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# Rape Culture in Disney Animated Princess Movies

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Rape Culture in Disney Animated Princess Movies

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Rape Culture in Disney Animated Princess Movies

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This thesis has been examined and approved by the following members of the student's committee.

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ABSTRACT

Gender stereotypes, rape myths, and rape culture are perpetuated in U.S. media, including media aimed at young people. Previous research in the areas of gender, gender stereotypes, portrayals of gender in movies, Disney movies, rape myths, and rape culture are all examined. Prior to this research, no study had been conducted to determine if the characteristics of rape culture are portrayed in Disney animated princess movies. For this research, an ethnographic content analysis is conducted on all thirteen of the Disney animated princess movies to determine if the characteristics associated with rape culture are portrayed in these movies. The findings are organized in three board categories: a) how the characteristics of rape culture are portrayed, b) who uses the characteristics of rape culture, and c) if the portrayal of rape culture in the Disney animated princess movies changes over time. This study finds that the portrayal of rape culture in Disney movies 1) relies on intimidation, coercion/threats, 2) that isolation is used as a characteristic of rape culture but also as a way to resist patriarchal power and control, 3) the severity of rape culture in these movies is not dependent on the total number of characteristics of rape culture present, but rather on the frequency with which various aspects of rape culture are shown, and 4) that movies depict the characteristics of rape culture by focusing on femininity and sexuality. While this research examines the portrayal of characteristics associated with rape culture in Disney animated princess movies it also discovers that some positive and empowering traits of the princesses are also observed.

INTRODUCTION

Gender stereotypes, rape myths and rape culture are detrimental to society and U.S. culture, but are especially harmful to children. All of these ideas are represented in the media, including media aimed, produced, and released for the entertainment of children (Oliver and Green 2001). It is the intent of this researcher to examine Disney animated princess movies to further determine the extent and prevalence of children's exposure to gender stereotypes, myths, and overall rape culture.

Research has already been conducted on stereotypical gender roles portrayed in media aimed at children (Smith, Pieper, Granados and Choueiti 2010), and the acceptance of rape myths have been researched in the area of adolescence and early adulthood (Lonsway and Fitzgerald 1995).  This study adds to this literature by examining the degree to which gender stereotypes, rape myths, and the characteristics associated with rape culture are portrayed in Disney animated princess movies. These movies are specifically aimed at very young girls, typically before they enter school.

Previous research has not examined whether or not attributes of rape culture are portrayed in Disney animated princess movies. For this study, an ethnographic content analysis (ECA) is conducted on Disney animated princess movies. The research is framed by feminist theory, which supports the ideas that rape, rape myths and rape culture are all structural, cultural problems, and social problems that need to be changed. This research also examines whether or not the characteristics of rape culture has changed over the last eighty years in Disney animated princess movies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

*Gender and Gender Stereotypes*

West and Zimmerman (1987) propose gender as a routine, methodical and recurring accomplishment.  To most people gender is not just what they are but is also who they are and how they act on a daily basis.  Gender shapes not only how we view ourselves but how we view others around us (Deutsch 2007). Immediately at our birth, or sometimes even before we are born, gender is assigned and usually we conform to the ideas and norms of our culture and society about gender. Gender is an ongoing aspect of social situations, as an outcome of and a rationale for various social arrangements and a means of legitimating one of the most fundamental division of society (West and Zimmerman 1987). Gender is considered by some as a master status that overrides all other roles and statuses that we hold (Deutsch 2007).

Deutsch (2007) finds that in U.S. culture and most other cultures around the world there are two primary gender categories, men and women, and value is placed on each gender differently. Men are supposed to be strong, rational, and dominating, while women are supposed to be in need of protection, emotional, and subservient. It is these thoughts and ideas about gender that create gender stereotypes. Deutsch (2007) further explained the process this way: "People act with an awareness that they will be judged according to what is deemed appropriate feminine or masculine behavior" (106). Characteristics, values, and roles are assigned to each person based on their perceived gender. Males are typically given more value than women, which creates a power struggle or conflict between the genders. Gender is only one aspect of all of us; however, for many it is the first and most important aspect that they look at. Gender is only one

part of our story as a person, and gender is only a social construct that does not reflect the complexity of lived lives (Wohlwend 2009). However, it remains a powerful ideological device, which produces, reproduces, and legitimates the choices and limits that are culturally assigned to individuals (West and Zimmerman 1987).

"Doing gender" means creating differences between girls and boys and women and men, differences that are not natural, essential, or biological. Once the differences have been constructed, they are used to reinforce the "essentialness" of gender (West and Zimmerman 1987). Because "doing gender" is a learned behavior, viewing gender stereotypes in the media can have a strong influence on young children. Coyne, Linder, Rasmussen, Nelson and Collier (2014) examined how viewing gender stereotypical behavior in the media can influence the play of young children. Masculine and feminine characteristics are expressed through the media and influence children in three different ways; modeling, which is the initial exposure to gender stereotypes; enactive experience, which is when children learn from the outcome of their behaviors; and direct tuition, when parents verbally instruct children on appropriate gender behaviors. Young boys learn the appropriate gender ideal of efficaciousness by being able to affect the physical and social environment through the exercise of physical strength or skills, and young girls learn to value appearance and managing themselves as ornamental objects (West and Zimmerman 1987). A plethora of research has been conducted regarding gender stereotypes in the media and the effects on young girls, but young boys can certainly be influenced by gender stereotypes in the media as well (Coyne et al. 2014).

Children may play a bigger role in the gender conformity process than once

thought. Brinkman, Rabenstein, Rosen, and Zimmerman (2014) conducted research on how children act and react to gender role socialization as part of a dynamic negotiation process. They found that children do play a role and have a position of power regarding their own gender identity development. Children in this study were able to discuss the idea of conformity and the consequences of nonconformity against the idea of being authentic to themselves. As active agents in the dynamic gender identity development process, children attempt to balance the pressure of conforming against the benefits of being authentic to their sense of self. Many of the children in this study expressed the desire to be able to make their own choice about how to express their gender identity and they emphasized the importance of being true to oneself regardless of the consequences (Brinkman et al. 2014). Through additional research it can be determined that viewing media and seeing how to do gender appropriately does impact children and the choices that they make when doing gender.

*Gender in the Movies*

Gender stereotypes are widely accepted in U.S. culture and can be seen in media daily. Rothman, Powers, and Rothman (1993) studied women's roles in movies over time. Rothman et al. (1993) reviewed the top one hundred grossing films from 1946 to the early 1990s, and found that women are leading characters approximately twenty five percent of the time and that percentage has not changed significantly over the years. Women characters have changed over time, however, to reflect societal changes regarding how gender and women are viewed by society; when gender myths become outdated, Hollywood just creates new myths to replace the outdated ones. In regard to U.S. movies, their research reflects the feminist perspective that, "American society is

portrayed as an essentially immoral, unjust patriarchal culture that subjugates women"
(Rothman et al. 1993:72).

Not much has changed in Hollywood regarding gender equality and myths since
Rothman et al. (1993) completed their study. Erigha (2015) reviewed more recent
statistics of representation of gender and race/ethnicity in the film industry and found that
women and racial/ethnic minorities remain underrepresented in Hollywood, far below
their proportions of the U.S. population.

Media for youth has been identified as particularly gender biased. For example,
Smith et al. (2010) found that in G-rated films traditional gender roles and
responsibilities are prevalent for women characters. Women characters are more likely to
be presented as attractive, smart and good, while men characters are considered to be
strong and funny. Similarly, in children's cartoons, boys typically are violent and active
and girls are portrayed as more domestic, interested in boys, and concerned with their
appearance (Thompson and Zerbinos 1997).

Oliver and Green (2001) found that children and adults both respond to media
entertainment in similar ways.  Girls are more likely than boys to express sadness in
response to a sad movie or scene, and these gender differences intensify with age.
Stereotypes are not just present in everyday interactions with others, but in the media and
entertainment children and adults watch. Television and movies also serve as an
important socializing function, supplying many children with images that can form,
change, and reinforce stereotypes (Robinson, et al. 2006). The impact of this exposure is
not well researched; however it raises many concerns. Smith et al. (2010) presented the
idea that viewing stereotypes in media may have serious consequences for children's

information processing for schema development surrounding gender. It is likely that children will internalize the content as a particular worldview (Martinez 2015).

Even though we are not fully aware of how these gender stereotypes are affecting children, we are aware that a majority of children in this country have access to a variety of videos and DVDs in their homes (Smith et al. 2010). Some research has been conducted regarding how children view fantasy and if they can distinguish reality from fantasy. Several of these studies have indicated that young children accept fantasy as reality and cannot always distinguish well between the two (Thompson and Zerbino 1997). If children cannot always tell the difference between fantasy and reality then the depictions of gender stereotypes in children's media should be even more alarming to parents; however, most parents think that watching G-rated movies are safe for their children (Smith et al. 2010). These depictions of gender stereotypes seen by children could impact and interact with both the expectations they develop about relationships and appropriate behaviors in their future life decisions (Thompson and Zerbinos 1997).

*Disney and Disney Movies*

According to D23, The Walt Disney Official Fan Club website (2017), Walt Disney informed his animators that they were going to produce their first animated feature film in 1934. That movie was *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, which was the highest grossing movie until it was surpassed by *Gone with the Wind* in1940. In January of 2000, Andy Mooney, the current chairman of the Disney company, launched the Disney princess line without utilizing focus groups, marketing, and in disagreement with Walt's nephew, Roy E. Disney. The Disney princess line is a media franchise that features a line-up of fictional women protagonists who have appeared in various Disney

franchises.  By 2001, Disney Consumer Products (DCP), including the Disney princess line generated 300 million dollars. Three years later they had generated revenues of one billion dollars and by 2012, the division increased revenues to three billion dollars (D23 2017)

Disney movies are some of the most researched movies due to their popularity, wide audience reach, and because they have been a part of the U.S. culture since the 1930's. Research on Disney movies has concentrated on topics such as hetero-romantic love (Martin and Kazyak 2009), portrayals of older characters (Robinson et al 2006), race (Hurley 2005), couples and families (Tanner, Haddock, Zimmerman and Lund 2003), gender, race, age and sexual orientation (Towbin, Haddock, Zimmerman, Lund and Tanner 2004) and gender stereotypes (Wohlwend 2009 and England, Descartes and Collier-Meek 2011). Some of this research has looked at specific characters or specific movies, though none have looked explicitly at the portrayal of characteristics associated with rape culture in Disney movies.

The Disney animated princess movies are all loosely based on classic fairy tales. Fairy tales are one of the longest existing genres of children's literature and play an important role in shaping self-image and the belief systems of children (Hurley 2005). Children often develop ideas about experiences based on exposure to situations in Disney animated movies. Robinson et al. (2006) examined portrayals of older characters in Disney movies and found that for children who have limited exposure to older people, images and depictions in these movies can have a powerful impact on their perceptions of older people and can influence the way in which they interact with older people in the real world. Hurley (2005) states that the preponderance of the all-white world of the fairy

tale, and in particular of the fairy princesses, on children of color should not be underestimated.

Disney movies also convey ideas to children regarding romantic relationships, promoting relationships in the context of heterosexual romance, courtship, and the ultimate goal of marriage. Martin and Kazyak (2009) suggest that most heteronormative behavior is assumed, mundane, ordinary and expected; however, in Disney movies romantic heterosexual relationships are portrayed as special, distinct, and exceptional. Heterosexual relationships are constructed as powerful, transformative, and magical because characters often defy their parents, or their very selves to embrace this hetero-romantic love (Martin and Kazyak 2009).

To children, Disney movies may also convey ideas surrounding the gendered bodies of men and women. Martin and Kayzak (2009) studied how the gendered body is portrayed in Disney animated movies and found that women are usually drawn with cleavage, bare stomachs, and bare legs, whereas men are usually shown without a shirt and larger than life muscles. These signs are found in different parts of the film including the subplots, musical numbers, and funny scenes. These scenes also contain sexual innuendo based on gestures, movement, tone of voice, and expressions. Sexiness and sexual innuendos are more often expressed by women characters and is used to gain the attention of the masculine character.

Gender stereotypes are depicted in children's media more than expected and children may use Disney animated movies to develop ideas regarding the expected societal gender characteristics and roles of men and women. England et al. (2011) identified some of the masculine and feminine characteristics that were portrayed in the

Disney princess movies. Some of the masculine characteristics included: curiosity about the princess; wanting to explore; being physically strong, assertive, unemotional, independent, and athletic; inspiring fear in others; bravery, physical attractiveness, and being a leader. Some of the feminine characteristics included: tending to physical appearance; being physically weak and submissive; expressing emotions; being affectionate, nurturing, sensitive, tentative, troublesome, fearful, ashamed, crying, asking for advice, and a victim role. Another aspect of princesses is that they often use domestic work as an expression of servitude and a way to gain love.

England et al. (2011) also found that there are both stereotypical and non-stereotypical gender portrayals in the Disney princess movies, but the overall trends fluctuated greatly and were not necessarily sequential; in other words, progress towards less gendered portrayals was not linear and has become more complex and may not accurately reflect changing gender expectations in U.S. culture. For example, *Pocahontas* (1995) was the most affectionate princess, and *Mulan* (1998) was the second most submissive character, second only to *Cinderella* (1950). Interestingly, no princess completes a final climactic rescue, or act that completes the narrative of the film, without the assistance of the prince or the romantic character linked to the princess through the movies, until 2013 when *Frozen* is produced and sisters save each other.

The impact of Disney portrayals of gender roles, characteristic, and hetero-romantic love can be identified in the play of young girls and teenager girls in relationships. Wohlwend (2009) looked at how young girls address gendered identities attached to the popular Disney movies and Disney franchised toys and found that girls do

not always follow the movie scripts while playing with dolls, but will sometimes turn them into other kinds of characters, like superheroes. Jackson (2001) studied abusive experiences of twenty-three young women aged sixteen to eighteen to understand how they position the experience and themselves in relation to cultural narratives of romance or fairytales. Jackson found that these young women tried to conform to the classic fairy tale narratives but the classic romantic narrative is problematic because it reinforces the idea of conforming to the social order, the dominance of men, and submissiveness of women, which underwrites violence and abuse in relationships.

*Rape Myths*

The acceptance of gender stereotypes and patriarchal values can lead to the acceptance of rape myths. Lonsway and Fitzgerald (1994) defined rape myths as,

> "False or apocryphal beliefs that are widely held; they explain some important cultural phenomenon; and they serve to justify existing cultural arrangements. Rape myths are attitudes and beliefs that are generally false but widely and persistently held, and that serve to deny or justify male sexual aggression toward women" (P. 134).

The best way to describe rape myths is to say that they are stereotypes that are believed by many, hard to get rid of, based on patriarchal beliefs, and used to justify violence against women.

Rape myths have been researched to be untrue, yet many in the U.S. still believe them. Some examples of rape myths are: a woman who goes to a man's house on their first date is willing to have sex; women falsely report rapes to call attention to themselves; any healthy woman can successful resist rape if she really wants to; victims of rape are women who are promiscuous or have bad reputations; women who wear provocative clothing are asking to be rape; women deserve to be taught a lesson; women

unconsciously want to be raped; many so-called 'rape victims' are women who had sex then changed their mind afterwards; it is a part of human nature for men to take sex from women; a rape didn't happen if the woman wasn't harmed or has no bruises or marks; any woman who teases a man deserves to be raped; and a husband cannot rape his wife. Although hostility toward women constitutes the core of these constructs, they also include acceptance of violence toward women and beliefs in the traditional and restrictive roles of women.

Rape myths are based on the idea of patriarchy. Ortner (2014) describes patriarchy in both the classic definition and technical terms. The classic definition means the rule of the father. The technical terms is defined as only one form of male dominance, lodged in the figure of the father, and often enveloped in an ideology of protection and benevolence as well as domination and control. Patriarchy can be seen as a structure and organization system in relation of power of both men over women and also men over other men. Hunnicutt (2009) explains patriarchy as evoking images of gender hierarchies, dominance, and power arrangements. Patriarchy retains gender as a central organizing feature of society, maintaining a hierarchical emphasis, and creating sustaining social systems and social arrangements that reinforce domination.

One of the critical functions of rape myths for men is to justify male sexual violence, and for women it is to deny personal vulnerability (Lonsway and Fitzgerald 1994). Individuals may want to believe rape myths for different reasons, but the acceptance is mediated by social and demographic variables. For example, individuals with a conservative gender role ideology believe rape myths more that those with more liberal ideologies (Johnson, Kuck, and Schander 1997).

*Rape Culture*

      Rape culture is an environment where rape is prevalent and sexual violence against women is normalized and excused in popular culture and media. It is perpetuated through misogynistic language, the objectification of women's bodies, and the glamorization of sexual violence in a society that disregards women's rights and safety. Rape culture affects every woman and limits women's behaviors because it creates a cycle of fear, where women feel that they need to protect themselves from rape. It is also this special burden of self-protection that reinforces the concept that women must live in fear and can never expect personal freedom, independence, and the self-assurance that men have (Brownmiller 1993). Some aspects of rape culture include: trivializing sexual assault, sexually explicit jokes, tolerance of sexual harassment, inflating false rape report statistics, publicly scrutinizing a victim including their dress, mental state, motives, and history, gratuitous gendered violence in movies and television, defining men as dominant and sexually aggressive, defining women as submissive and sexually passive, pressure on men to have sex, pressure on women to not appear "cold", assuming only promiscuous women get raped, assuming that men don't get raped or that only "weak" men get raped, refusing to take rape accusations seriously, and teaching women to avoid getting raped instead of teaching men not to rape (Giraldi and Monk-Turner 2017).

      Rape culture is a fluid and always changing construct that is socially produced and socially legitimated, so throughout time and place the definition will change (Rape Culture 2016). In the last thirty years the U.S. cultural and legal meaning of rape has changed dramatically due to the feminist movement. This movement has challenged the

traditional construction of sexual violence and has offered an alternative construction of rape. Feminists have helped to transform the cultural understanding of rape from private situations to public concern through social situations and as a social problem that needs to be rectified (Chasteen 2010).

Rape culture is often used by feminists to connect gender, socialization, media, institutions and the intersection of all of these that are used by men to perpetuate the status quo and the continued acceptance of rape myths (Guckenheimer 2008). The feminist theory of rape is in contrast to the criminological theories, which view rapists as social deviants, and the sociobiological theories that argue that sexual aggression in males is natural. Rape culture theorists also suggest that dominant sexuality is focused on force and aggression through the enactment of gender roles. Feminist theories of rape culture suggest that the influence of gender on sexual violence is not natural but learned behavior. Some rape culture theorists view rape as violence between the one who is raping and the one raped, which connects the theory with other forms of oppression and violence against women (Guckenheimer 2008).

Rape culture emphasizes the objectification of, and violence and sexual abuse toward women through movies, television, advertising, and magazines (Burt 1980). The media can play a significant role in supporting rape myths specifically, and an overall rape culture. Exposure to these types of materials normalize rape myths and make them appear to be common. It is through rape myths at both the individual and institutional or societal levels that sexual violence has been sustained and justified throughout history (Edwards, Turchik, Dardis, Reynolds and Gidycz 2011). Rape culture perpetuates norms of sexual aggression while lacking an understanding of consent. The foundation of rape

culture lies in rape myths and patriarchal values but also reinforces racism and classism as well as sexism.

*Summary*

A dual gender culture and society, where one gender has power and arguably ownership over the other gender, leads to the acceptance of rape myths and creation of rape culture that perpetuates violence against women. This dynamic is accomplished in many different ways, but one of the biggest ways that these issues are continued in U.S. culture is through media. It starts at a very early age in G-rated movies (Smith et al. 2010) and especially in Disney animated princess movies (England et al. 2011). It continues with the stereotypical portrayals of gender, gender roles, and gendered expectations in children's fairy tales through the portrayal of hetero-romantic relationships that are depicted as special and even magical (Martin and Kazyak 2009).

These stereotypical portrayals that shape children's understanding of gender roles can lead to the acceptance of rape myths and perpetuation of rape culture in U.S. culture. It is difficult for children to differentiate between fantasy and reality (Smith et al. 2010) and this can also be seen in adults that accept rape myths as facts and continue to victimize women based on stereotypes and myths. It is important that society stops accepting myths and stereotypes as true. The first step in accomplishing that goal is by increasing the awareness of the problems, how they are continued, and what they can do on a personal and institutional level to stop the violence and oppression against women.

Disney movies portray gender norms and have a profound influence on how youth understand gender (Martin and Kazyak 2009, Wohlwend 2009, and England et al. 2011).

However, it is unknown if they also teach rape myths and further overall rape culture. It is the purpose of this research to determine if and how rape culture is portrayed in Disney animated princess movies and if these portrayals have changed over time. It is important to start making changes with the children of our society so that they do not grow up and continue being part of the problem in regarding the acceptance of rape myths and rape culture.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Research has been conducted regarding the animated Disney princess movies and Disney movies in general (Martin and Kazyak 2009, Wohlwend 2009, and England et al. 2011), however, no research has been conducted regarding whether or not attributes of rape culture are portrayed in Disney animated princess movies.

To study the portrayal of culture in Disney animated princess movies Ethnographic Content Analysis (ECA) is used. ECA is orientated to concept development, data collection, and emergent data analysis. It is a way to study and understand culture by focusing on situations, styles, and images to explain patterns of behavior. Altheide (1996) outlines five stages and twelve specific steps involved in ECA as a process of qualitative document analysis that are followed in the development of this research. ECA has previously been used successfully to study film in the context of various topics (Weitz 2010; de Carlo 2007; McCullick, Belcher, Hardin, and Hardin 2003).

For this research, the main guiding research questions is whether attributes of rape culture are portrayed in Disney animated princess movies and, if present, how are the attributes of rape culture portrayed. The second guiding research question is, if there are

attributes of rape culture in these movies, do these attributes and portrayals change over time.

Line by line coding is done, based on the transcript of all the movies. Memo writing is also utilized. Memo writing is the pivotal step between data collection and writing the final analysis of the research. The movies are viewed on DVD and utilizing closed captioning to help ensure that all dialogue is reviewed and coded correctly. While viewing the movies, the researcher conducts line by line coding on the written transcript of all of the movies. The movie transcripts are gathered through a variety of different online sources. The accuracy of these transcripts is verified by this researcher during the research process.

*Measures*

Based on previous research, this researcher develops a list of attributes that are both consistent with the definition of rape culture, based on rape myths, and included on the Power and Control Wheel and Equality Wheel presented by the National Center for Domestic and Sexual Violence (2016). The Power and Control Wheel is located in Appendix B and the Equality Wheel is included in appendix C. The list is presented in appendix A and also included in Table 1 where the characteristics are listed in alphabetic order.

**Table 1. List of characteristics of rape culture and characteristics of equality used in coding**
  - ➢ Coercion and Threats
  - ➢ Economic Abuse
  - ➢ Emotional Abuse
  - ➢ Equality through Economic Partnership
  - ➢ Equality through Honesty and Accountability
  - ➢ Equality through Negotiation and Fairness
  - ➢ Equality through non- threatening behavior

➢ Equality through Respect
➢ Equality through responsible parenting
➢ Equality through Shared Responsibility
➢ Equality through Trust and Support
➢ Intimidation
➢ Isolation
➢ Male Privilege
➢ Men are Violent toward Women
➢ Men have direct power over women
➢ Minimizing, Denying, and Blaming
➢ Using children
➢ Women are objects

This researcher uses two Disney princess sequels that are not included in the final sample to review the coding protocol developed. This procedure assists in making sure that the coding protocols are accurate and assists the researcher in becoming more familiar with line by line coding, memo writing, and the process for this research project. The coding of these two movies is not part of the final report.

*Sample*

According to the Disney Movie Guide (2015) there are twenty one movies that are considered by Disney studios to be animated princess movies. All of these movies are rated G or PG and were released and marketed to children. The first movie was released in 1937 and the last movie was released in 2013. The list of twenty one movies was reduced by removing all sequels and any movie that was not released originally in movie theatres and those that are not considered full length movies. The following list is based on the above rational and is a purposive sample. This reduces the list from twenty one movies down to thirteen. Table 2 is the list of movies included in the sample for this research. The table includes the name of the movie, the year it was produced, and the name of the main princess character.

**Table 2. Sample for this research**
- *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937), Snow White
- *Cinderella* (1950), Cinderella
- *Sleeping Beauty* (1959) Aurora
- *The Little Mermaid* (1989) Ariel
- *Beauty and the Beast* (1991) Belle
- *Aladdin* (1992) Jasmine
- *Pocahontas* (1995) Pocahontas
- *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1996) Esmeralda
- *Mulan* (1998) Mulan
- *The Princess and the Frog* (2009) Tiana
- *Tangled* (2010) Rapunzel
- *Brave* (2012) Merida
- *Frozen* (2013)  Anna

In a few of these movies the main characters are not a princess until they marry a prince, and in some of these movies the main character is not ever actually a princess, but these movies are considered by Disney to be princess movies. For example, Ariel, in *The Little Mermaid,* is a goddess as she is the daughter of a god, Jasmine, in *Aladdin,* is the daughter or a sultan, Pocahontas is the daughter of a chief, and Mulan is never a princess and doesn't marry a prince, In *Frozen*, both Anna and Elsa are initially princesses, but Elsa becomes a queen. A brief description of all movies in the sample is included in Appendix D.

All thirteen movies are reviewed three times in this process using the analytical tool, NVivo.  NVivo is computer software that supports qualitative and mixed methods research, and has been identified as an appropriate tool to use while conducting research based on qualitative methods (Bringer, Johnston, and Brackenridge 2006; Hutchinson, Johnston and Breckon 2010; Cross, Day and Byers 2010;  Smith and Stewart 2012). This researcher also utilizes spreadsheets and tables to organize the main findings and to determine trends within the data.

*Other Concerns and Ethical Issues*

One of the concerns that is relevant to this research is that only one researcher reviewed all of the DVD movies and transcripts for attributes of rape culture. There is no inter-coder reliability to calculate, so the researcher needs to be careful that the descriptions of attributes that support or contradict rape cultures are accurate and consistent while reviewing all thirteen movies. It is important that the researcher be aware of assumptions and preconceived notions, that the coding is reliable, that the researcher follows good coding and memo etiquette, and allows the data to speak for itself. Because of this, coding of each movie is conducted three times to help ensure higher reliability through multiple coding episodes.

Because content analysis is performed on movies and live subjects are not used in this research many of the ethical issues that typically arise in research is not an issue. Consideration for live participants is not a concern and a review by the Institutional Review Board will not be submitted.

FINDINGS

The findings are organized in three board categories: a.) how the characteristics of rape culture are portrayed, b.) who uses the characteristics of rape culture, and c.) if the portrayal of rape culture in the Disney animated princess movies changes over time.

*How the Characteristics of Rape Culture are Portrayed*

Rape culture is portrayed in all thirteen of the Disney animated princess movies. Table 3 shows the breakdown of all of all the characteristics of rape culture that were coded for and which were observed in each of the Disney animated princess movies.

**Table 3. Characteristics of rape culture observed in each Disney animated princess movie**

| Characteristics of Rape Culture | Snow White 1937 | Cinderella 1950 | Sleeping Beauty 1959 | Little Mermaid 1989 | Beauty & Beast 1991 | Aladdin 1992 | Pocahontas 1995 | Hunchback 1996 | Mulan 1998 | Princess & Frog 2009 | Tangled 2010 | Brave 2012 | Frozen 2013 | Percentages of Movies | *N |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Male Privelge | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | 100% | 13 |
| Direct Power | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | 100% | 13 |
| Women as Objects | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | 100% | 13 |
| Violent Toward | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | | X | 92% | 12 |
| Isolation | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | | X | X | | 85% | 11 |
| Intimidation | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | | | 85% | 11 |
| Coercion and Threats | X | X | X | X | X | X | | X | X | | X | | X | 77% | 10 |
| Emotional Abuse | | X | | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | | X | 77% | 10 |
| Economic Abuse | | X | | | | X | | | X | | X | | X | 38% | 5 |
| Mimizing, Denying, Blaming | | | | | | | X | | X | X | | | | 23% | 3 |
| Using Children | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 0% | 0 |

\* N equals the number of movies out of 13 that these characteristics were observed.

Rape culture, like rape, is about gaining and maintaining power and control over women and is based on the idea of patriarchy. The practice of power and control and patriarchal dominance are observed in all thirteen movies reviewed. For example, male privilege, direct power over women, and women as objects was observed in all thirteen films and all of these characteristics are based on the patriarchal value of power and control. However, there were a few characteristic of rape culture that were not observed frequently. This includes economic abuse was observed in five movies, minimizing, denying, or blaming characteristics only was observed in three movies and using children was never observed in any of the moves reviewed. It is believed that using children as a tool to control women was not observed because there were no long-term relationships or marriages regarding the princesses; therefore the princesses did not have children that could be used against them. Many of the princesses could also be considered as children themselves, yet this characteristic of rape culture was not observed in the way that it is

described in the Power and Control Wheel. The rest of the characteristics were observed to varying degrees but occurred in at least 75 percent of the movies.

This study finds that the portrayal of rape culture in Disney movies 1) relies on intimidation, coercion/threats, 2) that isolation is used as a characteristic of rape culture but also as a way to resist patriarchal power and control, 3) the severity of rape culture in the movies is not dependent on the total number of characteristics of rape culture present, but rather on the frequency with which various aspects of rape culture are shown, and 4) that movies depict the characteristics of rape culture by focusing on femininity and sexuality.

*Intimidation and Coercion/Threats*

Two of the characteristics examined was intimidation or coercion/ threats against the princesses. These themes show up frequently in the movies; intimidation is present in 85 percent and coercion/threats are present in 77 percent of the films. Notably, whenever coercion/threats was used to control the princesses, intimidation was also used, and both are used simultaneously. There is only one film, *Frozen*, that portrayed the use of coercion/threats against the princess but did not use intimidation, and there were two movies, *The Princess and the Frog* and *Pocahontas*, that portrays intimidation but not coercion/threats.

In some cases the characteristics of coercion/threats and intimidation are somewhat minimal. For example, in the film *Snow White* the dwarfs tell Snow White to be wary of strangers because they can be dangerous. This is also observed in *Cinderella* when the evil stepmother and stepsister constantly bark orders at Cinderella to complete a variety of household chores around the house. Even though these cases are portrayals of

the characteristics of rape culture they are considered to be relatively innate compared to other examples of where violence and the threat of violence are used against the princesses to control them.

In the majority of the movies, intimidation and threats/coercion occur throughout the films and are very detrimental to the princesses. For example, throughout *Tangled*, Mother Gothel continually puts down Rapunzel and tells Rapunzel that she cannot survive in the outside world without Mother Gothel. It is because of this intimidation that Rapunzel stays in the tower for so long. Another example of coercion/threats and intimidation is when it is portrayed by a look, or a physical action, like in the *Beauty and the Beast* when the Beast growls at Belle and throws objects around the room. Coercion/threats, and intimidation is also portrayed by physical violence or the threat of physical violence. For example, in *Aladdin* when Jafar slaps Jasmine and traps her in a large hourglass, and it is also observed in *Sleeping Beauty* when Maleficent curses Aurora to die on her sixteenth birthday.

Coercion/threats and intimidation can also be seen as an example of bullying, like in *Tangled* by Mother Gothel against Rapunzel. In some cases the actual violence doesn't occur, but in many cases it does. For example, in the *Beauty and the Beast* many threats are made by the Beast against Belle, but he never carries out any of the threats of violence against her; however, in the *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, Frollo does attempt to carry out his threats against Esmerelda by trying to have her hanged and burned at the stake.

*Isolation*

Isolation is defined as controlling what the princess does; this may include who she sees and talks to, what she reads, where she goes, limiting her outside involvement, or using jealousy to justify actions. Notably, while isolation is a tool of power and control within rape culture, princesses in some of these movies are able to use self-imposed isolation as a way to empower themselves and resist patriarchal dominance. In the following movies, isolation is used as a way to gain or maintain control over a princess: *Snow White, Cinderella, Sleeping Beauty, The Hunchback of Notre Dame, Beauty and the Beast, Aladdin, Tangled,* and *Frozen*. In *Cinderella*, the stepmother and the stepdaughters isolate Cinderella from them in the house. They make Cinderella sleep in the servant's area and treat her like a servant throughout the movie, controlling what she does and who she see throughout the day. They treat her with jealous cruelty. In *Aladdin*, the sultan keeps Jasmine in the castle and away from others. The sultan justifies this by saying that it is for Jasmine's own protection, but it is also used to keep her away from those living in the city and to limit her social engagement. In *Tangled*, Mother Gothel keeps Rapunzel locked in the tower so that Mother Gothel can control her ability to heal and uses Rapunzel's power to make her youthful. In all three of these examples, isolation is used as a way to have power and control over the princesses.

As previously mentioned, the princess occasionally isolates herself from others to try to gain back some of the power and control that others have taken from her. This is the situation in *The Little Mermaid*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *Pocahontas*, and *Mulan.* In *The Little Mermaid*, Ariel isolates herself from the rest of the mermaids so that she can go out and explore the world and learn new things. In *Beauty and the Beast*, Belle isolates herself from the rest of the village because she likes to read and gain outside

knowledge. It also helps her keep her distance from Gaston who Belle is not interested in developing a romantic relationship with.  In both *Pocahontas* and *Mulan*, the princesses isolate themselves away from others because they feel that they are different than the rest of the people in their society and to try to escape from all of the pressures that their families, and especially their fathers, exert on them.  By isolating themselves from others they are attempting to gain back their own power and control and agency to pursue their own activities. They also use isolation as a way of gaining more knowledge and personal strength to fight against the expectations of the men in their lives and to escape from the characteristics of rape culture that are utilized against them.

*Severity of the portrayal of Rape Culture*

The film that had the most characteristics of rape culture and the most intense portrayals is *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*. In this movie, all of the characteristics of rape culture was observed except using children. Not only are all of these characteristics observed in this film, but the intensity of the portrayals is also extremely disturbing. Frollo (a city official in love with Esmerelda) attempts to have Esmerelda (the princess) arrested. He also blames Esmerelda for his attraction to her. He burns down much of Paris looking for her and tells her that it was her fault that he did this because he was searching for her. Frollo is observed killing a Gypsy woman and attempting to throw her child down a well. Some of the comments that he makes to Esmerelda are: "It is not too late, I can save you for the flames of this world and the next, choose me or choose the fire"; "The prisoner, Esmerelda, has been found guilty of witchcraft, the sentence, DEATH", and "Mark my words, Gypsy, you will pay for your insolence." Frollo ties Esmerelda to a pole so that she can be burned to death. Esmerelda is definitely viewed as

an object in this film. She has to dance for money, and in one scene, she is dancing around a spear that looks similar to a stripper's pole. She is also viewed as less than human because she is not only a woman, but a Gypsy princess.

It is not just the fact that in almost every scene of *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* there are multiple characteristic of rape culture being utilized against Esmerelda, but it is also that the portrayals of the characteristics of rape culture are extremely severe in comparison to the other movies. In several of the scenes in this movie, Frollo threatens Esmerelda or carries out the threats that he makes against her. He even attempts to kill her or have her killed more than once in the film. In one of the scenes in this movie, it appears that Frollo threated to actually rape Esmerelda. This is not stated implicitly, but is more indirectly implied.

*Power and control over the princesses' femininity and sexuality*

Rape and rape culture are about power and control and the domination of women by men. The characteristics of rape culture in Disney animated princess movies is also about power, control, and domination. The antagonists in these movies try to gain and maintain power and control over the sexuality of the princesses. This theme was observed throughout all thirteen movie sand the plots are centered around the princess coming of age, who and when she is going to marry, if that marriage will be prearranged by someone else, if she is going to follow societal norms regarding approved gendered activities, and what are considered by cultural norms to be desirable feminine characteristics. Table 4 shows a breakdown of all of the movies and which of these characteristics appear in each movie.

**Table 4. Princesses' femininity and sexuality characteristics other characters attempt to control or have power over.**

**Titles of Movies and Year Released**

| Feminity and Sexuality Characteristics | Snow White 1937 | Cinderella 1950 | Sleeping Beauty 1959 | Little Mermaid 1989 | Beauty & Beast 1991 | Aladdin 1992 | Pocahontas 1995 | Hunchback 1996 | Mulan 1998 | Princess & Frog 2009 | Tangled 2010 | Brave 2012 | Frozen 2013 | Percentages of Movies | *N |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Desirable Feminine Attributes | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | 100% | 13 |
| Coming of Age | X |  |  | X | X |  |  | X |  | X | X | X | X | 69% | 9 |
| Other Decisions Regarding Marriage |  | X |  | X | X |  | X | X |  | X | X |  | X | 62% | 8 |
| Gendered Activies |  |  |  | X | X |  | X |  | X | X | X | X |  | 54% | 7 |
| Prearranged Marriage |  |  | X |  |  | X |  |  | X |  |  | X | X | 31% | 5 |

\* N equals the number of movies out of 13 that these characteristics were observed.

One of the most prominent themes regarding the princesses' sexuality is based on cultural norms of desirable attributes of the princesses.  This is observed in all thirteen of the movies and co-exists as a characteristic of rape culture in that women are treated as objects.  For example, Snow White, Aurora (*Sleeping Beauty*), Ariel (*The Little Mermaid*), Belle (*Beauty and the Beast*), and Esmerelda (*The Hunchback of Notre Dame*) were all considered to be extremely beautiful, and Snow White, Aurora, and Ariel, were all desirable because of their singing abilities.  The second most prominent theme was regarding control of the princesses as they are coming of age.  This was observed in *The Little Mermaid* when Ariel tries to break away from her controlling father, and when in *Tangled*, Rapunzel tries to leave her tower and venture to the castle to see the lanterns being released into the sky.  In both of these situations, the antagonist of the movie tries to punish the princesses for trying to venture out on their own.

Marriage is also a theme that emerges in two different ways.  In four of the movies, the princesses' marriages are prearranged by their fathers, and in eight of the thirteen movies other decisions regarding marriage are observed.  For example, in *Beauty*

*and the Beast*, Gaston tries to persuade Belle to marry him, because he feels that he is the best man for her and that he deserves to be with the most beautiful woman in their village.  In *Frozen*, Anna is told by two different characters that she cannot marry Hans because she has only know him for one day.  In *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, Frollo tells Esmerelda that if she doesn't choose him as her husband, he will have her put to death.

In seven of the movies, characters try to control the activities that the princesses are interested in doing and try to make the princesses perform more traditionally gendered activities.  In *Brave*, Merida is told by her mother that she should not shoot bows and arrows because that is an activity that is usually performed by men.  In *The Princess and the Frog*, Tiana is told by male characters that she is not capable of starting her own restaurant because she is a girl.  Mulan takes her father's place in the Chinese army and dresses and acts like a soldier.  She is told in the movie that if anyone finds out that she is a girl she could be put to death.

In every one of the Disney animated princess movies, other characters try to gain and maintain power and control over the princesses by determining what feminine attributes are most desirable, when and if the princess can gain independence, who they are going to marry and under what circumstances, and what activities they can and cannot perform.  In all of these situations the other characters are trying to control the princesses' femininity and sexuality and the princesses are punished if they don't abide by the cultural and societal norms.

*Who demonstrates controlling behaviors?*

It is expected that male characters such as fathers or love interest will portray the characteristics of rape culture, what is not expected is that older women also maintain the patriarchal structure of rape culture in this series of movies. In two out of the thirteen movies (15.39%), the characters that portrays rape culture are   women, in five out of the thirteen movies (38.46%) both men and women characters portray the characteristics of rape culture, and in six of the thirteen movies (46.15%) men portray the characteristics of rape culture. Table 5 builds off of Table 4 and shows a breakdown of the gender of the characters who try to control the princesses' sexuality.

**Table 5. Gender of characters demonstrating controlling behaviors**

| Sex of Characters Controlling Feminity and Sexuality | Snow White 1937 | Cinderella 1950 | Sleeping Beauty 1959 | Little Mermaid 1989 | Beauty & Beast 1991 | Aladdin 1992 | Pocahontas 1995 | Hunchback 1996 | Mulan 1998 | Princess & Frog 2009 | Tangled 2010 | Brave 2012 | Frozen 2013 | Percentages of Movies | *N |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Men |  |  |  |  |  | X | X | X | X | X | X |  |  | 46% | 6 |
| Women |  |  | X |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | X |  | 15% | 2 |
| Both | X | X |  | X | X |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | X | 38% | 5 |

\* N equals the number of movies out of 13 that these characteristics were observed.

Women characters try to eliminate or seriously harm a princess because they are either jealous of the princess' desirable feminine attributes or they want to steal those same attributes for themselves.  This theme is observed in *Snow White* when the evil stepmother tells the huntsman to take Snow White to the forest and kill her so that the evil stepmother can remain the most beautiful in the land.  This theme is also observed in *The Little Mermaid* when Ursula, the evil sea witch, attempts to steal Ariel's voice and her soul so that she can win over Prince Eric and he will want to marry Ursula instead of Ariel.  In *Tangled*, Mother Gothel tries to control Rapunzel so that she can benefit from the magic of Rapunzel's hair which could reverse the sign of aging and heal.

Women characters also attempt to control the princesses in other ways that control their behavior and sexuality as they come of age. For example, in *Brave*, Merida's mother attempts to make Merida into a good mother and wife and also tries to stop her from engaging in predominately masculine activities. In *Tangled*, Mother Gothel attempts to maintain her control and domination over Rapunzel by keeping her locked in the tower so that she cannot experience the world and discover who she is as a person. In *Cinderella*, the evil stepmother turns Cinderella into a servant and attempts to stop Cinderella from being able to marry the Prince.

Women characters and men characters both portray all of the multiple characteristic of rape culture, except the use of children against the princess, to gain and maintain power, control, and dominance over the princesses. Women use all of the characteristic of rape culture that men use except one of them. The only characteristic of rape culture that is not observed portrayed by women characters was minimizing, denying, and blaming. This characteristic is only observed in three movies and is always portrayed by men. One of the best examples of this is when Frollo blames Esmerelda for his desire for her. He blames her for using witchcraft to make him desire her.

Even though this study finds the characteristics of rape culture are portrayed by controlling the princesses' sexuality, it is not typically the love interest who is exerting such control over the princesses. There are only three movies (23.08%) where a potential love interest portrays the characteristics of rape culture. These movies are *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, *Beauty and the Beast*, and *Frozen*. In *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, Esmerelda is not interested in Frollo as a love interest; however, he finds her extremely desirable and portrays the characteristics of rape culture in many scenes

and with severe intensity. In *Beauty and the Beast*, both Gaston and the Beast portray the characteristics of rape culture. Belle is not attracted to Gaston, but does eventually fall in love with the Beast, and in *Frozen*, Anna thinks that she is falling in love with Hans, but by the end of the movie realizes that he is not her true love.

*Changes in Rape Culture over Time (1937 to 2013)*

The portrayal of the characteristics of rape culture in the Disney animated princess movies does not change over time, but does fluctuate depending on the plot and the interaction of the characters. In all thirteen of the movies three major characteristics of rape culture are portrayed: male privilege, power over women, and that women are objects. In both the first movie (*Snow White, 1937*) and the last movie (*Frozen, 2013*) in the series the antagonist tries to have the princess killed or she is left to die. One of the most severe portrayals of the characteristics of rape culture is in one of the movies that was produced in the middle of the rest of them and that movie is *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, released in 1996. Arranged marriages occur in several movies throughout the series and show patriarchy and the direct power that men have over women. Even some of the characteristics of rape culture that are portrayed less often occurs in some of the earlier as well as in some of the later movies. These characteristic include violence toward women, isolation, intimidation, coercion/threats, and emotional abuse. Even the two least observed characteristics, economic abuse and minimizing, denying, and blaming occur throughout the series.

Though negative aspects of rape culture remain prevalent over time, what did change in the Disney animated princess movies are that some positive characteristics of equality and women's agency begin to appear. For example, in some of the films the

princess is able to save the prince, another character, or even herself, displaying

empowerment and agency.  Other positive characteristics are generally seen in the

relationship between the princes and the princesses, like when a prince would show

respect, honesty, trust, support, and shared responsibility. A description and definition of

these characteristics are included in Appendix A.  Table 6 shows the breakdown of

measures of equality and feminine agency by the princesses.

**Table 6. Measure of equality and feminine agency including rescues by the princesses**

**Title of Movies and Year Released**

| Empowering and Equality Characteristics | Snow White 1937 | Cinderella 1950 | Sleeping Beauty 1959 | Little Mermaid 1989 | Beauty & Beast 1991 | Aladdin 1992 | Pocahontas 1995 | Hunchback 1996 | Mulan 1998 | Princess & Frog 2009 | Tangled 2010 | Brave 2012 | Frozen 2013 | Percentages of Movies | *N |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Female Rescues him | | | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | 85% | 11 |
| Responsible Parenting | | X | X | X | X | X | X | | | X | X | X | X | 77% | 10 |
| Trust & Support | | | | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | | 69% | 9 |
| Non-Threatening | X | | X | X | X | X | X | X | | | | | X | 62% | 8 |
| Respect | X | | | X | X | X | X | X | X | | | | X | 62% | 8 |
| Princess Rescues herself | | | | | | | | | X | X | | X | X | 31% | 4 |
| Shared Responsibility | | | | | | | X | X | | | | X | | 23% | 3 |
| Honesty & Accountability | | | | | | | X | | | | X | | | 15% | 2 |
| Economic Partnership | | | | | | | | | | | | X | | 8% | 1 |
| Negotiation & Fairness | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 0% | 0 |

* N equals the number of movies out of 13 that these characteristics were observed.

There are three characteristics of gender equality that occurs throughout the series

such as non-threatening behavior, showing respect, and responsible parenting. Two of

these characteristics appear a few movies in the series such as trust and support, and

when a woman character rescues a man character. Four of the characteristics first appear

in the later movies. These characteristics include: honesty and accountability, shared

responsibility, economic partnership and when a princess rescues herself from a

dangerous situation.  Only one of the equality characteristics is not portrayed in any of

the movies in the series, negotiation and fairness. These characteristics are not as

prevalent as the rape culture characteristics, but they do occur in the Disney animated princess movies.  The most dynamic and empowering characteristic that is shown occurs in *Frozen* when a woman character completes the final climatic rescue in the movie.  This is the only movie in the series where a woman character completes the final climatic rescue, and in this case she rescues another woman character.

DISCUSSION

Researchers have made suggestions regarding how to combat rape culture and some have ideas on why this would be extremely difficult to accomplish. Burt (1980) stated that, "Changing adherence to rape myths will not be easily accomplished since they are so closely interconnected with other strongly held and pervasive attitudes" (229). Edwards et al. (2011) argued that the prevalence of rape culture in the U.S. needs to be addressed on both an individual and institutional level because institutions play a unique role in perpetrating rape myths. Race, culture, and gender all play a role at the individual and societal level in helping to eliminate rape myths and rape culture (Deutsch 2007). The long-range strategy in changing rape culture of the U.S. has to be fighting sex roles and gender stereotyping at a very young age before it is complicated by sex role interactions when they become more salient in adolescence (Burt 1980).

Disney plays an important role in the growth and development of how gender is portrayed in their movies and especially in the Disney animated princess movies. As one of the most influential corporations in the world, Disney does more than provide entertainment, it also shapes, in very powerful ways, how young people understand themselves, relate to others, and experience culture in the larger society (Giroux 2010).

The purpose of this research is to determine if and how the characteristics of rape culture is portrayed in Disney animated princess movies, and if these portrayals change over time. It has been determined that the characteristics of rape culture are portrayed in these movies, and that there are many aspects of rape culture that are not only committed by men, but also by women. It is shown that the portrayal of characteristics of rape culture in these movies are primarily centered on the ideas of gaining and maintaining power, control, and dominance over the princesses, especially in the area of the princesses' sexuality and femininity, and the primary way that this was accomplished was by the use of intimidation and coercion/threats. The portrayals of the characteristics of rape culture changed very little throughout the series of movies that started in1937 and continued to 2013. What did change was some of the more positive characteristics centered on equality, the princesses' agency, and rescues by women in this series of movies, that may be empowering to young girls.

Media aimed at young children is a multibillion dollar a year business and Disney is making large profits not just on the movies that they release but also on all of the marketing of products tied to these same movies. It is the hope of this researcher that Disney will take a more powerful stance on ending the portrayal of the characteristics of rape culture and objectification of women in their movies aimed at young children. It is also hoped that Disney will continue the trend in their movies of empowering girls by showing that they can complete heroic rescues, defend themselves, and demand more equality in their treatment by others. Many young girls grow up wanting to be a princess, and Disney has the power to change these ideals in an extremely powerful way.

It is the opinion of this researcher that more research needs to be conducted on if

the characteristics of rape culture are also portrayed in other U.S. media, especially media aimed at youths. This researcher also recommends that the influence and impact of observing rape culture characteristics be examined in regards to U.S. youth for both young girls and boys. This could be done in a similar way as Gerbner (1970) examines the impacts and effects of watching violence on television by looking at cultural indicators and using cultivation theory.

Another area of further research could be based on the concept of intersectionality. Gopaldas (2013) describes intersectionality as existing on both a macro and micro level. Intersectionality, at the macro level of analysis, refers to the concept of the multiplicity and interactivity of social identity structures such as race, class, and gender. At the micro level of analysis, intersectionality characterizes every person in society as positioned at the intersection of multiple social identity structures and is subject to multiple social advantages and disadvantages. This idea of intersectionality should be able to be observed in Disney Animated Princess movies, because some of the princesses are different then the majority groups based on social economic status, race, ethnicity, age, abilities, sexual orientation, colonization, and gender. Research could be conducted on whether Disney accurately portrays the concepts of multiple inequalities in the films they produce and market to young children. A true representation of intersectionality and displays of multiple systems of oppression and discrimination could offer young girls an example on how to deal with the multitude inequalities that they face daily.

It would also be beneficial to see if different media producer and different genres portray the characteristics of rape culture differently so consumers can make informed

decisions on the types and genres of media their children view. Further research in this area could examine television cartoons, other films and movies, videos, toys, and books aimed at children. Another area of research in this area could examine which types of characters portray the characteristics of rape culture.

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Appendix A. Coding Sheet

| |
|---|
| ***Intimidation*** |
| Making her afraid by using looks, actions and gestures, smashing things, destroying her property, abusing pets, displaying weapons |
| ***Emotional Abuse*** |
| Putting her down, making her feel bad about herself, calling her names, making her think she is crazy, playing mind games, humiliating her, making her feel guilty |
| ***Isolation*** |
| Controlling what see does, who she sees, talks to, and read, controls where she goes, limiting her outside involvement, using jealousy to justify actions |
| ***Minimizing, Denying, and Blaming*** |
| Making light of the abuse and not taking her concerns about it seriously, saying abuse didn't happen, shifting responsibility for abusive behaviors, saying she caused it |
| ***Using children*** |
| Making her feel guilty about the children, using the children to relay messages, using visitation to harass her, threatening to take the children away |
| ***Economic Abuse*** |
| Preventing her from getting or keeping a job, making her ask for money, giving her an allowance, taking her money, not letting her know about or have access to family income |
| ***Male Privilege*** |
| Treating her like a servant, making all the big decisions, acting like the master of the castle, being the one to define men and women roles |
| ***Coercion and Threats*** |
| Making and/or carrying out threats to do harm to her, threatening to leave her, commit suicide, or report her to authorities, making her drop charges, making her do illegal things |
| ***Men have direct power over women*** |
| Men have power over women through strength, men have power over women through social norms, men have to take care of and rescue women |
| ***Men are Violent toward Women*** |
| Men are sexual aggressive toward women, men are hostile toward women, violence is used to maintain social norms, violence is normal, women deserve to be taught lesson through violence, men take what they want from women, women are not trusted |
| ***Women are objects*** |
| Women dress according to social norms, women behave according to social norms, women are valued based on being desired or promiscuous, women are blamed for the negative things that happen to them |
| ***Equality through non- threatening behavior*** |
| Talking and acting so that she feels safes and comfortable expressing herself and doing things |

| |
|---|
| ***Equality through Respect*** |
| Listening to her non-judgmentally, being emotionally affirming and understanding, valuing her opinion |
| ***Equality through Trust and Support*** |
| Supporting her goals, respecting her right to  her own feelings, friends, activities, and opinions |
| ***Equality through Honesty and Accountability*** |
| Accepting responsibility for self, acknowledging past use of violence, admitting being wrong, communicating openly and honestly |
| ***Equality through responsible parenting*** |
| Sharing parental responsibilities, being a positive, nonviolent, role model for children |
| ***Equality through Shared Responsibility*** |
| Mutually agreed on a fair distribution of work, making decisions together |
| ***Equality through Economic Partnership*** |
| Making money decisions together, both partners benefit from financial arrangements |
| ***Equality through Negotiation and Fairness*** |
| Seeking mutually satisfying resolution to conflict, accepting change, willing to compromise |

Appendix B. Power and Control Wheel



www.ncdsv.org/images/powercontrolwheelnoshading.pdf

Appendix C. Equality Wheel
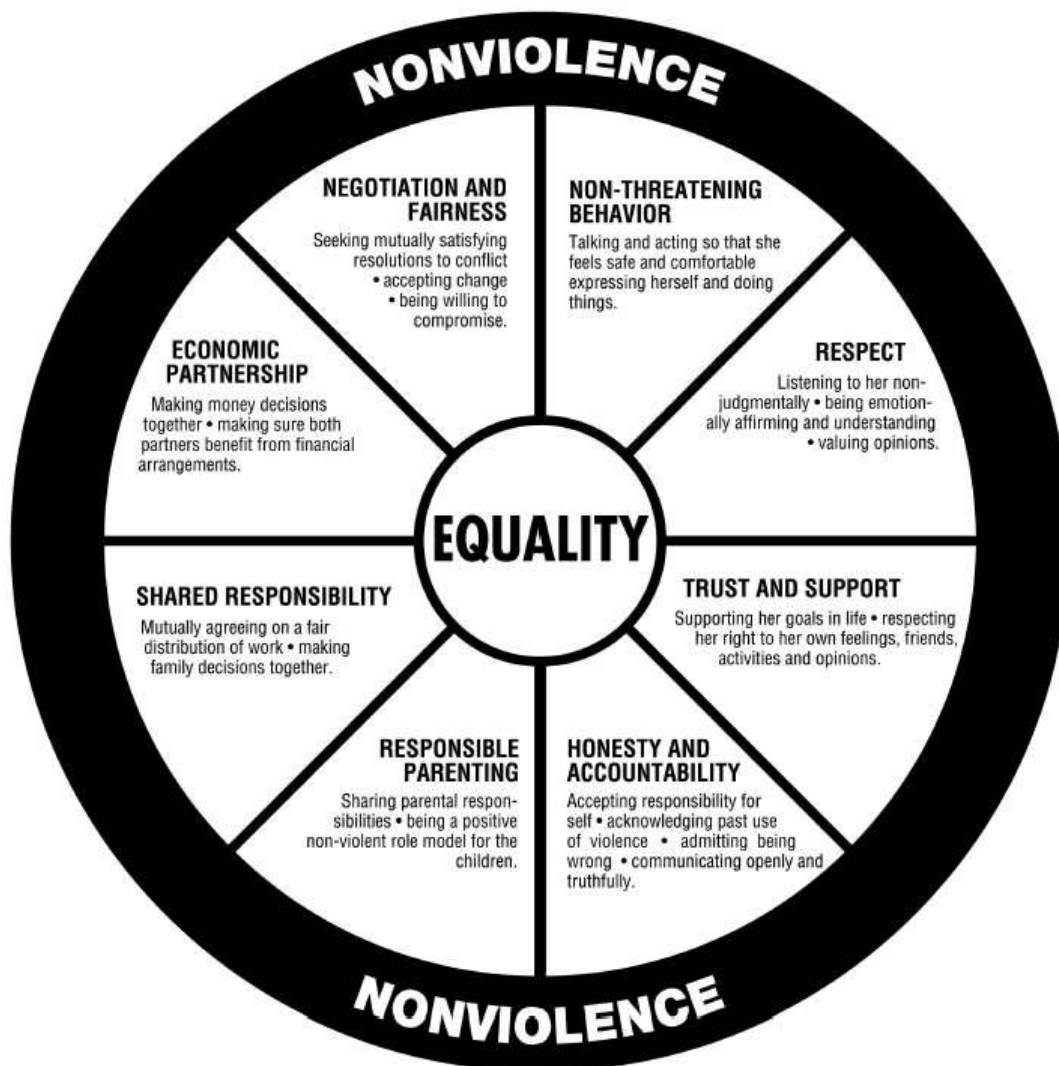
Appendix D. Brief Description of the movies used in the sample

*Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937), Snow White
The beautiful and kindhearted princess Snow White charms every creature in the kingdom except one - her jealous stepmother, the Queen. When the Magic Mirror proclaims Snow White the fairest one of all, she must flee into the forest, where she befriends the lovable seven dwarfs - Doc, Sneezy, Grumpy, Happy, Bashful, Sleepy, and Dopey. But when the Queen tricks Snow White with an enchanted apple, only the magic of true love's kiss can save her.

*Cinderella* (1950), Cinderella
In a far away, long ago kingdom, Cinderella is living happily with her mother and father until her mother dies. Cinderella's father remarries a cold, cruel woman who has two daughters, Drizella and Anastasia. When the father dies, Cinderella's wicked stepmother turns her into a virtual servant in her own house. Meanwhile, across town in the castle, the King determines that his son the Prince should find a suitable bride and provide him with a required number of grandchildren. So the King invites every eligible maiden in the kingdom to a fancy dress ball, where his son will be able to choose his bride. Cinderella has no suitable party dress for a ball, but her friends the mice, led by Jaques and Gus, and the birds lend a hand in making her one, a dress the evil stepsisters immediately tear apart on the evening of the ball. At this point, enter the Fairy Godmother, the pumpkin carriage, the royal ball, the stroke of midnight, the glass slipper, and the rest, as they say, is fairy tale history.

*Sleeping Beauty* (1959) Aurora
After a beautiful princess, Aurora, is born in to royalty everyone gathers to exchange gifts. Everything is perfectly fine until an unwanted guest appears, Maleficent. Magnificent casts a spell on the young princess and announces that she will die by pricking her finger on the spindle of a spinning wheel on the evening of her 16th birthday. Fortunately, one of the good fairies, Merryweather, changes the spell so Aurora will fall asleep, and that the only way to wake her up were the tears from her true love. Finally the day comes. Will she be left to sleep forever?

*The Little Mermaid* (1989) Ariel
In Disney's beguiling animated romp, rebellious 16-year-old mermaid Ariel is fascinated with life on land. On one of her visits to the surface, which are forbidden by her controlling father, King Triton, she falls for a human prince. Determined to be with her new love, Ariel makes a dangerous deal with the sea witch Ursula to become human for three days. But when plans go awry for the star-crossed lovers, the king must make the ultimate sacrifice for his daughter.

*Beauty and the Beast* (1991) Belle
Having lived a life in selfishness, a young prince is cursed by a mysterious enchantress to having the appearance of a monstrous beast. His only hope is to learn to love a young woman and earn her love in return in order to redeem himself. Years later, his chance

shows itself when a young maiden named Belle offers to take her ill father's place as his prisoner. With help from the castle's enchanted staff, Belle learns to appreciate her captor and immediately falls in love with him. Back in the village however, an unscrupulous hunter has his own plans for Belle.

### *Aladdin* (1992) Jasmine

Aladdin is a poor street urchin who spends his time stealing food from the marketplace in the city of Agrabah. His adventures begin when he meets a young girl who happens to be Princess Jasmine, who is forced to be married by her wacky yet estranged father. Aladdin's luck suddenly changes when he retrieves a magical lamp from the Cave of Wonders. What he unwittingly gets is a fun-loving genie who only wishes to have his freedom. Little do they know is that the Sultan's sinister advisor Jafar has his own plans for both Aladdin and the lamp.

### *Pocahontas* (1995) Pocahontas

This is the Disney animated tale of the romance between a young American Indian woman named Pocahontas and Capt. John Smith, who journeyed to the New World with other settlers to begin fresh lives. Her powerful father, Chief Powhatan, disapproves of their relationship and wants her to marry a native warrior. Meanwhile, Smith's fellow Englishmen hope to rob the Native Americans of their gold. Can Pocahontas' love for Smith save the day?

### *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1996) Esmeralda

In 15th century Paris, Clopin the puppeteer tells the story of Quasimodo, the misshapen but gentle-souled bell ringer of Notre Dame, who was nearly killed as a baby by Claude Frollo, the Minister of Justice. But Frollo was forced by the Archdeacon of Notre Dame to raise Quasimodo as his own. Now a young man, Quasimodo is hidden from the world by Frollo in the belltower of the cathedral. But during the Festival of Fools, Quasimodo, cheered on by his gargoyle friends Victor, Hugo, and Laverne, decides to take part in the festivities, where he meets the lovely gypsy girl Esmeralda and the handsome soldier Phoebus. The three of them find themselves ranged against Frollo's cruelty and his attempts to destroy the home of the gypsies, the Court of Miracles. And Quasimodo must desperately defend both Esmeralda and the very cathedral of Notre Dame.

### *Mulan* (1998) Mulan

This retelling of the old Chinese folktale is about the story of a young Chinese maiden who learns that her weakened and lame father is to be called up into the army in order to fight the invading Huns. Knowing that he would never survive the rigours of war in his state, she decides to disguise herself and join in his place. Unknown to her, her ancestors are aware of this and to prevent it, they order a tiny disgraced dragon, Mushu to join her in order to force her to abandon her plan. He agrees, but when he meets Mulan, he learns that she cannot be dissuaded and so decides to help her in the perilous times ahead.

### *The Princess and the Frog* (2009) Tiana

A modern day retelling of the classic story The Frog Prince. The Princess and the Frog

finds the lives of arrogant, carefree Prince Naveen and hardworking waitress Tiana crossing paths. Prince Naveen is transformed into a frog by a conniving voodoo magician and Tiana, following suit, upon kissing the amphibian royalty. With the help of a trumpet-playing alligator, a Cajun firefly, and an old blind lady who lives in a boat in a tree, Naveen and Tiana must race to break the spell and fulfill their dreams.

*Tangled* (2010) Rapunzel
After receiving the healing powers from a magical flower, the baby Princess Rapunzel is kidnapped from the palace in the middle of the night by Mother Gothel. Mother Gothel knows that the flower's magical powers are now growing within the golden hair of Rapunzel, and to stay young, she must lock Rapunzel in her hidden tower. Rapunzel is now a teenager and her hair has grown to a length of 70-feet. The beautiful Rapunzel has been in the tower her entire life, and she is curious of the outside world. One day, the bandit Flynn Ryder scales the tower and is taken captive by Rapunzel. Rapunzel strikes a deal with the charming thief to act as her guide to travel to the place where the floating lights come from that she has seen every year on her birthday. Rapunzel is about to have the most exciting and magnificent journey of her life.

*Brave* (2012) Merida
Set in Scotland in a rugged and mythical time, "Brave" features Merida, an aspiring archer and impetuous daughter of royalty. Merida makes a reckless choice that unleashes unintended peril and forces her to spring into action to set things right.

*Frozen* (2013) Anna
Anna, a fearless optimist, sets off on an epic journey - teaming up with rugged mountain man Kristoff and his loyal reindeer Sven - to find her sister Elsa, whose icy powers have trapped the kingdom of Arendelle in eternal winter. Encountering Everest-like conditions, mystical trolls and a hilarious snowman named Olaf, Anna and Kristoff battle the elements in a race to save the kingdom. From the outside Anna's sister, Elsa looks poised, regal and reserved, but in reality, she lives in fear as she wrestles with a mighty secret-she was born with the power to create ice and snow. It's a beautiful ability, but also extremely dangerous. Haunted by the moment her magic nearly killed her younger sister Anna, Elsa has isolated herself, spending every waking minute trying to suppress her growing powers. Her mounting emotions trigger the magic, accidentally setting off an eternal winter that she can't stop. She fears she's becoming a monster and that no one, not even her sister, can help her.

http://www.imdb.com/