Tian and Xiong (2013), Disneyfication led to a hotchpotch of the American and Chinese culture which causes cultural deformations, hybridisation and Americanisation. Disneyfication changed Mulan from a gentle girl in the original ballad to a rebellious one in the Disney version. Second, Mulan's reason to join the army was filial piety rather than the love for her father. Third, Mulan is full of Americanisation. For example, it is impossible for the Chinese emperor to bow before someone else and besides, Mulan would never embrace the emperor. Mulan is taking sausages and fried eggs for

breakfast, Mushu is voice-acted by Eddy Murphy in a street-smart lingo and last, the ancestral spirits are seen rocking out to western music (Chan, 2002; Tian & Xiong, 2013).

Even though Mulan is Americanised, Aladdin can be seen as "the most culturally violent of all Disney animations" (Said, 1978; Giovanni, 2003). Disney dominated the Arabic culture and race and for Disney, race is a sensitive area. According to several articles, Disney has been accused a few times of racisms and this happened mostly while portraying another culture. Setiawati (2008) mentions the movie Aladdin (1992) as a good example. Aladdin represents ethnic and nationalistic stereotypes inside the Arabic culture. For example, all the evil characters in Aladdin speak with Arabic accents and the heroes Aladdin and Jasmine are lighter skinned and speak with an American accent. Also, the princess Jasmine is more portrayed as a belly dancer instead of a royal princess. Belly dancers are considered having a lower status in the Arab culture. The racism can also be shown in the song lyrics of 'Arabian Night': "Where they cut off your ear If they don't like your face, It's barbaric, but hey, it's home". In 1997 Disney changed the lines, after the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee complained, into the lines: ""Where it's flat and immense, And the heat is intense, It's barbaric, but hey, it's home", which is less discriminating but where the barbaric culture of the Arab world is still stressed by Disney. Last, the genie, who is kind of Aladdin's sidekick, is Americanised since it is a character that transforms in a lot of Americanised forms and uses a funny language with American references and accents (Giovanni, 2003).

Another example is the study of Giovanni (2003). He mentions the movie Hercules regarding the Americanising of Greek mythology and the character Hercules having a strong American accent. Next, Pocahontas falls directly in love with the first white man she sees, which is a form of 'white supremacy' (Benhamou, 2014). Silverman (2001) states the following about Pocahontas: "Pocahontas (released in 1995) is the only Disney animated movie to deal with a true historical event. Disney was quite aware of the risks of making this film and consulted with various Native Americans. Nevertheless, when it came out, Pocahontas was strongly criticized for being romanticized, fictionalized, sanitized and nationalized for popular consumption." (p. 308). Silverman (2001) was not the only one pointing out Pocahontas. Many studies have pointed out about Pocahontas being a native-American Barbie doll, suitable for big American merchandising (Setiawati, 2008; Benhamou, 2014). However, according to Wasko (2001), Disney did do research on the Native-American culture for Pocahontas. The filmmakers visited the original Jamestown colony and talked to historians, academics and descendants of Pocahontas. After the many criticism, Disney has tried to play it safe within the next try. According to Silverman (2001): "...In the aftermath of Pocahontas, it appears that Disney decided to play it safe with Groove's Inca Peru, even though foundation myths of the USA were not at stake." (p. 308). This means that Disney got many criticism upon the romantisation of Pocahontas, that Disney tried to act safe with the next non-western movie "The Emperor's New Groove" which, according to the filmmakers, is not based on a specific country in South America, even though there are signs of Ancient Peru such as the Inca Empire (Silverman, 2001).

4.2 Previous studies on Moana

Only two literature studies about the movie Moana are found. Therefore, a lack of knowledge appears about how Polynesia is portrayed in the movie Moana according to others than the Disney filmmakers. One of the two is a content analysis about the relationship between good and evil in three different Disney movies including Moana (Yüksel, 2017). The overall conclusion is that the movie portrays different forms of evil and that the evil can mostly be found in demigod Maui, the Kakamora creatures, giant coconut crab Tamatoa and Te Kā. The instrumental evil is shown several times. First it is shown in Maui who wants to gain the power of rule over life by stealing Te Fiti's heart. This is also the case for the Kakamora creatures who are tempted to steal Te Fiti's heart. However, for Maui this action can also be seen as idealistic evil, because Maui's motives are good and on behalf of the people. Third, Maui's deed can be seen as stupidity because Maui did not foresee the consequences of his actions. The instrumental evil follows up in Maui's tricky actions and having the goal in mind of escaping with the boat without helping Moana on her journey.

Lava monster Te Kā is a good example of demonic evil. Te Kā can be described as problematic, since Te Kā lacks a motive for her violent behaviour towards Maui and Moana. Every evil has a good side and vice versa; Te Kā is actually the good Te Fiti and trickster Maui is also depicted as a hero (Yüksel, 2017). This outcome resembles the suggestions of Herman's (2016) and Craig (1989). Herman (2016) suggested that Te Fiti could be a reference to the name Tahiti which is an existing island located approximately in the middle of the Polynesian triangle (Herman, 2016). A mythological link for Te Kā could be with the Hawaiian goddess of volcanos called Pele who was characterised by her temper and jealousy (Craig, 1989).

The second study highlights gender portrayal in the movie. The whole approach on gender stereotypes can also be seen as a feature for Classic Disney. Gender is a popular topic for studies of Disney movies. This has to do with the facts that gender equality is a rising topic and that Disney has an interesting evolution of the portrayal of women from the beginning until now. Streiff and Dundes (2017) are researching gender stereotypes in the movie Moana by using content analysis and symbolic features and images. The authors analyse it with the semiology of Barthes (1967) and mentions the denotation and connotation from specific features in the film. One of the conclusions of this study is that the goddess Te Fiti is a particular female gender stereotype and the stereotype of good and evil because Te Fiti is portrayed as a

good, youthful and fertile female that turns into a witch-like, evil and infertile lava monster. Disney stereotypes women with the idea that they are mostly reasoning with their hearts and not by their heads and have a lack of emotional control. That is how Te Fiti gets "out-of-control" when losing her heart and transforms back in the gentle, loving, fertile, nurturing and reformed god as she was before.

Maui is an example of hyper masculinity since Maui is muscular and frequently connoted as a 'warrior'. This hyper masculinity is further emphasised by Dwayne Johnson being Maui's voice-actor. Next, Maui is the male battling with Mother Island, representing the female character, while pulling the island out of the sea. Furthermore, Streiff and Dundes (2017) also recognise that Maui cannot live with any self-confidence without his magical fishhook, what means his fishhook represents his masculinity. In the time that Maui faced Te Kā without his fishhook, Maui preforms the 'haka' dance to distract Te Kā. The haka dance is a traditional Polynesian dance that extends hyper masculinity because it is "the archetypal performance of Polynesian warrior masculinity". This is in contrast with the typical Polynesian hula dance which represents femininity. Last, the authors discovered that Disney used the typical Maori greeting gesture called the 'Hongi', where two people are rubbing their noses against each other, which means the breath of life is getting exchanged (Tengan & Markham, 2009; Streiff & Dundes, 2017).

4.3 Research gap

What has been learned from the analysis is that almost all of the movies that portrays a non-western and/or indigenous culture contains racial stereotypes, signs of wrong depictions of culture and American dominated features. Furthermore, the studies emphasise the fact that Disney uses historical, folkloric or mythological stories, themes or characters and Disneyfies them to let them fit into the global and American consumer market. An empirical study of Polynesia and the culture in Moana could not be found yet. Moana turned out to be a blockbuster and is an influencing factor on how the global audience sees Polynesia. Therefore, it would be good to focus on a study that can find out how Disney actually portrays Polynesia. This paper contributes with a small empirical study that focusses on Disney's portrayal of Polynesia, the Polynesian culture and the mix up with Americanisation and Disneyfication.

5 Theoretical frame and concepts

Theories and concepts that are highlighting and discussing cultural behaviours in a global audience are interesting to look upon for this research topic. While analysing the current studies of cultural aspects in Disney movies, several theories and concepts were mentioned.

What the theories have in common is that they are all related to imperialism and especially cultural imperialism. Culture is a wide and connotative concept that shapes the way that a certain group of people live, taking all the aspects of that certain group in account. According to anthropologists, culture can be defined as all the learned and shared concepts, beliefs and values that all work in an adaptive system (Lyman, 2007). Imperialism can be seen as a form of a political hierarchy on an international level in which one political polity is dominant and controlling upon another political polity. Given the history, imperialism was usually accompanied by colonisation and military interventions of strong nations upon less strong ones (Lake, 2015). Cultural imperialism is a type of imperialism that contains the influence of a culture of a dominant country upon the culture of another less-powerful and minority country. It includes the process of undermining minority cultures by the dominant culture (Mains, 2009). Culture imperialism includes the use of media and marketing tools for the dissemination of a dominant culture into other minority and foreign cultures.

Disney participates in this economic system by being one of many global American companies that keeps a focus on diversity and a message where a global audience can agree on beyond topics as religion and social differences. This phenomena is the American cultural imperialism. Only this cultural imperialism does have a counter-effect upon minority cultures. Spreading American products, services and lifestyles goes along with the dissemination of American values such as freedom and democracy. These values do perhaps sound appealing but will cause the gradually disappearance of many other cultures around the world due to the dominating American culture (Sayre & King, 2010). This development imagines the large scale of Disney's cultural influence in a global landscape since the American culture is popular and cultures in general are inevitably affected by each other. For this study theories and concepts on a cultural basis are useful. The first one is the theory of Americanisation, the second one the concept of Disneyfication and the third one is the concept of cultural appropriation.

5.1 Americanisation

Americanisation is a theory that has been used a lot in researches that analyse the portrayal of other cultures through the United Stated. The modern concept of cultural imperialism is mostly associated with the powerful cultural influence of America. According to Pieterse (2009), this form of cultural imperialism is named Americanisation. Cultural imperialism is mostly embedded with critiques upon the United States' export of media programming to other countries. They serve as a propaganda model for the American culture and consumerism-based capitalism which, according to Morris (2008), is Americanisation of the media. In this process, the cultures in the receiving countries are dominated (Morris, 2008). Overall, Americanisation can be seen as a threat for replacing traditional habits, but also as a positive influence through

representing American values as 'gender equality' (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2018; Pietserse, 2009; Siapera, 2010). Setiawati (2016) also mentions the different concepts of Americanisation in Disney movies. Disney adapts cultures with good intent but ends up portraying feminism, discrimination, racism or rebelliousness in the movies which can be framed in a totally different perspective for the inhabitants of the depicted culture. For Disney it is about creating a Disney formula with the American culture that must be well liked by the consumers to progress the movie sales (Setiawati, 2016). Therefore, Americanisation can be considered as emphasizing typical American values and behaviour and emphasizing the Classic Disney Formula also known as the concept of Disneyfication.

5.2 Disneyfication

Disneyfication is the next dimension of Americanisation that only applies to Disney itself. Thoroughly explained, Disneyfication is associated with the typical spreading of cultural products of the Disney company. To achieve this, products have to get Disneyfied, which means the transformation of an object in a way that will make it fit into their own Disney values. It can be considered that this Disneyfication does apply for Disney's Moana as well. Wasko (2001) associates the concept of Disneyfication with sanitisation and Americanisation of the essence and motivation of the original tales to fit inside the American market. Disney takes material from other cultural, historical or mythological background and Disneyfies this into the Classic Disney Formula that fits within the standard movie format. Fairy tales and children's stories are getting Disneyfied which can lead to a high amount of criticism from folklorists, educators and children's literature experts (Wasko, 2001). Thus, Disneyfication is the values and strategy that can be found behind the Disney movies and that characterises the movie being typically Disney, no matter what cultural, folkloric or historic story or theme is portrayed (Wasko, 2001). All these characteristics can be collected under 'The Classic Disney Formula'. This formula matches with the "Classic Hollywood Cinema" model of Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson (1985). The model can be used as a guideline for implementing the concept of Disneyfication (table 1).

Table 1. The Classic Disney Formula and Classic Hollywood Cinema Source: (Bordwell, Staiger & Thomson, 1985).

Style

- o Light entertainment
- o Music

Story

- o Often revised fairy tales or folklore
- o Classic Hollywood cinema model

Characters

- Anthropomorphized, neotenized animal characters
- o Formulaic heroines, villains, sidekicks
- Stereotypical representations of gender and ethnicity

Themes

- o Mainstream American
- o Individualism
- o Work ethic
- o Optimism
- o Escape, fantasy, magic, imagination
- o Innocence
- o Romance and happiness
- Good over evil

Next to the table that can be considered as The Classic Disney Formula, Wasko (2001) also summarised some other characteristics of a classic Hollywood movie that fits in the concept of Disneyfication. For example, the Disney story mainly set in a present or external world and the main character is an individual with clear motives and with a goal to fulfil. Besides, the main character has to confront certain obstacles to achieve the goal and in the end succeeds the goal what leads to a happy ending and the closure of the movie.

Furthermore, Wasko (2001) mentions other values that are typical Disney. For example, the movies mostly form a certain love story and make use of major turning points in the story that are expressed by distinctive music. Next, a popular theme is the 'coming of age of the main character' theme which often emphasises individualism. In this case it is most tied together with absent parents. The main characters are most likely heroes or heroines who are handsome or beautiful, striking and slim and with an upper-class background. The villains are the exact opposite. They are mostly ugly, fat or extremely thin and with exaggerated facial features. This stereotypical physical beauty norm is common for American culture. The main characters are almost always followed by humorous (animal) sidekicks and a mentor who lead them to the right way. Also, the portrayal of women is still a broad discussion within Disney movies. Wasko (2001) has pointed out that, even though the Disney heroines are displayed more individual, intelligent and independent throughout the years, they still live in a male dominated world. This means the portrayal of masculinity and femininity inside Disney movies can be seen as Disneyfication.

5.3 Cultural appropriation

When you combine both Americanisation and Disneyfication while portraying a culture other than the American culture, it is in fact cultural appropriation that arises. Even though cultural appropriation has not been mentioned in the literature review of previous research, it could still be interesting to implement this concept into the movie analysis. Cultural appropriation is different than Americanisation since it does not necessarily have to be the American culture dominating a minority culture. On the other hand, cultural appropriation refers to the adoption of another culture and using this culture in their own way (Schneider, 2003). It mostly describes the use and take-over of cultural knowledge and aspects originally produced by a minority and dominated culture by a majority and dominant culture. Young (2008) identifies two aspects of cultural appropriations. The first one is object appropriation and the second one subject or content appropriation. The first one is tangible and means the replacements of object from a specific culture into another culture. For example, bringing a typical souvenir home from another country. The second one is intangible and means the use of stories, motifs, styles and design from another culture. Subject appropriation mostly contains the experience of a culture by foreigners as if they were insiders.

Bredin (2008) points out that cultural knowledge and aspects are expressed through media and popular communication such as movies. Roughly said cultural appropriation is related to the representation of a specific culture by the media. Cultural representation is what the media portrays from a different country, region or culture. This representation is usually interpreted as a representation of how it actually looks like, even though this does not always have to be correct and to correspond with the country, region or culture. A represented culture by the media is never an exact reality, even when producers try to be as cultural correct as possible (Long & Wall, 2012).

When it comes to cultural appropriation it is not always certain if the dominant culture represents the dominated culture in an 'appropriate' way which can cause racial outcomes (Bredin, 2008). However, cultural appropriation does not always have to be harmful or offensive. The overall suggestion of Young's interpretation of cultural appropriation is that a majority culture has to be sensitive to the treatment of minority cultures by being as respectful as possible and to avoid unnecessary offence (Young, 208).

6 Methodology

The empirical study of the original English speaking version of the movie Moana is going to be a qualitative research. The literature review has shown that qualitative research is a popular method for analysing specific data of Disney movies. The reason is because most studies conducted a critical overall look upon different movie aspects such as music, visuals, setting, storyline, text and other additional elements. Analysing movies with all the different aspects can lead to complications. Mikos (2014) addresses three complications that a researcher encounters while analysing movies. The first is the difficulty of constantly moving images, the second is that the analysis contains the almost endless opportunity to find things and the third is the fact that there is no universal method for the structure of a movie. A CDA comes the closest to analysing all the aspects of a movie in one. This study is also focusing on textual and visual aspects with the goal to find Polynesian, Americanised and Disneyfied features. Qualitative research can help with that because it highlights text and visuals rather than referring to quantification of the data (Bryman, 2012).

6.1 Critical Discourse Analysis

The CDA will be done on certain selected scenes from the movie Moana. The purpose is to answer the two sub questions that will give the foundation for answering the main question formulated in chapter 3. The attention will be paid to cultural characteristics by following the semiology tools of Barthes (1967). Briefly explained, CDA is a method that is mostly used for analysing image and text, such as advertisements, videos, movies and news articles. It can help

to find hidden meaning behind the image or text. In concrete terms, CDA reveals a critical look upon the sample that is analysed (Machin & Mayr, 2012). The study will contain an inductive and deductive approach upon the findings of the analysis. Induction and deduction research are forms of logical, good and creative reasoning that are used together with observations of the analysis (Dylan, 2014). However, this way of reasoning can also be seen as a weakness of the CDA. It states that the results will be subjective because they rely on the interpretation of the researcher and cannot be seen as actual stated facts. This influences the validity and reliability of the study (Machin & Mayr, 2012).

The main tools that will be used are mainly semiotic tools used to analyse visual characteristics, but since the language of song lyrics are also included, a tool that can function for both visual and text analysis will be taken into account. Therefore, the method can also be called the Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA) (Machin and Mayr, 2012). The chosen tools are briefly explained below:

- 1. <u>Iconography:</u> Iconography is an element of the well-known semiotic theory of Barthes (1967, 1973, 1977) which describes a difference between the denotation and connotation of an image. Briefly, this theory describes the difference between what you actually see (denotation) and what kind of meaning it has behind it (connotation). Next to the distinction of denotation and connotation, Barthes (1967) describes semiology as the science behind a sign system. Briefly this means how people within a culture behave and communicate individually or in groups. People do this by signals that are cultural determined such as objects, music, clothes, food, gestures and language. These signs are not universally known but come from the history and social aspect of a culture (Barthes, 1967; Strinati, 1995). They communicate ideas, values, meanings, identity and actions (Machin and Mayr, 2012). All the signs will also appear in the Polynesian culture represented by Disney. Therefore, iconography will work as a tool to analyse what Disney portrays as Polynesian culture, mythology and history.
- 2. <u>Salience</u>: Salience can be given to a certain character or object to attract the attention of the audience or the highlight the importance of it. There are several ways to achieve salience and highlight importance. Certain elements can carry potent cultural symbols that will be used to attract attention. Size can be used to rank importance. The colour and tone can be bright, striking or highly saturated and the focus can play an important role by using the right composition on an element to catch the eye (Machin and Mayr, 2012). This tool can be important to find out where Disney actually puts the attention to and if the salience has been given to Polynesian cultural characteristics.

- 3. Generic and specific depiction: These tools are useful for analysing human stereotypes with physical features such as hair, body, voice, clothes, movements, and other behavioural cues. This is important, because it shapes the whole character in the movie. According to Machin and Mayr (2012): "The effect is to make the individuality of people disappear behind the elements that categorise them. Cartoons in particular can stylise and exaggerate individual as well as stereotyped group characteristics" (p. 101). When specific depiction of people are getting exaggerated it can create negative connotations and offensive stereotypes in the eyes of the people in that specific culture. This applies for the movie Moana, since it depicts a Polynesian group of people very closely.
- 4. <u>Individuals and groups (collectivisation):</u> People can be depicted as individuals or as a group. When they are portrayed as individuals, people have their own characteristics that distinguish them from others. But a group of people can sometimes be homogenised which means that the group looks and act the same way (Machin & Mayr, 2012). This tool also applies to the depiction of all the represented Polynesian characters.
- 5. <u>Ideology and power:</u> Research in CDA concerns also the expression of ideology and power in text or image. For example, for Gramsci (1971) it is the concept of the influence of dominant groups in society upon other groups to accept their moral and culture values. This contains hegemonic attitudes, opinions and beliefs and the way of making them appear 'natural', while in fact they might be ideological (Machin & Mayr, 2012). This is interesting when it comes to analysing power and ideology between the characters in the movie and to find out which culture is dominant, the American or the Polynesian culture.

6.2 Samples

Before conducting the CDA, the movie was watched thoroughly with the purpose to pick out scenes that can function as samples for the analysis. The movie has a total run time of 107 minutes. To provide the reader a clear understanding of the storyline, a table with the important characters and a brief summary of the story are displayed below (table 2). For a total understanding and a good picturing of Moana, the reader is recommended to watch the movie.

6.2.1 Movie summary

Table 2. The important movie characters. Source: original.

Character	Description
Te Fiti	Goddess and mother of islands who owns the power of creation.
Te Kā	A demon of earth and fire
Moana	The main character and the daughter of the chief. Moana got chosen to be the one to restore the heart of Te Fiti.
Chief Tui	Moana's father and chief of their tribe on the island Motunui.

Mother Sina	Moana's mother
Gramma Tala	Moana's grandmother who supports Moana for wanting to be on the ocean. Gramma Tala is the one telling Moana the stories about Maui, Te Fiti and her ancestors being voyagers.
Maui	Maui is a demigod of the wind and sea. He is portrayed as being a warrior, trickster and shapeshifter by the power of his magical fishhook.

The story begins with Gramma Tala telling an ancient tale about demigod Maui stealing the heart of Te Fiti which led Te Fiti to crumble down and to drain the life out of other islands. Maui escapes but gets attacked by Te Kā which causes him to get stuck on an island without his fishhook and the heart for a 1000 years. The story continues with the journey of Moana who is the only daughter of Chief Tui of the island Motunui. One day toddler Moana gets confronted by the ocean and the ocean picks her to be the chosen one for restoring the heart. Since then Moana is drawn to the ocean but her father does not let anyone go beyond the reef. Instead her parents are teaching her everything she should know for her future as being the next chief. However, Gramma Tala supports Moana's desire to be on the ocean and shows her the cave with the hidden ancient canoes. Moana finds out her ancestors were voyagers and starts her quest on the ocean to find Maui and to restore the heart. Moana and Maui face many obstacles but make it to Te Fiti in the end. Moana finds out Te Kā is actually Te Fiti and restores her heart (Moana, 2016).

6.2.2 Time code

The movie Moana has been watched carefully to find out which scenes consists of the most valuable information that can help in pointing out the Polynesian culture. While picking out scenes, a certain criteria has been taken into account, such as striking cultural habits, dance, music, and attributes such as tools and objects, quotes and sayings, physical gestures and the character's appearance. The results of this first analysis consist of 25 scenes that are displayed in appendix 1. From these 25 scenes, there are four samples with several scenes included that can be considered as the strongest and most suitable ones for the CDA. Overall, what has been noticed while watching the movie critically for the first time is that Polynesia and the culture emerges mostly in the beginning of the movie when Moana, the tribe, demigod Maui and the history and mythology known by the island is introduced to the audience. That is the reason why the four samples all take place in the first half of the movie:

Sample 1: The story begins

Scene 1: 0:00 - 3:49 - Story introduction

The introduction starts with the common Walt Disney logos with in the background singing voices of an indigenous language. The scene follows directly with Moana's grandmother telling

a story to a bunch of children of goddess and Mother Island Te Fiti who had the power of creation that many demons tried to steal. Demigod Maui was the one that succeeded and stole the heart of Te Fiti with his magical fishhook, leaving Te Fiti to crumble down. While escaping, Maui confronts Te Kā, a demon of earth and fire. Maui was struck from the sky, never to be seen again. His fishhook and the heart got lost and the demons are draining the life out of the islands.

Scene 2: 5:40 - 7:16 - Moana as the chosen one

The ocean picks out toddler Moana to be the chosen one returning the heart. The ocean is moving like a creature with a personality and tries to comfort and entertain Moana by playing with her hair, mimicking her, giving her shells and showing her the inside of the ocean. The scene is covered with another song sang by a woman in an indigenous language.

Sample 2: Motunui

Scene 3: 7:48 – 12:00 – Song 1: "where you are"

The scene starts with the song "where you are" and introduces the island, the village, the people and their habits. A happy tribe is visible with villagers living in harmony and all working on their own task and sharing everything together. Mother Sina is singing about the coconuts and the trees. Demonstrating that the island gives them what they need, while Moana is only concerned with the question why no one leaves the island because she is drawn to the ocean. She gets supported by Gramma Tala who loves to dance with the water. To get Moana's mind-set more focused upon her people, her dad takes her to the secret place of chiefs. He explains Moana that one day she will put a stone on the mountain and become the next chief of the tribe. Moana understands and tries to start to be what her people wants her to be; a future chief. Then, Moana starts to sing along and helps the villagers out. She wears her future chief headdress with pride.

Scene 4 and 5: 12:25 - 12:46 - Tattoo and teaching dance

As the future chief, one of Moana's tasks is supporting a young adult by getting his first tattoo. The guy is screaming it out and asking if it is already done even though the tattooist just started.

The next scene is Moana teaching a traditional dance to three children. Another boy comes along and is dancing a totally different dance than should be, what is making Moana uncomfortable.

Sample 3: Ancient voyagers

Scene 9: 21:30 - 26:05 - Song 3 - "We know who we are"

Gramma Tala guides Moana to the hidden ancient wayfinding canoes and tells her to find out who she is meant to be. Moana goes into the dark cave and discovers the canoes and the fact that her ancestors were voyagers. She finds out by banging the drums what awakens the voices of her ancestors telling her, in song form, who they were. This is illustrated by the ancestors sailing the large canoes and using different kinds of navigation techniques. Then land appears and the people go ashore. A village is seen growing on the island and when it is time, other villagers go voyaging again, stepping on the canoes and confronting the ocean.

Sample 4: Maui

Scene 13: 37:03 – 41:09 - Maui introduction and song 4: "You're welcome"

Moana arrives at the island of Maui and confronts the demigod for the first time. Maui is portrayed as a big and tall guy with a body full of tattoos and a full head of hair. Moana tries to be confident in her speech but keeps getting interrupted by Maui who clearly does not understand what Moana is trying to tell. When Moana gets mad, he tells Moana that he has been stuck on an island for a 1000 years to get the heart of Te Fiti for the people. So, he believes what Moana is trying to say is 'thank you'. Moana repeats 'thank you' on a sarcastic way and Maui answers "You're welcome!" Moana sees the misunderstanding and tries to get her out of it but stumbles over her words. Maui chuckles and starts to sing about himself and his achievements. Maui tricks Moana during the song and locks her up in the cave.

Scene 20: 1:07:35 – 1:10:47 - Maui's background story

Maui is feeling down and defeated after he discovered that he cannot handle his fishhook anymore as how he used to. Moana is trying to convince him to keep practising and tries to start a conversation. She asks Maui about his tattoos and points at one tattoo that hold the story of Maui getting abandoned by his parents. Maui is not so eager to tell the story behind it but Moana convinces Maui to talk when she starts about her own insecurities.

7 Presentation of findings and analysis

This chapter presents the findings and analysis of the empirical study upon the four described movie samples. The findings of every sample will be displayed separately and will be combined with the background information and the literature review. The analysis will contain an empirical look upon Disney's portrayal of the Polynesian culture in Moana by analysing it with the described theoretical framework and chosen CDA tools.

7.1 Sample 1: The story begins

Scene 1: 0:00 - 3:49 - Story introduction

During the presentation of the two logos of Walt Disney and Walt Disney pictures, the audience have their first encounter with Polynesian culture. The lyrics of the presented song is sung in the Samoan language and invites you to look down upon their Polynesian world (appendix 2). It can be taken into account that the salience has been given to some loud typical Polynesian drums to draw the attention of the audience. This portrayal of Polynesian music expresses the power together with the typical Disney castle logo as the image.

The movie switches over to Gramma Tala telling the children a story of the Mother Island Te Fiti and demigod Maui stealing the heart of Te Fiti and the consequences that his actions brought. This story illustrates drawings and symbols that can be considered as Polynesian. In every scene, similar symbols and drawings are popping up that could characterise Polynesian culture. Gramma Tala tells the story of Te Fiti, who achieves salience by appearing in the middle of the screen in a bright green saturated colour. Te Fiti is wearing a garland and looks like a young Polynesian woman. According to the movie, Te Fiti is the mother of islands who brought all the riches of nature and supplies to the islands by using her powerful heart: the heart of Te Fiti. Te Fiti itself does not appear to be descendant from a goddess in Polynesian mythology, but it can refer to the island Tahiti (Herman, 2016).

The story continues with demigod Maui. According to the filmmakers, demigod Maui is based upon a real demigod which could be true since Maui does in fact appear in many Polynesian folkloric stories (Westervelt, 2010). Gramma Tala says that Maui is "the most daring of them all". Disney depicts Maui as the strongest, a warrior, trickster and a shapeshifter with his magical fishhook. This power and masculinity is visualised by placing Maui in the middle of the image and giving him the ability to move easily through Te Fiti to reach her heart, to steal it by simply scratching it off from the surface and to escape without any problems. Thereafter, Demon Te Kā raised from the water and confronts Maui, which led to Maui disappearing for a 1000 years. Te Kā, with the large and scary volcanic body, can be also considered as a non-existing god that is portrayed as the opposite of the fertile Te Fiti. The mythological suggestive that could match with Te Kā is the Hawaiian goddess of volcanos called Pele who is known for her temper and jealousy (Craig, 1989). This refers back to Disneyfication regarding to always having a clear contrast between good and evil.

The movie switches over to Gramma Tala who scares the children by continuing the story about Te Fiti draining the life out of island after island. The salience has been given to Moana who sits in front of all the children and is wearing a plumeria flower in her hair. Robinson (2016) mentioned the plumeria flower to be a cultural misconception. The flowers could be also considered as a form of cultural appropriation for the reason that every important

female character, such as Moana and her mother Sina, is wearing the plumeria flower, even though the flower appeared in Hawaii for the first time after the first encounter with Europeans, which could emphasise western dominance (figure 4). Back to the story, Moana is already portrayed as an individual. She is the only child liking the story and emphasises that by clapping at the end of the story which can be seen as an Americanised gesture. Lastly, Chief Tui tries to calm down the children by saying the story is not real and that their island Motunui is paradise. Only Gramma Tala, who is portrayed to be 'the village crazy lady', believes in the ancient stories. This can be seen as cultural misappropriation of ancient Polynesia because the people believed and respected their many mythological stories and Disney portrays the people as non-believers of any mythological story.

Scene 2: 5:40 – 7:16 – Moana as the chosen one

When toddler Moana is at the beach, she looks curiously at the water. The camera angle is in bird's eye view which makes the water superior towards the small Moana. The ocean starts to move and music starts to play the song called 'the Ancient Warrior'. The language of the song is again Samoan (appendix 2). Analysing the connotation of the lyrics, the song is about the ocean picking Moana out as the chosen one for restoring the heart, which is a typical Disney feature because the main character has a goal to fulfil. The style of the song is similar to the first song and is, by Disney, considered to be in a Polynesian style. When Moana approaches the ocean, a figure starts to form out of the water that carefully bends forward towards Moana (figure 1). The ocean is Disneyfied for the reason that it is portrayed as a living magical character that characterises the Disney feature of having magic always helping the characters along the way.



Figure 1. The ocean portrayed as a living creature. Source: (Moana, 2016). * The images are not included inside the space limit.

According to Disney's Oceanic Story Trust, the ocean is important for Polynesians because they see the ocean as a living soul that gives life and connects the islands rather than separates them. That is why Polynesians are considered to speak gentle to the ocean. It is only a matter of cultural appropriation when it comes to other scenes of the ocean that are highly

Americanised and against the Ocean's description by The Oceanic Story Trust. For example the ocean acts stubborn, playful, sometimes frustrated and gives Moana even a high-five which can be seen as an Americanised gesture (52:32 - 52:34). Next, Moana screams to the ocean when she thinks the ocean was not helping her during the storm. The ocean responses by moving away when Moana tries to kick the ocean (35:48 - 36:06).

7.2 Sample 2: Motunui

Scene 3: 7:48 - 12:00 - "Where you are".

This scene starts with a song sung in English and consists of a different and more American music style than the two previous songs. Referring to the sound, the song has a mixture of modern and, what could be Polynesian, traditional instruments. The lyrics introduces the audience to the island and the tribe of Motunui (appendix 2). You can see villagers working together by all doing their own tasks in the village. Muscled men are pushing sticks into the ground that could represent a typical Polynesian way of working on a plantation. Women are making a product that looks like fabric, kids are playing with a coconut, people are carrying bananas, baskets and fish on sticks and fishermen are returning from fishing on typical Polynesian fishing boats. When Moana's father starts to sing, villagers are starting to dance different dances that can be related to typical Polynesian dances. It is striking that mother Sina is greeting an older lady by rubbing both heads and noses against each other. Here, Disney can refer back to the typical Maori gesture for greeting called the Hongi (figure 2).



Figure 2. Typical gesture called the Hongi performed by Mother Sina and a typical Polynesian dance performed by Chief Tui and the villagers. Source: (Moana, 2016)

The scene moves on with Moana and her parents making baskets with leaves where Moana's father mentions: "We share everything we make", which is a form of collectivisation. This means that Disney sees the Polynesian tribe as a group that takes care of each other by working together and by sharing everything together. Related to power, Disney emphasises equality, even for the chief's family who helps with all the tasks.

Next, happy dancing villagers are surrounding Moana while the coconuts are falling off the trees (figure 3). Mother Sina emphasises the coconut by introducing to Moana three possibilities for using coconuts and the coconut trees: "We make our nets from the fibers. The water's sweet inside. We use the leaves to build fires. We cook up the meat inside". During the last two sentences, Disney depicts a typical way of Polynesian cooking (figure 4).



Figure 3. The happily and equally portrayed tribe with the coconuts. Source: (Moana, 2016).



Figure 4. Typical Polynesian way of cooking. Source: (Moana, 2016).

With this attention, Disney can depict ancient Polynesians to be mostly dependent on the coconut. This statement confirms cultural appropriation for the sake of humour since the RSNB, (n.d.) already pointed out the coconut to be a racial slur against Pacific Islanders. Of course, the coconut is an important life source for Pacific islanders and they are known for using every part of the coconut. That is why the use of the frequently recurring coconut can be seen as a depiction of pride and importance of the South Pacific. However, it can also be seen as an element to be careful with since Pacific Islanders should not only be depicted by coconuts.

The portrayal of the whole tribe by Disney is a good example of generic depiction of a Polynesian appearance and collectivisation. To begin with, characters contain different and detailed clothing, different faces, hairstyles, ages and body types which means, for the appearance perspective, no one looks entirely the same despite some small details. However, their appearance is still in contrast with the chief's family. They are the only ones wearing red

colours and have more specific detailed accessories that portrays them as individuals. Disney could also point out that the colour red and red feathers are showing that you are from a royal descent. Moreover, the design and the fabric look like ancient Polynesian fabric called 'tapa' and 'woven pandanus leaves', which Disney fashion designer Neysa Bové has already confirmed to be the only two fabrics to work with (Pucharski, 2016). Still, the costumes can be seen as Americanisation or Disneyfication because it is not entirely sure what ancient Polynesians were wearing and the tribe all have matching outfits that are not too skin-showing.

Normally, Disney is known for portraying stereotypes according to their Disney values, which does not align with the tribe's appearance. However, this is dissimilar for the tribe's mind-set that do not differ at all. Disney portrays the Polynesian tribe as an efficient and happy tribe that works and share everything together without any struggle. Moreover, this could also have been a tool to give the salience to Moana and her family members more. Considering the mind-set of the tribe, Moana is emphasised as an individual even more which can be seen as Disneyfication and Americanisation, since individualism can be considered to be a feature for the American culture. Moana acts differently by not participating in 'the tribe's happiness' and by the fact that she constantly gets lured by the ocean. When Moana runs back to the ocean once again, she sees Gramma Tala dancing a dance that can be considered to a typical Polynesian water dance. Disney's choreographer Tiana Liufau confirms this to be a Polynesian water dance (Funtastic life, 2017). Typical Polynesian dances are important in the movie and shown several times inside the chosen samples. It means that Disney did in fact pay attention to certain details in Polynesian dance culture (figure 2 & figure 5)



Figure 5. Two examples of typical Polynesian dances. Source: (Moana, 2016).

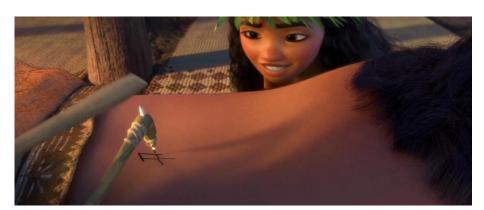
Gramma Tala is portrayed as the classic Disney mentor that helps the heroine on her path. Gramma Tala is the only one that approves of Moana's desire to be on the ocean while her father tries to convince his daughter to change her mind-set and to focus on her people. He succeeds by showing her the secret place of chiefs and by telling her that there will come a time that she will be chief. It is a form of Americanisation to highlight feminism and gender equality in the way to let Moana be the future chief of the tribe. Here Disney points out the modern Americanised standards around gender equality and ignores the fact that a female chief might have collided with the culture. Another Disneyfied and Americanised feature is the

individualism and rebelliousness of Moana. She is drawn to a new adventure, escaping her normal life. Therefore, she disobeys her parents' rules and starts acting rebelliously. With help from the ocean Moana gets the goal she was destined for, which are typical features of Disneyfication. Moana is in fact individualised and contains many Disney features, but this does not mean it contradicts purposely with the Polynesian culture. Moana has to be distinguished from the other characters to fulfil her role as the Disney movie protagonist. However, Moana can be discarded from her stereotypical Disney princess status due to her own appearance. She has not the skinny body as what the audience is used to see from Disney princesses. Moana's body is strong, muscled and not extremely thin. Her appearance makes Moana more equal with all the other portrayed Polynesian characters and forms a fine exception of the Americanised Disney princess body.

Her father's speech at the secret place of chiefs made Moana aware of her status and made her focus on her people. This causes her individualism to disappear for a while. Moana accepted her role in the tribe that expresses power and pride towards her people, island and culture. Moana's behaviour can also be related again to Disneyfication since Moana is searching for happiness what is seen as the key word of every Disney ending.

12:25 - 12:46 - Tattoo and teaching dance

This is a small scene wherein Moana is facing her responsibilities as a future leader and is accomplishing several tasks in the village. One of them is supporting a young male adult by getting his first tattoo. It looks like Disney wants the audience to notice the way of tattooing by starting with a zoom in upon the tools and the tattooing. The tattoo artist uses tools that can be seen as traditional Polynesian tools for tattooing (figure 6).



 $Figure\ 6.\ Disney's\ depiction\ of\ typical\ Polynesian\ way\ of\ tattooing.\ Source:\ Moana,\ 2016$

This representation does have resemblance of what Krutak (2013) points out to be Polynesian tattooing, even though it was not conducted the same on every island. Next, the guy is succumbing from the pain which could also be a form of cultural appropriation for the sake of

humour since the Polynesian way of tattooing was painful but also stated to be shameful if you succumb from the pain. Besides, the movie shows only men are having tattoos except for Gramma Tala who had a tattoo of a stingray on her back. This feature around tattoo's in the Disney's version does not correspond with the Polynesian tradition entirely. In fact it was the case that both men and women wore tattoos that consisted of deep meanings and achievements. However men do wear more tattoos than women. Krutak (2013) mentions that women do not marry unmarked men and men were not respected without any tattoos. In the case for women, it was common to have tattoos and also deserved respect when their body was tattooed (Krutak, 2013). However, Disney chose to reduce the amount of tattoos on the men's body and decided to give only Gramma Tala a tattoo. This is controversial compared to the general depiction of the 'equal' Polynesian tribe because it emphasises inequality instead equality in gender.

The next scene consists of Moana giving dance lessons to children. This lesson gets disturbed by a boy who comes along with totally different dance moves than the Polynesian ones. The boy finishes his act with a sultry look and a wink towards Moana. This behaviour can be seen as a form of Americanisation since the dance moves are more a feature of American modern dance culture. Second, it is cultural appropriation for the sake of humour since Disney is pointing the attention to the boy who is doing a funny act, instead of focusing on actual Polynesian dance. For this choice, it has to be taken into account that the movie is made by an American company and for a broad and global target group, including children. The American dance moves do contribute with the expected Disney humour and does not affect the Polynesian culture negatively.

7.3 Sample 3: Ancient voyagers

<u>Scene 9: 21:30 – 26:05 – Song 3: "We know who we are".</u>

This scene encounters Disney's portrayal of a mysterious event in Polynesian history of voyaging that is called 'the long pause' wherein Polynesians have stopped voyaging for 2000 years. Disney Disneyfied this historical event by creating their own version for solving the ancient mystery, namely the implications of the stolen heart of Te Fiti. In this scene, Gramma Tala let Moana know that she has the answer of who she is meant to be and guides her to a cave full of hidden ancient wayfinding canoes. Disney illustrated the canoes and the Polynesian history of voyaging mysteriously and in a fascinated way that exudes a feeling of power and pride. This gets emphasised in the dark and nightly setting and in the appearing of soft sounds and voices in the Samoan language. The canoes are decorated with different symbols and drawings that are similar to what can be found on the people's clothes and the drawings in the village. Moana is clearly fascinated by all the canoes and steps on the largest one. There she finds the drums, bangs them and lures a reaction from the ancestors.

Thereafter, the next song starts and the scene changes to the ancient ancestors sailing across the ocean on the large canoes. A man, probably the chief of the tribe since he is wearing a headdress with large red feathers, starts to sing in the Samoan language (appendix 2). During the song, different scenes are popping up that show the tribe working together to keep the canoes sailing. The tribe is, likewise to Moana's tribe, illustrated as a homogenised and happy group that takes care of each other, work together and carry out their own tasks, which is also known as collectivisation. The behaviour portrays Disneyfication since the life on the canoes can be assumed not to be as comfortable as Disney illustrates it to be. Only their appearance could confirm that, since their costumes consist of only mutually knotted leaves which is much lighter and airier than the outfits from the Motunui tribe.

Focusing specifically on the type of sailing that Disney portrays, a quick look upon a future scene tells that this type of sailing is called wayfinding: "It's called wayfinding, Princess. It's not just sails and knots. It's seeing where you are going in your mind. Knowing where you are by knowing where you have been, - Maui (51:57 – 52:08). With these words, Disney does depict wayfinding to be the typical ancient Polynesian way of sailing. Disney's illustration of wayfinding is all related to expressing power and domination of the Polynesian culture because the movie shows the pride that the tribe expresses while sailing the canoes and finding new islands. A form of Americanisation appears when the language of the song changes from Samoan to English. At the exact same time, Disney draws all the attention to a female wayfinder appearing very clearly on the screen (figure 7), looking strong and confident while pulling a rope connected to the sail. This image can be seen as an implemented feature of gender equality what is considered to be an American value.

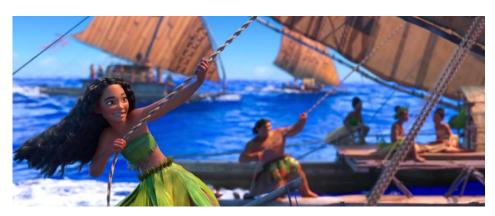


Figure 7. Female wayfinder. Source: (Moana, 2016).

Thereafter, Disney portrays some features of the wayfinding techniques. First, three people lean towards the water to feel the water, what looks like a typical wayfinding navigation technique, namely 'reading the water'. Second, the scene changes into a night sky full of stars and the chief put his hand up to measure the stars by using a certain angle of his

hand and his thumb on the horizon. This can be related to celestial navigation. The image of the hand in the sky is in the exact right position so that the audience can see how the chief reads the stars in what might look like the Orion's belt (The conversation, 2017). Third, the chief follows a bird with his eyes and discovers an island appearing on the horizon (figure 8). Disney could refer to another example of what could be Polynesian wayfinding, namely the tracking of birds to find land. This is made clear by the first lines of the song that is sung in Samoan: "Nuku i mua. Te manulele e tataki e" which means "There is land up ahead. A bird in flight to take us there" (appendix 2).



Figure 8. Three typical wayfinding techniques. Source: (Moana, 2016).

At the end of the scene, Disney does another reference to the happy, homogenised tribe that portrays equality. There is no difference in power distance noticeable since the tribe have equal tasks including the chief and his family. Next, Disney also calls on the importance of family in Polynesian culture. The respect towards family is emphasised in the lyrics: "We tell the stories of our elders in a never-ending chain". Disney emphasises that Polynesians always keep their pride up by remembering their history, identity and the stories of their elders.

7.4 Sample 4: Maui

Scene 12: 36:44 – 41:09 - Maui introduction and song 4: "You're welcome"

Arriving at Maui's island, Moana confronts demigod Maui for the first time. Disney has portrayed Maui as a big and tall guy with a massive body full of tattoos and a full head of hair. He wears a simple skirt made of leaves and a necklace with animal teeth which is one of the generic outfit depiction of Polynesians, according to Disney. This depiction means that Disney wanted Maui to look like a Polynesian hero by emphasising power and dominancy with a massive body full of tattoos showing all his achievements. But the appearance also depicts Maui to be a fast-moving, easy-going and easy-talking guy. Even though Maui is not depicted like this in Polynesian folkloric stories. Moana is confident and tries to talk with an authorised voice that portrays the difference in power between a chief's daughter and a person with a godly background. Moana approaches Maui by calling him by his full name. However, Maui gets portrayed as a dominant and masculine man by interrupting Moana in her speech for three times. The first time goes like this: "hero of man" and "I interrupted, from the top, hero of

men, go!" While saying "go" Maui does a typical hand sign that can be related to a gesture typical for American culture (figure 9).



Figure 9. Maui expresses a American typical hand sign towards Moana. Source: (Moana, 2016).

The second interruption contains another American and Disney value which is gender equality: "Sorry, sorry, sorry, … and women. Man and women. Both. All! Not a guy/girl thing, you know Maui is a hero to all! You are doing great!", followed up with the same hand sign as before. Moana gets confused and irritated when Maui interrupts her for the third time: "Oh of course, of course! Yes, yes, yes, yes! Maui always have time for his fans. …. We use a bird to write with, It's called tweeting". In that moment he draws a fishhook and a heart on Moana's paddle. Maui gives the paddle back and laughs confidently while saying: "I know. Not every day you get a chance to meet your hero".

This part of the scene contains good examples for both Americanisation and cultural appropriation. The relation with Americanisation consists in the fact that Maui is hardly listening to her what refers to an Americanised masculinity and the will of expressing power. The other reason is the fact that Maui is using Americanised language and behaviour what can be depicted as a modern conception of a respond to admiration. Next with "It's called tweeting", Maui could secretly refer to the large American social media company Twitter (Twitter, 2018). The relation to cultural appropriation exists in the fact that demigod Maui is considered to be a popular demigod that appears in many Polynesian folkloric stories which could lead to having respect toward the demigod by Polynesians. Maui's feature of being heroic and a trickster got mixed up with Americanised gestures and behaviour. This portrays Maui as an 'American dominant hero' while in folkloric stories Maui is depicted as an admirable Polynesian demigod. The reason could be that Disney wanted to express Maui's heroism as much as possible and therefore uses American heroic features and features from popular wrestler Dwayne Johnson. These stereotypical features are known by the global audience and therefore recognisable. Nevertheless, Disney's depiction of Maui does not correspond with the Polynesian Maui.

In relation to Americanised female power, Moana is getting sick of Maui's bragging and punches him and grabs him by the ear angrily. Only without success since Maui laughs it all away and dominates the conversation again by mentioning that Moana should actually say 'thank you' for all of Maui's achievements for the humans own sake, which is again an example of masculine supremacy. Moana repeats 'thank you' sarcastically and Maui trickily answers "You're welcome!" When Moana stumbles over her words, Maui is doing a gesture with his eyebrows which can be seen as an Americanised gesture for the reason that it is a typical eyebrow move of Maui's voice actor Dwayne Johnson (figure 10).



Figure 10. Dwayne Johnson's and Maui's typical eyebrow gesture. Source: (Moana, 2016; Kowek, 2017).

Next, Maui starts to sing about his achievements (appendix 2). The music contains an American style. In the beginning of the song, Maui expresses some Americanised gestures; he fist bumps the drawn mini-Maui, he shows his muscles in a typical way and he throws mini-Maui, who is a moving tattoo on Maui's chest, from the one chest to the other by moving his chest muscles. Disney is trying to make a link to Polynesian mythology by putting all the accomplishments of Maui as tattoos on his body. Hereby, Disney portrays Polynesian tattoos determinative for a man's accomplishments what can referred back to the tattoos having personal features and meanings. Next, Disney also tries to implement different stories of demigod Maui into the song. The song gives the attention to Maui's pride and attitude regarding to all his achievements. This becomes clear while having a look at the song lyrics:

- 1. Hey, what has two thumbs and pulled up the sky. When you were waddling yay high? This guy!
- 2. When the nights got cold, who stole you fire from down below? You're looking at him, yo!
- 3. Oh, also I lasso'd the sun. You're welcome. To stretch your days and bring you fun.
- ${\tt 4.\,Also,\,I\,harnessed\,the\,breeze.\,You're\,welcome.\,To\,fill\,your\,sails\,and\,shake\,your\,trees.}$
- 5. So what can I say except you're welcome? For the islands I pulled from the sea.
- $6.\ I$ killed an eel, I buried its guts. Sprouted a tree, now you've got coconuts.

In fact all the stories do appear in Polynesian mythology and folkloric stories but Disney depicts Maui to be the only one accomplishing them, even though Westervelt (2010) states that this is not always the case. Concluded, Disney's Maui exudes a certain power that makes him appear to be the biggest hero of Polynesian human civilisation, even though there were many other

characters believed to be involved with Maui's enumerated achievements. Continuing the scene, Disney's Maui is again a trickster by letting Maui trick and lock up Moana. Moana gets angry and screams: "*Hé*, *let me out! You lying, slimy, son of a*" Which are words that could be seen as highly modernised and Americanised for a Polynesian girl to say, but can be chosen for the sake of humour for the older audience that understand the typical American cursing expression. This can be related to the previous Disney movies as well wherein Disney uses Americanised language for a funny purpose.

Scene 19: 1:07:35 – 1:10:47 – Maui's background story

After that Maui realises that he cannot handle his fishhook properly anymore, he loses all his masculinity and therefore is confidence and motivation. Streiff and Dundes (2017) already pointed out that Maui's magical fishhook represents Maui's masculinity and self-confidence. This is a form of Americanisation wherein masculinity gets highlighted strongly. There are many different versions of folkloric stories about Maui's origin and his 'magical' powers and it looks like Disney's Maui is a mixture of all of them. Therefore, the character Maui does not only get Americanised, but also Disneyfied by making Maui's background story suitable within the Disney values. Returning to one of the Disney values is that Disney characters do have an important background story that influences and shapes the behaviour of the characters in the movie. For Maui it is the story behind how he became a demigod and received his fishhook:

Moana points at one tattoo that hold the story of Maui getting abandoned by his parents. Maui answers: "That's a man's discovery of noneya". "What's noneya?" Moana asks. "None of your business" Maui answers. Moana is being sincere about her own feelings of not knowing why she is 'the oceans chosen one' and convinces Maui to talk: "I wasn't born a demigod. I had human parents. They uhm... they took one look and decided, they did not want me. They threw me into the sea, like I was nothing. Somehow I was found by the gods. They gave me the hook. They made me Maui. And back to the humans I went. I gave them islands, fire, coconuts. Anything they could ever want." Moana: You took the heart for them. You did everything for them. So they would love you". Maui: "It was never enough". Moana: "Maybe the gods found you for a reason. ...But the gods aren't the one that make you Maui. You are" (Moana, 2016).

This background story is a typical feature for Disneyfication. Since Disney is using the Polynesian Maui with the condition of letting Maui fit into their own Disney values. Maui's motives for his behaviour is also Disneyfied because Disney emphasises the fact that he wants to find approval from the humans after being thrown into the sea as a baby by his parents. Finding your true identity and self-acceptance are typical features for Disney characters.

8 Summary and conclusion

This chapter starts with a summary of the findings that answers the two sub research questions. The chapter continues with the final conclusion wherein the main research question will be answered and end with a critical viewpoint upon the study and a proposal for future studies.

8.1 Summary

The findings have shown that Disney's depiction of Polynesian culture is contained in all the different criteria: music, dance, gestures, visuals, attributes, characters, mythology, history and the environment. These findings lead to the answer on the first sub research question. Starting with the storyline and setting, Disney uses Polynesian mythology by creating the characters Te Fiti, Te Kā and demigod Maui to sketch an overall background story. Te Fiti and Te Kā are not found as actual existing goddesses but can refer to Tahiti and Pele. The storyline also consist of a feature of Polynesian history: the historical mystery around 'the long pause'. Disney created their own story around it and linked it to mythology. Disney portrays Polynesian mythology and their history of voyaging in a mysterious way that expresses a feeling of power and pride. The setting of the story includes a colourful island that is based upon many different Polynesian islands. The colour is striking due to the predominant appearance of many flowers including the plumeria flower.

All the characters are related to Polynesian culture and mythology. First, the ocean can be seen as a living soul in Polynesia and is portrayed as a superior and powerful character. Second, demigod Maui appears as a strong character in the movie and in many different Polynesian folkloric stories. Third, the Motunui tribe and the ancient ancestors all show Polynesian cultural characteristics in their work, dances, gestures and clothes. You can see the tribe members doing different tasks that are typical Polynesian such as the way of cooking, fishing or making fabric or baskets. An example of a Polynesian gesture and dance is the 'Hongi' gesture and the typical water dance performed by Gramma Tala. Their appearance are diverse in body shape, facial expressions and clothes. The costumes are made of typical Polynesian fabrics and traditional accessories. What does not vary are the colours since they all contain a brownish colour scheme. The chief's family is more striking with the colour red and the returning plumeria flower in the hair. Disney highlights the colour red and the use of feathers to be royal. In general, Disney emphasises the importance of family and history in Polynesian culture since all the tribe members show an unseparated bond. According to Disney, Polynesians always keep their history, identity and the stories of their elders in mind. All the characters expresses this certain pride towards their culture, island and history.

For visuals and attributes, Disney depicts typical and varying work tools, Polynesian tattooing, fishing techniques and wayfinding techniques. Disney portrays wayfinding to be the typical sailing technique of Polynesia. Shown wayfinding techniques are the following; 'reading the water', tracking of birds and celestial navigation. Next, Disney portrays a typical way of tattooing. A striking feature is that only men, except for Gramma Tala, are wearing tattoos. Tattoos are emphasised to be very important and meaningful in Polynesian culture for both men and women. The overall music that is depicted in the four scenes show Polynesian features. Two are entirely in Polynesian style, one contains a mixture and two are having an American music style. The lyrics all emphasises the pride and power of the rich Polynesian culture depicted by Disney.

Next to depicting typical Polynesian characteristics, the analysis also encountered examples of cultural appropriation. The tribe has two striking features. First, the tribe does not show any interest in going beyond the reef and do not believe in the told mythological stories, which collides with the culture. Second, Disney portrays the coconut as being an important life source for Polynesians by letting the coconut appear frequently and by expressing all the possibilities with the coconut trees. A second example of cultural appropriation is the traditional way of tattooing portrayed by Disney. This can be seen as cultural appropriation for the sake of humour because the man is succumbing to the pain in what could be interpreted as shameful. A third example can be seen in the frequent appearances of the plumeria flower that could be seen as a sign of western domination and therefore cultural appropriation since the plumeria flower did not appear before the first encounter with Europeans.

Mainly all the Polynesian features are getting mixed up with Disneyfication and Americanisation which leads to the answer for the second sub research question. Overall, the Polynesian history and mythology theme got Disneyfied since Disney created their own version to let it fit into their Disney values. Next, the characters do contain American values such as feminism, masculinity and gender equality. The ocean is Disneyfied and Americanised for the reason that it is represented as a moving character that contains Americanised behaviour. The Motunui tribe and the ancient ancestors are portrayed homogenised since all the people are portrayed to be equal and carry the same mind-set, also regarding the relation between men and women. There are no differences in division of tasks in case of gender which can be seen as Americanisation. The tribe looks Disneyfied due to the fact that they all express their own happiness on the island or on the ocean.

Moana is Disneyfied and Americanised by being an individual, dissenting and a rebellious teenager that struggles to find her true identity and happiness. She is feminised for being the next chief in line. Besides, she has a task to fulfil, gets the help from magic [the ocean] and has a mentor that leads her through her journey [Gramma Tala]. However, Moana does

not have the stereotypical Disney princess-body, acts bravely and does not see herself as a princess. Last, Moana is Americanised by her gestures, behaviour and quotes.

Demigod Maui is even more Americanised since he is depicted to be large, strong, masculine and heroic that accomplishes anything with little effort. He has a massive body full of tattoos, with a full head of hair and simple clothing. Disney depicted Maui as a hero to Polynesians even though Maui expresses countless Americanised gestures and behaviour. Maui speaks with an American accent and uses Americanised quotes. Maui expresses power and pride constantly and brags about his accomplishment even though Polynesian mythology points out that Maui was not the only one achieving all the accomplishments. This is another form of cultural appropriation by using the legends for creating an 'American dominant hero'. Maui's background story is also Disneyfied because his story does not correspond entirely with the known Polynesian stories. Disney's version emphasises themes as finding approval by people, finding your own identity and self-acceptance.

8.2 Conclusion

The analysis has brought enough findings to answer the main research question: "How does Walt Disney's movie Moana represents Polynesia and the Polynesian culture?". The answer to this question will also conclude this study. In general, the movie is made out of an American dominated perspective of what is considered to be Polynesian culture. Yet, it can be concluded that Disney did portray the Polynesian culture and did not focus upon only one Polynesian island. Therefore, the movie changed into a Polynesian cultural hotchpotch with mainly details from Samoa, Maori, Tahiti, Hawaii and New Zealand. Referring back to Disney's approach, Disney sounds promising by working with their 'Oceanic Story Trust' to get the facts right and by hiring only voice-over actors with a Polynesian background. It led to many details that could refer to Polynesian culture in the characters, their appearance, attributes, storyline and environment. Nevertheless, by portraying Polynesian characteristics, some Americanised and Disneyfied features came along the way which led to some depictions that could be seen as cultural appropriation. The most striking features for Americanised and Disneyfied Polynesian culture are the depiction of the ocean, mythology, the happy and equally portrayed tribe with their coconuts and the use of the history of voyaging for the storyline. Especially the ocean and demigod Maui are considered to be important in Polynesian culture and depicting them strongly Americanised can lead to cultural misunderstandings. The background story of Maui is Disneyfied to let it fit into the Disney values. However, as there are many different tales around demigod Maui, it can be stated that there is no right or wrong depiction of the story behind Maui. Only Maui's feature of being a trickster is highlighted correctly, but mixed up with his American features. Furthermore, depicting Polynesians to be dependent on the coconut will only strengthen the already existing racial slur of coconuts upon Polynesians. A good aspect of Disney is that it highlights Polynesia and the culture as one to be proud of and highlights the importance of family and the story of the elders. All the tribe members and Moana herself refer to the message of how important their tribe and island is and how striking their history of voyaging is.

However, even though the overall depiction is all Disney's idea of Polynesia, the movie is still made for a young target group which means that some choices are additionally made to entertain. That is why the plumeria flower can considered to be seen as western domination, but on the other side, also as 'a splash of colour in the environment'. The succumbing of the young man, who got his first tattoo, could still be a choice for the sake of humour and the frequent appearance of the coconut could be due to the suggestion that children might be familiar with the coconut.

As overall conclusion, Disney did portray Polynesia and the Polynesian culture by implementing many features of cultural aspects of different Polynesian islands. Disney paid attention to representing Polynesia thoroughly in many aspects such as the general storyline, the characters, the cultural habits and behaviour and small details. However, the portrayal of Polynesia and the culture has gotten mixed up with Americanisation and Disney values that highlights the dominance of the American usage of Polynesian culture.

8.3 Critical viewpoint and further research

This study has brought a critical viewpoint to Disney's depiction of Polynesian culture and the mix up with American features and Disney values in four different samples that basically treated the whole storyline and most of the important characters. However, a weakness of this study lays inside the fact that it has analysed Disney's portrayal of Polynesian culture, but not if this portrayal can be related to Polynesia and the culture in general. Although it can be concluded that there is no such thing as a 'real' or 'correct' Polynesian culture. Everybody can have a different point of view upon a culture. This gets even more difficult considering the fact that Polynesia is rich with several kind of cultures that all share differences and similarities. Nonetheless, further research upon the relation of Disney's Polynesia and Polynesia itself could still give interesting insights to the question of whether Disney indeed got 'their Polynesian facts right'. One efficient qualitative research method that would fit inside this research aim, would be the method of holding interviews with focus groups with Polynesian audiences to link their view upon Polynesian culture with Disney's portrayal of Polynesian culture.

Another interesting future research proposal would be analysing the differences and development of Disney's portrayal of non-western or indigenous culture. As what is known, Disney released many animation movies with another cultural background in the 90s but took a break from it for over 13 years until Moana got released. It can be interesting to find

out if Disney's portrayal of a foreign culture changed with Moana and if their portrayal might have improved or not. A CDA as method for one or two 90s movies such as Mulan, Aladdin or Pocahontas would help to get clear insights into Disney's portrayal of foreign cultures in the 90s. The findings can be compared with the findings of this CDA study of Moana to analyse differences and similarities in the cultural representation and the relation with the amount of Americanised and Disneyfied features.

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AppendixesAppendix 1 Possible scenes with time code

Scene	Time code	Title	Scene description	Key words
1	0:00 - 3:49	Story introduction	The introduction starts with the common Walt Disney logo's with singing voices in the background. The scene continues directly with Moana's grandmother telling a story of Te Fiti and demigod Maui, stealing the heart of Te Fiti and confronting Te Kā.	Mythology History Music
2	5:40 - 7:16	Moana as the chosen one	The ocean is moving like a creature and has an own personality. The ocean tries to comfort and entertain Moana.	Mythology Music
3	7:48 – 12:00	Song 1 – where you are	The first song introduces Moana to her island Motunui and leads her throughout the years until the present. She shows more interest in the sea until she finally understands the importance as her role as future chief.	Music Dance Cultural habits Tradition Power distance
4	12:25 – 12:33	Tattoo	Moana supports a young adult by getting his first tattoo	Tradition Power distance
5	12:34 – 12:46	Teaching dance	Moana is teaching a traditional dance to some children and one kid is dancing an Americanised dance	Dance
6	12:47 - 13:13	Traditional cooking	A villager is cooking on a traditional way when he is speaking of cooking chicken HeiHei since he is talentless	Tradition
7	14:26 – 15:02	Disobeying father	Moana is disobeying her father by proposing to fish beyond the reef	Power distance Rebellious acting
8	16:16 – 18:44	Song 2 – How far I'll go	Moana sings about her desire to be on the ocean	Rebellious acting
9	22:20 – 26:05	Song 3 – We know who we are	Moana's grandmother guides Moana to the hidden ancient wayfinding canoes. Here, Moana finds out her ancestors were voyagers and wayfinders by the spirits of her ancestors.	History Tradition Music Cultural Habits Mythology
10	26:05 – 26:48	Story continues	Gramma Tala continues her story by telling Moana that the reason why her	Mythology History

			people stopped voyaging was because of Maui stealing the heart of Te Fiti and the appearing monsters and Te Kā making the ocean too dangerous to voyage.	
11	27:36 – 27:40	Guide to Maui	Gramma Tala tells Moana that Maui lays at the bottom of his hook that appears in the stars in the sky.	Mythology Tradition
12	35:48 – 36:06	Screaming to ocean	Moana is angry at the ocean for not helping her when she needed it and offends the ocean.	Tradition
13	37:03 – 42:47	Maui introduction and song 4: You're welcome	Moana's first encounter with Maui. Moana tries to be confident in her speech but keeps getting interrupted by Maui who clearly does not understand what Moana is trying to tell. He believes that Moana has come to 'thank you'. Maui starts to sing about himself and his achievements, tricks Moana during the song and locks her up in the cave. Maui is walking happily to the canoe, but his mini-Maui tries to stop him in vain.	Mythology Power distance Music Dance Cultural habits Americanisation
14	44:56 – 49-18	Kakamora	Kakamora are little coconut creatures that come to steal the heart of Te Fiti. First encounter with monsters in the movie. They look small and cute but are violent. Maui and Moana are fighting against them.	Mythology
15	49:46 – 50:52	Mini Maui	Mini-Maui is the moving tattoo on Maui's left chest that is acting as his subconscious. In this scene Mini-Maui starts to give points to Moana as you do in a game. Thereafter, Moana tries to convince Maui by telling him that he would be hero if he would help Moana.	Tradition Americanisation
16	51:23-53:21	Teaching to sail	Maui shows he is good at 'wayfinding' and Moana want him to teach her. He refuses and calls her 'princess with a dress and an animal sidekick'. Then she learns sailing which is shown in several shots of things she has to do.	Disneyfication Tradition Cultural habits
17	54:20-54:21	Maui speaking	Muscle up buttercup!	Americanisation

18	56:41 – 59:05	Lalotai	Lalotai is getting introduced as the realm of monsters full of darkness and neon light colours. Maui is kidding at the entrance: "It only appears after a human sacrifice", laughs and then opens the entrance with a traditional dance	Tradition Mythology Disneyfication Dance
19	1:00:21 - 1:05:38	Tamatoa and song 5	This scene introduces Tamatoa as the giant coconut crab that is obsessed with shiny and valuable objects. He is bragging about himself in song form.	Music
20	1:07:35 – 1:10:47	Maui's background story	Maui tells Moana that he earns his tattoos with his accomplishments. Maui starts to tell Moana his background story	Mythology Tradition
21	1:10:49 – 1:12:49	Back on track	Maui is learning how to use his hook again and Moana how to sail. This scene is followed by a background song with indigenous singing.	Music
22	1:18:44 – 1:22:22	Grandmother's spirit and song 6	Moana feels down after her plan failed and Maui left her. Her grandmother comes back (first as a stingray) and supports her. Then Moana remembers who she really is by singing a song.	Music Culture habits Americanisation
23	1:27:56 – 1:28-07	Maui dance moves	Maui is performing dance moves to distract Te Kā from Moana	Dance
24	1:28:31 – 1:32:44	Rescuing Te Fiti + song 6 – You know who you are	Moana recognises Te Kā as Te Fiti and let her come to her. She calms Te Fiti down by letting her remember who she is. When Te Fiti is restored, all the volcanic rock turns into a blooming nature paradise and all the islands are restored. Te Fiti picks Maui and Moana up and they bow before her. Maui apologises and he gets his fishhook back. Thereafter, Te Fiti returns to sleep and transforms into an island again	Mythology Music Culture habits Americanisation
25	1:34:18 – 1:36:14	Return to Motunui	Moana is warmly welcomed by her parents and her tribe. Her tribe restores the wayfinding boats and sails across the ocean with Moana and her dad on the lead. Moana teaches her people to sail	History Disneyfication

and is proud of her tribe and her history	
of being voyagers.	

(Moana, 2016)

Appendix 2 The song lyrics

1. Tulou Tagaloa and An innocent warrior (The Disney Wiki, n.d.b; The Disney Wiki, n.d.a)

Song 1: Tu	ılou Tagaloa	Song 2: An innocent warrior	
Samoan Lyrics	English translation	Samoan lyrics	English translation
Tulou	Pardon us	Ou mata e matagi	Your eyes so full of wonder
Tulou	Pardon us	Ou loto mamaina toa	Your heart an innocent
Tagaloa	Oh Tagaloa.	Manatu atu	warrior
		Taku pelepele	There's a task for you
Sei e va'ai mai	Look down		My dearest one
I le tatou lalolagi	Upon our world	Pa mai to mafanafanaga	
Sei e va'ai mai	Look down	Saolotoga tenei	Let it flow over you
I le matou lalolagi	Upon our world.	Manatunatu	This freedom you feel
Sei e malamalama	The light	Ki tamafine	And your deep thoughts
(Ko au e tu atu)	[I stand before you]		Our young girl
E taunuku te malaga	It is good and beautiful	Maua ai te lumanai	
(Toku manatu)	[My desire]	Ki tamafine	You have come
Sei e va'ai mai	Look down		Our young girl
(E lelei ma le manaia)	[The journey has begun]	Ou mata e matagi	
Manaia o le tataou olaga	At how beautiful our lives		Your eyes so full of wonder
	are.		

2. Song 3: Where you are (The Disney Wiki, n.d.c)

Chief Tui: Moana, make way, make way
Moana, it's time you knew
The village of Motonui is all you need
The dancers are practicing
They dance to an ancient song
(Who needs a new song? This old one's all we need)

This tradition is our mission And Moana, there's so much to do (Make way) Don't trip on the taro root, that's all you need We share everything we make (We make) We joke and we weave our baskets (Aha!) The fishermen come back from the sea

Moana: I wanna see

Chief Tui: Don't walk away Moana, stay on the ground now Our people will need a chief and there you are

Chief Tui and Sina: There comes a day When you're gonna look around And realize happiness is where you are

Chief Tui: Consider the coconut (the what?) Consider its tree We use each part of the coconut, that's all we need

Sina: We make our nets from the fibers The water's sweet inside We use the leaves to build fires We cook up the meat inside

Chief Tui: Consider the coconuts The trunks and the leaves The island gives us what we need

Moana: And no one leaves

Chief Tui: That's right, we stay
We're safe and we're well provided
And when we look to the future
There you are
You'll be okay
In time you'll learn just as I did

Chief Tui and Sina: You must find happiness right where you are

Gramma Tala: I like to dance with the water
The undertow and the waves
The water is mischievous, ha!
I like how it misbehaves
The village may think I'm crazy
Or say that I drift too far
But once you know what you like, well, there you are

You are your father's daughter Stubbornness and pride Mind what he says but remember You may hear a voice inside And if the voice starts to whisper To follow the farthest star Moana, that voice inside is who you are

Villagers: We make our nets from the fibers (We weave our nets from the fibers) The water's sweet inside (A real tasty treat inside)
We use the leaves to build fires (We sing these songs in our choirs)
We cook up the meat inside (We have mouths to feed inside)

Chief Tui: The village believes in us (That's right!) The village believes (Ha!) The island gives us what we need

And no one leaves

Moana: So here I'll stay
My home, my people beside me
And when I think of tomorrow
There we are
I'll lead the way
I'll have my people to guide me
We'll build our future together

Villagers: Where we are

Moana: 'Cause every path leads you back to

Villagers: Where you are

Moana: You can find happiness right

Villagers: Where you are, Where you are

3. Song 4: We know the way (The Disney Wiki, n.d.d)

Samoan/English lyrics	English lyrics
Tatou o tagata folau vala'auina	We are voyagers summoned by the mighty gods,
Le atua o le sami tele e o mai	Of this mighty ocean to come,
Ua la ava'e le lu'itau e lelei	We take up the good challenge,
Tapenapena	Get ready.
Aue, aue	Aue, aue
Nuku i mua	There is land up ahead,
Te manulele e tataki e	A bird in flight to take us there,
Aue, aue	Oh! oh!
Te fenua te malie	This beautiful land,
Nae ko hakilia kaiga e	The place I was looking for, we will make our
	home.
We read the wind and the sky when the sun is	
high	We read the wind and the sky
We sail the length of the seas on the ocean	When the sun is high
breeze	We sail the length of sea
At night, we name every star	On the ocean breeze
We know where we are	At night we name every star
We know who we are, who we are	We know where we are
	We know who we are, who we are
Aue, aue	
We set a course to find	Away! Away!
A brand new Island everywhere we roam	We set a course to find
Aue, aue	A brand new island everywhere we roam,
We keep our Island in our mind	Away! Away!
And when it's time to find home	We keep our island in our mind
We know the way	And when it's time to find home,
Augusta	We know the way.
Aue, aue	Avvord Avvord
We are explorers reading every sign	Away! Away!
	We are explorers reading every sign

We tell the stories of our elders in a neverending chain
Aue, aue
Te fenua, te malie
Nae ko hakilia
We know the way.

We tell the stories of our elders
In a never-ending chain,
Oh! Oh!
This beautiful land,
The place I was looking for,
We know the way.

4. Song 5: You're welcome! (The Disney Wiki, n.d.e)

Okay, okay I can see what's happening, yeah You're face-to-face with greatness and it's strange You don't even know how you feel. It's adorable! Well, it's nice to see that humans never change

Open your eyes, let's begin Yes, it's really me, it's Maui! Breathe it in I know it's a lot, the hair, the bod When you're staring at a demigod

What can I say except "You're welcome" For the tides, the sun, the sky Hey, it's okay, it's okay, you're welcome I'm just an ordinary demi-guy!

Hey, what has two thumbs and pulled up the sky When you were waddling yay high? This guy!

When the nights got cold, who stole you fire from down below? You're looking at him, yo!

Oh, also I lasso'd the sun You're welcome To stretch your days and bring you fun

Also, I harnessed the breeze You're welcome To fill your sails and shake your trees

So what can I say except you're welcome? For the islands I pulled from the sea There's no need to pray, it's okay, you're welcome I guess it's just my way of being me You're welcome, you're welcome

Well, come to think of it

Kid, honestly I can go on and on I can explain every natural phenomenon The tide, the grass, the ground Oh, that was Maui just messing around I killed an eel, I buried its guts Sprouted a tree, now you've got coconuts
What's the lesson? What is the takeaway?
Don't mess with Maui when he's on the breakaway
And the tapestry here in my skin
Is a map of the victories I win
Look where I've been, I make everything happen
Look at that mean mini Maui just tippity tappin'

Well anyway, let me say you're welcome! For the wonderful world you know Hey, it's okay, it's okay, you're welcome! Well, come to think of it, I gotta go Hey, it's your day to say you're welcome! 'Cause I'm gonna need that boat I'm sailing away, away, you're welcome! 'Cause Maui can do anything but float

You're welcome, you're welcome! And thank you!