

## Social Signified in the Movie Posters of Hollywood Movies Made for Children

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### Abstract

With the recognition of motion pictures as an art form of the twentieth century, one realizes that movie posters have also evolved in various aspects, namely aesthetically, technically, socially, ideologically, and so on. This research paper has a dual purpose: to present quantitative data relating to the production of movie posters advertising Hollywood children's movies, and to provide a semiotic analysis of the posters' content based on a number of semantic codes. The paper examines movie posters as socially generated products and as carriers of ideology. The sample was chosen based on the movies' US Box Office ranking, and comprises the one hundred highest-grossing children's movies produced from the 1930s — and more specifically 1937, with the movie *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* — to August 2012, when the research was conducted. As regards the designation “children's”, movies aimed at audiences of up to fifteen years old were chosen, based on their age rating.

### 1. Introduction

The animated cartoon made its appearance in the late nineteenth century, and more specifically in 1892 with Emile Reynaud's creations, before the Lumière Brothers' early movie-making attempts. Emile Cohl, a trailblazer and essentially the inventor of animated cartoons, was the person who realized that animated cartoons were truly magical and had their own language. The 1940s and 1950s were the dawn of a new era for animation, both aesthetically and structurally, and from 1965 onwards computers came into play in the production of animated movies (Century, 2007).

Animated movies do not imitate reality, but rather transform it so that the characters are distortions and caricatures of real types of people. There is, in fact, a tendency towards exaggeration, since, for psychological and aesthetic reasons, the characters' distinctive traits need to be emphasized, for example, eccentricity, human weakness, naivety, cunning, sobriety, or intelligence (Conelly & Conelly, 2011; Tversky et al., 2002).

Until 1940, posters were usually small, black-and-white fliers that included text, usually put up inside buildings. Larger color posters were later introduced as an advertising medium by French publishers using the hand press (Cooper, 1988; Smith, 1977).

Most theories to date approach the communication process as a cyclical relationship between the transmitter, the message and the receiver. Although subjected to severe criticism, this model regards the message as being isolated neither from the historical context and social relations that define it, nor from the social and political impact of the events it signifies (McLuhan, 2008). The message, as a schematic form of information, is transmitted from the source to the receiver and constitutes part of the social relations that

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determine the communication process. Although there are certain arbitrary elements to the message production process, it is nevertheless linked to and directly influenced by the transmitters' ideas, institutionalized knowledge, technical skills, professional ideologies, and their choices with regard to significations that favor their immediate apprehension by the public. Thus, a message is drawn from existing reality and is constructed on an axis that functions according to the recipient's needs, since the public is at the same time the source and the recipient of the on-screen message (Gaines, 2011; Hall, 1980; Bignell, 2002).

The consumption and, in this case, acceptance of the message through structured feedback is incorporated into the actual production process, which naturally takes precedence since it serves as the starting point for the shaping of the message (Hall, 1980). At any given moment, using semantic structures directly determined by factors such as professional ideologies, composite knowledge, production relations, mechanisms of socioeconomic policy, and so on, the transmission medium must send an encoded message, which, via arbitrary linguistic and iconic signs and signifying the appropriate events, will reach the other end of the communication chain, namely the message's recipient, who, also being part of the relevant semantic structures, will then decode the message (Thwaites et al., 2002).

In order to decode meaning systems and the semantic loads of signs, semiotics must view every cultural product (movies, television and radio programs, advertisement banners) as a *text* (Chandler, 1994; O'Neil, 2008).

Advertising and, by extension, posters function on two levels of analysis. On the one hand, they are directly associated with making a commodity stand out from its competitors so as to benefit its producer/manufacturer — in other words they have an economic dimension. On the other hand, advertising is a language in itself which is used to convince us of something (Berger, 1972, Barthes, 1979).

That means that advertising generates a type of ideology that tells us what is beautiful or ugly, or what constitutes enjoyment or comfort. It furthermore reduces different products into symbols, as it attempts to establish models which are identified with the consumer's imaginary world, thus creating for him/her the illusion of verisimilitude (Sinclair, 1987).

Posters are above all a type of ideological discourse; they are seen as an advertising creation and are a mass media form. They are used extensively in advertising, since their visual graphic nature enables them to transmit polysemic, high-density messages, primarily via their iconic function. As carriers of meaning, they generate ideology by permitting the intervention of codes that already exist in society. At the same time, they make use of images, concepts, ideas, perceptions and myths, in other words elements available in the prevailing culture. Posters do not merely reflect the dominant ideology, they process it. We could say that they constitute one of the more characteristic examples of "myth", in the sense of the word employed by Barthes (Vamvakidou et al., 2012).

Barthes (1979) describes myth as being a special semiotic system originating from an initial semiotic chain which existed before the myth. In other words, myth is a second-order semiotic system. Movie posters, which we have chosen as the means of communication to be analyzed, encompass all the characteristics of a commercial poster and have been turned over to the service of advertising. Their aim is to reduce the commodity they are promoting — in our case a cinematographic product — to a sign by fetishizing the product itself (Eco, 1987).

Movie posters function on an economic level, as the crystallization of production relations (movie production, distribution). Yet, by imbuing the product for sale with cultural connotations, they subject it to a latent analogy that may refer not only to its utility, but also to a network of social, mental and bodily needs. In other words, they can promise a personal transformation that will be achieved through the agency of the particular product being sold (Maiorani, 2007; Kafitasari, 2013; Shahid et al., 2015).

The recipient will give this transformation the significance demanded by his or her anthropological status, the cultural model held within him/her. According to some authors, it is here that the relative variability of interpretation offered by mass communication lies. As stated by Eco (1987), state or private

authorities cannot control the power of the message, even if the source and channel are under their strict protection, because no one can regulate how the recipient uses the message. And if one were to claim that the medium does not convey ideologies, but is an ideology in itself, or that television, for example, is a form of communication that represents the ideology of advanced industrial society, one could answer that: “The medium transmits those ideologies which the addressee receives according to codes originating in his social situation, in his previous education, and in the psychological tendencies of the moment.” Thus, unlike means of production, means of communication can be controlled neither by private entities nor by the community (Golding & Murdock, 1979).

Where movie posters are concerned, the message is constructed using two different codes: the linguistic and the iconic. Although different, these two codes are the component parts of a system, where their rhetoric is dependent on the way the system is articulated. The articulation possibilities of these two codes are numerous.

## **2. The Research**

This research sample consists of one hundred movie posters advertising children’s animated movies. The sample was chosen based on the movies’ US Box Office ranking (the one hundred highest-grossing children’s movies). Besides ensuring that the research is methodologically objective, this particular choice of sample also ensures a wide variety of objects to be studied, in terms of content and chronologically, since it spans a lengthy period from the 1930s to this day.

The following movie posters were analyzed based on their corresponding movies’ US Box Office ranking, determined by how much the movie had grossed at the time the sample was taken (August 2012): Shrek 2 (2004), Toy Story 3 (2010), Finding Nemo (2003), Shrek the Third (2007), Up (2009), Shrek (2001), The Incredibles (2004), Monsters, Inc. (2001), Despicable Me (2010), Toy Story 2 (1999), Cars (2006), Shrek The Final Chapter: Shrek Forever After (2010), Brave (2012), Wall-E (2008), Alvin and the Chipmunks: The Squeakquel (2009), How to Train Your Dragon (2010), Aladdin (1992), Alvin and the Chipmunks (2007), Kung Fu Panda (2008), Dr. Seuss: The Lorax (2012), Madagascar 3: Europe’s Most Wanted (2012), Ratatouille (2007), Tangled (2010), Monsters VS Aliens (2009), Happy Feet (2006), Ice Age: Dawn of the Dinosaurs (2009), Ice Age: The Meltdown (2006), Madagascar (2005), Cars 2 (2011), Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs (1937), Madagascar 2: Escape 2 Africa (2008), Ice Age (2002), Tarzan (1999), Kung Fu Panda 2 (2011), A Bug’s Life (1998), Shark Tale (2004), Over the Hedge (2006), Horton Hears a Who! (2008), Who Framed Roger Rabbit (1988), One Hundred and One Dalmatians (1961), Ice Age: Continental Drift (2012), Puss in Boots (2011), Megamind (2010), Lilo & Stitch (2002), Rio (2011), The Smurfs (2011), The Jungle Book (1967), Pocahontas (1995), Stuart Little (1999), A Christmas Carol (2009), Dinosaur (2000), Chicken Little (2005), Alvin and the Chipmunks: Chipwrecked (2011), Robots (2005), Bee Movie (2007), Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs (2009), Rango (2011), Mulan (1998), G-Force (2009), Bolt (2008), The Little Mermaid (1989), Hop (2011), Chicken Run (2000), The Princess and the Frog (2009), Bambi (1942), The Prince of Egypt (1998), The Rugrats Movie (1998), Yogi Bear (2010), The Hunchback of Notre Dame (1996), Gnomeo & Juliet (2011), Hercules (1997), Meet the Robinsons (2007), The Lion King (1994), Lady and the Tramp (1955), Antz (1998), Space Jam (1996), The Emperor’s New Groove (2000), Peter Pan (1953), Pokemon: The First Movie (1998), The SpongeBob SquarePants Movie (2004), Brother Bear (2003), Open Season (2006), Pinocchio (1940), Atlantis: The Lost Empire (2001), Jimmy Neutron: Boy Genius (2001), Pokemon (1998), The Adventures of Tintin (2011), Rugrats in Paris: The Movie II (2000), Coraline (2009), Monster House (2006), Oliver and Company (1988), Spirit (2002), Barnyard (2006), Stuart Little 2 (2002), Flushed Away (2006), Happy Feet 2 (2011), Fantasia 2000 (1999), Surf’s Up – A Major Ocean Picture (2007), Curious George (2006), and Anastasia (1997).

Semioticians often refer to movies, television and radio programs, and advertisement banners as “texts”; Fiske and Hartley (1978) talk about reading television. Media such as television and movies are thought of as languages by some semioticians. The issue tends to revolve around whether movies are closer to what we

consider “reality” in the everyday world of our own experience, or if they have more in common with a symbolic system such as writing (Lapsley & Westlake 1988, Chandler 1994).

According to Saussure’s semiotics, signs are organized into codes in two ways: by paradigms and by syntagms. The plane of the paradigm is that of selection, while the plane of the syntagm is that of combination (Chandler, 1994). The structuralist method leads to the study of paradigms as binary or polar oppositions (e.g. we/they, public/private). In Saussure’s semiotics, binary oppositions are considered to be fundamental to the creation of meaning.

An advertisement attempts to translate the text referring to a product’s identity in a way that it means something to the consumer. Advertisements sell us something besides consumer goods: they provide a structured framework through which we and the products acquire a reciprocal relationship, in other words, they sell us our very selves (Williamson, 1978).

### 3. Analysis

In Table 1 we see the distribution of movies with reference to the year they came out, from 1937, when the first movie on the list was shown in theaters, to August 2012, when the sample was taken. The table points to a marked increase in animated children’s movies in the 1990s, with eighteen movies in the research sample. This rise continues in the 2000s, with fifty movies ranking high at the Box Office, and reaches its peak in the first two years of the twenty-first century’s second decade, with twenty-two children’s movies on the list of the highest-grossing animated movies. This rise contrasts with the earlier period, given that there are only ten movies on our list from the first five decades (1939 – 1989).

**Table 1: Distribution of Posters as to the Movie’s Release Date**

Decade	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1930-39	1	1.0
1940-49	2	2.0
1950-59	2	2.0
1960-69	2	2.0
1980-89	3	3.0
1990-99	18	18.0
2000-09	50	50.0
2010-12	22	22.0
Total	100	100.0

**Table 2: Distribution of Posters as to The Movie’s Production Company**

Production Company	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Disney	41	41.0
Columbia	7	7.0
DreamWorks	21	21.0
Twentieth Century Fox	9	9.0
Warner Bros	4	4.0
Universal	2	2.0
Touchstone Pictures	2	2.0
Paramount	5	5.0
Other production companies	9	9.0
Total	100	100.0

Table 2 presents the distribution of movies with reference to their production company. The largest number of Box Office productions, forty-one in total, is by Disney, which at first appeared as “Walt Disney”, then as “Disney Pixar”, and in recent years as “Disney”. The next most frequent occurrence is that of DreamWorks, with twenty-one movies, followed by Twentieth Century Fox and Columbia, with nine and seven movies respectively.

Table 3 shows the distribution of posters with reference to how they were made. More specifically, the posters were divided into hand-drawn posters, two-dimensional digital posters and three-dimensional digital posters. The third category, namely the three-dimensional posters, are in the majority, with 68%, second is the category of two-dimensional digital posters, and third, with 12%, are the posters drawn by hand, a technique which, it stands to reason, flourished in the early years of children’s animated movies shown in theaters.

**Table 3: Distribution of Posters as to Their Type**

Poster Type	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Hand-drawn picture	12	12.0
Two-dimensional digital image	20	20.0
Three-dimensional digital image	68	68.0
Total	100	100.0

Proceeding to the posters’ linguistic content, in Table 4 we observe that 98% of the posters mention the movie’s title, 64% state its release date and 54% mention the company that produced the movie. Tag lines are included somewhere on the poster in 58% of them, and mention of the animation technique, the leading actors, and other parties, such as directors or producers, is made in 28%, 23% and 18% of the posters respectively.

**Table 4: Distribution of Posters as to Their Linguistic Content**

Linguistic Content	Percentage (%)
Movie title	98.0
Tag line	58.0
Date	64.0
Production company	54.0
Technique	28.0
Actors	23.0
Other parties (producers, directors, creators)	18.0

Table 5 categorizes the posters in the sample based on the objects portrayed in them. The illustrated objects are divided into: people, animals, imaginary beings, machines and engines, nature, buildings, weapons, and modes of transportation. We see that seventy-five posters show animals (animal kingdom code), forty-four show human figures (people code), twenty-six posters depict nature (natural environment code), twenty-four have buildings (buildings code), nineteen have imaginary beings (imaginary beings code), and fifteen posters show modes of transportation (transportation code). Only eight posters portray weapons (war code) and four have some form of engine (vehicles code).

The animals were divided into two main subcategories: those depicted as found in nature, encountered in fifty-two posters, and those shown with human features, in twenty-nine posters. As regards imaginary beings, there were ten instances of monsters, nine instances of fairy tale characters, and seven instances of extraterrestrial creatures. In the monsters subcategory, there is a further division into monsters in their natural form, encountered in five posters, and monsters with human features, in six posters. Lastly, there is another division with regard to references to nature, where, according to the table, we observe that in thirteen posters

the story takes place on land (in the forest, jungle, a garden, and so on), in another thirteen, it takes place in water, and in two posters there are references to other natural elements, such as the moon, stars, and so on.

**Table 5: Distribution of Posters as to the Objects Portrayed**

Object	Posters
People	44.0
Animals	75.0
Natural form	52.0
With human features	29.0
Imaginary beings	19.0
Monsters	10.0
Natural form	5.0
With human features	6.0
Fairy-tale characters	9.0
Extraterrestrials	7.0
Machines and engines	4.0
Nature	26.0
Forest	13.0
Water	13.0
Other natural elements (moon, stars, space)	2.0
Buildings	24.0
Weapons	8.0
Modes of transport	15.0

Table 6 presents the relationship between poster construction technique and the movie’s production company. Out of the twelve posters that have been hand-drawn, nine (75%) are for movies produced by Disney, two by Paramount (16.7%), and only one (8.3%) by Touchstone Pictures.

**Table 6: Hand-Drawn Posters per Production Company**

Production Company	Frequency	Percentage(%) of hand-drawn posters
Disney	9	75.0
Columbia	0	0
DreamWorks	0	0
Twentieth Century Fox	0	0
Warner Bros	0	0
Universal	0	0
Touchstone Pictures	1	8.3
Paramount	2	16.7
Other production companies	0	0
Total	12	100.0

In Table 7 we observe that a total of sixty-eight out of the total one hundred posters in the sample were constructed using three-dimensional digital imaging. The major creator of three-dimensional posters is Disney, with 29.4% corresponding to twenty of the sixty-eight posters, followed by DreamWorks with 27.9% (nineteen posters), and Twentieth Century Fox with 11.8% (eight posters).

**Table 7: Three-Dimensional Digital Images per Production Company**

<b>Production Company</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage(%)</b>
Disney	20	29.4
Columbia	6	8.8
DreamWorks	19	27.9
Twentieth Century Fox	8	11.8
Warner Bros	3	4.4
Universal	2	2.9
Touchstone Pictures	1	1.5
Paramount	2	2.9
Other production companies	7	10.3
Total	68	100.0

In Table 8 we see the percentage of tag lines on the posters per movie production company. Of the fifty-eight movies with a tag line on their poster, seventeen (29.3%) were produced by Disney and sixteen (27.6%) by DreamWorks. Companies such as Columbia, Paramount, Warner Bros, Twentieth Century Fox, and Touchstone Pictures use tag lines on their posters much less frequently, and Universal makes no use whatsoever of tag lines on the posters of the animated movies in the sample.

**Table 8: Tag Lines on Posters per Production Company**

<b>Production Company</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage(%)</b>
Disney	17	29.3
Columbia	5	8.6
DreamWorks	16	27.6
Twentieth Century Fox	4	6.9
Warner Bros	4	6.9
Universal	0	0
Touchstone Pictures	2	3.4
Paramount	4	6.9
Other production companies	6	10.3
Total	58	100.0

**Table 9: Mention of Production Company on Posters**

<b>Production Company</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage(%)</b>
Disney	39	72.2
Columbia	1	1.9
DreamWorks	14	25.9
Twentieth Century Fox		0
Warner Bros	0	0
Universal	0	0
Touchstone Pictures	0	0
Paramount	0	0
Other production companies	0	0
Total	54	100.0

Table 9 shows the frequency with which the production company is mentioned on children's animated movie posters. We thus observe that out of all the posters in which the production company is mentioned,

72.2% concern Disney, 25.9% DreamWorks, and 1.9% Columbia productions. The rest of the movie studios do not mention their movie’s production company on their posters.

In Table 10 we observe the frequency with which actors who do the movie’s voice-overs are mentioned on the poster per production company. Out of the twenty-three posters that mention the actors starring in the movies, eight (34.8%) movies were produced by DreamWorks, four (17.4%) each by Twentieth Century Fox and Warner Bros, and three (13%) by Disney.

**Table 10: Mention of Actors per Production Company**

Production Company	Frequency	Percentage(%)
Disney	3	13.0
Columbia	0	0
DreamWorks	8	34.8
Twentieth Century Fox	4	17.4
Warner Bros	4	17.4
Universal	0	0
Touchstone Pictures	0	0
Paramount	0	0
Other production companies	4	17.4
Total	23	100.0

According to Table 11, out of the one hundred movies in the sample, twenty-nine have animal forms with human features. DreamWorks accounts for 34.5% of these movies’ posters, Twentieth Century Fox for 20.7%, and Disney for 13.8%, followed by Columbia and Warner Bros with 6.9% each, and Universal and Touchstone Pictures with 3.4% each. Lastly, there are no animal forms with human features on the posters of movies produced by Paramount.

**Table 11: Portrayal of Animals with Human Features per Production Company**

Production Company	Frequency	Percentage(%)
Disney	4	13.8
Columbia	2	6.9
DreamWorks	10	34.5
Twentieth Century Fox	6	20.7
Warner Bros	2	6.9
Universal	1	3.4
Touchstone Pictures	1	3.4
Paramount	0	0
Other production companies	3	10.3
Total	29	100.0

Table 12 presents the number of movies produced by the production companies over time. As mentioned before, Disney comes first in movie production, with 41%, followed by DreamWorks with 21%. Next in line are Twentieth Century Fox with 9%, and Columbia with 7%. Lastly, Warner Bros (4%), and Universal and Touchstone Pictures (2% each) have the lowest number of animated movie productions in the US Box Office’s top one hundred rankings. It is obvious from the table that Disney’s presence spans the entire length of the research period, with one movie in the 1930s and two movies per decade from 1940 to 1989. In the 1990s we see a sharp rise in its production of children’s movies (ten movies), eighteen movies in the 2000s, and in a mere two years of the last decade it had four movies on the Box Office list. DreamWorks has a strong presence in the last two decades, with thirteen movies in the 2000s and six in the last two years. Columbia produced most of its movies in the 2000s (four movies), as have Paramount (four movies) and



Twentieth Century Fox (six movies). Lastly, Warner Bros and Universal have two movies each on the list from the last two years pertaining to the research sample.

**Table 12: Production Company Movies per Release Date**

Production Company	Decade								Total
	'30s	'40s	'50s	'60s	'80s	'90s	'00s	'10s	
Disney	1 100%	2 100%	2 100%	2 100%	2 66.7%	10 55.6%	18 36%	4 18.2%	41 41%
Columbia	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	1 5.6%	4 8%	2 9.1%	7 7%
DreamWorks	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	2 11.1%	13 26%	6 27.3%	21 21%
Twentieth Century Fox	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	1 5.6%	6 12%	2 9.1%	9 9%
Warner Bros	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	1 5.6%	1 2%	2 9.1%	4 4%
Universal	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	2 9.1%	2 2%
Touchstone Pictures	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	1 33.3%	0 0%	0 0%	1 4.5%	2 2%
Paramount	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	1 5.6%	4 8%	0 0%	5 5%
Other production companies	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	2 11.1%	4 8%	3 13.6%	9 9%
Total	1 100%	2 100%	2 100%	2 100%	3 100%	18 100%	50 100%	22 100%	100 100%

Table 13 indicates the posters that have been drawn by hand, which are twelve in total. We note that the percentage of such posters remains constant over the 1940s, 1950s, 1960s 1980s, and 2000s, with two posters produced each decade (16.7%). Only in the 1930s and 1990s do we have one movie poster (8.3%) each. Lastly, there have been no posters created in the last two years using this technique.

**Table 13: Distribution of Hand-Drawn Posters Based on Movie's Release Date**

Decade	Frequency	Percentage(%)
1930-39	1	8.3
1940-49	2	16.7
1950-59	2	16.7
1960-69	2	16.7
1980-89	2	16.7
1990-99	1	8.3
2000-09	2	16.7
2010-12	0	0.0
Total	12	100.0

Table 14 presents the posters created using two-dimensional imaging. We therefore observe that out of the twenty posters created using this technique, seventeen posters (85%) were made in the 1990s, two in the 2000s and only one in the 1980s.

**Table 14: Distribution of Two-Dimensional Digital Posters Based on Movie's Release Date**

Decade	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1930-39	0	0.0
1940-49	0	0.0
1950-59	0	0.0
1960-69	0	0.0
1980-89	1	5.0
1990-99	17	85.0
2000-09	2	10.0
2010-12	0	0.0
Total	20	100.0

Table 15 shows the chronological distribution of posters designed using three-dimensional digital imaging. We note that graphic artists and movie poster producers have employed this technique in the last two decades, during which three-dimensional images have enjoyed a widespread presence. Out of these posters, the majority are for movies produced in the 2000s (67.6%), and the rest for movies in the 2010s (32.4%).

**Table 15: Distribution of Three-Dimensional Digital Posters Based on Movie's Release Date**

Decade	Frequency	Percentage(%)
1930-39	0	0.0
1940-49	0	0.0
1950-59	0	0.0
1960-69	0	0.0
1980-89	0	0.0
1990-99	0	0.0
2000-09	46	67.6
2010-12	22	32.4
Total	68	100.0

**Table 16: Distribution of Posters Based on Movie's Release Date and Mention of Date on Poster**

Decade	Frequency	Percentage(%)
1930-39	0	0.0
1940-49	0	0.0
1950-59	0	0.0
1960-69	0	0.0
1980-89	1	1.6
1990-99	8	12.5
2000-09	36	56.3
2010-12	19	29.7
Total	64	100.0

In Table 16 we see that in the last few decades, graphic artists have been including the movie's release date on the poster. This is first encountered in the 1980s for only one movie (1.6%), with this percentage

rising to 12.5% in the 1990s. A marked increase is observed in the 2000s (56.3%) and in the first two years of the current decade (29.7%).

Another advertising trick that movie poster producers employ is to mention the movie's animation technique on the poster. Based on Table 17, this trick is employed almost every decade, naturally not with the same frequency. Thus, from the 1940s to the 1960s, we have two movies every decade (at 7.1% each decade) in which the technique used to produce them is mentioned. In the last two decades there is a noticeable increase, with fourteen (50%) posters between 2010 and 2012 and eight (28.6%) in the 2000s.

**Table 17: Distribution of Posters Based on Movie's Release Date and Mention of Movie's Animation Technique on Poster**

Decade	Frequency	Percentage(%)
1930-39	0	0.0
1940-49	2	7.1
1950-59	2	7.1
1960-69	2	7.1
1980-89	0	0.0
1990-99	0	0.0
2000-09	8	28.6
2010-12	14	50.0
Total	28	100.0

The next two tables (Tables 18 and 19) concern the content of the posters with regard to the objects depicted on them. Thus, in Table 18, we see the percentages of fairytale characters on the posters, noting that their frequency remains relatively constant over time. Such characters appear on the posters three times (33.3%) in the 2010s, twice (22.2%) in the 2000s and once each (11.1%) in the 1930s, 1950s, 1980s, and 1990s.

**Table 18: Distribution of Posters Based on Movie's Release Date and Portrayal of Fairytale Characters on Poster**

Decade	Frequency	Percentage(%)
1930-39	1	11.1
1940-49	0	0.0
1950-59	1	11.1
1960-69	0	0.0
1980-89	1	11.1
1990-99	1	11.1
2000-09	2	22.2
2010-12	3	33.3
Total	9	100.0

Table 19 presents the frequency with which elements of nature are portrayed in the research sample. We observe that in the last few years there are more depictions of natural elements, such as forests or the sea, on posters. The highest occurrence (50%) is encountered in the 2000s, followed by the 2010s (26.9%). In the first three decades of our research period, there are no portrayals of nature or natural elements, which begin to make their appearance on movie posters in the 1960s.

**Table 19: Distribution of Posters Based on Movie's Release Date and Portrayal of Nature on Poster**

Decade	Frequency	Percentage(%)
1930-39	0	0.0
1940-49	0	0.0
1950-59	0	0.0
1960-69	2	7.1
1980-89	1	3.8
1990-99	3	11.5
2000-09	13	50.0
2010-12	7	26.9
Total	26	100.0

As mentioned before, the research sample comprises one hundred movie posters advertising children's animated movies. The posters' analysis was based on commentaries on and examination of their type and content. As regards their type, the posters are divided into three categories: (a) hand-drawn posters, (b) two-dimensional digital posters, and (c) three-dimensional digital posters. During the early years of movie and poster production, hand-drawn images were used. As animation evolved, so too did the method used to promote these movies. In most movies produced using the technique of hand-drawn animation, we see the protagonists portrayed against a flat background (e.g. Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, Peter Pan, Pinocchio), whereas in modern-day movies, we see that the background depicts the movie's environment (e.g. in Shrek we see the castle, in Nemo the ocean depths, in Toy Story the bedroom). One exception is The Rugrats Movie, which although a modern production, uses hand-drawn images.

The linguistic and iconic messages coexist on the posters as two meaning systems structured into a single conceptual unit. Analyzing them helps us to better understand them (Kress, 2010).

As regards movie titles, only two posters in the sample have none: *Shrek 2* and *Kung Fu Panda*. In these posters there is a symbolic meaning, in the form of a verbal palimpsest, invoking the viewer's recollective memory and making him or her draw upon their pre-existent knowledge to decode the linguistic message.

Through anchorage, the caption or title helps us to choose the correct level of perception. In other words, it helps to focus the recipient's gaze and understanding on the image's shapes and messages (Kress, 2010). Anchorage provides clarification, or a metalanguage for certain aspects of the iconic message. For example, (a) on the Despicable Me poster, we have the tag line "Superbad. Superdad.", (b) the tag line of the Ratatouille poster is "He's dying to become a chef", (c) on the Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs poster, it is "Prepare to get served", (d) on the G-Force poster, "The world needs bigger heroes", (e) on the Chicken Run poster, "There's nothing more determined than poultry with a plan", (f) on the Meet the Robinsons poster, the tag line is "If you think your family's different, wait 'til you meet the family of the future", (g) on the Lady and the Tramp poster, it is "One of the all-time great love stories", and (h) on The Rugrats Movie poster, "France never had a chance". These posters do not merely provide information on the movie; rather, the phonological imprint of the acoustic image — the signifier — provides an additional meaning (Kokkali, 1992).

Furthermore, the posters are also accompanied by other types of linguistic text, in addition to the tag lines, which have an auxiliary or supplementary function (Barthes, 1988). Fifty-eight of the posters have such tag lines. Linguistic messages also include the movie's release date, production company, or animation technique, the actors doing the voice-overs, and the names of other contributors.

We note that in recent years the date has been mentioned as an advertising ploy to generate anticipation for the movie, e.g. "in theaters in November", "July 21", "Coming in 2006", "May 29", and "Christmas Day". The names of actors are also lately mentioned for the same reason, for example, Ben Stiller, Chris Rock, David Schwimmer, and Jada Pinkett Smith, as well as the very famous Robert De Niro, Renee Zellweger, Will Smith, Angelina Jolie, Jack Black and Martin Scorsese. Furthermore, the linguistic message

entailed in referring to the animation technique used (at first Technicolor and now 3D) is employed by the poster's creator to promote the new technique.

#### **4. Qualitative Analysis — Social Signifiers of the Sample**

From our analysis of the poster as an image, we have derived a series of codes that help to interpret the image so as to generate meanings. In the posters of the material under analysis, there are seven codes: the people code (human figures and imaginary beings), animals code, spatial code, buildings code, war code, machines and engines code, and modes of transport code, which function as communication conventions.

With reference to the people code, we see that the protagonists shown on the posters under analysis are: (a) princes and princesses, identified through the symbolic crown, (b) superheroes, identified either by the particular costume worn, such as in *The Incredibles* poster, by their accentuated physique, as in the *Hercules* poster, or via another feature, such as an action, e.g. Tarzan swinging from tree branch to tree branch in the jungle, (c) everyday people, such as the black-suit wearing protagonist in *Roger Rabbit*, and the hero in *Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs* who wears a white coat as a signified of the scientist, and (d) imaginary beings. The imaginary beings code comprises (d1) monsters or aliens and (d2) fairytale characters. Ariel, a fairytale character in *The Little Mermaid*, is depicted as a heroine who is beautiful and sweet, unlike Ursula the Sea Witch, the movie's villain, who is malicious and depicted in dark colors. We observe that fairytale characters are either heroes or villains, depending on the movie's story: dwarfs, elves, fairies, sea witches, mermaids, genies and Smurfs. Aliens sometimes have leading roles and at other times supporting roles. They are always vividly colored, have big eyes or just one, irregularly shaped eye, no arms, are ghost-like, or have a regular body but a big head, as in *Megamind*. In this category, most protagonists are monsters with or without human features (e.g. Shrek, a green monster, is dressed like a human/hero/warrior and tries to free the princess, in contrast with the dragon/monster that chases him, breathing fire on him, or the monster in the movie *Monsters, Inc.*). An important detail is the fact that in the people, animals and imaginary beings codes, there exist opposing pairs, namely good versus bad. The heroes are always more attractive, with bright, vibrant colors, unlike the somber-colored villains. The only exception is the green monster Shrek, who, although ugly, is nevertheless very likeable.

The animal code has the most representations, since it refers to animals (a) in their natural form, and in their own environment, with storylines involving animals taken from nature, as in *Bambi* (with a deer that explores the world), in the *Lion King* (with a lion that is king, accompanied by warthogs, monkeys and hyenas), and (b) wearing human clothing: in the *Stuart Little* poster, the mouse is in jeans and a T-shirt and is riding a skateboard; in the *Chicken Run* poster, the hens are wearing foulards and pearls around their neck and are trying to escape from the farm; in the *Alvin* poster, there are two chipmunks dressed like rappers, wearing caps and hoodies; and in the *Rango* poster, there is a chameleon in a Hawaiian shirt standing in a square with a plastic fish in his arms.

The spatial code concerns the poster's background, as an extension of the movie's plot. We see posters in which the protagonists are either by the sea, on the beach or in the ocean depths. For example, in *The Little Mermaid*, the princess's castle is under the sea, *Shark Tale's* poster depicts a city with tall buildings beneath the sea's surface, where the protagonists are fish, and there is also the well-known Nemo. There are also posters for movies whose storyline has something to do with water, but whose protagonists live out of the sea, as illustrated in some of the posters for the movies *Ice Age*, *Rio*, *Madagascar*, and *Happy Feet*.

There are few references to the machines and engines code, pertaining to machines and engines that come to life and are almost human-like. They live and act like regular humans, e.g. in *Cars*, where the vehicles have human features, such as mouths to smile with. There are also anthropomorphic machines or robots on various posters, e.g. for the movies *Wall-E*, *Robots*, and *Jimmy Neutron*. The robots are in their standard, well-known form and live either in space or on Earth.

Lastly, many movie characters use some mode of transport, such as public transport (in the case of the Smurfs, who take the subway), or a skateboard (used by Stuart Little to get around). Some characters use weapons, which may either be part of the character's role, or may help that character to solve a problem.

The buildings/urban code is auxiliary and comes into use depending on the poster's story. In *Shrek*, we see the castle where the princess lives, and there are also castles in *The Little Mermaid* and in *Aladdin*. In the posters we see the urban code keeps pace with the era, e.g. we see skyscrapers and modern edifices. Sometimes a building is symbolic, at times it is an old, detached dwelling, dark and frightening, and at other times we see symbolic buildings such as the Arc de Triomphe (*The Rugrats Movie*) and Big Ben (*A Christmas Carol*).

Through communication conventions, we observe in the posters the frequent use of symbol-objects that represent or draw a parallel between the said symbol-objects and people and situations (Kress, 2010). A characteristic example is the letter "S" on the *Shrek* movie posters, which is green just like its protagonist and is topped by antennae that are just like our hero's. Similar symbolism is found in the *Toy Story* poster, in which the toy characters come out of a box and so come alive. In *Nemo*, we see the large shark with its pointy teeth chasing the little fish Nemo. In this way, using size and by emphasizing the shark's teeth, the shark is presented as the hunter. In the *Up* movie poster, in order to reinforce the title and story, all the objects depicted on the poster are high up in the sky, all hanging from a huge bunch of balloons. The protagonist of *Despicable Me* has his back to us, wanting to drive home the fact that he is bad; he shows us his aversion. In the *Curious George* movie poster, the protagonist, a monkey, looks at us through his binoculars, which symbolize his curiosity and thus reinforce the movie's title.

The above symbolisms, serving as connotators, are linked and activated, contributing to the iconic denotation and reading of the message. While most posters offer images, we observe in a number of them the depicted subject's extra-diegetic gaze, which is a demand for the viewer to acknowledge it (Kress, 2010). A common characteristic of all the posters is the protagonists' intention to be approachable, to enter our lives, or rather for us to identify with them. Thus, offer images characterize the movie poster.

Based on the above analysis, we find that mass culture mechanisms employ various methods of influence aided by indirect, pervasive and internalized coercion, in this way introducing so-called symbolic violence, or, as Antonio Gramsci defines it, a cultural hegemony (Petras & Veltmeyer, 2001), which is none other than the dominant ideology (Gramsci, 1971; Manesis, 1986; Eagleton, 1991; Manheim, 1985; Althusser, 1984; Poulantzas, 1985). It has been repeatedly claimed by the Marxist school of thought that the media reflect the dominant ideology, the ruling class's values (Doulkeri, 1990). According to Baudrillard (n.d.), the mass media do not merely contribute to the dominant ideology, but in fact shape it, through it favoring definitions of reality that entirely negate critical thought — in essence creating a counterfeit reality (Hall, 1980) and making the receiver feel as if the transmitter's thought is his or her own thought, also confirmed by some third party (Downing, 1980). It is therefore evident that by introducing the concept of hegemony, power ceases to be exclusively a matter of coercion and violence, but instead becomes a combination of "compulsion and consent, authority and hegemony, violence and culture" (Anderson, 1985).

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