A study of ideologies relating to Captain Fantastic, and La La Land allows a deeper understanding of the films and how this can influence spectator responses. These responses can be generated through character representation and key messages and values presented in the films.

In the 2016 film La La Land, multiple ideologies are examined as they have been encoded into the film by the director. One of these includes a political approach to ideology, as it relates to context in 2016, Donald Trump was running for presidency with the main value of “Make America great again” referring to 1960’s America, which is reflected in La La Land in the use of 50’s and 60’s references. This includes costume and set design which are key elements of mise-en-scene, and are references to classic Hollywood and old musicals, generating a sense of nostalgia. This use of mise-en-scene links to the idea of the “American dream”, which a lot of Americans will align with and respond to, as Seb and Mia both try and achieve success in LA. This understanding of a political ideological approach allows me to examine the responses generated, as many supporters. of “Making America Great Again” will align with Seb’s character and his values as he wants to go back to ‘Classic Jazz’ and is stuck in the past. However, active spectators may have an oppositional view and would reject Seb’s character, as the ‘Great America’ that is idealised for some Americans, is not desirable for others, as the 50’s and 60’s were hard for Black Americans and people of LGBTQIA+ group. These spectators would not align with Seb or the nostalgic messages that are generated throughout the film and would understand that the ‘American dream’ of becoming successful is not achievable for some people.

In addition to the political approach to ideology, there is also a feminist approach to be examined, as it is explored through the character Mia. Towards the beginning of the film, she is auditioning and not getting anywhere, as she is judged quickly, based mostly on her appearance. In addition to that, she is watching Seb become successful, while she is part of the crowd. This can generate alignment with her character, as women who understand this discrimination will identify with Mia.

However, towards the end of the film, Mia gets her big break and begins to achieve success, and in the final sequence, the audience watch a montage of what her life would’ve been like, in which she is the successful one, and Seb is there to support her. This change in roles is emphasised when, in her audition, there is a spotlight on her only, and she is all the audience focus on. This use of key elements encourages alignment with Mia as she is a strong female protagonist that women can identify with. In addition to this, the idea of male gaze is explored, but reversed, meaning that rather that Mia being the subject of Seb’s gaze, he is the subject of hers, as we see the restaurant scene when Seb gets fired from her POV, again generating alignment and is a feminist approach that the film has taken. This examination of the feminine ideology allows me to understand how female spectators would respond to the character of Mia and the messages and values that she presents.

The ideology explored in Captain Fantastic is mainly focused on the political approach, as it was produced in 2016 during the presidential election but focuses on the differences in political alignment that the characters represent. Ben’s character is presented as left wing, promoting the values of anti-authority, equality and against social hierarchy. As he is presented as the main protagonist, this encourages alignment with him and his values, which is encouraged through the key elements when we’re introduced to him and his lifestyle. His home promotes left wing values, as it’s sustainable, and everyone works equally to keep the routine and chores, both men and women, old and young, and the ideological lifestyle encourages a positive spectator response, as people see it as peaceful. However, Right wing political messages are presented through the character Jack, the children’s maternal grandmother, who owns a big house with lots of land and is clearly very wealthy. This represents the right-wing political ideology that society should respect social hierarchy, should value money, and keep what they earn. These views could provoke a spectator to respond negatively towards Jack, although the individual audience members’ political opinion would influence who they align with. A right-wing spectator would view Ben’s values and parenting as dangerous and harmful for his children and would reject him as a character.

Examining the ideological approaches in Captain Fantastic allowed me to understand all the possible responses that the spectators have towards the film, as it allows the audience to understand both Ben and Jack’s viewpoints and align with who they identify with. A negotiated response to these characters could be that they both just want the best for the children, but both their ideologies are harmful, therefore rejecting both characters. Understanding the ideology allows spectators to understand the differences in the viewpoints, and this is emphasised by use id mise-en-scene, as Ben’s ideologies are reflected in his natural idyllic life in the woods, whereas Jack’s right-wing ideologies are reflected in his excessively large, monotone house.

In conclusion, the impact of ideological messages and values encoded into the film generated different spectator responses and allows the spectator to understand the different characters’ ideological viewpoint, generating alignment, and oppositionally, rejection of them.