

“It’s the Green, it’s the Green, it’s the Green You Need”

Deviation from and Conformity to Disney’s Hierarchical Narrative in *The Princess and the Frog*

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Disney’s Happily Ever After

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“You got what you wanted, but you lost what you had,” is gleefully chanted by shrunken heads hung on the wall of Dr. Facilier’s dimly lit voodoo lair. The warning comes at the end of “Friends on the Other Side,” arguably the catchiest song of Disney’s 2009 film *The Princess and the Frog*. Dr. Facilier performs this musical number to convince Prince Naveen and his butler, Lawrence, that he can “make [their] wildest dreams come true.” Instead of making Naveen and Lawrence wealthy, however, Dr. Facilier turns Naveen into a frog and Lawrence into a reluctant accomplice in his larger plan to take over New Orleans. At first, “You got what you wanted, but you lost what you had” appears to be the demons chiding Naveen and Lawrence for their greed and gullibility. By the end of the film, the line reflects a prejudiced warning against Dr. Facilier’s attempt to take more power than their social status allows. “You got the power that you wanted,” the heads seem to be telling Dr. Facilier, “but you lost the freedom you had. Be careful when you try to get more than you deserve.”

This message is not unique to *The Princess and the Frog*; many Disney films feature villains who reach for more power than they deserve and are struck down by fate, and these villains are an integral part of Disney’s traditional hierarchical narrative. Lee Artz, a professor of Media Studies at Purdue University Northwest, thoroughly outlines Disney’s traditional hierarchical narrative in his 2004 article “The Righteousness of Self-Centred Royals: The World According to Disney Animation.” Artz describes three key archetypal characters in the Disney canon that form the foundation for the hierarchical narrative: the hero, the villain, and the ruler. Heroes are privileged, attractive, and of noble birthright. A story’s end sees the hero maintain or increase their wealth and privilege. Villains, like Dr. Facilier, are unattractive schemers aiming to climb the social ladder. Their power is a fluke, and they are ultimately defeated. The benign ruler is perhaps slightly clueless but overall good-natured, benevolent, and harmless. As the ultimate authority, these



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In 2009, my family and I saw *The Princess and the Frog* in theaters. Six-year-old me was thrilled. The music was catchy, the protagonist

was smart and strong, and the villain was frightening but not nightmare-inducing. The experience is particularly memorable as the only time I saw a 2D animated film in a movie theater.

Disney produced a lot of the entertainment I remember consuming as a child. In Professor Lisa Andres’ Writing 101 course, Decoding Disney, I revisited some of the films that had captivated my imagination. Through movie nights, engaging readings, and insightful class discussion, I discovered the value of examining children’s media with a critical scholarly lens.

You may say, *but these movies are just for kids, so why do they matter?* Media is a mirror that both reflects and influences culture. Analyzing children’s media can reveal biases and stereotypes ingrained in our society and perhaps assist us in confronting them. I believe what we as a society are willing to show impressionable children reflects our values, and questioning our values allows us to improve them.

Revisiting the Disney movies I loved as a child with a scholarly lens did not ruin them in my eyes. Instead, the course helped me see some of the harmful messaging in the media I consumed as a kid and improve the critical eye with which I consume media now.

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rulers would never abuse their power (Artz 130). The combination of these three archetypal characters perpetuates the narrative that people who are attempting to improve their allotted socioeconomic station are evil and greedy, the upper class have an inherent right to wealth and power and should not be challenged, and people of lower social status are less fortunate because they deserve to be. The hierarchical pattern Artz identified in Disney films challenges the morality of social mobility and depicts a world that favors the wealthy and powerful.

In addition to the archetypal characters Artz outlines, Disney upholds their hierarchical narrative by sanitizing race and class from their media. Scholars Jessi Streib, Miryeya Ayala, and Colleen Wixted discuss the sanitization in their article, “Benign Inequality: Frames of Poverty and Social Class Inequality in Children’s Movies.” Disney erases issues of race and class within Disney films, thereby legitimizing poverty and discrimination. Streib and her colleagues refer to this idea as benign inequality; by ignoring race and class issues and portraying primarily upper class narratives, children’s media frames poverty and discrimination as inevitable, normal and acceptable (Streib et al. 16). The sanitization of race and class is a key aspect of Disney’s hierarchical narrative. By erasing the struggles of the lower class, Disney can portray characters working to improve their social status as villains and stigmatize social mobility. Sanitization also allows Disney to portray authority figures as purely benevolent. Confronting race and class issues would force Disney to admit that an authority promotes inequality, challenging the authority’s benign or benevolent characterization.

Disney’s *The Princess and the Frog*, although never explicitly discussed by Artz and only briefly mentioned by Streib et al., contains elements of Disney’s hierarchical narrative and sanitization. *The Princess and the Frog* is about a young Black woman, Tiana, in 1920s New Orleans. Tiana is working two jobs in an effort to realize her late father’s dreams of owning a restaurant together. The wealthy, white Charlotte La Bouff and her father Eli “Big Daddy” La Bouff invite Tiana to serve beignets at their Mardi Gras masquerade ball. While there, Tiana finds a frog, the human Prince Naveen turned amphibian by Dr. Facilier. Because Tiana is not a Princess, kissing Naveen turns her into a frog, too. Frog-Tiana and Frog-Naveen travel through the bayou, search for a way to turn back into humans, and try to stay ahead of Dr. Facilier and Naveen’s butler, Lawrence, who need Naveen as a pawn in a larger plan to kill Big Daddy and take over New Orleans. In the end, Tiana and Prince Naveen get married, become human again, and open her dream restaurant.

In light of the current scholarly discussion surrounding hierarchy and sanitization in Disney, I argue that *The Princess and the Frog*’s departure from a privileged, titled heroine appears to challenge the traditional narrative about class and hierarchy. Unfortunately, Tiana’s relationship to Dr. Facilier and the La Bouffs undermines that challenge. Juxtaposition of the appearances, aspirations, and rhetoric of protagonist Tiana and antagonist Dr. Facilier leads to a more insidious narrative separating the lower class into either *good or bad categories*. Disney sanitizes Tiana’s struggles and attributes her success or failure solely to her own hard work while portraying Dr. Facilier as a dangerous antagonist who acknowledges inequality around him and tries to rise above his social station. By contrasting Tiana and Dr. Facilier, Disney perpetuates a version of a model minority myth within the Black community, silences critics of the racial and financial divides within the film, and sells a harmful *pull yourself up by your bootstraps* narrative that has larger implications for the way society views the lower class. Just as Dr. Facilier’s social position in relation to Tiana’s is harmful,



the powerful and wealthy position of the La Bouffes in relation to Tiana's changing social status ensures that Tiana's social mobility does not challenge the traditional power structures established in the film. In the end, what appears to subvert the hierarchical narrative actually results in the reinforcement of that narrative and adds an additional layer of harmful messaging.

At first, it appears that *The Princess and the Frog* subverts the traditional hierarchical narrative that Artz outlines. Dr. Facilier fits Artz's villain archetype: a Black man who is struggling financially tries to take over New



Orleans with power he only possesses because he made a deal with his demonic “friends on the other side.” However, Tiana, the central protagonist, is not privileged or of noble birth. Tiana's neighborhood is introduced almost immediately in the film as a stark contrast to the “stately homes and mansions of the Sugar Barons and the Cotton Kings” that are pictured and described during the film's opening song (00:09:02-00:09:12). Her mother is a seamstress, her late father was a laborer, and adult Tiana waitresses at two restaurants to save for her dream restaurant. Tiana's eventual rise in social status – she becomes a princess – means *The Princess and the Frog* appears to be a story of social and economic mobility. Disney seems to subvert their traditional narrative by showing that anyone – regardless of their race or class – become successful or a princess. But that is not the true narrative. Instead, Disney tells a harmful, classist story through the juxtaposition of Tiana and Dr. Facilier.

Disney historically distinguishes heroes and villains with racial or social indicators of inequality. In *The Princess and the Frog*, both Tiana and Dr. Facilier are Black and struggle financially. Without racial or social indicators, the filmmakers reinforced the hero-villain dynamic through three key differences between Tiana and Dr. Facilier: their appearances, their aspirations, and their rhetoric.

Disney promotes the beauty-goodness stereotype in many of its films, *The Princess and the Frog* included. Dr. Dorris Bazzini, a professor of social psychology, and her colleagues did a statistical analysis in 2010 of the physical attributes, personalities, and outcomes of primary, secondary, and periphery characters in twenty-one Disney films. Their findings stated that Disney perpetuates the stereotype that “what is beautiful is good.” More attractive characters have

better outcomes, romantically and otherwise, and are “more morally virtuous and less aggressive” (Bazzini et al. 2706-2707). Disney is not the only media company promoting that beauty is good and ugly is bad, and in fact there is some

evidence that favoring attractiveness may be ingrained in our biology (Little et al. 1651). However, it is undeniable that Disney reinforces societal stereotypes that favor attractive people (Bazzini et al. 2707). *The Princess and the Frog* employs the traditional Disney method of using beauty to signal heroism and villainy. Tiana has rounded

features, large doe-eyes, and the small waist that is almost ubiquitous to Disney-princess proportions. In contrast, Dr. Facilier is lean and lanky, with longer, more angular features and a skull and crossbones on his top hat. Tiana appears warm, kind, and approachable; Dr. Facilier appears scheming and sinister.

The contrast between the character design of Tiana and Dr. Facilier goes even deeper. Disney continues their pattern of queer-coding villains, or creating villains embedded with queer stereotypes, by giving Dr. Facilier effeminate characteristics that evoke the stereotype of a predatory gay man. In her article, “Mean Ladies: Transgendered Villains in Disney Films,” Amanda Putnam, a professor of literature at the University of Central Oklahoma, describes and contextualizes Disney's habit of giving villains qualities of the opposite sex as a shorthand for good and evil. Putnam states that Disney incites social stigmas by making male villains effeminate and female villains masculine, while simultaneously exaggerating female heroes' femininity and male heroes' masculinity (148-149). *The Princess and the Frog* supports Putnam's thesis. Dr. Facilier is dressed in a purple three-piece suit with long coattails and no button up shirt, leaving his chest and stomach exposed. He gestures with “stereotypical limp-wristed affectation” (Putnam 148), wears a feather in his top hat, and looks Prince Naveen up and down hungrily when they first meet. In contrast, Tiana has the classic feminine hourglass figure, a smooth, silky voice, and large eyes. Even Frog-Tiana is notably smaller and slimmer than Frog-Naveen and has the same hourglass proportions. The dominant heterosexuality of Tiana plays against the deviant femininity of Dr. Facilier, emphasizing the separation of the hero and the villain through character

design. Highlighting the beauty and heterosexuality of the heroes and the unattractiveness and queerness of the villains reinforces social stereotypes that diminish those who do not meet society's beauty, gender, and sexuality standards.

Disney further emphasizes the hero-villain dynamic of Tiana and Dr. Facilier through their aspirations. Both want to escape poverty to a higher socio-economic status, but the framing of their desires is different. For Tiana, her desire is to open a restaurant because she loves to cook and wants to honor her late father. A critical viewer might look past Tiana's lack of awareness of her own poverty and recognize that she is currently struggling due to her lower socio-economic status. If she owned her own restaurant, she could afford a better place to live and improve her financial and social situation. However, Tiana does not discuss money, a better house, or a higher status as a goal throughout the film. She only mentions money in the context of "I need enough money to buy my restaurant," and thus Tiana's ambitions are "pure" as she is driven by love for her father and love of food. Her financial struggles are erased from the context of her goals. On the other hand, Dr. Facilier discusses money and social status blatantly. He is introduced as an avaricious conman who plays wicked tricks on unsuspecting patrons in order to manipulate them into giving him small amounts of cash. Dr. Facilier sells a man a potion to cure baldness for a coin, then looks on with jealousy as a cute, young boy receives a stack of cash for a newspaper. The man who bought the potion is dismayed to find Dr. Facilier has actually sold him a potion

that causes extreme hair growth on the entire body, not just the head (00:08:18-00:08:45). Dr. Facilier fits directly into Artz's villain archetype. In the beginning of the film, Dr. Facilier's plan is a desperate, vague attempt to gain wealth. Later, however, Dr. Facilier's plan becomes clearer as he discusses it with his "friends on the other side," the mysterious and vindictive spirits who lend Dr. Facilier their power. He plans to have Lawrence (disguised as Prince Naveen) marry

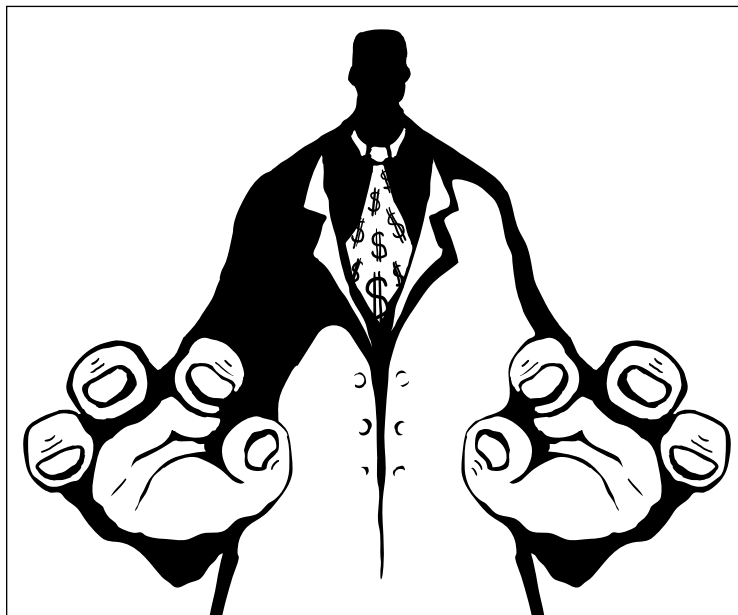
Charlotte, kill Big Daddy La Bouff, and then control the La Bouff fortune through Charlotte. Dr. Facilier wants to gain wealth by taking it away from someone else, just as Scar wishes to take the Pridelands from Simba, the rightful ruler, in *The Lion King*, or as Ursula wishes to take control of the ocean from King Triton, the true owner of the powerful trident, in *The Little Mermaid*. Tiana is passionate; Dr. Facilier is greedy.

Tiana is earnest; Dr. Facilier is duplicitous. Thus, an implicit judgment is made that desire for more money or higher social status is evil, demonizing people of a lower social class who may wish to reach financial security or a more comfortable social status.

Disney also emphasizes the hero-villain dynamic of Tiana and Dr. Facilier through the differences in their rhetoric. Tiana's rhetoric is all about hard work, and she discusses how close she is to achieving her goal of owning a restaurant only in relation to her own efforts. The first song Tiana sings is "Almost There," where she says, "So I work real hard each and every day, and good things are sure to come my way" (00:14:45-00:14:55). After the song "Dig a Little Deeper," Tiana says, "I get it! I need to dig a little deeper, and work even harder to get my restaurant!" (01:05:45- 01:05:55). She attributes all her successes and failures to her own hard work or lack thereof, and she does not acknowledge the racial and financial barriers that she faces. In contrast, Dr. Facilier dares to acknowledge racial and financial divides in the world around him. Dr. Facilier has a conversation with Lawrence, Naveen's butler, in which he says, "You and I both know the real power in this world ain't magic, it's money. Buckets of it... Aren't you tired of living on the margins while all those fat cats and their fancy cars don't give you so much as a sideways glance" (00:32:00-00:32:25). He blames the wealthy – and implicitly white – people for preventing him from moving up in society. These critiques are framed as complaints that lead the audience to view Dr. Facilier as bitter, jealous, lazy, and ultimately villainous.

The clear delineation of Tiana as a hero and Dr. Facilier as a villain through physical characteristics and aspirations makes an implicit judgment on their respective rhetoric. For example, when Dr. Facilier points out that it is unfair that Big Daddy has all the wealth and implies that Big Daddy has that money in part because he is white, this is framed as a negative commentary that highlights his evilness. Thus, Disney undermines

critiques of racial and social divides in the United States. When Dr. Facilier makes arguably accurate statements about the racial and financial divide, his commentary is easily dismissed because he is the villain. In contrast, when Tiana makes a statement about the value of hard work, this is has positive framing because she is the attractive hero. The contrast in their rhetoric and the way their rhetoric is framed



perpetuates a harmful *pull yourself up by your bootstraps* narrative. The film suggests that people who are facing social or financial struggles are in that position simply because they did not work hard enough. This ignores very real factors that prevent people from improving their situation in life. In addition, Disney makes the judgment that people who blame authority or who criticize the wealthy elite are doing so for sinister reasons and are complaining without valid points. Overall, Disney suggests that marginalized people should ignore the forces that are holding them back and whistle while they work.

Disney perpetuates a myth that there are *good* marginalized people and *bad* marginalized people through *The Princess and the Frog*. Good marginalized people like Tiana do not complain when they face hardship, do not blame others for their misfortune, and do not cause problems within their society; instead, they work hard to improve their situation. Bad marginalized people, like Dr. Facilier, complain, refuse to work hard, and dare to blame the oppressors for their misfortune. This myth implies that some people deserve to move up in society more than others. In *The Princess and the Frog*, this narrative perpetuates a version of model minority myth within the Black community.

The model minority myth is the narrative that some minority groups are excessively more successful than others, and thus they must not be as marginalized. In academic and cultural contexts, the “model minority myth” usually refers to a myth surrounding the Asian community, which promotes the idea that Asian Americans “have overcome all barriers of racial discrimination and are more successful even than whites” (Suzuki 23). In his article, “The Model Minority and the Inferior Minority Myths: Understanding Stereotypes and Their Implications for Student Learning,” Samuel D. Museus, a professor of Education Studies at UCSD interviews an Asian student in order to ascertain the personal effects of the model minority myth on her. The student explained that “because of the stereotype of the model minority, she believed that her instructors and classmates held excessively high expectations for her academic performance” (Museus 4). The inferior minority myth is the other side of the coin, stating that some minorities are naturally inferior. Dr. Museus

also interviewed a Black student who had been affected by the inferior minority myth, and she said “the moment she enters a classroom, she feels that her white peers believe she is academically inferior” (Museus 5). She internalized the inferior minority myth, leading her to believe she was inferior.

While the model minority myth typically refers to Asian Americans, *The Princess and the Frog’s* good versus bad marginalized people message mirrors a model minority versus inferior minority myth relationship within the Black community. The film sends the implicit message that Black people like Tiana who avoid critiquing or even acknowledging race and class divides are thus more deserving of improving their social station if they can work hard enough for it. In contrast, those who criticize harmful power



structures that perpetuate racism and poverty are threats like Dr. Facilier. These people do not deserve to reach a more comfortable social status or financial stability, and if they do, they may be dangerous. Thus, there are good and bad members of the Black community, those who may be allowed to work for social improvement and those who deserve their lower social standing, delineated only by how comfortable they make people with more social and financial power feel. If society deems a Black person as undeserving of an improved social status because they call out injustice, then that message may be internalized as it was for the Black student Dr. Museus interviewed. For those who are assumed to be deserving, their experience with discrimination may be invalidated. *The Princess and the Frog* perpetuates larger social stigmas that cause harm to marginalized people, inhibiting success for some and invalidating experiences for others.

While Tiana diverges from Disney’s traditional hierarchical narrative by not being privileged or of noble birth, the effect is not as positive as one would have hoped. Unfortunately, the reality of the relationship between the physical appearance, aspirations, and rhetoric of Tiana and Dr. Facilier communicates a harmful message that overshadows any positive message that could have been sent by Tiana’s race and class.

Tiana’s social status appears to challenge Disney’s

traditional hierarchical narrative not only in the beginning of the film, but also at the end. Tiana marries Prince Naveen, becomes a princess, and finally acquires her dream restaurant. In the traditional hierarchical narrative outlined by Artz, Tiana should retain her social and financial status from beginning to end, and any social mobility should be frowned upon as a sign of greed. Tiana's social mobility, which is celebrated in the film, contradicts the aspect of Disney's traditional hierarchical narrative that challenges the morality of social mobility. However, just as further inspection of the relationship between Tiana and Dr. Facilier revealed a harmful narrative, further inspection of Tiana's social mobility reveals that she does not truly challenge any traditional power structures.

While Tiana does become a princess and a business owner at the end of the film, which is a significant increase in social and financial status, the effect of that social mobility is dampened by the presence of the La Bouffs. Big Daddy and Charlotte La Bouff are rich, white socialites who essentially run New Orleans. Big Daddy is benevolent and slightly clueless, and he falls over himself to please Charlotte, a spoiled but generous southern belle who desperately wants to be a princess. Tiana's mother, Eudora, is a working-class seamstress who created beautiful princess dresses for Charlotte when Charlotte and Tiana were younger. Charlotte and Tiana are still friends as adults. While the La Bouffs do not have official titles, they are highest up on the social ladder within the world of the film — they are the wealthiest characters, they are white, and there is nobody with more power. Even though the La Bouffs are not nobility, they serve in Disney's predetermined role of benevolent authority much like King Triton in *The Little Mermaid* and Mufasa in *The Lion King*.

Tiana's relationship with the La Bouffs, the authorities, is representative of *The Princess and the Frog's* reluctance to address race and class within the film.

The obvious racial and financial divides between Tiana and the La Bouffs are brushed aside and minimized as Disney attempts to lessen the extent to which Tiana's social status is the source of her problems. The film never explicitly says what Big Daddy La Bouff does for a living, although a critical eye can reasonably assume that he is a plantation owner. In the opening song, "Down in New Orleans," the line "stately

homes and mansions of the Sugar Barons and the Cotton Kings" (00:09:02-00:09:12) is sung over an image of Big Daddy and Charlotte pulling up in front of their extravagant house. The film takes place in 1920s New Orleans, but Disney's attempt to gloss over how the La Bouffs became wealthy is one way the film erases the racism that was part of Louisiana at the time.

Disney also takes every chance to remind the audience that the La Bouffs harbor no racist sentiments. The La Bouffs treat both Tiana and Eudora kindly, without racial prejudice. In the beginning of the film, Big Daddy comes into Duke's, the restaurant where Tiana waitresses, to eat some of her beignets in celebration of his election as King of the Mardi Gras Parade. Charlotte tags along to talk to Tiana about the masquerade ball they are throwing (00:10:25-00:11:58). By having the La Bouffs visit a smaller restaurant where both Black and white patrons are eating, Disney demonstrates that the La Bouffs do not feel superior to others. At the masquerade ball, Tiana gets covered in powdered sugar and Charlotte brings Tiana into the La Bouff mansion to give Tiana a new dress (00:24:50-00:25:55), demonstrating that despite Tiana's role as a server at Charlotte's party, Charlotte sees Tiana as an equal. Considering the historical context, it is unlikely Charlotte would give Tiana a dress or invite Tiana into her room. The colorblind friendship and kindness Charlotte shows Tiana is a significant erasure of historical race relations.



Throughout the film, the La Bouffs are generous and kind, embodying Artz's ruler archetype. The La Bouffs can do no wrong. In this way, Disney sanitizes the racial and financial divides from Tiana's relationship with the La Bouffs.

While Tiana does experience social mobility at the end of the film, her new social status does not challenge the La Bouffs' position as the benevolent authorities. Tiana becomes a princess but does not leave to rule Maldonia and thus does not receive tangible power. If she had received the power a

princess would wield, she would have been more powerful than the La Bouffs and would have risen above Charlotte and Big Daddy on the social ladder. Tiana finally gets to achieve her dream and own a restaurant, but she still does not surpass the La Bouffs. During the final song, "Down in New Orleans (Finale)," she stops by the La Bouffs table at her restaurant to say hello and see how they are doing (01:29:20-01:29:25).

No words are exchanged as Tiana is singing, but Big Daddy waves a beignet in the air and winks, showing that he approves of her success and her cooking. This moment mirrors one from the beginning of the film, when Tiana is working as a waitress and serves Big Daddy beignets (00:10:25-00:10:47). Although she now owns a restaurant instead of working as a waitress, she is still serving the La Bouffs. Tiana's social status in relation to the La Bouffs has not shifted.

The implicit message is that Tiana can move up in the world, but only insofar as she does not challenge Big Daddy and Charlotte. Tiana, a Black woman, would not be allowed to move socially or financially ahead of the wealthy, white La Bouffs. In the end, the hierarchy established at the beginning of the film remains. The Black character does not supersede the powerful white characters, the divides based on race and class established in the beginning are not broken, and Tiana does not truly experience social mobility. The traditional power structure of authority, power, wealth, and whiteness is upheld. In the end, the presence of the La Bouffs ensures that Disney's hierarchical narrative is not challenged by *The Princess and the Frog*.

Disney films traditionally follow a similar hierarchical structure that rests on three archetypal characters: the attractive, privileged hero; the scheming, social-climbing villain; and the benevolent authority. The combination of these three characters results in a narrative that challenges the morality of social mobility and depicts a world that favors the wealthy and powerful. Disney's *The Princess and the Frog* breaks tradition by featuring a Black, low-income, working woman as its hero. In the end, Tiana becomes a princess and restaurant owner, entering a higher social and financial class. Unfortunately, when put in context with the characters that represent the other two archetypes, the villain and the ruler, Tiana's characterization and storyline fail to challenge Disney's traditional narrative and instead send a harmful message about the lower class.

The villain of the film, Dr. Facilier, is a shadowman who made a deal with his "friends on the other side" in exchange for mystical powers. Like Tiana, he is also Black and struggling financially. Disney usually separates the heroes and the villains with racial or social boundaries, but Tiana and Dr. Facilier are from the same racial and social background. Disney

signals the hero-villain dynamic between Tiana and Dr. Facilier through their physical appearance, aspirations, and rhetoric. Unfortunately, the juxtaposition of Tiana's rounded features, desire for a restaurant, and rhetoric focusing on hard work with Dr. Facilier's angular effemininity, desire for money and power, and rhetoric centered around jealousy and social divides creates an underlying message about the *good marginalized person* versus the *bad marginalized person*. The relationship between Tiana and Dr. Facilier leads to a version of the model minority myth within the Black community and discredits critiques of racial and financial inequalities.

The rulers of the film, Charlotte and Big Daddy La Bouff, are wealthy, white socialites who are friends with Tiana. They patronize the restaurant where Tiana works as a waiter and then later the restaurant Tiana opens. The La Bouffs' presence in the film makes apparent Disney's sanitization of the 1920s New Orleans setting. By not acknowledging the obvious financial and racial divides between Tiana and the La Bouffs, Disney glosses over the racial and social barriers Tiana



faces. In addition, because the La Bouffs' social position is unaffected throughout the film and Tiana does surpass them in status, Tiana's position in relation to the La Bouffs remains functionally unchanged from the beginning of the film to the end. Thus, the social mobility Tiana experiences does not challenge any of the existing power structures of Disney films.

Unfortunately, all of this means that *The Princess and the Frog* does follow Disney's traditional hierarchical narrative, and the film is not as subversive as one might initially believe. Towards the beginning of the film, the shrunken heads on the wall of Dr. Facilier's lair chanted, "You got what you wanted, but you lost what you had" (00:21:50-00:22:00). After thorough analysis of the hierarchical structures in the film, what was a warning against Prince Naveen's greed and gullibility becomes a more insidious chiding of Dr. Facilier. As the villain, or as someone in a lower social and financial class, Dr. Facilier is not allowed to end up with more power or wealth than his socioeconomic status allows. In challenging Disney's hierarchical narrative, Dr. Facilier invited fate to strike him down.

The harmful hierarchical narrative and messaging about

the lower class is not unique to *The Princess and the Frog* or Disney films. It is concerning, however, that within a movie where Disney attempted to break out of their traditional mold, the company ultimately failed to do so. Disney's failure with *The Princess and the Frog* does not inspire confidence for future films and franchises where they may attempt to undo some of their previous harmful messaging. Because Disney is a leader in children's entertainment, this does not bode well for films from other companies either. Whether

children's media improves messaging or not, it is important for society to pay attention to the messaging implicitly communicated in children's media. When children receive messages about the upper class being better than the lower class, or some lower class people being more deserving than others, those messages are likely to be internalized (Museus 4-5). Children's media should be scrutinized to identify biases and harmful narratives that individuals and companies can work to eliminate.

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