A cultural study of Disney's Star Wars : theorizing circuit of culture

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SINGAPORE

**A CULTURAL STUDY OF DISNEY'S *STAR WARS*: THEORIZING CIRCUIT
OF CULTURE**

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SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

2019

**A CULTURAL STUDY OF DISNEY'S *STAR WARS*: THEORIZING CIRCUIT
OF CULTURE**

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A thesis submitted to the Nanyang Technological University
in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

2019

Statement of Originality

I hereby certify that the work embodied in this thesis is the result of original research, is free of plagiarised materials, and has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other University or Institution.

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Summary

Using *Star Wars* as a case study, this thesis examines the cultural circulation of morality through discourses related to the *Star Wars* films and a range of the transmedia storytelling universe such as toys and merchandizing activities. My aim is to analyse the social and cultural significance of trust and loyalty as mutually reinforcing morals before and after *Star Wars*' acquisitions by Disney. This thesis explores the similarities and differences in the ways that Lucasfilm (under the leadership of George Lucas) and Disney, separately perceive and circulate moral meanings through *Star Wars* films, toys and other merchandize and the processes and practices involved in the construction of morals. To study this phenomenon, the thesis adopts the theoretical and methodological framework of the circuit of culture to analyse four distinct yet overlapping and non-linear moments or processes: representation, production, consumption and identities. The thesis adds to a deeper sociological understanding of the meaning-making processes of a cultural text when handled by two different cultural industries. In adopting the circuit of culture, this thesis offers a unique understanding of the cultural complexity of *Star Wars* through the articulation of the interconnected cultural processes. Considering the acquisitions of *Star Wars* by Disney as a recent phenomenon, this thesis will contribute empirically to an understanding of the memoir of *Star Wars* as a moral narrative, analyzed through the various cultural processes that enable multiple and varied meanings for a text.

To achieve this methodologically, this study employs an analysis of various discourses surrounding *Star Wars* when handled by Lucasfilm and Disney, respectively. In acknowledging the importance of film as a primary site to examine the conception of morals, I analyze discourses around the films and the various texts such as toys and merchandise, that are embedded within the cultural biography of *Star Wars*

as a moral tale. This thesis focuses on four of the five moments/processes of the circuit of culture. In examining the production process, I examine a number of distinctive practices by focusing on narratives involving George Lucas, media and industry experts and producers at Lucasfilm and Disney. I discuss how trust and loyalty are embedded in various relationships within the process of cultural production enabling certain moral messages. An analysis of the representation processes involves taking into considering various accounts of *Star Wars* morals in terms of post-world war II discourses and its role in shaping *Star Wars*. These accounts add to a semiotic and a discursive understanding of morality as rooted in several analytic representations. An analysis of consumption involves examining two fan forums-the boardsnet.com, and thecantina.starwarsnewsnet.com to discuss how fans interpret and ‘consume’ morality through their interactions and engagement with films and toys and ways in which those morals meanings are decoded. In addition, I also examine content created by fans online to study their perceptions related to the moral messages and its circulation around *Star Wars*. In examining identities, I analyze the various social identities related to *Star Wars*, that is to say how people identify with the text and how Lucasfilm and Disney structure identities around *Star Wars*. I examine the identity in terms of how *Star Wars* has enabled fans/consumers to take up certain *Star Wars* identities by focusing on few discourses such as *Star Wars*’ communities with a focus on costuming clubs, *Star Wars* fan forums, *Star Wars* Identities Exhibition and Force Friday to show how trust and loyalty are interwoven into the processes of identification between the producers, consumers and the text. An articulation of these four processes is useful in providing an understanding of ways in which morality is disseminated in society through popular culture.

Glossary

Abbreviated titles for all *Star Wars* films:

Star Wars: Episode I The Phantom Menace -	<i>Phantom</i>
Star Wars: Episode II Attack of the Clones -	<i>Clones</i>
Star Wars: Episode III Revenge of the Sith -	<i>Revenge</i>
Star Wars: Episode IV A New Hope -	<i>A New Hope</i>
Star Wars: Episode V The Empire Strikes Back -	<i>Empire</i>
Star Wars: Episode VI Return of the Jedi -	<i>Return</i>
Star Wars: Episode VII The Force Awakens -	<i>The Force Awakens</i>
Star Wars: Episode VIII The Last Jedi -	<i>The Last Jedi</i>

Star Wars anthologies:

Rogue One: A Star Wars Story -	<i>Rogue One</i>
Solo: A Star Wars Story -	<i>Solo</i>

Other terminologies and abbreviations

Original trilogy-	<i>OT</i>
Prequel trilogy-	<i>PT</i>
Sequel trilogy-	<i>ST</i>
Expanded Universe-	<i>EU</i>

Chronology of the feature films

Star Wars: Episode IV A New Hope (1977)

Director: George Lucas

Star Wars: Episode V The Empire Strikes Back (1980)

Director: Irvin Kershner

Star Wars: Episode VI Return of the Jedi (1983)

Director: Richard Marquand

Star Wars: Episode I The Phantom Menace (1999)

Director: George Lucas

Star Wars: Episode II Attack of the Clones (2002)

Director: George Lucas

Star Wars: Episode III Revenge of the Sith (2005)

Director: George Lucas

Star Wars: Episode VII The Force Awakens (2015)

Director: J. J. Abrams

Rogue One: A Star Wars Story- anthology (2016)

Director: Gareth Edwards

Star Wars: Episode VIII The Last Jedi (2017)

Director: Rian Johnson

Solo: A Star Wars Story- anthology (2018)

Director: Ron Howard

Star Wars: Episode XI (upcoming 2019)

Director: J. J. Abrams

Chapter 1- Introduction

Background

This thesis has developed out of my professional experiences and personal interests being in the frontline of media production. In 2012, while working as a producer at Star Movies, an English movies cable network in India, the news of Disney acquiring Lucasfilm¹, the parent company of franchises such as *Star Wars* and *Indiana Jones*, shook media industries across the globe. While 20th Century FOX, a part of Star TV Network² continues to distribute *Star Wars* films, the creative and merchandizing rights Disney acquired marked a new chapter not just for Disney as a company but for the fate of the *Star Wars* franchise which included films, television shows, comic books, toys, and related merchandise. More importantly, it signalled a new chapter for throngs of audiences and fans when Disney announced its plans for releasing a new *Star Wars* film every year. This announcement opened a range of possibilities in terms of production potential and audiences' expectations and engagement with the franchise. As a media professional working with the Star Network, this *Star Wars* deal with Disney signalled competition for Star network since *Star Wars* and *Indiana Jones* franchises performed remarkably well in terms of weekly audience research ratings. However, as an audience member and 'follower'³ of *Star Wars*, the knowledge of this marriage between the franchise and Disney's styles of media production proved to be quite exciting, mostly because it created new opportunities for the franchise to continue its legacy of all-time successful films.

¹ Company founded by George Lucas that manages several divisions including PIXAR, Lucas licensing, Industrial light and magic, Lucasfilm animation and LucasArts.

² Star TV is an international television network founded and owned by Rupert Murdoch.

³ Kozinets (2001) refers to audiences/consumers who have watched all Star Wars films and keep themselves updated with activities related to Star Wars such as the Expanded Universe, merchandise, news, etc as followers.

Franchises such as *Jaws*, *James Bond*, *The Avengers*, and *Indiana Jones* have been crucial as an acquisition property for every major studio and broadcaster in India such as Fox, Warner, Viacom, Sony, and Disney. Acquiring these mega franchises directly translates into assured increase in audience viewership and hence increase in the ratings for the channel, which promises huge monetary potential for the broadcaster. While FOX had already acquired most of these large franchises in India, the announcement of the buyout of the *Star Wars* franchise piqued the channel's (Star management's, where I was working then) interest to a new level. The most important highlight was George Lucas' sell-out of the franchise in the hands of another big media player such as Disney. Being associated with a professional role that deals with the management and acquisition of Hollywood films, especially American films, the Disney- Lucasfilm deal caught my attention.

The closest I came to *Star Wars* was while working with Cartoon Network in India during 2008, a children's entertainment cable channel which owns televised rights of an animated series of the *Star Wars* franchise- *Star Wars: Clone Wars*. I was responsible for "glocalizing" the series for Indian audiences by creating a market base and getting local audiences in India to adapt to Hollywood productions. My interest and inclination towards Hollywood films is what piqued my interests towards academic research involved in studying *Star Wars* as a Disney acquired franchise.

When Disney announced the acquisition of Lucasfilm for USD\$4 billion in 2012, with this being its 4th largest deal following ABC, Pixar, and Fox, it generated immense activities and discussions in online communities and entertainment outlets via news articles and entertainment, news and talk shows. In essence, the news of

George Lucas's sale of his landmark company to Disney sent the entertainment and media industry into a global buzz.

Cultural significance

To understand the cultural scale and significance which *Star Wars* occupies in the contemporary media landscape, Roger Iger⁴, the CEO of Disney, provides a brief yet remarkably insightful summary:

“Star Wars in particular is a strong global brand, and one of the greatest family entertainment franchises of all time, with hundreds of millions of fans around the globe. Its universe of more than 17,000 characters inhabiting several thousand planets spanning 20,000 years offers infinite inspiration and opportunities – and we're already moving forward with plans to continue the epic Star Wars saga” (Melanson 2012).

As a colossal cultural icon, the *Star Wars*' culture has seeped into the everyday lives of people making it one of the largest cultural bodies and influences in contemporary times (Elovaara 2013). In Taylor's words, *Star Wars* has saturated modern life:

I went to a yoga class- the teacher's short hand for the technique of ujjayi breathing was “just breathe like Darth Vader.” I went to Facebook for a press briefing on the algorithm that governs what stories we see in our newsfeeds; the executive explained it by showing how Yoda would see different posts from Luke Skywalker compared to the posts Darth Vader and Princess Leia would see on their feeds, because of the different familiar relationships (Taylor 2015: 5).

The cultural status of *Star Wars* can be recognised in four main ways. Firstly, *Star Wars* is considered cultural because people have constituted and established it as a meaningful text. People engage in meaning-making of cultural objects when they talk, think about and imagine it (du Gay et al. 1997), which *Star Wars* is a part of. *Star Wars* is also ‘cultural’ because it connects people socially with distinct sets of habits and practices such as consuming media products, purchasing merchandises and

⁴ This thesis retains original names of all people, usernames (on forums and blogs) as used and mentioned in the original data sources. Moreover, because this thesis relies on discourses and publicly available data sources, and does not involve direct, one-on-one interviews with participants, there is no use of pseudonyms.

collecting of related memorabilia. Thirdly, it is considered to be cultural because it is associated with certain types and groups of people. These include notable individuals such as George Lucas, the founder of the *Star Wars* franchise, to communities of fans and consumers through engaging in a plethora of fandom activities such as costume groups, fan fictions, production of online content and fan forums. The consumers and fans of the franchise range from all age groups and are demographically spread through all part so the world. While George Lucas had himself declared his films to be targeted at 14 years of age, the other transmedia storytelling mediums such as toys, action figures, novels, comic books, video games are consumed by adults and older fans too. The significance and influence of *Star Wars* are ubiquitous in people's day-to-day lives; 'from being featured on children's lunch boxes and T-shirts, to being featured as a cultural staple in Halloween costumes' (Pianka 2013). Through such practices, *Star Wars* acquires a social profile or a cultural identity. Finally, its cultural presence is also cemented through its prevalence and permanence within our cultural syntax of everyday language use in places where *Star Wars* is available. Iconic phrases such as 'May the Force be with you' and 'Do or do not, there is no try' as well as its widely recognised larger-than-life characters such as Darth Vader and Yoda all bear the hallmarks of the franchise's cultural influences.

By recognising and referencing *Star Wars* within these practices, people appropriate it into the other aspects of cultures and identities. Potential-wise, *Star Wars* today also stands as one of the most commercially successful popular cultural franchise of all time in which a substantial portion of its revenue is derived from its huge merchandising potential across a variety of regional markets. The combination of creativity, branding, business and the multiple avenues for different media related to *Star Wars* is a testimony to the success of the franchise. The Universe

of *Star Wars* not only comprises of films, and the expanded transmedia storytelling channels, but also people closely associated and invested in the franchise. These include ‘collectors and costuming collectives, droid builders and lightsaber lovers, spoofers and satirists- and most of these groups have, in unexpected ways, become part of the franchise itself’ (Taylor 2015: np). The production and circulation of the transmedia storytelling of *Star Wars* has generated an expansion of consumers and fans with its forty year old franchising. “*Star Wars* is not just alive but thriving, with a third generation of children whose dreams are fuelled by that long ago, far away galaxy” (McDonald 2013: 2). The franchise has also given rise to *Star Wars* fandom with several social sites of connections such as fan fiction, blogs, forums, comic conventions, costume clubs and fan parades to name a few.

In addition, *Star Wars* references are visible in other popular culture narratives, especially television such as Big Bang Theory, Bones, Community, The Daily Show, 30, Rock, Archer, Everybody Loves Raymond, Family Guy, Friends, The Goldbergs, The Simpsons, Saturday Night Live, South Park, Scrubs, and many more. Some of these shows have not only produced *Star Wars* references, but have written *Star Wars*-based plots or produced special *Star Wars* episodes. In addition, *Star Wars* has inspired many fan films and several parodies and spin-offs such as '*Family Guy's 'Blue Harvest'*', *Seth Green's -Robert Chicken: Star Wars*, *Hardware Wars- a spoof*, *Mel Brook's- Space Balls*, *David Lightman's-WarGames* and *Return of the Ewok-a feature film*. These narratives and references to *Star Wars* are constantly produced and circulated among audiences and consumers making the text a part of their everyday life and culture (Lee 2016).

Though *Star Wars* films were originally produced within the American context, the transmedia storytelling is spread and circulated through the world. Thus

these everyday references, reach and are consumed by people from all over the world. Whether it is about being fans, or simply audiences of the films and the television shows or consumers of the toys and merchandise, there will be very few people who have not heard of *Star Wars*. In UK, on a popular television and radio reality show, guests are asked to perform a task or activity that they have to admit they have never done, whose title is “Never Seen *Star Wars*.” Japan has a high number of *Star Wars*’ fan following, not the least due to its adaptation and similarities to Akira Kurosawa’s films but the ease at which *Star Wars* transmedia is being consumed in their everyday lives. Ever since the release of *A New Hope* in 1977, *Star Wars* has been a huge phenomenon.

For many people now, it is a culture, a sprawling detailed mythos they can pick through with their eyes closed; a group of characters who may have been important role models than friends and family; and a set of codes- quotes, in-jokes, obscure references that provide instant common ground for fellow fans meeting for the first time and that bind established communities together. (Brooker 2002:vii).

Much of the scholarship on *Star Wars* focuses on empirical research before its acquisition by Disney. It has been studied for both its ethical and philosophical insights (Decker and Eberl 2005), as well as its discourses on the American perception and experience of war (Kapell and Lawrence 2006). Furthermore, it has been studied extensively in connection to myth (Campbell 1949, Kuiper 1988), as a way of understanding religion and spirituality (Lyden 2003, McDowell 2007), and the ways in which it is expanding within the transmedia storytelling space (Hills 2002, Proctor 2013).

Since Disney’s acquisitions of *Star Wars*, there are a few studies focusing on online fandom and fan ethnographies (Proctor 2013), in an effort to ‘map’ out emotions and affectations of fans’ responses to the acquisitions and the transmedia

branding of the *EU* as a continuity of the canonical *Star Wars* plot (Proctor and Freeman 2016). Other studies included focusing on action figures of Disney's *Star Wars* characters that provide an understanding between the toys merchandise and other fan based activities as embedded with its 'paratextual' nature extending the term to fan fiction, costume groups, fan forums, etc (Scott 2017). Proctor and Freeman (2016) termed this phenomenon as an expansion of the *Star Wars*' franchise into a transmedia empire spread across varied media platforms such as novels, comic books, videogames, radio plays and magazines, where the "...branching out of the text has created an 'entertainment super system' as 'a network of extra- diegetic elements that operate in conjunction with the text itself and help create its meaning" (Proctor and Freeman 2016:224&25).

Disney's acquisition of *Star Wars* has not only produced academic debates related to the implications of its buyout posited within a discourse on production but also has garnered a variety of mixed reactions from fans and media. As Consetta Parker, a *Star Wars*' fan and a media consultant described her surprise in an interview with USA Today, "For years, we were told we'd never see it. The announcement of a new trilogy is really exciting for us fans. It really opens up the doors" (Truitt, Alexander and Della 2012). Likewise, Leonard Maltin, a film critic provided a deeper commentary,

"When I heard the news I was surprised... That's not the case with Lucas. George Lucas doesn't have a deep bench...but his characters endure. And that's what Disney is banking on I'm sure...It's not just the films. There's a whole stream of novels, graphic novels, video games. The characters live many different lives" (Truitt, Alexander and Della 2012).

On the sceptics' camp, Eric Geller, a fan and an editor of fan forums such as TheForce.net and Rebelcum.com, commented that "I'm hesitant to see what Disney does with it once George Lucas steps back...you need to have people to know his

vision” (Truitt, Alexander and Della 2012). Such debates contribute towards an understanding of fan’s emotional affection to *Star Wars* in relation to their anticipated treatment of their favourite text by Disney. What this debate also suggests is the multifaceted dimensions of organizational logic of buying a successful franchise which is supposed to guarantee immense revenue through an enormous potential of the transmedia storytelling factor (Hesmondhalgh 2007). On the one hand, fans claim that Lucasfilm has destroyed the *Star Wars* franchise especially while referring to the PT, while on the other there are fans who have expressed their admiration and respect for Lucasfilm for preserving the legacy of *Star Wars* plot by expanding *EU*. Thus it comes hardly as a surprise that Disney’s acquisition of *Star Wars* garnered mixed reactions from various groups such as fans and industry experts. Despite the release of two films and anthologies since 2015 after the acquisition, fans continued to be highly critical of Disney’s style of managing *Star Wars*. The disappointment expressed by fans have similarly inspired social movements such as petitions demanding Disney to offer George Lucas to write and direct the final chapter of the current *Star Wars* films, claiming that Disney’s direction of *Star Wars* films was an affront to the core values which Lucas had constructed in his earlier original films. This episode highlights how fans are not only involved in activities related to influencing the plot of *Star Wars* but also engage with themes from films which have become important cultural references of their lives. Considering these anecdotes, the existing scholarship and the recent acquisitions of *Star Wars* by Disney, there seems to be a gap in understanding the relationship between the organizational ways through which popular cultural myth are handled, its representation and the consumption patterns and interpretations.

Statement of the problem

Out of the various cultural references by which producers and consumers draw out from the *Star Wars* franchise, one major domain is the construction of narratives of morality in *Star Wars*. Morality is defined in relation to behavior considered as good or bad, or the distinction between right and wrong, good and evil in terms of desires and actions of responsible human beings (Hitlin and Vaisey 2010). Morals are cultural products which represent an individual's basic knowledge of ethical conduct, practices and expectations (Baker 1995). However, instead of assuming that people act towards others based on predetermined sets of values which they hold, individuals' actions and behavior can be seen as a reflection of their habits developed over a period of time (Swidler 1986). In that, morality can be regarded as mass produced strategies of actions by popular culture media which provides discourses towards guiding people's ethical behavior towards self and others. In highlighting this approach in defining morality, I focus on the production and reproduction of moral tropes through popular culture using *Star Wars* as a case. I argue that through *Star Wars* films and specific narrative approaches, *Star Wars* as a text⁵ imbues a narrative of morality in society by reiterating and replicating morally-suggestive narratives through films and has continued to disseminate morality through toys, television shows, comic books, video games and a range of transmedia devices. Part of the motivation in imbuing *Star Wars* with moral tropes was derived from George Lucas's intention of narrating *Star Wars* as a moral myth that embodied hope and positivism against the gloomy pessimism in the context of the Vietnam War which the American society experienced during the 60s and 70s. According to George Lucas's biography by Dave Pollock (1983),

⁵ Encompasses all the characteristics that refer to *Star Wars* as a cultural phenomenon.

“...Lucas wanted to present positive values to the audiences. In the 1970s, traditional religion was out of fashion and the family structure was disintegrating. There was no moral anchor. Lucas remembers how protected he had felt growing up in the cocoonlike culture of the 1950s, a feeling he wanted to communicate in *Star Wars*” (143 in Lev 1998:31).

In another interview published in 1977 before the release of the first *Star Wars* film, Lucas also noted that:

“...there was not a lot of mythology in our society- the kind of stories we tell ourselves and our children, which is the way our heritage is passed down. ...I wanted it (viz., *Star Wars*) to be a traditional moral study, to have palpable precepts...that children could understand...Traditionally we get them from the church, the family and in the modern world we get them from the media- from movies” (McDowell 2016:38).

Lucas further added that he wanted to highlight the core morals of friendship, honesty, loyalty and trust as a way of bringing back a sense of goodness and positivism to the American society in the aftermath of the Vietnam War. He explained that these morals provided guidance in doing the right thing and living on the “light side”; keeping away from the “dark side”⁶ for a smooth functioning of relationships and for people to have faith in one another. ‘Hard work, self-sacrifice, friendship, loyalty, and a commitment to a higher purpose’, according to Lucas, were the films’ core morals and messages in addition to the ones stated above. He further elaborated that “...there’s a reason this film (*A New Hope*) is so popular. It’s not that I’m giving out propaganda (which) nobody wants to hear” (Pollock 1983:140). Based on these perspectives, I argue that *Star Wars* carries explicit moral themes and messages with an aim to circulate specific tropes of morality in society through its films. By extension, Lucasfilm’s intention was to circulate these ideals through films as a popular culture vehicle driving moral messages to people.

⁶ In *Star Wars*, the light and the dark side are crafted as metaphors for the moral spectrum- The Force. The Jedi are shown to embody the light side aligned with knowledge and calmness whereas the dark side is depicted to be embodied by the Sith who embrace moral of selfishness, pride, greed, etc.

Hollywood cultural products and representations are consumed by people on a regular basis across the world. Films play a crucial role in shaping our social, cultural and political views of the world (Propp, Wagner, and Dundes 1968). Film narratives also provide strategies of action which become habits in people's everyday lives as they are exposed to these mediated references repeatedly (DiMaggio 1997). The distinctive portrayal of the good vs. evil and the distinction between the hero and the villain, signifying right vs. wrong practices are mass produced tools through popular culture which enabled the circulation of moral meanings. My thesis particularly focuses on the circulation of two moral concepts, namely trust and loyalty through *Star Wars* and the extension and applicability of these morals onto the transmedia storytelling channels. The choice of examining these two moral concepts is primarily based on Lucas' statements in various interviews in which he termed these as two of the most important moral values essential to any relationship portrayed in films. These relationships can also be examined out of the context of films related to several paratexts such as producer-audience relationships, audiences' relations to the text, all embedded in morals of trust and loyalty. I refer to Hesmondhalgh's (2007) notion of cultural industries which he refers to as synonymous to 'media industries'. *Star Wars*, I argue has used a specific format for its narrative construction comprising of mythic elements which should be examined within a larger discourse on myth. Several scholarly approaches to myth will be examined in details in chapter 2 that engages and develops a discussion of *Star Wars* moral meanings.

The application of the myth and fairy tale is commonly seen across Disney's films and can be argued is Disney's style of cultural production through the circulation of morality embedded in myth and fairytales. It is not wrong to interpret that what a myth is to *Star Wars* is equivalent to myth and fairy tales to Disney as the narrative

formats adopted to circulate moral messages. One of the differences between the narrative created by Lucasfilm and Disney however is in its narrative trajectory in which, on the one hand, while Lucasfilm's *Expanded Universe*⁷ (EU) moved the *Star Wars* narrative forward in a chronological manner, Disney's approach was aimed at a return to the past to narrate stories which took place in between the *OT* and *PT* (Proctor and Freeman 2016).

In connecting this scholarship and anecdotes to Lucasfilm and George Lucas' intention of circulating moral meanings, I argue that the repetition of the myth suggests a continuation of narratives with meanings comprising morality through *Star Wars* by Disney. Since the acquisitions of *Star Wars* by Disney in 2012, there has been scant research in examining how these two cultural industries construct meanings for a single cultural text in an effort to continue the transmedia storytelling world focusing on the circulation of morals of trust and loyalty as embedded within the mythic storytelling structure. My thesis provides a descriptive analysis of *Star Wars*' developments of moral tropes as handled and negotiated at different levels of the formation of the culture text across these two cultural industries. The significance of my research is in its focus on moral meanings which have served as mass produced mediated tools and have allowed for an examination of the ways in which these moral meanings are produced, represented and consumed.

Research goals and significance of the study

⁷ The Expanded Universe (EU) is a collective term for all fictional material produced by Lucasfilm or officially licensed by it. The EU consists of a range of derivative *Star Wars* works produced in conjunction with, between, and after the original trilogy (1977–1983) and prequel trilogy (1999–2005) of films; .; and serves as an extension of the *Star Wars* films produced by George Lucas.

The goal of my thesis is twofold. First, I examine the morals tropes of trust and loyalty constructed by Lucasfilm as cultural tools. Second, I examine Disney's control and reproduction of those morals tropes after its acquisition of Lucasfilm. I analyse the similarities and the differences between Lucasfilm's way of circulating moral meanings vis-a-vis Disney's way of reproducing moral meanings that are embedded within the cultural industries' rationale of storytelling and producing culture. I investigate whether and how Disney disseminates morality differently from what Lucasfilm has done. Specifically, I am curious about the role of Disney in mitigating the diverse range of *Star Wars* related texts- as an aspect that is not been thoroughly investigated in literature. Disney's organizational and industry structures (Peterson 1976) enable an understanding of Disney's massification of the *Star Wars* culture. That is, it is crucial to take a look at Disney's way of producing culture through its myths and its transmedia storytelling economy embedded within various paratexts.

It is not only through the continuation of the moral myth in the form of films which Disney circulates morality but it is also through the dismissing of the old canon, the production of *Rebels* through which Disney ensures new and modified meanings for *Star Wars*. Part of the discourses related to the meaning-making of moral rhetoric necessitate a discussion of the political-economy of the American film industry. This entails an examination of the factors that have facilitated in the production, representation and consumption of *Star Wars* (to be discussed in chapters. 2&4). In addition, when Disney acquired the rights for Lucasfilm and all the related texts, it changed the name of the '*Expanded Universe*' to '*Star Wars Legends*' that would only consists of texts comprising of the original six movies, *Star Wars: The Clone Wars* TV series and the *Clone wars* movie. Before the release of *The Force Awakens*, Disney introduced Force Friday- a global fan 'production' event celebrating the launch of *Star*

Wars merchandize. This study is however not comparative in nature in that it does not aim to highlight the themes (from the films) which are similar or different in Lucasfilm's and Disney's way of handling the text. Rather, I draw attention to the various discourses related to the ways in which Lucasfilm and Disney produce culture by circulating moral tropes through *Star Wars* as a vehicle of pop culture.

In order to achieve this, the moral meanings and processes belonging to the relevant cultural industries involved in circulating moral meanings are examined. I adopt the theoretical framework of the circuit of culture (du Gay et al, 1997) which examines five cultural processes such as production, representation, consumption, regulation and identities that shape a cultural text. My thesis fills a theoretical gap in the understanding of the practices and processes through which two cultural industries construct and circulate moral meanings in society. In adopting the circuit of culture as a guiding framework, I argue that my study contributes significantly to the understanding of the meanings and the processes through which a popular cultural text disseminates moral messages. I argue that the role that cultural industries play in handling moral meanings for the same cultural text has not been thoroughly investigated. Studying the role of two large cultural industries such as Lucasfilm and Disney will add to a deeper sociological understanding of the meaning-making processes related to *Star Wars*' morality. I adopt the framework of the circuit of culture developed by du Gay, Hall, Janes, Mackay and Negus (1997) which involves the articulation of five cultural processes to examine *Star Wars* as a cultural text. du Gay et al claimed that without analyzing these divergent yet overlapping cultural processes, the study of the meaning-making of a cultural text is incomplete. Their multiperspectival approach perceives meaning-making as an on-going process.

In my thesis I examine *Star Wars* through the four cultural processes: production, identities, consumption and representation. I choose to not include the cultural process of regulation for two reasons. One, on a methodological level, there are insufficient data available to analyse how morality is controlled and restricted by Lucasfilm and Disney. Secondly, on a theoretical level, the process of regulation within the framework of the circuit of culture is applied to the cultural hardware (the Walkman) as a tangible object and not the meanings it signifies or represents such as youth, mobility, and music. Since my thesis examines meanings, regulation cannot be utilised in the same sense that the other cultural processes can be articulated. In order to examine the relevance of disseminating morality through popular culture, it is important to study the way moral messages have penetrated into people's lives as mass produced tools. *Star Wars*' moral tropes are circulated not just through its films but also via a range of its transmedia storytelling universe that consists of toys, merchandise, comic books, and video games. This leads me to specifically ask, ***What are the meanings being constructed through the production and circulation of Star Wars which renders it a cultural phenomenon?***

Lucasfilm (George Lucas) and Disney are huge cultural industries that enable meaning-making for its texts and products. Both of these cultural industries are considered as strong economic and cultural phenomenon with powerful cultural tools that have implications on the messages they construct and circulate. In the context of my research, it is important to examine the way in which both Lucasfilm and Disney understand, perceive, shape and construct morality. The role of cultural industries in the dissemination of moral messages is a neglected sociological topic and this thesis aims to supplement that gap. Thus it is important and relevant to ask,

What roles do Lucasfilm and Disney play in the cultural dissemination of moral tropes in Star Wars?

I argue that the role of cultural industries in the dissemination of moral messages is a neglected sociological topic. By combining meanings and processes through which those meanings are shaped into a single study, I adopt the theoretical and conceptual framework of the circuit of culture that analyses four cultural processes of production, representation, consumption and identities that specifically leads me to ask,

How does the conceptual and theoretical framework of the circuit of culture enable an understanding of Star Wars as a meaningful cultural text?

Outline of the thesis

While the circuit of culture is non-linear, my thesis is arranged and presented in a linear way since the focus is to highlight the significance of each ‘moment’/ ‘cultural process’. In the next chapter, I focus on the key concepts and literature pertaining to my research questions (Chapter 2). Following that, I outline the methodology which the study adopts in addressing the research questions (Chapter 3). This study utilizes the methodology of discourse analysis to study how each discourse around *Star Wars*’ moral tropes form certain meanings around the text and within narratives of production, representation, identities and consumption.

I began my analysis with an examination of the *Star Wars* universe that entails scholarly debates around concepts of authorship and the political-economy of the American film industry posited within the processes of regulation, production and consumption. This chapter (Chapter 4) adds to a nuanced understanding of the facets of production of culture and contributes significantly to an understanding of the circuit of culture. The next chapter deals with the ‘moment’ of **production** since production

practices and processes create the cultural text (Chapter 5). In examining the cultural production of morality, I analyzed discourses related to various accounts of Lucasfilm's employees, George Lucas, Disney managers and producers, and those associated with *Star Wars* which helped shape the text. While du Gay et al (1997) claimed that studying the moment of production involves studying producers' accounts, I extended this analysis beyond George Lucas' and Disney' accounts, by incorporating the involvement played by media and industry experts included in the cultural production of morality. In addition, I examined the relationship between George Lucas and Kenner, the toy company which produces the *Star Wars* merchandise, as well as between Lucas and Disney, to highlight the significance of trust and loyalty via moral tropes as rooted within relationships in the process of production. The next analytical stage involved an examination of the ways in cultural and social meanings inform and shape *Star Wars* and vice versa through the process of **representation** (Chapter 6). To study cultural representation, I examined the discourses related to the Vietnam War, The Cold War and World war II as representative of the narrative and the characters. I focused on the semiotics involving the parallels drawn from the real wars embedded within the costume, the narrative as well as the characters. I specifically analyzed Lucasfilm and Disney's practices of representing morals of trust and loyalty within these signs. The following chapter deals with the 'moment' of **consumption**, in which audiences and fans produce and interpret moral meanings by interacting with *Star Wars* text (Chapter 7). In examining consumption, I relied on two well established and popular online fan forums for *Star Wars* fan activities. In addition, I also examined a few fan blogs and fan created content online to analyse their accounts and narratives related to the moral consumption. However, practices of consumption go two and fro, and especially shape

the process of ‘**identity**’ (Chapter 8). In the chapter on identity, I analyzed and examined discourses that focused on the processes of consumers’ and fans’ identification with *Star Wars* and ways in which Lucasfilm and Disney formulate and structure identities around *Star Wars*. After explicating the moments of the circuit of culture separately, I concluded (Chapter 9) by briefly commenting on the further directions this research could take by discussing its strengths and limitations.

Chapter 2- A Discussion of morality, myth and the circuit of culture

Introduction

This chapter addresses the scholarship on morality and myth relating to *Star Wars*, the ways in which cultural industries conceive of and circulate these meanings in society through popular culture and extant scholarship around the circuit of culture that informs this thesis. In general, the roles which cultural industries play in formulating and negotiating moral meanings for the same popular cultural text has not been paid sufficient attention within academic scholarship. The theoretical literature is therefore situated within the disciplines of cultural sociology, sociology of culture and cultural studies to emphasize the meanings of a cultural text and the organizational processes through which the cultural text obtains meaning. The goal is to bring together three divergent disciplines of research- cultural sociology, sociology of culture and cultural studies to show their growing relevance and connection to each other. This objective is accomplished by relying on the circuit of culture as a framework to study the cultural dissemination of morality focusing on both the meanings and the processes through which the *Star Wars* myth is imbued with meanings as a cultural text into a single study. To achieve this, I focus on Lucasfilm (under George Lucas's leadership) and Disney's role as cultural industries which facilitated the construction and modification of moral meanings for *Star Wars*. Based on this approach, the meanings related to *Star Wars* especially in relation to morality can be thoroughly understood by adopting the circuit of culture which not only includes the cultural processes of production and consumption but also broadens the analysis of a cultural text to the processes of representation, and identities.

By situating the scholarship within three disciplines, it enables a deeper acknowledgement surrounding the construction of a cultural text through cultural sociology, the sociology of culture, and cultural studies. The sociology of culture focuses on the organizational, political, economic and social processes which involves the production of cultural objects; and cultural sociology focuses on the “relationship between cultural objects and the social world in which ‘meaning’ takes centre stage” (Griswold 1994). The methodological goal of the first approach is to adopt explanatory methods to explain social processes (sociology of culture), while the second approach is to rely on interpretive methods where the aim is to examine and interpret a wide range of materials, discourses, and contexts to make sense of the social world (Edles 2002). On the one hand, the sociology of culture approach examines cultural industries to understand why certain cultural products achieve success. The focus is on market dynamics and organizational and industry factors without paying much attention to the meanings the products convey, or the meanings the products have for its audiences. One of the primary objectives of the sociology of culture is to understanding 'how' meaning is communicated (Griswold 1987, Eliasoph and Lichterman 2003) which cuts across studies of production and consumption. On the other hand, cultural sociology aims at incorporating the central role of meaning-making into the analysis of social phenomena (Lima Neto 2014:928). "...within cultural sociology, the study of cultural objects is central to the theorization of the practice of meaning making” (McDonnell 2010:1801). In summary, the concern in cultural sociology's is associated with the 'text' as a meaning-making object itself while sociology of culture centres around the organizational processes through which the text becomes meaningful.

Cultural objects are produced, circulated and consumed by people. Similarly, Griswold described that "...meanings are woven from the symbolic capacities of the object itself and from the perceptual apparatus of those who experience the object"(Griswold 1987:1079). Studies of meaning-making have focussed on what the object meant and represented from the producer's perspectives and those who consume it (Griswold 1987, McDonnell 2010, Riley 2005). Thus cultural sociology also focuses on the relationship between production and consumption. Griswold's (1994) cultural diamond analyses the 'mutual constitution' between cultural objects and society (i.e. the social world). The diamond draws links between a cultural object, the social world, the producers and the consumers. However Griswold notes that "If we are to build an integrative framework for thinking about the production and consumption of cultural/symbolic products, there needs to be a specific element which deals with the process of representation" (in O'Reilly 2005:577&78). This suggests that in addition to Lucasfilm's relationship between production and consumption, another 'moment' of representation is needed to study meanings surrounding a cultural object. du Gay et al (1997) offer two more analytical 'moments' involved in the process of the dissemination of a cultural object and pointed that "meaning is not sent from one stage e.g. production to consumption, as in a transmission model, it is 'more like the model of a dialogue"(du Gay et al. 1997:10).

Cultural studies scholars have generally avoided the thorough definition of its theoretical and methodological boundaries. Johnson formulated a continuous "circuit of the production, circulation and consumption of cultural products" (Johnson 1986:46). Johnson's framework was similar to Stuart Hall's (1980) version on "Encoding/Decoding" which examined the articulations of interconnected processes comprising the moments of production, circulation, and consumption. du Gay et al

(1997) expanded on this idea to examine the biography of a cultural artefact in relation to the articulation of five interrelated processes: production, representation, identity, consumption, and regulation. Hall (1980), Johnson (1986), and du Gay et al.'s (1997) theories also guide the multiperspectival methodological frameworks that inform the scholarly analysis of complex cultural and social processes.

My study adopted a theoretical framework from the field of cultural studies which du Gay et al (1997) have developed from Johnson's initial 'circuits of culture' (1986) by combining the meanings of a text and the cultural processes of production, representation, identities, and consumption. Together, these processes shape meanings for the cultural text and an articulation of their relationship to one another adds to an understanding of the patterns and practices of the circulation of meanings. Cultural text is an umbrella term used for cultural objects, artefacts and products. A cultural text is involved in a play of dispersed, variable meanings and reveals cultural meaning (Childs 2006). Though the words can be interchangeable, I adopt the term of 'cultural text' to refer to *Star Wars* in my thesis as the description that extends beyond material and physical properties of a culture. Cultural texts are "...defined as objects, symbols, narratives, or images inscribed by the collective attribution of meaning" (Bartlett 2005:3). Examples of cultural texts include both concrete and abstract concepts such as the princesses' stories, the religious beliefs and narratives, the image of the rainbow, traditions and rituals and anything for which meanings can be attributed to. In relation to the above description and definition of a cultural text, *Star Wars* could be seen as a case that comprises of varied and infinite sites for meaning-making. From a sociological perspective, the analysis of cultural texts does not focus on what the text does, but the social actions of people making and consuming it. Cultural texts such as movies, books, and television embody social

understandings and mediate the ways in which individuals' perceptions of the world are shaped. At the same time, perceptions of the social world also influence cultural texts (Nielsen, Patel and Rosner 2017). Culture and cultural texts co-exist and are mutually constitutive and dependant. "In other words, cultural objects (texts) reflect, reinforce, challenge, and dismantle social orders. Culture is at once being reflected by and in cultural objects as culture is being shaped by those objects and how individuals interact with them" (Nielsen, Patel and Rosner 2017:106).

Moral-cultural repertoires

This thesis focuses on the circulation of morality in and through *Star Wars*' text. The following section outlines a detailed discussion of how morality is manifested in people's everyday lives and how popular culture constructs moral myths by using the example of *Star Wars*. Popular culture discourses on morality can be considered as mass produced mediated tools, one of the ways of reinforcing and reiterating the distinction between good vs evil as well as right and wrong behaviors. I will first discuss morality by unpacking its concepts in relation to the morals and ethics as habits that people adopt and exercise in their choices, acts and behaviours (Swidler 1986) that emerge through popular culture discourses. Studies have shown that popular culture discourses and mediated representations of morality shape people's understanding of good vs evil and right vs wrong. By using *Star Wars* as a case, I highlight its relevance as a moral myth by arguing that popular culture enables the mass production of cultural tools and discourses that regulate strategies of action for moral actions and conduct. I shall explain how the existing literatures between *Star Wars* as a popular culture text within the framework of the circuit of culture and the larger theoretical discussion surrounding myth and morality intersect to form the research questions (outlined in the introductory chapter) my thesis aims to explore.

Sociologists such as Durkheim, Martineau and Simmel have argued for a science of morals that distinctly separates our understanding of ethics from morality. To Durkheim, morality is a system of rules that prescribes to an individual's way of conducting and behaving in various different situations (Durkheim 1957). Morality is understood from the context of an individual pertaining within the limits of the society. Durkheim also distinguished two elements of morality which are important to moral behavior. The first is a form of morality external of the individual which embodies some authoritative form, while the other is a morality which referred to an individual's way of representing the former character of morality. Morals are considered a distinction or a form with two sides- good or bad or taking internal commitments such as good vs evil into account (Luhmann 1996). In this sense, morality can be understood as an individual's way of expressing one's own understanding of the distinction between right and wrong or good and bad behavior based on societal and authoritative rules.

Earlier social scientists and sociologists varied in their theories on morality. "Marx argued that morality was a historically contingent social system tied up within class domination. And for Weber, the moral world was one with value rationality and the competing claims of historical ideas" (Hitlin and Vaisey 2013:52). Parsons proposed a moral theory of action where he argued that situations provide the means of action, values motivate the pursuit of ends and norms limit the ability to select the means for achieving those ends (Parsons and Shils 1951:2-6). Critics since, have successfully refuted and attacked this theoretical framework on many level. They argue that Parsons' claims were vague and that the theory does not take into account the internalization of norms, values and morals and provide weak connection between people's the values that people refer to and their actions (Collins 1981, Swidler 1986,

Hitlin and Vaisey 2013). Parson's theory makes a claim that social action is based on subjective consciousness and rationality. In agreeing with the critics, Parson's theory does not sufficiently provide how well the moral actions are well calculated and justified. In addition, emotions, habits, and tradition, are not a part of Parson's analysis.

Cultural sociologists reject the underlying assumption of Durkheim's sociology of morality as acting morally through conforming to social norms. At the same time they criticised Weber's idea of moral conduct being motivated by the values people acquire and internalise from society (Shaw 2015). To these scholars, values do not play any role in motivating moral actions and shaping individual behaviours (DiMaggio 1997, Swidler 1986). Scholars who study culture have often raised questions regarding the causal role attributed to the way cultural values are transmitted via the process of socialisation (Vaisey 2009). "The crux of this argument is that people do not internalise cultural meanings, ideologies, or values in thorough-going or consistent ways, as early socialisation theorists argued they do" (Shaw 2015:29). Theories of culture emphasize that people's perception, action and behavior towards things are shaped by culture without which meaning towards those objects would remain ambiguous (Shaw, Valadez and Rhoads 1999). Empirical studies by sociologists have shown that "people are often unable to verbally articulate their motives, or give consistent and non-contradictory reasons for their behaviour when asked to explain their commitments and justifications towards action" (Vaisey 2009: 1681).

The acts of right and wrong are embedded within habits and a historical understanding and agreement of such practices that raises concerns over harm, fairness and justice. In that virtuous behavior such as trustworthiness, being honest and loyal,

generosity are considered to be a practice of being morally good (Turiel 2002). In this sense, moral practices are fair and just and promote others' welfare. Being moral, in this view, is equivalent to being good and the opposite is viewed as 'immoral'. So if honesty, loyalty and trust are visible and experienced through a person's acts and behavior then the person is considered to be moral. In other oppositional view, morality refers to the understandings of right and wrong, and good and bad behaviour, is relative and varies between social groups and people. This notion of morality encompasses ways in which social groups or individuals understand and make sense of which behaviors are better than others, and what people should believe in, and act in various situations (Smith 2003). Here the opposite of moral is not immoral, rather something that can be considered as morally irrelevant. Morality is whatever is deemed acceptable by groups and differs culturally (Hitlin and Vaisey 2013).

The cultural sociologists' notion of morality fits into my argument that morality provides this distinction between good and bad conduct and enables people to identify good morals from immoral actions. In essence, I argue that popular culture texts play a crucial role in providing resources towards people's strategies of action in their understanding of good vs bad by providing moral discourses.

In the case of *Star Wars*, the connection between culture and morality can be understood within the socio-political rhetoric from the 1960s- 1980s that inform our understanding of morality and people's sentiments about morality being crucial and necessary. Events and situations such as government's involvement and role in the Vietnam war, the public protests and demonstrations surrounding the treatment of black people and the issues surrounding inequality in gender and the role of women gave rise to concerns over morality (Turiel 2002:4). *Star Wars* was conceived among these events that reflected the sentiments of people in their questioning of morality.

Star Wars is one such popular cultural text that has reiterated moral meanings that are posited within a discourse on the political, economic and cultural narratives as early as post World war II events.

Role of popular culture and mediated representations in influencing people's morality

Popular culture comprises of a gamut of 'folk', 'mass' and 'popular' practices, beliefs and objects which are extended beyond the conventional readable, visual or written objects such as advertisements, television, films and mass media objects. These include youth culture (Grossberg 1983, Hall and Jefferson 1993); household objects (Csikszentmihalyi and Halton 1981); food and drinks (Messer 1984); and dress culture (Barthes 1983). The effects of popular culture and media on people's behaviour and conduct have been well-explored within media studies and sociology (Silverstone 2002). In providing a basic definition of popular culture, Storey (2003) suggested that popular culture is simply a culture that is well-liked and preferred by many people. Popular culture texts are floating in society and films are an integral part of it. Studies of media portrayals of violence have evidently led to a few people committing acts of violence themselves (Phillips and Paight 1987). Engagement with various forms of popular culture means something for people who consume them. They employ the mediated representations and images in cultural products to construct their behaviour and interactions with people. To this end, Breckenridge noted that "...the world is shaped by media representations and images and people constitute their identities and knowledge by their experience of mass mediated forms in relation to the practices of everyday life" (Breckenridge 1995:4-5). People all around the world consume Hollywood media products, particularly films, on a regular basis which bear a profound role in their lives and shape the audiences' ideas surrounding social, cultural, political and economic issues.

Films, in particular, influence people's view of reality by mediating the various representations of reality in their mind (Demerath III 1981). 'Mediation,' as Silverstone (2002) defined the concept, is the role popular culture plays in conveying messages to people and influencing their actions and interactions. Mediation is not just the technological capability of popular culture but it also encompasses a social dimension. People as social actors have increasingly become dependent on the supply of public meanings and accounts of the world through popular culture in attempting to make sense of their own understanding and interpretation of those meanings (Silverstone 2002). As such, mediated representations have significant influences on ways in which the world appears in and to everyday life, "and as such this mediated appearance in turn provides a framework for the definition and conduct of our relationships to the other" (Silverstone 2002:3). Popular cultural forms of media that people consume enable an understanding of the world in terms of moral conduct (Iwashita 2006). "The narrative of media culture offer patterns of proper and improper behavior, moral messages and ideological conditioning, sugar-coating social and political ideas with pleasurable and selective forms of popular entertainment" (Durham and Kellner 2009:ix).

In adhering to this notion, popular cultural or mediated references influence people's behaviour and their understanding of good vs bad, and right vs wrong. This 'cultural information', as Vaisey (2009) remarked, is stored in people's mind and enables their actions where "... people 'store' a lot of cultural information in their memories 'without reference to its truth value'" (Vaisey 2009:1681). The information they store is 'indiscriminately assembled and relatively unorganized (DiMaggio 1997:268, Shaw 2015:29). Paul DiMaggio (1997:267) therefore claimed that "when individuals account for their actions, they tend to instead 'draw from a 'grab-bag of

odds and ends: a pastiche of mediated representations, a repertoire of techniques, or a toolkit of strategies". According to cultural sociologists (DiMaggio 1997, Swidler 1986, Vaisey 2009), people's actions are culturally acquired tools that they use to rationalise or make sense of their actions (Shaw 2015: np). "The explanations people give for their behaviour are social rather than internal or value-driven, and they are produced by popular culture industries as justificatory accounts for acting in certain ways" (Shaw 2015: np). Popular culture provides these justificatory accounts that are consumed repeatedly and over time. I argue that such moral tools mass-produced by popular culture facilitate the formation of certain cultural scripts and habits through which people adhere to certain socially and institutionally acquired practices. Similarly, "people's accounts and vocabularies, they draw on thus form part of a cultural toolkit or moral repertoire that individuals deploy for the purpose of making sense of what they do, as they navigate their way around organisations and networks" (Vaisey 2009:1679).

The idea that moral and cultural repertoires are institutionally derived enables an understanding of people's accounts of their participation in practices related to the consumption of popular culture (Shaw 2015). Swidler (2003) argues that it is not that people are not affected by cultural norms and mores, rather she argues that people make use of culture as much as it make use of them. Morality can be seen as an understanding and a practice that enables the differentiation of actions, decisions and intentions between those that are good or right, or evil or wrong. These actions that are guided by morality are a product of popular culture discourses that result in people's use of those morals that become habits over a period of time acquired through culture (Swidler 1986). The discourse on morality is brought to prominence through the reiteration and by invoking these mediated representations. In this, I

indicate that the moral discourses in *Star Wars* are continually reproduced and reconstructed through the film narratives and extended to discourses outside of film embedded in professional relationships in the entertainment industry, and in the producer- consumer relationships. There is a connection between morality and films in terms of portraying relationships, wherein particularly among personal relationships, most people are called upon to make moral decisions, from childhood ‘when we wish to please our parents, our desire for independence, to old age when dependence on others’ increases’ (Gillett 2012:np). Themes around morality have been staples of American cinema since the early 20s where “...film such as *Juno* articulates contemporary moral concerns, while *The Graduate* can still serve as a reference point for moral decisions” (Gillett 2012:32).

In using *Star Wars* as a case to study the circulation of morality, I argue that as a popular cultural text, it enables the dissemination of morality through its continuous and repeated portrayals of good vs evil and right vs wrong thereby providing discourses that could become a part of people’s cultural tool kit as strategies of action towards situations and in relationships. Conceived and created within the American context against the backdrop of the Vietnam War, *Star Wars* engages with moral themes and narratives such as good vs evil and the triumph of good over evil, in underlying the distinction between morality and immorality. As a way of bringing back optimism and positivity, the films’ narratives elicit a sense of reclaiming the ‘Americanness’, through the morals of hope, trust, honesty, loyalty and through themes of friendship and love. Post- 9/11 films such as *Minority Report* and *Collateral Damage* construct the distinct US, portraying ‘we’ as different from ‘them,’ which is embedded in morality and moral narratives. What these differentiation do is to anchor

distinctive ‘moral grammars of war’ - codes or contexts (or both) about the good and the bad that structure narratives of interpretation about war (Weber 2006:5).

The circulation of morality is not just limited to *Star Wars* films but also other paratexts such as video games, comic books, TV shows and more importantly toys and merchandise. As Gillett (2012) earlier pointed out the relevance of morality in relationships, I argue that the representation of trust and loyalty in various relationships are not only portrayed through *Star Wars*’ films, but that these morals are also embedded in the various cultural processes of production, consumption, representation and identities that are reflected through relationships between producers (Lucasfilm and Disney) and various other social actors involved in the moral discourses related to *Star Wars*.

Sociological and cultural relevance of trust and loyalty

Luhmann (2000), in examining the function of trust in society, found it to be so significantly imperative that he placed the idea of trust at the centre of sociological theorizing about contemporary society. He described trust as a basic fact of social life’ and the foundation for people to come together and their willingness to co-operate with one another for the smooth functioning of everyday life (Uslaner 2002). Trust enables people to put greater confidence in one another’s promises that they mean what they say when they promise to cooperate (Putnam 1993). For Luhmann (1979), the precondition for trust is familiarity. He viewed familiarity as sharing the same experiences and meanings because of which people co-operate and function together. He argued that people cannot trust each other without this basis. Thus the central idea behind trust is the belief that most people share fundamental moral values with each other in order to reduce complexities (Uslaner 2002). Bachmann (2001) makes a similar argument through the idea of trust that acts as a balance between confidence

in the knowledge through everyday experience and the likeliness of repeated occurrence. To him, familiarity can be understood in terms of trust reducing social complexity especially for cooperation among people. Khodyakov (2007) concurred that the basis for interpersonal trust is familiarity. People who know each other well are more likely to trust each other. When trust exists in a relationship, people suspend their disbelief and suspicion (Braynov and Sandholm 2002). Trusting in each other offers an assurance or a sense of security. Conversely, the more negative information people have about a person they are familiar with the less likely they are to trust them in future (Khodyakov 2007). Möllering (2001) theorized that trust as a favourable expectation regarding people's intentions and actions. He argued that trust is a process in which expectation is the end stage of trust which he calls favourable (trust) or unfavourable (mistrust). Because trust is seen as a process, it takes time to build but once people trust in one another, there is an element of expectation for future actions and behaviour and the suspension of complexity among relationships (Bachmann 2001). Without trust, all contingent possibilities lead to inaction and a breakdown in relationships (Braynov and Sandholm 2002). According to Luhmann (1979), "trust is conditional in which trusting entails mutual commitment and can only be put to test by both sides becoming involved in it" (42-43). Essentially, 'commitment' and 'loyalty' form the basic building blocks needed to form trust.

Trust and loyalty go hand in hand. Loyalty can be regarded as an individual's repeated purchase behaviour influenced by their emotional commitment towards a popular culture text (Lee and Yoo 2015). Mainly examined within the field of business and marketing discourses, commitment is considered to be a pre-requisite for loyalty (Day 1969). While some scholars suggest they are not related to one another (Oliva, Oliver and MacMillan 1992), others feel they are synonymous and represent each

another (Assael 1987). While a few other scholars say that commitment and loyalty are related, yet they are distinctly defined with commitment leading to loyalty (Beatty and Kahle 1988). Early sociologists defined commitment in relation to the social and societal factors that constrained or enabled individuals to a consistent line of action (Becker 1960, Kanter 1968). Within the context of sociology, commitment has generally been studied within the discourse of relationships, both formal and informal. Commitment is defined as "the relative strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular relationship" (Mowday, Porter and Steers 1982:27). This can be understood as an aspect of loyalty in which certain amount of commitment is attained and is a pre-requisite. Fan studies within popular culture have been most applicable in explaining the relationship between fan activities and loyalty. While fan activities might vary with different levels of involvement and commitment to the popular culture text, there is a proven loyalty in the text demonstrated through different mediums that is reflected through activities such as fan forums, cosplaying, fan blogs, fan fictions etc.

While this literature on trust and loyalty indicate their mutualness in terms of their importance in relationships, it is not so much about its analysis that my thesis focuses on. Rather the scholarship above is used to argue these as the two most important morals that align with George Lucas' adopting of trust and loyalty to create various themes that centre around these morals- for examples the themes of friendship, love, student-mentor, explication of the monomyth and *The Force* etc. These morals are invoked by Lucasfilm and Disney not just through *Star Wars* films but also through the various paratexts such as video games, action figures, comic books and toys through which *Star Wars* culture is disseminated in society. It is through the

various paratexts and discourses related to *Star Wars* that morals of trust and loyalty as moral tropes are circulated in society.

Role of cultural industries in producing morality

Peterson's production of culture (POC) perspective is one of the useful approaches in studying the organizational processes through which cultural meaning takes place. The 'production of culture' perspective focuses on exploring the social elements of culture and the organizational and institutional processes involved in shaping a culture or a cultural artefact. The sociological approach to the production of culture "focuses on how the symbolic elements of culture are shaped by the systems within which they are created, distributed, evaluated, taught, and preserved" (Peterson and Anand 2004: 311). This perspective heavily relies on the cultural producers-consumers' nexus while examining several processes related to production of cultural artefacts (Becker 1982, Peterson 1976, Peterson 1978). The production of culture perspective views "culture as composed of symbolic elements that should be understood within the social milieu and the organizational context in which they are produced, distributed, and received" (Newton-Francis and Young 2015:4). As such, the scholarship pertaining to the production of culture often focuses on the relationship between production and consumption in studying the meanings of a cultural text.

The term "cultural industries", recently, has come to being paralleled with the term 'media industries' specifically that are involved in the symbolic production of cultural texts (Hesmondhalgh 2007). Since the main concern of cultural industries is the industrial production and circulation of texts, cultural industries are known to add value to society and people and are directly involved in the production of cultural and social meaning (Calvert 2017). The audiences and consumers tend to spend large

amount of time with the cultural texts and thus the texts and the role the cultural industries play in its circulation is a powerful factor in people's lives (Hesmondhalgh 2007). These texts are produced by large and powerful corporations that have an interest in profit-making and the ability to influence and shape cultural meanings.

In relation to this description, Lucasfilm and Disney can be considered as cultural industries which enable our understanding of the world through the texts its produces. One of the ways in which Lucasfilm and Disney shape our understanding of reality is through its narratives and myths that they construct through its films, television shows and other channels of communication. Using films as one of its cultural texts, cultural industries communicate (moral narratives in the form of) myths and fairy tales and entertain the audience for better or worse (Ward 2002).

Defining myth

In relation to *Star Wars*, Lucasfilm in their conceptualization of the myth has borrowed from various genres such as the western, samurai films, space fantasies and world war two films; and has integrated and applied various mythological and religious concepts from across cultures. Two of such storytelling concepts that are dominant in *Star Wars* films- OT, PT and ST are the *monomyth* and *The Force*. It is important to understand these tropes within a larger discussion and scholarly discourse around myth.

A number of early social theorists, including Durkheim, Malinowski, Levi-Strauss and Levy-Bruhl, have viewed religious accounts as myths. They viewed 'religion and myth as expressions of social integration or social conflict, and so effectively reduced myth to a by-product of social forces' (Lyden 2003:62). Durkheim saw myths as taken for granted that frame a social group's engagement with the world. Reproducing this view on myths, Malinowski (1926) defined myth as a

narrative that shapes the "'common sense' pragmatic strategy for societal maintenance, hence ignoring any transcendental function for myth in its purported connection to a mystical, extramundane reality" (in Lyden 2003:62). Myths are stories created by every culture in an attempt to explain and justify their understanding of the world. Some scholars have viewed myths as stories that are too good to be believed and therefore deemed as untrue (Neal 2007:13-14), while others tend to think of myths as true stories which uncover facts about their culture. The elements of myth are attached through mechanisms of each society's culture in the sense that cultural narratives deal with everyday life stories and situations. Cultural myths guide one's directions and expectations (Bourdieu 1985). Myths have also evidently aided people to grasp and uncover the fundamental issues and problems of human existence and frame them in stories that are easy to comprehend and understand (McDowell 2007). In addition, myths have been considered to have the capacity to maintain communal life and social relations (Duncan 2011). Geertz (1973) provided a functional definition for myth. He linked the reality of social issues and common knowledge of the group within the idea of religion that offers an understanding of how the world is and how it should be. Building on Geertz' understanding of myths, Solis (2016) added that "myth provides the 'how to behave' and what to expect" (7). In this sense, myths provided discourses involving one's behaviors and the consequences of those behaviors which links to moral conduct in everyday life. Similarly, Armstrong (in Flotmann 2014:26) suggested that 'myth is not a story told for its own sake, it shows us how we should behave'. Another functionalist version of the myth is proposed by Campbell (2008) in which he claims that most myths have originated from one single myth- the monomyth. This monomyth spread across different cultures due to its retelling and transmission. The characteristic of this monomyth that all cultures share are some sort

of expressions of desire towards a connection with something that is believed to be divine. On the one hand, Campbell claims that myth is an eternal, self-evident construct that transcends human nature. On the other hand, he argues that myth brings together people with stories. These two assertions are rather contradictory in that, while on one hand he proposes myth to be a product of nature, on the other hand he claims it is a man's creations. These antithetical claims to understanding myth create a huge gap between 'the theological belief in religion's qualities and the secular belief in religion's lack of qualities (Gorman 2014:83).

Campbell and several scholars (Hanson and Kay 2002) who adhere to his idea of the 'monomyth' have a psychoanalytic focus, "interpreting Campbell's heroic journey as each individual's personal voyage to selfhood in the course of which initiatory thresholds need to be crossed and 'monsters' slain but which ends with the integration of all aspects of the personality and produces a complete human being who brings/is a boon to his/her society" (Flotmann 2014:14). This according to Campbell is also a universal storytelling format across all popular cultures.

A different approach to myth is posited within the structuralist and the post-structuralist discourse by Roland Barthes. When Barthes started formulating his notion and interpretation of the myth, he took it in its 'traditional sense as stories that are false or at least unverifiable, and that tend to construct a world view, explain certain practices, or the nature of social institutions' (Barthes 1972: 109). In the later version, he added, "Myth hides nothing and flaunts nothing, it distorts. Myth is neither a lie nor a confession, it is an inflexion" (Barthes 2006: 267). Barthes does not advocate a natural evolution of myth or something that is arbitrary as proposed by scholars above, rather sees myth as a type of communication derived from history. Barthes refers to myth as "'depoliticized speech', meaning that those values and beliefs that seem to 'go without

saying'...and conceals a highly political agenda and are as a result not simply true or natural" (Barthes 1957:11 in Murray in Magnussen and Christiansen 2000:142).

In this sense, according to Barthes, myth then is employed intentionally or unintentionally for certain purposes. Myth analyses sign system that constructs meanings around cultural assumptions. The construction of meanings entail an ideological motive that carries certain assumptions about the myth that make it seem natural but are in fact historical in nature (Gaines 2002). This ideological positioning of the myth is derived from Barthes work in which he claims that the writer of the myth must decide his/her position as any communication/writing is targeted towards a certain kind of an audience whose identity is ingrained within the object of the myth. Barthes as opposed to other scholars does not see myth as religious stories, or narratives concerning evil or demons, neither is he interested in the falseness or the superficial portrayal of historical facts.

While Levi-Strauss and Campbell's basic assumption is that there is a phenomenon such as myth out there, Barthes differs from this notion. He analysed real life historical discourses shaped by a certain society at some juncture in history and draws attention to their mythical nature. Thus while Levi-Strauss and Campbell define myth as a narrative or a story, Barthes highlights how seemingly 'pure' language becomes myth in the minds of people. (Flotmann 2014:44). As argued earlier, while Barthes claims myth is familiar and thus seem naturalised to those who it is targeted towards, it can produce both positive and negative effects- it provides comfort and predictability, however it also manipulates and distorts (Flotmann 2014).

While the discourse on monomyth is largely placed within a discussion of myth, another conceptual and storytelling tool that *Star Wars* has adopted in its representation of morality is *The Force*. In *Star Wars*, *The Force* is conceived as a religious myth used

to symbolize a transcendent power (Lee 2016). The narrative of *The Force* is also derived from the ancient myths that focused on stories of Gods or heroes with a religious and a moral purpose. J. R. R. Tolkein⁸ says, “Myth and fairy-story must, as all art, reflect and contain in solution elements of moral and religious truth (or error)” (Purtill 2003:n.p). This moral lens is also adopted in *Star Wars* through the creation of *The Force*. *The Force* is used as a symbolic moral compass which guides people's behavior and choices. This has been explicitly portrayed through *Star Wars* by using The Force as the judge between good vs evil. This narrative is portrayed through the depiction of the Jedi and the Sith as being on the opposite sides of *The Force*. The Sith are seen as immoral because they are represented as wanting to destroy the galaxy and control it through immoral means such as selfishness, anger, hatred and pride. George Lucas has constructed *The Force* as a moral compass to chart a framework of recounting good vs evil as mediated representations in the film. In theorizing the monomyth and *The Force*, one can argue that certain concepts and ideas within the narratives such as good vs evil, the destruction of evil, Jedi's embodiment of good morals and Sith's representation of immorality, the moral dilemmas that the hero faces such as choosing side, maintaining friendships, overcoming internal battles are all cultural tools produced through *Star Wars* that enables discourses related to morality. These moralistic discourses of the monomyth attest to DiMaggio's (1997) claim of mediated representations as floating around that provide cultural tools.

In an overarching framework of myth, Barthes (1972) theorizing of the myth applies to my own positionality of understanding *Star Wars* as a text that ‘depoliticizes’ historical and political narratives. However, Barthes did not analyse myths through popular culture form of movies and television. In that, presentation of myths especially

⁸ The writer of the film and book series- The Lord of the Rings.

through *Star Wars* are not only falsified accounts but they are narrations of history and politics embedded within discourses of morality.

Role of the myth in culture, society and popular culture

Myths have been an integral part of popular culture and mass media and “...one of the key functions of media is to create, codify and circulate stories, narratives, and myths” (Kavoori and Fraley 2006:5). Some of the popular cultural texts that have been widely studied for its structures of their myths that inform a ‘uniform’ storytelling pattern across cultures include *Harry Potter*, *Star Trek*, *Chronicles of Narnia* and *Star Wars*. Each of these texts and narratives outlined the myth of the good vs evil providing discourse that is common across several cultures. In this view, myths provide a moral sense of behaviour in terms of what one ought to do and what is expected. In considering this view of myths in terms of our morals concepts of good vs evil and right vs wrong, I argue that the myth of *Star Wars* reinforces strong messages of morality embedded through its narratives and discourses. In doing so, Lucasfilm offers more than escapist entertainment by giving us a vision of what we should be (McDowell 2014).

Organizational structures in the context of films provide discourses that provide people with a ‘tool kit’ of coping through situations and formulate ‘strategies of action’ (Swidler 1986). “The uninterrupted nature of storytelling in films allows for high degrees of continuity and helps to create a deep and complex narrative that other media fail to replicate” (Suber 2006 in Duncan 2015:76). Films are a powerful medium for the construction of myth and meaning and serve as a medium through which meaningful stories are told (Brode and Deyneka 2012). In applying Barthes notion of myth then, films can be considered as a type of speech or language that present any intended or intended form of information or communication. Films

provide a platform through which myths adopt the function of narrating 'cultural stories'. Fisher explained that the link between narrative and myth is the "...most compelling, persuasive stories are mythic in form, stories reflective of 'public dreams' that give meaning and significance to life"(Fisher 1985:76).

Furthermore, Lyden noted that "...films deal with all concerns of our culture and its struggles to define its worldview, morals, and identity through various stories" (Lyden 2003:73). One of the primary functions of myths is to grasp the fundamental problems of human existence framing them in understandable stories through movies. In that sense, though myths are known to be culture-specific, they can also be seen as universal. To this end, McCarthy offered an example of this universality of myth within *Star Wars*:

No one lives in Luke Skywalker's world, just as no one lived in those of Oedipus or Prometheus, but the Greek myths, as well as the Ur-hero myths or those based upon it (*Star Wars*), still find an audience. The reason for this mass mobilization is clear—myths provide distillations of experiences which define humanity and which, because the virtual world of experience is forever changing, provide a glimpse into possible futures, into alternative realities unstably contained in everyday life (McCarthy 2014:130-31).

One of such universal themes through which myths construct our understanding of good vs evil is the narrative or the myth of the hero's journey. Several cultural industries have used these myths in their popular cultural texts including Marvel, Lucasfilm and Disney. Within myths, scholars have identified themes, story patterns, and mythic archetypes such as the hero, the mentor and the villain that show consistently in stories passed on from generation to generation. "The basic storyline shared by such stories has come to be known popularly as 'the hero's journey' chronicling unlikely heroes who grow to confront evil and overcome it with good." (Neal 2007:13).

The notion of the hero's journey or the monomyth as conceptualized by Campbell (1949) is a storytelling device that outlines the basic functions within a hero's journey and the battle against evil. The monomyth is defined as "that single 'consciously controlled' pattern most widely exhibited in the world's folk tales, myths and religious fables" (Campbell 1949:255-56). The central theme of the monomyth is the quest: "the hero is called to an adventure, crosses the threshold to an unknown world to endure tests and trials and usually returns with a boon which benefits his fellow" (Palumbo 2008:414). Monomyth's universal characteristics allowed it to occur cross-culturally (Lang and Trimble 1988). Echoing Campbell's notion of the monomyth, Lang and Trimble suggested that the monomyth is a narrative tool to show a hero's adventures through which he ends up resisting immorality and comes out as a moral being thereby a 'self-proclaimed' hero.

However mere claims based on Campbell's psychoanalytic interpretation of myth restricts the meanings developed with the movies to a highly internal and personal level. Myth and movies not only produce a person's individual journey rather influence a collective consciousness to deal with larger societal concerns such as equality, race, gender, etc. The monomyth is one of the several narrative tools used to depict one of the aspects of producing a male protagonist. In that sense, *Star Wars* is a monomyth is a huge and a false claim. Campbell's monomyth and its single most role in the *Star Wars* narrative has received much criticism. Critics argue that fulfilling Campbell's criteria do not make narratives and stories mythical (Mackay 1999, Flotmann 2014) They rather see mechanisms of manipulation, same as what Barthes sees in communicating any kind of message or information in which films such as the *Star Wars* can be sold in such a way that people immensely profit by it. By people the scholars usually refer to the creators, the producers and audiences in general who

largely benefit in promoting a movie on the back of a commonly known aspect of storytelling and story interpretation. Turning *Star Wars* into myth “is to obscure from whence comes the authority- The Force- behind *Star Wars*. The authority behind the *Star Wars* story is not a universal mythic faculty within the human psyche- it is Joseph Campbell” (Mackay 1999:66) Mackay further argues that the sole purpose of any myth is to further economic interests. This can be applied to the monomyth of *Star Wars* which George Lucas used as a strategic tools to promote the narrative and open further commercial avenues. Flotman (2014) has a different view and believes that myths create community by dealing with universal issues, it brings people together through its moral channelling. His claim is similar to scholars such as Levi- Strauss, etc.

Though *Star Wars* mirrors apocalyptic ideas and religious notions from across the world, it is unfair to interpret the movies’ religious elements only through the categories that Campbell has proposed in his theorizing of the monomyth. One of the biggest critiques of Campbell’s monomyth is that he generalizes about all religions including even those that do not preach monism, Judaism in particular (Lyden 2016). The problem with Campbell’s generalizations is that “it is interested less in analyzing myths than in using myths to analyse human nature...Campbell unfortunately cites hundreds of myths and extricates from them hundreds of archetypes...but he analyzes few whole myths, and deals with even those in insufficient critical depth (McDowell 2007:3). Campbell ignores the characteristics of the individual narratives he provides and makes ‘one narrative fits all’ formula claiming that the hero’s journey is that one formula that essentially needs to be applied across all stories with a hero’s narrative (Lyden 2016). However, Campbell’s claims regarding the monomyth can be applied to my own analysis of moral meanings through *Star Wars*. The narrative tools such as

religious metaphors and the hero's journey are useful in an explication of moral meanings of trust and loyalty.

Disney's mythic rhetoric

These discourses around morality and myth circulated through Lucasfilm are now reconstructed and controlled by Disney (since 2012) as a result of the acquisition. The implication for Disney is that it needs to take extra care in the messages it produces because the cultural tools it acquired possesses immense potential to influence (Ward 2010). Considering this, it can be understood that Disney plays a crucial role in shaping people's understanding of morality. The Disney company is a storytelling and myth-making organization (Boje 1995:997) where "...it is a very successful story-manufacturing and story commodification business" (Fjellman 1992:299-318). In his previous works on Disney, Boje (1991) defines a storytelling organization as a "collective storytelling system in which the performance of stories is a key part of members' sense-making and a means to allow them to supplement individual memories with institutional memory" (Boje 1991:106). Disney is a powerful and an influential cultural phenomenon known through the world as it shapes people's view of morality via the films it produces (Ward 2002, Wasko 2001). While Disney has been criticized by scholars from various disciplines for employing racist, ethnic and gender stereotypes, films which have been responsible for the dissemination of Disney's values and culture are shielded from such criticisms owing to the fact that the stories are based on widely accepted cultural myths and morals (Nielsen, Patel and Rosner 2017, Wasko 2001). Disney has been known to adapt stories revolving around 'princesses' and women protagonists in general for the big screen and have been proven successful. Disney also aimed at promoting certain

tropes of virtuous behavior of the female protagonist or the princess through its stories (Zipes 1994:34). Its films are also known to incorporate elements of friendship, sacrifice, love, trust, loyalty into its narratives, which are regarded as moral tropes. Disney films are also known to be responsible for circulating cultural myths (Nielsen, Patel, and Rosner 2017). Through the fairy tale, Disney promotes and represents people's understanding of their role in life, the battle between good and evil, weak and strong and between right and wrong. Over the years, even though fairy tales have evolved, the backbone of a fairy tale still remains the morality it aims to produce.

In popular culture today, the myth and the fairy tale function as platforms for the exploration of various elements and themes such as good versus evil, morals of jealousy, trust, loyalty, pride and focus on the importance of love and relationships (Ayob 2010). While these stories supposedly take place in imaginary worlds, they also mirror our world and lives (Clute and Grant 1999:338). Disney is considered to be a myth producing cultural industry that has appropriated several narratives involving moral tales. *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, *Cinderella*, and *Sleeping Beauty* are just a few examples whose adaptations have been made into films (McDonough 2017). Disney also focuses on the narrative of one's journey (or the hero's journey) which becomes culturally relevant as a metaphor for people's own journey in life and their understanding of good vs bad behavior (Ward 2002, Zipes 1994). These cultural themes run common between Disney and *Star Wars*. Though portrayed differently (perhaps), dissemination of morals in society is something that is representative of both Lucasfilm and Disney texts.

The cultural industries' approach focuses on the supply and the demand side, that is the production and consumption of cultural texts (Hesmondhalgh 2007). I argue that studying the circulation of morals by focusing on production and circulation has

its limitations in theorizing the overall social meanings of *Star Wars*. The next section lays out the theoretical foundation for my thesis to suggest an approach that enables in the best manner an analysis of meanings constructed around *Star Wars*.

Conceptualizing the circuit of culture

The central theme of any ‘cultural study’ is culture. John Hartley noted it is difficult to fix just a single definition for the term ‘culture’ (2003), while Raymond Williams terms it as “one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language” (1976: 86) describing the concept as “multi-discursive”, suggesting that it is not only used in different ways within different contexts, rather its other meanings tend to actively co-exist. In general, culture can be understood in two ways, firstly as a “‘whole way of life’ and secondly as ‘the production and circulation of meaning’” (du Gay et al. 1997:13). My thesis adopts the latter definition and description of culture. The multiperspectival approach that the latter description of culture adopts regards meaning-making as a continuous-non-linear dialogue. du Gay et al (1997) argue that ‘to do a cultural study’ “any analysis of a cultural text or artefact must pass [through the circuit of culture] if it is to be adequately studied”(3). This implies that if any of the moments or the processes are ignored then the study of the text will be insufficient in understanding the meanings and the overall meaning-making processes. “The circuit of culture as a theoretical and methodological framework is based on the articulation of a number of distinct cultural processes ‘whose interaction can and does lead to variable and contingent outcomes’” (du Gay et al. 1997:3). The five cultural processes identified by du Gay et al are representation, identity, production, consumption and regulation.

On a theoretical level, the circuit of culture contributes to the discourse about ‘how and why’, and at the methodological level, the discourse about ‘where, when and

by whom' that enables an understanding of the social and cultural meanings being generated' (Grey 2004). This approach is based on their critique of the traditional approaches to production and consumption represented by Adorno and Horkheimer's view that meaning is fixed and inherent and that consumers are passive. In the context of critical media, these scholars see production as the dominant process that constructs meanings for a popular culture text while deeming consumers as passive audiences who have no say or control over the text. In opposition to this view is the notion of the active roles of consumers and the processes of production and consumption as connected (Chambers 1986; Fiske 2010). Meaning does not solely arise in either consumption or production and a serious cultural study should not exclusively focus on any one cultural process (Grey 2004). A significant aspect of the circuit of culture is that all the cultural processes are of equal importance and connected with each other. The unity of these processes can be considered a commitment towards the meaning making of a cultural text. According to du Gay et al (1997), the goal of cultural studies is to say something about meaning such as "...to attempt to capture a sense of meaningful social processes: How is meaning actually produced? Which meanings are shared within society, and by which groups? What other, counter meanings are circulating? What meanings are contested?" (Champ and Brooks 2010:574).

In the context of *Star Wars*, the circuit of culture framework significantly contributes to the understanding of meaning-making as a communication rather than a two-way dialogue between consumption and identity or between production and representation. For example, in addition to interacting with each other, the processes of production and consumption also shape social identities and representation. Similarly, identities and representation of *Star Wars* inform both production and

consumption, and these interactions also generate meaning (Grey 2004). Thus, du Gay et al argue that, in explaining the meaning for a cultural text , “one should at least explore how it is represented, what social identities are associated with it, how it is produced and consumed, and what mechanisms regulate its distribution and use” (du Gay et al. 1997:3). In tracing and explaining the meanings related to *Star Wars*, I explore the cultural processes of representation, identities, production and consumption that enable a meaningful discourse related to the cultural dissemination of morality through *Star Wars* as a cultural text.

One of the factors that du Gay et al (1997) noted in examining the moment of production is the involvement of a number of narratives and accounts of the 'facts' that have become associated with a cultural text. That is to suggest that cultural production lies in investigating the origins and the ideas behind the process of production and the various discourses surrounding it. Negus (2002) described the process of production as involving artistic creation to marketing to consumption, describing this process in terms of a ‘decision chain’ or a filter’. du Gay et al (1997) also highlighted that when creators or producers of texts become visible in production discourses, it is only the management that is given prominence. In their exploration of the cultural clashes within the music industry, the discourse heavily relied on the creative clashes between George Michael and Sony (Grey 2004). This is true in the case of cultural industries such as Lucasfilm and Disney in which production process is often described using discourses and accounts of producers or those in management positions. It is necessary to not only understand the technical and economic processes and patterns of manufacturing, advertising, organization, and distribution (the production of culture) but also the culture through and within which *Star Wars* is made and given meaning by their producers. The 'cultures of production' perspective involves in exploring the

relationship between the company (Sony) and the product (Walkman) (du Gay et al. 1997). In my studies, therefore, to study the moment of production, I explore the relationship between George Lucas/Lucasfilm and *Star Wars*, and examine the cultural backdrop and motivation against which *Star Wars* was conceived and the relationship between Disney and *Star Wars*. In a similar vein to du Gay et al (1997), I approach this study as an attempt at deciphering “...the distinctive practices used in the production of the object (Walkman) and the way that such widespread practices are represented in terms of specific values, beliefs and patterns of working” (du Gay et al. 1997:43).

Another aspect of production in which meanings are embedded is the various forms of the text. One of these practices involve an examination of the extended texts such as toys, merchandise, comic books, video games and a whole range of the Expanded Universe of *Star Wars*. Using multiple texts as a way to convey meanings is also referred as transmedia storytelling. Transmedia storytelling can be defined as “stories that unfold across multiple media platforms, with each medium making distinctive contributions to our understanding of the world” (Jenkins 2006:334). It involves the transference of characters and narrative across different media platforms. *Star Wars* can be considered as a transmedia storytelling medium with which producers enable people’s involvement with the text beyond films alone. Transmedia storytelling entails the connection of production channels with the consumers and audiences. Kinder (1991) labels this phenomenon the ‘entertainment supersystem’ referring to a ‘series of intertextual references spawned by any successful media organization’ (3). *Star Trek* and *Star Wars* are often said to fall within these definitions of transmedia storytelling or entertainment super systems due to their growing and widened network of varied media channels and texts. “For

Jenkins, this process of unfolding stories across multiple media platforms serves to make ‘distinctive contributions to our understanding of the storyworld,’ a fictional space that is constructed in and across these multiple media sources” (2006: 334 in Freeman 2014:42–43). These production processes have also led to media convergence –the technological integration of the various content systems. Convergence is lucrative to media industries as it opens various entry points to the consumption process (Thorburn and Jenkins 2004). Disney’s acquisitions of *Star Wars* including various other cultural texts is a case in point of this media convergence that not only proves lucrative but also ensures a continuous narrative for the text, thereby increasing the life of it through various representations.

Representation is defined as the form a cultural text takes and the meanings encoded in that form (Curtin and Gaither 2007). What du Gay et al (1997) termed as the signifying practices which is concerned with the practice and processes of constructing meaning through the use of sign and language, Hall (1997) explained it as language systems that can be regarded as a form for meaningful communication. This is metaphorically referred to as a language by du Gay et al in which they defined language as “the use of a set of signs or a signifying system to represent things and exchange meaning about them” (du Gay et al. 1997:13). In relation to *Star Wars*, I argue that various representations have produced different forms of knowledge and discourses about *Star Wars*, such as the transmedia storytelling practices (Proctor and Freeman 2016, Proctor 2013, Smith 2009), sociological issues of racial and gender stereotypes and portrayals, identity, politics, colonialism (Lee 2016, McDonald 2013, McDowell 2016), and religion (Phillips 2000, Rushing 1986, Wetmore 2000). Foucault’s concept of regime of truth possesses tremendous weight in understanding *Star Wars* as a diversified cultural text. In that, the moment of cultural representation

is significantly crucial in understanding the symbolic capacity and the processes related to *Star Wars*. These practices that revolve around production and representation are mostly understood at the level of encoding-the meanings attributed to the text embedded within the organizational and the industry structures (Hall 1997, Negus 2002). These representations of *Star Wars* are ultimately consumed and made sense of by audiences and consumers thereby passing through another level of meaning-making within the framework of the circuit of culture.

de Certeau (1984:xiii) referred to consumption as “secondary production”. Similarly, du Gay et al defined it as “the production of meaning through usage” (du Gay et al. 1997:86). The consumption of cultural texts also have a performative function. In that going to a theatre to watch a film, or a concert to appreciate music or reading a book are all examples of consumptive practices that are performative where meaning is produced through its continuous usage. The performance here, is understood at the level of consuming the popular cultural texts as fans, audiences or consumers. As several scholars have argued earlier that consumers are not passive victims but are rather active individuals, ‘working with a range of materials, and, through a range of consumption practices, constructing and making sense of everyday life’ (Mackay 1997:10). While du Gay et al have shown through their study of the Sony Walkman that what is consumed is the physical object, Curtin and Gaither (2007) argued against this by claiming that, what is usually consumed is the symbol, not the manufacturing reality. Han and Zhang (2009) argued that people as consumers assign meanings to texts based on their use and association of it. "Consumption is an everyday human experience that makes sense to those who are directly involved in it" (Yamato 2012:202). In their study on Chinese online activists' interpretation and rejection of Starbucks, Han and Zhang claimed that the meanings of Starbucks are

negotiated and contested simply based on Starbucks' location which was in an interior part in Beijing, China. The location symbolizes the dominant Chinese culture. The studies found that Chinese consumers viewed Starbucks as a destination restaurant- a way to experience and express "Americaness", that signifies modernity and a fashionable and elite lifestyle rather than a coffee hang-out and take-out joint. While studying the circuit of culture, fandom is a crucial area. Fans or fan activities are associated with the practices and processes of consumption. Jenkins (1992) challenged the prevailing notion of popular culture fans as being passive dupes dependent on mass culture. Studies on fan reception and production highlight the active role of fans of popular culture as consumers who produce and reshape meanings of cultural texts in ways with which they engage with those objects. Fans are at the core of meaning-making of popular culture and are active agents in reproducing and reshaping the cultural objects (Abercrombie and Longhurst 1998, Booth 2010, Hills 2002).

"An active fan is a specific type of audience that can be substantially distinguished from the majority of media consumers. For such fans, the act of watching a particular film or playing a certain video game can comprise an experiential unit that is interconnected to an expansive multi-textual environment—one which may encompass magazines, books, collectibles, interactive media, online clubs, conferences, and role-playing events (Jenkins 2003 in Shefrin 2004:273).

This I argue can be related to the consumption practices of fans of *Star Wars* when they exhibited their association with *Star Wars* through various other paratexts apart from films. Borrowing de Certeau's idea of 'poaching' as a tactic of consumption, Jenkins emphasizes that fans are in a position of "cultural marginality and social weakness' while consuming popular culture. Fans must beg with the network to keep their favorite shows on the air, must lobby producers to provide desired plot developments or to protect the integrity of favorite characters" (Jenkins 1992:26-27). In his studies on fandom and popular culture consumption practices,

Jenkins recognizes the importance and legitimization of fans. As opposed to seeing poaching as 'tactics of consumption as ingenious ways in which the weak make use of the strong' (Certeau 1988:xvii), Jenkins (1992) examines it as an entirely oppositional practice. His work suggests that active fans while engaging with popular texts challenge the ability of producers to constrain the creation and circulation of meaning. In the context of popular culture consumption, Hills (2002:39) noted that "...fans are no longer ignored or viewed as 'eccentric irritants' by producers but rather as loyal consumers to be created where possible". Similarly, Kozinets' (2001) study on *Star Trek* fans' consumption of sacred themes and their interpretation of those themes concurred with Hills's analysis. He argued that larger political and cultural factors in engaging with the popular culture text comes close to understanding consumption practices related to *Star Trek*' morals and religious discourses. His study also explained how an entertainment product serves as basis for engaging people in religious discourses and myths. "Consumption of such popular cultural texts can be so deeply intertwined with life themes and goals as to be overtly considered religious and sacred" (Kozinets 2001: 33).

"Identity" is the final site of examination in the circuit of *Star Wars*. The practices and processes related to consumption are rooted within individual's identification with the text, especially in the context of *Star Wars*. By identifying with the text, consumers are able to engage with and involve in meaningful ways with *Star Wars*. I argue that the process of fans' identification with *Star Wars* should be understood within the context of cultural industries- Lucasfilm and Disney who play an important role in constructing *Star Wars* identities; and the ways by which fans engage in various activities thereby identifying with *Star Wars*.

“Identity is the process or set of practices involved in establishing, through the marking of sameness and difference, who ‘I’ am in relation to ‘you’, and who ‘we’ are in relation to ‘them’” (Grey 2004:27). In that sense, identities are seen as cultural processes involving negotiation in which individuals are active agents capable of negotiating their sense of self or subjectivity. Social determinism suggests that people like *Star Wars* because of their socially distinct classification of good vs bad that enables people to identify themselves as good or bad in real life. Examining morals through the text achieves this cultural classification as the portrayal of good vs bad behaviour and morals are represented through a distinction between the Jedi and Darth Vader. The view held by du Gay et al, is that individuals negotiate their positions by appropriating texts such *Star Wars*. Hesmondhalgh (2007) made a connection between cultural industries and identities, suggesting that cultural industries “contribute strongly to our sense of who we are and what it means to be a woman or a man, an African or an Arab, a Canadian or a New Yorker, straight or gay” (3). The cultural text itself is an expression of symbolic meaning rooted into the process of identification that is enabled by the cultural industries. In Newton-Francis & Young's (2015) study of the 'hooter's girl' as a cultural text and a cultural industry, they located their analysis within the production of culture perspective to argue that Hooter girl is an identity that embodies both the physical meaning and form and one that is embedded within the organizational expectation of the hooter girl as a commodity.

du Gay et al. (1997) suggested that not only are production and consumption closely linked but representation and identities play equal importance in gathering meanings for a cultural text. Identity expression is not without the process of consumption which in itself is a performative aspect. In studying the four processes of the circuit of culture, by using *Star Wars* as a case, my thesis explain how *Star Wars*-

before and after its acquisitions by Disney has acquired several meanings related to morality through the articulation of the four moments. More importantly, I provide a fresh perspective on the way two different cultural industries provide their own moral meanings for *Star Wars*. In the next chapter, I deal with the methodology involved in providing answers to my research question.

Chapter 3- Research Methodology

Research goals

This thesis started with an assumption that the construction of moral meanings through a popular culture text and the processes through which those morals are circulated is an unexplored sociological topic. In arguing that the above phenomenon needs to be studied as one single process rather than studying meanings and processes separately, the main theoretical framework which informs my thesis is the 'circuit of culture' that articulates four interrelated cultural processes, namely, production, consumption, representation, and identities that combine to make a cultural text meaningful. A relevant and empirical example that my thesis adopts that combines the construction and circulation of morals (meanings) and the processes through which these morals have been dealt with (organizational processes) is the recent acquisitions of *Star Wars* by Disney. In examining the cultural and social implications of the recent takeover of *Star Wars* by Disney, I simultaneously examine the ways in which Lucasfilm (refers to period before the acquisitions by Disney under George Lucas' authority), has constructed and circulated morality through *Star Wars*.

Using the 'circuit of culture' as the guiding framework, my thesis examines the interrelated processes associated with the production, representation, consumption and identity of morals constructed through *Star Wars* and the way Lucasfilm and Disney negotiates and reconstructs meanings for those morals. In adopting the circuit of culture, I argue that each articulatory process constitutes "a key site for in-depth multiperspectival analyses, which facilitate a broad contextual understanding of the complexities and contradictions" (Scherer and Jackson 2008:507) associated with *Star Wars* culture. The methodological approach of analysis of various discourses related to Disney's *Star Wars* will deepen understanding of how the four interrelated cultural

movements enable meanings. An analysis of discourses is the most applicable methodology since my thesis deals with four different processes, all involving diverse data sources consisting of written, video and audio publicly available documents such interviews with producers at Lucasfilm and Disney, critics, articles and analysis by media and industry experts, blogs, fan forums, reviews by viewers and media professionals, a few TV shows with references of *Star Wars*, and academic scholarship that informs the four cultural processes.

This study adopts a qualitative approach useful in the close contextual examination and application of analytical concepts and theories (Murphy 2011). Because cultural sociology examines the meanings of social phenomenon, a qualitative approach is most appropriate. In dealing with how meanings of *Star Wars* are constructed and negotiated by Lucasfilm and Disney, my research adopts an interpretive and a descriptive approach. “Discourse analysis is situated within “a family of contemporary approaches that emphasises human language as a socially contextual performance in the field of qualitative research” (Wertz et al. 2011:4). My thesis adopts a methodological framework through which I analyse discourses related to cultural texts and the processes that shape those texts. Though my framework relies on discourse analysis as a methodological tool, I do not examine 'language in use' (McCloskey R 2008) or the 'way language shapes or affects social contexts'. Rather I analyse how various texts have produced knowledge so far on *Star Wars* and the way they can be utilised to articulate the four cultural processes within the circuit of culture. My chapter begins by explaining and discussing the methodological approach utilised for the thesis which complements my theoretical approach and the broader research questions. Next, I will explain why an analysis of discourses is a suitable and useful methodology for studies related to popular culture and the contexts that

surround it. I will then discuss the methods utilised for data collection and the coding methods followed by my role as an instrument to interpret data and the research ethics involved.

Methodology: Analysis of discourses related to cultural texts

To gain a ‘fuller understanding’ of the cultural meanings associated with the Walkman, du Gay et al. (1997) focussed on the practices and processes associated not just related to the making of the Walkman, but the various discourses that have been associated with the Walkman that highlight the cultural processes. In examining the representation and identities formed around the Walkman, du Gay et al used the discourse of advertising and branding as a language that shapes meanings for the Walkman to reflect on “how various individuals, social groups, types of peoples and lifestyles’ came to be associated with this representation” (p. 40). To examine the production of the Walkman, the scholars not only focussed on the story of Akio Morita, creator of the Sony Walkman but also several other accounts by journalists and industry experts that enable meaning-making for the Walkman. In relation to the consumption practices, du Gay et al relied on a combination of data such as market research, advertisements and some quantitative statistics related to class, gender and socioeconomic factors related to the consumptive practices surrounding the Walkman. Similar to du Gay et al's (1997) method that examines discourses in the construction of meanings around the Sony Walkman, I employ a multiperspectival approach (Grey 2004) to study *Star Wars* as a cultural text by analysing popular culture discourses. Like treating the Sony Walkman not just as an object but as a cultural and social meaning-making site, my thesis does not focus exclusively on the text or on the reception of the text, rather it takes into account the modes and practices around the circulation of the text which involves all *Star Wars*

films as a discourse, the written and the visual script, news articles, publications, opinion pieces, published accounts, producers' accounts, consumer's accounts, interviews, fan forums, fan blogs and fan-created content online, etc. Previous and existing studies on popular culture especially media texts have tended to focus on reception, on the facets of production, the production-consumption nexus and on textual features (Carter and Howell 1998, Han and Zhang 2009). This multiperspectival study examines the four distinct cultural processes including consumption, production, representation and identities. The basic methodological assumption that has shaped this thesis is that the meanings produced within the circuit of culture are all of equal importance to study the cultural and social implications and significance of a cultural text. du Gay et al defined the meaning-making process which they term as the 'circuit of culture' as an ongoing, non-linear, five-way dialogue. The circuit of culture is "a theoretical model based on the articulation of a number of distinct processes whose interaction can and does lead to variable and contingent outcomes" (du Gay 1997a: 3). The five cultural processes of production, consumption, representation, regulation and identities "are the elements which taken together are what we mean by doing a 'cultural study' of a particular object" (4). This thesis connects four processes together to study how they intersect to form meanings for a cultural text, in that my study is described as a 'cultural study' of Disney's *Star Wars*. In highlighting that each of the processes within the circuit of culture are interrelated, du Gay et al (1997) claimed that each of the discourses related to the five processes 'has created its own regime of truth' (Foucault 1972), and its own defining moments' (Grey 2004: 50) and would thus have to be examined through various discourses to study its connection to one another. The study of the Sony Walkman has shown possibilities of researching a cultural artifact in relation to the articulation of a number

of processes that are at the heart of meaning-making (Ding and Thompson 2013). Several other studies since have outlined meaning-making for cultural texts to be embedded within the usage of the circuit of culture. Scherer and Jackson (2008) argue that a “multimethodological frameworks associated with conceptualizations of a continuous circuit of culture can enable and facilitate critical analyses of the production, representation, and consumption of cultural products and social practices across a range of contexts” (521). At the level of justifying several discourses used to study circuit of culture of a cultural text, each moment or process has different data to claim a ‘fuller understanding’ of a cultural text being meaningful. For example, producers’ discourses play a dominant role in studying the moment of production as it entails making and creating a communication message or a product that is embedded within the meaning-making logic of production (Curtin and Gaither 2007; Han and Zhang 2009). Since my thesis is divided into four analytical chapters that discuss and focus on the different processes involved in meaning-making of a cultural text, I rely on different data sources for each of the chapters as discussed below. Though the data sources are different for each of the chapters, an analysis of the data enables a connection between the four chapters and the processes in a way that strengthens an understanding of the circulation and dissemination of morality through a popular culture text when handled by two different cultural industries.

Usefulness of Lucasfilm’s discourses related to cultural texts

My study is based on examining various discourses related to practices and processes that involve examining certain moments/scenes/narrative from the original, prequel and the sequel trilogies; producers' accounts in the form of audio, video and published interviews, opinion pieces and journalistic articles, advertisements, film trailers, other popular culture texts (that consists of *Star Wars*' references), blogs, fan

forums, and *Star Wars*' and Disney's official websites⁹. An analysis of discourse or a case analysis is one of the suitable methods to study the circulation of a cultural text by adopting circuit of culture (Han and Zhang 2009). In their study on the negotiation of identities constructed by media around Starbucks and the Forbidden City in China, Han and Zhang adopted the circuit of culture as a theoretical framework by collecting data from various channels “including Nexis-Lexis, Google search engine, official websites of Starbucks and Starbucks China, and relevant Websites and online forums in China that reported and discussed the case” (396). In their studies, they examined the data materials intensively to identify a clear pattern of the development of the case, and did not focus exclusively on the language or the talk within those discourses.

Applying a similar approach of 'case analysis' to *Star Wars*, I argue that an analysis of discourse can be overall useful to study social and cultural patterns that are derived out of examining certain channels of communication or ‘paratexts’ (Scott 2017) through which such discourses appear. To study production and representation, advertisements and an analysis of branding or campaigns prove to be useful data methods (Scherer and Jackson 2008). In fact du Gay et al’s primary data for studying the cultural facets related to the Sony Walkman came from an examination of advertisements. Scherer & Jackson's (2008) focused on advertising as a strategic methodological discourse to study how Adidas as a company produces and negotiates certain dominant images of the Maori culture that is constructed around an international rugby match. Their studies provided a useful understanding of how discourses related to advertising help in articulation of moments such as production by examining the advertising agency that created the ad, the representation of Maori culture through the performance of Ka Mate haka by the All Blacks rugby team signifying bravery and life and the reception

⁹ Films aside, most of the data is from the Internet in the forms of various sources such as news, blogs, forums, etc.

of the advertisement by people especially in New Zealand. Practices related to consumption with regards to popular culture are usually associated with fandom. Kozinets' (2001) study on Star Trek fans' consumption of sacred themes and their interpretation of those themes as larger political and cultural factors to engage with the popular culture text comes close to understanding consumption practices related to morals and religious discourses concerning a popular culture text. Using a combination of ethnography and analysis of fan forums¹⁰, his study also explained how an entertainment text serves as basis for engaging people in religious discourses and myths. Jenkins (1992) in his studies on fans co-creating content and meanings for their favorite television shows, utilized fan forums and interviews as a methodological tool to engage with concepts and practices related to consumption of popular culture. In his studies on fandom and popular culture consumption practices, Jenkins recognized the importance and legitimization of fans as opposed to seeing poaching as 'tactics of consumption as ingenious ways in which the weak make use of the strong' (Certeau's 1988). Similarly, Hills (2002) noted that "...fans are no longer ignored or viewed as 'eccentric irritants' by producers but rather as loyal consumers to be created where possible" (39). Such active forms of participation and engagements of fans are usually seen on online communities such as blogs and fan forums. The presence of these discourses produced by fans therefore becomes suitable sources to analyze the cultural meanings through the four moments of circuit of culture.

Borrowing methodological approaches from these studies and thus analyzing available discourse is applicable and useful to my thesis as it sheds light on the various

¹⁰ Forums are online discussion sites where participants hold conversations in the form of 'posts' or posted messages.

'texts' produced through the existing discourses publicly available related to *Star Wars* that disseminates certain culture through its construction and circulation of morals. du Gay et al (1997) state that “any analysis of a cultural text or artefact must pass [through the circuit of culture] if it is to be adequately studied” (3). Two of the main analytical concepts that my thesis focuses on are the morals of trust and loyalty disseminated through popular culture. It is important to understand the discourses surrounding these morals that make the circuit of culture an applicable theoretical and methodological approach and that make the analysis of the study of Disney's *Star Wars* as a cultural text meaningful. Considering the dynamics within production, the changes in the ownership and the potential consumption and representational practices calls for a story to be told which takes into account the massiveness of the deal and the potential transformations that it would bring about in the *Star Wars* Universe. *Star Wars*, though originally conceived within the American context, has been a part of every culture through its various other forms of transmedia storytelling. People from all parts of the world are evidently associated with *Star Wars* in some or the other way. Discourse analysis as a methodological approach is most suited to investigate an unexplored research area of this nature that takes into account the various processes that intersect in the formation and meaning-making of a cultural text. Later in the data collection section, I will elaborate on each data collection method and sources that examine the four interrelated processes and provide a justification for it.

Defining discourse and the role of discourse analysis

"Discourses are defined as systems of meaning that are related to the interactional and wider sociocultural context and operate regardless of the speakers' intentions" (Georgaca and Avdi 2012:147). Traditionally, discourse analysis is best described as the study of talk and texts in enabling an understanding of the

“relationship between language and ideology, exploring the way in which theories of relations of power are encoded in such aspects as the syntax, style and rhetorical devices used in texts” (Lupton 1992:145). It is a set of methods for investigating language in use and language in social contexts. Texts play a central role in shaping social activities and discourse analysis is useful in identifying these texts as being prominent in people’s activities and their understanding of the world (Fairclough 2003; McCloskey R 2008; Potter and Wetherell 1987). From a sociological standpoint, discourse could be defined as any form of communication by which individuals imbue reality with meaning. When defined in these terms, “discourse is found in a wide range of forms in any social practice or communication from a dance, ritual, a job contract, myth or culinary custom can be analysed discursively” (Ruiz 2009:np). Lucasfilm’s and Disney’s discourses around these forms of popular culture help in making connections between several cultural processes situated within the circuit of culture.

Fairclough (1993) offered three overlapping and useful perspectives of looking at discourse: “1) discourse as text, that draws attention to the meanings of written or spoken words, symbols and any form of communication; 2) discourse as practice, focusing on how the text is distributed and consumed; 3) and discourse as social practice, explicating how the text is part of a broader societal structure” (in McCloskey 2008: 26- 28). All three approaches of understanding discourse are useful in their methodological application to my thesis because my research focuses on *Star Wars* as a text and the practices and processes not limited to production and consumption but also representation and identities. Discourse analysis is a useful methodology to study meanings, and a way of investigating any form of communication which constitute social action and culture (Wetherell, Taylor, and Yates 2001). Discourse analysis is

now being extended and utilized across various disciplines in social sciences including sociology, public policy, economics and psychology. One of the earlier discursive approaches that emerged in the 1980s within social sciences was in the field of psychology. This approach was concerned with ways in which speakers in everyday and institutional settings negotiate meaning, reality and identity (Wiggins and Potter 2008). Another approach in the social sciences termed as the Foucauldian discourse analysis drew upon post-structuralist theorists, such as Barthes, Derrida and Foucault, cultural studies and social theory (Arribas-Ayllon and Walkerdine 2008; Burman 1993). The Foucauldian approach analyses the ways in which various discourses construct objects and subjects, and create through, the play of such power, certain versions of society and reality (Harper and Thompson 2012). For instance, Talja noted that:

“Foucault influenced discourse analysis does not study the rules and conventions of mundane talk; rather, it examines “serious speech acts,” institutionalized talk or practices. This does not mean that the participants of the study should be institutionally privileged speakers. Instead, regardless of the roles and positions of the participants, talk is studied as an example of more general interpretative practices.” (Talja 1999:2).

A deeper and wider interpretation of discourse is central to the ‘social construction of reality’ (Berger and Luckmann 1967), more specifically it extends to studying the social processes and practices that shape a culture and the way meanings are derived out of it (El-Nashar and Nayef 2016; Fairclough 1993). Scholars have found that Lucasfilm’s discourses give prominence to the assumption that the society is full of discourses that direct how people understand the world and what is occurring around them (Potter and Wetherell 1987). An analysis of discourse takes surrounding context into consideration in that it connects to other discourses produced earlier and simultaneously and takes into account events or discourses that occurred prior to the current analysis (Fairclough and Wodak 1997 in van Dijk (Ed). In studying the

cultural meanings for *Star Wars*, my thesis will examine the earlier discourses constructed for the text before its acquisitions by Disney to make the current analysis relevant and insightful.

Methods and data collection

My data sources are publicly available discourses and documents that are easily available with no direct involvement from participants. An analysis of available discourse is a useful methodology to study popular culture artifacts and the meaning-making processes related to it (Taber et al. 2014). It is advisable to start with a thorough analysis of a few relevant data (Talja 1999). My primary data source is films which can also be considered as a discourse. Within films, while the entire narrative structure of *Star Wars* is largely based on morality through its clear portrayal of good vs evil with storytelling tools of the monomyth and The Force, I focus on a few narratives/scenes that depicted the morals of trust and loyalty. For example, the narrative sequence in the *OT* in which Luke Skywalker is trained by the Jedi master Yoda on Dagobah as an examination of loyalty as embedded within relationships. Luke is torn between his loyalties towards his friends who trust Luke to rescue them and his loyalties towards Yoda who trains Luke to become a Jedi. These narratives of trust and loyalty are based on my own interpretation of identifying trust and loyalty as mutually reinforcing morals. Another narrative structure that enables an understanding of trust and loyalty is Anakin Skywalker's character portrayal in the *PT* and the way it transforms through certain relationships. My analysis extends to other transmedia storytelling universe of toys and merchandise and the ways in which morality is embedded through these discourses. I examine paratexts such as blogs, fan forums, fan channels, official company websites, online popular culture magazines and newspapers such as *Variety*, *Bloomberg* and *The New York Times*. I do not consciously

expand my analysis to other transmedia storytelling forms such as TV shows, comic books, video games and novels unless these come in any form of communication in the paratexts mentioned above. Some qualitative forms of discourse analysis tend to analyse texts in more depth. (Pickering 2008: 57). Thus my intentions to selectively analyze texts would be to provide more in depth understanding of the data than to have a wide variety of it.

A visual representation of the data sources for each of the cultural process

Data sources

Discourse analysis enables an understanding of why people tell stories (Johnstone 2018). To explore this in the context of production, I have relied on George Lucas and Lucasfilm's accounts of producing *Star Wars* as a moral tale. This means that to study the production of a cultural text it is important to study the culture within which *Star Wars* is made and given meaning by their producers and the people involved in creating the text. In my studies, therefore, to study the moment of production, I have explored the relationship between George Lucas/Lucasfilm and *Star Wars*, that is to examine the cultural backdrop and intention against which *Star Wars* was conceived, the relationship between Disney and *Star Wars* and the Disney's style of producing culture. "What we need to try to understand are the distinctive practices used in the production of the object and the way that such widespread practices are represented in terms of specific values, beliefs and patterns of working" (du Gay et al 1997: 43). In *Star Wars*, the context of production, I have examined the morals that George Lucas has produced that reflect his cultural sensibilities which are perceived within the American social and historical context. In relation, I have also examined production through the ways and practices of Disney's acquisitions and reconstruction of moral meanings for *Star Wars*.

For examining the discourses around the production of morals, my data considers *Star Wars* films and adopts the entire *Star Wars*' narrative as a moral text permeated by the morals of trust and loyalty that highlight the importance of love and friendship. Certain narratives structures from the *OT* highlighting the relationship between Luke Skywalker, Leia and Han Solo; the relationship between Obi-Wan and Anakin throughout the *PT* that shows the transformation and conflict in terms of trust and loyalty and Anakin's relationship with Palpatine helps to theorize trust and loyalty

within the films. To focus on the producers' accounts, I relied on data consisting of any written, audio, and video interviews, new articles and opinion pieces by industry experts with George Lucas and those directly involved in the process of production. Similarly, I examined certain narratives focusing on trust and loyalty in relationships such as Luke and Rey; and Kylo Ren and Snoke. I relied on Lucasfilm's written, audio and video interviews with Disney's producers such as Disney's CEO, Robert Iger, President of Lucasfilm, Kathleen Kennedy, as well as employees at Lucasfilm to examine how Disney handles moral themes in the ST as a continuation to the OT and the PT. My data sources for studying cultural production also included official websites of *Star Wars* and Disney that comprise of Disney's *Star Wars*' official YouTube channel and the official blog of *Star Wars*- Studying Skywalkers (that deals with various themes from the movies such as gender, politics, identities, etc). To examine trust and loyalty embedded within 'the production of culture' in terms of Lucasfilm relationship with studios, the practices and patterns involved with the manufacture of toys, the working environment at Lucasfilm and Disney's restructuring and modification of *Star Wars* morals as rooted within the practices and workings of those involved at the level of production, I have used data such as articles and interviews with the producers at Lucasfilm, the televised documentary '*The Toys That Made Us*': episode 1- *Star Wars*¹¹ dealing with the relationship between Kenner the toy company and Lucasfilm and published written interviews with some of the cast from *Star Wars*- OT, PT and ST.

The circuit of culture that highlights the process of production as associated with producers' account and his/her narratives including critics and contestations

¹¹ *The Toys That Made Us* is an American television series that streamed 8 episodes in total on Netflix until May 2018. The 8-episode documentary series focuses on the history of important toy lines such as *Star Wars*, He-Man, Barbie and G.I.Joe.

around those accounts. Thus interviews with George Lucas and his team will enable an examination of meanings from the producers' perspective embedded within the processes of production. Official *Star Wars*' website provided an explanation on how morals are intended to be produced and the various perspectives on production. I used similar types of data for examining how Disney produces morals of trust and loyalty by selecting certain moments from the ST to look at the similarities and differences in the way Lucasfilm and Disney perceive morals and aligns it (or not) with Disney's vision. Through these discourses, I explained the ways in which morality has been produced originally by George Lucas that highlights the relationship between the producer and the cultural text, production intentions of circulating moral meanings in society, the meanings of morality that Disney has intended for circulation and the different process through which Disney negotiates these meanings by highlighting its role as a cultural industry.

In order to examine how representation works, it is important to note that the morality of *Star Wars* itself signifies the practice of representation. In other words, the relevant practices and discourses from the films are linked through the processes of representation. This chapter on the cultural representation of morals is embedded within post war discourses that focus on the relation between semiotics and language by examining aspects such as costumes, colors, narratives, characters and the transmedia storytelling. My data for examining cultural representation of morals related to the *OT* and *PT* came from interviews with George Lucas that enables an understanding of what the films represented in terms of the real situation in the American context. To analyse the semiotics and its connection to war discourses, I examined films as a discourse to look at aspects of clothing, costumes, and characters that are embedded within representational practices. In addition, I relied on newspaper

articles, and scholarly literature that focus on the link between war discourses and representational practices embedded within the process of production. I used similar data types such as interviews with directors of *ST* and journalistic articles to examine Disney's representational practices that focus on the semiotics. I have relied on producers' comments and interviews, articles by journalists and media experts, blogs by industry professionals and fans, opinion pieces, published interviews with producers and consumers in exploring the various facets of the reproduction of morals through *Star Wars*.

Adopting Jenkins's (1992) definition and methods to study consumption of popular culture texts from the perspective of fans, I have primarily focused on fan forums as a social arena that enables active participation and involvement of fans that enable the discourses related to *Star Wars*' morality. In addition, the utility of fan forums has provided a platform where *Star Wars* fans discuss and construct their understanding and interpretations of moral meanings through their engagement and involvement with each other on forums. I also examined fan-produced content on YouTube channels that deals with loyalty and trust as overarching themes and the association of those themes to Lucasfilm-George Lucas (pre-Disney) and Disney. In that sense, the consumption of cultural texts is performative, through which fans actively construct, and negotiate moral meanings for *Star Wars* (Jenkins 2003). This negotiation or give-and-take of meanings of morality can be examined outside the practice of watching the films and thus fan forums and fan created content prove useful meaning-making sites of such cultural exchanges of morality related discourses. For reviewing discourses related to fans' consumption of moral meanings of trust and loyalty, I have analysed two fan forums-boards.theforce.net and thecantina.starwarsnewsnet.com. These forums out of the many fan forums related to

Star Wars focus on discussions related to morality. These forums were not an initial choice or decision but through careful examination and filtering of several forums, I focused on these two. I looked through several other fan forums before deciding to analyze the two mentioned above. A large number of threads¹² on other fans forums mainly discussed topics such as 'favorite movie characters', 'movie spoilers', 'music themes', 'storyline, plot and characters within the original trilogy, prequel trilogy and the sequel trilogy' and of course their divided love and hate for George Lucas and Disney. While some threads were very old, they are no longer continued. In addition, I also looked at many fan blogs and YouTube channels such as *Star Wars* Theory, *Star Wars* Explained, Scified.com-*Star Wars* and in a faraway galaxy. Many videos and discussions on those channels are about *Star Wars* characters, anticipating new story plots, quotes, facts and trivia. The selected two forums focused extensively on *Star Wars* morals and the ways in which Disney has controlled altered, modified and negotiated meanings for it. Within these two forums, I selected threads that discussed trust and loyalty not just through their main topics but also by qualitatively evaluating each and every thread/topic. I went through all 70 threads in thecantina.starwarsnewsnet.com, each thread consisting of a minimum of 5-100 posts per topic; and close to 200 threads in boards.theforce.net, each thread with 10-90 posts per topic. The reason to go through each thread and each post was to qualitatively interpret the conversations and discussions related to morals and how people engage with these morals and apply it to their own lives. These discussions comprised of an analysis of morals within OT and PT and the ST. Analyses of fan forums help formulate an understanding of consumption practices among fans,

¹²Within an online forum, every new discussion is called a *thread*.

audiences and consumers (Jenkins 2003). I read through every discussion to decipher if the posts are engaging in discourses related to consumption practices and how fans are actively involved in creating theories related to *Star Wars*' moral meanings for their favorite cultural text. In addition, I also examined a few fan blogs, journalistic articles, YouTube channels to study the latest discourses regarding the speculation that Disney had requested Kathleen Kennedy to resign from her role as the President of Lucasfilm.

To explore the various dimensions of identity in terms of how producers structure and facilitate *Star Wars*, and consumers and fans identify with *Star Wars* as a moral text, I have examined interconnected and overlapping data embedded in the processes of production, consumption and representation. Identification with *Star Wars* as a cultural text is rooted within activities involving fandom (Hills 2002). I have looked at fan discourses to see how fans use *Star Wars* in the form of films, merchandise and other texts that makes it a part of their everyday lives. The data for this chapter came from fan blogs, YouTube channel, and written articles as a way of examining fans' involvement and interaction with '*Star Wars*'. I have examined discourses pertaining to industry activities such as The Force Friday, *Star Wars* Identities Exhibition and various other promotional activities that Lucasfilm and Disney have organized around fans in order to create an identity around *Star Wars*. In general, people's identification with *Star Wars* also involves characteristics like wearing *Star Wars* T-shirts that symbolizes and solidifies their identification with the text, buying and collecting *Star Wars*' action figures and merchandise, and playing out good vs evil with the *Star Wars* action figures. My data is derived from fan blogs, articles, news and stories and the documentary, '*The Toys That Made Us*' that revolved around such activities explaining how cultural industries such as Lucasfilm

and Disney structure and facilitate people's identification with *Star Wars* text and how fans interpret and use *Star Wars* in their everyday lives. The process of cultural identification is closely tied in with the processes of cultural production, representation and consumption as these processes have enabled identification around *Star Wars* as a popular culture text.

Coding and data analysis

Discourse analysis is considered as a contemporary approaches in qualitative research that shares some of the analytical methods with other qualitative methods such as grounded theory that comprises of coding, sorting of analytical categories, identifying themes and drawing conclusions to answer the research questions (Shanthi, Lee, and Lajium 2015). A qualitative approach is adapted in order to be able to code the data through the application of theoretical concepts, by grouping coded data together by themes. Coding helps in noticing relevant phenomena, collect samples of said phenomena, and to critically assess those phenomena in order to reveal similarities and differences (Kelle 1996). I conducted a qualitative coding in which I was the interpretive instrument and based on the data gathered, I labelled it as per the key analytical concepts applied to each process, passage and scene that is relevant to the question (Murphy 2011). "The goal of coding is to 'squeeze an unwieldy body of discourse into manageable chunks' (Potter and Wetherell 1987), paving the way for data analysis" (McCloskey 2008: 33). While doing this, I moved back and forth between coding and analysis. In my thesis, I have used two coding strategies to manage code and recode the data. I have chosen these coding strategies that have proven to generate such knowledge presentation in the best way suitable to my thesis. While recognizing that there might be other suitable means to code my data, my choice for these coding strategies is based on the constraints to execute the research.

For management of data, I have used a single coding method: thematic coding or thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is “a qualitative analytic method for ‘identifying, Lucasfilm’s and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organises and describes your data set in (rich) detail” (Braun and Clarke 2006:79). ‘Thematizing meanings’ is one of the few shared generic skills across qualitative analysis (Holloway and Todres 2003:347). Thus thematic analysis is not a specific method to conduct qualitative research but more of a tool used across different methods (Boyatzis 1998). A thematic analysis further helped me locate and organise relevant patterns and themes in the texts within my data. A Thematic approach proposes that themes or patterns located within the data exist; and if themes or patterns do exist within the data then there is an approach for developing the ability to identify themes within the data collected. As my data spans across various means of collection methods and channels such as fan forums, recorded and published interviews, published articles and websites, I used In-vivo software coding. This allowed me at an initial stage to provide descriptions and labels to the large amount of data. This was useful as certain themes began to emerge through the labels. I also used NVivo software to store data and maintain it by creating categories and codes to each. I have saved and store all the webpages that my study has utilized since these webpages may not be opened at a later date while accessing online.

Process of data coding and analysis

As in the case of semi-structured interviews wherein a researcher’s questions are developed based on the broad research objectives and goals, my data search and collection comprised of information that aligned with the theoretical framework of the circuit of culture. In that the four processes have been considered as broad categories within which I specifically looked at data that fits into these categories and processes

and then labelled data. However, I was not selective in the analysis, in that I coded every piece of text, information that I gathered as data sets. After coding, I recoded to form coherent and overlapping themes. Once the overarching themes were visible, I re-framed it alongside the theory of the circuit of culture. After having come across similar kinds of data a number of times and the coding (labels) began to repeat, I saw that a pattern of themes developed, which provided a coherent analysis of the phenomenon (processes) that are discussed in the thesis. “Coding and recoding are over when the analysis itself appears to have run its course, when all of the incidents can be readily classified, categories are ‘saturated’ and sufficient number of ‘regularities’ emerge” (Lincoln and Guba (Miles et al. 1994:62). These regularities emerged after recoding and this enabled the thematization of dominant discourses (as will be seen from chapter 4- 8).

The nature of my research being based on a theory, the broad themes and categories are pre-shaped based on the theoretical formulation and thus my data is not emergent. Though the number of online sources seems quantitatively less, my focus is on emphasizing on the quality of meanings that the data generates. As described earlier in the methodology, my analysis is also derived from scholarly works and publications thus serving as data. While common search words, sentences, terms include titles of all *Star Wars* films, primary characters such as Leia, Han Solo, Lue Skywalker, Anakin Skywalker, Darth Vader, Yoda, Emperor, Palpatine, Snoke, Rey, Finn, Poe Dameron, C3PO, R2D2, Sith, Jedi; and the light vs dark side, Lucasfilm, Disney, George Lucas, Kathleen Kennedy, trust, mistrust, loyalty, fans, producers, I shall not include these in the coding chart (provided in appendix C) for the sake of

avoiding repetition and providing clarity. The first phase of attaching labels to data generated around 300 codes¹³.

Research ethics

Researchers analyzing discourses related to popular culture texts rely heavily on textual documents and texts (Braun and Clarke 2006), mostly due of their neutrality and close to a complete absence from the researcher being influenced or biased (Putnam 2005) since the data is already made available by someone else. Some of the examples are transcripts of everyday conversations (Diamond 1995), official documents, (Rankin and Campbell 2006), and mainstream media (Cleeton 2003), When analyzing such documents, researchers play no role in producing them but provide rich data sources. My job as a researcher was to select the relevant data among the countless possible texts to use and apply in my own study. The research questions drive the selection of texts (Wodak and Meyer 2001). This thesis was approved by the Institutional Review Board of NTU. My study did not deals with subjects/participants directly. Data sources included public websites, and published interviews/articles related to *Star Wars* and Disney texts. The data also relied on the analysis of publicly-accessible content produced by *Star Wars* and Disney consumers on fan- and consumer-oriented websites. My primary data is derived from publicly available discourses of a popular culture text. No informed consent is required for research involving forums and any online information since participants are aware that their posts are available in public domain for public viewing, especially since my research dos not focus on a sensitive topic (Rodham and Gavin 2006). Most of the online forums, fan forums do not even have real names of the participants but go by pseudonyms. I did not interview participants, consumers, producers or any social

¹³ The list of codes and the way data is coded and labeled has been provided in Appendix C below.

actors that create an online discourse, directly or face-to-face thus avoiding any violation of ethics in the case of my thesis.

Chapter 4- Contextualizing *Star Wars* as a cultural narrative

To locate *Star Wars* within the discourses related to moral narratives and mythical themes, a discussion of the different conjunctures that have facilitated a *Star Wars* discourse and its creation as a cultural phenomenon is necessary. These conjunctures are crucial in an examination of the ‘production of culture’ that shape an understanding of the meanings circulated of and through *Star Wars*. An analysis of the POC perspective would then necessitate a deployment of several dimensions through which a cultural text gathers meaning. While Hall’s (1980) theory might look at the relationship between the production and consumption focusing on ‘producers’ or ‘production’ as the meaning-making site, analysing factors that enable this relationship is crucial to our understanding of the processes in shaping and modifying a cultural text. In the following sections, I discuss and analyse the conjunctures such as the political economy, authorship, the rise of cultural industries posited within framework of the circuit of culture that requires a consideration of the economics (production and consumption) and the politics (regulation) of films. The following sections provide an introduction to the *Star Wars* films and the franchise.

Introduction to the *Star Wars* films

Very few popular film narratives have the ability to captivate public’s imagination and have generated as much discourse and critical commentary as George Lucas’ *Star Wars* saga. *Star Wars: Episode IV A New Hope*, the first of the six films created by Lucasfilm was released in May 1977. It went on to become one of the highest grossing and most popular films of all time ‘redefining the cinematic use and technological advancements with special effects that paved way for one of the biggest and profitable Hollywood blockbusters’ (Silvio et al. 2007:1). The *Star Wars* Saga consists of nine feature films and two anthologies in total, so far, released by

Lucasfilm (George Lucas) and Disney. According to 24/7 Wall Street, the total worth of *Star Wars* films is estimated to be at over \$30 billion, with \$4.27 billion in worldwide box office sales, \$20 billion in licensing sales, \$3 billion in video game, over \$2.5 billion in DVD sales, and over \$800 million in DVD rentals (2012). Comprising of two trilogies, released with three sequels each stand today as the most popular films in the history of Hollywood. The first or the original trilogy includes *A New Hope* (1977), *The Empire Strikes Back* (1980), and *Return of the Jedi* (1983), while the prequel trilogy comprises *The Phantom Menace* (1999), *Attack of the Clones* (2002), and *Revenge of the Sith* (2005). The two of the three films in the OT are directed by other filmmakers, while all the three films in the PT are directed by George Lucas, constituting episodes I-III, that provides a ‘backstory’ to the original trilogy.

Both trilogies focus on the central themes of good vs evil, religion and morality. Though, the themes and the narratives are not unique to Hollywood films since its inception: the ‘struggle between good and evil, the damsel in distress, the hero’s journey, the rebellious ally, and a wise mentor’ have been common to several films; the historical, cultural and the moral contexts of the films are unique to the text.

The OT and the PT reflect a mix of narratives borrowed from the genres of ‘western’, science fiction and space fantasy. The OT is the saga of a young man on a faraway planet who comes of age and saves his galaxy from the evil forces (Briggs 2009). The first trilogy focuses on the protagonist Luke Skywalker’s journey and coming of age as a Jedi Knight as he fights against the evil Empire controlled by the Emperor and Darth Vader. Through the sequels, Darth Vader is revealed as Luke’s father and the realization by Luke that his father can seek redemption. The PT centers on the story of young Darth Vader- Anakin Skywalker and his corruption and pull

towards the dark side of the Force by the Emperor (Atkinson and Drumheller 2003:6–8). Some of the central characters are common to both the trilogies that enable and ensure a continuation of the saga. *A New Hope* paralleled the political and cultural situation of America during the time when the saga was released. The *Star Wars* name is synonymous with American culture that is a reminder and a reflection of post-world war II narratives and the political and moral rhetoric that the films convey. *Star Wars*... "struck a populist chord and touched something deep inside the American psyche" (Monk 2007:3 in Briggs 2009). In addition to the narratives and themes, some of the main characters in the OT, PT such as Luke Skywalker, Princess Leia, Han Solo, Obi Wan, Yoda, Darth Vader, Emperor, to name a few have also become memorable in the history of film-making and Hollywood.

When Disney acquired the entire rights to Lucasfilm, including *Star Wars* and *Indiana Jones* franchises for \$4.05 billion, it announced its plans to produce a *Star Wars* film every year. The films released since the acquisition are categorized as the sequel trilogy. The first feature film in the ST released was *Episode VII-The Force Awakens* (2015) directed by J.J. Abrams; followed by *Episode VIII- The Last Jedi* (2017) directed by Rian Johnson; and the last in the trilogy slated for released *Episode IX* (2019) to be directed by J. J. Abrams. In between the first two films in the ST and after episode VIII, Disney released two anthology films: *Rogue One- A Star Wars Story* (2016); and *Solo- A Star Wars Story* (2018). The sequel trilogy is a continuation of the OT and PT with the main characters- Luke, Leia and Han having aged and providing a background to the earlier narratives. The ST introduces three new main young characters- Rey, Finn, and Poe Dameron taking the story forward to tackle the evil represented by Kylo Ren and Supreme Leader Snoke. *Star Wars* as a franchise is managed by Lucasfilm President Kathleen Kennedy, who has worked with George

Lucas and Steven Spielberg on several Hollywood projects. In addition to developing the anthologies, Disney (under Kennedy's authority) enforced the de-canonization (i.e. the wipe-out) of the expanded universe, and renamed it as *Legends* thereby creating new storylines and narratives under it.

Examining the transmedia storytelling and expansion of the franchise

The *Star Wars* saga is not just a series of films but also an industry, a business, and a 'multi-million dollar global franchise'. "*Star Wars* changed the way we make movies. It has also changed the way we market movies, understand culture and do business" (Clooney in Wetmore 2017:np). Besides movies, the *Star Wars* universe extends to other transmedia storytelling outlets such as television shows, a vast and varied system of official novels, comic books, magazines, video games, toys and several fan projects ranging from fiction, posters, films and much more. These comprise of the official *Star Wars Expanded Universe* (EU). That is the 'official' components of *Star Wars* are comprised of elements from every media. After the release of *A New Hope*, in 1978 the EU began with novels such as *Splinter of the Mind's Eye* by Alan Dean Foster and Brian Daley's Han Solo series. Timothy Zahn's *Thrawn* trilogy and Steve Perry's *Shadows of the Empire* book series that introduced new chapters enabled the production of action figures and began appearing in board games, video games, websites.

Dark Horse Comics around 1987 acquired the *Star Wars* license which was then owned by Marvel and launched a number of sequels to the original trilogy which began with the popular Dark Empire series. A few of the other official EU include: an official radio adaptation on a national public radio broadcast in 1981; numerous cartoons based on the characters from the films: the Saturday morning televised series *Droids* featuring R2-D2 and C3PO, *Star Wars: The Clone Wars* on Cartoon Network,

and several holiday specials. Apart from the canonical narrative depicted in the main films, additional stories from the EU contribute to promote and ensure the continuity of the franchise.

The EU facilitated a ‘flowing stream of distribution’ while at the same time producing and releasing extra-textual elements such as toys and other merchandises related to the franchise. Since the late 70s and 80s, there has been no dearth of *Star Wars* products in the cultural marketplace. “The continued success of the films on TV and in various video, DVD and cinema re-releases, the dozens of *Star Wars* novels and related books which have been published since the 1970s, and the sale of many billions of dollars’ worth of products based on, or tied in with, the films” (Kramer 2004: n.p). This highlights the consumption economy of *Star Wars*. In addition to the above mentioned channels of transmedia storytelling, *Star Wars* name is synonymous with action figures and toys. Before the release of *A New Hope*, George Lucas made a deal with Kenner company, a small time company that made toys and action figures to release a few action figures before the release of the first film. “Within such a supersystem we can include Kenner’s massively successful toy ranges, and Lego sets that adapt key scenes and characters from the Original and Prequel trilogies, among other ‘non-narrative’ merchandising elements” (Proctor and Freeman 2016: 225). Long after the last film in the prequel trilogy, action figures and other toys ensured the longevity and continuity of the franchise. Lucas never saw *Star Wars* toys as a lucrative spin-off: to him, they were his best chance of making a profit from a film that he thought would not do so well at the box office. In June, 1977 when *Star Wars* was barely released, he said “In a way this film was designed around toys. I actually make toys. If I make money, it will be from the toys”(Baxter 2000:173).

The commercial expansion of *Star Wars* is also situated within the logics of branding and advertising. Especially the last in the prequel trilogy, *Revenge of the Sith* saw a steady surge of television advertisements, themed merchandise and product tie-ins at restaurants that made sure *Star Wars* was everywhere. Brands such as Pepsi, 7-Eleven, Burger King promoted their products through television advertisements by using characters such as Chewbacca, Yoda, Darth Vader, Darth Maul as product integration. Large companies such as Hasbro, Lego produced more and more toys and action figures with the release of every sequel in the trilogies. “One strains to imagine how any other franchise could surpass this commercial *everywhereness* of *Star Wars*” (Kapell and Lawrence 2006:1). From this perspective, then, the *Star Wars* franchise is an

“exemplar of a ‘commercial intertext’, a complex web within which the film series becomes only one component in a product line that extends beyond the theatre, even beyond our contact with mass media, to penetrate the market for toys, bedding, trinkets, cups and other minutiae comprising one’s everyday inside a commoditised, consumerised culture” (Proctor and Freeman 2016: 227 & 228).

The *Star Wars* franchise of movies may not have had any future had it not been for the EU. George Lucas realized the potential for a parallel universe in addition to the films and gave people the rights to help him expand his universe. The rights to the master plot of these narratives is held by Lucasfilm, and all significant changes and inventions need to be approved by George Lucas himself. Thus the *Star Wars* franchise is created and narrated by several others within and outside Lucasfilm. Reportedly, *Star Wars* is the most successful film franchise in history (2005 CNN report), in which before the release of *Revenge of the Sith*, the estimated worldwide theatrical gross of the first five films was \$3.4 billion with additional \$9 billion in merchandising. Websites such as Barnes and Nobles and Amazon.com have listed over 1,000 titles each based on the films- including film tie-ins, graphic novels, scholarly analysis, biographies of Lucas,

and many others. Several of these are published by Lucas books, the publishing part of Lucasfilm. Lucasfilm has not only copyrighted its intellectual property, it has also trademarked it. Lucasfilm reserves the rights and the authorship to anything canonical Lucas (Wetomore 2017). This has sparked concern over authorship of *Star Wars* franchise as it problematizes the issues of ownership, creation and consumption (to be discussed under the section on auteur and authorship).

With the aspects stated above, *Star Wars* revolutionized the concept of film franchising and played a significant role in changing the structures within the industry that only focused on the promotion of films. Before *Star Wars*, though it was not uncommon to let go the merchandizing rights for free promotions and publicity, however, with *Star Wars*, merchandizing became an industry in itself. In the early 70s Fox did fast food tie-ins and product tie-ins such as T-shirt, jewelry, candy with films such as *Jaws* and *King Kong*, such commercial licensing lost its value as soon as the movie run was completed. “What began as an upstart young director’s passion project, a western space opera predicted to fail at the box office, has become the most commercially successful franchise of all time; and while other franchises have performed better in theaters, *Star Wars* outpaces them all by a huge margin in total revenue due to its incredible merchandise potential” (Pianka 2013:1). *Star Wars* changed these industry and commercial logics and such product tie-ins began to drive the conception and marketing of the films rather than vice versa. Such phenomenon of franchising came to be known as the ‘Holy Grail of Licensing’ among industry producers and experts (Cook 2002:51).

With Disney acquiring the franchise, it has left no stone unturned in the aspect of transmedia storytelling. Before the release of *The Force Awakens* (2015), Disney introduced *Force Friday*- a global fan ‘production’ event celebrating the launch

of *Star Wars* movies. *Force Friday*, launched a wide range of tie-in toys and other merchandise with every *Star Wars* film release. Disney set up a *Star Wars* Exhibition which provides viewers and consumers an interactive experience by focusing on three themes centered around Luke and Anakin Skywalker: their origins, the influences that shaped them, and the choices they made during their lives.

The above sections have provided a glimpse of the magnitude and the massiveness of the *Star Wars* universe that has rightfully become a global phenomenon. The following sections analyse some of the dimensions of the CoC such as regulation, production and consumption that examine concepts of authorship, and the socio-cultural narratives that have shaped *Star Wars* as a cultural text.

Introducing George Lucas and the historical and political trajectories

It is important to consider and acknowledge that *Star Wars* is written and produced within an American cultural context. George Lucas, the creator of the *Star Wars* films and the EU was born during the World War II. Though the Lucas family was insulated from the war, the war affected everyone in some way. George Lucas remembers growing up in a world where the war was “on all the coffee tables”, in *Time*, in *Life*, in the *Saturday Evening Post*, in *Living Technicolour*”(in Taylor 2005: np). Since then several of post-war films were made and Lucas grew up watching films such as *The Dam Busters* (1955), *633 Squadron* (1964), *Tora, Tora, Tora!* (1970).

During the time when Lucas was a film student in the 1960s, the American political situation was getting intense and complicated. President, John F. Kennedy was assassinated in 1963; and two more political figures, Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr. in 1968. The Vietnam war escalated around the same time. “During the same year America had to deal with the ever-escalating undeclared War in

Vietnam, the ever-more-angry and violent tenor of the Civil Rights Movement, and then some five years later, Watergate and the unmaking of another President, Richard Nixon. No wonder this proved to be a difficult time for people to go on believing in the once bright American Dream” (Brode and Deyneka 2012:4). American people needed a less complex world and desired simpler times. Being a film student, Lucas was inspired to create films that were politically and socially relevant to the US. “Being a student in the sixties, I wanted to make socially relevant films, you know, tell it like it is” (Lucas 1999:89). *Star Wars* is a result of the political turmoil set against the cultural context of the 1960s. When the first film of the original trilogy- *A New Hope*, was nationally released in 1977, the United States was still recovering from a defeat in Vietnam and the Watergate scandal (Briggs 2009). George Lucas began writing the script for *Star Wars* during Nixon’s presidency and towards the end of the Vietnam war. “A very powerful and technological superpower trying to take over a little country of peasants was big on my mind,” claims Lucas (in Wetmore 2017:np). In the 1960s, America was a global superpower with advanced technology and enormous firepower whose resources and strength could not be compared with Vietnamese insurgents armed with primitive AK-47s.

Now consider the *Star Wars* galaxy. An Empire with enormous reach and firepower, with a ruthlessness to match the fire-shattering abilities of its Death Star wonder weapon, meets its demise at the hands of a precocious farm boy from Tatooine wielding a primitive light saber and a Rebel Alliance that has little more than a ragtag fleet and a fervent belief in the righteousness of their cause (Lucasfilm 2012:11).

The characters, the narratives in the film are a testimony to the political situation in the 60s and 70s. The Empire is reflexive of the US military in Vietnam, the Ewoks resemble the Viet Cong, and there are a lot of parallels between the Emperor and President Nixon. “*Star Wars* has got a very, very elaborate social, emotional, political

context that it rests in...but of course nobody was aware of that” (Lucas 2012 in Taylor 2015:2).

The first three *Star Wars* films in the original trilogy (1977-1983) echo the countercultural motifs of the 1960s: strong moral messages, themes of rebellion against coercive authority, communal bonding, articulations of religion and patriarchal values (Kellner 2010:174). The narratives within *Star Wars* continue to be a reflection of the political and cultural situation of the time and era that each saga is produced within. For example, Jimmy Carter was the American president in 1977 and it was a period of heightened Cold War. Inflation and growing oil prices were becoming common greatly affecting economy and the lives of average Americans. The next two sequels of the original trilogy written in 1980 and 1983 were reflexive of this situation in which Cold War was at its peak. So much so that President Reagan, used the reference from *Star Wars*, and cast the Soviet Union as an ‘evil empire’ that had to be brought down. The Soviets during the time had invaded Afghanistan; in addition there were small rebellions and wars occurring all over the world. President Reagan was also developing plans to make a nuclear war winnable, via programs such as the Strategic Defense Initiative and the MX missile. “In short, the original trilogy, is reflective of the fight between ‘freedom-loving’ people who are fighting an evil empire that has enough destructive power to destroy a planet” (Wetmore 2017:np). The prequel trilogy produced and written between 1995-2005 focuses more on corruption and evil corporations. The prequel trilogy reflects a different world from the original one- ‘the evil empire is replaced by more complex and difficult challenges, yet both trilogies reflect the eras that produced them’ (Wetmore 2017). The original trilogy portrays a clear distinction between good and evil. It reflected the political context of the late 70s and the 80s in which there were well-defined heroes

and villains in the Western culture. Against the backdrop of the historical and political turmoil in America, the mid-70s saw several films based on political happenings and events. *All the President's Men* (1976) based on the re-election of President Richard Nixon in 1968 and 1972, and war based movies such as *Coming Home* (1978), *The Deer Hunter* (1978) and *Apocalypse Now* (1979) were a reminder to the American audiences that of the political mistakes (Cook 2002). *Star Wars* is posited among these movies with postwar discourses and within the political economy of the American film industry.

In the 1990s, villains were less clear and religion came to the forefront with Usama bin Laden's declaration of war against the United States. "With religion taking on more than just the Protestant reformation in Western culture, it is no wonder that Episodes I and II went beyond the mere allusion to the Jedi Order as a religion. Lucas moved from Han's denunciation of "hokey religions" such as "the Force" in *A New Hope* to a replication of the Christ story in *Phantom Menace*" (Atkinson and Drumheller 2003:19).

What runs common through the trilogies are the overarching themes of good vs evil, the need for bringing back values and morals and the desire for a peaceful and a better world. While the focus on characterization, plotlines and structure change within the two trilogies, the narratives and the themes continue to reflect the cultural and political contexts during the post-war eras. Through the medium of films, Lucasfilm has aimed to illuminate social indicators of the realities of the historical era. *Star Wars'* narratives represent political events and figures of the era while sometimes providing an 'indirect commentary and critique of their social and political context' (Kellner 2010:4).

To understand this from the perspective of regulation (politics), production and consumption (economy) then is to take into account the conditions and the nature of relationships between studios and cultural producers that has facilitated the creation of *Star Wars*.

An examination of regulation (politics), production and consumption (economy)

Political economy within communication is defined as the “the study of social relations, especially power relations, that mutually constitute the production, distribution and consumption of resources, especially communication resources” (Mosco 1996:25). This definition and process can be applied to the political economy of the American film industry from the late 1940s and understood within the process of regulation. The American film industry changed in a number of ways in the decades after World War II from the late 1940s. With the federal Government winning the anti-trust proceedings against Paramount in 1948, it led to a separation between the studios, and the production and the distribution companies of the film industry (Thompson 1999:3–4). The lawsuit of United States vs Paramount Picture Inc brought about a shift in the industry forcing the studios to withdraw its hold on the theatrical screenings and distribution (Horwath et al. 2004:110). Because there was no guarantee of films being realized every week, there was a decline in the number of audiences in the theatres. This is also partly due to the shifting patterns of viewing with the advent of television. It is also owing to the introduction of the ‘package-unit-system’, which entailed film-by-film financing that brought about a shift in the production practices and was responsible for the collapse of the studio systems that controlled the creative processes of films. The package unit system “was a short film by film arrangement...(where) a producer organized a film project: he or she secured financing and combined the necessary laborers...and the means of production”

(Staiger 1985: 330). This also put the studios under financial strains and by the 1960s, every major studio apart from Twentieth Century Fox and Disney had been acquired by large cultural producers. This wave also recognized as conglomeration in which an organization controls almost all the media enabled some of the big cultural producers such as Disney, Warner, Sony, Viacom, and News Corp and Comcast to maintain its growing economic power and keep out the competition. With the collapse of the studio systems in the 1960s, the franchise system triumphed over the individual film. Cook (2002) sees the years from 1969 to 1975, as a 'richly fruitful detour in the American cinema's march towards the gigantism and global domination' (XVII). Through such control, organizations were able to produce and circulate texts and narratives by using several of its other channels. The post-1965 conglomerate wave in which a number of studios were absorbed gave rise to studios' uncertainties. Paramount was taken over by Gulf and Western in 1966, United Artists by Transamerica in 1967, and Warner Bros and MGM by Kinney National Services and Kirk Kerkorian, respectively in 1969. However, this proved to be beneficial for the studios as the parent companies did not have much knowledge about the film business and at the same time relieved studios of their financial losses and pressures.

The cultural industries' control over studios indicated a business favored outlook on films that ensured returns on investments. And thus there were less chances of any unusual project to get financed. That was a period when genres such as Western: the Wild Bunch, McCabe and Ms Miller), gangster films such as *The Godfather*-part 1 & 2, and detective themed films such as *China Town*, *Night Movies* were considered blockbusters and promised huge profits in almost all the markets.

A discussion of the cultural and social rhetoric

This phenomenon also called the 'New Hollywood' phase that emerged in the 1960s comprised of two moments: the period of studio uncertainty that resulted out of shifting viewing patterns and youth audience allowing experimental cinema in the 1970s; and the second was the time when film school graduates such as George Lucas, Steven Spielberg and Paul Schrader were making breakthrough blockbusters reviving the Old Hollywood themes at the same time representing social and political discourses through their films. Late 60s and mid- 70s also saw a rise in the youth audiences, or the baby boomers who had a penchant for technology and experimental films, and with the rise in youth culture there was a decline in art cinema.

The French New Wave and its influences on Hollywood film school graduates: This phase of 'The New Hollywood' from the late 60s and early 70s saw a shift in way films were made linking the classical Hollywood genres with the innovations of European art cinema. This 'new' is situated and derived from the new cinema movement in Europe in the 1950s, called the French New Wave influenced by the Italian Neorealists, where in a group of young directors such as François Truffaut, Jean-Luc Godard, Claude Chabrol, Jacques Rivette and Eric Rohmer used film as a medium to express and critique social issues as opposed to what the studios wanted them to make. This was adapted in Hollywood in the 1960s that saw a shift in the audience demographic, the result of which was a cinema of 'alienation, anomie, anarchy and absurdism' (Sarris in Horwath, Elsaesser, and King 2004:20). The 'New Hollywood' takes into factor the arrival of the generation of film school graduates such as Martin Scorsese (NYU film school), Brian De Palma (Columbia and Sarah Lawrence), Francis Coppola, John Milius, Paul Schrader and George Lucas (UCLA and USC), as highlighted earlier. In their films, they adopted cinematic practices that

were a reflection of the French Wave (refer to Neupert 2007 for a list of cinematic practices and processes that the new age filmmakers adopted from the French Wave).

They were reading the 1960s American film criticism of Pauline Kael, Andrew Sarris and Manny Farber, absorbing the influence of Cahiers du Cinema on Anglo American film criticism, and admiring the films of Bergman, Fellini, Antonioni, Bertolucci, Traffaut and Godard. Accordingly some accounts of new Hollywood see this moment as the explicit inscription within American filmmaking of the critical practice of auteurism resulting in a self-consciously auteur cinema (Horwath et al. 2004:20).

In addition, this new age film school products were a part of and experiencing the rebellious mores of the 1960s, such as rock music, low culture, drugs, and social and political concerns and issues thereby explicitly rejecting social institutions. They were consuming and enjoying genres of science fiction, crime and horror thereby reproducing these genres into their own films. Their motive to make films was personal expression as opposed to what the studios expected of them to make, just like the European filmmakers. The cinematic practices which the film school products started to adopt was a mix-bag of themes from the old Hollywood films in the 1950s. Carroll (1996) refers to this as a 'cinema of allusion' in which "a mixed lot of practices including quotations, the memorialization of past genres, homages, and the recreation of 'classic' scenes, shots, plot, motifs, lines of dialogue, themes, gestures and so forth from film history especially as that history was crystalized and codified in the sixties and early seventies" (Carroll et al. 1996 in Horwath et al. 2004:21). Several of these can be found in John Ford's movie *The Searchers* (1956) which has then influenced the new age film school products of the 1970s. Scorsese's *Taxi Driver* (1976), Lucas' *Star Wars* (1977), and Schrader's *Hardcore* (1978) all mirror the themes and the issues from *The Searchers*.

The scholarship discussed here reflects the political and the economic perspectives embedded within dimensions of regulation, production and consumption in which *Star Wars* discourse is posited.

An application of the CoC moments to Disney

Political economy of media as discussed earlier deals with the question of who controls the media and whose ideologies get widely produced and circulated. Disney as a cultural producer can be understood within these dynamics of the regulation and production processes that enable Disney to disseminate its values and ideologies through its texts that are distributed via various channels and modes of communication. In that sense the conditions of the mode of production influence the film process and has implications on socio-political aspects of society (Wasko 2003). And thus it is important to consider and understand this political economic structure of Disney before analyzing its cultural and social impact on society. The moral messages that Disney's myths such as films, cartoons and television programmes produce are rooted within the political economy of the organization in which one single text is distributed and circulated through various channels and modes of communication. Michael Eisner, ex-Disney CEO has commented,

I have always believed that the creative process must be contained in what we call 'the financial box' - financial parameters that creative people can work in - but the box is tight, controlled and responsible. Finance has the key to the box...Disney is a business. As a business we are accountable to our stockholders to produce a profit. But in order to make money, we have to get the public to consume our product. And once we do that, we have to invest our money wisely to maintain our business (Wasko 2013:28–29).

This goes back to the founder of Disney- Walt Disney himself who created an image for Disney as a company that produces and circulates traditional American morals and values in society through its narratives and several forms of transmedia storytelling. Though this takes momentarily takes away the political economic emphasis of Disney

being a profit-oriented organization and stands in contrast to what its CEO has commented, the nature of being a conglomeration and a cultural producer supports the latter argument of Disney being a profit-oriented organization. Disney's website states, 'Disney's overriding objective is to create shareholder value' (Wasko 2013:37) In this regard, it is important to then understand who these shareholders are and who then actually owns the Disney company and makes decisions regarding the business and the types of texts that are produced and circulated. On one hand, Disney focuses on image-building by promoting its objectives such as 'family-oriented entertainment', 'disseminator of values and morality', 'fantasy and myth-making for children'. While on the other hand, these same objectives are produced and circulated through the various businesses that Disney owns such as theme parks, television channels, movies, publications, etc. In this sense, Disney as a cultural producer, metaphorically, is a make-belief world encompassing several narratives and myths that is interwoven into the fabric of its conglomerate nature.

Disney's characteristic of the regulation can be seen from its inception in the creation and marketing of its characters through film, merchandise and other channels of media. From the 1950s when the Hollywood film industry was facing significant changes, that is post war especially with the wide spread of television and the decline in the number of people going to movie theatres, Disney also had to undergo certain changes to keep up with the challenges of the industry and to sustain its consumers and audiences. The post-world war II period brought about an increase in the family audiences-the baby boomers who were a major audience and consumers for Disney. In adapting to this new phase, was the creation of Disneyland, the television production such as the "The Mickey Mouse Club" and "Disneyland", and the production of feature films including live-action movies and more animation movies, which were

intended for family viewing. As much as Disney is known and written for its storytelling and circulation of morals and values, it is often being critiqued for this self-promotion.

Although there is the tendency by many to think of ‘Disney’ as something sacred and special and not as a commercial, profit-based endeavor...the Disney organization has always been a profit-motivated company . . . and that although Disney-branded products . . . are assumed to be wholesome, safe, and pure, as well as ethical, virtuous, and unprejudiced...Disney products include definite and often unmistakable themes and values that are not always wholesome and unbiased or innocent (Wasko 2001:246–52).

Disney’s profit-driven goals are situated within the political economy of films and media to study the role of a cultural producer in disseminating its ideologies as social and culturally relevant messages in society. During one of its expansions, Disney bought Miramax Films, a leading independent film motion picture distribution and production company, in 1993 for \$80 million. This was one of the first major instances of Disney’s vertical integration by acquisition as opposed to expanding their own properties further of ‘upsizing an established division,’ as Tom Schatz has noted (in Barnouw 1998). The Miramax-Disney deal changed the face of the Hollywood film industry thereby revitalizing independent films. As Perren (2012) has argued, Miramax was able to capitalize on Disney’s strengths to advance and accelerate some of their business practices such as aggressive deal making, and strong marketing plans. Disney was among the first to acquire and support the ‘indie’ genre of films that did not make a mark on the box-office. Through this acquisition, Miramax was able to continue leading in the independent film world by releasing films such as *The Piano* (1993), *Pulp Fiction* (1994), and *The English Patient* (1996), the film that gave Miramax their first Academy Award for best picture.

This deal also proves Disney’s positioning from the production perspective rooted within CoC of controlling several aspects of narrations and genres within the

American film industry. “Analyzing the political economy of media is one of the indispensable point of departure for studying popular culture production, in which economic factors set limitations and exert pressures on the commodities that are produced (and influence what is not produced), as well as how, where, and to whom these products are (or are not) distributed” (Wasko 2013:28–29). This acquisitions also broke Disney’s perception of creating only specific kinds of movies. Wasko (2013) argues that Disney as a conglomeration is beyond merely producing myths and movies centred around themes of race, gender and class. And it is important to note that the perception of Disney and its princesses’ phenomenon is situated within a discussion of understanding Disney as a brand synonymous with creating and manufacturing fantasy. Taking this argument into consideration, it is crucial to understand Disney not just as a myth-making cultural organization but to study it as a cultural industry whose businesses enable Disney’s position as a moral disseminator in society. Disney’s expansion and its circulation of messages with moralistic messages and themes such as good vs evil, the universal narrative plots, and the continuation of these themes through merchandise and a number of media that it owns can be studied through the lens of the political economy of media in understanding Disney’s way of negotiating and reproducing meanings. More importantly, the characteristic of being a cultural producer allows Disney to expand and circulate its texts and products through its own synergies, integration, and intellectual property rights. This allows Disney complete control over the production process, right from the conception of a movie, the choice of the theaters, and the decision to launch any merchandise based on the movie (Croteau, Hoynes, and Hoynes 2006; Hardy 2014). Disney’s business manages operations in television networks, studios, movies, consumer products and entertainment parks. Disney not only promotes its movies through its own television

networks, but also produces, markets and distributes merchandise. Disney's continued efforts to produce merchandise, video games, and collaborate with companies such as sports franchises, fast food chains indicate its constant engagement with the consumers not only with its movies, but also in everyday activities (Jess-Cooke 2012). Thus the myth and the fantasy making organization cannot be understood in isolation as a company that creates narratives around certain themes, but it is crucial to understand the dimensions that enable the circulation and the spread of these myths as a 'Disney format'.

Disney's role as a cultural producer and its control over facets of production

Disney's control over facets of production are visible in the ways in which it has modified meanings for *Star Wars*. When Disney acquired the rights for Lucasfilm and all the related franchises, Disney changed the name of the 'Expanded Universe' to 'Star Wars Legends' that would only consists of texts related to the original six movies, *Star Wars: The Clone Wars* TV series and the Clone wars movie. So Disney declared the past elements such as comic books, action figures, fan fictions, video games as non-canon³ and will produce new material under *Star Wars*' Legend' going forward. Disney introduced *Force Friday*, a fan-driven event, which is all about corporate synergy. Started on a Wednesday evening in September 2015, and continued for the next 18 hours in 12 countries around the world, Disney-affiliated YouTubers showed off the wide range of tie-in toys and other merchandise for *Star Wars: Episode VII*. The next day, consumers could go to toy stores to buy them immersing themselves in the world of *Star Wars: Episode VII* (Hall 2015). Disney branded the event "Force Friday" and offered its consumers their first glimpse of merchandise connected to the forthcoming film (Scott 2017). "The rollout of more than 100 new *Star Wars* toys was a cultural phenomenon, with a huge bottom line. Toy sales

between Force Friday and the end of the year reached \$2 billion in retail sales. For just toys, just through the end of 2015, \$150 million in royalties to Disney is a massive number,” (Marc Mostman, a partner at Striker Entertainment, an entertainment-focused licensing and merchandising agency <https://www.wired.com/2015/12/disney-star-wars-return-on-investment/>).

With the recent acquisitions of Pixar, Marvel and *Star Wars*, Disney controls meanings for audiences and consumers that drives all of Disney’s businesses, from movies and television shows to theme parks, toys, and beyond. Before the launch of *Disney’s –The Force Awakens*, the Disney cruise line hosted *Star Wars* day at Sea Cruises. The cruise organised costume themed days, portrait-making of people’s favorite *Star Wars* character; there were people (Disney cruise employees) dressed in Rebel Alliance attire, they made a version of the Jedi training academy. The banner on the cruise read “The Force is strong with the Disney fantasy’. There were *Star Wars*’ images and messages everywhere. A few weeks before the release of *The Force Awakens*, Disney launched a Pixar clip where the characters personifying emotions in *Inside Out* react to the *Star Wars* trailer. “I love this trailer!” Joy says. On ABCs (owned by Disney), *Good Morning America*, the anchors dressed up as *Star Wars* characters and revealed new *Star Wars*. Disney also released *Star Wars* clips during their evening programming on ABC and ESPN. Such synergies (or cross promotions) where several divisions of a company work together and increase company’s value has been a routine practise for Disney owing to the fact that it is one of the top five global media conglomerates (McChesney 1999). “With so many outlets available for promoting *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*, the question is not “Where can I see more *Star Wars*?” but “Where can I not?” (Greenberg 2015).

In considering the huge role, Disney plays as a cultural producer with a potential to disseminate moral meanings in society, George Lucas' intentions and decision to sell *Star Wars* to Disney does not come as a surprise. Before analysing the facet of production, it is imperative to understand the role of the creator of *Star Wars*- George Lucas posited within a scholarly discourse on authorship. George Lucas remains a name synonymous with *Star Wars* even after its acquisitions by Disney.

An analysis of auteur and authorship

Lucas' authorial control can be recalled through his negotiations and dealings with Twentieth Century Fox, during the initial development of *Star Wars* in early 70s. His control-oriented negotiation and decision of refusing a hike in the salary as a writer and a creator in favor of retaining the rights to sequel and merchandise are a testimony to Lucas' claims to authorship on everything related to *Star Wars*.

Many scholars consider George Lucas as the author of the *Star Wars* text. Timothy Corrigan and Warren Buckland see George Lucas as a 'commercial auteur' that focuses less on the internal dynamics of the film and more on the commercial aspects of it. Corrigan defines the auteur as a "commercial strategy for organizing audience reception...a critical concept bound to distribution and marketing aims that identify and address the potential cult status of an auteur" (in Bowrey and Handler 2014:37–38). Scholars have also argued that a film even though produced collectively, is only valuable when it is essentially seen as the work of the director, the film is more than likely to be the expression of his individual personality; and that this personality can be traced in a thematic and/or stylistic consistency over all (or almost all) the director's films (Caughie 1981:9–10). Lucas has been seen as the author of *Star Wars* through his association with the whole franchise, and not just limited to films.

"Lucas's transtextual singular authorship has functioned in dialogical relationship with

the creative, industrial, and textual forces that have constituted the *Star Wars* franchise over the last four decades” (Lomax 2017:36-37). While *A New Hope* and the PT is directed by George Lucas, the other two films in the OT have been directed and written by other film makers. The screenplay for the *Empire Strikes Back* (1980) is attributed to Leigh Brackett and Lawrence Kasdan, and the film was directed by Irvin Kershner and produced by Gary Kurtz. Similarly, the screenplay of *Return of the Jedi* (1983) is attributed to both Lawrence Kasdan and George Lucas. Lucas himself agrees that he’s much more of a filmmaker than a film director. (Bowrey and Handler 2014:37). Henry Jenkins argues that George Lucas is the sole author of the *Star Wars* franchise and comments that “the most successful transmedia franchises have emerged when a single creator or creative unit maintains control” (in Lomax 2017:36).

However, the concept of film authorship has been the subject of much academic debate in recent decades. Essentialist concepts of authorship such that the author is an ‘artist’, working independently, than collaboratively; the concept that meaning is determined solely by the director, rather than by a range of figures, including viewers; and the concept that the author is uninfluenced by his or her industrial and cultural contexts” (Manley 2018:15). In relation, Andre Bazin claims that auteurism involves choosing the “personal factor in artistic creation as a standard of reference” (1957, 1985:255). This can be applied to George Lucas’ references to post-war discourses and the historical and social contexts around the time that *Star Wars* was made.

However, much earlier, Wimsatt and Beardsley in their seminal work of ‘The Intentional Fallacy’ (1946) argue that the “design of the author or the intention of the author is neither available or desirable as a standard for judging the work of success of literary art” (Gerstner and Staiger 2003:11). Wimsatt and Beardsley are not the only

scholars that have challenged authorial intentions. In their essays on ‘The Death of the Author’ (1967), and ‘What is an author’ (1969), Barthes and Foucault argue that because of the instability of language of a text, the location of meaning should be the point of reception and consumption. This suggests that the words of the author should not be taken at face value, and rather viewed through the organizational and industry structures within which the text is created. In that, while earlier it can be seen that the theories of authorship are mostly situated within the facet of ‘production’ in the circuit of culture, the problematization of ‘authorship’ is further highlighted to suggest a cusp between production and consumption. Recent approaches to auteurism have tried to avoid the essentialist notion of the auteur as having any real agency, towards the notion of the auteur as a construct: a concept produced by consumers, critics and by organizational processes such as advertising and marketing (Tzioumakis 2006).

George Lucas may have written the narrative for *Star Wars* based on his interpretation of the post war discourses, however such authorship should be understood within the systems that produce it. In this sense, the idea of a filmmaker as the focal point for authorship shifts to an understanding that places ‘inter-textuality of a cultural product’ a factor to locate authorship outside the realms of ‘production’. An author, is situated within the institutional frameworks (industrial, cultural, academic) and thus in that sense cannot be seen as an independent or the sole author as Lucas earlier claims himself to be.

I am the Father of our *Star Wars* movie world- the filmed entertainment, the feature and the television series...I set them up and I train the people and I go through them all. I’m the father, that’s my work.” (Lucas 2008 in Taylor 2015: np).

Lucas’s claim over *Star Wars* authorship has not come without criticism. Rather some scholars (Christopher Manley 2018; Lomax 2017) have critiqued ‘authorship’ in relation to Lucas’ claims as the sole owner and creator of the expanding and growing

universe of *Star Wars*. George Lucas has been highly critiqued for his control over the franchise and his style of film-production of the myth that is a reminder of the 50s and 60s America. However there are less critiques related to authorship that take into account the creativity, the political economy and the social context that investigates the CoC to examine authorship not as a sole creation but as interwoven into the process of making a cultural product. *Star Wars* as mentioned earlier is not a simplistic and a straightforward moral myth that it often gets described as. Contrary to what George Lucas claims, *Star Wars* is not a radical departure from his earlier works especially his first two films- *THX 1138* (1971) and *American Graffiti* (1973) and shows influences of many filmmakers such as Akira Kurosawa, John Ford and David Lean whose cinematic output focused on Western, war narratives, and space fantasies.

In considering these arguments, what aspects of authorship can be attributed to Lucas? Author of the films are not necessarily only directors (Sellors 2011) and that the act of authorship refers to the management of the entire culture text, not just one film but other narratives and storytelling mediums such as fans' works, merchandise etc. In that sense it can be argued that George Lucas does not fit into some of the earlier theories on authorship as discussed above that see the creator/director as the 'author', rather shifts towards a critique of it (Barthes 1977, Lomax 2017).

In the current era of the *Star Wars* franchise, 'the auteur gives way to the team player', suggesting an authorial structure that supersedes the independent and singular author role. This is also largely different than the George Lucas era as the buying company Disney is already a huge cultural producer and disseminator of content. Hence the products that are created become synonymous and owned by Disney as a whole without the authorial rights to one single person or director. However, a more critical perspective should also take into account that this authorial structure still

facilitates the authorial presence of a single auteur. J.J Abrams, the director of *The Force Awakens* is an example of such new authorial structure and ownership. In addition, appointment and assignment of other film auteurs such as Rian Johnson, Gareth Edwards and Colin Trevorrow stresses on Disney's focus on a purposeful authorship (Lomax 2017:46).

Conclusion

This chapter has analyzed certain aspects of CoC mainly regulation and production that have facilitated (or controlled) the creation of *Star Wars*. By examining concepts such as the political economy of films and authorship embedded within a discourse on regulation, production and consumption, this chapter has highlighted the factors and the industry and organizational structures that have shaped meanings around *Star Wars*.

Chapter 5- CoC moment- ‘Production’ of morals

Introduction

This chapter examines and explains the practices and processes involved in the production of morals constructed through *Star Wars*. Circuits of culture scholars (du Gay et al 1997) highlighted production as one of the essential moments in the CoC without which a cultural text cannot completely become meaningful.

Many of the accounts of both the success of Lucasfilm and *Star Wars* privilege the activities of one man- George Lucas. George Lucas appears as a symbolic personification of the idea behind the technological enhancements (special effects, graphics) and the company (Lucasfilm). Lucas is often represented (and represent himself) as an inspired individual who single-handedly built the company and created *Star Wars*. It is the idea and imagination of this one person that has enabled various representations and narratives for *Star Wars*. “Far from simply being 'fictions', these different accounts provide an insight into the contested nature and characteristics of cultural production and indicate how *Star Wars* has accumulated meanings among those who participated in its production” (du Gay et al 2013: 38). These accounts also raise debates over the issue of authorship (as seen in chapter 4). Large cultural producers such as Lucasfilm that control the processes of production control the meanings for the texts they circulate and distribute. And thus the process of production is intrinsic in understanding under what conditions is the text made and what has influenced its production. Thus ‘production’ is necessary in understanding the historical, cultural and the social contexts to fully understand the story behind the creation of the text.

The first three sections of this chapter mainly focuses on the various versions and interpretations of the origins of production, including George Lucas' conception of moral constructs through a popular culture myth; the background against which morality is fabricated within the context of American society and culture; and examining how culture is transmitted by focusing on George Lucas' specific choices to conceive of and incorporate the monomyth and *The Force* as storytelling tools to communicate a moral tale in society. Conceived against the backdrop and aftermath of the Vietnam war, the monomyth paralleled a common American's metaphoric death and its transformation as the 'true hero'. *The Force* signifies a religious and spiritual abstraction that serves as a moral compass enabling an understanding of good vs evil, and right vs wrong. With a focus on trust and loyalty as mutually reinforcing morals, this chapter examines the conception of *Star Wars* against the appalling background of American history as an essential factor in understanding not just the idea behind producing *Star Wars*, but also the practices and processes that involved in the circulation of morality. Hence the creation of narrative vehicles such as the monomyth and *The Force* become important in understanding the connection between the rebirth of heroes as depicted through popular culture and a restoration in faith in some divine power that helps strengthen relationships in the American society. An analysis involving producers' narratives will enable in showing the ideation involved in the process of producing morality at the level of encoding (Hall 1980).

Trust and loyalty are not just produced through films, rather a plethora of other transmedia storytelling channels such as toys and merchandise that enable an understanding of the circulation of morals. Cultural production entails different narratives, representations and distinctive practices that is an integral part of the

company way of life and the cultural text it produces that informs organizational decisions and activities (du Gay et al 1997; Fine 1992). And that is the focus of section four.

The fifth section examines the relationship between Lucas and Disney as a way of understanding their production perspectives. In addition, it also examines trust and loyalty embedded into the professional relationships outside the context of films by engaging and connecting the analysis with the literature on 'production of culture'. By situating my analysis within the production of culture literature, I examine how trust and loyalty are constructed and circulated through processes involved in the meaning-making of a popular culture text.

The last and final three sections examine discourses related to Disney's role in circulating moral meanings through its myth.

Peterson (1976) noted the structures involved in the process of production such as occupational structures, organizational structures and industry structures are crucial to cultural industries within the process of production. While Negus' (2002) and Peterson's (1976) description of production processes also made a connection to audiences and consumers as the end product in the production cycle, it is evident that their focus was on the structures and the people involved at the production stages as dominant meaning-makers of a cultural text. du Gay et al. (1997) suggested that Sony's "culture of production" has been represented as predominantly Japanese considering that the idea was conceived in Japan and was made by the Japanese. In the case of *Star Wars*, it is then important to examine the morals that George Lucas has produced reflect his cultural sensibilities which are perceived within the American context. In relation to this, it is also important to understand the production moment with regards to Disney's acquisitions of *Star Wars*, the former that is already known to

circulate its own meanings of morality. A ‘cultural biography’¹⁴ of *Star Wars*, I argue, explore specific discourses that attempt to describe producers’ intent to shape and construct the cultural text. This entails a discussion of the relationship between George Lucas and *Star Wars*. In exploring the relationship between Sony Corporation and the Walkman, du Gay et al (1997) argued that Sony’s “culture of production” has been represented in various ways as quintessentially Japanese. A closer examination of Lucas relationship with *Star Wars* provides an understanding of the latter as quintessentially American.

Producing morals within American context

While researching for this thesis, I came across a number of similarities between the Sony Walkman and *Star Wars*. Much of what du Gay et al say about Sony (company) and the Walkman seem applicable to George Lucas and *Star Wars*. For example, du Gay et al stated that the origins of the Walkman, like most successful technologies, “are bound up in numerous, often contradictory, narratives” (1997: 62). Anyone who is familiar with any of the biographies of George Lucas recognises that this is also certainly also the case for *Star War*. Scholars (McDowell 2014; Gordon 1978) have suggested that George Lucas was primarily inspired by the Vietnam War to craft *Star Wars* narrative as a battle between good vs evil and the triumph of good over evil. These narratives are woven into the fabric of producing a *Star Wars* tale as a modern moral story. du Gay et al (1997) noted that examining the moment of production involves considering a ‘number of narratives and representations of the ‘facts’ that have become associated with a cultural text’ (37).

¹⁴ Grey (2004) uses this term for his study on a ‘cultural biography of Jane Eyre’ adopting the circuit of culture as a theoretical framework.

They suggested that a closer examination at production involves studying the origin of the idea behind the cultural text.

Much of the counterculture in the US in 1960s, coupled with the civil rights movement around the same time became revolutionary with the American government's military intervention in Vietnam. These social factors have been responsible for George Lucas' conception of *Star Wars* in an effort to produce and circulate moral meanings which he saw as eroding. Lucas in an interview with Dale Pollock (1983) revealed that “There’s more of me in *Star Wars* than I care to admit.” An examination of this quote suggests that there is a close connection between Lucas' own experiences involving these social factors while growing up as a child and the moral saga, namely, *Star Wars*.

Based on his opposition of the US involvement in the Vietnam War, Lucas had plans of making an anti-war film on the Vietnam war to be titled 'Apocalypse Now' which got passed to his contemporary Francis Ford Coppola¹⁵ in 1973 (Smith 2014). This sentiment can be seen in Lucas' description of *Star Wars* as “a large technological empire going after a small group of freedom fighters. This reference is depicted in the opening scene of *Star Wars* in which Princess Leia's rebel ship is 'completely overwhelmed in size and firepower by an Imperial Star Destroyer'” (Hufbauer 2015). While these anecdotes point to Lucas' inspiration for *Star Wars* as drawn from the Vietnam War, Lucas has tried to capture the moods and sentiments of the American society during the 60s which he saw as a loss of confidence and erosion of morals. Lucas, in an interview has stated that Americans during that time needed the sentiment and confidence of good triumphing

¹⁵ An American writer, director and producer, a friend and colleague of George Lucas whose filmography included films such as *The Godfather*, *The Great Gatsby*, *Apocalypse Now*, and *The Rainmaker*, to name a few).

over evil. He saw the Vietnam war and the cultural effects that followed as a turning point for America. According to Lucas:

“Wars have a tendency to be course changers, which is why it is dangerous for a society to get into a war — it shakes up the status quo. Vietnam is a perfect example. It was billed as a completely harmless war over there; no bomb was ever going fall on United States soil. But a huge psychological bomb landed on United States soil, and it changed it forever” (Pollock 1983).

The psychological bomb that Lucas talked about was the failing spirit and a lack of faith in humanity. George Lucas wanted to express a sense of optimism and hope again. Producing *Star Wars* was a way to express and bring back this optimism and hope back into the American society. Evidently, Lucas's anti-war stance and beliefs have shaped *Star Wars*. “Just as in Vietnam, Lucas envisioned an Imperial war machine going up against guerrilla freedom fighters...the Empire is the villain, the freedom fighters are the heroes. The idea was that he wanted to show human spirit as triumphing over the Empire, and in so doing to make a subtle commentary on his own political context” (Bacon 2017) By the time *A New Hope* was released, the Vietnam War was over. But these parallels can easily be spotted in the film. Another noteworthy aspect is Lucas' conscious and very specific decision to depict the Empire as evil, and the rebels as heroes. This is a clear distinction and a starting point of Lucas' envisioning of morality vs immorality which is seen through all the *Star Wars* films. Rather than detailing the atrocities of the war, he wanted to offer a balm to people to invoke certain ideas and sentiments of friendship, trust, and hope for a better future. Trust and loyalty are the basis of social life (Coughlan 2005; Luhmann 1988) and so it was important for Lucas to emphasize these morals through *Star Wars*. For Lucas, "...friendships, honesty, and trust, and doing the right thing; living on the light side; avoiding the dark side. Those are things that it (*Star Wars*) was meant to do" (Gross 2017). His portrayal of loyalty and trust as representing the good

side is an important aspect of the production rationale to depict these as morals associated with seeking greater good hence reinforcing that triumph of good over evil can only be achieved if there is loyalty and trust among people.

Lucas' conscious decision to do that through the medium of film was strategic as popular culture, especially films, have the potential to significantly shape people's views of reality (J. Demerath Iii 1981). Mediated representations enable people to constitute their knowledge of right vs wrong, good vs bad in relation to the practices of their everyday life (Breckenridge 1995). George Lucas believed *Star Wars* to be that mediated representation that would not only portray good vs bad but would do that through certain morals "I wanted it to be a traditional moral study, to have some sort of palpable precepts in it... there is always a lesson to be learned. ... Traditionally, we get them from church, the family, art and in the modern world we get them from the media -- from movies." (in an interview from 1999). Lucas' decision to transmit such morally and socially relevant messages through films comes as no surprise as Lucas himself is a film school product along with names such as Steven Spielberg and Francis Coppola.

Analysis of the socio-cultural factors

While one of the several factors that has facilitated the production of *Star Wars* is George Lucas own narrative of post-world war II references and the Vietnam war in particular, other factors such as the regulation within the American film industry and the social and historical indicators make for a compelling case involving the production process of *Star Wars*. The 1950s saw immense transformation and change in American culture and around the world with the advent of the rise of pop culture, advances in music and the rise in the percent of American homes that owned television sets. Due to the change in these demographics, the American film industry's target

audiences saw a rise in the youth market. Filmmakers started making films that were more in sync with the youth and rebellious themes of the 1950s. Especially the rise in TV homes caused a major decline in movie theatre attendance. The 1960s was an era for social change. Largely influenced by the civil rights movements, the Vietnam war and the overall American politics, movies then, reflected such social messages and changes. The rise of the 'New Hollywood' in the 1960s paved way for studio uncertainty that continued until the 1970s and the emergence of film school graduates such as Spielberg, Schrader, Coppola and Lucas. The phase of New Hollywood was shaped and informed by the French New Wave that relied on a cinematic vision comprising realistic films with social and political messages as a reflection of the post-world war II discourses (JT Esterkamp 2014). The American film school graduates were all watching these films during their formative years as filmmakers. Reflecting the political and the social events and situations of the 60s-70s, the films they made mirrored these real discourse parallelly taking place in America. This period also saw a shift in the viewers which were primarily the youth, the baby boomers. In a documentary on 'Film school generation', George Lucas mentioned that 1960s was the decline of major studios, the rise of independent producer, and a change in the intellectual attitude of college students'. The Vietnam war at its peak in the 1970s, developed frustration, mistrust and cynicism and disenchantment towards the government within the American culture. Hollywood films during this period reflected the social and the political tensions with war-related themes, and political and moral messages weaved into the narrative. *Star Wars* is posited alongside these events and discourses embedded within American rhetoric from the 1960s (Hale, n.p).

Considering the history and the political turmoil around which *Star Wars* is made, more specifically the way in which George Lucas interpreted that history, can

illuminate certain aspects of his life, as well as the cultural environment around him that helped shape the *Star Wars* films and the morality associated with it. Lucas' own understanding of America's role in the Vietnam war, the industry structures post world war II, the state of the studios and Lucas' relationship with them, are some of the factors that cement our understanding of the application of morals such as trust and loyalty.

Production of trust and loyalty in films

Trust and loyalty are incorporated into *Star Wars* as two of the essential morals for maintaining relationships. One of the instances where these morals are depicted are in *The Empire Strikes Back*, when Luke goes to train at Dagobah with the Jedi master-Yoda knowing that his friends are in danger elsewhere. In this instance Luke is tested between the loyalties towards his friends on the one hand and towards Yoda on the other. Trust can be interpreted in this way- the Jedi trust that Luke is the only one to destroy evil and hence want him to finish training as a Jedi. While Luke's friends elsewhere also have that unbinding trusts in Luke to come and save them. This I argue focuses on trust and loyalty in relationships. The example in which Luke leaves his training incomplete and leaves for planet Bespin to rescue his friends who are in danger shows that Luke chooses friendship over a formal relationship. George Lucas in an interview has stated the importance of friendship in people's everyday lives. By conceiving of a strong friendship between Luke, Leia and Han, George Lucas brought the prominent morals of trust and loyalty as essential elements to friendship. Lucas emphasizes that there is a Luke in everybody. Everyone wants to be a hero and overcome evil. As Lucas himself has mentioned in several interviews that trust, loyalty and friendship are very important to him and thus his conscious decision to produce them as a central theme is obvious. Trust

is depicted in the opening scene of *The Empire Strikes Back*, when Anakin and Obi-Wan are fighting the droids. Obi-Wan allows himself to be presented as a bait for Anakin to use him to draw the droids into his line of fire by putting his trust into Anakin to save him. Trust is also demonstrated through the repeated lines by Obi-Wan and Qui-Gon Jinn telling Anakin to 'Trust the Force', and 'trust your instincts', respectively. Loyalty is depicted through Chewbacca's character towards Han Solo in *The Empire Strikes Back* particularly when Chewbacca stays by Solo's side despite not agreeing with Solo realizing that this loyalty could cost him his life and thereby risking his life. Owing to Yoda's role in Luke's life as a mentor, Luke is torn between his loyalty towards his mentor and friends when he is torn between continuing his training and saving his friends.

In providing this data, I do not intend to examine trust and loyalty analytically through films. In that I do not provide explanations or analysis of how and why Luke trusts the Jedi and not the Emperor. Rather I focus on some of the situations/scenes within the films in which discourses related to trust and loyalty are prominent. Afterall, George Lucas clearly indicates situations and scenes in films which highlight the adoption of morals, particularly trust and loyalty. Lucas has highlighted the importance of these morals in a sense that he has provided mediated resources towards strategies of action for moral behaviour (DiMaggio 1997).

Monomyth and *The Force* as storytelling tools

The myth of *Star Wars* is organized around the monomyth and *The Force*, as storytelling devises rooted within cultural production. Film producers' cultural expressions involve the symbolic processes and collective practices to reinforce certain points of view and to perpetuate themselves and their interests (Caldwell 2008). This notion explains the fabrication of the monomyth and *The Force* as specific

storytelling tools reinforced by Lucas to produce morality. Scholars have argued that *The Force* is derived from the idea that God is in control of everything and that he tests people by throwing difficult situations at them to test their morality (Gordon 1978b; Peters 2012). *The Force*, in *Star Wars* is created as a moral compass which controls everything and guides people's behavior and choices. George Lucas has constructed *The Force* as a storytelling instrument that keeps good vs evil as binary thereby providing a clear distinction between morality and immorality. A cultural explanation for “the Force still being with us' is that people still need religious myths and stories and that *Star Wars* offers a 'realism' that is much advanced as people receive the Force as a religious myth” (Galipeau 2015). George Lucas admits,

The struggle between good and evil within us has been around since the beginning of time. All mythology and all religions address it, and it's the most intimate struggle that we cope with—trying to do the right thing and what's expected of us by society, by our peers, and in our hearts. The issues of falling from grace and being redeemed, and the strength of the family and love—they're all very primary issues (Prince 2002:205).

The Force is treated as scale to measure morality. Lucas' idea of *The Force* came through his childhood experiences where he attended a Methodist church with his family every Sunday. Traces of these religious experiences are interwoven into his works, notes Dale Pollock (1983). *The Force* is developed to awaken spirituality suggesting a belief in some higher power or authority without actually endorsing or advocating any specific religion. "I put The Force into the movie in order to try to awaken a certain kind of spirituality in young people – more a belief in God than a belief in any particular religious system. I wanted to make it so that young people would begin to ask questions about the mystery”, says Lucas. (Moyers 1999). This resonates with Barthes' (1972) notion on myths having a historical context and being communicated intentionally or unintentionally. The Force addresses

character developments in *Star Wars* that deal with morality along their journey. In an interview, Lucas comments that the idea behind *The Force* was based on people's conscious choice between good and evil, and that the world functions better if people are on the good side. When Lucas sat down to write about *The Force* with his co-producer Gary Kurtz in 1976, the version he came up with was 'the Force of others' that makes reference to only the 'dark side' of the Force. Kurtz who studied comparative mythology and religion expressed his unhappiness with the one sided interpretation of the Force. After having several discussions and negotiations on how *The Force* should be produced as a tool to highlight morality, Lucas and Kurtz agreed that *The Force* should represent spirituality. du Gay et al (2013) argued that the production of a product entails a process of negotiation as several people within the production cycle apply their own meanings and interpretations into it. Lucas and Kurtz went back and forth with the creative team over the definition and portrayal of *The Force*.

These negotiations finally settled for the incorporation of morals of trust, loyalty, honesty, hope etc as good morals and those which have positive outcomes, while morals of hate, anger, and pride as immoral and representative of the dark side which leads to negative consequences. Lucas has depicted the Jedi as being on the good side and the Sith as representing the 'dark side of the Force'. The Sith are portrayed to embrace the dark side of *The Force* mostly associated with anger, fear, hate and pride while the Jedi value morals such as trust, honesty, loyalty that are associated with the light side. This is depicted through Jedi's insistence that the dark side primarily works on these functions. Lucasfilm has crafted this clear difference between good vs evil by emphasizing on the way the Jedi and Sith use *The Force*. "The Jedi prefer to keep in contact with *The Force* occupying all living things, to draw

on the natural world and use it to their advantage. Meanwhile the Sith is more concerned with cultivating internal energies, focusing on personal power and passions" (Asher-Perrin 2017). The dark side as conceived by George Lucas is predicated on selfish pursuits, in which the Sith seeks to gain status and control, while the Jedi seeks to use their powers for the benefit of others and attain peace (Asher-Perrin 2017). The Sith embodies lack of trust and loyalty while the Jedi personify these two morals positively. That is to say, it is through his own interpretation and beliefs that George Lucas has constructed morality and circulated it through the characters, clearly differentiating between the good and evil and outlining morality vs immorality by showing two distinct sides. This adoption of *The Force* as a storytelling tool represents moral messages that are mediated through films.

The monomyth is another storytelling tool that George Lucas has created to produce mediated representation of morals. Campbell's notion of the monomyth as being a singular universal story format applies to George Lucas' depiction of the monomyth. In that, the format of the 'struggling hero', 'damsel in distress', 'an ally' 'a mentor' and an 'enemy' is apparent through the films. However, this perspective of the monomyth does not reveal much about morality. Instead, examining an aspect of it- the hero's journey enable a portrayal of morality. The production of monomyth is drawn from his own sentiments on the Vietnam war and who he defined as heroes. Frith (2002) noted that no medium has depicted American war references better than films in the manner in which they depicted heroes and define heroism. He observed that trusting each other (other war heroes) and being loyal to one's side are true virtues of how heroes are depicted through popular culture. By centering on the hero's journey, drawing from the Vietnam war references as a metaphoric path to win over the battle, Lucas has

carved the monomyth as a moral compass. The monomyth is the hero's journey as outlined by Campbell (1949) and this journey is rooted in morality. Similarly, Luke also fulfilled this role as the mythic hero where he possesses the narrative of "A royal lineage that he grew up ignorant about in a simple, obscure way, and he has special powers and abilities that are brought out by a series of teachers." (Feder in an article by Persall, a film critic). In any classic myth, the hero reluctantly leaves his home to fulfill a quest that takes him to stranger places. This is portrayed in *A New Hope* in an example in which Luke leaves his own planet Tatooine to embark on a journey that leads him to face several hurdles. George Lucas noted that as children we are taught to become strong like a hero. Children grow up watching a lot of such myths in which it is clear that the hero rises above all (Lucas n.d.). Two elements from Campbell's hero's journey remains constant through *Star Wars*- a continued test of physical courage and challenging moral dilemmas that are difficult to navigate and hence the monomyth can be theorized as a moral path. The monomyth is a mediated representation and is used in many popular culture texts (Lyden 2003). By constructing this representation of the monomyth as a moral journey, George Lucas has reinforced morals of trust and loyalty through Luke's character portrayal.

Lucas' envisioning of *The Force* and the monomyth are embedded within the American historical and political narratives of the 1960s and 70s. Creation of concepts and themes is a big part of the process of cultural production. These process related to cultural production entails different narratives, representations and distinctive practices are integral to the organization and the culture it produces through the construction of the text (Negus 2002). It is not only within and through the *Star Wars* films that these morals are produced, but also moral production are embedded within relationships in the processes and practices of production. The production of

culture perspective is useful in explaining the processes by which *Star Wars* as a moral tale came to be circulated through the patterns and practices of discussions, negotiation and agreements in the production process involving various people. The production of culture perspective emphasizes that a ‘cultural text is shaped by the environment in which it is created, performed, and disseminated’ (Peterson and Anand 2004). And this very claim problematizes the role of the director and the film maker as the single most author of the text. As seen in this section, it is only Lucas who has produced *Star Wars*, rather the creation of the text is embedded within organizational, industry and occupational structures and is a collaborative work. These processes also shed light on the analysis of trust and loyalty as rooted within and that stem from concerns over authorship and certain facets of the production of culture.

A discussion and the problematization of authorship

The simplistic messages such in *Star Wars* such as ‘good is good, evil is evil and that the good reigns over evil; elements from the ‘Western’ and the ‘space opera genre; adventure and jungle series; the storyline, structure, presentation and characterization all recreate the television series and films of George Lucas’ childhood and youth. Some of these popular cultural references that can be seen in *Star Wars* are from *Flash Gordon*, *Buck Rogers*, *The Hidden Fortress*, *Yojimbo*, *Bridge on the River Kwai* and *The Wizard of Oz*, to name a few (Wetmore 2017). George Lucas himself has admitted that his original inspiration for *Star Wars* were the *Flash Gordon* film series and John Carter of Mars, the book series.

I wanted to make an action movie- a movie in outer space like *Flash Gordon* used to be...I wanted to make a movie about an old man and a kid...I also wanted the old man to be like a warrior. I wanted a princess too, but I didn’t want her to be a passive damsel in distress....I wanted to make a space fantasy that was more in the genre of Edgar Rice Burroughs; that whole other end of space fantasy that was there before science too it over in the Fifties. Once the

atomic bomb came...they forgot the fairy tales and the dragons and *Tolkien* and all the *real* heroes (Gordon 1978a:315).

On the one hand, Lucas belonged to the group of film school graduates in the 1960s and was influenced by a lot of film genres such as Western, war and fantasies. Lucas was largely influenced by the Japanese film-maker Akira Kurosawa who made samurai and war films; and these references from Kurosawa's films can be easily viewed in *Star Wars* through elements of costumes, the political themes and character driven narratives.

In fact *Star Wars*, as mentioned earlier in the thesis, is a mix-bag of Hollywood themes and genres and thus the issue of authorship becomes problematic. Even Lucas' earlier films such as *THX 1138* (1971) and *American Graffiti* (1973) shows influences of many filmmakers such as Akira Kurosawa, John Ford and David Lean who have made films on Western, war narratives, and space fantasy genres. While on the other hand, George Lucas has been highly critiqued (Manley 2018, Lomax 2017) for his adaptation of themes and references from earlier popular culture texts such as *Flash Gordon*, *Hidden Fortress*, *Seven Samurai*, *Buck Rogers*, *John Carter*, to name a few, that his claim to authorship of *Star Wars* should only understood within the dynamics of production and not the creative aspect. "It (*Star Wars*) is a film conflicted by Lucas's need for total ownership and disciplined control of his work- the mode he became accustomed to as a one man creator of short, avant-garde animations and his contradictory desire for human warmth, community and improvisation" (Brooker 2009:10).

Lucas' desire for control can be examined and understood within the discourse surrounding the regulation of films especially the control of studios over the creative processes of production. This is also one of the significant factors for George Lucas's

loss of trust in studios that led him to start his own company-Lucasfilm wherein he could control all the processes related to production.

The concern related to authorship can be traced back to the late 40s in which independent film makers had more economic power due to the transformation of the studio systems. The studios were primarily becoming distributors for films made by independent film makers and production companies instead of controlling the process of creativity and production. In the 1960s, the studios got into deals to distribute films with a number of film-school graduates such as Spielberg and Coppola. Warner Brothers, commissioned funds to Coppola to start his American Zoetrope company, which produced such director driven films as his own *Apocalypse Now* and Lucas's *THX 1138*. Other larger studios such as Universal and Paramount entered into distribution deals with production companies such as BSS, Director' Company that financed films of independent directors (Decherney 2011:293–94). Film authorship has also been discussed in relation to genres and their adaptation more broadly. For example, *Star Wars* is categorized in the genres of science fiction and space fantasy, and reflects iconic cinematography from Western genre, especially John Ford's- *The Searchers*. In addition, *Star Wars* has also been known to borrow from the science fiction genre and series such as *Flash Gordon* and *Buck Rogers*. Despite Lucas borrowing from other films and genres, he has shown low tolerance for work he feels is inspired from his films, which is evident in his attitude to use copyright law that exempts other filmmakers from adapting elements and narratives from his films. Though fan fictions started as soon as the release of the first film, Lucas created a licensing agency that monitored potential copyright infringement on fan fiction (Decherney 2011:301–4). Lucas' need for authorship stems from his long lasting aversion to the conventions and industry structures of Hollywood and is an important

factor in understanding the complexity of authorship of the *Star Wars* franchise. Ever since Lucas graduated from film school and started making independent films, he has been openly expressing cynicism and distrust towards Hollywood's studio system by saying that it controls the creative process in an unfair way. Lucas felt it a betrayal of directors' creative inputs to let studios interfere or make decisions about the narratives and the creative process of films. Lucas's resentment for studio and his strong desire for authorship and copyrights partly also stems from this structure. More so ever they took advantage of it knowing that the parent companies had little idea of running the film business. George Lucas being the product of a film school, and a protégé of Coppola wanted to make socially relevant films that were an product of his experiences and imagination and not run by a corporation. His attempt and success at launching his own company and production house has been a testament to the authorship over *Star Wars*. However, it can be argued that the irony of Lucas's aversion towards Hollywood actually sought to establish in reinventing the contemporary entertainment industry that Lucas was against in the first place. Lucas had a problem with corporations and businesses, accusing large corporations of selling creativity. However by withholding merchandising rights for *Star Wars*, Lucas was also trying to run a business and a corporation.

What I was trying to do was stay independent so I could make the movies I wanted to make, but at the same time I was fighting the corporate system. [...] But now I've found myself being the head of a corporation, so there's a certain irony there, that I've become the very thing that I was trying to avoid. Which basically is what part of *Star Wars* is about—that is, Darth Vader (Lucas in an interview, Lomax 2017:40–41).

Much before *Star Wars* while Lucas was still a film student, he was working on his first film *THX 1138* in the late 1960s along with his mentor Francis Coppola. The project was assigned by Warner Bros studios. The studio recut and edited several

minutes out of the rough cut that Lucas presented to them. "I don't feel they had the right to do it...not after I had worked on that thing for three years for no money. When a studio hires you, that's different. But when a film-maker develops a project himself, he has rights. The ludicrous thing is that they only cut out five minutes, and it really didn't make that much difference. I think it's just a reflex action they have" (Miles and Pye 1979). A few years later Lucas started working on the script for *American Graffiti* based on the early 60s era that was dominated by drugs, music, and reflect American political events from the start of Eisenhower's second term to the end of Kennedy's golden years. At the hands of Universal studios, it recut and edited the film even after its release. In addition they refused Lucas the album rights to a song he wanted to use on sound track (Miles and Pye 1979). These negative responses by studios and their ruthlessness in re-cutting and editing the films increased Lucas' resentment and mistrust towards them. This was one of the reasons Lucas become less reliant on studios for the financing of *Star Wars* and instead started his own production company Lucasfilm after having lost the trust in the studios to handle his films. This led to sentiments of gaining complete authorship over the films he created (JT Esterkamp 2014).

The experiences with his first two studio productions, *THX-1138* (1971) and *American Graffiti* (1973), turned Lucas's mistrust of corporate Hollywood into resentment and heightened his determination to secure creative control of *Star Wars*. The desire of controlling the franchise and the bitter-sweet relations Lucas had with the studios in the 70s, was one of the reasons why he started his own production company that would allow him all creative and production rights and ensure non-interference from studios.

Creating trust and loyalty within occupational structures

The production of culture perspective “focuses on the expressive aspects of culture over values and explores the process of symbolic production than focusing on the meanings for the text under the production process” (Peterson and Anand 2004: 312). Studies pertaining to sociology of culture have suggested that culture is produced through sustained collective activity (Becker 1984; Menger 1999), and the networks of working relationships developed by creative workers make for what some have called “cultures of production” (Fine 1992, du Gay 1997). The success of a cultural product is largely dependent on the co-habitation of several occupational structures that help construct meanings for a cultural text. Without the collaborative efforts by a team, the morality through *Star Wars* would not been circulated as successfully, making *Star Wars* meaningful as a cultural product. Trust and loyalty can be examined within the framework of the production of culture embedded within practices and the routine workings of a company.

A *Star Wars* narrative is not just embedded within the processes of writing the script and screenplay. Editing plays a huge role in the way a cultural text gets shaped. That is collaborative work, understood within the concept of authorship is rooted within the dynamics of organizational and occupational structures. Much of *Star Wars* success is based on editing the script which was considered a failure by Lucas’ own film school friends and contemporaries- Steven Spielberg and Brian de Palma (*how Star Wars was saved in the edit* 2017). Having a long history with his critiques and closest friends, he trusted their judgement when they called it an ‘inevitable failure’, turning to his editing team of *A New Hope* that included his wife- Marcia Lucas. This can be understood within the occupational structures within the ‘production of culture’ perspective that is posited within the issues of authorship. Despite the editors having edited the rough cuts to develop a comprehensive storyline, Lucas’ need for control

can understood in the re-edits that he did which were deemed to be unnecessary. “I really enjoy editing the most. It’s the part I have the most control over...” (*how Star Wars was saved in the edit* 2017). However George Lucas’ vision for Star Wars was refined, re-edited and reproduced by his team of editors which can be seen in the development of *A New Hope*.

Thus on one hand, while Lucas’ desire for authorship stems from the organizational structures (Peterson 1976) relating to the dynamics of the collapse of studios, the rise of large cultural producers and regulatory controls from late 1960s; on the other, authorship can be understood within the occupational dynamics of Lucasfilm that have shaped meaning for *Star Wars* and is crucial in the theorizing of trust and loyalty within these structures.

Collaboration, and creative exploration have been Lucasfilm’s strong building blocks in creating trust and loyalty among its employees. George Lucas’ emphasis on morals of trust and loyalty through his films have been translated into the symbolic cultural elements at Lucasfilm have enabled the construction of a cultural text. The environment at Lucasfilm has been intensely collaborative, which enabled positive team-oriented cultures. Groups at Lucasfilm are known to collaborate across divisions. The computer division works with the special effects team or the division that develops games (Finkelstein 2015). This can be seen as a way to ensure and promote not just a healthy work bond but also trust among various occupational levels working together effectively in creating the best product. One of the ways within the occupational careers that enabled building trust among each other was the good use of the Skywalker Ranch¹⁶ as a bonding space. Rick McCallum, producer of *The Young Indiana Jones Chronicles* said:

¹⁶ Skywalker Ranch is a movie ranch, set and workplace of George Lucas in Marin County, California.

“Skywalker Ranch was a real place where people could work together, party together, and try to write and come up with things. We’d be [at the Ranch] for a month at a time. We’d get drunk every night, and we’d be back in story meetings at eight in the morning and wouldn’t leave until eight at night... it was filmmaking camp” (Finkelstein 2015).

George Lucas valued people at Lucasfilm and trusted each one’s role in contributing towards meaning-making for *Star Wars*. Though he believed in technology, Lucas used it to create his films and not shape the creative process inside Lucasfilm. That is to suggest that he did not rely on technology for writing scripts, designing props and characters. He trusted the creative team to design and write *Star Wars* from the scratch without the use of any technological enhancements if they did not wish to use it. “At Lucasfilm, room existed for a purer and less analytical creative process, leaving people freer to go where their imaginations led them. Such a creative environment just produces very interesting and different ideas; it just kind of makes you feel that it is okay to explore,” says Ron Gilbert, who worked in the games division of Lucasfilm during the late-1980s and 1990s (Finkelstein 2015). Bonnie Burton, a *Star Wars* fan who worked for Lucasfilm from 2003-2013 expresses how creativity is valued the most thereby trusting its employees over technological developments that could easily double the film-making process. She recalls, “It was also one of the most creative places around for letting your inner geek loose and getting paid for it. There were times I would test our latest licensees’ *Star Wars* costumes to see how durable they were. Not many companies encourage their employees to dress up as Jabba the Hutt for the day like I did” (Burton 2017). This can be understood within the context of organizational networks facilitating symbolic production through its occupational structures (Peterson and Anand 2004). Such aspects within occupational and

organizational structures enable the building of loyalty among Lucasfilm's employees and gain their trust as an organization that promotes cultural beliefs

Trust and loyalty through the production of transmedia

Beyond George Lucas' classic trilogy, the *Star Wars* galaxy includes the transmedia storytelling channels of comic books, video games, toys and action. The *Star Wars* toy franchise is an example of how trust was built mutually between George Lucas and Kenner, a small scale toy company in Cincinnati and how loyalties were maintained in this relationship. Back in 1977, while Lucas approached several big toy manufacturers such as Hasbro, Mattel, Parker Brothers, he immediately got rejected as Lucas only gave them six months to release toys before the release of *A New Hope*, a process that usually takes two years. I argue that Lucas, in a bid for secrecy, was asking the big companies to trust a novice producer whose creative work was barely recognized. These toy manufacturers, also rejected Lucas' merchandizing offer based on the fact that the film wasn't out and thus considered it a financial risk to make toys that might not make any business sense. Kenner took this risk of making *Star Wars*' toys as one of their executives was familiar with Lucas' work. "This was the risk of all risks that hardly anyone had any confidence in backing", says David Vonner, a toy designer, at Kenner (*The Toys That Made Us*). He explained that though Lucas had entrusted Kenner with a huge responsibility, Kenner was unsure of maintaining that trust, given the time constraints. After the release of *A New Hope* in May 1977, it became a decent commercial success but more importantly, it was the most popular and talked about movie that year. Kenner realized it had to release toys during Christmas due to the growing popularity of *Star Wars* but did not have anything ready. Bernard Loomis, the President of Kenner company came up with a solution (risky according to his colleagues) to build not only Lucas' but consumers' trust with an empty

promise. With the fear of anticipating huge financial losses, Kenner decided to deliver and sell a promise, since they could not deliver the action figures. This has been one of the boldest marketing gimmicks in the history of toy making associated with *Star Wars* (Lambie 2017). The promise that Kenner delivered the Christmas of 1977 was an empty package (without any action figure) containing a *Star Wars* Space Club membership card, a cardboard display stand depicting 12 *Star Wars* characters, and a rather apologetic set of stickers. Most important of all was a gift certificate in the form of a postcard which, when filled in and sent off, promised to send back a set of four *Star Wars* figures before the spring of 1978 (Lambie 2017). Prof. John Tenuto, department of sociology, College of Lake County, Illinois recounted:

“The scariest part was to release at Christmas something called 'The *Star Wars* Early Bird Certificate'....they (Kenner) promised kids that they would be the first in the galaxy to receive four action figures- Luke Skywalker, Princess Leia, Chewbacca and R2-R2 in the Kenner line. Loomis' plan was brilliant; it told kids at Christmas time that they are coming. And luckily the promise was not as empty as the boxes because in the spring of 78 Kenner was ready” (*Toys That Made Us*).

This marketing gimmick provided an insight into the ways in which *Star Wars* toys were presented with meanings of trust not just within producers (Lucasfilm and Kenner) but also trust between Kenner and consumers. For several years to come with every release of *Star Wars* film, Kenner grew their loyal consumer base. The processes of marketing, manufacturing and market (consumption) are a part of the facet of production within the framework of production of culture (Peterson 1976) through which trust and loyalty can be explored and understood as mutually reinforcing morals. Lucas and Kenner slowly and gradually introduced a few toys with the release of every movie. However, the sellout of the toys would not have been a success without their marketing strategies. Around the release of *The Empire Strikes Back*, Kenner announced that ‘kids could mail four proofs of purchase from any *Star*

Wars figure and get a sneak peek of a new toy, the bounty hunter Boba Fett' (Whitbrook 2015). This proved to not only be a lucrative business strategy to ensure increase in sales but also indicated Kenner's expectation from consumers in trusting them to introduce new action figures which were not tried and tested before. With a total of the first three original trilogies, Kenner sold 22 million *Star Wars* toys annually during which Kenner gained an unprecedented 80-85 percent market penetration.

Connection between George Lucas and Disney

Just before Disney acquired *Star Wars*, Lucasfilm announced that George Lucas was working on script for episodes VII-IX. Thus the Disney deal came as no surprise as the house would not have spent \$4 billion on something which had been non-existent for some time. After Disney acquired all rights for Lucasfilm including *Star Wars* and *Indiana Jones* franchise and the associated universe of transmedia storytelling, it immediately announced the making of episode VII which went on to be *The Force Awakens*, adding the first chapter to the sequel trilogy. When Disney announced episode VII, Lucas expressed his excitement saying that it was time for the new generation of filmmakers to play in his sandbox full of morality. Disney decided to retain Lucas as a creative consultant only to later cut him off completely from the universe he created. Disney knew it was playing safe by acquiring popular culture's most lucrative franchise for \$4.02 billion, including box office, DVD sales, merchandise and rentals which was worth \$ 28 billion. This was way higher than the other top franchises such as *Batman*, *Harry Potter* and *James Bond* (Connaughton 2015). Disney suspected that if Lucas' presence and association with the franchise continued then it would become problematic to give *Star Wars* a Disney identity. Thus it decided to disconnect fans' association and expectation from George Lucas.

The connection between Disney and George Lucas could be traced way back when George Lucas was approaching major studios to finance *Star Wars*. Lucas had positioned *Star Wars* as a space opera, and during the 60s this genre was associated with low-budget films. Lucas and Gary Kurtz, his partner on *American Graffiti*, circulated a 12-page script of *Star Wars* to various Hollywood studios including United Artists, Universal Studios who turned them down. Finally, 20th Century Fox, not just financed *Star Wars* but also gave Lucas extra money, considering *American Graffiti*'s commercial success. Initially Lucas had approached Disney first as he saw *Star Wars* being a good fit with Disney since he believed his myth would fit well with the several other Disney myths and fairy tales. "I wanted to make an action-movie, a movie in outer space...I wanted to make a movie about an old man and a kid...I also wanted the man to be like a warrior, I wanted a princess too, but I didn't want her to be a damsel in distress, I wanted to do a children's story,...a modern fairytale, a myth" (Gordon 1978:315). Disney has been a forerunner of creating fairy tales and myths. The social function of fairy tale and myth is to teach moral lessons and the way people should conduct themselves in have a 'happy ending'. A suitable example would be the role of Disney's *Cinderella* as the 'damsel-in-distress' (Ayob 2010:50). Disney provides a staple for fairy tales and through this format; it circulates certain morals such as obedience, patience, loyalty, trust that is seen in most of Disney's fairy tales. These morals are seen in several Disney's fairy tales such as *Beauty and the beast*, *Cinderella*, *Snow White*, *Sleeping Beauty*. "If children or adults think of the great classical fairy tales today, be it *Snow White*, *Sleeping Beauty* or *Cinderella*, they will think of Disney" (Bell, Haas, and Sells 1995:21). Disney's ending scroll 'And they lived happily ever after' is a classic fairy tale format that helps people make an instant

connection with Disney. The iconic scroll opening which depicted the following lines, "...A long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away ..." established Lucas's idea of fairy tale and a fantasy. *Star Wars* is produced out of a pastiche of themes of a universal mythology of heroes and villains, good and evil and, crucially, a milieu where the good guys win similar to many of Disney's fairy tales and myth. Perhaps due to these specific intentions Lucas had for *Star Wars*, he approached Disney deeming it a good fit. Lucas admitted,

“*Star Wars* came out of my desire to make a modern fairytale. In college I became fascinated by how culture is transmitted through fairy tales and myths. Fairy tales are how people learn about good and evil, about how to conduct themselves in society. Darth Vader is the bad father; Ben Kenobi is the good father. The good and bad mothers are still to come. I was influenced by the dragon-slayer genre of fairy tale—the damsel in distress, the evil brothers, the young knight who through his virtue slays the dragon” (Lucas 1999:143).

However Disney refused to have any association with *Star Wars* and rejected

Lucasfilm's offer to finance *Star Wars*. George Lucas experienced a loss of trust from studios due to multiple rejections to finance *Star Wars* as no studio believed in the commercial and cultural potential of the text.

Peterson (1976) argued that cultural texts are not simply the work of individual artists but are fabricated by occupational groups and within social milieus where ‘...symbol-system production is most self-consciously the centre of activity (Peterson, 1976: 10). Though George Lucas has explicitly expressed his desire for *Star Wars* to become a part of the Disney family, during the process of negotiation, Lucas seemed sceptical in selling off *Star Wars* to Disney. After the deal, Lucas refused to turn over his sketches of the next three *Star Wars* films that he claimed he had rough drafts of. When producers from Disney asked to see them, Lucas assured them that the scripts would be good and that Disney should trust him. "Ultimately you have to say, 'Look, I know what I'm doing. Buying my stories is part of what the deal is.' I've worked at

this for 40 years, and I've been pretty successful," says Lucas (Jones 2016). Lucas finally handed over his stories to a few people after he "got assurances from Disney in writing about the broad outlines of the deal." Disney, however, throughout this process, wanted to make sure that Lucas was aware that Disney would get a final say on everything. "Though Lucas was "melancholy" when he finally signed away his franchise, Disney CEO Robert Iger was, well, in Iger's own words, "I was Darth Vader." (Zukerman 2013). This reference to Darth Vader can be interpreted as Iger's interpretation of Disney being the evil guys in the eyes of Lucas.

By asking them to trust him, Lucas expected Disney to trust the legacy that he had created over 40 years and the morals that created the legacy. By referring to himself as Vader, Iger was metaphorically using film references attached to Vader's morality of not only being the evil one, but of someone breaking George Lucas's trust. As soon as Disney took over *Star Wars*, they offered Lucas to remain a creative consultant. However, during the process of producing *The Force Awakens*, Disney decided to sever all ties with Lucas. Lucas expressed his unhappiness saying

"Disney was not that keen to have me involved...they didn't want to use those stories, they decided they were going to do their own thing...but if I get in there, I'm just going to cause trouble, because they are not going to do what I want them to do. And I don't have the control to do that anymore, and all I would do is muck everything up" (Rose 2015).

He compared the sale of *Star Wars* to a breakup and divorce and criticizes the producers and writers of *The Force Awakens* for emphasizing familiar elements of his previous work 'some of which had issues over innovation and storytelling of their own' (Rose 2015). A loss of trust and erosion of loyalty can be seen through this production practice. Most importantly, this accounts for Lawrence Kasdan's involvement in writing scripts for Disney's *The Force Awakens* (2015) and its anthology, *Solo: A Star Wars Story* (2018). Lawrence Kasdan in the past has written

scripts with George Lucas for *The Empire Strikes Back* (1980) and *Return of the Jedi* (1983). In Lucas' blaming of the writers in relation to the ST, Kasdan's involvement in what Lucas deems elements reflecting Lucas' own work enables an assumption of Lucas' sentiment of Kasdan breaking his loyalty and trust. Lucas lost trust in Disney to produce his 'baby' as he calls it elsewhere, the way he intended it ever since Disney scrapped off his plans for a third trilogy. Lucas felt the future of *Star Wars* was a blank slate and needed a captain for the ship. He recommended Kathleen Kennedy, an individual who was part of Lucasfilm's production team to man the ship that is now in Disney's hands.

In the next section, in mapping out similarities and differences in the production practices and processes, I examine 'Disney's way' of producing morality.

Disney's role in reproducing *Star Wars*' morals

Disney can be considered a creative industry defined within the production of culture perspective as an organization that mass produces and standardizes products (Crane 1992). Related to this, a large firm such as Disney designs routines to sort the unfamiliar into the familiar at every step of decision chain related to a cultural text in the production process (Ryan & Peterson 1982, Gitlin 1983). Disney's way of producing culture could be understood within the context of Disneyfication, a process referred to 'sameness' and 'uniformity' in all its products. Disneyfication is considered as 'the often criticized way in which Walt Disney, his co-workers and their successors put an original work through a Disney mincer to emerge with a distorted version of it' (Schickel 1986). The outcome of the process was and is instantly recognizable as a Disney product. Critics comment that as soon as a new Disney film is released, it follows a nearly automatic format for stories that could be bracketed under the 'princesses' myth. Disney has always relied on myths and fairy tales to produce and

promote a certain culture that involves people of all ages (Wasko 2001). “It is necessary to consider the wide range of products produced and distributed by the company, as well as the widespread availability and unique exposure to a range of Disney products at different periods of people’s lives” (250). Disney’s myths revolve around morality that focuses on ‘princesses’ and women protagonists that elucidate themes of love, friendship, sacrifice and trust (Zipes 1994), while promoting itself as some kind of sacred and non-profit-making cultural industry (Wasko 2001). However as several critics point that the primary objective of any media organization is profit-making (Hesmondhalgh 2007). Being a vast media empire, the Disney culture is spread through and across its various portfolios such as Disney studios such as the Touchstone, Miramax, Pixar etc; consumer products that are marketed all over the world; Disney theme parks and resorts that literally enable people to get in close connection with Disney’s myths and its various media networks such as the ESPN, ABC, Disney kids’ channels, and several others. This can be understood within the context of production of culture (Peterson 1976) through which the facets of the industry, organizational and market culture are seen as non-linear and closely tied to one another as processes that enable morality through Disney’s various segments of businesses. This also explains Disney’s oligopoly nature whereby Disney preferred control over several of the communication and cultural aspects (Wasko 2001). Such control leads to a process of standardization of forms and content. The consequences of such concentration are viewed as leading to a process of standardization of form and homogeneity of content. “The impact is perceived as, at best giving the consumer little real choice, at worst promoting cultural forms that are dulling our ability to think critically about the world in which we live and reducing the diversity of values, beliefs and customs across the world” (du Gay 1997: 81). Based on such logics of creating a

‘sameness’ in its content, Disney produces trust among its consumers through the repetition of its myth and fairy tale format which is intrinsic to the ‘Disney way’ (Ward 2002).

George Lucas might have been sceptical about keeping his vision for morality alive by selling *Star Wars* when going through the deals with Disney, however the data presented earlier suggests that he trusted Kennedy to carry on the *Star Wars* stories. "I've seen him (Lucas) build Lucasfilm from a small rebel unit in Northern California to an international fully integrated entertainment company... I am honoured that he trusts me with taking care of the beloved film franchises. I feel fortunate to have George working with me for the next year or two as I take on this role—it is nice to have Yoda by your side," comments Kennedy (Business Wire 2012). This reference of Yoda from the film can be interpreted as Kennedy considering Lucas as her mentor and trusting him to guide her through the production of *The Force Awakens*. Kennedy had been an integral part of Lucasfilm working closely with George Lucas on *Star Wars* and with Steven Spielberg on *Indiana Jones* through all the films. Owing to her loyalties, not just to the texts but also the people who created the texts, it is not a surprise that she took up the offer of heading Lucasfilm. Kennedy's reference to 'rebel unit' as a metaphor for a close-knit group can also be linked to morality as the rebel alliance was portrayed to be on the good side and thus when she referred to this she was essentially emphasizing that her relationship with Lucas as involving trust and loyalty. By metaphorically drawing references from film and relating it to character traits and morality within the relationships pertaining to production practices, this form of discourses greatly shapes the process of production.

Moral ambiguity in Disney's sequel trilogy

While the overarching conflict of good vs evil is laid out through scenes and dialogues in Disney's *Star Wars*, there seems to be some moral ambiguity through character portrayals. For instance, Schwerdtfeger highlighted that:

“...We learn that the seemingly pure and righteous Luke considered murdering Ben Solo years earlier. We see that both The First Order and The Resistance are guilty of dealing with war profiteers. And we get to a point at which Kylo Ren is no longer fixated on being a Jedi or a Sith. He's now done serving as Snoke's puppet, and he wants to pursue the remnants of The Resistance based on his anger and perceived mistreatment” (Schwerdtfeger 2017).

This I argue is moral ambiguity and does not locate well within Disney's portrayal of morality through other films. Disney is known to produce films with few alarming moral ambiguities. This absence of moral ambiguities in Disney films can be understood through the lens of 'Disneyfication' (Bryman 2004), which suggests that all Disney films follow a same pattern to tell a moral story. (McReynolds 1972) argued "that Disney films deny the evil reality: all wicked characters are banished, leaving a world "in which kindness and sympathy always prevail" (787-88). This is not just the case in Disney's live action films but also animated films in which the good always emerges triumphant. 'The Little Mermaid, Cinderella, The Lion King, Snow White, Alice in Wonderland are all examples of moral clarity as there is a clear distinction between 'good' and 'bad' characters' (Hastings 1993). Yet, it portrays certain characters with a 'gray' shade. This is depicted in the *Last Jedi* in which Snoke manipulates Kylo Ren's powers and uses the latter for his own ends, despite his doubts. Though Rey is shown to be the protagonist, there is a lot of mistrust shown in her. I argue that both Luke and Snoke portrayed instances in the new narrative where they did not trust the new generation of characters in making the right choices. While George Lucas urges people to be trusting towards one another, Disney is cautioning people to be alert in trusting people easily.

Mark Hamill, the actor who plays Luke Skywalker in the *OT*, *PT* and *ST* felt that George Lucas had clearly defined trust to be associated with the 'good side' of *The Force* and as the hero as he sets out on his adventure to save the galaxy. But in *The Last Jedi*, this portrayal is less clear. In an interview, Hamill confirmed,

“In ‘*Star Wars: The Last Jedi*,’ Luke has lost confidence in his ability to make good choices. It haunts him to the core. But he hasn’t gone to the dark side. This is not an evil version of him. But it’s still an incarnation of the character I never expected. It has pulled me out of my comfort zone. It’s a real challenge” (Whitbrook and Jackson 2017).

This quote encapsulates the essence of Luke's character that George Lucas produced versus the ones that Disney has reproduced. By portraying Luke Skywalker to be trustworthy in making the right decisions and choices, Lucas has clearly essayed the hero as trusting. Disney shows a weak Luke who's full of self-doubt unlike the one George Lucas created. Luke, in *The Last Jedi* has no trust in himself, a feature that does not compliment a hero that George Lucas crafted. Kennedy defends these comparisons and says that *Star Wars* is very much a continuation of the morals that Lucas set out to disseminate. She says that Disney's focus will be on carrying this vision ahead as she strongly feels that morals mean something to people and that is the reason why *Star Wars* still resonated with all generations. Handy also similarly noted that "...Because there is this allure to what George created from a mythological standpoint. It's not just because it's a successful franchise—it means something to people on a really deep level" (Handy 2015).

However, Kennedy admitted that the reason to not have Lucas associated with the franchise was because of his focus on 'very young characters' (or as Lucas calls them 'teenagers'). Disney had its apprehensions and was afraid of going back to the Phantom menace territory. This can also be read as avoiding juvenile and racialized characters that have been stereotyped in popular culture. Disney perhaps simply does

not want to make the mistake of repeating it and losing audiences and its business.

Phantom Menace showed Anakin's good and innocent side as a young boy who is on his path of becoming a Jedi and wants to save people. Thus Disney has associated the character with morals of loyalty, trust, honesty etc. Disney did not want to circulate this version of morality, especially good morals associated with a character that turns evil later. Kathleen Kennedy also highlighted this by explaining that, "We've made some departures - exactly the way you would in any development process" (Vanity Fair 2015). Instead of focusing on teenagers, *Star Wars* The Force Awakens centers on a pair of 23-year-olds (Daisy Ridley's Rey and John Boyega's Finn) as well as a 35 year-old (Oscar Isacc's Poe Dameron). Those ages are much more in line with those of the main cast in the first *Star Wars*, which included a 26 year old Mark Hamill, a 35-year-old Harrison Ford, and a 21-year-old Carrie Fisher (Vanity Fair 2015). While the overarching theme of good vs evil remains intact in Disney's versions of *Star Wars*, it differed in a few creative areas from Lucas' version of *Star Wars*. Through Rey's portrayal, Disney focused on the narrative of a hero's journey (protagonist) which becomes culturally relevant as a way of using it as a metaphor for people's own journey in life and their understanding of good vs bad behavior and the difference between being good and being evil (Ward 2002).

Conclusion

This chapter achieves an analytical understanding of the several facets of the production processes that involve a discussion of the morality being produced and conceived as important to the producers embedded in the production perspective at the level of encoding. Lucasfilm's intention in circulating moral messages is embedded within the historical, political, cultural and social contexts of the American society. An examination of the production process entails a discussion of not just various accounts

of people involved in constructing a cultural text but also the elements of culture that are fabricated among occupational, industry and market structures that forms the centre of symbolic activity (Peterson and Anand 2004). The accounts of production are embedded within the political-economy of the American film industry and the socio-cultural dynamics of America from the late 1950s that has shaped moral meanings for *Star Wars*. Crucial to investigating moral meanings is an examination of the concern over authorship which is rooted within such political-economic discourses and the facets of ‘production of culture’. Morals of trust and loyalty as mutually reinforcing are not just produced through films but also rooted within professional relationships in the process of production that is extended to discourses related to *Star Wars*’ transmedia storytelling world. An examination of Disney’s way of producing culture adds new insights into the aspects of cultural production by another huge cultural player/industry. Each of the sections highlighted ways in which moral meanings are constructed through the context of the organizational, industry and occupational structures that shape moral meanings for *Star Wars*.

Chapter 6- CoC moment- 'Representation' of morals

Introduction

This chapter focuses on a variety of cultural practices involved in the process of representation. These “signifying practices”, as Hall (1997) called them, have all contributed to the construction of *Star Wars*' complex cultural profile. Hall distinguished between two constructionist approaches to study representation: the semiotic, and the discursive. He explained that “the *semiotic* approach is concerned with the *how* of representation, with how language produces meaning – what has been called its ‘poetics’; whereas the *discursive* approach is more concerned with the *effects and consequences* of representation – its ‘politics’” (1997: 6).

In this chapter, I discuss and explain the 'poetics' and 'politics' of the representation of morals that are constructed and circulated through *Star Wars*. In answering the broad question: How do Lucasfilm and Disney represent trust and loyalty? I focus on aspects such as costumes, colors, logos, scripts (narrative), characters, and transmedia storytelling, that enable an understanding of ways by which semiotics and discourses enable an understanding of moral representations of *Star Wars*. This chapter analyzes first the historical context of *Star Wars*' moral representations. It then explicates how Lucasfilm and Disney have represented morality through costumes and colors respectively in their *Star Wars* products embedded in a discussion of the myth.

Representation can be defined in two primary ways. First is in terms of description or depiction of something, that is to call it up in the mind by portrayal or imagination, while the other one is the way a cultural text symbolizes or stands for something (Han and Zhang 2009). This is in relation to Hall's notion of the semiotics and discursive approaches which enable an understanding of how *Star Wars* is

presented in the films and the various discourses and talks generated as a consequence of such representation. For mapping out the full range of associations, meanings, and connotations that *Star Wars* has gathered over a period of time in culture, it is important to look at how it is described and symbolized. For example, ‘it has come to stand for things that are high-tech and modern, associated with technology, entertainment and morals. Each of the terms by which a cultural text is described is attached to its own networks of meanings-its semantic networks, each is associated with its own language or discourses, that is, its own 'way of talking' about the subject’ (du Gay et al 2013: 9). There is a discourse of technology, of merchandise, of morality, even of American-ness that is representative of some of the themes in *Star Wars*. To connect *Star Wars* with these “semantic networks is to bring new ranges of meaning to bear on our understanding of what it represents, culturally. To expand meanings or make sense of a cultural text is to potentially draw on these wider connotations and discourses. To put this into context, the idea of high-tech belongs to a particular discourse which is widely used to characterize anything which is the product of modern, cutting-edge technological developments” (du gay et al 1997:9). The CGI effects, the use of light sabers, the land speeders, the blasters, the droids, prosthetics, can be used to describe high tech. Similarly, the idea of *Star Wars* being a 'merchandising monster' carries another, related set of semantic associations. It signifies *Star Wars* in terms of a huge merchandising potential associated with toys, action figures and games. This chapter aims to achieve an understanding of the representational practices embedded into moral discourses that enables *Star Wars* as a meaningful cultural text.

It discusses the interpretive practices of morals from the perspective of the consumers-cultural industries nexus. Towards the ends, this chapter would have

achieved a discussion and explanation of the various semiotics aspects that include how language denotes and carries symbolic meanings and the ways in which discourses are generated around those meanings.

The mythic elements of *Star Wars* have promoted religious beliefs and sentiments that are representational of George Lucas' relationship with mythology and the American context of the 60s and 70s embedded within the practices of production and representation (as elaborated in chapter 4&5). The embodiment of ideas, emotions and concepts in a symbolic form that can be interpreted meaningfully is what Hall (1997) means by practices of representations. "Depressed by the glum catastrophe films and anti-Westerns of his contemporaries, George Lucas saw himself as a kind of revivalist who would bring some wholesome spiritual values back into American culture" (Kapell and Lawrence 2006:8). While conceived as a spiritual, religious tale that embeds morals with an aim to revive the American spirit, a lot of what *Star Wars* represents is within the context of American politics and morality. *Star Wars* has often been referenced as signaling the renewed American conservatism of the Reagan presidency. One example is as followed:

"The clean-cut well-spoken White youths of the film seem to come out of an idealized version of the 1950s and the clear division between good and evil governments suggests the Cold War. Indeed, some phrases borrowed from the film became key ideological points of the Reagan years: '*Star Wars*' (meaning a futuristic missile defense system), 'The Evil Empire' (meaning the Soviet Union). More recently, the name 'Jedi knights' was used by a U.S Army group planning the Gulf War" (Meyer 1999 in Lev 2010: n.p).

These references indicated the morality and religious themes of *Star Wars* as strategically used to symbolize American politics. While George Lucas was not considered to be responsible for the ways in which government uses the films' narratives to advance their political causes, the moralistic tones from *Star Wars* films symbolize the dualism in terms of it being transferred to real politics. George Lucas

has admitted several times that the references to the 'Empire', 'Rebels', 'Alliance' are all derived from the politics around the 60s and the 70s. For instance, Lucas highlighted that:

“...Because the prequel trilogy is the back story of the *Star Wars* saga one of the main features of the back story was to tell how the Republic became the Empire. At the time it happened, it was during the Vietnam War and the Nixon era. The issue was how does a democracy turn itself over to a dictator? Not how does a dictator take over but how does a democracy and senate give it away?” (George Lucas 2015, Cannes International film festival in Kapell & Lawrence 2006: 35).

These myths, as Barthes (1972) would say represent a form of speech that is embedded through certain characters, concepts and more importantly inform the political, historical and social events around the time *Star Wars* was conceived.

Barthes (1972) notion of myth informs my analysis of the myth of *Star Wars*. The entire *Star Wars* is not a myth, contrary to Campbell's claims (that *Star Wars* is a monomyth) as it is not the story that I am studying. Rather the various forms of speech and discourses utilized in the narrative such as the political events, George Lucas' own social and political interpretations and the various symbolisms embedded within the portrayal of characters that are sociologically posited within American history and the history of films. Thus while applying this definition of myth to *Star Wars*, the question is not only whether the narratives resemble and reflect the American historical and political events. Rather it is about making those very same events 'disappear' yet portraying it as natural through characters, concepts, structure and narrative (Durham and Kellner 2009:92). Flotmann (2014) believes that *Star Wars* can be identified as a myth focussing on its most basic characteristics:

structure based on binary oppositions and their negotiation, a certain universality, a tendency to reappear in different forms in various periods and countries, a penchant to address certain basic human fears and offer consolation,

and, as the downside to structural simplicity, the perpetuation of cultural stereotypes and ideology (54).

Though these concepts might be present in *Star Wars*, it is the ‘normalization’ and the ‘taken-for-granted’ aspect that highlights the mythic nature of the text.

Historical context of *Star Wars*’ moral representation

George Lucas’s moral tale is highly influenced from the events of Vietnam war, Cold war and World war II. George Lucas primarily attributed his primary motivation for the entire *Star Wars* narrative to the Vietnam war, though he admitted that certain aspects such as characters, costumes and colours are representative of the Cold war and World war II. In numerous occasions, he attributes *Star Wars*’ storyline to the aftereffects of the Vietnam, which, from Lucas’ point of view, have caused a gloomy atmosphere in the American society. The morality created around this political reference presents two opposing ideas that Americans have strongly associated with.

On the one hand, Americans could be the evil empire fighting against the Vietnamese people, and on the other hand Americans actually identified with the Rebel Alliance. For a post-Vietnam America, *A New Hope* quite literally provided *A New Hope* for all Americans. With a group of ragtag rebels overcoming the great, evil empire through religious dedication and a western-vibe, *A New Hope* hails to American nostalgia and a simpler time (Axinto 2014).

In Arthur Schlesinger Jr.’s phrase, the American war in Vietnam was a “tragedy without a villain” (Anderson 2010:3). As a consequence of the long and traumatic war there was a growing mistrust among Americans in the government (during Nixon’s presidency) blaming the president for prolonging the war and ultimately losing it. The Vietnam war not only caused political and social repercussions but also experienced moral affects. Americans started losing trust in the government believing that the political leaders in power were no longer credible. Americans became suspicious and cynical about the government as a consequence of the war. Many Americans felt that

the US was merely trying to illustrate its dominance to the world and expressed their sentiments about bringing back peace to the country after having experienced a lack of trust in the government (Scott 2008). While this 'lack of faith' among Americans in the government may have been 'disturbing', as Darth Vader would say, the events during and after the Vietnam war facilitated in Americans identifying with '*A New Hope*'. Americans were left with a bitter taste after the brutality of the Vietnam War and the failure of the Nixon administration. To many American, *Star Wars* served as a welcome assurance of morality. "The country was desperately groping for real change. '*Star Wars*' came along and it revalidated a core mythology, that there is good and evil, that evil has to be defeated," (Mattei 2015).

Real events portrayed through mediated representations have a powerful impact in leading people to associate with the text (Silverstone 2002). *A New Hope* invoked and reinforced the sentiments of an erosion of national loyalty and trust in the government. George Lucas's motivation for *Star Wars* started during the Vietnam war while he was in college as a film student. Lucas experienced an anti-government and anti-war movement around him everywhere he went. George Lucas considered films as a powerful medium to convey this message not just to Americans but the entire world. The real events which led Lucasfilm to construct *A New Hope* are represented through the remaining *OT* films and the *PTs* in a number of ways. The real events become part of the mediated representations or a myth. Some scholars consider myths as being true which reveal facts about their cultures (Neal 2007). A myth has the power to grasp the fundamental issues related to human existence and experience and formulate them into stories like *Star Wars* (Mackay 1999). For instance, Yaniz Jr argued that:

"...In the wake of the morally complex Vietnam War, it's no wonder that the *Star Wars* trilogy and its clear definitions of right and wrong struck a chord

with audiences. The film became a "new hope" that the future ahead might be a brighter one, one in which the villains and heroes are easily distinguishable, and ultimately, good always triumphs" (Yaniz Jr 2018).

The ideological goal of the myth is to give to a certain culture what it wants and what it expects. Hence the receivers of myth/audiences/consumers easily recognize the myth as they are familiar with its historical readings that yet appear to be naturalized (Champagne and Champagne 1984:106).

Representing shifts in historical and political rhetoric within OT and PT

Lucas' anti-war sentiments and its portrayals in *Star Wars* facilitated an understanding of not just the political turmoil but also the myth of good vs evil and the theme of good triumphing over evil. In "The Making of *Star Wars*: Return of the Jedi," when asked if Palpatine was a Jedi at any point, Lucas commented, "No, he was a politician. Richard M. Nixon was his name. He subverted the senate and finally took over and became an imperial guy and he was really evil. But he pretended to be a really nice guy" (Nadler 2017). The references to the Vietnam war, World war II, and the Cold war all touch a cord with the American audiences, as each one of them have experienced one or the other during the OT and PT. *A New Hope* was released four years after the end of the U.S military intervention in Vietnam. The events and the related sentiments among Americans of the war and its consequences were fresh in their minds as "they viewed the on-screen struggle of poorly trained and equipped Rebels against the technological juggernaut that was the Empire. The analogy lay on the surface, and it was not unintentional. Lucas has since suggested that his work was meant as an allegorical protest of the Vietnam War" (*Angry Staff* 2015). When George Lucas wrote the script in 1973, he said that he wanted to show "a large technological empire going after a small group of freedom fighters" (Smith 2014). Considering Lucas' anti-war stances, the references to America as a technological empire and

South Vietnam to a ‘small group of freedom fighters’ were evident in the films. This is directly seen through films especially throughout the *OT* in which Palpatine represented the Empire and the Alliance is portrayed as resilient freedom fighters. The Galactic Empire is not some kind-hearted hegemon, rather a totalitarian and genocidal regime that Lucas modelled on European fascism, the Nazi Germany in particular where:

“Just as the Nazis won elections in Weimar Germany, so too did the Emperor employ democratic means to the extent that they were useful to him. And just like European fascists did, Palpatine consistently engaged in all sorts of extra-legal and immoral acts of sabotage and violence to advance his agenda...Just take the fact that the Emperor, through his surrogate Count Dooku, ignited the Clone Wars (which killed millions) and then used the conflict to justify his assumption of absolute power, including orchestrating the genocidal mass murder of most Jedi” (Slack 2015).

When *A New Hope* was released against the backdrop of the Vietnam war with references from World war II, the strained relationship between the Soviet Union and the US was lurking in the background with the threat of nuclear annihilation. An aspect of this real life event has been depicted in *A New Hope* through the portrayal and the narrative of the Death Star- the ultimate weapon of mass destruction that is shown to destroy Princess Leia’s home planet of Alderaan. “‘*Star Wars*’ itself entered the realm of Cold War history after it was adopted by the media in the 1980s as a nickname for President Ronald Reagan’s proposed Strategic Defense Initiative, which would have used lasers to defend the United States against incoming nuclear missiles” (Klein 2015). *Star Wars*’ and its narratives entered the political realm wherein its metaphors became strategies for the government as representing the tense situation between the US and the Soviet Union. Especially around the time of *The Return of the Jedi*, The US President Ronald Reagan had been strategizing rhetorical attacks towards the Soviet Union. In one of the speeches addressing these issues, Reagan mentioned:

“I urge you to beware the temptation of pride—the temptation of blithely declaring yourselves above it all and label both sides equally at fault, to ignore the facts of history and the aggressive impulses of an evil empire, to simply call the arms race a giant misunderstanding and thereby remove yourself from the struggle between right and wrong and good and evil” (Beckwith 2017).

This speech which carried heavy moralistic undertones in setting up the Soviet Union as an enemy and an ‘evil empire’ has been telling of the references drawn from *Star Wars*. The *Empire Strikes Back* and the *Return of the Jedi* were released around the peak of the Cold War era around 80s. During the era, the Soviet Union had invaded Afghanistan and small rebellions and wars took place all over the world. American President Ronald Reagan used one of the biggest metaphors from *Star Wars* to describe the Soviet Union as an ‘evil empire’ that needed to be brought down (Wetmore 2017). One of the political initiatives by the Reagan government that adopted representations and references from *Star Wars* was the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI). Nicknamed as ‘*Star Wars*’, the SDI was the first of its kind program initiated by President Ronald Reagan with an intent to develop ‘a sophisticated anti-ballistic missile system in order to prevent missile attacks from other countries, specifically the Soviet Union’ (Crowley n.d). The SDI was the United States’ response to possible nuclear attacks from the Soviet Union especially with the Cold War looming overhead. This initiative was strategically adopted for the government as people could easily associate the references to the ‘evil empire’ and the use of lasers and advanced technology. *Star Wars* films have themselves have become the embodiment of American culture (Jr 2017).

These narratives reflect a shift in the narratives represented within the OT and the PT as informed by the historical and political events of the 1960s and 1970s.

While post war discourses play a major role in understanding various *Star Wars* representations embedded within the organizational structures of storytelling and

myths, other factors such as the semiotics that form the basis of these discourses also have the potential to add to an understanding of several themes and significations that convey and construct moral meanings.

Representing morals through significations

One of the ways through which the story themes and narratives are conveyed is through clothing, such as costume designs and their colors. This section employs semiotic analysis to illustrate how Lucasfilm represent morality through costume designs in its *Star Wars* products. Semiotics, in simple terms, examines the relationship between signs and their meaning and the way those signs are combined into codes (Fiske and Hartley 1978). Of relevance are ““systems of signs, whatever their substance and limits; images, gestures, musical sounds, objects, and the complex associations of all these, which form the content of ritual convention and public entertainment”” (Barthes 1964: 9). From Barthes’ perspective, the semiotic system is associated with myth, in that the myth is constructed from a semiological chain which existed before it...” (Barthes 1972: 114). According to Barthes, semiotics emphasizes on the social or meanings of banal signification processes such as “the socially constructed signs associated with fashion, professional wrestling, or cinema that pervade quotidian existence” (Soukup 2009: 20). In highlighting the cultural meaning of signs that lie in mythologies or myth, Barthes suggested that signs trigger a ‘mental myth chain’ (Fiske and Hartley 1978:42). I argue that the symbolic system in *Star Wars* stems from the myths rooted within American history and politics and global cultures. The Cold war, World war II, Vietnam war, the Japanese samurai and the Templar knights are all embedded within a language system that denotes symbols of costumes, colours and characters as contextual representations.

“It is by our use of things, what we say, feel and think about those within a certain context what sociologists and cultural scholars refer to as language that is embedded within representations of symbols- how we represent them and give them meanings by frameworks of interpretation we bring upon them. In part, we give things meaning by how we use them or integrate them into our everyday practices” (Hall 1997:3). Language or the way we describe and talk about things works through representation. Language is understood as systems of representation not because it’s written or spoken but because language systems use elements to represent or signify concepts we wish to communicate and express. This working of language within the context of *Star Wars* can be understood through its semiotics that is embedded within certain representational characteristics which have contextual references. I argue that costumes, colours, characters etc are set alongside language in strategic ways that semiotically become meaningful contextually.

To understand the semiotics of costumes and colours, other symbols of logos, background etc, including the terms and representations of ‘Stormtroopers’, ‘The Jedi’, and ‘The Rebel Alliance’ it is important to put these terms into context. “We give things meaning by how we use them or integrate them into our everyday practices” (Hall 1997:3). In understanding this semiotics contextually, the voice of the producer(s), in this case George Lucas and Lucasfilm, enable semiotic meanings through language systems. The following section examines the contexts from the *Star Wars* OT and PT that represent post war discourses within the American context enabling an understanding of theorizing trust and loyalty within these discourses.

References to the evil empire in *Star Wars* could be understood through several symbolisms. One of the ways to examine such symbolisms is through costumes and its significations. While within a few discourses, the parallels with regards to the Empire

are drawn with the US in the context of the Vietnam war, there are other discourses that suggest that The Galactic Empire is based on the real empire- The Third Reich. This is semiotically portrayed through the characterization of Stormtroopers and their uniforms. The portrayal of the loyal Stormtroopers of the Empire should be contextualized within the World War I. Stormtroopers are the loyal army of Darth Vader in *Star Wars* similar to the Nazi Stormtroopers or *Sturmabteilung*. There is also a representation of *führer* in the form of The Emperor. Just like the Nazis have known to occupy countries, the Stormtroopers occupy planets on the command of the Emperor. George Lucas has not been subtle about the association between the two. He has highlighted in several interviews that he wanted to make it very apparent that his villains are bad. So he has made them to look like some of the most infamous names people could associate with. Cultural industries, in this case Lucasfilm, attempt to make these real associations and combine them with fictional narratives to create a bond with people in order to gain their trust and loyalty by engaging in specific images (Simpson 2006).

The Stormtroopers in *Star Wars* have a direct resemblance to the German Storm troops.

Another aspect of clothing associated with the Third Reich as depicted through representations in *Star Wars* are the Imperial officers who are responsible for the running for the Empire. Engrained within symbolisms of fascism, the look and feel of

the Empire bore similar resemblances to the Nazi party. George Lucas has referred to the Imperial officers as ‘Nazis’ in the *Empire Strikes Back*. While commenting on their militaristic style of dressing, Lucas says, “The Nazis are basically the same costume as we used in the first film and they are designed to be very authoritarian, very empire-like,” (Percival 2015). History and politics have played a crucial role in designing the look and feel of these characters. Costume designer, John Mollo recalled, “...he (Lucas) wanted the Imperial people to look efficient, totalitarian, fascist; and the Rebels, the goodies, to look like something out of a Western or the US Marines. He said, ‘You’ve got a very difficult job here, because I don’t want anyone to notice the costumes. They’ve got to look familiar, but not familiar at the same time.’” (Trendacosta 2016). The overall colour schemes and the look of for the Empire uniforms were intended to be fascist. A few actors who played the Imperial officers and wore the militarized uniforms share connections to WWII. The actor Kenneth Colley who plays Admiral Piett, recalled Irvin Kershner, the director of *the Empire Strikes Back* telling him, “I’m looking for someone that would frighten Adolf Hitler!” And he sized me up and down...obviously they were going on some sort of design for Darth Vader’s men” (Slack 2015).

Nazi army costumes

Imperial officers from *Return of the Jedi*

Another aspect of costuming that could be analysed through semiotics is Darth Vader's headgear which is inspired by Nazi helmets. While describing what he had in mind for Darth Vader, artist Ralph McQuarrie said, George envisioned the character as a "dark lord riding on the winds, with an evil essence about him," (Hill 2017). The artist sketched Vader with a breathing apparatus and a cape. John Mollo, the costume designer, then added real-life elements to the costume associated with war and evil. Darth Vader's headgear resembles the black shiny helmets the Nazis wore during World War II. In *Star Wars*, Darth Vader's suit represents evil and thus portrays him as being *less human* (Hill 2017).

Mediated representations like these which are representative of unforgettable moments of history are widely recognized and accepted and are also embedded within the organizational structures of storytelling (Crane 1992). These real references used for mediated representations should be embedded within the political situations of World War II. The Third Reich is not only associated with causing atrocities, but is known for its dominating, powerful stance and evil means of ruling over the world. These parallels are seen in the Empire and through the depiction of Emperor as

containing anger, pride, greed and malicious intents. Cultural industries construct real events and try to normalize it for the audiences. Representation involves a process of normalizing certain messages by the media or producers of the text (Kidd 2016). Films are a representational practice because it has to appeal to people and engage with the meanings which the text has accumulated over time (Du gay et al 2013). Lucasfilm had portrayed the dichotomy between good vs evil by constructing post war references that make the association of good vs evil easier. It is not that the Sith (representing the Empire) could not be trust or are not loyal, (the men of the third Reich must have displayed extreme fealty and trusted their leader to advance their cause of world dominance). It is the ways through which the Sith intended to achieve those means are immoral. These representations are associated with the war experiences and highlight the negative portrayals by discussing the role of a few people in real life who have played an important role in both World war II and the Vietnam war in different ways. Lucasfilm set out these depictions by the dichotomy of good vs evil by crafting the Sith and the Jedi as morally contradictory.

Representing other cultural references

While the references to Darth Vader, Stormtroopers and the Imperial officers are embedded within the dark histories, the references to the Jedi are drawn from popular culture. These can be understood within the context of myths as a form of language. To Barthes, myths function to naturalize and eternalize the historical forms of culture. In fact he claims that myths ‘disappear’ history transforming cultural factors as natural. Barthes also argues that myths erase what is dissimilar and different. In his famous interpretation of a Black African soldier saluting the French flag, Barthes claimed “that the image erased the horrors of French imperialism, presenting a sanitized portrait of a French soldier that made it appear natural that an African should salute the French flag

and exhibit the proper signs of military behavior” (Durham and Kellner 2009:xxii). Such representations that naturalise and disappear certain ‘historical’ forms are also informed by George Lucas’ adoption of Japanese film references.

George Lucas was a film student in the 1960s at the University of South California (USC) and was an ardent fan of filmmakers such as Akira Kurosawa David Lean, Norman McLaren and John Ford; most of whose films focused on war and Western genre and discourse (Brooker 2009:10). At the time, Akira Kurosawa, a Japanese film maker was the only non-Western film maker that successfully made his way through his films into the mainstream Hollywood. George Lucas, and other film students and his contemporaries such as Steven Spielberg, Francis Ford Coppola, and Paul Schrader were huge fans of Japanese samurai films those made especially by Akira Kurosawa. Infact, George Lucas has admittedly borrowed many references for *Star Wars* to scenes, setting, characters, costumes, colours and narratives from Akira’s famous samurai film- *The Hidden Fortress*.

George Lucas has explicitly acknowledged part of his inspiration for *Star Wars* drawn from the famous Japanese filmmaker, Akira Kurosawa. George Lucas incorporated the characterizations of the Jedi order, whose morals and disciplines as shown in films bear similarities to the code of honour inculcated in Japanese samurai. While there are similarities between the Jedi from films and the Japanese samurai, in other discourses, the Jedi echo the medieval monastic military order of the Knights Templar. “The Templars were esteemed above other knights for their austerity, devotion, and moral purity. Like the Jedi, they practiced individual poverty within a military-monastic order that commanded great material resources” (Pahman 2016). The Templars originally were a group of people who devoted their whole lives to promote justice and peace. For instance Pahman noted that:

“In our own world, which is no less fraught with war and oppression than the Middle Ages (or a galaxy far, far away), the idea of the Jedi speaks to a deep desire in the human heart not only that a higher spiritual and moral order would exist throughout the universe, but that there should be *real people*, not just myths or legends, who actually devote themselves to it and live it out.” (Pahman 2016).

Similar to the depictions in films with a council of members headed by Yoda, the Templars also comprises a 12- member council headed by a grand master. The hooded white robes worn by the Christian warrior monks are seen as seen as been adopted in the Jedi clothing in the *Star Wars* films (Klein 2015). In fact George Lucas had originally named them ‘Jedi Templar’, rather than Jedi knights as in films now. The idea of the white and grey robes is derived from both the Templar and the Japanese samurai that symbolise peace and purity.

Jedi costumes in films

Samurai robes

Knights Templar costume

With references to the representations presented here, I argue that it is not only the mediated representations and popular culture that bear upon people’s understanding of the world in terms of god vs evil, but it is also the real world that bears a profound impact on the mediated representations and culture.

Representing morality through *The Force*

In relation to *Star Wars*, just as George Lucas has borrowed from the various genres such as the western, samurai films, space fantasies and world war two films in constructing *Star Wars*; he has similarly integrated and applied various mythological

and religious concepts from across cultures. Such religious themes and motifs does not necessarily adhere to Campbell's monomyth but a pluralistic whole of diversified parts with an Western interpretation (Lyden 2016, McDowell 2007). Campbell's focus on individualism in his theory of the monomyth does not seem to apply well to *Star Wars*. Infact *Star Wars* highlights the importance of social relationships such as friendship and working together towards the common good. In relation to the direct applicability of monomyth to the construction of *Star Wars*, Lucas has earlier said, "there is a Joseph Campbell connection, but it's just one of the many" (McDowell 2007:6). And thus while monomyth can be broadly associated with *Star Wars*, the individual characteristics of the monomyth do not provide a clear applicability to the themes and rhetoric addressed through *Star Wars*.

While the symbolisms of costume designs and other cultural references enabled a representation of moral meaning in *Star Wars*, the constant references to *The Force* also played a crucial role in forming a moral discourse in *Star Wars*.

The Jedi representations bear such significance to people's lives that several people have now come to inculcate its beliefs and have come to acknowledge these beliefs as religion. "In the case of Jediism, members have adopted two things in particular from *Star Wars* (esp. Lucas 1980, 1999): belief in 'The Force' and an identity as Jedi Knights. Around this core, Jediism has developed theology and rituals that blend *Star Wars* material with (Western) Buddhist and Christian beliefs and practices. (Davidsen 2016: 522). These members who have formed themselves around Jediism are different from typical fans in that the Jediists mediate experience, invoke The Force and pray to it in ways which *Star Wars* fans do not indulge in. In New Zealand, a web-based group call themselves the Jedi Church believing that "The Jedi religion is just like the sun, it existed before a popular movie gave it a name, and now

that it has a name, people all over the world can share their experiences of the Jedi religion, here in the Jedi church” (Cresswell 2012). This can be understood and interpreted in terms of the use of several religious in the explanation of *The Force*. Like a casserole that combines multiple faiths, *Star Wars* is a blend of Christianity and Judaism, primarily. Scholars have argued that there are traces of several religions depicted through *Star Wars*. While George Lucas himself does not think of *Star Wars* as a religious film, he does admit that ‘almost every single religion found the film to contain elements of and be suggestive of their faith’ (Wetmore 2017). The theme of Christianity is echoed by the overall narrative of redemption in the OT and the phrase, ‘May the Force be with you’. Yoda as an authoritative religious figure is also seen criticising Luke for his lack of faith. Traces of Judaism can be found in the constant pull between the good vs evil, and loyalty and faith. *The Force* is also representative of the Hindu concept of OM¹⁷, which represented a powerful presence everywhere, which can be noted through Obi-Wan Kenobi’s explanation to Luke Skywalker about the Force, “It’s an energy field created by all living things. It surrounds us and penetrates us; it binds the galaxy together” (*A New Hope*). According to Peter Kramer, *Star Wars* can be seen as films that celebrate the primacy of the Force over technology. Luke ‘uses the Force’ and ‘trusts his feelings’ over his targeting computer to destroy the Death Star (2008).

I argue that cultural industries, Lucasfilm in this case, has provided narratives around *The Force* and religious discourses which enable people’s beliefs and involvement with those mediated representations that reflect in their everyday lives. Embedded within these beliefs and practices is the role of the teacher or the discourse

¹⁷ Om is a sacred sound and a spiritual symbol evolved in Hinduism. It is a syllable chanted often during meditation.

of the mentor. In *Star Wars*, throughout the OT, especially *A New Hope* and *The Empire Strikes Back*, Yoda and Obi-Wan impart teaching to Luke Skywalker of the mysteries of the Force. By portraying such spiritual teaching by an authoritative figure, Lucasfilm provided a discourse which evokes some kind of response among people especially among the Jediist. When Yoda appeared as a wise and religious sage on screen, people subconsciously associated it with religious figures in general while projecting these associations onto Yoda. In this case, *Star Wars* as a mediated representation has not only provided religious discourses but has also translated that into everyday life and practices of people. Jediism proved to be the result of it. Considering and acknowledging Yoda as a religious authoritative figure who knows everything he is talking about and whose teachings can be trusted, people attach a meta-representation of reality to Yoda's authoritative figure, which has the potential to cognitively play out on people's minds. The maintenance of authoritative figures or the one in power has the potential to contribute to people's religious attitudes (Kirkpatrick 2005) which are further reinforced by popular culture and mediated representations. 'In addition, this discourse of the authoritative figure in relation to the formation of religion through fictitious means constitutes some sort of an 'embedded discourse' within the narrative framework of popular culture' (Davidsen 2016: 532-533). This discourse also makes it possible to process the religious discourses independently from that particular narrative. Jediists respond through *Star Wars* in ways by which they are persuaded by Yoda's teachings of right vs wrong and the good vs evil due to his narratively constructed fictional authority. The Jediists inculcate a sense of moral education by accepting Yoda's authoritative religious fictitious figure thereby making it a part of their everyday reality. I argue that through this narrative and depiction of the Force, Lucasfilm has enabled a clear distinction between the Jedi

and the Sith making one a matter of religious discourses preaching morality- the ways of becoming good and the consequences of bad behaviour. By pitting and portraying the Sith in stark contradiction with the Jedi, Lucasfilm has portrayed the Sith to be bad and evil, reinforcing the narrative myth of good vs evil through popular culture. As a way to understand morality in terms of good vs evil, one of the ways to examine this is through the clothing of the Jedi and the Sith that marks the distinction between good vs evil. The aspect of clothing needs to be understood contextually within the political and social contexts of the 60s & 70s and the narrative frameworks of the religion embedded within the organizational structure of Lucasfilm in terms of crafting such representations.

Representation of morality in Disney's *Star Wars*

When Disney acquired *Star Wars*, the historical representations and the social and cultural backdrops against which *Star Wars* was originally made by Lucasfilm were huge. The overarching theme of good vs evil and morality is retained in Disney's *Star Wars*. In fact, *The Force Awakens* reportedly represents similar storytelling form that can be found in *A New Hope*. It is evident because of Disney's positioning and representation of fairy tales and myth. True to the original storytelling form adopting the monomyth, Disney uses similar tropes such as 'the naïve young (male) hero, the wizened mentor, the damsel in distress, direct challenges most often resolved through violence, the polarization of right (good) and wrong (evil). 'Wash, rinse, repeat, sequel, sequel, sequel' (Griego 2015).

Bryman (2004) refers to this standard format that Disney applies to several of its texts as 'Disneyization'. This also offers an explanation of Disney's success with the original and sequel trilogies and several of Disney's own films. From 2005 to 2015, 10 years since the *PT* ended and *ST* released its first instalment, the political and cultural

references have changed. Russia has once again risen as a dominant military actor and global uncertainties have increased. Superpowers have continued to contest with each other using new means of technologies. The world is changed drastically in these 10 years. Within the context of *Star Wars*, this indicates that while Disney continues the *Star Wars* phenomenon, they might have to consider the changing times in crafting morality within the new and renewed context while maintaining the overall theme of good vs evil that the *OT* and *PT* was based on. The continuity in the story can be seen through the trailer and the film-*The Force Awakens*:

“The supposed victory of the Rebel Alliance seems somewhat in question, even as a Star Destroyer lays in mouldering ruins on the surface of what we can surmise is Tatooine, Luke Skywalker’s home planet. The legacy of the Sith still survives, in the mysterious figure of Kylo Ren. Battle scenes between X-Wings and Tie Fighters emphasize that the struggle continues for dominance in the galaxy” (*Angry Staff* 2015).

These representations are perhaps not just a continuation of the *PT* but also an expression of current political and cultural sentiments. One might ponder if governance proved more difficult for the Rebel Alliance and whether the Empire was able to reclaim its powers and reorganize after Darth Vader. While the previous *Star Wars* movies echoed the anti-war and post war rhetoric that people were able to associate with, *The Force Awakens* supplies a grey shade to the overall tone of morality by making sides appear less black and white, blurring the lines between the dichotomies of the good vs evil. These grey shades can be seen in the ST through the analysis of costumes. I argue that Disney's portrayal of morality is rather ambiguous. In *The Last Jedi*, Luke is seen to be wearing black robes, a dark representation of Luke's character hence defying the morals associated to him being a hero in the original and prequel trilogies. This feels much closer to his appearance in the *Return of the Jedi* but in the end, he defeats the evil side thereby defeating pride,

selfishness, hatred and anger. In the final scene in *The Force Awakens*, Luke is seen in white robes. This rather contradictory portrayal of Luke in *The Force Awakens* and *The Last Jedi* does not give a clear representation of the side of the Force he represents, and owes his loyalties to. Disney's conscious choice of portraying Luke in dark costumes probably could be linked to his failed tutelage of Kylo Ren. Mark Hamill the actor who plays the role of Luke, in an interview has stated that he had a hard time grappling with Rian Johnson's choice for Luke's costume which he thought gives out a very different representation of Luke than what people have been used to (while referring to the original trilogy). Mark Hamill's disappointment over his representation is evident in his comments on Disney and Rian Johnson, "I almost had to think of Luke as another character. Maybe he's Jake Skywalker — he's not my Luke Skywalker" (Trumbore 2017). Luke's use of the word 'my' is proof of his attachment to his portrayal of Luke as created by George Lucas in the original trilogy. Hamill has expressed this mistrust towards Disney in various media outlets on numerous occasions. By expressing his disappointment in Disney's portrayal of Luke, he seems to take sides as he feels his representation of Luke as an obvious hero. His clear portrayal of good and the Light side is rooted in the depiction of morals. This also shows Hamill's distrust in Disney's portrayal of his character and his loyalties towards George Lucas by making this statement.

The costumes in the *ST* in a pursuit of maintaining continuity with the *OT* and *PT* have used references from Nazi uniforms and the robes worn by the Buddhist monks. While Disney has tried to retain some of the key political and cultural references from the *OT* and *PT*, it has done so by imagining a continuation within the real political events. In relation to crafting the villainous characters in *ST*, JJ Abrams, the director of *The Force Awakens* reveals, "That all came out of conversations about

what would have happened if the Nazis all went to Argentina but then started working together again.” (Percival 2015). Abrams is perhaps referring to the remnants of the Third Reich that fled Germany after their defeat in WWII. With the representation of the villains, Disney has tried to reconstruct the Nazis through its narratives by bringing the morality associated with good vs evil to prominence. Hills (2002) highlighted that continuation and repetition of a myth are essential to the connection between the cultural industries and the audiences that facilitates a dialogue. While Hills applied this within the notion of the transmedia storytelling and the franchise, it could be applied to the narrative within the *ST* narrative that has retained the look and feel of the Nazi Germany in constructing the evil characters. The Empire is shown to evolve in the Force Awakens, known as the The First Order. The Stormtroopers represent a new age technology that is distinct and advanced from the *OT* and *PT*. Evidently, the look of the new Stormtroopers is inspired by the Nazis and Apple. Michael Kaplan, the costume designer for the Force Awakens says regarding the Stormtroopers costumes,

With the stormtroopers it was more of a simplification, almost like, 'What would Apple do?' J.J. wanted them to look like stormtroopers at a glance but also be different enough to kind of wow people and get them excited about the new design. The new uniforms are much heavier. Also, the action in the film required them to not be “VacuFormed” [like the old uniforms] as those all broke and cracked. These new ones are much more heavy-duty, but they are redesigned, too, they are not the same Stormtroopers (Paur 2015).

The Nazi-influenced uniform style is in continuity with styles from the *OT*. This should be understood not only within the context of Disneyization (Bryman 2004) in terms of applying the format of fairytales and monomyth to all its texts but also within the context of industry structures that construct meanings for a text by banking on narratives from already established popular cultural texts. However, continuity does not imply imitating, and cultural industries that shape the meanings for popular culture

texts have a capacity to re-present certain images over and over again. These can be understood as some of the social practices which have become associated with *Star Wars* and its dissemination of morality.

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to explain how morality is represented through *Star Wars*. By employing discourse and semiotic analyses, I have investigated various representations of morality through costume designs, colours and characters within Lucasfilm's and Disney's *Star Wars* and, at the same time, located the moral representations within the contexts of the Vietnam war, the Cold war and World war II. In this chapter, I have explicitly adopted discourses revolving George Lucas in the knowledge that the idea of enriching *Star Wars* with political and cultural references is created by him. The practices of representation as discussed in this chapter enable an understanding of morals of trust and loyalty, and in general morality as associated with the political turmoil and people's sentiments regarding it. The *Star Wars* myth is representative of the historical and the political discourses of the late 1960s and 70s. The signifying practices associated with the Jedi robes are situated alongside the theorization of *The Force* as a metaphoric narrative tool used to represent religion and religious beliefs. Disney's representation of morality is not vastly different from the ones constructed through *OT* and *PT*, in that it has retained the basic theme of good vs evil in order to circulate moral meanings. Yet, it has formed its own characteristics by rendering an ambiguous moral stance in portraying Luke and similar narratives involving morals of trust and loyalty.

Chapter 7- CoC moment- ‘Consumption’ of morals

Introduction

This chapter analyses practices and patterns related to the consumption of morals of trust and loyalty through *Star Wars*. Drawing on the reciprocal relationship between fans and popular culture, I examine fan forums as a social arena to study how fans understand morality based on their engagement, involvement and attachment with the *Star Wars* text. In addition to fan forums, I examine content created online by fans on certain YouTube channels on *Star Wars*’ issues and topics. Firstly, I focus on fans’ discussions on forums related to consumption of morals through *Star Wars* films- both Lucasfilm’s and Disney’s *Star Wars*. I show a connection between mediated representation of films that enable fans’ understanding of and engagement with moral themes and the way fans imbibe those morals as acts of consumption in everyday life. Secondly I focus on fans’ use of morality in terms of their involvement and affection with *Star Wars* related to Lucasfilm and Disney. In this chapter, I achieve an understanding of the consumption practices involved in fans’ active participation of fan forums as a meaning-making site for morals to be a part of everyday lives. This chapter also achieves an insight into the critique of the production of consumption perspective (du Gay et al 1997) that rejects the notion of consumers as mere tools at the hands of the producers, and enables an explanation of meanings not residing in a text but rather on how the text is used and shaped by people.

‘Consumption’, “is the cultural process, in which we appropriate and make sense of various cultural forms in our routines in everyday settings” (Mackay 1997:1). In Hall’s terms, consumption is the act of decoding (1980). This description of consumption has been central to cultural studies. While earlier scholars of consumption have celebrated the acts and practices of consumption in terms of

pleasure, bricolage and poaching, circuit of culturalists' approach to consumption is more measured, the one that recognizes 'a balance between creativity and constraint' (Mackay 1997:11) 'in the practice of everyday life on one hand and the limits of other cultural processes such as production, representation, and identities on the other' (Champ 2008), providing an articulation between and the necessity of various cultural processes that shape meanings for a cultural text.

Consumption and fandom

While consumption as a general practice refers to the act of consuming something, the type of a cultural text itself, in this case, a popular culture text, determines types of consumers. "Consumption is an everyday human experience that makes sense to those who are directly involved in it" (Yamato 2012:202). As such consumption practices related to *Star Wars* such as watching films, buying toys, playing video games, etc. mean something to those involved in these acts and practices. This reference could be made to fans of popular culture who consume *Star Wars* in their everyday lives as a text that means something to them. Contrary to the prevailing notion of popular culture fans as being passive dupes dependent on mass media, Jenkins' (1992) challenges this notion pointing to studies on fan reception and production that highlight the active role of fans of popular culture as consumers who produce and reshape meanings of cultural texts in ways with which they engage with those texts. Fans are the at the core of meaning-making of popular culture and are active agents in reproducing and reshaping the cultural objects (Abercrombie and Longhurst 1998). In the words of Jenkins,

Active fans are a specific type of audience that can be substantially distinguished from the majority of media consumers. For such fans, the act of watching a particular film or playing a certain video game can comprise an experiential unit that is interconnected to an expansive multi-textual environment— one which may encompass magazines, books, collectibles,

interactive media, online clubs, conferences, and role-playing events.
(in Shefrin 2004:273).

Alternate scholarship places "individual identification with and affective investment in mass media images and objects—rather than subcultural participation—as the essential characteristic of fandom" (Kozinets 2011:69). Considering this perspective, as individuals engage in discussions and actively construct discourses around the popular culture text based on their involvement and attachment to it, they are considered as fans or active consumers of that text. I adopt this perspective to argue that consumers of *Star Wars* need not to have any subcultural identification, in order to have some sort of engagement in and investment with *Star Wars'* related texts through fan forums as a social space for such involvement and participation. Analyzing fan forums is not necessarily studying subcultural groups but a heterogeneous set of people who engage with a common popular cultural text and are committed in their emotional investment with the text (Jenkins 1992).

In Kozinets' ethnography (2001) on fans' engagement with *Star Trek* as a popular cultural text and how fans construct meanings by reproducing and consuming *Star Trek*, the author finds no boundaries in the usage of the terms 'followers', 'consumers' and 'fans'. Adopting this, I use the terms fans and consumers interchangeably in the interest of this chapter. Jenkins (2003) utilizes fan forums and interviews as a methodological tool to engage with concepts and practices related to consumption of popular culture. Scholarship has suggested that fan forums and internet clubs have provided arenas for fans to develop and sustain heightened connections with one another by engaging and involving themselves in discussions and opinions related to their favorite cultural texts (Shefrin 2004). *Star Wars* fan forums enable an understanding of how fans understand and apply morality in their everyday consumptive practices. Fans discuss how immorality is bad based on the

mediated representations of *Star Wars*, and engage in their understanding of morals of trust and loyalty as being in binary opposition to the morals of hatred, selfishness and pride.

In relation to TheForce.net as one of the primary fan forums involving discussions and discourses around *Star Wars*, Proctor (2013) points out to the various activities of *Star Wars* fans that ranged from posters, memes etc. after the news of Disney's acquisitions of the text. Fan portals and websites, according to Jenkins (2006) have 'blurred the distinction between producers and consumers allowing fans to create 'new versions of the *Star Wars* mythology'' (201). When fans come into contact with their object of fandom, important aspects of human needs become prominent such as social connection, identity etc. "When we are fans, the object of fandom comes to represent some facet of who we consider ourselves to be—our moral values, our beliefs, our politics, our priorities, our approach to life, etc", (Kresnicka in Proctor 2013). In this sense the object of fandom or the cultural text affect fans' way of thinking about the world and who they are. Fans' affection and investment in the *Star Wars*' text is a testament to their consumption practices related to morality which they imbibe in their everyday lives.

Consuming trust and loyalty through films- OT and PT

Various threads and posts on fan forums suggest that their involvement with *Star Wars* over a period of time has been the building blocks of morality in everyday lives. For instance:

I was introduced to *Star Wars* at the age of ten when the first film ever premiered in the cinema...I returned to the cinema 10 times to rewatch it... Happy times. And that's what *Star Wars* is for me: Happy childhood times. Friendship. Revisiting a world of space, space ships, blowing planets...so much fun, so many possibilities. I remember playing at home using tennis rackets as blasters and a broken sweeping brush as a saber. I was blooming broom boy! (Kylocity, February 28, 2018).

These mediated representations of friendship and happiness are reflected in their consumption practices and adaption in their everyday lives. Another fan recalled his experience of watching *Star Wars* for the first time,

I watched *A New Hope* ... er, "the first one" for most of us, when I was still learning how to multiply and divide. I watched it on VHS in my pyjamas on a cold, dark night by myself when all my siblings were busy and my parents were out. The only supervision I had was from a wise old kook named Obi-Wan and a scary Sith named Darth Vader (Pino 2017).

The use of the words 'wise' for Obi-Wan and 'scary' for Darth Vader are based on the mediated representation of Obi-Wan as someone with wisdom and knowledge. Usage of the word 'scary' associated with Vader is usually consumed as someone to be feared, with pride and selfishness (as Sith are portrayed in the films). This also suggests that *Star Wars* as a mediated representation enables not just in an involvement with the text but also actually consuming wisdom and morality from Obi-wan as ways to be morally good in real life as the word 'supervision' suggests.

Another fan expresses that he and his wife teach their son morality from *Star Wars* films,

Kristina and I teach Hayden to "feel from his heart". When his mom is traveling, I ask him to feel in his heart how mom is doing. Is she happy, or sad? Does she miss him? It does not matter if he's right or wrong. Because by doing this exercise he's learning empathy – an important skill (Lakhiani 2018).

This fan also adds on to say that what they are teaching their son is to actually trust his feelings and instincts like Obi-wan or Qui-Gon Jin instruct Luke and Anakin in the *OT* and *PT*. By teaching Hayden the importance of trust, Lakhiani assumed the role of a mentor, a father (figure) in this case by imparting the Jedi teachings from *Star Wars*. Silverstone (2002) suggested that people as social actors have become increasingly dependent on mediated representations and meanings to make sense of their own. As such, these mediated representations guide people's understanding of the ways in which

the world appears in and to everyday life, ‘and as such this mediated appearance in turn provides a framework for the definition and conduct of our relationships to the other’ (Silverstone 2002: 3). Several fans also expressed that they trust *Star Wars* to best portray morality which can be lessons in life. Not only do fans associate morals of trust and loyalty as being attributes of the good side, they also see it in complete opposition to the dark side or immorality. As one fan expressed, “The Dark Side is stealing forks from restaurants...Or going five miles below the speed limit in the left lane...Or not getting off Minecraft when your mother tells you to do it the first time” (anakinfansince1983, January 16, 2015). This explication of the dark side can also be interpreted as breaking rules in real life. The mediated representation associated with immorality in which Anakin breaks the trust and loyalty towards the Jedi is reflected in fans’ interpretation of their experiences in everyday lives. To fans, *Star Wars* is clearly what it represents through films- the battle between the good and evil which is discussed in various ways of forums.

Where *Star Wars* gets really interesting...is that the story very clearly shows that the potential for good and evil resides within all of us. We make the choice. There is no one in *Star Wars* who is implicitly or explicitly born one way or the other- except for perhaps Palpatine, who I believe may be George's idea of a mythological personification of evil itself, therefore he shouldn't be morally considered in even the same "territory" of morality as the other characters. The morality of *Star Wars* is why I consider them to be the perfect family movies. They portray a model of morality that is easy and clear enough for even toddlers to perceive (I picked up quite a bit when I first saw the films as a 4 year old), yet you keep finding the wisdom in it well into adulthood. (Han Burgundy, February 7, 2015).

The perception of morality, the distinction between good vs evil through mediated representation has become a part of people and continued through their growing years. One of the ways through which fans consume morality is through the opposition of good vs evil as portrayed by the distinction of the Jedi and the Sith, one representing morality and the other, immorality.

The Jedi have their flaws, like any organization, but I find it ridiculous when people compare the Jedi and the Sith and act like they are an equal distance from the "middle" of the spectrum. The Sith are vile, evil, selfish, violent maniacs. And do *vastly* more harm to the galaxy at large than the Jedi could even consider. (The Supreme Chancellor, April 12, 2015).

The usage of the term 'middle of the spectrum' can be interpreted as a reference to *The Force* in which the fan suggests that there is an imbalance in the morals that the Jedi and the Sith display. By associating the (im)morals of selfishness, evil, violence to 'doing harm', the implication is that the Sith are consumed as immoral, in stark contrast to the morality of the Jedi that should be trusted in restoring a balance in the galaxy. Several posts in this thread suggest that the overarching message is the potential for good and evil that resides in every person. And that people have a choice to choose morals in their everyday lives.

Personally I think that the two most important messages I get from SW are that being good or evil is a choice, and it's a choice that you make yourself. People always blame their behavior or actions on outside factors, but in the end they made a choice, Vader might say that the Emperor manipulated him into being evil but in the end of the day he still let it happen and he still chose to do those things, Luke proved to Vader by not succumbing to his and the Emperor's manipulation that being good is indeed a choice... SW's moral views have been extremely important in shaping my own views to this day (Iton, February 7, 2015).

While fans discuss and engage in their perception of good vs evil and the Jedi vs Sith argument, their consumption of morals is also situated within their interpretations of morals in an understanding that just because the Jedi are portrayed to be 'good', does not make them loyal or trustworthy guardians of the galaxy. This is captured through a post as a critique to trusting the Jedi as being loyal simply because they are associated with the light side of the Force.

The Jedi are shown to be a violent bunch. They likely excuse their actions with rationalizations like "It's for the greater good", "Sacrifices have to be made" and "The needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few". Well, who are they to sacrifice others' lives instead of their own? To determine who needs to live the most? I always thought that the Jedi way was the way of peace. Now, I'm not so sure. You might say that they allow the war to change them. They

are appointed generals and so begin to think like generals, which pushes them closer to the dark side (Lulu Mars, February 17, 2015).

This post encapsulated a true of essence of an understanding of trust and loyalty as not solely being Jedi attributes or morality. While they acknowledge that the portrayal of the Jedi is shown as a clear mark of (good) morality, as intended by Lucasfilm, they also suggest that a learning from the films is that the world is not black and white, and even the supposed white side can display immorality. However, in engaging with discourses related to morality, in several threads and posts, fans repeatedly mention and associate morals of aggression, fear, pride, hatred as immoral and having negative consequences as opposed to morals of selflessness, trust, honesty, loyalty as acts of morality. Fans also suggest that being and acting out morally is more difficult than acting out immorally and they cite Anakin's story/example of easily being swayed to the wrong path.

Being a Jedi is the *harder* path, as *Star Wars* tells us over and over. Giving in to your selfish impulses is always easier. The omnipresent "darkness in the jungle"...is always there, lurking in the lowest reptilian parts of our brain. Aggression and fear and jealousy are natural to all living beings (Aeternum, January 27, 2015).

This post suggests that consuming fear and jealousy is easier than consuming and following the Jedi morals of trust, honesty and loyalty, in the sense that being immoral is easy in life, and that trusting someone or being loyal is difficult morals, and is learnt through films in this case. Consuming and acting out immorally are expressed on forums by referencing certain scenes/situations related to Anakin's portrayal. In relation to consuming good vs evil, fans engage in discussions related to *The Force* as being a significant metaphor in realizing good from evil.

The Force shows what it shows and it is up to the people to decide how best to deal with what they see. Each vision has a purpose and a meaning and the difficulty is only in trying to discern what that meaning is (darth-sinister, April 26, 2015).

Consuming morality through *The Force*

Star Wars is interpreted by many fans as a religious myth. *The Force* itself is seen as religion by many that controls moral and immoral actions. The *Star Wars* myth as fans express has helped them through their life problems. “*Star Wars* is religion. Even for those who have their own theologies, *Star Wars* reinforces it. For many people, these are serious and sacred texts that have helped them through as many problems in their life as the Quran or the Bible” (Katz 2018). These articulations of *Star Wars* as something spiritual or as a religion or myth are individually interpreted in a myriad of ways, suggestive of the various fan narratives. *The Force* is seen as a moral compass by fans that make a distinction between the light and the dark sides. *The Force* can also be considered having a religious reference here as something supreme that guides people in their everyday struggles of life. It is understood as a marker of morality vs immorality. While fans do not equate *The Force* to God, they see it as some ‘all powerful entity’ that portrays the Jedi as being morally good.

The Jedi trusting is sound because they make the choice logically... Anakin is not thinking things out logically. He is acting selfishly and through fear. He doesn't trust in the Force, he only trusts in Palpatine. He doesn't ask himself why he is seeing these visions. He is believing 100% that she will (Padme) die and he cannot stop it, whereas the Jedi aren't 100% certain Anakin is the Chosen One, but they are putting their faith in him as they are taking precautions by training him (darth-sinister, April 17, 2015).

This post is in reference to the prophecy that Anakin is ‘the chosen one’ to bring balance to the galaxy by destroying the Sith. *The Force* and Palpatine are seen as opposites, in which the Force here is referred to as synonymous with the Jedi indicating that the Jedi represent morality and are the ones to be trusted. By relating morals of fear, hatred and selfishness to Anakin, the Jedi’s trust in Anakin as eroding understood as valid and justified by fans. Clearly, these deliberate and deliberated comparisons of *Star Wars* and religion or the reference to the Force as a moral

compass develop and reinforce the utility of (Belk, Wallendorf, and Sherry's (1989) sacred consumption conduit and O'Guinn and Belk's (1989:237) exploration of "the interdependence of media, politics, religion and consumption" in American culture. O'Guinn's (1991) exploration of the religious facets of fan consumption grant "a sacred domain within the everyday life" of its participants. The findings indicate that groups of consumers and fans can and do consciously utilize the notions of morality and sacred consumption through their understanding and interpretation of *The Force* as the moral compass that guides moral and immoral actions and in order to legitimize their own consumer behaviors through fan forums. By consuming ideas related to *The Force* through films and interacting with each other through online forums, fans consider the aspects of morality as providing strategies of action for behavior in their everyday lives. This section has highlighted how fans consume morals of trust and loyalty from films and apply it to their lives.

Consuming trust and loyalty through relations embedded in production

The explication of trust and loyalty is not just limited to films but is also reflected in fans' relationship with Lucasfilm and George Lucas as embedded within fan practices and the culture of consumption. Borrowing Certeau's (1988) idea of 'poaching' as a tactic of consumption, Jenkin's applied the concept to popular culture consumption of fans being in a position of 'cultural marginality and social weakness'. "Fans must beg with the network to keep their favorite shows on the air, must lobby producers to provide desired plot developments or to protect the integrity of favorite characters" (1992:26-27). In his studies on fandom and popular culture consumption practices, Jenkins recognizes the importance and legitimization of fans. As opposed to seeing poaching as 'tactics of consumption as ingenious ways in which the weak make use of the strong' (Certeau's 1988), Jenkins (1992) examines it as an entirely

oppositional practice. His work suggested that activities of fans while engaging with popular texts challenge the ability of producers to constrain the creation and circulation of meaning (23). In the context of popular culture consumption, Hills (2002) notes "Fans are no longer ignored or viewed as 'eccentric irritants' by producers but rather as loyal consumers to be created where possible" (39).

Lucas's far-away galaxy has immense fan bases that have gained the status of loyal audiences and have ensured the commercial success of the cultural text. Additionally, a growing number of "active" or "participatory" fans (Jenkins, 1992) are exhibiting a sense of ownership that includes an investment in the creative development of the *Star Wars*' universe (Shefrin 2004:261–62). Perhaps because of their invested attachment with the cultural text and their interactions with other fans, there seems to be a general effort in taking the onus of creating *Star Wars*' text by themselves. *Star Wars* fans, for some time now have been unhappy with the actions of Lucas and Lucasfilm. "On the one hand, their desires to be "consumer affiliates" in the cinematic production process have been generally ignored; on the other hand, their roles as "illegal pirates" of corporately-owned intellectual property have been overtly emphasized (Jenkins 2003:np). Fans, on several occasions have accused Lucasfilm of over-commercialization of the *Star Wars* text. After the 1999 release of Episode I: The Phantom Menace, Brooker (2002: xvi) cites fans' grievances:

Star Wars fans feel that they should be the custodians, but are faced with a situation where someone else still owns the story, is pitching to a far wider audience than their dedicated group, cares not at all for their interpretation of the saga, and will attempt to shut down their sites forcibly if they contradict his version of the characters and plot. Brooker's explanation correlates and indicates a 'harsh voice of criticism' displaying lack of trust in Lucas by claiming their 'loyal' status in the usage of the word- custodians. Fans feel that Lucas and Lucasfilm disregard their creative interpretations of *Star Wars* expressing a general sense of distrust in Lucas who they feel favors commercial profit over human relationships that he's built over time (Brooker 2002:90)

Fans' erosion of trust and their loyalty in Lucasfilm can be seen through their reactions and expressions after the release and the backlash of the *Phantom Menace*. Fans' not only claimed to have invested their childhood but sometimes also careers in their relationship with the *Star Wars*' narrative. Kolnack, webmaster of Clone Wars unofficial fan site writes:

[M]uch of the movie was too influenced by marketing ... The movie should have had us, (the die-hard fans), in mind more than it did and we all know that. George Lucas should have consulted with us, the fans, as to what we think and what we'd be most excited to see in this film... [We] hope he doesn't repeat the same mistakes twice. Make this one for us, George; after all, it's fans like us who've made you and your family millionaires many times over! (in Shefrin 2004: 270).

There is a general sentiment among fans and is based on the feeling that their loyalties been taken for granted. This is evident in fans' accusation towards Lucas for breaking fans' trust by not incorporating their inputs provided at the level of production. The survival of transmedia storytelling and paratexts is embedded in loyal fans' involvement and engagement with those texts. Jenkins (2003) explains commercial promotions of the *Star Wars* text as an illustration of this point: "This new 'franchise' system actively encourages viewers to pursue their interests in media content across various transmission channels, to be alert to the potential for new experiences offered by these various tie-ins" (284). By definition, a loyal fan will constantly be on the alert for updated transmedia products and enhanced engagement with the text. On the other hand, participatory fandom could also be the enemy of transmedia storytelling and especially cultural industries based on the erosion of their trust and loyalty in those texts that the media industries offer. Trust and loyalty are at the cusp of copyright issues and the question of ownership (Lessig 2001). Jenkins (2003) explains the issue of ownership as embedded within the issues of fans' trust and loyalty in the cultural text:

Fans reject the idea of a definitive version produced, authorized, by some media conglomerate. Instead, fans envision a world where all of us can participate in the creation and circulation of central cultural myths...Fans also reject the studio's assumption that intellectual property is a "limited good," to be tightly controlled lest it dilute its value. Instead, they embrace an understanding of intellectual property as "shareware," something that accrues value as it moves across different contexts, gets retold in various ways, attracts multiple audiences, and opens itself up to a proliferation of alternative meanings (289).

Jenkins (2003) suggested that evidently Lucasfilm has been responsible for eroding fans' trust and loyalty in their efforts to stop fans for the cultural production. Finally, in the late 1990s, fans started regaining their trust in Lucasfilm and redeeming their loyal status when StarWars.com provided free Web outlet to fans and allowed them to submit their creations, on the condition that their submissions and creative work would become Lucasfilm's intellectual property (see Lucas Online, 2003b). This type of fandom illustrates the practice of 'produsage' as described by Bruns (2007), a trend of user-led content creation on online environments such as blog spheres, fan fictions and fan forums. Jenkins (2006) suggests that fan activities related to *Star Wars* are blurring the distinction between producers and consumers. The digital arenas- fan forums, blogs, fan fictions have allowed fans and granted them the rights to create their own and new versions of the *Star Wars* mythology.

The widespread circulation of *Star Wars*-related commodities has placed resources into the hands of a generation of emerging filmmakers in their teens or early twenties. They grew up dressing as Darth Vader for Halloween, sleeping on Princess Leia sheets, battling with plastic lightsabers, and playing with Boba Fett action figures. *Star Wars* has become their "legend," and now they are determined to remake it on their own terms. Jenkins (2006:131 in Proctor 2013: 201&202).

These blurring lines between the production and consumption practices discussed in this section, raises concern over the issue of authorship. As seen in chapter 5, authorship becomes problematic especially with fans engagement and involvement in

the creation and production of *Star Wars* texts through fan fictions, and other fan activities.

Examining authorship and trust between production and consumption

The dynamics pertaining to the producer-consumer nexus can also be examined through a conceptual understanding of authorship and trust among fans. Fans' trust in Lucasfilm and George Lucas can be understood in terms of Bourdieu's (1998) notion of cultural production that is based on symbolic capital which he defined as 'charisma, that accumulated through recognition, prestige, and honor (102). Charisma could be easily understood as economic capital as witnessed in the case of George Lucas' personal economic capital. George Lucas is estimated by net worth of \$6.39 billion as of March 2017 according to *Bloomberg*. His six *Star Wars* films have earned more than \$4.3 billion worldwide at the box office and the toys, merchandise and video games have grossed more than \$20 billion.

“However, the double disparity in terms of both symbolic and economic in George Lucas' starting position would dictate a series of moves that would lead to marked change in their symbolic status over the next six years. One of the determining factors in this change would be George Lucas' prequel trilogies that have created harsh discourses and criticisms among many fans of the franchise” (Shefrin 2004:265).

Lucasfilm has experienced some bitter-sweet relationship with fans. Lucasfilm and George Lucas have enjoyed the position of being a major player in Hollywood for almost over three decades boasting of a good amount of economic and symbolic capital that has enabled a trust in the franchise despite harsh criticisms. However, after the release of *The Phantom Menace*, George Lucas experienced a decline in his symbolic capital as a result of fans' disappointment in the film. Lucas' 'charisma' started to decline once fans started to lose trust in him after allegedly taking them for granted and ignoring them by producing what fans claimed to be a 'bad' film. Many

Star Wars fans especially those who had spent their childhood with the franchise were harshly critical of Lucasfilm blaming the way it took *Star Wars* towards a direction that they did not approve of. This was allegedly to do with the back story of Anakin Skywalker and his portrayal as a good kid and the transformation of the innocent loving child to what became one of the most horrific villains in Hollywood. Many fans accused Lucasfilm of first portraying a perfect villain full of immorality through the *OT* and then showing a sudden twist in his characterization which confused the fans of their emotions towards Anakin's character. This also gives rise to the question of authorship in terms of who actually owned *Star Wars*. While the trend of fan edits and fan fictions has existed for some time now, there is a conflict regarding authorship of the franchise. George Lucas and Lucasfilm have been criticized a multiple times for allegedly ruining *Star Wars* for the fans, however the ever-increasing number of fans and their involvement with *Star Wars* narratives and transmedia are a testimony that Lucasfilm has enjoyed and built fan loyalty and their trust, which is evinced through Lucasfilm success in businesses and fans' undying love and support for the franchise.

This notion of authorship is embedded within various discourses surrounding the 'author' or the 'producer' in the context of this study. These discourses of auteurism are engaged by para texts such as trailers, interviews, web pages to promote the film-maker granting a notion of auteurs being more powerful thereby claiming valid rights to the texts. The issue of authorship sheds new light on our understanding of the relationship between audiences, film related para texts and the organizational forces that shape these paratexts. The question of authorship blurs the lines between the producers and consumers and the *Star Wars* Universe is a testament to it. *Star Wars* fan edits and fan fictions have given rise to a culture of production of consumption whereby the authorship of the content itself is debatable.

du Gay et al. (2013) believe that cultural production not just entails producing a text but ensuring its sustenance over a period of time. George Lucas's versions (often contradictory) are a testimony to providing assurances to people on keeping the franchise alive through several years. This essentially also means that Lucasfilm intended for morals to be continually circulated by producing *Star Wars* texts beyond the six films. The culture that he intended originally within the American context back in 1977 was to continue for several years to come. As a way of claiming authorship over the text, George Lucas promised fans that *Star Wars* would keep growing through the leadership of Lucasfilm. However, after *Revenge of the Sith*, Lucas made it clear that this is the conclusion of the story that he had always wanted to tell. In a way Lucas felt that his intentions for morality to be circulated through every corner of the society through film, toys, and other merchandise had been achieved successfully. This phenomenon can be understood by examining the relationship between Lucasfilm and consumers (fans) that enabled an exploration of trust and loyalty as embedded within the practices of production. This is in relation to George Lucas' various accounts and promises made to fans about releasing *Star Wars* films beyond the *OT* and *PT*, in which I argue left people with mistrusting him by often changing and modifying his promises to them, thereby leading to his fans altering their loyalties in Lucas. In 2008, George Lucas announced that there will be no episodes VII-IX. "I've left pretty explicit instructions for there not to be any more features. There will definitely be no 'Episodes VII-IX'. That's because there is not any story. I mean, I never thought of anything! The '*Star Wars*' story is really the tragedy of Darth Vader. That is the story" (Agar 2014). Mark Hamill remembered during the promotions of *Return of the Jedi* in 1983 that Lucas asked him if he would be willing to play an 'Obi-Wan type' role for a new movie around 2011. Lucas expressed to Hamill that the

saga could easily span for at least nine films. Lucas went back and forth about his versions regarding having a 9-film outline. This suggested that Lucas had plans of crafting morality beyond the six films. Just before selling off the franchise to Disney, Lucas mentioned he had started drafting more ideas but did not have a complete script. He claimed in several interviews that he had even approached Mark Hamill, Harrison Ford, and Carrie Fisher about starring in his episodes VII, VIII and IX (Kornhaber 2015). Perhaps what Lucas was trying to do was to build trust back for him among his several fans, audiences and the film community who did not see any *Star Wars* film since the *Revenge of the Sith*.

Whether or not, Lucas' ideas for episodes VII-IX are incorporated by Disney will be examined in the following sections.

Consumption of morality through Disney's films

While fans consume morality by engaging in discourses related to *The Force*, the themes of good vs evil and their interpretations of morals associated with the Jedi and the Sith within the context of the OT and PT, the discourses related to consumption of Disney's morals seem very similar in suggesting that there is an overarching good vs evil and that morals associated with the lead characters are reflective of real life.

I think that Rey taught little girls that it's alright to accept help and be independent and strong, while still remaining kind and caring towards others. Finn taught that young boys that it doesn't matter how you're raised, you can still be a good, strong, noble man. We learn through Finn that it doesn't matter how many times you fail, as long as you keep getting back up and fighting for what you believe is right. Even against all odds (RandomGreyJ, November 30, 2016).

This can be understood in the context of what (Gillet 2012) refers to films as providing fodder to consume morals and certain positive (or negative) learnings in people's everyday lives suggesting that such moral mediated representations strengthen

people's use of those morals. However, fans also recommend that (Disney's) *Star Wars* is in contrast to Disney's myths that make a clear distinction between good vs evil in which good always triumphs over evil, just as Lucasfilm (George Lucas) has created the *Star Wars* myth. That does not mean that fans' expect a fairy tale format for *Star Wars*. Several negative reactions came from active fans who questioned Lucas' decision to sell *Star Wars* to Disney in expressing an erosion of their trust in him.

"Star Wars always had meaning to it...I feel screwed by Lucas. What? Lucasfilm wasn't big enough to just let someone else run it, he had to go fucking hand it to Disney on silver platter? It makes me physically ill to think of Princess Leia being caught up in that Disney princess crap. The reason Princess Leia was so incredible was that she wasn't some dumb blonde damsel-in-distress waiting around for Prince Charming. It gave real girls a real role model and she still got to be a princess..." (fan interview in Proctor 2013: 216 & 217).

Disney's myths have known to centre around princesses such as *Snow White*, *Cinderella*, *Sleeping Beauty*, wherein the narrative follows a format in which the princess is portrayed as helpless and powerless waiting for her prince to rescue her (Zipes 1994). This storytelling format circulated by Disney is considered as a universal consumption practice all over the world (Artz 2002). This form of storytelling is very representative of Disney and is widely recognized as a 'Disney' film. Fans' imagine what it will be like if Disney imposes the 'princesses' format onto *Star Wars* films.

What do you think? Will Kylo use the Force to put Rey to sleep waiting for a Force powerful Prince to awaken her? (#1 Xeven, July 18, 2017).

There seems to be more disappointment among fans in terms of the way they feel Disney has handled *The Force Awakens* and *The Last Jedi*. Fans' disappointment especially with the portrayal of Luke's (Mark Hamill) character have led to an erosion of their trust in handling *Star Wars* the way Lucasfilm did. There is a general

accusation from fans towards Disney being morally ambiguous in its portrayal of characters. The treatments to the *Star Wars* text by different producers have also raised several discussions and expressions on forums. Fans express that the primary focus of *Star Wars* OT and PT is ‘the family’ and engage in conversations of Disney’s treatment of it.

Star Wars is not about Bloodline or Nobility--it's about FAMILY. Rey is this weird character with no connection to the other characters we know or love. TLJ made the sequel trilogy incredibly awkward and off-putting. All TLJ did was cut off the very *Star Wars* branch it was sitting on. I guess I'll have to wait for a New Republic movie for that old family struggle between brother and sister. Or maybe Abrams will right the ship (10 Paladinryan, December 17, 2017).

Two factors in this post suggest fans’ interpretation of Disney handling of *Star Wars* – *The Last Jedi* differently. Referring to TLJ as a cut off from the *Star Wars* branch it was sitting on points to certain expectations embedded in consumption practices which have been missing in Disney’s *Star Wars* as compared to the OT and PT. This also pre-supposes fans’ expectation that is rooted within their trust in the text as being a moral tale focusing on the family. The expectation from J.J. Abrams making things right points to a comparison between Disney’s own movies, as a way of suggesting their trust in Abrams over Rian Johnson to redeem what *Star Wars* represents. As Peterson (1976) suggested, changes within the occupational structures has the potential to shape or reshape a text differently based on people’s own interpretation of the text within those structures.

Consuming trust and loyalty in the context of Disney’s ST

On forums, several threads include discussions about what *Star Wars* means to the fans. Many of them have expressed that *Star Wars* means morality to them. 60% of them in one of the forums posted and responded that *Star Wars* tells a bigger message about good vs evil, in which Lucas has drawn clear distinctions between good and evil

characters. Audiences know who's the hero and who's the villain, there's only black and white and no grays. Some fans feel that Disney is refreshing those thoughts about morals fans experienced as younger kids.

“As a kid we wondered what it would be like if our dad was evil. As an adult via Han Solo and to a lesser extent Luke we wonder what it would be like if our children or children in our family grew up to become horrible people despite our best efforts. There's more though. In Luke's case there's also those scary wakeup calls we get as we get older when we catch glimpses of the aspect of our parents we disliked” (Ender_and_Bean, December 27, 2017).

Fans express Disney's effort in refreshing these thoughts that are reflections of their everyday lives. These discourses and discussions as activities on online communities are a kind of participatory culture in which fans are no longer mere consumers of the text but actively engage in reproducing the text in relation to their invested loyalties and involvement with it (Tombleson and Wolf 2017). Several discourses on forums that can enable theorizing of trust and loyalty related to *Star Wars* is around Kathleen Kennedy's, President of Lucasfilm, way of dealing with the cultural text. Fans have compared her to Palpatine from *Star Wars OT* and *PT* who represents the dark side and is associated with immoral acts. They have expressed trust issues in Kennedy's way of contracting meanings for and shaping *Star Wars*. Through several threads and posts, fans explain their (dis)trust in Kennedy by metaphorically citing analogies from *Star Wars*' films.

Kennedy really is the ruthless Emperor figure I always took her for. I imagine a significant amount of LFL employees have started to miss good ol' George. It is human nature after all to not realize the value of things until you've lost them. This whole Disney takeover reminds me of Palpatine (Kennedy, embodiment of corruption) legally, but still through foul play, getting rid of Valorum (Lucas, baseless accusations of corruption). Padmé (the fans) willingly aided him, because she thought he'd be a better leader, only to regret her decision much later on when Palpatine's true nature was revealed. This is the turning point, now that Kennedy has executed Order 66 on a set of directors. The takeover is complete (Seeker of The Whills, June 21, 2017).

The direct references and comparisons of Kennedy to Palpatine in relation to his character in the films symbolized immoral behaviour from Kennedy as fans deemed it. Fans accused Disney of immorality by comparing Disney to Palpatine and using fans as pawns. "Walt Disney is Palpatine lol, and some fans are Jar Jar, Padme, Anakin, Nute, Dooku and Tarkin. They are being used" (CoolyFett, April 11, 2015). Trust and loyalty can further be analysed through fans' lack of trust in Kennedy in not just dealing with the films but also in blaming Disney and her for ruining the franchise.

Disney has shown repeatedly that they don't care about the established franchise and keeping consistent with the previously established material. Almost everything Disney releases now just feels like a product to make money, not a story made with heart and soul and care and lots of thought put into it. It's obvious that Disney just doesn't care about pleasing fans like me, and for that large part there is just too little logic and too many flaws and consistency errors in their stories for me to be able to enjoy them as much as I would like to (Pain and Suffering, January 21, 2018).

Hesmondhalgh (2002) argued that one of the functions of cultural industries is to make profits suggesting that though such industries are involved in the creation and circulation of a cultural text, its primary focus is business-driven. This is also a clear analysis of an erosion of trust that in Disney also leading some fans to take sides with Lucasfilm (George Lucas). Fans suggest that George Luas/Lucasfilm provided less moral ambiguity in the *OT* and *PT* as compared to Disney's portrayal of it.

The moral compass presented in the film (*A New Hope*) seemed more black-and-white than ambiguous. When it comes to the moral ambiguity of the characters in the Prequel movies, a lot of fans tend to scream *bad writing*... Once Disney acquired the franchise, they seemed bent upon returning to the moral compass of "*A New Hope*" with their new film, "Episode VII - The Force Awakens"... Lucas started the franchise with an entertaining and well done tale with very little ambiguity and developed it into a complex and ambiguous saga that I believe did a great job in reflecting the true ambiguous nature of humanity. (CTrent29, January 21, 2017).

There is an apparent comparison between George Lucas' *Star Wars* and Disney's portrayal of it. Though fans suggest that the *PTs* were morally ambiguous, they still

saw a distinction between good vs evil as white and black as opposed to what they feel Disney has done which is only construct 'gray' morality. Fans see this as a deliberate deviation from the *OT* and *PT*. Several threads suggest fans' distrust in Disney in the form of accusations over ways in which they feel Disney is (mis)handling *Star Wars* in which they have invested loyalties and attachments.

Disney has lost the trust of many *Star Wars* fans. They don't seem to understand *Star Wars* has multi-generational fans, within families. Loads of young people love the *OT* characters, but Disney seems to be determined to undermine one these characters, totally misreading the fan base. Why should we invest in any new character, when Disney could decide to make them, lame, cowardly, inconsistent or down right stupid, at the drop of a hat. They have taken a diamond mine and reduced it to coal (Martin McKerry 2018).

This clearly indicates fans being upset over not just Disney but proves their trust and loyalty towards Lucasfilm/George Lucas in terms of engaging fans over a period of time. Fans recommend that Disney should stick to the traditional non-ambiguous good vs evil morality that George Lucas created. In that fans suggest that Disney is diverting from these moralities and express their disappointment and an erosion of their faith and investment in the text.

There is a reason why Disney is not making *Star Wars* bigger. Its called poor writing. It seems to me they want to make *Star Wars* something different from George Lucas' vision. If that was the case, why buy it??? They need to stick with what *Star Wars* has been all about--Good vs. Evil and plenty of characterization and narrative. They can still keep their big explosions and shock, but we need more Skywalker story. We need more Jedi and Sith. We need more of what George gave us years ago (Mike Zeroh 2018).

Fan forums such as TheForce.net and cantina.starwars.com have several discourses that criticised *The Last Jedi*, expressing that it is morally ambiguous and has diverted from Lucas' vision of morality. By using words such as hate, betrayal, hurt, there is an underlying assumption of fans' investment and trust in the *OT* and *PT* as far as the films are concerned (though *PT* has been ridiculed by several fans) which they feel Disney lacks in building. "My 4 year old nephew has only seen return of the jedi and

empire on VHS (thx version). He even said, why is Luke bad, thats not Luke, and he was so confused by the ending. I hate you Disney. Also i was just ughhh” (Adam Schnellenbach 2018). A number of harsh criticism has been directed towards the President of Lucasfilm, Kathleen Kennedy in her handling of *Star Wars* that fans feel betrayed by. The following forum posts show an erosion of trust among the loyal fan base of *Star Wars* in Disney’s, especially Rian Johnson and Kathleen Kennedy’s treatment of the cultural text. One of the fans explains the trust he developed for Kathleen Kennedy eroded over a period of time.

KK betrayed Lucas’ trust and *Star Wars*’ fans and our trust. Many of you hated her from the very beginning. I cannot claim that. I trusted her when she and Lucas sat down for an interview and she was talking about honouring SW and George’s characters and his vision and having George there to help her out. I bought into it fully. KK had positive words spoken about her from Spielberg, Bob iger, Lucas. So I had faith in KK. I hate KK, I hate her. She earned that hate. ...”(in geeks+gamers Jeremy 2018).

Other fans just express their distrust towards Kennedy and Johnson by comparing them to the characters in films who represent the dark side. Another fan comments:

“Lucas sold it to them, along with the ST, on the basis that he trusted them to not make an inferior product. That they would maintain the same dedication to the company and the franchise as if he were still running the show” (darth-sinister, April 13, 2015). In a critique of Disney and Kennedy, fans are seen to be taking sides with George Lucas in accusing Disney of breaking Lucas’ trust in treating the text as he had intended to.

“How did George's story die? A vicious producer named Kathleen Kennedy, who was a pupil of George's before she turned to evil, helped Disney hunt down and destroy his treatments! She betrayed and murdered the Maker!" (Pro Scoundrel, May 14, 2015).

Fans also go on to suggest that Disney should have complete faith in George Lucas by using the words ‘blindly trust’ and by also referring to FOX-another cultural industry that bought the initial distribution rights to *Star Wars*.

I can't believe you trust studio executives and JJ Abrams more than you trust George Lucas to know what a good story is. They should have just blindly trusted his stories and cashed in on them. Phantom Menace made a billion dollars. Fox blindly trusted Lucas' stories despite reservations and it worked out just fine (KenW, May 14, 2015).

In this way fans not just consume morality through their involvement and attachment to the text but also through their interpretations of it in relation to Disney's takeover of *Star Wars*. "As long as the evil emperor (Kathleen Kennedy) and her Sith apprentice (Rian Johnson) are in power, I am not supporting anything *Star Wars* related. It hurts me to say anything bad about *Star Wars*, but with what they did to *The Last Jedi*, that was it" (Dakota Heller 3 months ago). This not only suggests that fans do not trust Disney and Kathleen Kennedy in power to handle it, but they feel more betrayed as their loyalty is disrespected and disregarded by Kennedy and Disney. Somehow fans also sympathize with Lucas in this context and feel Disney has not only betrayed them but George Lucas and his vision for *Star Wars* as well.

It's almost as if Kathleen Kennedy, Rian Johnson, and the guys at Disney had a vendetta against George Lucas and the true *Star Wars* fans. They basically pulled a Temple of Doom and ripped all of our hearts out of all our chests while we watched. The way they handled the new trilogy was the most idiotic and disrespectful thing they could have done to the fans and George Lucas. They should be bitch slapped by the force...(Mike Zeroh, March 1, 2018).

Fans also engage in the way Disney has created different character treatments and deviated from the original characterizations of the protagonists especially Luke Skywalker.

Basically almost every single fan expectation is turned onto its head. Rian Johnson and Kathleen Kennedy predict everything fans expect and want and instead say "Nah, what we are giving you is cooler". When Kylo says "Let the past die" & Luke says "This is not going to go the way you think." they are basically talking to the audience. Long time fans will be pissed when certain expectations aren't meet. And in this case with lines from Luke about not coming to save the day with "a laser sword", they don't just subvert expectations with this movie, Kathleen Kennedy tosses them right back in your face (Mickey Mouse, 6 months ago).

It's almost as if fans take the immorality associated with the dark side in the films and impose it onto the acts of Kennedy and Disney in describing them as evil and breaking loyal fans' trust which is evident in fans' critique of the content.

As a lifetime fan of *Star Wars* since the movies came on the screen in the the 70s . I loved the original movies trilogy with Mark Hamill, Carrie Fisher storyline. . Now I completely hate the trilogy the way it went with. Totally feel that Disney destroyed the series. .. will no longer waste my money anymore” Billcris 1991, 4 months ago. Some of the disappointments fans have in Disney and accuse the organization is because they feel certain story plots associated with character moralities could be handled the way Lucas did with the OT and PT. They feel that Rey not belonging to the Skywalker family, or Snoke's background being blurry, or even a lack of Jedi wisdom and clear depiction of the Force are some of the factors that have caused imbalance in the new *Star Wars* galaxy. “I want to believe that the franchise can be salvaged.. but I'm never going to commit again; for two years we waited for answers.. waited for a more answers from Rey's origin, supreme leader snoke...(Mike Zeroh, March 1, 2018).

Some of the fans' comments that are embedded within their loyalty as active fans and (dis)trust towards Disney complements Hesmondhalgh's (2007) notion of cultural industries as profit-oriented than having any other interest. Fans' active status can also be interpreted in them providing inputs, writing letters of complaint to producers and actively seeking out others' who share (or not) the same sentiments as them. This act of fan participation related to films content based on their status as loyal fans of *Star Wars* is testimony to Jenkins' (2003) notion of fans attempting to challenge the ability of producers to constrain the creation and circulation of meaning.

These new movies are trash. People keep talking about how it can be saved, but you're wrong, it is over. We will never get another *Star Wars* movie that is ever as great as the OG trilogy. The fact that Disney dropped the drafts JJ had set up proves they don't care about the franchise, just money. They have no idea the true damage they have done to *Star Wars*. I have already written emails to Disney and Lucasfilm letting them know that they have lost me as a fan of both Disney and Lucasfilm (Mike Zeroh, March 1, 2018).

Proctor in 2013 proposed that “it will be interesting to see if Disney adopts the tyrannical position that Lucas has now relinquished; or if fans can make themselves heard among the cacophony of voices across the internet” (222). This notion of the

fans' voice being heard and finally a satisfaction among the online community of Disney keeping their trust and respecting their loyalty can be evinced through the several recent discourses of Kathleen Kennedy's anticipated step down as the President of Lucasfilm. Looking at the recent discourses regarding the conflicts related to fans influencing Disney to ask KK to resign, is a good way to suggest that fans' voices are finally heard making cultural anthropologist and industry consultant, Grant McCracken's recommendation valid that 'in the future, media producers must accommodate consumer demands to participate or they will run the risk of losing the most active and passionate consumers to some other media interest that is more tolerant' (ibid:133 in Proctor 2013: 222). Brooker's (2002) study suggests that *Star Wars* fans – "whether 'gushers' or 'bashers' – do not believe that they have any power to affect the *Star Wars* saga" (98). This is in alignment with Tulloch's argument related to sci-fi audiences with regards to Dr. Who fans as a 'powerless elite' (1995). I argue that consumers might not have the power to directly create content however they have the power to influence discourses and matters that affect and influence content through their engagement and involvement on fan forums, fan blogs, fan fictions and podcasts. My argument is supported by Jenkins' claim in which he suggests that "fans are the most active segment of the media audience, one that refuses to accept what they are simply given, but rather insists on the right to become full participants" (2006:131). "Due to their personal investment in and identification with the texts, consumers or fans may also 'adopt attitudes, language, or behaviors that are an outgrowth of their immersion in a special lexicon'" (Harris and Alexander 1998:8). This sort of a participatory fandom is determined by a sustained emotional and physical engagement with a particular popular cultural text in this case *Star Wars* (Jenkins 2003). "an engagement that visualizes a non-commercial, shared

ownership with the media company that holds the commercial, legal property rights" (Shefrin 2004:273). The articulations of meaning and practice that fans use to relate *Star Wars*' systems of media objects and images is embedded in the consumption approach. This meaning making of a cultural text is not just a sociological interaction between fans and consumers but can be understood as an institutionalized activity (Kozinets 2001). Fans' participation and belief in the firing of Kathleen Kennedy as the President of Lucasfilm has been recently discussed on Mike Zeroh's YouTube channel in which fans' express that their loyalties are finally being paid off by Disney trusting their choice and opinion of Kennedy's mishandling of the franchise. While most of the fans site the boycotting of Han Solo as a reason for the film's failure and hence Disney's decision to fire Kennedy, several fans feel it has to do with the Kennedy-Johnson backlash of *The Last Jedi*. Fans assume the role of the 'good guys' by using analogies from the films and refer to Disney as the Empire deeming Disney as the evil one. "We are the rebellion and we must come together and fight this empire. If they listen to us then we have won. We know what we want and what they want is not it" (Jim Jones 2018). Another fan comments, "Rian Johnson is a useless piece of shit director...but the real villain here is Kathleen Kennedy. All of these decisions were overseen and approved by her. She is the Emperor Palpatine to Johnson's Darth Vader. I only hope that in the end they both meet fitting professional demises appropriate to their respective counterparts" (Mike Zeroh, March 1, 2018). Fans' supposedly use the references of Palpatine and Darth Vader for Kennedy and Johnson as doing evil in real life and breaking loyal fans' trust.

However there is a general satisfaction among fans since the news of Kennedy's firing from the post of President of Lucasfilm have surfaced.

Two big reasons for failure was the Solo boycott and the Last Jedi backlash. Disney will start listening to fans more after Solo bombed. Han solo is an example of when a company loses money they realise they are going to change ways and listen to fans. Kathleen Kennedy doesn't get the core of how fans see SW, or even how casual fans see it (Mike Zeroh, June 1, 2018).

Another fan comments, "I definitely believe that at least big part has to do with the Solo: A *Star Wars* Story boycott based on the Last Jedi backlash, based on decisions by both Rian Johnson and Kathleen Kennedy" (Stefan Kyriazis, May 30, 2018).

Some of the active participation is in the form of pleas using *Star Wars*' metaphors and direct statements for Kennedy to step down. "Kathleen Kennedy is ruining the franchise and she needs to go, NOW!" (Bobby F65 2018). "If SW is to survive... It must happen!..." "Help us Bob Iger....Your our only hope" (Mike Zeroh 2018). This post suggests that fans look to the CEO in the anticipation that he will listen to them and will have Kennedy stepped down from handling *Star Wars*. This post is also indicative of fans' distrust mostly targeted at Kennedy and Johnson and not Disney on the whole. However, several other references and discussion are directed towards Disney as an industry responsible for circulation of morality.

Conclusion

du Gay et al (1997) argue for 'needs' of consumers to be cultural, in that various consumption needs related to a text are produced by systems of meaning through which people engage with the text, make sense of the world and are often reworked and ever-changing. In this chapter, morality is understood as cultural and social through which people constantly negotiate its meanings based on their attachment and involvement in different periods and contexts. Especially in relation to new situations as in the case of Disney's acquisitions of *Star Wars*, new meanings will continue to emerge. This chapter has examined the various discourses by fans on

forums where they participate and engage in discussions related to morality. Through their understanding and interpretation, fans consume moral messages from *Star Wars* and apply it to their own lives. An examination of the concept of authorship has also provided useful in seeing the blurring lines between production and consumption and the significance of consumption practices related to *Star Wars*. While fans might not yet have the power to influence the production process at the level of writing scripts and constructing stories, data presented in this chapter indicates that fans collectively have the potential to influence decisions that occur at the level of production. For example, the recent controversy surrounding Kathleen Kennedy's exit from Disney and the poor performance of *Solo* at the box office has implications on the ways in which fans demonstrate attachment towards and investment in *Star Wars*. The issue of fans' involvement and investment with the text further raise questions regarding the 'how' of their attachment to *Star Wars*. That is to see how fans identify with *Star Wars* in general through various levels of participation and activity. The next chapter on identities discusses this process of meaning making at the level of identities and identification.

Chapter 8- CoC moment- Constructing a *Star Wars* 'Identity'

Introduction

The recent discourse and scholarly literature on identity see it as a basic meaning-making process in everyday life (Cerulo 1997; du Gay et al 1997). In other words, identity is socially constructed and bounded by the cultural repertoires to which people are exposed to and have access and the structural and cultural context in which they live (Lamont 2000). Identity as a concept combines the personal world of individuals and the collective space of social relations and cultural forms. "It is important to study identities, that is the imaginings of self in worlds of action, as social products", in that "identities are lived in and through activities and so must be conceptualised as they develop in social practices. Identities are a key means through which people care about and care for what is going on around them. They are important bases from which people create new activities, new worlds and new ways of being" (Holland et al. 2001:5). The links between an individual's personal world and the social and cultural contexts forms people's relationship with cultural texts and artefacts. Cultural texts and artefacts are essential to identity formation. People use cultural texts to develop certain aspects of their identities to manage their own thoughts, actions and behaviour on a broad scale (Holland et al. 2001) and sometimes to align their activities with others as a part of the processes of forming identity around a cultural text. A cultural text must engage with the meanings which it has accumulated through a course of time and should be able to construct an identification between the consumers and those meanings (du Gay et al 1997). Cultural industries have the potential to form this link between the cultural text and the consumers through consumers' identification with the text, in this case *Star Wars*. Cultural texts 'get us to see ourselves as –identify with or acquire the identity of- a potential

consumer of the product' (du Gay et al 1997:21). In enabling identities for its consumers, it is essential to study the identities that Lucasfilm and Disney have formulated and structured around *Star Wars*.

In this chapter, the first section examines how cultural industries, namely, Lucasfilm and Disney, have enabled a *Star Wars* identity through the moral narratives in *Star Wars* films. The second section analyzes the role of *Star Wars* merchandize, such as toys, in the construction of a *Star Wars* identity. The third section looks at identity construction through events and exhibitions. Finally, I examined the importance of communal interaction in the construction of a *Star Wars* identity among fans.

This chapter achieves an examination and explanation of the connections between the role of cultural industries and fans in formulating identities around the *Star Wars*. Essentially it argued that cultural industries facilitate in constructing an identity of *Star Wars* through the moral themes in films and various other discourses that enable fans to associate with or identify with *Star Wars*. From the perspective of the circuit of culture, identity formation becomes important and relevant in understanding that meanings are not only consumed or decoded but become an integral aspect of people's lives.

Cultural industries strategically structure identities and texts interchangeably in the sense that they are experienced at the same place and time. In addition, the text and the processes through which the identity is created are reflexive- that is the cultural text itself becomes the identity of the organization. This is applicable in the case of Lucasfilm in which *Star Wars* has become its identity. There are several factors to consider the role of popular culture in contributing to identity formulation. Firstly, people's massive involvement with the gamut of popular culture, in the case of *Star*

Wars, the films, the merchandise, the toys, comic books, video games, and novels is testament to the cultural industries' potential to create a diversification in identities. Through its films and narratives, cultural industries offer consumers a plethora of potential role models for people to learn from (Altheide 2000). Understood within the context of *Star Wars*, Lucasfilm has provided people with powerful fictional characters that enable some connect with the consumers, be it Luke Skywalker, Darth Vader, Princesses Leia or Obi-Wan.

Construction of identities through moral narratives

Popular culture promotes identity as a resource to satisfy and establish individually oriented needs and interests to 'be whomever you want' (Altheide 2000). This is related to 'personal identity' as recognized by several scholars, which is embedded within the process of identification as a by-product of social interaction (Charon 1998; Hewitt 2010). Popular culture's focus on entertainment and commodification of the self informs this claim. "Ultimately the media's ability to produce people's social identities, in terms of both a sense of unity and difference, may be their most powerful and important effect." (Altheide 2000:12&13). This began with the question of 'What make *Star Wars* such a huge phenomenon and a part of people's everyday life?' and what role do Lucasfilm and Disney play in making *Star Wars* a huge cultural success? One of the keys towards understanding this is the moral narratives of films, which provide resources for people's strategy of action. "If mythology describes a process by which we come to understand our relationship to the universe through the narrative, then the term can equally describe the wide variety of discursive processes that render our relationships to our immediate social universe meaningful" (Silvio et al. 2007: 3). In other words, myth refers to a complex site of cultural production that is embedded within economics, politics, and identity

formation. In a sense people's relationship to these categories is to a large extent mediated by popular narratives. While these narratives are popular due to the various storytelling forms and strategies universal to societal myths such as the myth of the hero's journey and the theme of redemption, several myths are also rooted within the historical and cultural contexts that make a myth more relatable. As I have discussed in chapter 6 (representation of morals), the myth of *Star Wars* went on to be such a successful and popular text is primarily due to its explicit portrayal and reference to moral issues that are rooted in historical, social and cultural contexts, the very themes that *Star Wars* was conceived against the American context. I argue that Lucas was trying to promote a national solidarity or a sentiment of national identity. "Rather than detailing the horrors, he (viz...Lucas) decided to offer a balm to try, to try to reinvigorate American mythic tropes, remap the mythic landscape that had been so badly traumatized by American involvement in the war in Southeast Asia" (McDowell 2016:37). The narratives of '*Star Wars*' draw metaphoric references from the Vietnam war and developed the 'archaic warrior myths' thereby attempting to reaffirm the national identity. In this sense, not only is the war against 'evil' considered as legitimate, but viewing it as a mediated representation serves as a relief (McDowell 2016).

In a sense, Lucasfilm acquired an identity of circulating moral messages in society by using war references, inspirations from Japanese cultural themes and religious elements from different faiths. In other words, to analyze *Star Wars* from the perspective of a mythical narrative that enables an identity with the text and also its connection to the identification within the moment of production, is to explore the ways in which *Star Wars* represents specific relations of certain themes to the current social order. Within the perspective of circuit of culture, the processes of

representation and identity share many similarities. This is drawn from du Gay et al (1997) in which they see identity as an extension of representation. That is to say, “we should examine identities in terms of not only its creation and assertion among consumers and fans but also the production and circulation of meanings that form the identity of cultural texts” such as a *Star Wars* identity (Grey 2004:37).

Star Wars is described as a space opera that comprises a mix of narrative elements borrowed from *Flash Gordon* and the Japanese film, *The Hidden Fortress*. “I have this sort of space opera thing... Well, I got this movie ... it's sort of a space opera thing we have ... I think dogs driving spaceships,” (Gross 2017). In an earlier interview, Lucas said, “As a kid, I read a lot of science fiction. But instead of reading technical, hard-science writers like Isaac Asimov, I was interested in Harry Harrison and a fantastic, surreal approach to the genre. I grew up on it. *Star Wars* is a sort of compilation of this stuff...” (Lucas 1999:47). Thus *Star Wars* was intended to be set up within the genre of sci-fi with a number of elements and narrative themes from mythology and fantasy. But the main idea I argue, is that it enables an identity for *Star Wars* to communicate moral messages in society. Narrative concepts such as the Force and the hero’s journey are so associative of *Star Wars*, that even today these themes remain central to *Star Wars* within the ST.

In an era in which Americans have lost heroes in whom to believe, Lucas has created a myth of our times, fashioned out of bits and pieces of twentieth-century American popular mythology-old movies, science fiction, television, and comic books- but held together at its most basic level by the standard pattern of the adventures of a mythic hero (Gordon 1978:315).

This can be understood in terms of Lucasfilm’s effort to build an identity around *Star Wars* through its films. There are several discourses surrounding *Star Wars* borrowing its mythic structure from Joseph Campbell’s (monomyth) and the religious theme of *The Force* that are synonymous with *Star Wars*. Such textual representations play a

special role in the processes of formulating identities around the cultural text, argues Grey (2004). Kapell and Lawrence (2006) suggest that, “We become not just those who experience the story; we become part of the story itself” (15). This quote encapsulates the true essence of *Star Wars*’ penetration and relevance in people’s lives. The moral narratives structured around the films provide moral messages and discourses that provide resources towards people’s actions and behaviour. I argue that the morality portrayed through films is one of the catalysts towards the formation of identity especially through narratives, character portrayals and dialogues that are immediately associated with *Star Wars*. It is mainly through the narrative that Lucasfilm has tried to create the ‘monomyth’ that can be understood as a metaphor for people’s everyday struggles in real life which makes *Star Wars* even more relevant.

While George Lucas’s famous introduction to the *Star Wars* universe tells viewers they are light-years away from anything they’ve ever known, one of the reasons the film immediately resonates with such a broad fanbase is because, despite the starships and futuristic setting, children and adults alike see themselves in Luke, Leia, and Han’s struggle. We see not just a story about a rebellion fighting for freedom—we see a coming-of-age tale, and characters lifting themselves up to fulfil their destiny (Sedor, Sedo and Sereci 2017).

This identity around *Star Wars* as a tale of morality can be seen formulated through media interviews and media discourses that help connect consumers to the cultural text and its narratives of good vs evil. Citing the example of Sony, du Gay et al (1997) suggest that one of the ways by which the Walkman enabled a certain identity for Sony was the organizations’ capacity to provide something technologically advanced that helps people associate with the Walkman. This formulation of identity was done through the media descriptions of the Walkman that formed a certain kind of identity for Sony by referring to the Walkman as ‘high tech’, ‘slim’ or ‘mobile’ by drawing on several features of the Walkman which directly related its consumption practices to the youth. Similarly, Lucasfilm’s formulation of its identity as an organization that

circulates morality can be understood within the contexts of several media discourses and reports. While several media critics have referred to *Star Wars* as 'an assemblage of spare parts with no emotional grip', one of the newspapers reported *Star Wars*' connection with Luke's journey as the mythological hero and commented "The magic of *Star Wars* is only dramatized by the special effects; the movie's heart is in its endearingly human (and non-human) people" (Ebert 1977). This is perhaps one of the early discourses related to *Star Wars*' description of not only a modern sci-fi (by using the human vs non-human/machine) but also representing it as a tale of humanity. A couple of years ago, Craig Shirley, a biographer of Ronald Reagan, wrote a column for *The Washington Post* on how the first movie in the franchise, '*A New Hope* presented the 'ultimate conservative morality tale' (Shirley and Mauer 2017). This description of *Star Wars* is situated within the discourses related to *Star Wars*' historical and cultural themes within the American content. In addition, George Lucas has rightly portrayed and described *Star Wars* as a moral myth that was necessary around the late 70s when *A New Hope* was released. These are the early discourses around *Star Wars* which clearly signify its narrative as a moral one. This shows that through early discourses in the form of newspaper articles and media reports *Star Wars* has been represented as a moral myth. In another newspaper report, *Star Wars*' story has been applauded and has been described as the most basic storytelling form known to man, the Journey.

All of the best tales we remember from our childhoods had to do with heroes setting out to travel down roads filled with danger, and hoping to find treasure or heroism at the journey's end. In "*Star Wars*," George Lucas takes this simple and powerful framework into outer space, and that is an inspired thing to do. We get involved quickly, because the characters in "*Star Wars*" are so strongly and simply drawn and have so many small foibles and large, futile hopes for us to identify with. And then Lucas does an interesting thing. As he sends his heroes off to cross the universe and do battle with the Forces of Darth Vader, the evil Empire, and the awesome Death Star (Ebert 2008:725).

In this article, Ebert is referring to the monomythic format of *Star Wars* that was a common theme around 1920s and 30s in films such as *The Mask of Zorro*, *The Wizard of Oz*, *Robin hood*. Most part of Campbell's 'Hero with a Thousand Faces' has been inspired by this universal storytelling format essaying the hero's journey. In using the term 'identify with', Ebert implies and refers to other media representations and portrayals of characters that people are familiar with. Wickman (2015) calls *Star Wars* a 'pastiche' of several other popular culture texts from the early 1920s. In describing the relation between the hero's journey and his battle with the Evil empire, the critic draws our attention to the representation of the Dark side by pitting Darth Vader, and the Empire against the hero, clearly distinguishing between the good and evil highlighting the distinction between morality and immorality. As a feature of media and popular culture, identity is increasingly presented as a resource and a product that is used as a thing, namely, 'identity politics' (Schendel and Zurcher 2001). Cultural industries promote and push their cultural texts that have gone on to become mass-mediated and easily available products through the various media channels and discourses that are used in the capacity of the cultural industries to formulate identity for itself and around the cultural text that represents the cultural industry in certain ways.

Identity embedded in merchandizing

Another aspect of Lucasfilm's identity around *Star Wars* is its heavy emphasis on the merchandize, which *Star Wars* in fact has become synonymous with. Lucasfilm has played a significant role in people's lives by creating facets around *Star Wars* that are not easy to escape. On his YouTube channel in the section on *Star Wars* reviews, Stuckmann says that very rarely do media savvy people go through a single day without hearing some reference to *Star Wars*, whether in conversation with friends or

on TV, radio, or without seeing some advertisement that refers to it, or without coming across any *Star Wars*-related merchandise- book, comic, coffee mug, etc. I argue that it is not just the objective of cultural industries to prove their presence everywhere through organizational forms such as marketing, advertising, and distribution, but these exercises and efforts are building a connection with consumers in a bid to expect their trust and loyalty that enable an organization make profits. But moreover, this form of trust and loyalty helps build a reputation and identity for the cultural industry. Lucasfilm's reputation was built through its merchandizing power that enabled a certain identity for it and makes a direct connection with consumers. *Star Wars* as a franchise stands one of the greatest commercial and cultural success. From *A New Hope* (1977) to *Revenge of the Sith* (2005) *Star Wars* spans 28 years of merchandising success, and product tie-ins that enable Lucasfilm an identity through its merchandizing potential. It is unimaginable how other film franchise could ever surpass this commercial 'everywhereness' of *Star Wars* (Kapell and Lawrence 2006).

As the *Hollywood Reporter* writes on the original 1977 *Star Wars*, "Fox let Lucas pass up an additional \$500,000 directing fee in return for keeping licensing and merchandising rights for himself — a decision that would cost the studio billions." In the first 35 years after that film, the six *Star Wars* movies generated some \$20 billion in merchandise sales, more than quadruple what the movies made at the box office. The movies, often lambasted as toy commercials, are very much that — nakedly, in fact. But they happen to be *outstanding* toy commercials, supplying depth and mythology to things kids absolutely love to play with. There's a nobility in that. Children are going to use these toys to launch infinite hours of imagination and storytelling. People have paid billions for cast-plastic figurines and Lego sets and the rest because they are totally worth it. ... (Hutchinson 2015).

This discourse around play, imagination and storytelling can be understood through Huizinga's famous study *Homo Ludens* (1938) on the concept of 'playing'. This study "describes play as a free and meaningful activity, carried out for its own sake, spatially and temporally segregated from the requirements of practical life, and bound by a self-

contained system of rules that holds absolutely” (Rodriguez 2006:n.p). Though Huizinga’s original study was around playing, it has been adopted as a core idea within ‘gaming’ (Crawford 2003). The idea of play comprising "meaning", that is playing makes sense to the player, can be understood in terms of identity around the act of ‘playing’. Huizinga claimed that play is "free", in which the primary objective of the player is the *experience* that it affords. Playing with *Star Wars* action figures and merchandise can be understood within a similar context.

Lucas probably didn’t set out to make three hot-garbage kids’ movies, but don’t blame toy sales for that. The kids-at-play mentality is the very purpose of having *Star Wars* in the first place. When they take on the voice and the direction of children, even frickin’ Jar-Jar Binks action figures become creatively redeemed. *Star Wars* toys give kids a tangible expressive outlet, a vivid way to take on new identities, and create their own stories. (Hutchinson 2015).

The performance or the act of playing helps kids to develop their sense of self-restraint and to cultivate the moral skills necessary (Rodriguez 2006). I argue that the basic potential of ‘playing’ with toys and action figures who children know as mediated representations (only seen through films) further helps strengthen their identities towards those characters and build up their own coherent identities. I argue that the merchandising potential has provided children especially with this platform of ‘playing’ their favourite characters thereby creating some kind of identification with the text. Dave Okada, Vice President of Design at Kenner, says,

In real world, kids might not have a lot of scope, but in the toy world they have a lot of potential for their imagination. In a bad day at school, when kids would come home Luke would be waiting for them, they trusted Luke would wait for them. When you're Luke Skywalker, you can do anything. The Force will always be with you" (*The Toys That Made Us*).

This suggests the way a cultural meaning of trust attached to Luke Skywalker is produced and circulated through toys. By playing with Luke Skywalker, children are subconsciously imbibing good or the 'light side' of the Force; similarly, by

holding a Darth Vader miniature action figure along with the Death Star, children play out the immorality attached to characters which further helps strengthen their identities with the action figures and *Star Wars* as a cultural text. In a sense, they are able to identify with the merchandise created by Lucasfilm as those merchandized are embedded within film narratives which have the potential of ‘playing’. Identifying with Luke Skywalker and making him a part of their homes and everyday lives by playing and acting out character traits, children are indirectly imbibing morals through the representation of Luke as portrayed through films. Thus, by playing with Luke's miniature action figure, kids are role playing morality. This connection between the circulation of merchandise and the enabling of ‘play’ is essential in theorizing the formation of identity among ‘players’ (children) and Lucasfilm.

Sci-fi fans can only get close to their favorite characters by watching a film and that too played by someone else, for example Solo played by Harrison Ford. It is only through toys that people get close to their favorite characters and act out the good vs evil at homes with family and friends (Prof. John Tenuto, sociology from the documentary *Toys That Made Us*).

deLange's theory of identity construction that explained how play is a useful and appropriate metaphor for identity, enables an understanding of the formulation of identities through cultural narratives (2015). Popular culture promotes characters and roles over people, in the sense that cultural industries such as Lucasfilm have focused more on their toy potential as a way to construct an identity. “Play and politics (of the cultural industries) are no longer separate when they are filtered through a mediated environment whether it is films or merchandise” (Altheide 2000: 20). While Lucasfilm has facilitated the merchandizing culture as one of the ways of building an organizational identity, with the takeover of Disney, the latter can be seen as massifying the processes of merchandizing through its Initiative-Force Friday as a way of reconstructing a *Star Wars*' identity among people and for itself.

Identity Construction through events and exhibitions

Besides films and toys, events and exhibitions have also played crucial roles in constructing a *Star Wars* identity. This section is going to use the examples of the “Force Friday” and *Star Wars* Identities Exhibition to illustrate how events and exhibitions helped identity construction.

The *Force Friday* is an event introduced by Disney as a corporate strategy to launch their merchandize three months before the release of the *Star Wars* films. A journalist commented on the “Force Friday” “If it wasn’t clear before, it’s time to face facts: In 2015, *Star Wars* is a toy franchise, not a movie franchise” (Meslow 2015). The roll-out and launch of toys was initiated by Disney including toy companies such as Hasbro and Lego in 2015 as part of a huge merchandising effort three months before the release of *The Force Awakens*, the first film in the ST.

The first wave of product around *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* was officially launched on “Force Friday,” a global fan event on September 4, 2015, which saw more 130,000 fans turn up to one of 3,000 retail locations in the US that opened their doors at midnight. Highlights of the new line were revealed via a global unboxing event that unfolded over 18 hours, 15 cities and 12 countries (*Star Wars*’ official website, January 12, 2016).

Force Friday is all about corporate synergy wherein Disney offered its consumers their first glimpse of merchandise connected to their first *Star Wars* film. Branded as “Force Friday”, in partnership and collaboration with various *Star Wars* retailers and license holders, Disney offered *Star Wars* consumers the first of its kind merchandising event that can be understood within the context of Disney’s effort of building its identity as a merchandising monster.

Merchandise, and toys and action figures in particular, have long held a special place within *Star Wars* fan culture, both as collectable objects and storytelling devices. As a cornerstone of new parent company Disney’s “Journey to *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*” marketing campaign, a strategically plotted roll-out of “official” transmedia texts (novels and comic books) designed to fill in the narrative and temporal gaps between the original trilogy and the

forthcoming film, “Force Friday” was infused with similarly revelatory textual expectations (Scott 2017:138).

A particular aspect within the Force Friday that enables a theorization of trust and loyalty within the context of identity is Disney’s exclusion of Rey action figures from the Force Friday (the first event). Kenner toys and Lucasfilm partnership with an aim to provide *Star Wars* however minor action figures with conceivable characters, enabled consumers to identify with their favourite character by the act of ‘playing’ with toys at home (as explained earlier). In relation to this, it comes as no surprise why it annoyed consumers to find no Rey action figures in the Force Friday. Scott’s study presents a discussion of the hashtag activist movement #wheresrey, as a topic that allows the exploration of gender identities and politics of cultural industries such as Disney (2017). An image was widely circulated as an evidence of the marginalization and the lack of female characters and fans as a part of the #wheresrey campaign. The image featured a Hasbro box set of six action figures with only the films’ new male characters- Finn, Poe Dameron, and Kylo Ren in addition to Chewbacca and two anonymous action figures including a Stormtrooper and a TIE fighter pilot. The lack of Rey action figures was discussed as being ironical to the films’ narrative in relation to constructing female identities around the ST (Scott 2017). A female protagonist comes as no surprise from Disney, which is evidenced through Disney’s history of its inclusion and portrayal of female characters that enables a certain kind of identity and discourse in justifying the description of ‘fairy tales’, ‘magic’ and ‘myth’ in its narratives. The lack of Rey action figures was thus ironical and raised several concerns of Disney’s own identity and of Disney’s expectations from consumers in terms of identifying with the text. It gave mixed messages to consumers, and the narrative (film) did not complement the lack of Rey action figures. I argue that event like Force Friday are embedded within the industry and organizational structures to control

meanings and discourse in favour of the organization (DiMaggio 1997), thereby attempting to create loyal consumers and build trust, Disney's lack of Rey from Force Friday pushed consumers further away. The liminality of action figures and toys and their capacity to 'strengthen or weaken established meanings' (Gray 2010) are what makes them significant to a franchise's success and longevity that enables consumers' heightened and prolonged levels of interaction and involvement with the text (Scott 2017). While toy companies like Hasbro attributed the lack of Rey action figures to the protection of consumers from spoilers, a conflicting report suggests that the decision to keep Rey action figures minimalistic (or none) was in fact the product of a sexist decision-making process at Lucasfilm (Disney) (Berger and Kang 2016). Kathleen Kennedy has acknowledged bluntly that, "the business infrastructure of franchises are predominantly men. If I'm sitting in a meeting about toys, it's predominantly men" (Berger 2015). This I argue goes against Disney's way of representing and creating female oriented identities through characters and narratives. In fact, when the toys were released, Disney presumed Kylo Ren would make a huge impact on the consumers in terms of the merchandizing potential.

They (Disney) were completely surprised when it was Rey everyone identified with and wanted to see more of. Now they are stuck with vast amounts of Kylo Ren product that is not moving and a tidal wave of complaints about a lack of Rey items" (Berger and Kang 2016).

This mistake by Disney was however corrected soon after and the year before the release of the Last Jedi, there were not only female protagonists such as Rey, Leia Organa and Captain Phasma. "[Disney] took a risk and they made a female the hero of 'Force Awakens.' She sold better than just about anyone, except for Kylo Ren, but the villain always sells better. There are more (female action figures) in the last 18 months than there have been in the last 20 years" (Scott 2017). While Disney broke gender barriers with Rey, a female protagonist as a hero, the above presentation of the data

highlights the structuring of identities by Disney around *Star Wars*' merchandise which stand in contrast to its film narratives in revolving the 'hero's journey around a female lead.

In addition to events like the Force Friday, Disney's Identities Exhibition is another example of offering consumers an opportunity to involve more with the *Star Wars* text by literally building their identities temporality through a virtual experience. Disney has opened a space for fans and consumers to interact virtually with their characters, take on those character traits and personality, with an aim of unveiling their own *Star Wars* identity, through the *Star Wars* Identities Exhibition.

"As you initially enter the exhibition, you're handed an interactive wristband; a ticket to crafting your very own *Star Wars* alter-ego by mimicking the journeys and choices of your favourite characters. Your options are broken down into ten components: species, genes, parents, culture, mentors, friends, marking events, occupation, personality, and choices" (Loughrey 2016).

The exhibition revolves around visitors who are able to take on a temporary identity of any of the *Star Wars*' characters. At the entrance, people are greeted with the question, 'What forces shape you?' which is a leading theme. This interactive exhibition explores identity including everything from your parents, genes, friends, mentors, personality and influences.

The first thing you need to do is grab an audio earpiece and electronic wristband. As you wander around, you scan your wristband and take part in interactive quizzes to build up your unique profile in the *Star Wars* universe. From a moisture farmer from Tatooine, who enjoys laughing with your friends, to a Mon Calamari Sith Lord from Coruscant with galactic domination on your mind. Your TRUE identity will be revealed at the end! And then a picture of your character is emailed to you after the event (O2 2016).

Through this experience fans not only chose their favorite characters but also explored genetic and social influences that shape them. The visitors can create an original *Star Wars* character based on him or her, temporarily stored to a smart-technology bracelet or keycard, by interacting with ten stations throughout the exhibit. For example, by the

first station where the visitor chooses a race (based on a selection of fifteen *Star Wars* races) and gender, genetics is explored as an influence. Items in the exhibition include original props used for filming, models for special effects, costumes worn by the actors, original concept art, and production notes for the films and later productions such as *Star Wars: The Clone Wars*.

Unusually for a Friday morning, I'm surrounded by Sith Lords. Since the first days of Darth Vader in the original *Star Wars* film, the visual cues for the film's anti-Jedi villains – dark clothes, some sort of facial covering, red lightsabers – have been instantly recognisable, the characters firm favourites with any right-thinking young kid planning a stick fight in the back garden, says Sophie Desbiens, Communications and Museum Relations Director for X3Productions says (Fullerton 2017).

The exhibition enables not just role-taking pertaining to good characters but also portraying evil. Some fans enjoy the portrayal of immorality of the fictional characters such as Vader, Stormtroopers and the Emperor. "It's fun to be bad, it's fun to be different, it's fun to be on the outside – and it's mostly fun to be somebody you're not allowed to be. That's what I think", adds Sophie Desbiens (Fullerton 2017). Mediated representations enable the understanding of good vs evil and morals of trust and loyalty as associated with the good side and immorality such as pride, greed, selfishness as attributes associated with the bad side. Based on George Lucas' own observation that 'people mostly want to be on the good side' suggests that people exhibit and act out morals such as loyalty and trust to maintain good relationships with people around. Through the identities exhibition, participants are able to cosplay or take on identities of evil which are otherwise deemed immoral and unacceptable to maintain healthy relations. A fan on his father's identity that transforms him into Darth Vader says,

When (like Luke Skywalker) your dad turns out to be Darth Vader, it's safe to say you probably spend a fair bit of your time thinking about the old nature versus nurture argument. Does the fact that you are descended from an evil, shiny black-carapaced Sith lord mean you too are destined to become a

psychopathic death cyborg, a villainous destroyer of worlds? Or might the timely interventions of monkish old men and tiny, big-eared green extraterrestrials lead you to the path of righteousness? (Child 2016).

The last sentence is an obvious reference to the Jedi as described in terms of their appearance and most importantly their morality in terms of being on the good side by using the term 'righteous'. The fan talks of these temporarily given identities as real assuming that since the identities are generated based on our inputs and preferences, we might ourselves be evil and vice-versa in reality. This can be understood in terms of scholarship that focuses on identities outside of everyday lives and without any social obligations which make such identities temporary in the first place. Based on Stein's (2011) work on vacation identities, which are seen as temporary identities outside of everyday experience, the *Star Wars* exhibition can also be considered as an arena that facilitates such temporary identities. Such experiences allow people the time off to forget social obligations and be in close touch with their passion, and what they love the most. Loughrey (2016) says that the fictional characters in the exhibition are so relatable that it's easy to identify with them in real life and become a part of their galaxy. She says,

Yoda may have helped Luke understand who he was, and now he's helping us understand who we are. Over the course of my journey, I slowly crafted my female Togruta (think *Clone Wars*' Ahsoka); raised on Tatooine, I chose to survive my tough desert childhood by collecting scrap metal for trade before rising up the ranks to Rebel pilot thanks to the mentorship of one Padmé Amidala, who represented the kind of fierce moral code I've always identified with in my own life.

Though the exhibition is centred around Anakin and Luke's story, it involves other characters who are a part of their monomythic journey as portrayed through films. The specific identities created of the other characters and their portrayal as being on the good or the evil side, are key factors in the process of the hero's journey embedded

in fans' identification of the fictional characters. Sophie Desbiens, in the capacity of her role as a Communications Director at the exhibition says that the exhibition is so powerful in shaping and transforming people's identities that it has an impact on their real lives. "She describes her favourite experience with the tour: when she received a letter from a mother who visited the exhibition with her adopted sons, discovering that through Luke and Anakin – orphaned themselves – she was able to communicate with her children about both their experiences and their relationship with each other. In turn, it brought a whole new level of understanding within the family" (Loughrey 2016).

Identify construction through communal interaction

du Gay et al see identities as historically contingent, socially constructed and a cultural process rather than a fixed one (1997). Identities are constructed through a cultural process, and it is important to note that 'individuals are active agents who are capable, to varying degrees, of negotiating their sense of self or subjectivity' (Grey 2004:29). Identity can be defined as consisting of "customary practice and of beliefs, values, sanctions, rules, motives and satisfactions associated with it" (Arnett Jensen, Arnett, and McKenzie 2011:286). Several ethnographic and anthropological works have highlighted the negotiation of identity production in which identities are continually constructed not through self-making but also through interactions with others that enable formulating conceptions of the self (Holland et al. 2001). Firmly rooted within social psychology as a concept and process, identity comprises of several aspects attributed to culture that involves social interaction, for example, activates, meanings, groups, contexts.

A substantial portion of the scholarly works before 1970 focuses on the formation of 'me', by exploring how interpersonal interactions shape an individual's

sense of self. After 1970s, works on identity have shifted from an individual in interaction producing identity to the more collective components of identity (Cerulo 1997). This can be understood in terms of what Gee (2000) refers to as positionality that is being recognized as a ‘certain kind of person’ in relation to others related to groups and activities. (99). However, identity is not only about being recognized as a certain type, rather it entails certain elements of culture that include socially shared meanings. One way of associating with the socially shared meanings is through identifying with cultural texts. While the consumption of *Star Wars* movies and merchandise happens on a broader level, there are certain people who identify more with elements from *Star Wars* that is evinced through the practices that they are involved with such as making *Star Wars* related accessories- t-shirts, caps, key chains, belts, etc as a part of their identities. That is to study how *Star Wars* has become a part of people’s everyday lives. I attribute these practices that make *Star Wars* an integral part of people’s every life to fan practices and activities. I argue that for a text to become meaningful as a way of forming identity, there has to be certain level of involvement and attachment to the text. These aspects are connected to fans’ identity of *Star Wars* as a meaningful text in their lives. The next section focuses on the ways in which fans identify with *Star Wars* as a meaningful source in their lives.

Connections between fandom and nostalgia

Fans differ from consumers in terms of the extent to which they invest and actively participate and engage in particular interests (Lee Harrington and Bielby 2010) “with fans being more intellectually, emotionally, behaviourally, and ideologically involved than ordinary consumers” (Groene and Hettinger 2016:325). Fandom is understood as performance through which fans give various symbolic

meanings to the activities they associate with thereby assuming the role of cultural producers at the same time. "Fandom is a particular kind of performance that many members boldly explore, playing with identity and finding their own layers of meaning" Duchesne (2005:18). Fiske (1992) in stating that fans are producers as well as consumers of culture with symbolic meaning describes fan activities as 'productivity and participation'. Jenkins (1992) in his study of fans' relationship and engagement with science fiction justifies this claim by arguing that fans actively reimagine and reconstruct narratives of television programs to claim their identities and relationship to the text. In the context of *Star Wars*, such fandom can be seen as new form of participatory culture in which fans are involved in *Star Wars*' related paratexts such as fan fictions, fan forums, and production of their own content online (Hills 2010). Through these forms of participatory culture, fans identify with *Star Wars* 'paratextually'. However, these paratextual forms are helpful in understanding the relation of fans to the *Star Wars* text as a site of co-production, the regular references and experiences in their every lives in terms of their association with *Star Wars* enable an understanding of the way fans identify with *Star Wars*.

I watched *A New Hope* ... er, "the first one" for most of us, when I was still learning how to multiply and divide...Back then I didn't understand the symbolism of the Empire or how borrowing the centuries-old hero's journey story arc was an effective way to position Luke as an underdog before confronting him with a moral dilemma between family and his morality. I couldn't understand why *The Empire Strikes Back* made the good guys lose, and why that made the end of *Return of the Jedi* so much sweeter...If you want the most basic of reasons why some of us like *Star Wars*, it's because there are laser guns, spaceships and unique monsters that can frighten you (the Rancor or Wampa) or make you laugh. (Pino 2017).

One of the ways to understand this basic identification of fans with *Star Wars* is through the concept of nostalgia. Although nostalgia is described as a painful desire to return home, a longing for a home that has never existed or no longer exists (Boym

2001), it can be applied to *Star Wars* as facilitating a fan identity which makes one go back to the text each time. Many fans associate *Star Wars* as rooted in their childhood. *Star Wars* can metaphorically be compared to the comforts of a home which fans long for and have identified with. A fan expresses, "Watching Luke Skywalker trying to figure out his path, I really drew parallels as a high school student, it helped me to figure out the mark I wanted to make" (Strickland 2016). In addition to drawing certain emotions and sentiments, nostalgia also carries the ability to further cultural continuity. *Star Wars* as a long running franchise by keeping the same characters and storylines alive from generation to generation reinvokes the sentiments among fans that they have identified with. *Star Wars*' underlying structure of good vs. evil, can also make fans become nostalgic about the post war contexts in which the films were set up that make them identify even more. For some fans nostalgia is simply about remembering something pleasant. Various fan experiences involve their identification with the *Star Wars* texts in terms of their attachment to *Star Wars* in everyday life. These experiences of going back to comfortable times enable an understanding of fans' nostalgia of *Star Wars*. "For me it is reminiscent of happier times in your life. It's about your childhood when life was a bit simpler. It's about a time when all your friends really really got into something and you played together" (Strickland 2016). For many fans, *Star Wars* existed within them and they were exposed to *Star Wars* as children. Acting favourite scenes at home and at school and investing so much time into a fictional universe are rooted in their identities as *Star Wars* fans.

Brandy Roatsey, a *Star Wars* fan, instantly connected with the myth of the *Star Wars* universe as a child while watching it with her father. When she moved to away from family to another place after several years for work, Roatsey didn't know anyone. She came across a local *Star Wars* fan group, the Hothlanta Rebels, who met for lunch

regularly. "It was the best decision of my life, all thanks to the inclusive and welcoming nature of '*Star Wars*' fans," she comments. Not only did they welcome her and introduce her to the new place but also introduced her to Dragon Con. Roatsey now works as a track director for *Star Wars* at Dragon Con and is responsible for scheduling panels and guests (Strickland 2016).

Examining social interactions and identities

This understanding of *Star Wars* identity that fans come to invest through social interactions can be understood through Cerulo's (1997) point about identity comprising of various groups, activities and contexts which become meaningful through social interactions. *Star Wars* has played an integral part in the formation of fans' identities that have also enabled them to imbibe the morals of trust and loyalty through the films. Katie a 5-year-old adopted girl got attached to *Star Wars* as she watched the films with her father who was a huge *Star Wars*' fan. She was constantly bullied by her friends for liking *Star Wars*.

When she was 5, Katie connected to the idea of Leia as someone who was also adopted and identified with her. And when Katie was old enough to develop a relationship with her birth brother and sister, to her it felt like when Luke and Leia are reunited, recalls Katie's mother (Strickland 2016).

When her mother shared this story with CNN in 2010, *Star Wars* fan communities came together to support Katie. The costuming group 501st even created a custom-made suit of Stormtrooper for Katie as an act of solidarity. Several fans admired her loyalty towards *Star Wars* through her accounts of relating to Leia, and her trust in the franchise as teaching her valuable morals in life. Her mother says that this experience brought out an important aspect of *Star Wars* uniting people who have nothing else in common but their love and investment in the franchise. By trusting in herself and her community around, Katie identified herself as the *Star Wars* girl which proved loyalty

to the franchise as she carried it with her name (Strickland 2016). In this way, ‘popular culture is lived through participation and identity is an accomplishment of interaction with the broader market’ (Altheide 2000) in terms of online communities who share a common interest.

Similar to the 5-year-old Katie who was mocked for wearing *Star Wars*’ clothes in school, a 7-year old girl wore her *Star Wars* T-shirt to school. She was mocked by friends for liking ‘boy stuff’ which made her upset. Her mother tweeted about it not expecting over 10 replies. The next day she was overwhelmed to see over 40,000 retweets including a tweet from Mark Hamill. His tweet read, “Just tell her to feel free to use this gesture if her classmates give her any grief. "Boy stuff"? PLEASE! The Force is, & always will be strong with females here on Earth & in galaxies far, far away.- mh”. Upon reading Hamill’ response, the girl cheerfully said, 'of course he said nice things because he's the good guy' and she ran off to play’ (Romano 2018). Identity is based on a reaffirmation by someone who is closely associated with it. This also goes on to show that mediated representations shape an understanding of the world. By referring to Hamill as the good guy, the girl is actually referring to Luke Skywalker who plays the good guy in the films. These representations from films especially when merged with real life enable an affirmation in one’s identity.

Brown, a *Star Wars* fan and cosplayer at the Celebrations Orlando, says that *Star Wars* taught him to have hope and trust people, as a kid. He says he travelled a lot as a kid and was bullied by other kids all the time. He always woke up to the feeling of not wanting to go to school at all. He recalls an experience as a child that to get him out of those negative feelings, his father would hide *Star Wars* figures in his shoes. ““I’d wake up in the morning and I’d put my shoe on, not wanting to go to school, and I’d feel—Oh! What’s this? And it would just bring me up” (Boym 2017).

The action figures of Luke, Han would make him believe that there is still goodness in the world and that bullies can also turn good. This he learnt through *Star Wars* portrayal of Darth Vader who finds redemption through his son. Identifying with good morality of trust and loyalty in friends and family enabled Brown's trust in the good side of the world. (Holland et al. 2001) suggest that involvement and interaction with a cultural text in terms of making it a part of an individual's everyday life add to the construction of identities.

These examples show that whether it is film narrative, merchandise, or *Star Wars* communities, identity is a socially constructed concept with continuous interaction and involvement with the text (du Gay et al 1997). This also explains Grey's (2004) notion of sense-making of one's identity that is rooted within *Star Wars*' discourses. For several fans, their identity around *Star Wars* wasn't based on films but action figures and games that made them connect more with the text. The moment of playing together with friends is more important to them which they attest to an important learning from *Star Wars*- friendship.

For me, *Star Wars* wasn't ever about the films. For me, the immersion came mostly from games: from early memories of X-Wing vs Tie Fighter, to playing out epic *Battlefront II* space battles with my brother and later, as a retro fix with my best friend at university. I remember adoring the *Knights Of The Old Republic* games with their sheer volume of lore: wise-cracking robots, sleek spaceships piloted by brave rogues, traitorous Sith Lords. The films will always be a cultural touchstone (and *Episode I*, I will always insist, is cruelly underrated). But for me *Star Wars* means more than who shot first, or doing Chewie impressions. It's the universe that *A New Hope* started. And it's being a kid with my friends, our imaginations fired by a galaxy far, far away (Franklin-Wallis, Wired 2017).

These aspects derived from the narrative help formulate and strengthen friendship, an important aspect of growing up for many fans. These identities are often reminiscent of the narratives that highlight the friendship between Luke, Leia and Solo. In that sense identities are a combination of mediated experiences and the ones that can

actually be played out among groups as a way of heightened level of involvement with *Star Wars*. I argue that it is not only specific channels and arenas such as films, engagement with the merchandise, absorption in the transmedia storytelling universe, participation in costume clubs and parades, fan conventions that enable a *Star Wars* identity. A *Star Wars*' fan identity can be established by making it visible through its everyday use in terms of making it a part of your body.

A link between identities and personal attributes

We come across several people in a day who wear some piece of clothing with *Star Wars*' characters, logo, or any such aspect that is helpful to refer to the person as a *Star Wars* fan. Such accessorising also connects one fan to the other in terms of acknowledgement or relating to the person in some way. This is highlighted through du Gay et al's (1997) Walkman case in which they show how the Walkman has been a physical identity for the youth, something that can be worn and something that comes with tags of 'mobile', 'hiphop', 'cool', etc. These tags also enable an acknowledgement of identity among the youth who Sony originally targeted as the consumers for the Walkman. A person wearing any form of *Star Wars*' clothing or accessory could be tagged as a nerd or a geek since *Star Wars* is associated with sci-fi and sci-fi is assumed to have certain kinds of people who associate with it. However, geek and nerd are the external attributes given upon the person. Wearing a *Star Wars* t-shirt or a cap means something to the person wearing it. For most, it is usually to show their attachment and investment in the franchise but it is also a way of announcing one's identity as a *Star Wars*' fan to others. Identity is not only revealed through spaces such as fan conventions, or online communities and forums or costuming clubs, rather people's everyday interactions with people or their aspects of personal and social life also enable an identity.

On the advice of yet another fellow dating mom, I deleted Tinder and signed up for Match. Finally, I came to understand the true power of the force that was my *Star Wars* V-neck T-shirt. From the moment I first logged in, I discovered an all-out *Star Wars*–loving surprise party waiting for me. Unlike Tinder, anyone on Match can contact you. That photo of me next to the storm trooper was a beacon for young and old alike, for deployed servicemen, suburbanites, cute and nerdy athletes, and beyond, all of whom sent message after message. One 28-year-old repeatedly posted the same comment on my pic: “Hell yeah!” After a week on Match, I was contacted by a guy who made a joke that I was hardly playing “fair” by using the *Star Wars* pic. It was clear from his profile that he had a sense of humor, wasn’t a droid...(Wood Shapiro 2017).

While being pessimistic about displaying certain identity online to connect to people, on the insistence of her friends, Wood finally put up her profile picture with a *Star Wars*’ T-shirt. After getting so many responses, there was a sense of pride in identifying as a *Star Wars* fan and making that announcement to people. Such social interactions as a part of everyday life enabled a formation and a re-establishing of the identity.

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed how cultural industries, consumers and fans have structured and formulated identity around *Star Wars*. Cultural industries formulate *Star Wars* identity through film narratives and merchandise that enable fans’ connection and identification with the franchise. A discussion of certain aspects of morality related to *Star Wars* helps towards understanding how identities are shaped and constructed. This chapter has also shed light on the identities embedded within morality as a way of understanding its cultural circulation in relation to the other cultural processes of representation, production and consumption. An analysis of identity is important as it enables an understanding of how a cultural text such as *Star Wars* becomes meaningful to people not just through watching and consuming films,

but also through making aspects of *Star Wars* such as playing with action figures, wearing *Star Wars* clothes and accessories a part of their everyday lives.

Chapter 9- Conclusion

This study has examined the four cultural processes separately for its analytic comprehension that is divided into four empirical chapters. However, the processes should not be considered as linear or separate in examining circulation of moral meanings. This study has discussed and examined the moral meanings and the processes through which those moral meanings are shaped for a popular cultural text. Using *Star Wars* as a case study, I have examined the role of two cultural industries in the dissemination of morality for the same cultural text. I argue that while *Star Wars*, a popular culture text as a meaning-making site has been studied extensively within academia, the processes through which moral meanings are shaped by cultural industries for the same text has not received much academic attention. Since the recent acquisitions of *Star Wars* by Disney, there's a dearth of studies that add to empirical insights on the ways Disney shapes meanings related to morality that have been conceived and constructed by another cultural industry earlier. I have examined specific ways through which Lucasfilm and Disney as different cultural industries produce culture thereby constructing and circulating their own meanings of morality.

In an effort to do so, I have focused on trust and loyalty as mutually reinforcing morals to uncover ways in which these morals are circulated through films and the transmedia storytelling channels such as toys, merchandise, comic books and video games. Trust and loyalty are embedded not just with these 'contents' but also through external factors such as relationships between producers, the industry, consumers and the media in studying the discourses surrounding the circulation of morality.

My conceptual framework has engaged with literature on morality as mass produced cultural tools through popular culture and mediated representations that provide discourses enabling people towards 'strategies of action' in terms of right vs

wrong and good vs bad conduct and behaviour (Dimaggio 1997; Swidler 1986). While engaging with scholarship on the myths of good vs evil, the monomyth and *The Force*, I have argued that these serve as powerful storytelling tools through which morality is disseminated.

At a theoretical level, I have adopted the framework of the circuit of culture that enable meaning-making for a cultural text by looking at the interconnected and non-linear ‘moments’ of production, consumption, representation and identities. These cultural processes are embedded within the organizational and institutional structures of the cultural industries that are involved in shaping a culture or a cultural text (Peterson 1976). Several discourses involved in the cultural processes of production, consumption, identities and representation help in exploring meanings related to *Star Wars* from various dimensions. *Star Wars* has been conceived against the backdrop of the Vietnam war in the American context. George Lucas saw morality eroding as an aftermath of the war and wanted to bring back the positive and optimistic spirit back to the American society. He saw trust and loyalty as important morals that could help strengthen relationships in society and bring back the peaceful American that he grew up in, in the 50s. *Star Wars*’ political, religious and spiritual references are interwoven in the process of production through the organizational and industry structures. Several representations that explore semiotic and discursive dimensions such as ‘language’ that symbolize and elucidate various references to the Cold war, World war II and the Vietnam war; and the Jedi references to Japanese Samurai and Chinese monks enable an understanding of these mediated representations and its connection with morality and moral discourses. Such discourses also raise questions of people’s involvement with the text as way of identifying with it. It is not just people’s (consumers and audiences) identification with *Star Wars* but also the way cultural industries structure

and formulate identities around *Star Wars* that help towards an understanding of the meaning-making processes within the ‘moments’ of production and consumption. Consumers do not simply accept the text as it is, but engage with it and interpret it in meaningful ways based on their attachment and involvement with it (Jenkins 2003) sometimes even altering and modifying the content. By analysing these interconnected moments, this thesis provides an insight into the role cultural industries play in constructing, negotiating and circulating meanings for *Star Wars*. In addition, by examining *Star Wars* as handled by two cultural industries, this thesis provides fresh perception on the similarities and differences in the way moral meanings are disseminated. At a methodological level, I have examined and analysed the discourses surrounding *Star Wars* and the contexts and contents that facilitate an understanding of the dissemination of moral meanings.

Academic significance

While the topic on *Star Wars*’ morality has been explored by scholars through the lens of philosophical (Decker & Eberl 2005), political (Brode & Deyeka 2012, Kapell & Lawrence 2006) and spiritual, theological and religion (Gordon 1978, McDowell 2007), political and philosophical (McDowell 2016), the mediated representations as providing discourses for strategies of action enabling an understanding of right vs wrong conduct open up new ways of understanding morality as intrinsically embedded within the concept of popular culture. Popular cultural forms enable an understanding of moral conduct (Iwashita 2006). By using films, primarily, as a discourse to understand the construction of moral meanings, this thesis contributes to an understanding of mediated representations as mass produced tools in the dissemination of moral meanings of trust and loyalty.

While the overarching myth of good vs evil remains a prominent factor and theme across the *OT*, *PT* and *ST*, there seem to be a moral ambiguity in the *ST* as compared to the *OT* and *PT* through character portrayal and a few narratives that are different than what Lucasfilm intended for morality. One of the ambiguities in the moral treatment is through the character portrayal of Luke Skywalker who is shown to be weak and experiences a loss of trust. This according to Mark Hamill, the actor who plays Luke Skywalker is in quite contrast to the hero as portrayed in the *OT* and *PT*. In addition, the wipe out of the old canon, the production of the Rebels, the *Star Wars*' anthologies, events such as Force Friday and The *Star Wars*' Exhibition add to an understanding of ways by which Disney has handled *Star Wars* differently thereby creating discourses related to trust and loyalty embedded within these organizational processes and the relationship between producers and consumers.

This thesis is not only situated within the discipline of cultural sociology that aims at incorporating the central role of meaning-making into the analysis of social phenomena (Neto 2014), but also within the discipline of sociology of culture that focuses on the processes of symbolic production of the cultural text (Crane 1992; Peterson 1976). By combining the 'meanings' and 'processes' into a single study, this thesis is unique in that it explains various cultural processes as essential and overlapping in the production of culture and moral meanings. My studies have attempted to fill in the theoretical gap within the scholarship pertaining to the role that cultural industries play in shaping meanings for the same cultural texts. That is to argue that by panning out the similarities and differences in the way Lucasfilm and Disney have constructed themes around morality for *Star Wars*, goes on to describe and examine their own organizational perceptions and claims of morality. By adopting the circuit of culture, this study intensifies the understanding of moral meanings by

examining each of the cultural processes distinctly yet making an analysis as overlapping, and not limiting the theoretical focus on the processes of production and consumption alone. The circuit of culture has the potential to explain and broaden our understanding of the practices and processes that make a cultural text meaningful by adopting popular cultural texts discourses on mediated representations.

Besides its theoretical significance, this study could also contribute overall to discussion of the ways in which Disney constructs meanings related to morality for two of its cultural texts- that is *Marvel* and *Star Wars* as a way of comparing how two established cultural texts gather meanings. By drawing parallels between ‘superheroes’ from Marvel and ‘the hero’s (journey)’ from *Star Wars*, this thesis adds to a comparative approach within a single cultural industry.

No study goes without any critique of its conceptual and methodological tools. du Gay et al’s Walkman study has on numerous occasions been critiqued in their application and usage of it to the cultural hardware, that is- the Walkman in its physical form. Cultural texts contain characteristics that material objects such as the Walkman do not possess. The meaningful exchange of texts does not simply take place between the creator and receiver of the cultural message. A form of communication also takes place between producers and consumers through varied structures (Grey 2004). Film not only has an identity value, but also the ability of shaping people’s lives through discourses. Thus concepts such as fandom, transmedia storytelling, paratexts are embedded within the facets of production, consumption, representation and identities thereby broadening our understanding of the processes of meaning-making.

Limitations and directions for future research

Like many studies, this study is also shaped by my (researcher's) and the project's constraints in resources. While it takes into account the discourses in relation to the articulation of the cultural processes, there might be other variations such as direct accounts of producers and especially audiences primarily examining their first hand narratives on morality through *Star Wars*. Another methodological approach would have been Kozinets' netnography (2010), an ethnographic approach adapted to study online communities specially to study consumption patterns. This method allows to gain access to a large number of fans by reaching out to them by sending them questionnaires which would probably provide a detailed insight into their perception of morality and the way it shapes their everyday life (Proctor 2013). By conducting either ethnography or netnography by directly getting in touch with fans, this study could further provide inroads towards the influence of mediated representation towards providing cultural tools for strategies of action (Swidler 1986).

Authorship and the problematization of its legitimacy

Extant scholarship has focused on the issues pertaining to authorship with regards to the producers and consumers, mainly fans in terms of 'who owns the content'? (Shefrin 2004). While there is a symbiotic relationship between producers and consumers of popular culture that establishes participatory fandom as 'legitimate' in which fans alter and create their own content parallel to the main storyline (Jenkins 2003; Liebler, Raizel and Chaney 2007), there is scope for this topic to be further examined through the approach of fan's involvement in scripts for crafting moral themes. For example, the current discourse in media and through fan forums raising questions on the power of fans in influencing organizational decisions such as making Kathleen Kennedy step down her position or boycotting Solo would add to a deeper understanding of the issues of authorship with regards to *Star Wars* and Disney.

Further possible research could also explore whether fans would have a say or contribute to the future *Star Wars*' scripts thereby complicating the dynamic of the producer-consumer nexus and blurring these lines solidifying an understanding of the production of culture.

Appendices

Appendix A

Primary data sources

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Appendix B

List of all the fictional character names, places, or any such references used from *Star Wars* original, prequel and sequel trilogies.

Admiral Piett- A supporting villain in command of Darth Vader's army.

Anakin- a young boy prophesied to bring balance to the Force, a Jedi knight who turned an apprentice to Darth Sidious.

C3PO- a humanoid who has appeared in the OT, PT and ST.

Chewbacca- a wookiee- tall and hairy 'animal-human' nicknamed "Chewie", and is Han Solo's loyal friend who serves as the co-pilot of the Millennium Falcon.

Dagobah- a star system shown in *The Empire Strikes Back* and *Return of the Jedi*, and where Yoda went into exile after a lightsaber battle with Darth Sidious and where Luke goes to train with him.

Darth Sidious- Sith Lord who also served as the Supreme Chancellor of the Galactic Republic and the Emperor of the Galactic Empire.

Darth Vader- the main villain in the original trilogy serving the fictional Galactic Empire.

Death Star- An enormous space station armed with a planet destroying superweapons.

Droids- a fictional robot with artificial intelligence and a term for robots designed to act humans. 'Droid' as a term has been Lucasfilm's registered trademark since 1977.

Emperor Palpatine- primary antagonist of *Star Wars*. In the OT, he is portrayed as the Emperor of the Galactic Empire and the Sith master of Darth Vader. In the PT, he is depicted as the senator from Naboo who rises to the position of the Supreme Chancellor of the Galactic Empire.

Finn- one of the main characters in the ST who first appeared as a Stormtrooper for the First Order, flees and turns against the Order.

Galactic Republic- referred to as the Republic, it is the interplanetary State that is overseen by the Senate. It is shown to represent the good cause and fighting against the Galactic Empire.

Han Solo- a pilot and the captain of the starship Millennium Falcon.

Jabba the Hutt- an antagonist and a huge slug-like alien character mainly in the OT.

Kylo Ren- aka Ben Solo, the son of Han Solo and General Leia Organa. He serves Supreme leader Snoke though trained as a Jedi by his uncle Luke Skywalker.

Luke Skywalker- the main protagonist of the OT.

Millennium Falcon- a fictional starship piloted by Han Solo and Chewbacca.

Obi-wan Kenobi- a mentor to Luke Skywalker in the OT and a friend and master to Anakin Skywalker in PT.

Padawan- was heard first in the PT Episode I- The Phantom Menace, a concept in reference to 'apprentice'.

Padme- served as the Princess of Theed and Queen of Naboo in the PT. She was also secretly married to the Anakin Skywalker.

Planet Bespin- a fictional planet first featured in The Empire Strikes Back.

Poe Dameron- an X-wing fighter pilot of the Resistance in the ST often being compared to Han Solo.

Princess Leia- a princess of the fictitious planet Alderaan, a member of the Senate and an agent of the Rebel Alliance.

R2-D2- a fictional droid, and plays an ally to Padme, Anakin, Luke, Leia, Obi-Wan in various points of the *Star Wars* saga.

Rey- the female lead in the ST who seeks Luke Skywalker to train her to become a Jedi.

Stormtroopers- fictional soldiers who serve under the leadership of Emperor Palpatine and commanded by Darth Vader, are the main ground force of the Empire.

Supreme leader Snoke- introduced in the ST, Snoke is the Supreme Leader of the First Order and who seduces Ben Solo to the dark side.

Tatooine- a fictional desert planet where Luke Skywalker comes from.

The Force- compared to aspects of several religions, it is depicted as an invisible metaphysical power in the *Star Wars* Universe. The characters wield the Force- Jedi utilizing the 'light' side while the Sith embracing the 'dark' side.

The Galactic Empire- fictional autocracy introduced in the OT comprising the antagonists.

The Jedi- depicted as an ancient monastic and paramilitary organization in the OT and PT. Jedi are portrayed as morally righteous and associated with the 'light' side of the Force. They are known for their wisdom and knowledge in the OT and PT.

The Sith- characterised by the desire to control and seize power by evil means. Associated with the 'dark' side of the Force, Sith lack the basic capacity for love, empathy and kindness.

Yoda- serves as the Grand Master of the Jedi Order.

Appendix C

The following table details the list of 129 (re)codes I assigned for the data corresponding with the analysis used in the thesis and its source. The codes provided below are representative of each of the broader categories of production, representation, consumption and identities that encompass the circuit of culture.

Production	Representation	Consumption	Identities
Morals	True meaning	Monomyth	Nostalgia Coming-of-age journey
Myth	Religion	Fandom	Fan testimonials
Interview-George Lucas	Spiritual	Morality	Comic cons
Interview-Kathleen Kennedy	Good vs bad	Moral dilemma	SW exhibition
Conglomeration	Disney merger	Grey shades	Simulation
Producing experiences	Commercial	Immorality	Experience
Producing nostalgia	Time span	nostalgia	Villain
Theme parks	Costumes	Selfishness	Identification
Trust	Character developments	Family movies	Geek culture
Loyalty	Moral representations	Choice	nerd
Kids	American politics	Regret	Feminism
Fairy tale	Light vs dark side	Moral message	engaging
Storytelling	SW movies	Shaping personal life	Meaning
Hero's journey	Themes	Deeper meaning	merchandise
Friendship	Culture	Producer's commentary	Toys
Good vs evil	podcast	Critique	Action figures
Merchandise	Habits	SW philosophy	Cosplay
Disney morality	Real life	Themes	Faith
American history	Metaphor	Disney movies	Humanity
Vietnam war	Symbolic	Revisiting childhood	fandom
The Force	Semiotic	Inconsistent morality	Cultural industries
Movies	Language	Sci-fi	Play
Light side	Disney changes	Disney's control	Imagination
Dark side	colors	Erosion of trust	storytelling
Monomyth	Stormtroopers	Erosion of loyalty	events

Production of culture	Nazi	KK's betrayal	Force Friday
Collaboration	Rebel alliance	Fans upset	Communal interaction
Transmedia	Cultural industries	Changing pace	
Kenner	Mediated representations	Morality as habits	
Toys action figures	signification	Life lessons	
Authorship		Fairy tale	
Studios		Disney bashing	
Mistrust		Family theme	
Fans		Mistrust in leadership	
Changes in ST			
Disney integration			

Some of the examples below are of data coded that have been used in the thesis. The organization of the data into sets is only an indication of the coding categories and the themes that were highlighted as some of the most prominent ones in an engagement of discussion related to the four processes of the circuit of culture.

Vietnam War

- “Just as in Vietnam, Lucas envisioned an Imperial war machine going up against guerrilla freedom fighters...the Empire is the villain, the freedom fighters are the heroes. The idea was that he wanted to show human spirit as triumphing over the Empire, and in so doing to make a subtle commentary on his own political context”.

Vietnam War, Lucas’s narrative, triumph, production

- “Wars have a tendency to be course changers, which is why it is dangerous for a society to get into a war — it shakes up the status quo. Vietnam is a perfect example. It was billed as a completely harmless war over there; no bomb was ever going fall on United States soil. But a huge psychological bomb landed on United States soil, and it changed it forever” (Pollock 1983).

American politics

- The moment is ripe. Many Americans, angry with the status quo, view our society as currently “out of balance” between those forces that seek to destroy the values we most hold dear as a nation, and those who valiantly seek to defend them.
- The first six Star Wars films showed how a democratic Republic may, through fear and the threat of war, devolve into a tyrannical Empire in order to preserve “a safe and secure society.” Lucas wrote his original treatment for Star Wars at the time of the Vietnam War and Watergate; his frustration with political demagoguery and technologically sophisticated, yet morally stunted, plans for weapons of mass destruction is evident in his screenplay for A New Hope — think of Obi-Wan Kenobi’s wistful description of a lightsaber as “an elegant weapon for a more civilized age.”
- The major political dimension of The Force Awakens is thus more likely to resemble the aftermath of 9/11 rather than the Cold War that inspired the first trilogy, reflecting Americans’ concern about wars in Iraq and Afghanistan were worth the sacrifice, considering that the jihadist hydra has now grown a new head in the form of Isis. (<https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/star-wars-can-tell-us-a-lot-about-the-modern-world-but-the-force-awakens-suggests-we-could-be-on-the-a6778761.html>)
- Chris Weitz had observed that the series’ Galactic Empire represented “a white supremacist organization.” It was “opposed,” commented his colleague Gary Whitta, “by a multicultural group led by brave women.” Just weeks after the election of President Donald Trump and the culmination of an acrimonious, racially charged political campaign, the film was hailed by some as “anti-Trumpian” – and subject to boycotts by irate members of the alt-right, a coterie of white nationalists who were upset about the film’s supposed liberal bent. (<https://bangordailynews.com/2017/12/15/opinion/contributors/are-political-messages-ruining-star-wars/>)
- They viewed the on-screen struggle of poorly trained and equipped Rebels against the technological juggernaut that was the Empire. The analogy lay on the surface, and it was not unintentional. Lucas has since suggested that his work was meant as an allegorical protest of the Vietnam War. (<https://taskandpurpose.com/how-the-star-wars-franchise-started-as-a-commentary-on-american-imperialism>)

Fan testimonial, identification, movies and imagination

- For me, Star Wars wasn’t ever about the films. For me, the immersion came mostly from games: from early memories of X-Wing vs Tie Fighter, to playing out epic Battlefront II space battles with my brother and later, as a retro fix with my best friend at university. I remember adoring the Knights Of The Old Republic games with their sheer volume of lore: wise-cracking robots, sleek spaceships piloted by brave rogues, traitorous Sith Lords. The films will always be a cultural touchstone (and Episode I, I will always insist, is cruelly underrated). But for me Star Wars means more than who shot first, or doing Chewie impressions. It’s the universe that A New Hope started. And it’s being a kid with my friends, our imaginations fired by a galaxy far, far away (Franklin-Wallis, Wired 2017).

Fan testimonial and identification, SW exhibition,

- I never did like Star Wars. I think it's because my dad didn't like Star Wars, so I wasn't shown the movies as a child. That might be the same reason I was never much interested in watching sportsball. My first memories of the franchise were some toys and a poster in the room of one of my grade school age rotational best friends. The toys sat next to cooler looking Alien toys.
- These props and costumes were only really intended to survive the length of the film's production; so not only is it a miracle these pieces have actually survived (and a lot has certainly been lost), but it's a sure rarity to see so many of them displayed in one place like this.
- And, though the exhibition was originally conceived before Disney even landed its historic deal with Lucasfilm, the London run does feature a few select props from last year's Star Wars: The Force Awakens for eagle-eyed fans to uncover; including, most notably, a chance to meet the lovable BB-8 in the robotic flesh.
(<https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/films/features/star-wars-identities-london-o2-tickets-props-costumes-interactive-a7417106.html>)

Experience, fan testimonial, identification

- On the advice of yet another fellow dating mom, I deleted Tinder and signed up for Match. Finally, I came to understand the true power of the force that was my Star Wars V-neck T-shirt. From the moment I first logged in, I discovered an all-out Star Wars-loving surprise party waiting for me. Unlike Tinder, anyone on Match can contact you. That photo of me next to the storm trooper was a beacon for young and old alike, for deployed servicemen, suburbanites, cute and nerdy athletes, and beyond, all of whom sent message after message. One 28-year-old repeatedly posted the same comment on my pic: "Hell yeah!" After a week on Match, I was contacted by a guy who made a joke that I was hardly playing "fair" by using the Star Wars pic. It was clear from his profile that he had a sense of humor, wasn't a droid... (Wood Shapiro 2017). (<https://www.vogue.com/article/wearing-a-star-wars-t-shirt-transformed-my-dating-life>)

Play, imagination and storytelling

- As the Hollywood Reporter writes on the original 1977 Star Wars, "Fox let Lucas pass up an additional \$500,000 directing fee in return for keeping licensing and merchandising rights for himself — a decision that would cost the studio billions." In the first 35 years after that film, the six Star Wars movies generated some \$20 billion in merchandise sales, more than quadruple what the movies made at the box office. The movies, often lambasted as toy commercials, are very much that — nakedly, in fact. But they happen to be outstanding toy commercials, supplying depth and mythology to things kids absolutely love to play with. There's a nobility in that. Children are going to use these toys to launch infinite hours of imagination and storytelling. People have paid billions for cast-plastic figurines and Lego sets and the rest because they are totally worth it. ... (Hutchinson 2015). (https://www.huffingtonpost.com/inverse/star-wars-toys-are-the-best-reason-to-make-the-movies_b_8112024.html)
- In real world, kids might not have a lot of scope, but in the toy world they have a lot of potential for their imagination. In a bad day at school, when kids would come home Luke would be waiting for them, they trusted Luke would wait for them. When you're Luke Skywalker, you can do anything. The Force will always be with you" (The Toys That Made Us).

Nostalgia, friendship, meaning

- I was introduced to Star Wars at the age of ten when the first film ever premiered in the cinema... I returned to the cinema 10 times to rewatch it... Happy times. And that's what Star Wars is for me: Happy childhood times. Friendship. Revisiting a world of space, space ships, blowing planets... so much fun, so many possibilities. I remember playing at home using tennis rackets as blasters and a broken sweeping brush as a saber. I was blooming broom boy! (Kylocity, February 28, 2018).

Leadership, Kathleen Kennedy's betrayal

- Kennedy really is the ruthless Emperor figure I always took her for. I imagine a significant amount of LFL employees have started to miss good ol' George. It is human nature after all to not realize the value of things until you've lost them. This whole Disney takeover reminds me of Palpatine (Kennedy, embodiment of corruption) legally, but still through foul play, getting rid of Valorum (Lucas, baseless accusations of corruption). Padmé (the fans) willingly aided him, because she thought he'd be a better leader, only to regret her decision much later on when Palpatine's true nature was revealed. This is the turning point, now that Kennedy has executed Order 66 on a set of directors. The takeover is complete (Seeker of The Whills, June 21, 2017).
- It's almost as if Kathleen Kennedy, Rian Johnson, and the guys at Disney had a vendetta against George Lucas and the true Star Wars fans. They basically pulled a Temple of Doom and ripped all of our hearts out of all our chests while we watched. The way they handled the new trilogy was the most idiotic and disrespectful thing they could have done to the fans and George Lucas. They should be bitch slapped by the force...(Mike Zeroh, March 1, 2018).

Life lessons

- Kristina and I teach Hayden to “feel from his heart”. When his mom is traveling, I ask him to feel in his heart how mom is doing. Is she happy, or sad? Does she miss him? It does not matter if he's right or wrong. Because by doing this exercise he's learning empathy – an important skill (Lakhiani 2018).
- “As a kid we wondered what it would be like if our dad was evil. As an adult via Han Solo and to a lesser extent Luke we wonder what it would be like if our children or children in our family grew up to become horrible people despite our best efforts. There's more though. In Luke's case there's also those scary wakeup calls we get as we get older when we catch glimpses of the aspect of our parents we disliked” (Ender_and_Bean, December 27, 2017).
- I think that Rey taught little girls that it's alright to accept help and be independent and strong, while still remaining kind and caring towards others. Finn taught that young boys that it doesn't matter how you're raised, you can still be a good, strong, noble man. We learn through Finn that it doesn't matter how many times you fail, as long as you keep getting back up and fighting for what you believe is right. Even against all odds (RandomGreyJ, November 30, 2016).

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