Fall 11-2016

The Shattered Slipper Project: The Impact of the Disney Princess Franchise on Girls Ages 6-12

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ABSTRACT

The Disney Princess franchise is arguably the largest and most popular franchise in the world, earning billions of dollars globally each year. Due to the prevalence and ease of access, the Disney princesses have a tremendous impact on today's youth, namely young girls. This qualitative study investigated just how much of an impact the Disney Princess franchise has on American girls ages 6-12 through the production of a documentary film, entitled *The Shattered Slipper Project*. The research team selected girls from private schools in Lakeland, Florida and Sharpsburg, Georgia. The researcher conducted two interviews—one a roundtable-style group interview focusing on body image and a personal interview focusing on gender roles and race. With regards to body image, the girls communicated that Disney princesses have body types different than those of real women, and that, by animating the characters in such a way, the Walt Disney Company sends certain messages about what body types are ideal. The girls expressed progressive values with regards to gender roles and race, looking beyond traditional masculine and feminine roles and the prejudices that continue to characterize America's cultural landscape.

KEYWORDS: Disney Princess, Disney, feminism, gender, gender studies, gender roles, race, body image, gendered marketing, girls ages 6-12

"Men want girls with good taste. Calm, obedient, who work fast-paced. With good breeding, and a tiny waist, you'll bring honor to us all."

--lyrics from "Honor to Us All" *(Mulan, 1998)*

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Introduction

Snow White. Cinderella. Ariel. Rapunzel. Their names are internationally well-known. Their films are some of the most popular children's films of all time. Their toys are the fastest-selling on the market. From Disney's first full-length animated feature *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* in 1937 to the 2013 international blockbuster *Frozen* (based on Hans Christian Andersen's tale "The Snow Queen"), the Disney Princess franchise has transformed today's image of girlhood, beauty, and what it truly means to be a princess. Little girls all over the world play with Disney Princess merchandise, watch Disney Princess films, and dress up in Disney Princess costumes. What has made the Disney Princess franchise so popular?

Although The Walt Disney Company has been around since 1923, the Disney Princess franchise did not actually exist until the early 2000s, when then-chairman of the Disney Consumer Products division Andy Mooney visited a *Disney on Ice* show and saw little girls decked out in what he described as "generic princess products" (Ng). He, along with his team, promptly began work on establishing a franchise specifically for Disney Princesses, which included media and an extensive merchandise line (Smith). Originally, the franchise included Snow White, Cinderella, Aurora, Ariel, Belle, Jasmine, Pocahontas, Mulan, and Tinker Bell; however, Tinker Bell was removed shortly after the conception of the franchise (Orenstein). In 2005, Disney revealed the Disney Fairies franchise, which was headed up by Tinkerbell, making her removal from the Princess franchise much more profitable (Hill). Tiana, from *The Princess and the Frog*, was added

in 2010, becoming the first new addition to the lineup since its conception (Greenberg). Since then, princesses Rapunzel and Merida were added in 2011 and 2013, respectively (Fox News; Banks). The franchise quickly rose to become the fastest-selling girl's toy franchise in the world, topping Mattel's ever-popular Barbie line (Orenstein).

However, not everyone is so impressed. Peggy Orenstein, in a 2006 *New York Times* article entitled "What's Wrong With Cinderella?," examines just how much of an impact princesses have on young girls. A mother herself, Orenstein expresses her frustration with the princess-obsessed society that pushes princesses, glitter, and all things pink onto young girls. Largely because of the impact of the Disney Princess franchise, little girls seem to want nothing but to be princesses. She notes that "some psychologists say that until permanency sets in, kids embrace whatever stereotypes our culture presents," meaning that companies like Disney are almost responsible, in a way, for girls' obsessions with princesses (Orenstein). Although Orenstein struggles to embrace the characters that her young daughter so loves, she admits that "in the end, it's not the Princesses that really bother me anyway. They're just a trigger for the bigger question of how, over the years, I can help my daughter with the contradictions she will inevitably face as a girl, the dissonance that is as endemic as ever to growing up female" (Orenstein). Are little girls' fascinations with Disney Princesses as harmful as Orenstein makes them out to be?

In 2010, Sharon Hayes and Stacey Tantleff-Dunn conducted a study to measure the effect that princesses had on young girls' (ages 3-6) body image, particularly their weight. The study concluded that at least one-third of the girls exhibited body-image related issues. However, the study had several limitations to which Hayes and Tantleff-

Dunn admitted. First, they stated that the video clips shown to the girls were too short, clocking in at 14 minutes. The researchers stated that in a future study, "rather than relying on longer exposure periods with young children who have shorter attention spans, [future studies] should further explore the impact of children's everyday exposure to appearance-related media" (Hayes and Tantleff-Dunn 423). Second, the researchers allowed the girls to move on to the toy section of the study before post-test questions. In a future study, the researchers advise that the girls in the control group should have their post-test evaluations prior to the toy section so as to "isolate exposure effects" based on the toys (Hayes and Tantleff-Dunn 423). Third, the researchers admitted that there needed to have been a more diverse group of girls. The girls in this study were mostly middle-class and Caucasian. In the future, there would need to be more racial and economic diversity. But what does this say about the Disney Princess franchise as a whole?

The Shattered Slipper Project seeks to expand and fill in the gaps left by the Hayes and Tantleff-Dunn study by producing a documentary film centered on and around the themes of their investigation. The study will investigate the current academic research on what gender roles, racial implications, and body-image statements are present in the Disney Princess franchise, as well as factors of gendered marketing within the franchise product lines. The documentary proper will seek out how the Disney Princess franchise as a whole affects American girls ages 6-12. Specific research questions include:

- How does the Disney Princess franchise affect girls' attitudes on gender roles, specifically women's roles?

- How does the overall whiteness of the Disney Princess franchise affect girls of color?
- How does the Disney Princess franchise affect girls' attitudes on body image and the ideal woman?
- How does the marketing of the Disney Princess franchise affect girls' ideas of what are "girl toys" and "boy toys"?

Since it is no surprise that the Disney Princess franchise has an enormous impact on young girls, both domestically and globally, the topic is one of eager interest to the intellectual community. To begin to understand the topics at hand, a thorough review of literature has been conducted detailing how the Disney Princess franchise addresses issues of gender, race, and body image in their films through a Western lens.

Review of Literature

This literature review will break down what scholars have to say about: (1) gender roles in the Disney Princess franchise; (2) racial representation in the Disney Princess franchise; (3) body image in relation to the Disney Princess franchise; (4) gendered marketing in relation to the Disney Princess franchise and the Walt Disney Company as a whole.

Gender Roles and the Disney Princess

A discussion of gender roles in the Disney Princess franchise can best be accomplished by examining the Princess films in three eras: Early, Modern, and Postmodern. A few key terms and concepts to note are *agency* and *traditional gender roles*. According to Merriam-Webster, agency is "the capacity, condition, or state of acting or of exerting power" (Merriam-Webster, Inc.). Traditional gender roles, in an

American sense, can be defined as the mentality that men should be the providers for the family and women should perform domestic and childcare-related tasks.

Early Disney Princesses (1937-1959)

The Early Princess era consists of Snow White (1937), Cinderella (1950), and Aurora (1959) (Cottrell et al.; Geronimi, Jackson, and Luske; Geronimi). In general, these princesses can be described as passive and reactive, allowing men to rescue them from their dire situations rather than saving themselves. In a 2011 content analysis done by Elizabeth England, Lara Descartes, and Melissa Collier-Meek, it was reported that princesses and princes of this era exhibited more traditional gender roles (England, Descartes, and Collier-Meek). Jill Henke, Diane Umble, and Nancy Smith, in a 1996 study on feminist readings of Disney Princesses, concluded that princesses in the Early era are powerless, passive princesses who lack agency and are merely reactive to the world around them. They exhibit love-at-first-sight romances, and their relationships with other women are shaky at best. Other women in these films are either "bumbling" fairies with limited power or very powerful, but wicked, women (Henke, Umble, and Smith 243). In a 2015 article, Julianna Garabedian labels this era the "Pre-Transition" era, noting that its princesses adhered to the stereotypes of women of the era—domestic homemakers who relied on the men in their lives for basically everything (Garabedian).

In an article on Snow White, Brenda Ayres (2003) states that the purpose of Disney's Snow White film is "to frame females into a patriarchally acceptable portrait of a womanly ideal" (Ayres 40). The patriarchy exists primarily in the character of the Magic Mirror, which "decides [the Evil Queen] is no longer young and desirable enough compared with [Snow White]" (Ayres 41). The Evil Queen is viewed as such because she

has ambitions, in contrast to Snow White, who has no ambition beyond what marriage to a man can give her. Ayres comments that "finding *him* is not an option; she is to *be* found, passive voice" (Ayres 40). Ayres further argues that the Queen and Snow White can be seen as two halves of a whole—active and passive, respectively. With the notion that domesticity equals goodness, the Queen is evil because she "worries about her appearance instead of being a self-abnegating woman" (Ayres 42). She rejects traditional gender roles by empowering herself, whereas Snow White literally lives to serve others. Once Snow White does something for herself (eats the apple), she physically dies. She is saved by her prince, who restores her to a function: becoming a wife and mother; Snow White is only whole again when she is united with a man.

Jacqueline Layng, in a 2001 article, argues that beauty drives everything for Snow White; it is beauty that causes initial conflict with the Evil Queen and it is beauty that saves her in the end. She is dependent on the men around her (huntsman, dwarfs, prince), and thus has little to no agency. She is, in short, a passive princess. Even when Snow White is in charge of the dwarfs, she still plays the role of the maid, and is, therefore, submissive to them. She is child-like and sexually repressed (much like the women of the 1930s), which is a stark contrast to the Evil Queen, who represents sexuality and power. However, Layng notes that "in the end dependency is profitable…while the independent queen's efforts result in alienation as well as death…True beauty does not act…The role for the proper woman is to be beautiful, to be dependent, and to be powerless. The moral to this story is apparent-dependence reaps benefits, independence results in death" (Layng 204).

Lori Baker-Sperry conducted a study in 2007 on first grade children in relation to gender roles in the novelization of *Cinderella*. Baker-Sperry read the story in several reading groups and allowed the children to interact with the text. The children adhered to the stereotypical views of the characters, indicating that Cinderella was beautiful and kind, the Stepmother was mean and ugly, and the Prince was handsome (although the boys in the group did not pay much attention to that character). Most of the knowledge of the characters' appearances came either from previous knowledge of the film or from the illustrations. Baker-Sperry explained that "the children did not question the basic gendered assumptions embodied in many images and characterizations in the text, nor did they explore alternatives" (Baker-Sperry 721). The girls in the group actively participated in the discussions, and Baker-Sperry noted that "by retelling and defending the tale as it was read, they reinforced their positions as girls and as knowledgeable of the feminine world" (Baker-Sperry 722). The girls understood much about the tale and were able to relate to it, especially on topics of beauty and marriage. They adhered to the gender norms presented within the context of the tale, although some of the girls did begin to question some aspects of the story.

In 2009, Karen Wohlwend observed a kindergarten class once a week for 24 weeks, studying how princesses affected gendered play in kindergarten girls. She mainly observed three girls (two of Chinese background and one of Filipino background) who regularly played with Disney Princess dolls in class. She noted that approximately half of all play done by these girls involved playing out stories through the dolls. The teacher encouraged the children to create little plays for the class and one of the girls, Zoe, created her version of the *Sleeping Beauty* tale. Wohlwend explained that through many

story board revisions and rehearsals, Zoe (who directed and acted as Aurora) "struggle[d] with the passivity of the princess in the Disney text" (Wohlwend 70). Zoe eventually inserted her character into the role of the dragon-fighter, a role usually reserved for the prince of the story.

Modern Disney Princesses (1989-1998)

The Modern Princess era consists of Ariel (1989), Belle (1991), Jasmine (1992), Pocahontas (1995), and Mulan (1998) (Clements and Musker, *The Little Mermaid*; Trousdale and Wise; Clements and Musker, *Aladdin*; Gabriel and Goldberg; Bancroft and Cook) . In general, these princesses break the traditional gender roles established by the earlier princesses. Modern era Princesses are more independent and exploration-driven; however, many do still rely on men to save them. England, Descartes, and Collier-Meek (2011) reported that these princesses and their respective princes blurred the lines between masculine and feminine (England, Descartes, and Collier-Meek). Julianna Garabedian (2015) labels this era the “Transition” era, noting that this era “represents the aftereffects of the second wave of feminism.” Princesses are more curious and independent; however, they still rely on their respective princes to save them in some form or fashion (Garabedian).

Jill Henke, Diane Umble, and Nancy Smith (1996) concluded that princesses in the Modern era exhibited more independent traits. Ariel actively chases her desire to explore the human world. However, indulging in that desire comes at the price of her voice, both literally and metaphorically. By being independent and having a passion for books, Belle is “marginalized by the community for her uniqueness” (Henke, Umble, and Smith 237). She actively refuses a marriage proposal by the town’s most eligible

bachelor. Once she trades her freedom for her father's life, it seems that her agency has also been traded. However, Belle "sets the terms for the bargains she makes" (Henke, Umble, and Smith 239). She continuously is mistress over her own destiny, but still ends up the 'perfect woman' once she marries the Prince. Pocahontas is perhaps the most liberated of the group. She advocates for herself and those she loves, she actively seeks out her destiny, and she even refuses the offer of traveling with her lover, John Smith, to take a position of leadership within her tribe. Pocahontas also is mentored by both Grandmother Willow and "the spirit of the wind that symbolizes her mother" (Henke, Umble, and Smith 240). Their relationships with men are still emphasized, with Pocahontas being the only one to not keep her lover. Their relationships with other women also get progressively stronger. In the latter two films, there are no female villains, and in Pocahontas' case, she is surrounded by "a supportive community of female mentors and friends" (Henke, Umble, and Smith 245).

In a 2011 conference presentation, Robert Baron discusses the patriarchal dominance in *The Little Mermaid*. Baron argues that while she is the main character, Ariel is but a pawn in the larger conflict between King Triton and Ursula, the sea witch. She never takes proactive steps toward her goals and her "one independent action, the human collection in her secret grotto, is destroyed as part of the film's narrative" (Baron 16). She also has her voice taken away, making her loss of agency quite literal. In the final battle sequence, there is a major struggle between the masculine and feminine powers at work. Ursula gains Triton's trident, a symbol of masculine power, once Ariel cannot fulfill her part of the bargain struck between her and the sea witch. However, since Ursula is female, she cannot hold on to her stolen masculinity. Prince Eric crashes a

splintered ship's bow into her gut, effectively killing her and restoring the masculine power to its rightful place. The only change that comes about for Ariel is that she "leaves one strong male to be with another" (Baron 21). Masculinity still remains the dominant force in the film.

Sharon Downey, in a 1996 article, argues the feminine empowerment of Belle in *Beauty and the Beast*. Downey states that the heart of *Beauty and the Beast* is "a moral and relational entanglement that progressively escalates and increasingly invites Belle's active intervention" even though story is largely told through the Beast's perspective (Downey 191). Downey chronologically identifies a codependence of male and female in *Beauty and the Beast*. In the early portion of the film, resistance plays a key role in balancing the power between the male and the female. Even though the story appears to be male-centric, women have a lot of power. The Enchantress transforms the prince into a hideous beast with a spell that only a woman can break. Although men try to mute Belle by symbolically and literally taking her freedom, Belle is able to overcome that through the symbolic lyrics in the musical numbers. Male power is seen as an illusion; Belle is the one with the true power because she has the power to alleviate the struggles of the men around her (Gaston and the Beast).

In the middle portion of the film, the codependence between Belle and the Beast is made clear. The Beast initially holds all of the power in the relationship until he rescues Belle from a pack of wolves (which was his fault in the first place). Belle teaches him how to be a human again and he gives her a library in return, which brings back the voice she lost earlier in the film. He later parallels her earlier sacrifice by allowing her to return to her ill father, leaving him with no one to break the spell and accepting that he

will remain a beast forever. Belle is allowed to walk freely in her prison, and the enchanted objects that she meets assist her in helping the Beast because they can relate to Belle. Overall, this section reveals that the Beast is able to slowly take back his humanity by embracing *feminine* qualities and values.

In the final portion of the film, Gaston invades the castle in an attempt to truly make Belle his own by killing the Beast. The Beast, having put aside his aggressive masculinity, only attacks Gaston once he sees that Belle has returned. Belle is a spectator of this attack because it is really "a struggle over rival masculine ways of being," which the Beast and Gaston must sort out for themselves (Downey 205). Downey concludes by stating that both the Beast and Belle are able to have power because they found the power in each other—the Beast let go of his toxic masculinity and Belle realizes that her power was within her all along. Power must be relational, and Downey affirms that *Beauty and the Beast* "calls into question the nature of patriarchal power itself" (Downey 207).

Sean Griffin (1998) looks at gender interpretations in *Aladdin* through the lens of identity. Griffin notes that, in conjunction with the Male Gaze theory, more female characters in Disney films have been drawn to be made more appealing than male Disney characters. This changed in the creation of the character Aladdin, when the writers wanted to create a physically appealing male character. The animators used Tom Cruise as a reference for the character. There are also hints of silent film star Rudolph Valentino in Aladdin's "prince Ali" persona. Jasmine was made to be overtly sexual, with swinging hips, sultry eyes, and an inherent lack of "modest" dress. The Genie's identity can be seen as fluid, Griffin argues, because he morphs through genders and even species, creating many personas for the sake of comic effect.

Jacqueline Layng (2001) argues that Jasmine appears to have some agency. She talks about wanting to change her kingdom's marriage laws and desires to have a different life than that of a princess. There is a distinct contrast between her words and actions. She runs away from home, but has to go back to try to save Aladdin from beheading and eventually "stays because she is incapable of living in the real world" (Layng 205). Layng comments that "Disney presents her as a free-spirited outspoken princess, but her actions display a helpless child" (Layng 205). Even her body image and actions are in direct contrast: she maintains innocent worldviews and actions, but dresses extremely sensually. In the end, "Jasmine appears to be a feminist-speaking, freedom-seeking progressive, but her actions betray her true nature of a traditional woman in need of being constantly protected" (Layng 206).

In a 2001 article, Lauren Dundes refutes the claim that Pocahontas is a revolutionary princess because she does not end the film with a steady romantic partner (Dundes). According to Dundes, Pocahontas gives up her romantic selfishness in order to fulfill her *maternal* duty to her people as a leader and councilor. After detailing how that claim is presented in the film, Dundes states that this thinking is in line with current societal messages sent to young women, encouraging them to grow up and juggle many responsibilities—those of a wife, mother, and career woman—rather than pursuing any "selfish" relationships that they may desire for pleasure. Dundes concludes with a brief comparison of Pocahontas and Ariel of *The Little Mermaid*, asserting that Ariel is, perhaps, more liberated than Pocahontas because her choice of matrimony is one that she makes herself as a desire to explore other worlds and have a relationship that derives from pleasure.

Notably, there has been no mention of the 1998 princess Mulan. Although she is Disney's first warrior princess and the first princess to dress as a man, there have not been many studies done on her character individually.

Postmodern Disney Princesses (2009-2013)

The Postmodern Princess era consists of Tiana (2009), Rapunzel (2010), and Merida (2012) (Clements and Musker; Greno and Howard; Andrews, Chapman, and Purcell). In general, these princesses would be considered the most liberated, breaking free of most of the traditional gender roles of earlier princesses. Postmodern Princesses are fiercely independent and ambitious. According to England, Descartes, and Collier-Meek (2011), these princesses and their respective princes blur the lines between masculine and feminine. Prince Naveen (of *The Princess and the Frog*) is mentioned as exhibiting the most feminine traits of all men coded (England, Descartes, and Collier-Meek). Julianna Garabedian (2015) labels this era the "Progression" era, the era in which Disney is currently operating. The princesses act on their own, without direct intervention from male characters. Garabedian notes that Disney is pushing further into the Progression era, allowing princesses to "shatter the glass ceiling and push past traditional gender roles" (Garabedian 25).

In a 2013 article, Neal Lester discusses the ways that Rapunzel's hair in *Tangled* delineates the feminist values underlined in the film. According to Lester, Rapunzel's blonde hair represents captivity and her tie to Mother Gothel, her captor. Her hair also objectifies her and defines her as a commodity rather than an independent entity. Furthermore, Lester asserts that, even when her ties to captivity are literally cut, she is saved by the power of a man rather than herself. That man, who becomes her husband,

leads her back to the life she was meant to have—life as a princess—and trades her independence and curiosity for a crown and a wedding ring (Lester, Sudia, and Sudia).

Jena Stephens (2014) focuses on the characterizations of three of the latest Disney Princesses: Tiana (*The Princess and the Frog*), Rapunzel (*Tangled*), and Merida (*Brave*) in relation to earlier Disney Princesses. She argues that Tiana is a strong character because her goals do not revolve around marriage or a quest for "true love" and she saves herself in the end. Stephens finds Rapunzel to be a stronger character than her predecessors because of her rebellious spirit and ingenuity. Finally, Merida is considered by the author to be the strongest of the Disney Princesses because of her complete lack of a romantic subplot and defiance to what is expected of her (Stephens).

Unofficial and Upcoming Disney Princesses (2013-2016)

Although they almost dominate the Disney consumer market, Queen Elsa and Princess Anna of *Frozen* (2013) are not official Disney Princesses as of 2016 (Buck and Lee). However, they are a currently a trending topic in Disney academia because of the unconventional spin placed on the breaking of the spell in the end of the film, as well as Queen Elsa not having a romantic subplot.

Disney has also released two new princesses in 2016: Elena, a princess of ambiguous Latina descent, and Moana, a Pacific Islander princess/heroine (*Elena of Avalor*; Clements et al.). Elena breaks from the Disney tradition by appearing primarily in a television show on the Disney Channel, entitled *Elena of Avalor*. In the show, Elena learns how to become a proper ruler with the help of her friends and some mystical creatures taken from several Latin mythologies (Milligan). *Moana* centers around the titular young woman who, with the help of a demi-god (played by Dwayne Johnson),

goes on an adventure across the Pacific Islands ("Meet the Voice of Disney's New Princess, Moana").

Obviously, any opinions on gender roles are subject to debate, depending on the lens used. Most of the articles presented here use a feminist lens through which to look at the princesses. However, even within the feminist academic community, there will be several different views on what makes a princess liberated and what makes her oppressed, as seen in the *Tangled* section.

Race and the Disney Princess

The depiction of race is a trending topic amongst Disney scholars. Most of the source material for the Disney Princesses is of European origins; therefore, seven of the eleven official Disney Princesses are white by story alone. Four princesses are women of color: Jasmine, Pocahontas, Mulan, and Tiana. Of these four, two (Pocahontas and Mulan) are based on historical figures. Jasmine is an interpretation of one of the princesses from the book *One Thousand and One Nights*. Tiana's portrayal is different from the others, as her story is derived from the fairytale "The Frog Prince" by the Brothers Grimm. Notably, it was the choice of the producers, not the source materials, to make her Disney's first African-American Disney Princess.

An article by Dorothy Hurley (2005) examines the way that color delineates good versus evil in six Disney films: *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, *Cinderella*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *The Little Mermaid*, *Beauty and the Beast,* and *Aladdin*. She noted that white and brightness are used consistently to illustrate purity and good characters, while black and darkness illustrate evil and depraved characters. Hurley found that in Snow White's tale, the Evil Queen surrounds herself in blackness, from her fashion to her house to her pet

crow. All good things in *Cinderella* are white, whereas the malevolent cat, aptly named Lucifer, is black. Hurley notes that "the brown mice, in their behavior and demeanor, are reminiscent of the 'good plantation slaves' featured in some of Hollywood's most racist films" of that time (Hurley 225). In *Sleeping Beauty*, the color binary takes on a religious element—"the prince is armed by the good fairies with 'weapons of righteousness'- virtue and truth- to triumph over evil, 'all the powers of hell' claimed by Maleficent" (Hurley 225). Not only does blackness symbolize danger in *Beauty and the Beast*, but "in the end, white triumphs over black, implying that good triumphs over evil: the big brown Beast becomes a blue-eyed, white, tawny-haired prince and all the black statues turn white" (Hurley 226). In *The Little Mermaid*, there is an overabundance of whiteness, with only two characters that could possibly be "black" in any way—Sebastian, the Caribbean crab, and Ursula, the sea witch. Hurley comments that "while she is not obviously black, like Sebastian, the nuances of her speech and movement are more stereotypically Black" (Hurley 226). Finally, in *Aladdin*, which is the only non-European film listed in the study, the darker a character's skin is, the more evil that character is. Even though the story is not about white people, per se, "one of the clearest indicators of the privileging of Western or White culture in this film is the noticeable absence of positive representations of Eastern or Arabian cultural currency" (Hurley 227). The entire film stereotypes Arabian culture in several different ways, from harem girls to brutal street vendors.

In a 2003 study of 26 full-length Disney animated films, Mia Towbin and her research group found that whiteness is the ideal in the Disney world. According to their coding of the films, non-dominant cultures are seen in a negative light, classes are exaggerated and rife with stereotypes, Western, Christian values are seen as the standard,

those who "share similar values should stay/be together," and there can be harmony between those whose values are different (Towbin et al. 31-32).

Sean Griffin (1998) looks at racial interpretations in *Aladdin* through the lens of identity. Griffin states that *Aladdin* is "an Arabia in quotes—a parody of Hollywood's typical treatment of the 'exotic' Orient" (Griffin 211). The film had to be "toned down" before final viewing to be more ethnically appropriate, with lyric changes and the lightening of the main cast's skin. However, there are still many stereotypical "Arabian" jokes in the film: sword swallowers, too-harsh street vendors, and sensual harem girls.

Neal Lester is one of the premier scholars when it comes to racial representation in Disney films. In a 2010 article, he discusses the importance of Tiana being the first African-American Disney Princess. Tiana is one of the first black characters that Disney put in a positive light; earlier films, such as *Dumbo,* presented black characters in what could only be described today as a horribly racist light (one of the crows is actually named Jim Crow, after the segregation laws of the late 19th and early 20th centuries). Tiana is also the first Disney Princess to aspire to something other than "happily ever after" following her marriage. Lester likens Tiana to Michelle Obama because both are women who are wedded to royalty (Tiana's Prince Naveen and Michelle's President Barack Obama). They also both must keep their hair in a straightened style as to make them more appealing to the general public, which, in a manner of speaking, robs them of a part of their identities. Even though Tiana has the body type of a typical Disney Princess, Lester notes that she has "an extra dose of 'attitude' and confidence" that separates her from some of her princess peers (Lester 299). Many critics argue that Tiana should have married a black prince, not the racially ambiguous, somewhat European

Prince Naveen, who suspiciously looks just a little too white. This creates a problem for the black male youth—they have no one to look up to in the Disney realm. Another area of contention is the fact that the American South in which Tiana lives is far from the reality that was 1920s New Orleans. Tiana has relatively more freedom than the average black woman of that era and region. Critics of the film also recognize that it is easy to lose Tiana's blackness as she spends a majority of the film as a frog. Even though many criticize that Tiana may not be 'black' enough, she is still a milestone in the Disney Princess franchise, showing that Disney has come a long way since the Jim Crow character in the 1941 film *Dumbo* (Armstrong et al.).

In a 2013 article, Lester discusses the ways that Rapunzel's hair in *Tangled* is used to symbolize the white-skinned, blonde-haired ideal in American society. He assesses the racial implications that Rapunzel's hair puts forth, arguing that many young black girls see themselves as inferior aesthetically because they do not possess "the much-coveted blonde and straight hair of little white girls" (Lester, Sudia, and Sudia 84). It can also be said that Rapunzel's hair "underscores and perpetuates the good/bad, black/white stereotypes" symbolized in fairytales and children's literature (Lester, Sudia, and Sudia 85). Mother Gothel, who is seen as evil, has black, curly hair, further emphasizing the value of blonde, straight hair.

Racial representation in Disney films has unfortunate implications for young girls of color. Since so many of the princesses possess white skin, blonde hair, or both, girls of color do not have many role models to look up to within the franchise. The princesses of color do not get as much product placement or representation within the Disney Parks.

They are almost always placed near the back of the Disney Princess lineups on merchandise (see fig. 1).

Fig. 1—Official Disney Princess Line-up

Source: (White; "Disney Princess | Official Site | Dream Big Princess")

Body Image and the Disney Princess

It is no secret that Disney Princesses are supposed to be beautiful; however, the stories reinforce the feminine beauty ideal concept, as well as beauty defined by the aesthetics of the Disney Princesses. This, in turn, can possibly have disastrous consequences for young viewers, who look up to such characters as role models.

In 2010, Sharon Hayes and Stacey Tantleff-Dunn conducted a study on the effect that princesses have on young girls' (ages 3-6) body image, particularly their weight. They had the girls view appearance-related clips from princess movies (as well as a control group who viewed clips unrelated to appearance). The girls then got to play with various types of toys in a playroom setting, some "princess-y" and some not, while an assistant recorded the types of toys with which they played. Finally, the girls were given

a selection of images from which they had to pick the ones that looked most like themselves and the ones that looked like “real” princesses. The study concluded that at least one-third of the girls exhibited body-image related issues, and the issues were evenly significant between the experimental and control groups. Hayes and Tantleff-Dunn also noted that it was children in the 5-6 year-old age range that exhibited more knowledge of “ideal” body types, while the 3-4 year-olds had less knowledge (Hayes and Tantleff-Dunn).

Lori Baker-Sperry and Liz Grauerholz (2003) focus on how the female beauty ideal—“the socially constructed notion that physical attractiveness is one of women's most important assets, and something that all women should strive to achieve and maintain"—has spread from Grimm’s fairy tales into modern society (Baker-Sperry and Grauerholz 711). They first note that, although this ideal is seen as oppressive or restrictive, many women still engage in daily beauty routines and many feel empowered by those routines. Baker-Sperry and Grauerholz then coded 168 Grimm fairy tales looking for mentions of beauty, handsomeness, and physical appearance. They also looked to see if beauty was equated to goodness, power, and/or wealth. They finally sought out how many of these tales have been reproduced into the twentieth century and if those had the same ideals about beauty. The authors found that 94 percent of the fairy tales coded made mention of beauty or handsomeness. Female beauty was mentioned five times as much as male handsomeness. Most mentions of female beauty are made in extremes or hyperboles. They noted that "[o]f the tales that contain younger women, 57 percent describe them as 'pretty,' 'beautiful,' or 'the fairest'" (Baker-Sperry and Grauerholz 718). In the tales, 31 percent equated beauty with goodness, and 17 percent equated

ugliness with evil. Beauty is both rewarded and seen as a source of danger—89 percent of women come into danger in the tales and 40 percent of that danger is the "direct result of the character's physical appearance" (Baker-Sperry and Grauerholz 719).

Forty-three out of the 168 tales in Baker-Sperry and Grauerholz's study were reproduced, the top five tales being those of Cinderella, Snow White, Briar Rose (Sleeping Beauty), Little Red Riding Hood, and Hansel & Gretel. The reproduced tales elevate the importance of female beauty, and from 1981-2000, the importance of male handsomeness was also elevated. Most of the reproductions were made during the second half of the twentieth century. The authors conclude by mentioning that, as females became more liberated, the fairy tales may have been reproduced to keep a hold on the female beauty ideal. This is due to the fact that any external means of control placed on women were slowly slipping away, allowing the need for internal control to be maintained. Because of the pervasiveness and popularity of these stories—and the subsequent Disney films—young girls are being fed consistent messages of beauty being paramount. They also are having messages of certain body types being emphasized as beautiful. This can be destructive for developing girls' views and images of their own bodies, which are not proportioned the way that they see on screen.

Doris Bazzini (2010) studied the effect of the beauty-goodness stereotype on Disney animated films. She conducted two experiments to measure the effect. In the first, four people rated 21 Disney animated films that had a majority of human characters present. The raters were instructed to evaluate the characters on several categories, including physical attractiveness, moral standing (good or evil), and life outcome at the end of the film. This study concluded that Disney emphasized the beauty-goodness

stereotype, in that the more physically attractive people were morally superior and led more fulfilling lives. In the second study, Bazzini reproduced a 1999 study in which fictional graduate assistant applicants were rated after the participants watched a film either where the beauty-goodness stereotype was present or where it was absent. In this study, Bazzini had 6-12 year-old children watch either *Cinderella* or *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*. The children were then presented with photographs of attractive and unattractive children and were asked which of those children pictured would make better friends. This study concluded that, while the film did not directly influence the children's choices, physical attractiveness was rated as equal to success and goodness overall.

When discussing body image, it is important to note that not all young girls who engage in the Disney Princess franchise are negatively affected in this area. It is safe to say that many households have educated their children in body positivity, a movement that celebrates bodies of all shapes, sizes, and colors ("The Body Positive").

Gendered Marketing and the Disney Princess

As stated earlier, the Disney Princess franchise itself was created in the early 2000s by Andy Mooney in order to sell more specialty products to little girls who were fans of the Disney Princess films. Since its launch, a large portion of Disney marketing as a whole goes to the Princess line, which is almost exclusively marketed to young girls.

Carol Auster and Claire Mansbach analyzed gendered marketing on the Disney Store website in 2012. They coded the toy portion of the site according to three categories: color palette, primary color, and type of toy (doll, instrument, etc.). They also counted how many of the toys appeared on both the "boy" and "girl" sections. After coding, Auster and Mansbach concluded that bold colors signified a "boy" toy, while

pastel-colored toys signified a “girl” toy. They also noted that “with regard to specific colors, while over 85 % of toys with red, black, gray, and brown as the most predominant color were for ‘boys only’, over 85 % of toys with pink and nearly two-thirds of toys with purple as the most predominant color were for ‘girls only’” (Auster and Mansbach 384). Blue was noted to be a gender-neutral color. Finally, they revealed that gender-neutral toys appeared more in the girl section, suggesting that girls are more likely to cross gender boundaries than boys. However, it should be noted that much of the girls’ toys fall under the Disney Princess category. It is also important to note that the Disney Store is beginning to make the change to a more gender-neutral website layout, with the 2015 Halloween costume section re-named “I Am Awesome” that makes all children’s costumes “Costumes for Kids” (“Costumes for Kids | Disney Store”).

The Disney Princess website is another story. In 2011, Meghan Sweeney thoroughly examined the Disney Princess website from a marketing and user perspective. Sweeney explained that Disney wanted to reclaim the connotation of princesses, turning them from “bratty” youths into young ladies of good character. She noted that the “products [Disney] came up with have very little to do with real princesses and more to do with ideal formulations of girlhood" (Sweeney 69). By turning princesses into commodities, Disney has claimed to be the top authority on what it means to be a princess—their word is gospel. Sweeney admitted that, even though Disney presents the Princesses as being unique personalities, all of the Princesses are essentially the same when it comes to their character, since they are to embody female ideals.

Sweeney then reviewed the usability of the website. She noted that, aesthetically, the website is the pinnacle of stereotypical girliness—lots of pink and glitter. She then

explained that Disney has created no need for in-website advertising because the entire *website* is an advertisement. When she reviews some of the games, Sweeney pointed out that the games make the user (typically a young girl) feel special and important, with each of the princess voiceovers emphasizing friendship with the user and thanking her for all of her 'help' in the tasks appointed to her. This, Sweeney said, makes the user equate being helpful with being a good person/being important. Overall, Sweeney argued that the compliments are meaningless because the user literally cannot do wrong by the Princess. Sweeney finished with the observation that, at the end of the game, the user is encouraged to visit the product section of the website, emphasizing that she "take on the most important role of all: loyal consumer" (Sweeney 84).

Even if the Disney Store is trying to neutralize gendered marketing within their products, Sweeney's study makes it obvious that the Disney Princess franchise still attempts to make princesses appealing to mainly girls.

It is evident that academia has much to say on the Disney Princess franchise and its impact on society as a whole. However, academics are not Disney's target audience; children are. Based on a thorough examination of the aforementioned studies, the information will be utilized in order to create a documentary to study how the Disney Princess franchise affects girls ages 6-12 in the categories represented.

Methodology

Pre-Production

The production team began by assembling the proper documents needed to allow the children to be in the film. These included forms of both consent and assent, parent letters, and casting flyers. Locations were procured both at the Steelman Library at

Southeastern University in Lakeland, Florida, and Bartow First Assembly Church in Bartow, Florida. The casting flyers instructed the parents when and where to bring their children. The team then set out to assemble a litany of questions to ask the girls during the interview process. These questions were then broken down into categories of body image, gender roles, and race. The body image questions were organized to be asked in a round-table style group format to encourage the girls to speak freely and interact communally. The race and gender roles questions were left to be conducted in a personal interview style.

Next, the production team attempted to contact local private schools and churches via email and telephone. This method of recruitment was, for lack of better words, a failure. There was not an abundance of negative responses—there simply were not any responses from any of the contacts.

Filming Locations

On the first weekend of shooting, the team arrived at Bartow First Assembly Church with hope that there would be a strong turn-out from the afterschool program. This location turned out to be a failure as well. For reasons unknown, parents did not wish for their children to participate in the interviews. The same thing occurred on the second weekend at this location. The Steelman Library location was also deemed a failure as well, for lack of participants.

The first weekend at Southeastern University was far more successful, but not in the conventional way. On the morning that the team was to pick up the film equipment, Southeastern University was hosting the FACCS (Florida Association of Christian Colleges and Schools) Junior Fine Arts convention (“Junior Fine Arts Info

(Competitions)"). The team took advantage of the opportunity and proceeded to hand out flyers all over the campus, requesting that the children participate in the interviews later that day. With only a few hours to prepare, the team rushed to acquire all of the essential supplies—goody bags, coloring books, princess paraphernalia, and the like—before returning to the studio on campus. In all, 14 girls from various racial backgrounds were interviewed in an "on-the-fly" process. Unfortunately, the quality of the filming was compromised, and the footage was not included in the documentary. However, the content of the interviews still appear in this investigation.

After two weekends, the team was still in need of at least 16 more girls to round out the study. A skeleton crew of two travelled to Sharpsburg, Georgia to recruit children from Trinity Christian School. The crew went from classroom to classroom, handing out recruitment packets including a letter to the parents and consent forms. The next day, a group of 35 girls arrived after school had ended to participate. Out of those 35, 27 completed the personal interviews. This location was the most successful, in terms of turn-out.

Production

The filming process for each location was broken into four portions. First, each child handed in their parental consent forms and children over 8 years of age completed an additional assent form. Next, the children were gathered for the body image workshop. At the Georgia location, the children were broken into two groups because of participation numbers. The two groups were 1^{st}-3^{rd} graders and 4^{th}-5^{th} graders. After answering the body image questions, the children were taken into a separate holding area

to color a picture for one of the questions. While that portion was being conducted, girls were taken individually to be filmed for the personal interview portion.

Originally, the team wished to conduct a gendered marketing portion, consisting of allowing the children to play with a variety of traditionally masculine and feminine toys uninhibited, while a camera operator followed them around. However, the team later determined that the children were too old to fully interact with that exercise. Budgetary limitations were also another reason for this portion to be cancelled.

Analysis of Questions

The interview questions were carefully crafted and arranged in order to receive the best responses from the participants. The body image workshop consisted of four questions, each crafted to foster group discussion. They were as follows:

- Question 1: Do Disney Princesses look like real people?
- Question 2: Why do you think Disney makes the princesses look the way they do?
- Question 3: What do you think about Moana (an upcoming princess)?
- Question 4: What kind of princess do you want to see made in the future?

The questions functioned to make the children think about the body image statements that Disney makes through the design of each of the princesses (Question 2), as well as thinking about their own views on body image, positive or negative (Question 1). The question about Moana (Question 3) also served to allow the girls to gauge the "progress" that Disney has made in princess design since Snow White in 1937. Finally, Question 4 asks the girls to consider the future of the franchise and how it can adapt to the will of the primary audience—girls their age. It is important to note that Question 4 was not analyzed because each answer was specific to what the individual child wished to

see, and there were no centralized answers. However, some of these answers can be seen in the documentary film.

The personal interview consisted of seven questions, with topics ranging from the role that gender plays in the franchise to equating race with the ability to be a princess. Those questions are the following:

- Question 1: Who is your favorite Disney Princess? Why?
- Question 2: What does it mean to be a princess?
- Question 3: What does a princess look like?
- Question 4: What does a princess do?
- Question 5: Can a princess do _____? (gave three occupational scenarios)
- Question 6: Can ____ be a princess? (three notable women picked from a list)
- Question 7: What woman inspires you? Could she be a princess?

These questions were designed to foster thoughts about traditional gender roles and racial diversity. The answers to Questions 2, 4, and 5 reflected the ideas and notions that the girls held about traditional gender roles. Questions 3 and 4 also analyzed how race is represented within the franchise. Question 7 asked the girls to consider the qualities of a princess and apply those qualities to their immediate world. The answers to Question 1 can be found in Appendix G, table 1. Selected answers to Question 7 can be found in the documentary film.

Analysis of Data and Results

After filming had ended, each of the interviews were carefully scanned and coded for all of the answers. Most of the questions asked were open-ended, which proved more difficult to calculate and interpret the data. The analysis of the data is broken into three

sections: (1) questions relating to gender roles; (2) questions relating to race; and (3) questions relating to body image.

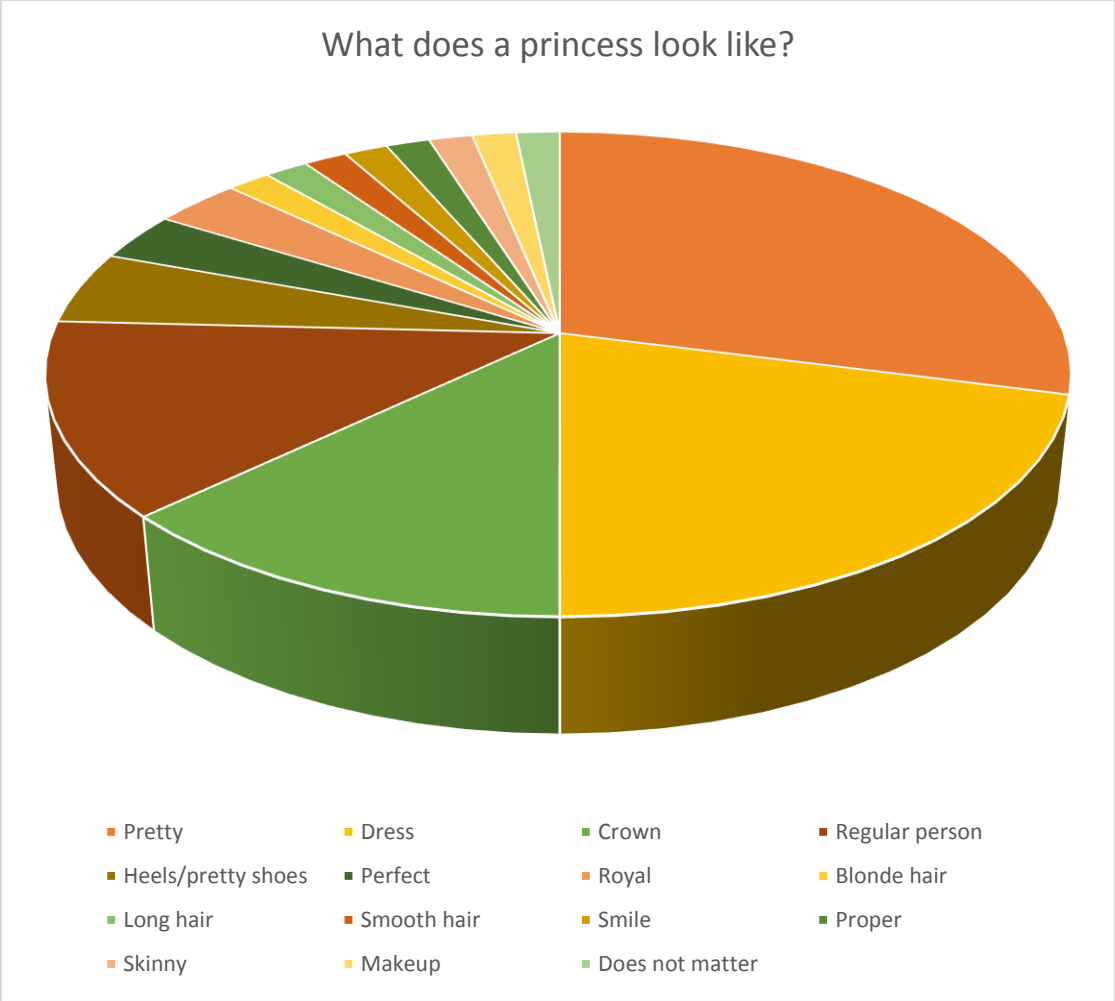
Questions on Gender Roles

What does it mean to be a princess?

One of the first gender-related questions asked was "What does it mean to be a princess?" In total, there were 66 responses. There were a wide variety of answers from the girls, being that the question was open-ended. The top-rated answer was that to be a princess, one must be kind. This answer received 20 responses. The qualities with the next-highest score were combined responses of bravery, courage, and strength, yielding seven votes. The third-highest quality was "following your dreams." It received six votes. The remaining 15 responses garnered five or fewer votes each (see fig. 2).

The responses, in terms of gendered qualities, yielded interesting results. Kindness, a traditionally feminine quality, was rated highest in determining who a princess is. However, it must be noted that kindness is also an internal quality; being pretty (an external quality) only received two votes. The next highest response, although severely smaller than the first in number, was the masculine quality of strength. The rest of the responses vary in terms of masculinity or femininity. It can be argued that most of the traits present are, in fact, non-gendered or unisex.

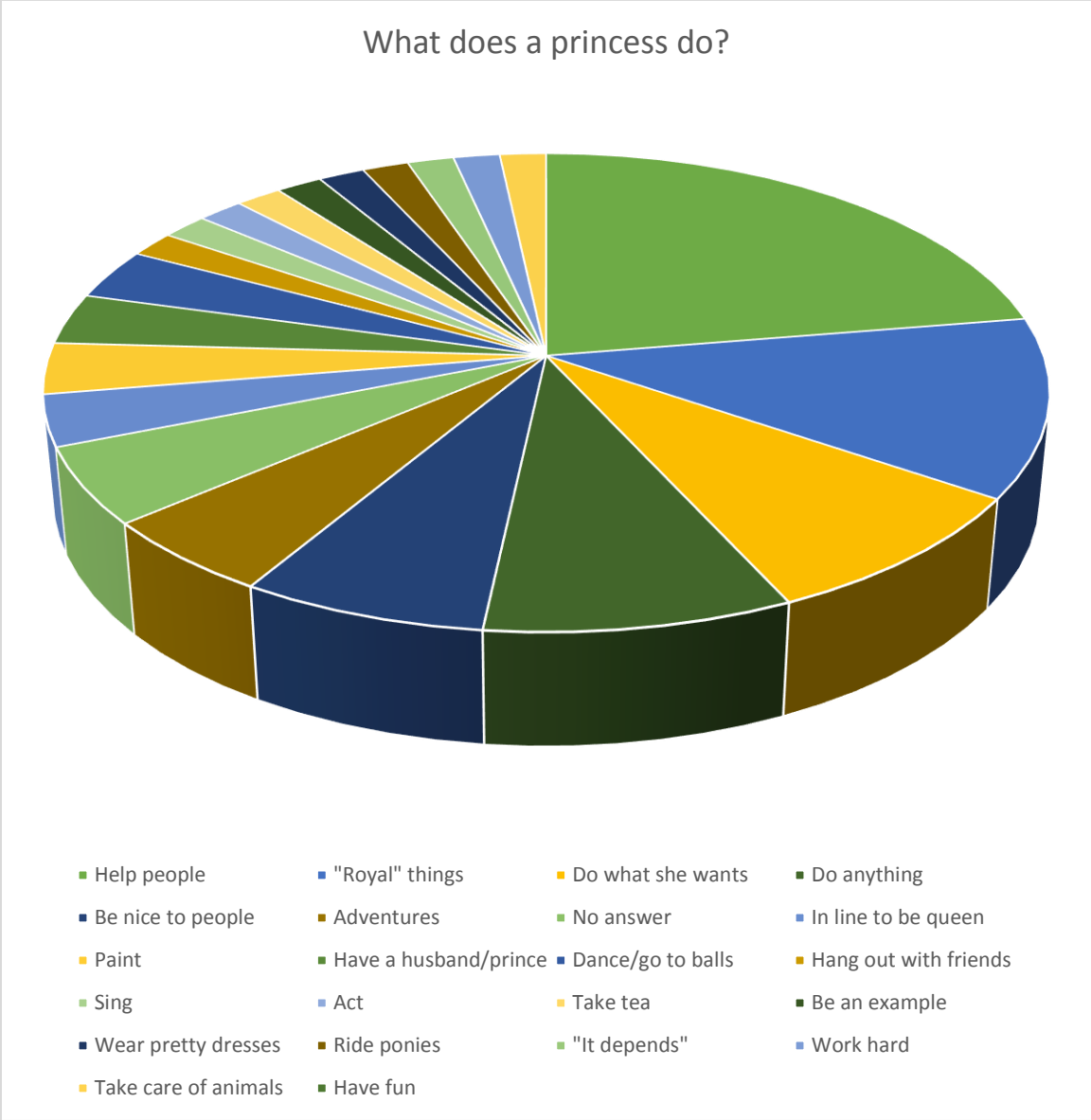
Fig. 2—What does a princess look like?



What does a princess do?

The next gender-related questions asked was "What does a princess do?" This was also an open-ended question, with 59 responses in total (see fig.3). Of all the answers given, "helping people" was the top-rated answer, with 13 responses. The next highest was a group of like answers combined under the category of "royal things," with seven responses. These answers included opening buildings, signing documents, etc. After that, the next highest rated response was independence (i.e. doing what she wants or doing anything), with five responses. The remaining 18 responses had four votes or fewer each.

Fig. 3—What does a princess do?



Occupational Scenarios: Can a princess do _____?

One of the most important gender-related questions asked was inspired by a study conducted in 1998 by Kevin Durkin and Bradley Nugent. The study comprised of presenting a series of traditional gender roles to a group of 4-5 year olds and asking if men, women, or both men and women could perform the tasks (Durkin and Nugent 399). In this study, girls ages 6-12 were given three scenarios and asked if a princess could do

any of them. The girls could answer either “yes,” “no,” or “maybe” (see Appendix G, table 2). The scenarios were the following:

Table 1—List of masculine and feminine occupation scenarios

MASCULINE	FEMININE
Fix a car	Take care of children
Lead/Rule a Kingdom	Clean a house
Fight for Kingdom	Cook dinner
Build houses	Teach people
Be a doctor	Serve people food

Of the feminine roles, most received zero “no” answers. For the two that received “no” answers (“take care of kids” and “cook dinner”), the children’s reasoning were that the princesses would not know how, would be too busy (kids), or would employ servants cook). Cooking and cleaning received the top amount of “yes” answers, with 12 apiece. The scenario of serving people food received the least amount of “yes” answers, with eight responses.

Of the masculine roles, only the scenario of leading/ruling a kingdom received zero “no” answers. The scenario of fixing a car received the most “no” answers (7), with reasons being that the princesses would not know how, they would not want to get dirty, they are a girl, and that the act is “not what a princess does.” The act of building a house received three “no” answers. The girls’ reasons for this were that it would require too

much work, the princess would not be up to it, and that it is not something that a princess does. Both the acts of fighting for a kingdom and being a doctor received two "no" answers, with reasons being that the princess already has an army and that pretty people do not fight (fight for kingdom), as well as being royalty and the possibility of being "grossed out" (doctor). For the "yes" responses, being a doctor (the most asked question) received an astounding 15 "yes" answers, while fixing a car received the least, with six "yes" answers.

The results of the scenario exercise reveal that girls ages 6-12 can imagine princesses, and by extension women, in both masculine and feminine roles. However, placing them in masculine roles comes with more difficulty and doubt, while placing them in a feminine role is almost unquestioned. These results also heavily mirror the results of the Durkin and Nugent study, suggesting that the gender role ideologies in place for young children in 1998 have continued to stay the same in 2016.

Questions on Race

Can _____ be a princess?

Only one question in the personal interview section really focused on race (see Appendix G, Table 3). However, the responses yielded insightful clues into how young women see race nowadays. However, it is important to keep in mind the possibility that these responses may be filtered through the lens of being politically correct. Another investigation would have needed to be conducted to determine the individual racial prejudices within the girls. The women chosen are as follows:

Table 2—List of Women

Angelina Jolie	Audrey Hepburn
Beyoncé	Frida Kahlo
Lupita Nyong'o	Malala Yousafzai
Marie Curie	Maya Angelou
Mother Teresa	Sacagawea
Tsai Ing-Wen	Zhang Yin

Before discussing the results, there are two demographic factors to consider when looking at the group of women selected for this question: racial makeup and careers. As far as the racial makeup of the group, there are three white women, three black women, three Asian women (two from East Asia and one from the Middle East), one Latina woman, one Native American woman, and one non-white Eastern European woman (from Albania). As far as career, four of the women are in the entertainment industry, two in the fine arts, two in politics or leadership positions, two in humanitarian efforts, one in science, and one in business.

Of the positive responses, Audrey Hepburn received the most, with 11 "yes" answers. Marie Curie and Frida Kahlo each received the least amount at five each. As far as their appearances, Audrey Hepburn has classically beautiful features and is a white woman. While Marie Curie is also white, she is considered to be far less classically pretty

than Hepburn. Frida Kahlo has prominent facial hair, including a mono-brow and hair on her upper lip, which could have prompted fewer "yes" responses.

As for the negative responses, Marie Curie received the most, with four "no" answers. Most of the other women received one each. Tsai Ing-Wen received three "no" responses, and Beyoncé, Lupita Nyong'o, and Frida Kahlo each received two. The reasoning for the top "no" responses are as follows:

- Marie Curie (4): "no reason"; looks "old-fashioned"; too busy (with job as scientist); does not "look" like a princess
- Tsai Ing-Wen (3): "no reason"; already a president; [being a president] should "be enough"
- Beyoncé (2): "sings too much"; singers cannot be princesses
- Lupita Nyong'o (2): "no reason"; dress too "poofy"
- Frida Kahlo (2): "no reason"; looks "old-fashioned"

Examining the results, it seems that the girls interviewed have pre-conceived notions about who can be a princess, even if they cannot fully articulate these notions. Four out of the five women listed here cannot be princesses simply because the girls thought that they could not. Marie Curie and Frida Kahlo had black-and-white photographs as their references, which might have contributed to the "old-fashioned" responses. Marie Curie, Beyoncé, and Tsai Ing-Wen were also denied because of their respective careers, which it seems some of the girls could not look past. Perhaps the most interesting reason for denying princess-ship was for Lupita Nyong'o on the grounds that her dress (in the photograph) was deemed "too poofy" by the girl answering. It was not

for her skin color, her career, or anything like the other reasons given for the various women. It was simply because the little girl in question did not like her dress.

Questions on Body Image

Do Disney Princesses look like real women?

The first question in relation to body image is one of three discussed in the group interviews. This question asked the girls to examine how the design of the Disney Princesses matches up to real-life women. Out of the three groups interviewed, 16 girls responded directly to this question. Of the responses, six girls answered "yes" and 10 girls answered "no."

Most of the girls who gave "yes" answers took the question as "Do Disney Princesses look relatively human as compared to other animated films/television shows?" instead of asking if the princesses accurately resembled the female form. One of the girls answered that the princesses in the parks looked just like the ones from the films, to which the prompter clarified that the question was centered on the animated princesses, not the princesses in the parks. Other girls stated that, in comparison to other cartoons, the franchise created princesses that looked like realistic depictions of humans. They added that the princesses also behaved like real people.

The girls who answered "no" (62.5%) thought more in line with what the question had intended. They stated that of course animated characters are not going to look like real people because they were not flesh and blood. The girls also examined the proportions of the princesses when crafting their answers. One girl in particular expressed her deep frustration that the princesses looked "perfect." Several girls agreed, stating that

there is a distinct lack of variety in the body types of the princesses—too many of them were "skinny," according to the girls.

The frustration exhibited by the girls reveals an insightful examination of the current media and societal trends when it comes to body image statements, considering that most of these girls were around 10 years old. Advertising today all but insists that women maintain a certain physique, which is almost impossibly skinny: from extreme photo-editing in fashion magazines to the rigorous physical standards for runway models.

The Disney Princess franchise has long been a part of these media messages, producing only thin, flawless princesses with near-impossible proportions. However, Disney's newest heroine/princess Moana (whose film premieres November 24, 2016) sets a new standard for how a princess can be shaped. She is much stockier than say, Cinderella or Jasmine, in keeping with her Pacific Islander heritage. Moana's body is much more accurately shaped to how a realistic young woman would look, giving the young female audience a breath of fresh air.

Why does Disney make princesses look the way they do?

The second group interview question asked the girls their opinions on Disney's reasons for their designs of the princesses. About half of the answers focused on looks, and the other half focused on character.

Many of the answers focused on the aesthetic values of the princesses. The girls explained that, according to Disney, a princess is a princess only if she is pretty. Therefore, the company exclusively animates attractive women for their princesses, even if they are not proportionally accurate. They also stated that the character design makes the films more interesting to watch for the audience because people do not want to follow

an ugly protagonist. Furthermore, making princesses extremely beautiful encourages young girls in the audience to aspire to be more like the princesses—whether that would be in appearance or in deed would have to be determined in a case-by-case basis.

The other half of the girls dealt with inner character statements made by the Walt Disney Company. According to these girls, Disney has created princesses who will inspire others, princesses that could be role models for young girls. The design of the princesses also made them more relatable to the audience. Furthermore, one girl suggested that Disney wanted the princesses to be morally upstanding and inoffensive.

What do you think about Moana?

The final group interview question asked the girls' opinions about the new Disney heroine/princess, Moana (see fig 4). Most of the girls had not seen or heard anything about her, as the first US trailer had premiered several weeks after the interviews were conducted. The prompter showed the girls a picture of Moana and asked them to draw their conclusions about her from that.

Fig. 4—Picture of Moana

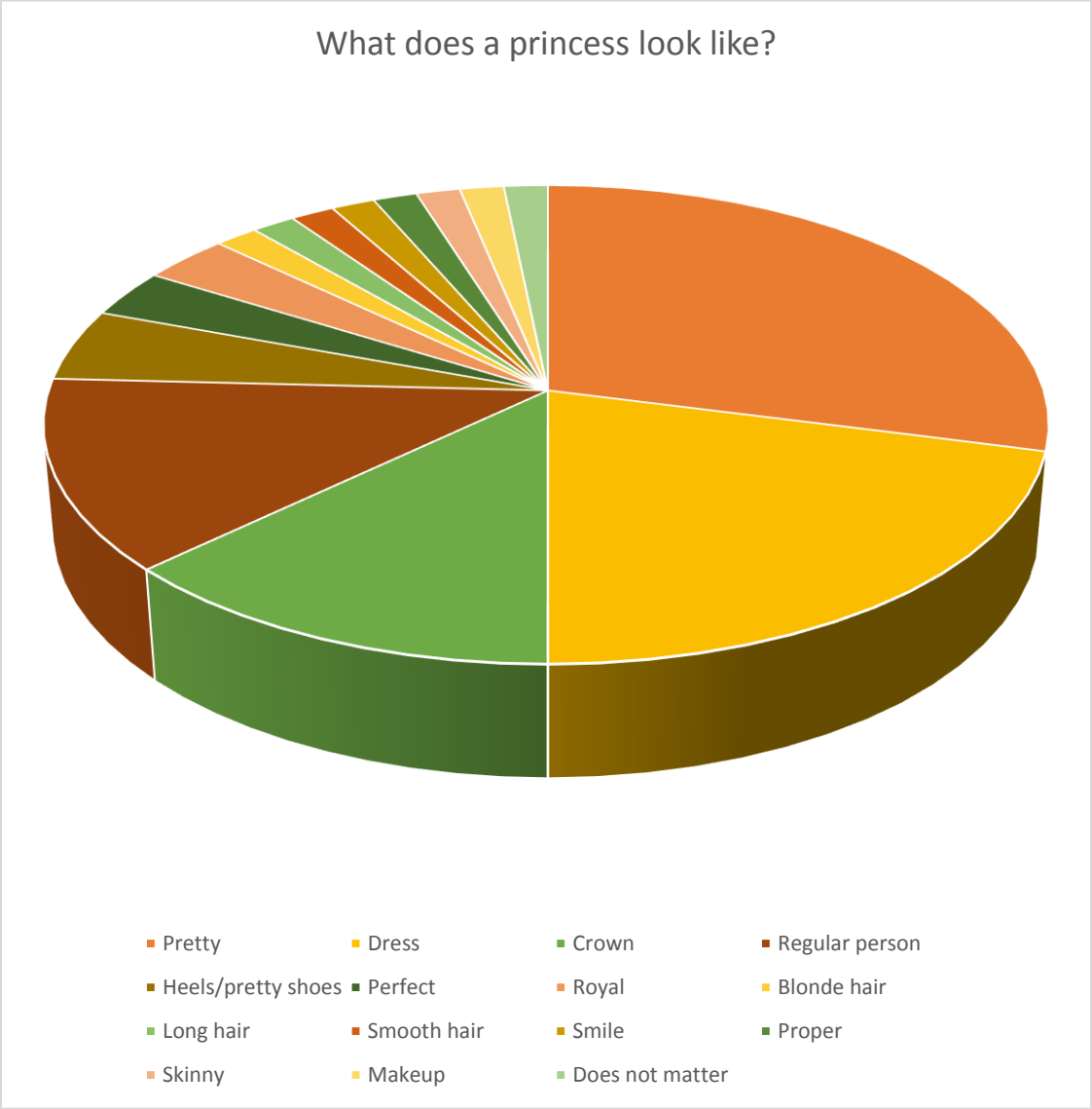
Source: (Flaherty)

The answers for this question were not as varied as the others had been. Many of the girls commented on how Moana looked "different" from the other princesses. They applauded Disney's attempt to "animate realistic-looking characters" because, unlike previous princesses, Moana has a larger body shape, looking more "like us" as a result. A few girls also mentioned that Moana looked different than other princesses because of her ethnicity; one girl compared her to Pocahontas (although Pocahontas is Native American while Moana is a Pacific Islander). Overall, their comments were positive in nature, prompting the conclusion that young women are ready to see a princess that does not fit the norms given to them by the franchise.

What does a princess look like?

Only one question in the personal interview focused on body image, since the group interview held the majority of the body image questions for the study. The question asks the girls to consider the external qualities of a princess. There were 62 responses to the question (see fig. 5).

Fig. 5—What does a princess look like?



The highest-rated answer, with 18 responses, was that a princess, above all else, must be pretty. This response, however, is entirely vague. The girls answering never set any parameters for what "pretty" means. Therefore, "pretty" can have many different meanings, depending on who uses the word. The next-highest requirement for looking like a princess was that she must wear a dress, receiving 13 votes. Again, this answer is vague, although it could be guessed that the girls meant some sort of ball gown, since that is the type of dress most of the Disney Princesses wear. Rounding out the top-rated answers with eight votes was the necessity of a crown. A crown is one of the most recognizable items for royalty—if the young woman is a princess, then of course she would have a crown. This combination of being pretty, wearing a dress, and having a crown is the winning formula for making a princess, according to the girls interviewed. There are no skin color stipulations, no body type stipulations, only that the princess in question has all three facets.

Interestingly enough, another response garnered eight votes—a princess must look like a regular person. Does this contradict the top-rated response that a princess must be pretty? Or does this answer now grant anyone access to being a princess, regardless of their beauty or lack thereof? Or do the two answers have nothing to do with one another? After this answer, the responses become increasingly more specific, with only one girl mentioning that a princess has to be skinny, have a specific type of hair, or look perfect. These specifics seem to be less popular than the more broad answer of "pretty," concluding that young girls today have more of an open mind when it comes to identifying a princess based on appearance.

Conclusion

Overall, the results of the study showed that girls ages 6-12 can form insightful opinions about the Disney Princess franchise and the statements made by the franchise. The gender role portion of the study revealed that, while girls can imagine princesses taking on masculine roles and traits, feminine roles and traits are more widely-recognized as being for princesses. The top-rated qualities and actions for a princess are also internal and service-oriented, such as kindness and helping people. As far as the treatment of race within the franchise, the girls recognized that a non-white princess is outside the norm, but were eager to see more non-white princesses, for example, Moana. The factor of race never anyone denied princess-ship, according to the girls interviewed. The body-image related questions yielded perhaps the most insightful results. The girls were able to distinguish the difference between the body types of the Disney princesses and those of real women. They also expressed frustration with the proportions of the princesses, as they do not accurately reflect those of real women, and therefore encourage young girls to try to attain the impossible. Furthermore, the girls agreed that a princess does not have to look a certain way in order to be a princess.

Limitations

Several limitations impacted this study. There were issues concerning the diversity of the subjects. All of the girls came from religiously-affiliated private schools, which could have influenced the morality within their answers. Since they all came from private schools, the economic diversity was also limited. The researchers sought to have a more racially diverse subject pool than the Hayes and Tantleff-Dunn study, which was achieved. However, there still could have been greater racial diversity. Another issue

arose with the content of the answers for the race-based question. None of the girls had an issue with race as pertains to being a princess. That being said, there was almost no discussion about the impact of race in the franchise.

Further Study

In order to create a more accurate picture of how American girls perceive the Disney Princess franchise, the following steps should be taken in future research. First and foremost, a greater pool of subjects would be more desirable. The girls in this study came from two small areas of the southern United States. If one were to interview girls across the country, this would ensure better demographic diversity. The questions as a whole could also be expanded on and refined to more accurately assess the girls' opinions on the franchise. Researchers could also interview girls ages 12-17 to see how growing up with the franchise has impacted them as teenagers. Finally, the two new princesses could be added to the study to increase the racial diversity within the franchise and evaluate how their additions impact girls.

The aim of The Shattered Slipper Project is to get people to think about the different ways that the Disney Princess franchise, and by extension, society, impacts young girls in a multi-faceted way. Whether positive or negative, young girls are being told, in almost every area of their lives, that there is a certain way to dress, act, play, etc. that makes them "in" or not. Hopefully, through this study, little changes can be made to show young girls that they do not need society to dictate how they live their lives.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Recruitment Flyer

THE SHATTERED SLIPPER PROJECT

A documentary film exploring the impact of the Disney Princess franchise on girls ages 6-12

Friday May 13th, 2016

For *Kids Life* kids at Bartow First Assembly of God (All Ages 6-12) during *Kids Life*

Saturday May 14th, 2016: Steelman Library at Southeastern University

Ages 6-9: 10am – 1pm

Ages 10-12: 2pm – 5pm

Friday May 20th, 2016

For *Kids Life* kids at Bartow First Assembly of God (All Ages 6-12) during *Kids Life*

Saturday May 21st, 2016: Steelman Library at Southeastern University

Ages 6-9: 10am – 1pm

Ages 10-12: 2pm – 5pm

The Shattered Slipper Project is a documentary thesis film exploring the impact of the cultural phenomenon that is the Disney Princess franchise on girls ages 6-12 in the areas of gender roles, body image, race, and gendered marketing.
We need 20-30 girls of varying ages (6-12) and ethnic backgrounds to participate in an interview-based study at Bartow First Assembly of God in Bartow, Florida.

For more information and if you would like your child to participate in this study, contact us at shatteredslipperproject@gmail.com and visit our Facebook page entitled The Shattered Slipper Project.
Thank you for your participation!
Caila Cordwell and the Shattered Slipper Project team

Laura Ball (Media Contact)
Email: shatteredslipperproject@gmail.com
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Instagram: @shatteredslippr
Twitter: @shatteredslippr
Tumblr: shatteredslipperproject.tumblr.com
YouTube: Shattered Slipper Project

Appendix B: Parent Letter

Dear Trinity Parents:

Hello, my name is Caila Cordwell. I graduated from Trinity in 2013, and I am a senior at Southeastern University. Currently, I am working on my undergraduate thesis focusing on the impact of the Disney Princess franchise on girls ages 6-12. For this project, entitled *The Shattered Slipper Project*, I am filming a short documentary in which I interview girls in the age group about how the franchise has impacted them personally.

For this, I am in need of girls ages 6-12 to participate in the documentary film. I will be filming Wednesday, May 25th, after school from 3-5 PM in Mrs. Cordwell's 5th grade classroom. My team will pick up the girls in the classrooms during dismissal or you may pick them up in the line and then bring them to Mrs. Cordwell's classroom on the 5th grade hallway after dismissal ends. Be sure that if you would like your child to be picked up in their classroom, they must have their signed consent forms ready.

The process will consist of a group activity and a personal, one-on-one interview. The discussions and interview will revolve around body image and the roles that women play in society today. Parents are welcome to stay or pick up the students at 5:00.

If you are interested or for more information on the project, you can contact me at (678) 877-9129 or shatteredslipperproject@gmail.com.

Thank you,
Caila Cordwell

Appendix C: Parental Consent Form

Parent/Guardian Consent Form

The Shattered Slipper Project

Responsible Principal Investigator: Joseph O'Brien

Other Investigator(s): Caila Cordwell, Carise Cruz, Sarah Meinhardt

On-Set First Aid: Joanna Cruz

1. **Purpose of the Study:** This study explores the impact of the Disney Princess franchise on American girls ages 6-12 in the areas of gender roles, race, body image, and gendered marketing.

2. **Procedures to be followed:** Participants will be asked several short questions in a personal interview, participate in a group interactive body image workshop, and participants ages 6-9 will participate in a short playtime activity. All of this will be filmed, and the participants will be photographed as well.

3. **Discomforts and Risks:** possible mild emotional discomfort

4. **Benefits:** Self-knowledge, self-growth, advancing research in an important topic, appearance in a documentary film

5. **Statement of Confidentiality:** All demographic information will be stored in a secure binder in a secure location. Only the primary researcher will have access to that information. Your child's first name and age, along with their image will appear in the documentary film.

6. **Whom to contact:** Please contact Caila Cordwell at shatteredslipperproject@gmail.com with any questions, or concerns about the research. You may also call Caila Cordwell at (678) 877-9129 if you feel your child has been injured or harmed by this research. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this study, please contact the SEU Institutional Review Board at (863) 667-5097 or via email at irb@seu.edu

7. **Compensation:** Compensation for gas money will be given at the completion of the study.

8. **Cost of participating:** There is no cost to participate in this study.

9. **Voluntariness:** Participation in this study is voluntary and parent and/or child may discontinue at any time without any penalty or loss of benefits to which the participant is otherwise entitled.

10. **Dissemination:** The results of this study will appear in an undergraduate thesis that will be uploaded to the Southeastern University website. This study is filmed and participants will appear in the finished product. This film will be shown at Southeastern University and possibly other local film festivals.

11. **Signature:**

- ☐ I have read and understand the above consent form and voluntarily agree for my child to participate in this study.
- ☐ You were given a copy of this consent form for your records.

_____ _____

Parent/Guardian Signature Date

Print Participant Name: _____

Appendix D: Child Assent Form

Assent Form

The Shattered Slipper Project

Responsible Principal Investigator: Joseph O'Brien

Other Investigator(s): Caila Cordwell, Carise Cruz, Sarah Meinhardt

On-Set First Aid: Joanna Cruz

12. **Purpose:** This study explores how the Disney Princesses have an impact on American girls ages 6-12 in different areas.

13. **Procedures:** You will be asked some short questions by yourself. Then you will answer questions in groups. Then, girls ages 6-9 will do a separate group activity. People will be filming you, as well as taking pictures of you.

14. **Risks:** You might get a little uncomfortable.

15. **Benefits:** You get to help the team with important research, learn more about yourself, and be a part of a film.

16. **Statement of Confidentiality:** All important information will be kept safe. Only the research team will be able to see it. Your first name and age will appear in the film.

17. **Whom to contact:** Please have your parent/guardian contact Caila Cordwell at shatteredslipperproject@gmail.com with any questions or concerns about the research. They may also call Caila Cordwell at (678) 877-9129. If you have any questions about your rights, please have your parent/guardian contact the SEU Institutional Review Board at (863) 667-5097 or via email at irb@seu.edu

18. **Voluntariness:** If you do not want to participate in the study anymore, you can quit at any time. Your parts will not be shown in the film if you choose to quit.

19. **Distribution:** This film will be put on the SEU website and could be shown at a few film festivals.

20. **Signature and Assent:**

☐ I give my assent to participate in this study.

_____ _____

Signature Date

Print Name:

Appendix E: Interview Questions

Shattered Slipper Project Interview Questions

Warm-Up Questions for the Personal Interview Segment:

1. What is your name?
2. How old are you?
3. What is your favorite color?
4. What is your favorite dessert?
5. What do you want to be when you grow up?
6. Do you think a princess could do/be (insert answer to #5)?

Questions for the Personal Interview Segment:

1. Who is your favorite Disney Princess? Why?
2. What does it mean to be a princess?
3. What does a princess look like?
4. What do princesses do?
5. Can a princess do _____?
    - Fix a car?
    - Take care of children?
    - Lead her people/rule a kingdom?
    - Clean a house?
    - Fight for her kingdom?
    - Cook dinner?
    - Build houses?
    - Teach people?
    - Be a doctor?
    - Serve people food?
6. Could this person be a princess? (Pictures in separate document)
    - Beyoncé
    - Malala Yousafzai
    - Lupita Nyong'o
    - Marie Curie
    - Angelina Jolie
    - Frida Kahlo
    - Maya Angelou
    - Sacagawea
    - Aung San Suu Kyi
    - Audrey Hepburn
    - Mother Teresa
    - Zhang Yin
7. Who inspires you? Could they be a princess?

Questions for the Body Image Workshop:

1. Do Disney Princesses look like real women? Why/why not?

2. Draw yourself as a princess. (Subjects will be given art supplies to draw themselves as a princess.)
3. Why do you think Disney makes princesses look the way they do?
4. What do you think about the new Princess? (Show pictures of Moana, the upcoming Disney Princess—see below)
5. What kind of princess do you want to see Disney make?

Moana

Source: (Flaherty)

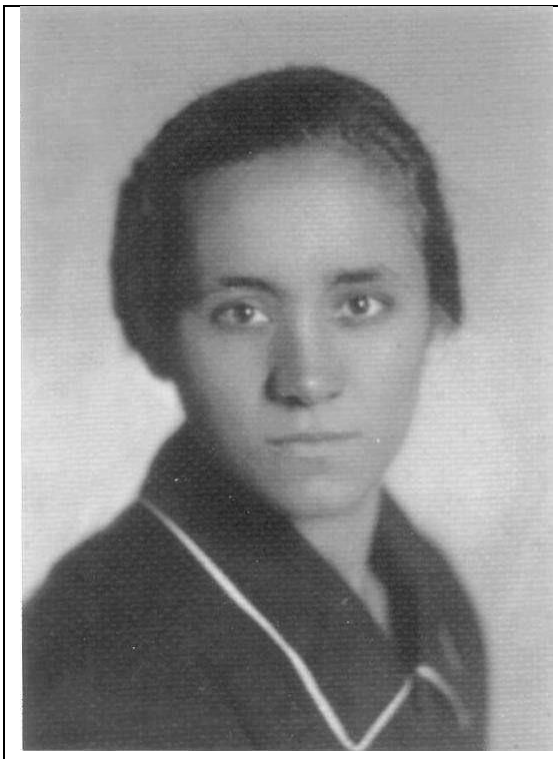
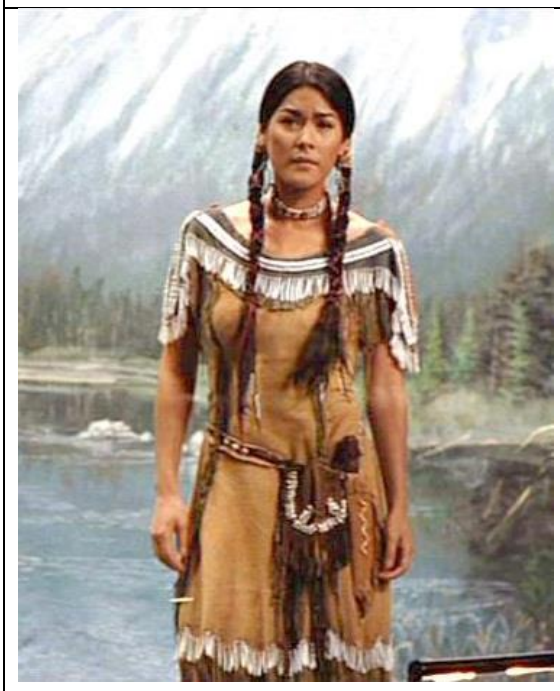
Appendix F: Personal Interview Pictures

Picture	Person
	Angelina Jolie
	Audrey Hepburn

	Beyoncé
	Frida Kahlo

	Lupita Nyong'o
	Malala Yousafzai

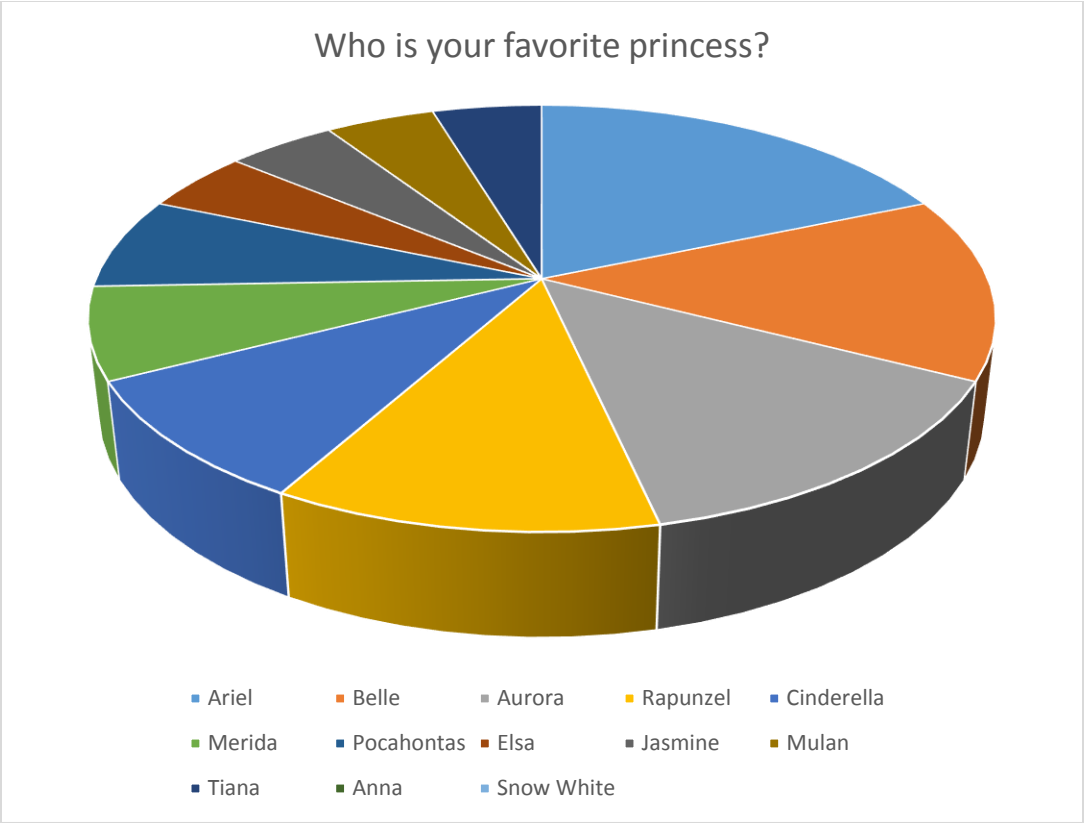
	Marie Curie
	Maya Angelou

	Mother Teresa
	Sacagawea

	Tsai Ing-Wen
	Zhang Yin

Appendix G: Tables and Graphs

Table 1: Who is your favorite princess? Why?



PRINCESS	***REASON***
Elsa	Special Powers; cares for sister
Jasmine	"No reason"; pretty
Mulan	Strong; brave; not like other princesses
Tiana	Can cook; looks like me (Angelika)
Merida	Not like the others; free; brave
Pocahontas	Real person; active; outdoorsy; not like other princesses
Cinderella	Loves animals; social climber
Rapunzel	Like me (Makayla); like my friend (Tori); long hair; sees the world; animation is different
Belle	"No reason"; kind; sees good in people; looks like me (Faith); brave; "I like the film"; won't let anything stop her
Aurora	Perseveres; pretty dress; lives normally; brave; explores; fun; kind; good story; "She came to my party" (Jessalyn)
Ariel	Swims; becomes human; brave; stands up for beliefs; "I love the ocean" (Holly); Pretty; red hair; adventurous; good personality; "She gets feet" (Emma Grace); outdoorsy

*****Does not include Anna and Snow White because no one voted for them. *****

Table 2: Occupational Scenarios

SCENARIO	***M/F***	***YES***	***MAYBE***	***NO***
Fix a car	M	6	2	7
Take care of kids	F	10	0	3
Lead/rule kingdom	M	7	0	0
Clean a house	F	12	0	0
Fight for kingdom	M	8	0	2
Cook dinner	F	12	2	2
Build houses	M	7	1	3
Teach people	F	11	0	0
Be a doctor	M	15	2	2
Serve people food	F	8	1	0

Table 3: Can _____ be a princess?

WOMAN	RACE	YES	MAYBE	NO
Beyoncé	Black	7	0	2
Malala Yousafzai	Middle Eastern	8	1	1
Lupita Nyong'o	Black	9	0	2
Marie Curie	White	5	0	4
Angelina Jolie	White	9	0	1
Frida Kahlo	Latina	5	3	2
Maya Angelou	Black	9	1	1
Sacagawea	Native American	7	1	1
Tsai Ing-Wen	Taiwanese	6	0	3
Audrey Hepburn	White	11	1	1
Mother Teresa	Eastern European	7	3	1
Zhang Yin	Chinese	8	0	1