

5-1-2014

Long May She Reign: A Rhetorical Analysis of Gender Expectations in Disney's Tangled and Disney/Pixar's Brave

Caitlin J. Saladino
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/thesesdissertations>



Part of the [Communication Commons](#), [Film and Media Studies Commons](#), and the [Rhetoric Commons](#)

Repository Citation

Saladino, Caitlin J., "Long May She Reign: A Rhetorical Analysis of Gender Expectations in Disney's Tangled and Disney/Pixar's Brave" (2014). *UNLV Theses, Dissertations, Professional Papers, and Capstones*. 2137.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.34917/5836156>

This Thesis is protected by copyright and/or related rights. It has been brought to you by Digital Scholarship@UNLV with permission from the rights-holder(s). You are free to use this Thesis in any way that is permitted by the copyright and related rights legislation that applies to your use. For other uses you need to obtain permission from the rights-holder(s) directly, unless additional rights are indicated by a Creative Commons license in the record and/or on the work itself.

This Thesis has been accepted for inclusion in UNLV Theses, Dissertations, Professional Papers, and Capstones by an authorized administrator of Digital Scholarship@UNLV. For more information, please contact digitalscholarship@unlv.edu.

LONG MAY SHE REIGN:
A RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF GENDER EXPECTATIONS IN DISNEY'S
TANGLED AND DISNEY/PIXAR'S *BRAVE*

by

Caitlin J. Saladino

Bachelor of Arts - Communication Studies
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
2012

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the

Master of Arts - Communication Studies

Department of Communication Studies
College of Urban Affairs
The Graduate College

University of Nevada, Las Vegas
May 2014

Copyright by Caitlin J. Saladino, 2014

All Rights Reserved



THE GRADUATE COLLEGE

We recommend the thesis prepared under our supervision by

Caitlin J. Saladino

entitled

**Long May She Reign: A Rhetorical Analysis of Gender Expectations in
Disney's *Tangled* and Disney/Pixar's *Brave***

is approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts - Communication Studies

Department of Communication Studies

Sara VanderHaagen, Ph.D., Committee Chair

Thomas Burkholder, Ph.D., Committee Member

Erika Engstrom, Ph.D., Committee Member

David Dickens, Ph.D., Graduate College Representative

Kathryn Hausbeck Korgan, Ph.D., Interim Dean of the Graduate College

May 2014

ABSTRACT

**Long May She Reign:
A Rhetorical Analysis of Gender Expectations in Disney's *Tangled* and
Disney/Pixar's *Brave***

by

Caitlin J. Saladino

Dr. Sara VanderHaagen, Examination Committee Chair
Professor of Communication Studies
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

This project addresses messages about gender expectations in Disney princess narratives. The two films included in my project are *Tangled* (2010) and *Brave* (2012), which feature the most recently inducted princesses to the marketed Disney Princess line (Rapunzel and Merida, respectively). Using genre as an organizing principle, I argue that Rapunzel and Merida are different from the past Disney princesses (Snow White, Cinderella, Ariel, Jasmine, etc.) because their narratives reflect new ideas about gender expectations in modern society. The central tension appearing in both films is the opposition between the image of woman as traditional, domestic, and dependent and woman as progressive, industrious, and independent. The ways in which Rapunzel and Merida address this tension reflects changing roles of women in society more generally. In *Tangled*, Rapunzel experiences consciousness-raising in her quest for self-discovery, and the film's audience is also invited to experience consciousness-raising about gender expectations. In *Brave*, Merida's quest for self-efficacy (control of her own destiny) displays new ideas about gender expectations as well. In society there is an unrealistic expectation which influences young women to believe they can have a rewarding life as a home maker and achieve a fulfilling professional career, if only they are willing to work

hard enough. In other words, society is in control of the destiny of women based on expectations. Merida suggests an alternative narrative to the expectations of her society by fighting for self-efficacy. Through Merida's narrative, *Brave* expresses new ideas about social expectations of women in reality. The messages about gender appear most explicitly in the princess's words and the song lyrics. These messages are considered moral messages because they suggest ways about how the world ought to be, and therefore may resonate with young children who view Rapunzel and Merida as role models. This thesis is a valuable addition to current communication studies literature because while princesses have been analyzed rhetorically in the past, a scholarly investigation of Disney's newest princesses has yet to be published.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Writing this thesis has helped to shape my future in a variety of ways. As I begin my doctoral program in Higher Education in Fall of 2014, I now have the tools necessary to accomplish a dissertation. The skills I have learned as a graduate student in the Department of Communication Studies at UNLV will allow me to excel in all my future collegiate and professional endeavors. This Master's degree has given me an opportunity to work with incredible people and I will always have fond memories of my time in this program. I want to begin by thanking Dr. Sara VanderHaagen for taking me on as a thesis advisee for this project. I knew very early on that I wanted to study Disney not only to keep myself committed to the project, but to ensure that the final product was something I felt contributed to the world outside our field. Dr. VanderHaagen was encouraging and supportive of this popular culture project from the start. It was very easy as a student in her classes to recognize that she was the best advisor for me. Through the drafting process of this thesis, her feedback was absolutely invaluable to reaching a final product that I am, indeed, proud of. Thank you, Dr. VanderHaagen, for the countless hours you spent helping me, and for believing in the value of this project. I look up to you as an example of the type of scholar and mentor I hope to be one day.

I also wish to thank the members of my committee who were so instrumental in the success of this thesis. Thank you first to Dr. Erika Engstrom, who provided me with key pieces of scholarship that helped to frame the direction of this entire project. The suggestion you made to break apart the analysis of *Tangled* and *Brave* into two, separate chapters helped get me through the challenges of drafting this thesis. Second, I would like to thank Dr. David Dickens for his insight and his enthusiasm for this project from the

start. In our initial meeting, you made me feel like one of your own students and your friendly suggestions during the prospectus defense were so appreciated. Finally, the critical concepts used to structure this project would not have been possible without Dr. Tom Burkholder. My understanding of rhetoric comes from the valuable advice I received from Dr. Burkholder at various points of the project. Thank you for reminding me that rhetorical criticism must be polymorphous, taking many forms to provide a truly evaluative analysis. This reminder allowed me to be a better and more thorough critic.

This thesis would also not have been possible without the encouragement of my COM 101 family, the people who shared in this journey of graduate school with me from start to finish. I am most grateful to have worked with Professor William Belk, my instructional mentor and basic course director. I would not be the teacher I am today without your guidance. During the two years I spent in this program, you always took the time to ask how I was doing and truly cared about me. I am forever grateful for all you have done for me. Thank you to the members of office 4121 for making every day in the office enjoyable. The post-it wall will always represent the memories we shared together. Sara Kaplan, thank you for being the most supportive and friendly second-year mentor I could have asked for. Colby Miyose, your friendship and laughter has made my own time as a second-year so enjoyable, and am looking forward to hearing about your future successes. To my friend and officemate, Michael Eisenstadt: thank you for your confidence in me, for the exorbitant number of nicknames, and for your help with nearly every final project I worked on during my master's career. You excel above your peers as a dedicated student, exceptional scholar, and an even better friend. Finally, thank you to my very good friend, Sheriff's Deputy Travis Trickey. Thank you for teaching me to

focus on the things that truly matter. You reminded me every day that one's personal definition of success cannot be prescribed by others. I have been *successful* because of the lessons you taught me, and for that I cannot thank you enough.

DEDICATION

Disney films have been a part of who I am for as long as I can remember. At two years old, I watched *Beauty and the Beast* on a constant loop, singing and dancing with my stuffed toy Beast to the tune of “*Tale as Old as Time*.” At four years old, I pretended I was Simba, climbing the couch and roaring at the top of my imaginary ‘Pride Rock.’ At seven years old, I dressed up in a mermaid tail, colored my hair red and sang “Part of Your World” at my elementary school talent show. I could have never anticipated that in my childhood memories, I would find a topic worth researching for a Master’s thesis. This project is dedicated to the people in my life that understand what Disney really means to me... The people who understand why I love visiting Disneyland, who understand why my favorite way to spend a Saturday night is watching a marathon of Disney movies, and who understand why I dream of sharing my love of Disney with my children one day.

To my dad and mom, Steve and Mary: thank you for always being there for me and reminding me that I can do, and be anything I want. Your encouragement has helped me to overcome the challenges I faced as a graduate student, and I cannot thank you enough. You reminded me to be strong like Merida, to chase the wind and touch the sky.

To my sister and brother, Carleen and Michael: thank you for allowing me to read drafts of this thesis to you for over a year. As siblings, the enthusiasm we share for Disney made writing and sharing this thesis with you enjoyable. You reminded me to be like Anna, to remember that family is the closest bond of all.

To my future prince, Sean: thank you for being understanding of the time that I needed to dedicate to completing this thesis. You have supported me in finishing this

project, which has allowed me to start building a solid foundation for our future. I am so fortunate to have you in my life, and I can't wait to see the future that lies ahead for us. Your unconditional love helped remind me to be resilient like Rapunzel. With the completion of this part of our life, I am reminded every day that *everything is different, now that I see you...*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
DEDICATION	viii
CHAPTER ONE: An Introduction to Disney Studies	1
<u>Introduction</u>	1
Research Purpose	2
<u>Literature Review</u>	3
Disney Studies	5
Critical Investigations of Disney Princesses	8
<i>Princesses Operate in Patriarchal Societies</i>	10
<i>Princesses Should Be Beautiful</i>	11
<i>Princesses Must “Dream” of Social Advancement</i>	13
<u>Introducing a New Perspective</u>	14
The Goal of Disney Princess Criticism	14
A Child’s Ability to Reason Beyond Critique	16
Alternative Moral Messages	18
<i>Princesses are Capable of Self-Motivated Advancement</i>	18
<i>Princesses Should Respect Nature and Animals</i>	20
<i>Princesses Should Stand Up for Others</i>	21
<u>Method</u>	23
Introduction	23
Overview of Method	23
<u>Overview of Subsequent Chapters</u>	26
Overview of Chapter Two	26
Overview of Chapters Three and Four	28
<u>Conclusion</u>	31
CHAPTER TWO: Disney Princesses - A Rhetorical History	39
<u>Introduction</u>	39
<u>Analysis</u>	40
Walt’s World of Disney	40
Eisner’s World of Disney	45
Today’s World of Disney	50
<u>Conclusion</u>	53
CHAPTER THREE: Untangling Perceptions of the Modern Woman, Consciousness-Raising of the Androgynous Disney Princess	59
<u>Introduction</u>	59
<u>Rhetorical Strategies</u>	61
Consciousness-Raising	61
<u>Analysis</u>	65

Mother's Control Imposed on Princess's Ambition	68
Mother's Control Conflicts with Princess's Ambition	71
Princess's Ambition Reigns Over Mother's Ambition	78
<u>Conclusion</u>	82
 CHAPTER FOUR: Being <i>Brave</i>, A Princess's Alternative Narrative to Dominant Gender Expectations	88
<u>Introduction</u>	88
Woman's Role and Social Climate: 2008-2012	90
<u>Analysis</u>	95
Mother's Tradition Imposed on Princess's Ambition	96
Mother's Tradition Conflicts with Princess's Ambition	98
Princess's Ambition Reigns Over Mother's Tradition	102
<u>Conclusion</u>	111
 CHAPTER FIVE: Long May She Reign, Disney Princesses as Moral Role Models for Society	117
<u>Introduction</u>	117
Contributions to Society	118
Moral Messages in <i>Tangled</i> and <i>Brave</i>	121
<i>Marriage is a Not a Necessary End</i>	121
<i>Rejecting Authority Is Necessary in the Quest for Self-Discovery</i>	125
<i>Princesses Should Embody the Virtues of Femininity and Masculinity</i>	126
<u>Future Directions</u>	129
<u>Conclusion</u>	133
 APPENDIX A: Disney Letter of Rejection to Mary Ford, 1938	137
 APPENDIX B: Lyrics to song "When Will My Life Begin?"	138
 APPENDIX C: Lyrics to song "Mother Knows Best"	139
 APPENDIX D: Lyrics to song "Reprise of Mother Knows Best"	141
 APPENDIX E: Lyrics to song "Into The Open Air"	143
 APPENDIX F: Lyrics to song "Learn Me Right"	144
 BIBLIOGRAPHY	145
 CURRICULUM VITA	156

CHAPTER ONE: An Introduction to Disney Studies

Introduction

This thesis explores gendered messages contained in Disney princess films. In this first chapter, I examine the body of literature surrounding Disney animated movies. Specifically, I explore films with princesses as main characters in order to understand how mass communication texts depict the roles of females in society. The analytical chapters of this thesis consist of two Disney films as rhetorical objects: *Tangled* (2010) and *Brave* (2012). I focus on the female protagonists of these films: Rapunzel and Merida, respectively. As an overarching theme, I am interested in the ways that Disney films contain moral messages, and how those messages shape a rhetorical understanding of the texts. Much like the terms “rhetoric” and “rhetorical,” the terms “moral” and “morality” have a variety of definitions within moral education literature. For the purpose of this thesis, I refer to the term “moral messages” in the sense articulated by moral education scholars, Rebecca Glover, Lance Garmon, and Darrell Hull.¹ In their assessment of moral messages in television programming, Glover, Garmon, and Hull define moral messages as “the themes presented in media that may influence viewers’ understandings of social standards of right and wrong that pertain to... social norms regarding how people ought or ought not to treat each other.”² Of special concern to this study are those moral messages that influence the viewer’s understandings of social standards of gender expectation.

Through this investigation, I will also provide the field of rhetorical studies with a new perspective on the critique of Disney animated films. Perhaps the most important result of this study is the refocus of attention on Disney films as important rhetorical

artifacts containing messages that might affect society. By examining the messages contained in Disney princess films, my analysis will express how the various rhetorical strategies exhibited in the films are promoted to a global audience through cinematic means, with special focus on children as a particularly amenable target audience. Simultaneously, using a rhetorical perspective will add new and unique knowledge to the existing body of literature on Disney's influence on society. Finally, this study is important due to the recency of these films, as no rhetorical study to date has sought to investigate the two newest additions to Disney's princess line.

Research Purpose

Through this project, I ultimately wish to encourage the exploration of Disney films as an important area for the discipline of rhetorical studies. In the process of conducting research for this project, I noticed an unsettling trend in the literature on Disney films. Much work has been done to explore the implications of Disney films for audiences and society as a whole, but this body of literature is also limited in the field of communication studies. "Disney studies," a body of research bent to the Disney phenomenon,³ has been embraced by scholars of film, English, and history, but the literature on Disney is sparse within the field of communication studies. This became especially apparent as I began to construct my reading list for this project and found it challenging to find communication-centered interventions. For this reason, I recognize an important lack in the scholarship of our field, which has motivated my study of this topic.

Additionally, Disney studies is what I believe the field of communication studies needs in order to become a more versatile discipline. This project contributes to the deep, historical commitment among rhetoricians to produce scholarship that is publicly

relevant; this study connects the traditional tools of rhetorical critics to unexplored popular texts that influence adults and children alike. Disney is a cultural force, an accessible phenomenon that affects everyone in some way or another. With this in mind, Disney can serve as a way for rhetoricians and communication scholars more generally to cipher scholarly investigations in a package that non-academics could decode. Perhaps then, Disney films can be a tool for bridging the gap between the realm of academia and the realm of the social. Studying Disney films allows the field of rhetoric to span beyond an immediate, academic audience, giving access to potentially anyone. Disney princess films are especially necessary for study because they articulate gender expectations. These gender expectations are mirrored in society, and therefore make a scholarly investigation of this phenomenon intriguing for a broad audience. Specifically, this thesis investigates the messages about gender expectations contained in the two most recent Disney princess films: *Tangled* and *Brave*. I begin by offering a literature review on the study of Disney films and the Disney Princess marketing campaign as the contexts of this project.

Literature Review

Perhaps the most important development in the discipline of rhetorical studies today is the broadening of the body of texts deemed acceptable in rhetorical analysis to include a wide variety of rhetorical artifacts. By assuming this perspective, virtually anything can be studied rhetorically including cultural standards, fashion, tastes, monuments, places, and film. This wide sweeping approach is the most inclusive way of understanding the way that cultural phenomena, such as Disney films, can be explored as socially relevant rhetorical artifacts. While not a traditional rhetorical speech text, Disney

princess films are both worthwhile and necessary rhetorical artifacts for the understanding of moral messages pertaining to gender. Examining the messages contained in these popular films allows for scholars to explore the way that cultural phenomena influence several facets of our lives and consequently shape society.

Film has become a pervasive art that transcends entertainment value alone, as messages in film reflect the choices of “real-life” communicators. Communication scholar David McMahan notes that no instance of mass mediated communication is void of influence from interpersonal communication and vice versa.⁴ Real-life communicators create films, which in turn reflect the communicative expectations of society. If the aim of rhetorical criticism is to explore the interactions between an artifact and society, then it is only fitting that films be examined as socially constructive texts. In addition, communication scholar Barry Brummett suggests that the pervasive nature of stories in film “do not merely pose problems, they suggest ways and means to resolve the problems insofar as they follow discursively a pattern that people might follow in reality.”⁵ This implies that films do not simply exist in a vacuum, but instead are rhetorical organisms that grow and react to the social context of their production. For the purpose of this analysis, an evaluation of the importance of film will be conducted through an investigation of two particular Disney princess films. To frame the significance of *Tangled* and *Brave*, this thesis investigates the Disney princess line, which contains the following eleven Disney movies: *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937), *Cinderella* (1950), *Sleeping Beauty* (1959), *The Little Mermaid* (1989), *Beauty and the Beast* (1991), *Aladdin* (1992), *Pocahontas* (1995), *Mulan* (1998), *The Princess and The Frog* (2009), *Tangled* (2010), and *Brave* (2012). A review of the literature on Disney films will

illuminate both what has been accomplished by rhetorical scholars in the past and what still must be done in order to build a strong foundation of literature on Disney princess films.

Disney Studies

“Disney studies” has recently emerged as a widely discussed topic of interdisciplinary interest. According to Disney scholar Rebecca-Anne Do Rozario, “Disney studies has become a multidisciplinary field of study.”⁶ The Disney phenomenon is a cultural force that has inundated the American public for nearly a century. According to rhetorical scholars Elizabeth Walker Mechling and Jay Mechling, Disney has wielded great power “over the years as the creator of grand narratives, of American mythologies, about American origins, history, present, and future.”⁷ These grand narratives have come in many forms including reinterpretations of fairytales from around the world, stories based on real historical figures, and original stories written by creative animation teams. Animators and film writers behind the scenes often express that Disney’s responsibility is to produce and tell great stories. An interview with Disney story head Paul Briggs reveals this sentiment. Briggs discusses the studio’s “story trust, and ‘keeper’ of the ‘safe room,’ which is the nickname for the Disney’s writer’s room where artists and writers feel safe to share personal things from their own lives to help inform the stories they are telling.”⁸ Not only does Disney strive to tell great stories, but the stories told reflect the human experience. But Disney’s reach has spanned beyond film, as the company has grown into a corporate empire since the company’s first success with *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* in 1937. Business writer Andrew Beattie notes that before Disney became a world powerhouse company, “with interests spanning the globe, Disney was more closely

associated with the vision of the man after whom it was named.”⁹ Walt Disney’s original vision for his company has transformed into a company named seventeenth most valuable brand in the world by *Forbes*,¹⁰ with a market value of \$103.96 billion as of May 2013.¹¹

The reach of Disney has prompted Disney studies scholars to investigate the messages and effects of the Walt Disney Company on viewers, consumers, and audiences. “Within Disney studies literature, a variety of approaches have been implemented, including examination of Disney films compared to their original written versions,¹² the marketing and context of Disney film releases,¹³ and the imagery of Disney characters and resulting body image investigations.¹⁴ Since the mid 1990’s, the critical investigation of Disney films has become a specific area of interest for rhetorical scholars. This branch of research includes many different approaches from within communication studies. For example, Annalee Ward illustrates the versatility of Disney films in her book *Mouse Morality: The Rhetoric of Disney Animated Film*. An influential text for my own investigation, Ward’s book provides rhetorical criticisms of five prominent films: *The Lion King* (1994), *Pocahontas* (1995), *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1996), *Hercules* (1997), and *Mulan* (1998). In each of her analyses, Ward uses a different theoretical perspective to investigate the films and subsequently illustrate the versatility of these rhetorical texts.¹⁵ As an overarching goal, Ward seeks to illuminate the ability to use different critical approaches to uncover the moral messages taught in the films and “demonstrate the possibility of understanding the films from any number of angles.”¹⁶ Using a similar approach, this literature review seeks to account for the various interpretations of Disney *princess* films and the subsequent evaluations of morality that can be made.

The conceptualization of “Disney princess films” comes from the marketing line that specifically showcases the female heroines of Disney films. According to author Peggy Orenstein, the “Disney princess line” is dedicated to the marketing of princess characters separate from their film’s release.¹⁷ Originally released in 2000, the Disney Princess Line sold \$300 million in its first year, without any marketing focus groups, or advertisements.¹⁸ In a *New York Times* article titled, “What’s Wrong with Cinderella,” Orenstein discusses the span of Disney Consumer Products associated with this Disney princess line:

Sales at Disney Consumer Products, which started the craze [...] by packaging nine of its female characters under one royal rubric, have shot up to \$3 billion, globally (in 2006) from \$300 million in 2001. There are now more than 25,000 Disney Princess items. “Princess,” as some Disney execs call it, is not only the fastest-growing brand the company has ever created; they say it is on its way to becoming the largest girls’ franchise on the planet.¹⁹

As if by pixie dust, the anticipated success stated by Disney executives in 2006 has become a reality; in 2012, Disney Princess topped *Forbes*’s list of the 20 best-selling entertainment products, ahead of Sesame Street and Star Wars.²⁰

Disney princess has become a prominent part of growing up for young girls, and has therefore blossomed into a scholarly consideration in recent decades. The investigation of Disney princesses stems from an understanding of the term “princess” itself. According to child development scholar Karen Wohlwend, princess invokes certain connotations. Wohlwend notes that “princess characters voice scripts for passive victims,”²¹ and therefore show a subordinate status. A princess is typically juvenile, naïve, and helpless, representing a “persona that is friendly, always-beautiful, and self-sacrificing.”²² In the end, the princess rarely loses sight of her goal to attract a prince. According to folklorist Sharon Sherman, “the princess may be seen as the female

counterpart of the hero.”²³ These connotations of “princess” invite scholars to consider the significant messages that may be expressed through Disney’s representations of “princess.” With its success as a marketing line, Disney Princess has become a popular area for scholarly investigation in recent years. I offer a discussion Disney studies literature that specifically addresses Disney princesses in order to understand the rhetorical implications of these films. The majority of academic literature on Disney princesses tends to focus on the immoral messages that appear as a result of these princess’s actions and in some cases *inactions*. I will provide a synthesis of this literature in order to frame the resulting perspective taken in this thesis.

Critical Investigations of Disney Princesses

In 1975, folklore scholar Kay Stone wrote, “heroines have been virtually ignored except by a handful of writers interested in children’s literature.”²⁴ However, the growth of Disney studies, and the scholarly interest in princess narratives has put this idea to rest. For critics today, the problem with Disney does not lie only in its power as a teacher of moral messages, but also in the fact that the morals being taught are aimed primarily at a child audience.²⁵ For Ward, Disney’s adaptation to cultural changes has been realized through the “Disneyfication” of each fairytale plot, fitting a formula for both commercial success and Disney’s perspective on reality.²⁶ As illustrated in the literature, this “Disneyfication” of society raises the question of whether or not Disney films “contribute positively to children’s moral education.”²⁷

To respond to this inquiry, scholars from various disciplines have provided “critiques” of Disney princess films. I use their word “critique” with caution, for my investigation as a rhetorical criticism employs the term in order to address evaluative,

rather than critical implications of the films. A vast number of scholarly investigations of Disney film seem to employ the Merriam-Webster dictionary definition of the word critique, “making or expressing *unfavorable* judgments about things.”²⁸ However, rhetoricians employ this word differently. As rhetorician Karlyn Kohrs Campbell notes, “the critical process makes conscious and explicit what may be non-conscious or even unconscious for the author(s) and what is unrecognized by a casual or non-expert audience.”²⁹ Rhetorical criticism seeks to “make overt what is hidden,”³⁰ but does not initially seek to determine the value (unfavorable or favorable) of what is found. A true critique should attempt to evaluate all sides of an issue, or argument in order to present a well-rounded and valid analysis. In order to illustrate the types of past criticism on Disney films, I will provide a brief synthesis of this literature.

To reiterate the goals of this literature review, I will reference the definition of moral messages introduced in the opening paragraphs of this chapter. Again, Glover, Garmon and Hull define moral messages as those messages that influence viewers’ understandings of social standards.³¹ In many cases, Disney as a media force has provided a set of standards about how the world should operate. According to communication scholar Sharon Downey, “the images culled from fairy tales’ oral and written traditions persist in their contemporary mass-mediated manifestations, including Disney animated film features.”³² Disney critics have overwhelmingly interpreted Disney animated films for the negative messages they may contain; these types of evaluations have been focused on Disney princess investigations primarily. As quoted in Downey, Disney princess films have been condemned [...] “for their stereotypical, sexually provocative, and denigrating portraits of females. For example, Lieberman criticizes

Disney's 'beauty contest' motif as harmful for viewers; and Stone indicts Disney heroines for their passivity."³³ To understand the scope of past Disney princess scholarship, I discuss three moral messages that I see frequently mentioned in Disney studies scholarship: (1) princesses operate in patriarchal societies; (2) princesses should be beautiful; (3) princesses must "dream" for social advancement.

Princesses Operate in Patriarchal Societies

"We all must serve our Emperor, who guards us from the Huns: a man by bearing arms, a girl by bearing sons." –chorus girls (*Mulan*)

Scholars have traditionally taken aim at the kingdom of gender constructed in Disney films. Patriarchy is especially upheld in the first generation³⁴ of princess films: *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, *Cinderella*, and *Sleeping Beauty*. According to literary critic Brenda Ayers, Disney both mirrors a Victorian tale and perpetuates a nineteenth-century notion of domesticity in the portrayal of the princesses.³⁵ Ayers also notes, "women are to be submissive, self-denying, modest, childlike, innocent, industrious, maternal, and angelic—all traits that perfectly describe Snow White."³⁶ The patriarchal ideologies displayed in Disney princess films can become a problematic reality when viewed by young children in today's society. Author Peggy Orenstein discusses the negative messages found in Disney films in the context of raising young girls in American society.³⁷ The literature points to the concern that young girls will embrace patriarchal ideology and miss out on the opportunities for personal advancement as a result.³⁸ The Disney princess theme of patriarchy is certainly evidenced in the story of Snow White which focuses on "a tale of a woman's coming into maturity, but she matures in order to be someone's wife, and later, a mother."³⁹ For Snow White, the desire

for a heterosexual marriage ensures her ability to have a family all her own, and serves as the ultimate goal of her tale.

While many princess films uphold a typical patriarchal ideology, it is possible to argue that Disney does not always seek to uphold the dominant understanding of patriarchy in its princess films. Heterosexual marriage is a recurring theme in virtually every Disney princess film (with the exception of *Brave*). However, the fairytale weddings that conclude several princess films can be read as somewhat contradictory to the messages of a true patriarchal ideology. This is evident in the social and hegemonic structures of the princesses' worlds. While the relational dynamics that exist in Disney princess films have been critiqued by several scholars as being patriarchal, it is also true that traditional patriarchy cannot be upheld in the model of Disney princess films. This is due to the fact that the princess serves as the pivotal character of each royal family. After all, traditional patriarchy is upheld by the bearing of sons, not daughters.⁴⁰ Therefore, it is inherently flawed to assume that Disney princess films are only interested in upholding patriarchal ideologies. If this were the case, "the princess would always have a brother or other male relative poised to succeed her father, but she does not."⁴¹ This being said, Disney's construction of patriarchal hierarchy does not fit the traditional mold. Rather, it fits the mold constructed as part of the Disney worldview, which values the princess as the focus of their tales.

Princesses Should Be Beautiful

"She's got these eyes that just... and this hair... and her smile! (sigh)" -Aladdin (*Aladdin*)

Within Disney studies literature, an entire subset is dedicated to investigation of the body imagery of princesses. This branch is important to a social understanding because film can serve to inform children about sociocultural models of body image.

According to Marika Tiggemann and Amanda Pickering, “current societal standards for beauty unduly emphasize the importance of thinness and drive young women to achieve a body shape that is often unattainable.”⁴² It can be problematic if these ideals are internalized by children, especially when what is “ideal” does not reflect the diversity of body image. As communication scholar Elizabeth Bell notes, the “animation of race and ethnicity was unproblematic in the early Disney shop.”⁴³ Instead, the early animated heroines were portrayed with fair-skinned, fair-eyed, Anglo-Saxon features that emphasized their perfectly skinny model-like form.⁴⁴ Early princesses displayed the elegance and grace of a ballet dancer. As a result, critics cite this imagery, evidenced in the animation of Snow White, Cinderella, and Aurora as a proponent of unrealistic body image expectations for young girls.⁴⁵

The image of the princess has changed with the introduction of princesses of color. This shift occurred during the second generation of princess films, which I argue begins with *The Little Mermaid* in 1989 and concludes with *Mulan* in 1998. Lacroix expands on recent depictions of Disney princesses in the 1990s, outlining the stereotypical “orientalization” of the first Disney female protagonists of color.⁴⁶ Do Rozario notes that the physical form of princesses like Pocahontas and Jasmine emphasize the shift from princesses of dance to “heroes of sport.”⁴⁷ This shift has also reflected sexuality in the princesses designs that scholars find disconcerting. As communication scholar Celeste Lacroix notes, “an increased emphasis on sexuality and the exotic is evident in the construction of the female heroines in these films, particularly in the female characters of color.”⁴⁸ The field of Disney studies consistently argues for future investigation of race and gender imagery in princess films. For the purpose of

understanding the moral messages contained in these films, it is important to consider how the production of animated body image can frame expectations in reality.

Princesses Must “Dream” of Social Advancement

“But they say if you dream a thing more than once, it’s bound to come true, and I’ve seen him so many times...” – Aurora (*Sleeping Beauty*)

A final prominent critique of Disney princess films is based upon passive and subordinate behaviors elicited by the princesses. It is somewhat intriguing to recognize that even princesses, individuals of royal descent and power, can still appear subordinate in a Disney scripted world. For the first generation of Disney princesses, the dark cloud of misfortune that hangs over her head is not something that she can save herself from; her savior comes not from her own action, but instead the result of her dreaming. The conflict in their tales originates from a malevolent outside source, albeit sometimes from a questionable member of the princess’s family.

Snow White’s beauty so torments the Evil Queen that she is willing to kill her stepdaughter. This leads to the conflict that propels the story, where Snow White must lock herself away in a woodland cottage in order to hide from her antagonist. Cinderella’s unhappiness is a result of her evil stepmother’s cruelty, culminating in Cinderella’s imprisonment when she is prevented from attending the royal ball and trying on the glass slipper.⁴⁹ For Cinderella, the only escape from her dismal life lies in the prince’s decision to choose her over all others in the kingdom. Likewise, Aurora is tormented by Maleficent, an evil sorceress whose name is just a few letters off from being named “Malevolent.” Once again, Aurora hides away, singing and dreaming of the day when her vision of romantic love will become her reality. As the prophecy predicts, Aurora pricks her finger on the spindle of a spinning wheel and at once falls into a cursed sleep, only to

be awoken by the arrival of her prince.

In the case of these princess narratives, the princess's ability to move from a dismal existence to one that she desires is only achieved through rescue by a prince, with the aid of dwarves, fairy godmothers, and animals; advancement is never made possible by her own actions. The desires of these princesses are to be whisked away from their lives so that they may live out their moral platitudes of heterosexual romance. Accepting this moral message, the princesses need not assume any action on their own. In other words, the fate of Snow White, Cinderella, and Aurora lies outside of their delicate hands. Subsequently, this is a problematic moral message for two reasons. First, because it implies that personal advancement cannot come from within. Second, because it suggests that if the desires you have do not require individual action, then your morality can be determined for you.

Introducing a New Perspective

The Goal of Disney Princess Criticism

As a scholar, I am troubled by the expansive body of literature that seems only to focus on the immorality of Disney films. The extent of unfavorable judgment outweighs the critiques that have tried to uncover more evaluative accounts of what is happening in Disney films. The opposite perspective is also in need of critical investigation: the idea that perhaps Disney films serve as a form of rhetoric that provides important and even favorable moral messages for viewers. While the majority of Disney studies literature tends to emphasize the social harm that princess films can cause, I argue that we should also examine the social good they might do; rhetorical criticism allows for alternative interpretations to shine through. Using the terminology of literary critic Northrop Frye,

Karlyn Kohrs Campbell expresses the goals of rhetorical criticism. According to Campbell, “criticism must be polymorphous (taking many forms), because communicative and rhetorical acts are polysemous (having multiple meanings).”⁵⁰ In order to accomplish this goal, scholars must recognize that more than one possible interpretation exists for any rhetorical object. Because this is true, a multitude of tactics must be used in rhetorical investigations in order to represent the many possible interpretations of a given object. This inclusive approach to criticism fuels the interpretations I offer of Disney princess films.

Other scholars have already begun to explore the possibility of interpreting Disney princess films in new, productive ways. In her review of Peggy Orenstein’s *Cinderella Ate My Daughter*, Sherianne Shuler brings to light an important consideration: “While the book is quite respectful of the intelligence and imagination of little girls, my daughter’s suggestion that princesses have ‘magic powers,’ for example, points to ways that girls are capable of creatively interpreting and reappropriating princess texts in non-Disney ways and is worth further exploration.”⁵¹ Shuler’s suggestion should encourage scholars to consider breaking free from traditional exploration of Disney princess films. Scholars that approach the Disney princess realm with an open mind can view the messages contained in the narratives for more than their immoral implications. In the case of Sharon Downey’s research, for instance, a rhetorical approach was specifically useful in explaining the gender dynamics between male and female characters in Disney’s *Beauty and the Beast*.⁵² Downey’s polymorphous approach is, quite frankly, a breath of fresh air; she offers an atypical perspective by discussing the favorable impact of Disney princess narratives. Downey argues that “Disney animated films’ blending of discursive

and nondiscursive forms enables viewers to construct meanings of the films that *empower* the feminine.”⁵³ Therefore, rather than immediately assuming that the rhetorical messages in Disney films are inherently harmful, exploring the texts more open-mindedly allows for the examination of rhetorical elements that provide messages of morality.

Non-traditional investigations of Disney princess films also have a place in what rhetorical scholar Annalee Ward calls the “Disney worldview.”⁵⁴ The Disney worldview is the result of considering Disney as “the means by which experience and belief are merged and organized and by which values are prioritized.”⁵⁵ However, Ward cautions against the supposition that a single Disney worldview can be constructed and maintained, given the many interpretations that can be formed based on any given perspective for analysis.⁵⁶ This thesis expands the possible interpretations of Disney princess films, and ultimately expands the definition of “princess;” this expansion will be revisited in chapter five. It is necessary to recognize that a wide variety of interventions are available when examining these unique rhetorical texts. To understand how these alternative interventions might be true for child viewers, I explore a study in child development research related to Disney princess film consumption.

A Child’s Ability to Reason Beyond Critique

“Every child is blessed with a vivid imagination.” - *Walt Disney*

The bombardment of anti-Disney critique may be a premature diagnosis of Disney’s effect on society. After all, the supposition that children learn immoral messages from Disney films is not supported in the research literature. As Orenstein notes, no study exists in the literature proving that “playing princess specifically damages girls’ self-esteem or dampers other aspirations.”⁵⁷ The current study does not seek to

identify how children actually respond to Disney films. Nevertheless, it is helpful to investigate literature that has sought to do exactly that. An exploration of child development research reveals important insight about the actual effect of the messages found in Disney princess films. Contrary to popular critique, children do not necessarily conform to the messages that scholars feel are most troublesome in Disney films. This invites the need for new scholarship to explore alternative interpretations of Disney princess narratives. Karen Wohlwend points to the potential for children to modify the rhetoric of Disney princess films through transmedia, giving dolls active identities.⁵⁸ Zoe, a kindergartener in Wohlwend's study, makes evident the alteration of traditional roles by transforming her Mulan doll into a superhero.

She's really a princess, but I'm pretending she's a superhero. Her powers make her fly. She can make tornadoes. She can use power from her hands to make fire. Sometimes she makes the bad guy dead with her fire. This is how they make her weak: They make a stronger power -wind- and they blow her over to the door. My mom got her for me when I got back home from Disney World. That's not her natural clothes; her natural clothes -but I got this- this is my other Barbie's thing - this is her- my Barbie's cheerleading skirt... I want her to talk in there [Lowering pitch of her voice and bending close to the digital voice recorder.] I have super powers and I am a superhero and I can't have a lot of powers and I can make tornadoes.⁵⁹

When Zoe states, "she's really a princess, but I'm pretending she's a superhero" she moves beyond the gender expectations that are portrayed in the film.⁶⁰ Although scholars argue that Disney is a dangerous tool that teaches children to accept what is found in the films as morally sound, it is apparent through Zoe's exploration that children are not passive consumers of what they see. Rather, Zoe and the other students in this study were found to adapt their playtime representation of Disney princess dolls in order to reflect their own experiences, rejecting gender stereotypes in the process.⁶¹ Zoe's reinterpretation of her Mulan doll ultimately provides justification for the need to

reinvestigate Disney films in different ways. It is important to note that Zoe is a representative example of responses, not just an exception to the norm. Additionally, Wohlwend found that even male children adapt their concept of gender expectations when they interact with Zoe and the other female children in the study.⁶² The realization that young children are not blind consumers of the traditional femininity that appears in Disney discourse should open the door for scholars to investigate the positive implications of Disney princess films as rhetorical artifacts.

Alternative Moral Messages

It is important to note that media consumption plays an important role in understanding identity. According to McMahan, “identities constructed through specific media consumption can be just as significant as other aspects of the self”⁶³; this does not necessarily mean that the identities constructed through media consumption are inherently bad. Ward argues, “Disney’s influence in society is powerful. It can shape the way children think about who they are and who they should be.”⁶⁴ I therefore wish to illuminate alternative moral messages that appear in opposition to dominant critique of Disney’s influence on society. With this perspective, it might be said that children are capable of overlooking the harsh critiques of Disney films that some scholars argue are obvious. In a sense, perhaps we are not giving enough credit to a child’s ability to construct his or her own identity. To understand the social expectations of gender present in Disney princess scholarship, I discuss three moral messages that I found frequently mentioned by researchers: (1) princesses are capable of self-motivated advancement; (2) princesses should respect nature and animals; (3) princesses should stand up for others.

Princesses are Capable of Self-Motivated Advancement

“Bright young women, sick of swimmin’, ready to stand...” - Ariel (*The Little Mermaid*)

The rise of the active princess seems to be a recent trend in the Disney princess realm. Rather than assuming that the patriarchal societies that the girls operate in are rigid constructs, more recent princesses have begun to break the traditional mold. The desire for independence reoccurs as the driving force in several recent Disney films. Examining the history of Disney plots, Hines and Ayers note that “independence is usually conferred upon boys in Disney’s wonderful world: Pinocchio and Mowgli in *The Jungle Book* (1967) tend to do as they please, while Snow White and Cinderella just do more than their share of housework.”⁶⁵ While the theme of independence has been an area of contestation in critiques of the earliest princess films, more recent princess films exhibit princesses with a desire to break free from traditional gender norms in their pursuit of independence. The desire for autonomy presents itself in different ways for each of the princesses. Buescher and Ono cite the theme of independence of Pocahontas in her ties to nature, which allows this desire to symbolically emerge as one carried by the wind.

Kekata, the shaman, enunciates the link between Pocahontas and the wind when he says, “You know Pocahontas. She has her mother’s spirit. She goes wherever the wind takes her.” At this moment the film cuts to Pocahontas standing high above her people while the wind and leaves circle around her. The wind embodies the spirit of her desire for freedom and adventure.⁶⁶

Pocahontas ultimately desires freedom and adventure for reasons similar to that of Jasmine: for the pursuit of a love interest that contradicts the accepted norms in her society. However, to assume that all Disney princesses are motivated for the pursuit of heteronormative marriage is a restrictive interpretation. Instead, it seems fair to notice that the more recent Disney princesses are driven to do whatever necessary to achieve their goals. This is certainly a positive shift from the passive, subordinate scripts of the

early Disney princesses. For young girls in society today, Ariel, Belle, Jasmine, Pocahontas, Mulan, Tiana, Rapunzel, and Merida showcase the importance in standing up for what you believe in and pursuing your own dreams through action; for these reasons, the princesses can be interpreted as positive role models for young girls. This assessment can serve as a balance to the negative assessments that overwhelm Disney studies literature.

Princesses Should Respect Nature and Animals

“I know every rock and tree and creature, has a life, has a spirit, has a name” -*Pocahontas*

Another positive moral message comes with the relationship between Disney princesses and the natural worlds they inhabit. It is readily accepted that displaying kindness to animals and a respect for nature is a moral message worth teaching our children. Additionally, the connection between Disney princess and the natural world perpetuates the perception of “nature as female,” conveyed through the term, “Mother Earth.”⁶⁷ Therefore, the incorporation of this moral message is important because it is connected to the construct of gender. Whether the role of nature is an active component of the princess film (as in *Pocahontas*), or simply the context for the film’s plot, all of the princesses display this moral theme. For each princess, nature takes the form of a pet, or animal companion of some kind. Snow White and Aurora have the woodland animals, while Belle and Merida rely on their horses, Philipe and Angus, respectively. Of the eleven Disney princesses, only three (Ariel, Mulan, and Tiana) have pets that display personification through spoken dialogue with the princess. The rest serve as comic relief and companionship for the girls. For some, the pets become their therapists, the constructive outlets for the princesses to express their feelings to the audience. A group

of mice for Cinderella, a pet tiger named Raja for Jasmine, and a pet chameleon named Pascal for Rapunzel serve as the “only friends” for the princesses until other characters appear in the plot. For Pocahontas, “Flit the bird and Meeko the raccoon not only make noises that imply rudimentary language skills, but also interrupt people, point to objects, and have distinct personalities.”⁶⁸ The importance of these animal companions is not to be taken lightly. These pets replace the “friendships” that the princesses might be expected to have with other girls, setting them up as the female centers of their universes. The value each princess places on these relationships is intrinsic to her own character, reflecting her compassion and respect for nature in the process. The relationships formed between princess and nature facilitate a moral message that can certainly be evaluated as a positive aspect of the Disney princess realm.

Princesses Should Stand Up for Others

“You risked your life to help people you love. I risked your life to help myself... at least you had good intentions.” – Mushu (*Mulan*)

Disney princesses in recent years have been portrayed with confidence enough to stand up for the rights of others in their stories. This moral message is powerful because it instigates a sense of possible agency in audience members. Disney scholars Jill Birnie Henke, Diane Zimmerman Umble, and Nancy J. Smith note, “Belle has freedom to make choices and to act on her own behalf as well as on the behalf of others; and she exercises that freedom.”⁶⁹ For example, Belle stands up for the Beast and defends his character against the unruly mob organized by Gaston. Belle also stands up for her father and sacrifices her own safety to ensure his freedom. This is an important development in more recent Disney princess films. Prior to Belle’s strong-willed and self-sacrificial actions, princesses like Snow White, Cinderella, and Aurora did not stand up for

themselves, let alone for the people around them. However, standing up for others becomes a central theme in the stories of Pocahontas and Mulan.

When Pocahontas realizes that both the settlers and her people have reached a point of war, she literally throws herself onto John Smith, willing to sacrifice her life to ensure that he is not executed. She stands up for herself and her beliefs while simultaneously protecting John Smith from death. In the end, Pocahontas also stands up for her people, rather than selfishly abandoning her role as peacekeeper. At the end of the film, John Smith is injured by a gunshot wound and he needs to return home to England for medical attention. However, Pocahontas remains loyal to her people and tearfully tells Smith, "I'm needed here." Pocahontas displays faithfulness to others in her life, and is willing to stand up for them even at the expense of her own desires.

Finally, Mulan's story is exclusively centered on the theme of standing up for others. This theme is evident in two ways: her devotion to her father and to her country of China. First, Mulan's aging father receives orders from the general that he must report to serve in the Imperial Army. However, Mulan knows that if her father goes to war in his frail state, he will surely die. As a result, she stands up for her father by disguising herself as a man and reporting for duty in his place. Ultimately, Mulan stands up for her fellow soldiers against the leader of the Mongolian army, Shan Xu. In the film's climactic moment, Mulan cuts the rope that leads to safety in order to keep the emperor of China from being reached by Shan Xu. Mulan sacrifices her safety for the safety of others and stands up for others out of a sense of honor and duty.

Method

Introduction

With an understanding of Disney studies literature, a theoretical lens for examination of Disney princess films will now be offered. A rhetorical investigation of these films prompts several questions. How can Disney princess films be grouped in order to understand their rhetorical significance? How do Disney princess films reflect the worldview of society at the time of their production? In what ways do Disney princess films inform our understanding of gender expectations? What unique messages about gender expectations appear in the most recent Disney princess films that set them apart from previous princess films? What moral messages can be found in the most recent Disney princess films by conducting a polymorphous critique? Finally, what do the presence of these moral messages suggest about the state of the Disney princess film genre? With these questions as a foundation for analysis, I will provide an overview of the method used in this thesis and an overview of the subsequent chapters.

Overview of Method

For the purpose of this project, a clear understanding of Disney princess films begins with the creation of a taxonomy to categorize our understanding of the world; this idea is the foundational concept for what rhetorical scholars call “genre.” Genre as a theoretical construct implies that similar rhetorical situations reoccur, resulting in “discourse with similar stylistic and substantive elements.”⁷⁰ As discussed in the literature review, there are several instances of recurrent similarities within Disney princess films. Nevertheless, Disney studies literature has yet to examine the benefits of using a generic, rhetorical approach for the specific classification and examination of

Disney princess films. However, by grouping these films through genre analysis, we can reveal rhetorical notions that have previously been unexamined. For example, when grouped into historical time-periods, the Disney princess line reveals diverse messages about gender expectations.

The simple identification of similarities and grouping does not reveal anything inherently rhetorical about a body of texts— it simply reveals commonalities. However, assuming a generic perspective toward criticism helps us move away from genre as a mere categorization.⁷¹ Campbell and Jamieson claim that “inherent in each classification are two comparative standards— the comparison of like to like, the comparison of like to unlike.”⁷² In this sense, previous research literature has made great strides toward understanding Disney princess films through a comparison of like to like. Disney princesses are a part of a grouping of Disney films that typically carry similar plots and display princesses with similar characteristics. As rhetorical critics often mention, simply identifying that a theoretical construct exists in a given text is not enough: something must then be said about this discovery. It is therefore essential to move beyond a simple categorization of the Disney princess line.

It is my goal in this thesis to also illuminate the comparison of like to unlike in the Disney princess line. Campbell and Jamieson argue that the investigation of like to unlike allows scholars to explore contrasts which “compel re-definitions and form the basis for strategic evaluations.”⁷³ Through this analysis, I argue that re-definitions of the Disney princess line are prompted by historical time periods. This idea is supported by James Jasinski, who argues that genres are historically continuous, but are open to fluid reinterpretation over time as new texts emerge and subsequently co-construct the genre

itself.⁷⁴ This accepts that new components added to an existing genre can help to enhance and redefine the genre itself. With the continuous addition of films to the Disney princess line, each new princess film adds something unique and important to the existing Disney princess line. Therefore, working to explore Disney princess films as a genre is a constructive theoretical perspective.

Literacy development scholar George Kamberelis claims that, “learning a genre is equivalent to learning an ideology; generic enactments rearticulate ideologies.”⁷⁵ The dominant ideologies that reoccur within Disney princess films shape the moral messages that are carried throughout the films; since Disney princess films consistently uphold certain gender ideologies, rhetorical scholars can investigate how the recurring moral messages might appear in reference to real-life communication. In the case of Disney princess films, the genre’s function as a set of activity structures lies in the gender expectations that reoccur in the films; subsequently, the recurrence of Disney princess gender expectations in the films informs society about the appropriate roles of women, providing what Kenneth Burke labels, “equipment for living.”⁷⁶ Jasinski also points out that “learning a genre is a lesson in how to contest or disrupt an ideology. Generic enactments refract or reaccentuate ideologies, modifying the ideology along with the genre.”⁷⁷ Disney princess films have upheld certain ideologies about what it means to be a princess. This study invites consideration for the disruption of dominant Disney princess ideologies, by comparing the like to the unlike and revealing alternative ideologies in the process.

Princess films can be generically classified on the similarities of the princess’s motivation (pursuit of a prince, independence, etc.), body images of the princesses, or the

conformity to traditional fairy tale story expectations. However, based on an investigation of ideology and genre, it seems best to group these princesses by the time periods and dominant ideologies that existed at their creation. It is also essential to understand that the gender expectations communicated by Disney princess films can be interpreted in a variety of ways—as previously mentioned, these messages about gender are polysemous. According to rhetorical scholar Celeste Condit, polysemy is defined as the degree to which a text creates free space to interpret its messages in multiple ways.⁷⁸ The analysis chapters of this thesis will highlight the free space of interpretation within the films.

By acknowledging Disney films as complex, multi-dimensional rhetorical objects, scholars can better illuminate all perspectives of a film. As a result, accepting the multi-dimensionality of princess films upholds the necessity that texts not be interpreted as rigid, cookie cut molds to fit in a generic categorization. To summarize, using the concept of polysemy to help uncover the vast possibilities for interpretation of Disney princess films, paired with the understanding of genre as “continually open to reconfiguration,”⁷⁹ enables this project better to investigate gender expectations in the films and society. By using this approach, an investigation of Disney princess films across a large historical context can be conducted, while still leaving room for future additions to the genre as new princess films are released.

Overview of Subsequent Chapters

Overview of Chapter Two

The title of chapter two is *Disney Princesses – A Rhetorical History*. Using a critical approach that emphasizes polysemy, the second chapter of this thesis explores how Disney princesses reflect the gender expectations of society. Primarily, I argue that

Disney princesses speak and act in ways reflective of gender expectations of women in society during the time the films were released. In order to examine this dynamic, I provide a historical investigation of the years when each of the princess films were released. I focus specifically on the culture of employment opportunities for women in the Walt Disney Company itself to illustrate the changes in women's roles. I use interviews, newspaper articles, and primary source documents to frame an understanding of these dynamics in society. In order to understand the rationale for studying *Tangled* and *Brave* separately in chapters three and four, I use chapter two to explain how three distinct groups exist within the Disney princess genre. For the purpose of this thesis, I label *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937), *Cinderella* (1950), and *Sleeping Beauty* (1959) as "the first generation" of Disney princess films. Snow White, Cinderella, and Aurora, the respective princesses in this group, exhibit common traits within similarly themed stories. Generally, the first generation princesses display the least amount of independence, power, and motivation to achieve their own dreams. In addition, I label *The Little Mermaid* (1989), *Beauty and the Beast* (1991), *Aladdin* (1992), *Pocahontas* (1995), and *Mulan* (1998) as "the second generation" of Disney princess films. Second generation princesses certainly break from the "norms" of the first generation by assuming active roles in the pursuit of their dreams. Despite the newfound independence of princesses since Ariel (1989), the disturbances created by the villains are always resolved romantically in the end. Despite the extensive literature encompassing Disney films, scholarly classifications of the Disney princess line have not included the newest additions to the collection. Therefore, I propose the need for an additional category to include the most recent additions. As a result, this third group will be the primary focus

of this thesis. The remaining three films in the Disney Princess line, *The Princess and The Frog* (2009), *Tangled* (2010), and *Brave* (2012) are labeled as “the third generation” of Disney princess films. In grouping these films together I draw comparisons between first, second, and third generations of Disney princess films, and provide a heuristic springboard to engage in the study of the two most recent princesses, Rapunzel and Merida.

Overview of Chapters Three and Four

In previous studies, the reconfiguration of gender expectations within the Disney princess genre has been explored in reference to past princesses.⁸⁰ However, *Tangled* and *Brave* both seem to confront and reflect the implications of what it means to be female in today’s society. Specifically, it seems that Rapunzel and Merida both struggle with some of the same conflicts experienced by girls in society today: the tension of upholding traditional expectations about female gender roles and pursuing an autonomous, self-motivated lifestyle of personal attainment. Therefore, chapters three and four investigate the messages about gender expectations that are present in *Tangled* and *Brave* respectively. Although race is certainly an interesting component of Disney film research, the discussion of race is beyond the scope of this particular study.⁸¹ Therefore, Princess Tiana, of *The Princess and the Frog*, is excluded from my analysis. Additionally, *Tangled* and *Brave* are ideal for a comparative investigation in this thesis because both Rapunzel and Merida are primarily in conflict with their mother figures, rather than an external villain. This is another reason why *The Princess and the Frog* is not discussed in this thesis; the antagonism for Tiana comes from an evil witchdoctor, rather than a matriarchal figure. Finally, as the two most recent Disney princesses, Rapunzel and

Merida are worthy of an extended investigation because no previous rhetorical scholarship has focused exclusively on these new princess narratives.

In both chapters, the rhetorical analysis will be limited to key narrative moments that showcase messages about gender expectations. Additionally, I will include song lyrics as a part of the intrinsic text in this thesis. Whether the characters are singing the songs themselves in a film-musical format, or the songs are performed as a backdrop for the actions of the characters, music is a recurrent generic element of the Disney princess realm. In many cases, the investigation of songs revealed instances of detailed self-disclosure, where the princess speaks to her true feelings about her conflicts, thoughts, and dreams. Much like a Shakespearean monologue aims to clarify for the audience the character's feelings, it seems that the most revealing moments of personality and tension are disseminated through catchy tunes that resonate with Disney consumers long after the credits roll. However, it should be noted that the selection of lyrics does not fit into what would be considered a "rhetorical analysis of music." As communication scholars Deanna Sellnow and Timothy Sellnow note, "the rhetorical power of music can only be ascertained effectively by considering both lyrical content and musical score."⁸² An investigation of the aesthetics of music is outside the scope of this project. There are several factors to music that extend beyond a rhetorical investigation of gendered messages (e.g. tempo, meter, rhythm, dynamics, melodic and harmonic structure, instrumentalization, phrasing, etc.). Sellnow and Sellnow note that "any method designed to analyze music as a rhetorical form must consider the dynamic interaction between lyrics and score to capture a full meaning of the message."⁸³ This thesis does not seek to employ a method for the analysis of music. Therefore, I treat the lyrical content of the

songs in *Tangled* and *Brave* in the same fashion as the dialogue that occurs between characters. In doing so, it is my goal to understand how dynamics of female gender expectations are upheld in the lyrics and narratives and in turn shape the Disney princess film genre.

Additionally, both chapters will be divided into the same three key sections. For both princesses, conflict appears from the expectations of their mothers. Therefore, the analysis in each chapter will begin with an investigation of the instances where *Mother's Control Conflicts with Princess's Ambition*. For both Rapunzel and Merida, the conflict they experience begins due to disagreement with their mothers. Next, the analyses will segue into an investigation of the instances where *Mother's Control Conflicts with Princess's Ambition*. For both Rapunzel and Merida, the frustration with the expectations of their mothers leads to rebellion, and conflict ensues between mother and daughter. Finally, each chapter will conclude with an analysis of the instances where *Princess's Ambition Reigns Over Mother's Ambition*. This will allow for an investigation of the moments where both Rapunzel and Merida display gender expectations that are different from those previously found in Disney princess films.

In chapter three, *Tangled* is examined for the gender expectations that are reflected in Rapunzel's narrative. Specifically, I argue that consciousness-raising as a rhetorical strategy serves to illuminate the gendered messages expressed by Rapunzel. Consciousness-raising occurs first for the character of Rapunzel, who is unaware of her position in society. She is ignorant of her own potential and therefore does not see herself as a human being capable of action. Rapunzel's journey allows her to experience a raised consciousness, when she breaks free from her mother's control and realizes her identity.

Consciousness-raising as a rhetorical strategy is also projected on the film's viewers, who are invited to experience a new understanding about gender expectations as a result of Rapunzel's words and actions. Rapunzel suggests new ideas about what it means to be a princess through her androgynous behaviors and speech. Therefore, Rapunzel exemplifies strong, feminist behaviors that challenge the typical actions of past Disney princesses, and awakens viewers to a new understanding about women's roles in society.

In chapter four, I address the real-life societal factors that serve as a backdrop for *Brave* and the animated portrayal of Merida. *Brave* is investigated as a rhetorical text that operates as an alternative narrative to the dominant discourse about gender expectations for women in society. Merida's desire for self-efficacy, or control over her life is challenged by the expectations of her community. The gender expectations for women in reality are situated in the "can-do discourse," a social standard that suggests to young women that they can be exceptional homemakers and mothers and leading professionals in their fields, if only they work hard enough. The problem with this discourse is that it is socially determined, not individually desired. As an alternative narrative, Merida rejects the expectations of her society, which are primarily enforced by her mother, Queen Elinor. As a result, she achieves self-efficacy and obtains control of her fate.

Conclusion

For the purpose of this study, I argue that *Tangled* and *Brave* are worthy of a closer investigation because the films are analogous to larger society. Just as Rapunzel rejects her life as a humble shut-in to seek adventure and autonomy, similar trends can be found in society, where today's young women are turning to lives of career motivated "adventure," and abandoning their expected gender roles. As Merida suggests ways to

revise the dominant discourse of her place in her community, today's young women are invited to consider the social standards that prescribe unattainable goals. The tension between independence and tradition is still a present conflict for both women in society, and the heroines of *Tangled* and *Brave*. The present study will work to identify the ways that Rapunzel and Merida represent the independent spirit, in spite of the restrictive gender roles in which they must operate. The final chapter of this thesis will then reassess the presence of moral messages in Disney princess films, using the analyses of chapter three and four to introduce new moral messages about gender expectations.

Notes

¹ Rebecca Glover, Lance Garmon, and Darrell Hull. "Media's Moral Messages: Assessing Perceptions of Moral Content in Television Programming," *Journal of Moral Education* 40, no. 1 (2011) : 89.

² Ibid., 91.

³ Rebecca-Anne Do Rozario, "The Princess and the Magic Kingdom: Beyond Nostalgia, the Function of the Disney Princess," *Women's Studies in Communication* 27, no. 1 (2004) : 35.

⁴ David McMahan. "What We Have Here Is a Failure to Communicate: Linking Interpersonal Communication and Mass Communication," *Review of Communication* 4, no. 1/2 (2004) : 48.

⁵ Barry Brummett. "Burke's Representative Anecdote as a Method in Media Criticism," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, 1, (1984): 164.

⁶ Rebecca-Anne Do Rozario, "The Princess and the Magic Kingdom: Beyond Nostalgia, the Function of the Disney Princess," 35.

⁷ Elizabeth Walker Mechling and Jay Mechling, "The Atom According to Disney," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 81, (1995): 437.

⁸ C. Edwards, Frozen' Story Head Paul Briggs Talks About Truth in Storytelling, *Cartoon Brew*, December 13, 2013, <http://www.cartoonbrew.com/disney/frozen-story-head-paul-briggs-talks-about-truth-in-storytelling-92787.html>.

⁹ Andrew Beattie, Walt Disney: How Entertainment Became An Empire, *Investopedia*, December 1, 2011, <http://www.investopedia.com/articles/financial-theory/11/walt-disney-entertainment-to-empire.asp>.

¹⁰ Ahead of Walmart (#18), Nike (#24), and Pepsi (#25), according to *Forbes* rankings.

¹¹ "Walt Disney." *Forbes*. accessed March 10, 2014. <http://www.forbes.com/companies/walt-disney/>.

¹² For a detailed examination of this comparative literature, see Sun and Scharrer (2004), Finkelstein (2003), and Buhler (2003).

¹³ See O'Brien (1996) for an investigation of Disney films through textual and contextual analysis.

¹⁴ For an investigation of the function of body image in Disney princess films, see Lacroix (2004), Do Rozario (2004), and Bell (1995).

¹⁵ Annalee Ward. *Mouse Morality: The Rhetoric of Disney Animated Film*. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002), xiii.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Peggy Orenstein, *Cinderella Ate My Daughter* (New York: Harper-Collins Publishers, 2011), 13.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Peggy Orenstein, "What's Wrong With Cinderella?," *New York Times*, December 24, 2006.
http://www.nytimes.com/2006/12/24/magazine/24princess.t.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0.

²⁰ Jenna Goudreau, Disney Princess Tops List Of The 20 Best-Selling Entertainment Products, *Forbes*, September 17, 2012,
<http://www.forbes.com/sites/jennagoudreau/2012/09/17/disney-princess-tops-list-of-the-20-best-selling-entertainment-products/>.

²¹ Karen Wohlwend, "The boys who would be princesses: playing with gender identity intertexts in Disney Princess transmedia," *Gender and Education* 24, no. 6 (2012): 597.

²² Ibid, 596.

²³ Sharon R. Sherman, "Perils of the Princess: Gender and Genre in Video Games," *Western Folklore* 56, no. 3/4 (1997): 253.

²⁴ Kay Stone, "Things Walt Disney Never Told Us," *The Journal of American Folklore*, 88, no. 374 (1975) : 42.

²⁵ Annalee Ward. *Mouse Morality: The Rhetoric of Disney Animated Film*, 113.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid., 3.

²⁸ "Critical," *Merriam-Webster Online*, accessed April 18, 2014, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/thesaurus/critical>.

²⁹ Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, "The Nature of Criticism in Rhetorical and Communicative Studies," *Central States Speech Journal* 30 (1979) : 7.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Rebecca Glover, Lance Garmon, and Darrell Hull. "Media's Moral Messages: Assessing Perceptions of Moral Content in Television Programming," 89.

³² Sharon Downey, "Feminine Empowerment in Disney's Beauty and the Beast," *Women's Studies in Communication* 19, no. 2 (1996) : 186.

³³ Marcia Lieberman, "'Some Day My Prince Will Come': Female Acculturation through the Fairy Tale," *College English* 34, no. 3 (1972), 385. and Kay Stone, "Things Walt Disney Never Told Us," 43, quoted in Sharon Downey, "Feminine Empowerment in Disney's Beauty and the Beast," 186.

³⁴ To distinguish between the three time periods in which Disney films have been produced, I use the term "generations" as a labeling device. This labeling device is one that I argue avoids additional connotations in a scholarly sense. Other scholars have used alternative labels such as Princesses 1.0 and 2.0 (Rome, 2013) which does not quite fit, and First, Second, and Third Wave Princesses (Whelan, 2012) which invites questions about the waves of feminism. However, the term "generations" allows me to reference the three groups of princess films in a strictly generic sense.

³⁵ Brenda Ayers, "The Poisonous Apple in Snow White: Disney's Kingdom of Gender." In *The Emperor's Old Groove: Decolonizing Disney's Magic Kingdom*, by Brenda Ayers, (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2003), 39.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Peggy Orenstein, *Cinderella Ate My Daughter*, 13.

³⁸ For a review of child perceptions of film see Wohlwend (2009) and Booker (2010).

³⁹ Brenda Ayers, "The Poisonous Apple in Snow White: Disney's Kingdom of Gender," 40.

⁴⁰ Rebecca-Anne Do Rozario. "The Princess and the Magic Kingdom: Beyond Nostalgia, the Function of the Disney Princess," 52

⁴¹ Ibid., 52.

⁴² Marika Tiggemann, and Amanda Pickering. "Role of Television in Adolescent Women's Body Dissatisfaction and Drive for Thinness." *International Journal of Eating Disorders* 20, no. 2 (1996) : 199.

⁴³ Elizabeth Bell, "Somatexts at the Disney Shop: Constructing the Pentimentos of Women's Animated Bodies." In *From Mouse to Mermaid: The Politics of Film, Gender, and Culture*, edited by Elizabeth Bell, Lynda Haas, and Laura Sells, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995) 110.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Peggy Orenstein, *Cinderella Ate My Daughter*, 76.

⁴⁶ Celeste Lacroix, "Images of Animated Others: The Orientalization of Disney's Cartoon Heroines From The Little Mermaid to The Hunchback of Notre Dame." *Popular Communication: The International Journal of Media and Culture* 2, no. 4 (2004): 213.

⁴⁷ Rebecca-Anne Do Rozario. "The Princess and the Magic Kingdom: Beyond Nostalgia, the Function of the Disney Princess." 47.

⁴⁸ Celeste Lacroix. "Images of Animated Others: The Orientalization of Disney's Cartoon Heroines From The Little Mermaid to The Hunchback of Notre Dame." 213.

⁴⁹ Pamela O'Brien. "The Happiest Films on Earth: A Textual and Contextual Analysis of Walt Disney's Cinderella and The Little Mermaid." *Women's Studies in Communication* 19, no. 2 (1996): 161.

⁵⁰ Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, "The Nature of Criticism in Rhetorical and Communicative Studies," 8.

⁵¹ Sherianne Shuler, "Review of *Cinderella Ate My Daughter: Dispatches from the Front Lines of the New Girly-Girl Culture*. Peggy Orenstein. New York, NY: Harper Collins, 2011," *Women and Language* 34, no. 1 (2011): 98.

⁵² Sharon Downey, "Feminine Empowerment in Disney's Beauty and the Beast," 188.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Annalee Ward. *Mouse Morality: The Rhetoric of Disney Animated Film*. 116.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Peggy Orenstein, *Cinderella Ate My Daughter*, 16.

⁵⁸ Karen Wohlwend. "Damsels in Discourse: Girls Consuming and Producing Identity Texts through Disney Princess Play," *Reading Research Quarterly* 44, no. 1 (2009): 75.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ David McMahan. "What We Have Here Is a Failure to Communicate: Linking Interpersonal Communication and Mass Communication," 48.

⁶⁴ Annalee Ward. *Mouse Morality: The Rhetoric of Disney Animated Film*, 5.

⁶⁵ Susan Hines, and Brenda Ayers, "Introduction: (He)gemony Cricket! Why in the World Are We Still Watching Disney?" in *The Emperor's Old Groove: Decolonizing Disney's Magic Kingdom*, by Brenda Ayers, (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2003), 5.

⁶⁶ Derek Buescher, and Kent Ono. "Civilized Colonialism: Pocahontas as Neocolonial Rhetoric." *Women's Studies in Communication* 19, no. 2 (1996): 138.

⁶⁷ Catherine Roach. "Loving Your Mother: On the Woman-Nature Relation." *Hypatia* 6, no. 1 (1991): 46

⁶⁸ Derek Buescher and Kent Ono. "Civilized Colonialism: Pocahontas as Neocolonial Rhetoric," 135.

⁶⁹ Jill Birnie Henke, Diane Zimmerman Umble, and Nancy J. Smith, "Constructions of the Female Self: Feminist Readings of the Disney Heroine," *Women's Studies in Communication* 19, no. 2 (1996) : 238.

⁷⁰ James Jasinski, *Sourcebook on Rhetoric: Key Concepts in Contemporary Rhetorical Studies* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2001), 273.

⁷¹ Ibid, 275.

⁷² Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Kathleen Hall Jamieson, "Form and Genre in Rhetorical Criticism: An Introduction," in *Readings in Rhetorical Criticism*, ed. Carl R. Burgchardt, (State College: Strata Publishing, 2010), 457.

⁷³ Ibid., 458.

⁷⁴ James Jasinski, *Sourcebook on Rhetoric: Key Concepts in Contemporary Rhetorical Studies*, 273.

⁷⁵ George Kamberelis, "Genre as Institutionally Informed Social Practice," *Journal of Contemporary Legal Issues* 6, (1995): 146.

⁷⁶ Kenneth Burke, "Literature as Equipment for Living." *Direction* 1, (1938) : 262.

⁷⁷ James Jasinski, *Sourcebook on Rhetoric: Key Concepts in Contemporary Rhetorical Studies*, 275.

⁷⁸ Celeste Michelle Condit, "The Rhetorical Limits of Polysemy," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 6, no. 2 (1989) : 104.

⁷⁹ George Kamberelis, "Genre as Institutionally Informed Social Practice," *Journal of Contemporary Legal Issues* 6, (1995): 135.

⁸⁰ See Hoerrner (1996) for detailed investigation of gender roles in Disney films.

⁸¹ I do not mean to suggest that only *The Princess and the Frog* would be conducive to an investigation of race and gender in Disney princess films. Additionally, I do not mean to suggest that Tiana is "raced," whereas Rapunzel and Merida are not. However, several Disney princess researchers have already explored race in second generation princess films (i.e. *Aladdin*, *Pocahontas*, and *Mulan*) and scholars have recently investigated *The Princess and the Frog* using a similar approach. Although race and gender intersect in many cases, I narrow this thesis to gender alone as a strategic choice. My project is more interested in gender expectations *regardless* of race, and this allows for an appropriate narrowing of scope. For an investigation of race in Disney princess films specifically, see England, Descartes, and Collier-Meek (2011), Ma (2003), Parekh (2003), Sachko (2003), Staninger (2003), or Wise (2003).

⁸² Deanna Sellnow and Timothy Sellnow, "The 'Illusion of Life' Rhetorical Perspective: An Integrated Approach to the Study of Music as Communication." *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 18, no. 4 (2001) : 396.

⁸³ Ibid.

CHAPTER TWO: Disney Princesses - A Rhetorical History

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to understand the distinction between each of the three historical time periods in which Disney princess films have been produced: 1937-1959, 1989-1998, and 2009-present. As discussed in chapter one, Disney princess films serve as rhetorical artifacts in the current study, and their production during these time periods is important to understanding their significance. These film texts function to provide a larger understanding about the expectations of women during the time in which they were released. Disney princess films in the “first generation” are produced between 1937 and 1959, and include *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937), *Cinderella* (1950), and *Sleeping Beauty* (1959). Disney princess films in the “second generation” are produced between 1989 and 1998, and include *The Little Mermaid* (1989), *Beauty and the Beast* (1991), *Aladdin* (1992), *Pocahontas* (1995), and *Mulan* (1998). Finally, Disney princess films in the “third generation” are produced between 2009 and the present, and include *The Princess and The Frog* (2009), *Tangled* (2010), and *Brave* (2012).

In order to uncover the importance of the films’ gendered messages relative to the time period when they were released, I will address the historical context of women’s gender expectations in society at these times. Specifically, I examine expectations of women in the workplace as a way to uncover the extrinsic aspects of the princess narratives. For the purpose of narrowing this analysis, I find it useful to address the changes in social atmosphere of women’s involvement within the Disney Corporation itself. After all, if social norms regarding women’s roles were changing within society, it is reasonable to assume that these changes were occurring in Disney’s own social,

corporate climate. This investigation helps to examine the direction of influence taking place by addressing the following question: Does Disney's reach allow their films to prescribe and influence society in order to promote their own worldview, or does society serve to influence the films as the starting point for Disney's stories?

This question frames the historical analysis in this chapter, and will be revisited in the conclusion. Through this historical account, I argue that Disney princesses speak and act in ways reflective of gender expectations of women in society during the time the films were released.

Analysis

Walt's World of Disney:

In this section, I will investigate the social atmosphere for women in the Walt Disney Company between 1937 and 1959. During this time period, the films *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, *Cinderella*, and *Sleeping Beauty* were released. As I mentioned in chapter one, the princesses in this first generation of princess films reflect a certain similarity in their (in)actions, attitudes and behaviors. Snow White, Cinderella, and Aurora are certainly the least self-motivated princesses within the Disney princess line. They each display the characteristics of being "traditional" women, enunciating their domesticity while waiting for their handsome princes to arrive at their rescue. At the point in American history when these films were created, the roles of women were still quite restricted. Although originally applied to the understanding of women in the nineteenth century, the traditional roles of women labeled by Barbara Welter as "The Cult of True Womanhood,"¹ seem to be reflected in the narratives of the Disney princesses from 1937-1959. In fact, women were widely expected to conform to being

homemakers until the 1950's. The Cult of True Womanhood constituted a set of socially accepted ideals to which American women were expected to conform during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. A woman's proper "place" was within the confines of her home. Karlyn Kohrs Campbell notes that a typical American woman learned "the crafts of housewifery and motherhood" as she bore children, tended to the needs of her husband, maintained the cleanliness of the home, prepared meals, and served as an educator through child-rearing.² Stemming from this role, four key principles of True Womanhood appear consistently for women of the nineteenth century. To be a "true woman," Welter notes that one was to be "pure, pious, domestic and submissive."³ While these ideals appear to be antiquated or overly traditional within a modern perspective, these expectations of women appear very much alive in Disney's representations of Snow White, Cinderella, and Aurora.

Although their films were created decades after the early women's rights movement of the nineteenth century in American society, Disney's first three princesses appear to be representative of the expectations indicated by the Cult of True Womanhood. To understand why this view of women was perpetuated in Disney's early films, we need look no further than the namesake himself. Born in 1901, Walt⁴ grew up during the heart of the woman suffrage movement. By the time Walt opened his animation studio, the expectations of women had not changed all that much from the expectations indicated by the Cult. Author of *Feminism in America: A History* William L. O'Neill argues that while the women's rights movement resulted in the ratification of the nineteenth amendment allowing women the right to vote, this movement failed in larger feminist goals.⁵ Because this time period of reform focused intently on the woman's vote,

other social issues were largely ignored. For example, issues like working conditions and employment rights for women were underrepresented during the fight toward woman suffrage. Due to these failures of the women's rights movement, the division between men and women in the workplace remained problematic, and is apparent in the way that Disney Animation Studios operated at the start.

The roles occupied by women in the Disney corporation between roughly 1935 and 1960 reveal key insight about the expectations of women more generally. In her book, *Good Girls & Wicked Witches: Women in Disney's Feature Animation*, Amy Davis discusses the assumption that Disney films reflect and helped shape the attitudes of wider society, especially in their representations of femininity.⁶ These attitudes, Davis discusses, establish the extent to which the characterizations of women were shaped through wider popular stereotypes.⁷ This function contributes to a value system that constructs what Annalee Ward calls, "the Disney worldview," teaching viewers what is important in culture and individual living through Disney film texts.⁸ Specifically, the issues of women in wider society and the social constraints of the time influenced the depictions of Walt's princesses (those created while Walt was still alive). As these iconic princess films were produced, it is notable that female Disney employees were not allowed any real say in the matter; this sort of female exclusion was typical of society at the time. I argue, however, that these exclusions did not stop within the walls of the Disney Animation Studios; these real-life gender expectations of women in the 1930s, 40s, and 50s crept into the princess narratives of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, *Cinderella*, and *Sleeping Beauty*. In other words, the way these princesses are depicted is reflective of the constraints faced by Disney female employees as these films were being

constructed. Therefore, the social climate of female subordination lives on in the iconic Disney films that worldwide audiences, and especially child audiences, embrace today. To illustrate the ways that the Disney company excluded women during this time, I will highlight two primary source examples. First, I will introduce the experience of Marcellite Garner. An interview with Garner reveals her understanding of women's roles in the Disney Company as a result of the restrictions she experienced first-hand. Second, I will discuss Mary Ford's experience with the Disney Company at the time; an official letter addressed to Ford reveals, in writing, the blatant exclusion of women from creative roles.

In an interview with Marcellite Garner, as detailed in the book, *Working with Walt*, Don Peri paints an in-depth picture of a woman's role in the creation of some of Disney's first feature-length successes. According to Peri, inkers and painters were to transfer the cleanup drawings to transparent celluloid; inkers traced the drawings on the front of the celluloid and the painters filled color onto the reverse side of the sheets.⁹ Essentially, women were responsible for the manual, tedious tasks for building the images seen in the films, while men assumed the creative and inventive side of the occupation. Garner's experience working in the Ink and Paint Department during the 1930s reveals critical insight about the segregation between men and women in the field of animation.¹⁰ She was never given the opportunity to speak out regarding the story or images drawn of Snow White. Ultimately, Garner's career in the animation industry was halted when her "cute" voice caught the attention of animators and she was encouraged to try out for the voice acting part of the timeless character, Minnie Mouse¹¹; from then on, this became her principle role in the Company. Garner's experience further indicates the

separation of roles between men and women at the time, as she was ultimately valued only for her femininity and not for her creative potential.

DON PERI: When you worked in Ink and Paint, did it bother the women that women were only employed there and not in animation?

MARCELLITE GARNER: No. Oh, I think there was some little feeling that there were no women in animation at that time. And they used to say that there never would be any women animators, because men couldn't be as free in the gag meetings. But when I went to work for Walter Lantz, they had a woman animator and she didn't seem to create any problems.

DON PERI: I have read about the rules - I guess they were at the Burbank studio - that men were not supposed to be in the Ink and Paint Building and women were not supposed to be in the Animation Building.

MARCELLITE GARNER: That's true.

DON PERI: They were strict on that?

MARCELLITE GARNER: Yeah, we were pretty well separated. I think the only time I ever got over there was a couple of times when I had to go over and talk to Walt [Disney] about something.¹²

The words of Marcellite Garner show how social expectations of women during this time were at play when she worked for the Disney Company. In the words, "oh, I think there was some little feeling that there were no women in animation at that time" Garner expresses the segregation between men and women that was expected and, in her eyes, not to be questioned. Through the language that "no women" were allowed to contribute to the animation industry and that "we [the women and men] were pretty well separated", an understanding of what women were and were not allowed to do in Garner's time becomes apparent. The narrative contained in Garner's interview is situated within a larger history of how women were expected to engage in society during this time. While women were an integral part of the production of Disney films in the early years, their role was subservient to the roles served by men. Due to this, women's communication was suppressed and excluded from the drawing boards as men defined the animation and dialogue of characters. Likewise, the representations of Snow White, Cinderella, and

Aurora are consistent with the social expectation of woman as submissive and domestic, rather than self-willed and industrious. Female roles in the Disney Corporation are connected to the representation of women in Disney films, and therefore are important in understanding the rhetorical significance of these princesses.

Additionally, a recent primary source document belonging to Ms. Mary Ford provides further evidence that Disney Animation Studios had no intent of including women in the creative processes of the company in the early princess years. Found by her grandson after her death, Ford's official letter from Walt Disney Productions, Ltd. reveals the gendered exclusions that took place in America at the time.¹³ In response to an application for the animator training school submitted by Ford, Disney hiring officials responded with a letter that explicitly told her "women do not do any of the creative work in connection to preparing the cartoons for the screen."¹⁴ In other words, the Disney Animation Studios during the time of the earliest princess films was a man's world. Subsequently, the films created may be centered on female characters, but each princess in question waits patiently for her "happily-ever-after" in the "prince's world" she inhabits.

Eisner's World of Disney

In this section, I will investigate the social atmosphere for women in the Walt Disney Company between 1989 and 1998. From the release of *Sleeping Beauty* in 1959 to the release of *The Little Mermaid* in 1989, the Walt Disney Company went on a princess film hiatus of sorts. This changed after Michael Eisner stepped into the role of CEO of Disney in 1984. Prior to Eisner's arrival, Disney had experienced a serious decline in cultural, cinematic prominence. Following Walt's death in 1966, Disney films

leading up to 1989 (*The Fox and the Hound*, *The Great Mouse Detective*, *Oliver and Company*, to name a few) were not as successful as the era of films released while the company's namesake was alive and influential in the Company. The absence of princess films here is significant, given the fact that the women's liberation movement came to fruition during this time period. However, as noted by Hoi F. Cheu, "more than those of other major Hollywood studios [during the Reagan years (1981-1989)], Disney pictures tended to stay away from any heated political debate of the time and stood firm in its objective to produce 'wholesome' home entertainment."¹⁵ Therefore, the absence of princess films between 1959 and 1989 suggests that Disney was not yet ready to venture into the territory of depicting strong, independent, feminist, protagonists. For the purpose of this section, I will discuss the corporate influence of women in the Disney Company during the 1990s and the ways that new, more progressive attitudes about women crept into the portrayals of Ariel, Belle, Jasmine, Pocahontas and Mulan.

After Eisner joined the Company, Mark Axelrod notes that Disney went from economic vulnerability to a stable and prosperous animation studio once more.¹⁶ According to Laura Sells, under Eisner's new leadership, the completion of "*The Little Mermaid* [was Disney's] first commercially successful animated feature since Walt's death in 1966, and the first in a spate of new animated features that reaffirm[ed] Disney's position as one of the largest producers of 'acceptable' role models for young girls."¹⁷ This new era of film success for Disney came coupled with several social changes regarding the roles of women in society and how they could be portrayed in media. While Cheu discusses Disney's avoidance of political debate from 1981 to 1989 following the woman's liberation movement, the second generation of princess films seem to directly

confront the gains of this movement. As a result of this woman's rights effort, American women were able to be independent, bold and more rebellious than ever before. These qualities are present in the portrayals of Ariel, Belle, Jasmine, Pocahontas, and Mulan. Nevertheless, women did not completely abandon the social norms of the past. While woman of the 1990s took new strides toward independence, the patriarchal ideal of finding a husband and marrying were still valued during this time. As a result, each of the princesses' stories ends with an apparent or implied marriage; Pocahontas is the only exception to this rule because she gives up her romantic ending with John Smith so he may return to England to receive medical attention. The changes in the perceptions of women's roles following the woman's liberation movement, coupled with the expectations of traditionalism are represented in second generation Disney princess films.

As indicated by Amy Davis, "throughout popular culture in America in the 1970s and 1980s, changes in the ways in which women were portrayed began to appear. The images of the happy home-maker and contented wife and mother did not disappear, but neither did they remain the only acceptable alternative shown to be available to 'respectable' women."¹⁸ This is the dynamic that plays out in the five princess films of this time period. Second generation princesses are active female protagonists, which reflects the progress that real women had achieved in the Disney Company in the decades after the first generation of princess films were released. In fact, the Disney Company experienced a large increase of women in leadership positions during the Eisner years. Davis reports that several women began to climb the ladders within the Disney Company, including an increase in the number of women in the animation department during the 90s.¹⁹ The key distinction here is that while women's opportunities became greater,

women were still expected to conform to the typical feminine goal of marrying and starting a family. In the late 1990s, women were motivated by a dominant discourse that suggested they could “have it all” in a professional sense. This theme emerged in a variety of films during the 1990s, not just those produced by Disney. A key passage by Davis expresses this reality quite perfectly.

In Hollywood’s movie industry as well, examples were emerging of women who, instead of being on the hunt for a husband were on the hunt for everything else, and when (because in most of these films, a man eventually did come along and sweep the heroine off her feet) she fell in love, finding a husband and starting a family were portrayed as being not her goal, but rather the last pieces of her life falling into place.²⁰

In this passage, Davis illustrates a social stigma regarding women in the 1990s: Women in society had achieved the freedom to act in pursuit of personal growth, but personal achievement was still less important than their success in achieving love. This dynamic is certainly apparent in the personal achievements of women in the Disney Company during this time period. This new level of female involvement in Disney animation consequently came to life in the narratives of Ariel, Belle, Jasmine, Pocahontas and Mulan.

Whereas Snow White, Cinderella, and Sleeping Beauty found solace in their prince’s arrival, second generation princesses find a sense of incompleteness to their lives and fight for their own destiny. However, despite their will-power, the princesses of this time period still do not abandon the traditional, heteronormative end of finding a prince to complete them; each of the girls find their “prince” in the end. Nevertheless, it is absolutely the case that these girls are portrayed as ambitious, spunky, and determined to get what they want. For Ariel, her infatuation with Prince Eric leads to her wish “to be human,” so she can be with him. For Belle, her “poor, provincial town” leaves her wanting “adventure in the great wide somewhere.” For Jasmine, she proclaims, “maybe I

don't want to be a princess anymore" at the first sign that she cannot have her way. For Pocahontas and Mulan, the desire to protect their families motivates their actions. The ambition of these princesses showcases Disney's transition to new perceptions of female protagonists; these perceptions were in line with social expectations between 1989 and 1998. Author of "Damsels and Heroines: The Conundrum of the Post-Feminist Disney Princess" Cassandra Stover observes "the situations of these princesses are, in effect, a criticism of the very situations with which Disney began its princess empire."²¹ The attitudes of these princesses are reflective of the addition of women's voices in the creative processes of Disney.

During the Eisner years, women were given the opportunity to take up creative roles in the production of Disney films. However, these creative roles did not reflect women in lead positions like director or producer, for instance.²² New strides were made by women like Sue C. Nichols, who is credited as a visual development artist for *Beauty and the Beast*, and a character designer for *Mulan*.²³ Susannah Grant is credited as co-writer for *Pocahontas*, alongside two male writers Carl Binder and Philip LaZebnik.²⁴ Lorna Cook is credited as a character animator for *Belle*, and a credited with story development for *Mulan*.²⁵ Additionally, Rita Hsiao is credited with screenplay writing for *Mulan*.²⁶

By the time Ariel, Belle, Jasmine, Pocahontas, and Mulan made their debuts, women had certainly moved up from the ranks of the ink and paint department. The growing number of women in the animation industry allowed for women like Nichols, Grant, Cook and Hsiao to work in creative roles in the Walt Disney Animation Studios. This trend has only increased in recent years. According to *LA Times* writer Rebecca

Keegan, the California Institute of the Arts' prestigious character animation program (graduates of which oftentimes funnel directly into Disney) in 1987 had “only five women out of a class of 34; this year (2013) there are 98 women enrolled in the same program out of a class of 161, according to the school.”²⁷ While the second generation of princess films certainly served as a successful comeback for Disney, the third generation of Disney princess films looks even more promising for the Company’s future.

Today's World of Disney

In this final section, I will investigate the social atmosphere for women in the Walt Disney Company from 2009 to present day. While only a decade passed between the release of *Mulan* (1998) and *The Princess and the Frog* (2009), much had changed regarding the portrayal of princesses during this time. The princesses in the contemporary world of Disney reflect a slight, but absolutely crucial distinction from any of the prior princesses. Rather than feeling incomplete in their individualistic pursuits until love completes them, third generation princesses are completely content and self-satisfied without a prince, even if they end up getting one anyway. I argue that this discourse is a direct response to what critical feminist scholar Julia Wood has termed the “can-do discourse” of today’s young women.²⁸ Gone are the days when the dominant narrative for female success in Western society consisted of the need to find a suitable mate, spur a marriage proposal and become affianced, put on an elaborate, fairytale wedding, go on a honeymoon, then proceed to live married life together, which ideally leads to the raising of children. While this narrative may have represented the aspects of female life for much of history, and certainly the period of history during which *Snow White*, *Cinderella* and *Sleeping Beauty* appeared, today’s women are told that they can do it all through the

promotion of female advancement in the workplace and in higher education.²⁹ According to Wood, “this can-do discourse encourages [young women] to imagine they will have high status careers and successful families if they are but willing to invest sufficient effort.”³⁰ Although this social shift has given females the opportunity to successfully pursue high-power careers, women still feel pressure to maintain rich and fulfilling home lives, working what sociologist Arlie Hoshchild calls a “second shift”³¹ in order to fulfill their feminine duties.³² What is most interesting about this dynamic of gender roles is that Disney’s most recent princesses seem less interested in their “second shift” and far more interested in getting what they want, for their own *personal* growth.

Third generation princesses appear ready to achieve their goals without the *need* to achieve love in the end. For both Tiana and Rapunzel, their respective “princes” come to them in the form of guides that neither princess really wants for any purpose but as a means to their desired ends. Prince Naveen and Flynn Rider eventually take the role of “prince” but not before *The Princess and the Frog*’s Tiana gets her restaurant and *Tangled*’s Rapunzel ventures to see the floating lights and discovers her true identity. I argue that *Brave*’s Merida takes this dynamic to the next level, as the first of Disney’s princesses to have no love interest by the end of the film. In fact, she blatantly rejects her mother’s hopes of finding her a suitor. Merida does not want to be a princess if being a princess means giving up her individuality. This message is powerful in reference to modern social context. Specifically, I argue that the reasoning for the individualistic focus of recent princesses has much to do with women finally making it to the top in Disney’s recent years.

In recent years, the growth of women's roles in the Company indicates significant changes for female employees at Disney. In 2006, Meg Crofton was promoted to the role of Walt Disney World President, and has just recently had her role extended to oversee management of Disneyland in Anaheim, CA and Disneyland Paris, according to *Orlando Sentinel* writer Jason Garcia.³³ Crofton's role in overseeing the Disney Parks network is an extension of Disney's initiative to create "One Disney," within its theme park empire, but certainly marks an important advancement for women in Disney. Second, with the recent release of *Frozen* (2013) much talk about the nature of women in high level positions in animation has come to the surface again. As Keegan notes, "the new era of female creative leadership at the studio is the product of decades of evolution in a slow-moving field."³⁴ *Brave* (2012) is the first (Disney) Pixar Animation Studios film to focus on a female lead character, and was produced by Katherine Sarafian. While other Disney/Pixar films have been produced by female producers, it is most noteworthy that the original story of *Brave* was written by Brenda Chapman, who also served as a director for the film. According to her own editorial piece written to the *New York Times*, Chapman was eventually taken off of *Brave* due to "creative differences."³⁵ Chapman discusses the series of events and persistence that it took to keep her name on the project.

To keep my name attached to *Brave*, I was persistent and stuck to my principles [...] This was a story that I created, which came from a very personal place, as a woman and a mother. To have it taken away and given to someone else, and a man at that, was truly distressing on so many levels. But in the end, my vision came through in the film. It simply wouldn't have worked without it (and didn't at one point), and I knew this at my core. So I kept my head held high, stayed committed to my principles, and was supported by some strong women (and men!). In the end, it worked out, and I'm very proud of the movie, and that I ultimately stood up for myself, just like Merida, the protagonist in *Brave*.³⁶

The struggles felt by Chapman and her overall success in taking credit for this project are apparent in the struggles felt by Merida, and I would argue even Rapunzel. The struggle for autonomy and individuality is at the core of the discursive tension in the stories. These fictional struggles did not appear without influence from the real world, and Chapman's persistence to make things right showcases the social climate of the Disney Company during this time. As a woman, Chapman's level of involvement was a first for Pixar. However, Disney Animation Studios has followed in similar footsteps more recently. The Disney Company has certainly come a long way from pretty young girls inking and painting their way into the history books. Keegan notes, "Three-quarters of a century later, for the first time on a Disney animated feature, a woman's place is in the director's chair. Jennifer Lee, a screenwriter, shares directing credit on *Frozen* with animator Chris Buck."³⁷ Lee's leadership in the creative process of this film marks another major and timely shift in Disney animation studios. This corporate shift in women's roles suggests that Disney princesses in the open-ended third generation will continue to adapt and reform to represent the Company's social environment of strong, leading women.

Conclusion

The changes in women's roles in the Disney Company suggest a great deal about the extrinsic factors that contributed to the creation of Disney's princesses. This analysis allows me to revisit the question posed in the introduction of the chapter: Does Disney's reach allow their films to prescribe and influence society in order to promote their own worldview, or does society serve to influence the films as the starting point for Disney's stories?³⁸ While Amy Davis claims that Disney is both prescriptive and reflective, I think

that Disney films more reflect than prescribe culture. These films were certainly not created in a vacuum, void of influence from the outside world. Walt's princesses responded to the society of the time, whereas Eisner's era of influence was responsive to an American public 30 years later. The princesses of today reflect the current changes in society regarding "typical" gender roles and expectations. Even as Disney released *Frozen* (November 2013), an adaptation of an original Hans Christian Andersen tale, this "latest princess film"³⁹ carries on with similar themes to those found in *Tangled* (2010) and certainly *Brave* (2012). Given the similarities to previous princess narratives and the unique elements of *Frozen*, I predict that it will not be long before Ana, and perhaps even her sister Elsa, joins the ranks of her fellow princesses, adding new depth and meaning to the group of most recent Disney princesses.

Most interestingly, the inclusion of women in leadership ranks of the Walt Disney Animation Studios is an idea that came first from Walt himself. In a recent *Los Angeles Times* article, Rebecca Keegan cracks open the vault of the Walt Disney Archives to reveal Walt's true feelings about the future of his studio. In a speech Walt gave to his employees in 1941 he stated, "If a woman can do the work as well, she is worth as much as a man [...] The girl artists have the right to expect the same chances for advancement as men, and I honestly believe they may eventually contribute something to this business that men never would or could."⁴⁰ Considering the advances discussed in this chapter, it is clear that Walt's prediction has and will continue to come true. Women's contributions to the Walt Disney Animation Studios, and to the Disney princess culture specifically, have allowed more authentic and time sensitive representations of women in these animated films. A historical investigation reveals that what is occurring in Disney

princess films is more than meets the eye. For the purpose of this project, the investigation of these three time periods helps me to narrow the subsequent analysis chapters to focus on the dynamics of the two most recent princess films in the third generation. This narrowing will allow me to investigate the specific instances of women's expectations that are revealed in the plots of *Tangled* and *Brave*.

Notes

¹ Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860," *American Quarterly*, 18 (1966): 152.

² Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, *Man Cannot Speak For Her. Volume I: A Critical Study of Early Feminist Rhetoric* (New York: Praeger, 1989), 13.

³ Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860, 152.

⁴ In order to avoid confusion between the company and the man, Walt Disney is referenced as "Walt" in the context of this thesis.

⁵ William L. O'Neill, *Feminism in America: A History* 2nd revised ed. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1989.

⁶ Amy Davis. *Good Girls and Wicked Witches: Women in Disney's Feature Animation*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 14.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Annalee Ward. *Mouse Morality: The Rhetoric of Disney Animated Film*. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002), 7.

⁹ Don Peri. *Working with Walt: Interviews with Disney Artists*. (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2008), xxvi.

¹⁰ Ibid., 89.

¹¹ Ibid., 83.

¹² Ibid., 89.

¹³ Nina Bahadur, "Disney Rejection Letter From 1938 Tells Candidate, 'Girls Are Not Considered,'" *The Huffington Post* (New York, NY), March 30, 2013.

¹⁴ See Appendix A

¹⁵ Hoi F. Cheu, "Disney and Girlhood." in *Girl Culture: An Encyclopedia* Volume I., eds. Claudia Mitchell and Acqueline Reid-Walsh (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2007), 53.

¹⁶ Mark Axelrod, "Beauties and Their Beasts & Other Motherless Tales from the Wonderful World of Walt Disney," in *The Emperor's Old Groove: Decolonizing*

Disney's Magic Kingdom, ed. Brenda Ayers (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2013), 36.

¹⁷ Laura Sells, "'Where Do the Mermaids Stand?': Voice and Body in *The Little Mermaid*," in *From Mouse to Mermaid: The Politics of Film, Gender, and Culture*, eds. Elizabeth Bell, Lynda Haas, and Laura Sells (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 176.

¹⁸ Amy Davis, *Good Girls and Wicked Witches: Women in Disney's Feature Animation*, 169.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid., 170.

²¹ Cassandra Stover, "Damsels and Heroines: The Conundrum of the Post-Feminist Disney Princess," *LUX: A Journal of Transdisciplinary Writing and Research from Claremont Graduate University*, 2, no. 1 (2013): 4.

²² All filmography credits for Sue C. Nichols, Susannah Grant, Lorna Cook, and Rita Hsiao are taken from IMDb (International Movie Database) listings found with the film credits at www.imdb.com.

²³ "Sue C. Nichols," IMBd.com, last modified 2014, http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0629734/?ref_=ttfc_fc_wr9.

²⁴ "Pocahontas: Full Cast and Crew," IMBD.com, last modified 2014, http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0114148/fullcredits?ref_=tt_ov_wr#writers.

²⁵ "Lorna Cook," IMBD.com, last modified 2014, http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0177170/?ref_=ttfc_fc_wr15.

²⁶ "Rita Hsiao," IMBD.com, last modified 2014, http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0398763/?ref_=tt_ov_wr.

²⁷ Rebecca Keegan, "'Frozen,' 'Get a Horse!' female directors mark firsts for Disney," *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, CA), Nov. 22, 2013.

²⁸ Julia Wood, "The Can-Do Discourse and Young Women's Anticipations of Future," *Women & Language*, 33 (2010): 103-107.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid., 103.

³¹ Arlie Hoshchild, *The Second Shift*. (New York: Penguin Group, 1989), 4.

³² Ibid., 103.

³³ Jason Garcia, “Disney World President Meg Crofton promoted,” *Orlando Sentinel* (Orlando, FL), July 5, 2011.

³⁴ Rebecca Keegan, “Frozen, 'Get a Horse!' Female Directors Mark Firsts for Disney.”

³⁵ Brenda Chapman, “Stand Up for Yourself, and Mentor Others,” *New York Times* (New York, NY), Aug. 12, 2012.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Rebecca Keegan, “Frozen, 'Get a Horse!' Female Directors Mark Firsts for Disney.”

³⁸ I thank Tom Burkholder for this insight. (Tom Burkholder, Personal Communication, Aug. 12, 2013.)

³⁹ Frozen has not yet been named an official “Disney Princess Film.” Based on the fact that Anna and Elsa are princesses, it is likely that the pair will be added to the Disney Princess marketing line.

⁴⁰ Rebecca Keegan, “72 years before 'Frozen,' Walt Disney spoke on women in animation,” *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, CA), Nov. 29, 2013.

CHAPTER THREE: Untangling Perceptions of the Modern Woman, Consciousness-Raising of the Androgynous Disney Princess

Introduction

The changing dynamics in society during the three time periods of Disney Princess films are essential to understanding the remaining chapters of this thesis. This chapter begins the analysis of the specific films of interest in this study. Chapter three and chapter four are solely dedicated to uncovering important rhetorical implications within the third generation of Disney princess films (2009-present). To do so, I focus on the new representations of “princess” that emerge in the Disney film, *Tangled* (chapter three), and the Disney/Pixar film, *Brave* (chapter four).

As mentioned in chapter one, I have selected these two films in order to appropriately address the scope of this project. To reiterate this discussion, *The Princess and the Frog* (2008) is also a part of this new grouping of Disney princesses, but has been excluded for three reasons. First, *The Princess and the Frog* is Disney’s first story about an African-American princess. While an analysis of race and gender in Disney princess is a valuable area of research, this project focuses exclusively on issues of gender expectations. Secondly, there are more similarities in the plots of *Tangled* and *Brave* because each film is centered around mothers as antagonists.¹ Rapunzel and Merida are different from other recent Disney princesses because their ambition is what causes this tension to emerge. With this similarity, it allows the study of each of these films to follow the same pattern in the analysis chapters: (1) mother’s control on princess’s ambition; (2) mother’s control conflicts with princess’s ambition; and (3) princess’s ambition reigns over mother’s ambition. In comparison to other princess films, second generation

princesses (Ariel, Belle, Jasmine, and Pocahontas) are exclusively raised by their fathers and have no mother figure in their lives at all; with the exception of Mulan, a mother figure is present, but she plays a very minimal role in the story. In the case of the third generation of Disney princesses, mothers reappear as important influences for Tiana, Rapunzel, and Merida. However, *The Princess and the Frog* is removed from this analysis because Tiana's mother, Eudora, is portrayed as a nurturing and compassionate figure that, again, plays a minimal role in the plot of the film. *Tangled* and *Brave* are distinct from *The Princess and the Frog* because Rapunzel and Merida's mothers act as the films' antagonists. The antagonism from Mother Gothel and Elinor is important because in both films, the mothers represent certain gender-expectations, while Rapunzel and Merida respectively fight against those expectations. Finally, the decision to analyze *Tangled* and *Brave* exclusively comes from the desire to provide something new to the field of rhetoric and Disney studies. Because Rapunzel and Merida are the two most recent inductees to the Disney Princess marketing line, it is valuable to begin examining their influence. These newest princesses are unique in a variety of ways, which adds to an investigation of the Disney Princess genre as a whole.

In this chapter, I use the concept of consciousness-raising to explore the primary tension present in Disney's *Tangled*. This tension is twofold for the purpose of this study, and leads to two interrelated claims: 1) The film's protagonist, Rapunzel, experiences consciousness-raising during her journey for self-discovery and 2) *Tangled* serves as a form of third-wave feminist consciousness-raising for the film's audience because Rapunzel models non-traditional behaviors and tendencies that challenge gender expectations. This chapter begins with an explanation of third wave feminist

consciousness-raising as a critical lens for this analysis. The analysis works to illuminate the common threads between the princess's journey and the implications of her narrative in the society outside of the film. A close reading of both dialogue and song lyrics in *Tangled* is implemented in order to narrow the analysis to key moments of consciousness-raising in the film. To make these selections, I look at the ways in which the quest for identity reflects a personal consciousness-raising for the character Rapunzel. The consciousness-raising function of *Tangled* is enunciated by the relational struggle between Rapunzel and her "mother" (who is actually her kidnapper), Mother Gothel. Then, I explain how Rapunzel's narrative is a form of third wave feminist consciousness-raising for society, specifically because of her androgynous tendencies. For Rapunzel, consciousness-raising occurs through her androgyny. As a result, *Tangled* showcases Rapunzel in ways that suggest new ideas about what it means to be a princess.

Rhetorical Strategies

Consciousness-Raising

In, "The Rhetoric of Women's Liberation: An Oxymoron," rhetorical scholar Karlyn Kohrs Campbell describes consciousness-raising as an affirmation "of the affective, of the validity of personal experience, of the necessity for self-exposure and self-criticism, of the value of dialogue, and of the goal of autonomous, individual decision making."² This definition emphasizes the ability for consciousness-raising to promote self-awareness and empowerment among women. In Campbell's 1983 article, "Femininity and Feminism: To Be or Not to Be a Woman," she notes that consciousness-raising as a rhetorical strategy in the women's rights movement of the 19th century was a style specifically adapted to women, because it served as a way for them to bring private

issues into the public and political realms of society.³ In this sense, consciousness-raising was understood as both a rhetorical strategy and a mode of small-group communication, where women gathered and shared their experience.

The concept of consciousness-raising has been especially useful for understanding feminist rhetoric, because the function of consciousness-raising helps to illuminate how individuals gain social awareness. Communication scholars Stacey Sowards and Valerie Renegar argue that the evolution of consciousness-raising in third wave feminism has instilled “a critical perspective that focuses on personal and social injustices.”⁴ Third wave feminists primarily critique second wave feminism for its exclusion of minority experiences, but there are still similarities in the rhetorical obstacles faced in the second and third wave. Second wave feminism used the foundation of the nineteenth century women's rights movement, but expanded to issues that became relevant to women in the twentieth century; topics like job availability, sexual harassment, and equal pay emerged during this wave. Third wave feminism emerged in an effort to finish the job set out by second wave feminists by including minority experiences. Just as there are differences in the three waves of feminism, there are also differences in the ways that consciousness-raising functions within the waves. As such, consciousness-raising as a rhetorical option has changed as the influence of mass media has become more accepted. The function of mass media in second wave feminist rhetoric is discussed in an excerpt from the *Encyclopedia of Gender in Media*:

In many ways, second wave feminists demonstrated an uneasy relationship with mass media. Mass media were thought to constitute an extremely negative force in the lives of women. However, in recognizing the influence of media on popular understandings of gender and behavior, some feminists also advocated harnessing the tools of mass media and using them to empower women. If a major goal of feminism was to make women more aware of the shared concerns they

experienced, then media could be used to break down this isolation. It was thought that popular culture could be used to create positive portrayals of women while also making women aware of their oppressed state through media-based consciousness-raising.⁵

This conceptualization of consciousness-raising in media will be used to guide this analysis.

Third wave feminist consciousness-raising draws from consciousness-raising tactics used in the second wave. However, by mobilizing these tactics within mass-mediated messages, consciousness-raising has gone far beyond small group interaction. As stated by Sowards and Renegar, “the rhetorical features of traditional small-group consciousness-raising were designed to overcome a distinct set of barriers and as these barriers have evolved so must the consciousness-raising designed to address them.”⁶ The use of consciousness-raising strategies presented through mass media is a way in which feminists have started to break down these “barriers.” Sowards and Renegar note that new uses of consciousness-raising in third-wave feminist rhetoric are moving beyond previous conceptions of the term. As they note, third-wave feminists have used

[. . .] public venues and mass media outlets to address diversity issues within feminism, which would not be possible in the same way within a small group of people who share a particular geographic proximity. In a small group consciousness-raising session, a limited number of people participate in consciousness-raising activities for a limited amount of time. However, consciousness-raising in books and popular culture can provide a wider array of perspectives than any one small group.⁷

By using media, third wave feminists have been able to transform consciousness-raising to a scale unachievable within the limitations of the small group communication environment. Instead, mass media outlets serve as a way for consciousness-raising as a rhetorical strategy to function in a contemporary setting. The reach of mass-mediated messages allows for consciousness-raising to function on a grand scale.

When Campbell first discussed consciousness-raising as a rhetorical strategy, she wrote of its use in feminist rhetoric. This is important to the current study because Disney princess films serve as a form of feminist rhetoric as a rhetorical strategy for consciousness-raising. In the case of women rhetors, the use of relatable, personal anecdotes illuminated how “the personal became social and political and the experiences of individuals were generalized into statements about the conditions of women as a group.”⁸ This, Campbell notes, has become “the essence of the consciousness-raising process in contemporary feminism.”⁹ As a rhetorical strategy, consciousness-raising is well suited to feminist rhetoric. According to Campbell, nineteenth century orators had to deal with the rhetorical problem of audience unawareness because women saw themselves as incapable of effective action.¹⁰ In the modern context, the idea of a strict feminine communicative style still acts as a barrier for women in political discourse. In discussing contemporary feminine style, communication scholars Bonnie Dow and Mari Boon Tonn state,

Attempts to avoid perceptions of masculinity and to be rhetorically effective with public audiences have led these women to synthesize gender expectations by using socially approved rhetorical strategies commonly identified as “masculine” — formal evidence, deductive structure, and linear modes of reasoning — while simultaneously incorporating concerns and qualities typically considered “feminine,” such as family values or feminine personae.¹¹

By using these approaches, women rhetors have adapted their strategies to meet a present need. In this sense, consciousness-raising as a rhetorical strategy in contemporary feminist rhetoric has transformed into an androgynous style, rather than a feminine style. As Dow and Tonn note, this gender-equal approach to rhetoric is not exclusive to women, as rhetors or audiences.¹² As a rhetorical strategy, consciousness-raising in feminist rhetoric has become a way to share the complexities of the female experience.

Mass media functions as a viable medium to raise consciousness because it presents feminism as a political activist concern in a way that is accessible to the general public. Consciousness-raising has expanded and adapted to the expectations of contemporary audiences. As activist Kristina Sheryl Wong writes, “feminist politics can be shared with the world if it is carefully disguised in the mass media. Pop culture provides an effective vehicle to carry the self-celebrating concepts of third-wave feminism.”¹³ Television and film, then, can be used to reflect third-wave feminist thinking by showcasing strong female leads. As noted in Michele Byer’s analysis of the empowered female characters in the television show, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, the actions of the title character can serve as consciousness-raising for the show’s audiences. “[Buffy] dramatizes the struggle that many young women face to be strong, independent, articulate, ambitious, and powerful. And this is done without erasing women’s desire for connection.”¹⁴ This example in *Buffy* indicates a promising step in a feminist direction regarding the portrayal of women in media. In describing this study, Byer states, “What has been missing in both the feminist and popular commentary about Buffy is the recognition that the artifacts of popular culture that are directed at young adults should be taken seriously and tied—whenever possible—to feminism, the study of gender, and activism.”¹⁵ With the substitution of the word “Disney” for the word “Buffy,” the purpose of the current analysis is well articulated.

Analysis

Rapunzel’s narrative may serve to raise audience consciousness regarding gender roles and expectations. Through Rapunzel’s androgynous tendencies, her narrative serves to raise consciousness about the contemporary female experience. Rapunzel’s story is

ideal for a rhetorical investigation because the accessibility of her narrative brings consciousness of women's roles to a popular audience; an investigation of Rapunzel is fruitful because her audience expects princesses to be inherently feminine. With Disney, the size of this audience is expansive, so the scope of this message is vast. Films also have the opportunity to be viewed at a future time, promoting messages that span not only their current audiences, but audiences for decades to come. Much like the audiences of early women's rights activists, Rapunzel is initially presented with a complete unawareness of her position in society; she spends her life locked away in a tower without any understanding that she has the power within her to enact change. However, this *unconsciousness* is also what sparks her curiosity for identity and ultimately allows her to experience her own consciousness-raising.

As noted by feminist writer Kathie Sarachild, consciousness-raising for women was rooted in recognizing personal oppressions. Through the subsequent analysis, I will reveal how Rapunzel recognizes and overcomes her personal oppression. According to Campbell, the rhetorical strategy of consciousness-raising allowed early women rhetors to address their subordination to their husbands, fathers, or male employers.¹⁶ In similar fashion, consciousness-raising allows Rapunzel to speak out about her subordination to Mother Gothel. Additionally, Campbell notes that because women had a lack of voice, they also often had negative self-images.¹⁷ I illustrate how consciousness-raising allows Rapunzel to recognize her lack of voice, and overcome the negative self-image which is forced upon her by her mother. In the process of experiencing these consciousness-raising characteristics, Rapunzel achieves the status of being fully human.

Also relevant to the subsequent analysis is the role of conflict in this consciousness-raising. Communication scholar Charles Conrad states that a key factor in the rhetoric of the early women's rights movement lies in "the assumption that rhetorical acts originate in conflict."¹⁸ Conflict is relevant to the current analysis because Rapunzel's rhetoric is spurred by the tension she experiences between herself and her maternal guardian. The conflict that emerges in *Tangled* is driven by Mother Gothel's suppression of Rapunzel's ability to recognize herself as a capable human being. According to Conrad, the fundamental conflict that emerged from women's restrictions in society during the early women's rights movement was "the *consciousness* that they were fully capable human beings and that their society defined them as incomplete, not-fully-human creatures."¹⁹ In *Tangled*, Rapunzel experiences this restriction, as all three characteristics of being fully human are denied to her. According to Conrad these characteristics are, (1) human beings are aware of themselves and their condition; (2) they are free to make meaningful choices; and (3) they are responsible for those choices.²⁰ Through the analysis, I will use these three characteristics to help illustrate how Rapunzel overcomes her oppression and ultimately gains consciousness.

Early women rhetors found themselves addressing the nature of being subordinate in their efforts to raise consciousness. Similarly, viewers can recognize these efforts in Rapunzel's self-searching story. In *Tangled*, this conflict is animated through the interaction between "princess" and "mother." I see this dynamic unfolding in a three step process in this film. First, Mother Gothel imposes control on her princess daughter. Second, a conflict emerges due to the princess's unwillingness to conform to her

mother's authority. Third, Mother Gothel's power is ultimately overrun by the ambition of the princess, who finds herself in the process of rejecting her mother's values.

Mother's Control Imposed on Princess's Ambition

Tangled begins with a flashback to Rapunzel's life as a baby. The flashback reveals that Rapunzel is the daughter of the king and queen (unnamed) of the kingdom. While pregnant with Rapunzel, the Queen becomes very sick. The cure to her illness comes in the form of a magic, golden flower, which the Queen consumes. As a result, a healthy baby girl is born, and the magical qualities of the golden flower are imparted to the infant princess. Soon after, Mother Gothel, who had previously used the golden flower as her own personal fountain of youth, steals Rapunzel from her crib. By singing to the flower, Mother Gothel subtracted years of age from her appearance, and she realizes that she can continue doing the same with the child. By the time she steals baby Rapunzel from her royal home, Mother Gothel is actually hundreds of years old. In order to stay young forever, Mother Gothel keeps Rapunzel and the magical properties of her hair locked up in a tower where no one can steal her away.

To understand the relationship between Mother Gothel and her "daughter," Rapunzel, it is worth noting that Mother Gothel sustains the relationship only for personal gain. It is clear from the beginning that Mother Gothel does not truly *love* Rapunzel the way a mother should; Mother Gothel's primary motivation is to ensure that the magic in Rapunzel's hair is kept safe, and therefore, Rapunzel is hidden away from the outside world. Similarly, Rapunzel blindly accepts her mother's "affections" because she has never known anything else (a state of *unconsciousness*). In an early moment in the film, we see a young, curious Rapunzel learn about the world from Mother Gothel.

YOUNG RAPUNZEL: Why can't I go outside?

MOTHER GOTHEL: The outside world is a dangerous place, filled with horrible, selfish people. You must stay here, where you're safe. Do you understand, flower?

YOUNG RAPUNZEL: Yes mommy.²¹

Mother Gothel puts a belief in Rapunzel's head that the outside world is evil and there is no good in people outside the tower. As a result, Rapunzel believes that she needs to stay in the tower because her mother is the only person protecting her from the danger that awaits. As a young child, Rapunzel is too naïve to recognize that she is not in control of her life; Mother Gothel controls Rapunzel's life and her understanding of the world. In terms of Conrad's characteristics of being fully human, Rapunzel is not aware of herself or her condition because she has been cast as the obedient follower in Mother Gothel's plot. Mother Gothel is able to perpetuate her eighteen year lie to Rapunzel, and continue using the powers released by brushing the princess's long blonde hair to stay young forever.

The way in which Mother Gothel speaks to Rapunzel early in the film suggests that the princess is unaware of her condition. In a key moment, Mother Gothel looks into a large mirror with her daughter by her side and says, "Look in that mirror. I see a strong, confident, beautiful young lady." As Rapunzel begins to smile, Mother Gothel chimes in again with an abrupt, "Oh look, you're here too!" This comment suggests that Rapunzel perceives herself with a negative self-image that is generated from the words that Mother Gothel speaks to her. The imposition of Mother Gothel's views creates a princess who believes that she has little self-worth. As a result Rapunzel believes that polishing and waxing, doing laundry and sweeping until the floors are clean is the only life that should be desired. After all, life outside of the tower is dangerous and should not even be

explored. In the lyrics of the song “When Will My Life Begin?” it becomes clear that Rapunzel has used the endless time spent in the tower to become crafty and skilled in a variety of activities.

*Seven a.m., the usual morning lineup
Start up the chores and sweep till the floor's all clean
Polish and wax, do laundry, and mop and shine up
Sweep again, and by then it's, like, seven-fifteen
And so I'll read a book or maybe two or three
I'll add a few new paintings to my gallery
I'll play guitar and knit and cook and basically
Just wonder when will my life begin?²²*

After finishing her daily chores in 15 minutes flat, Rapunzel spends her time doing a variety of things that keep her busy during the day. With her infinite spare time, Rapunzel works to cure her boredom and limited independence by entertaining herself with activities that are atypical by the standard of Disney's earlier princesses. While not mentioned explicitly in the lyrics of the opening song in the film, Rapunzel is displayed enacting behaviors that suggest androgyny early on. According to Sangeeta Rath and Aakankshya Mishra, “androgynous individuals are independent, industrious and courageous, and at the same time they are nurturing, tender and expressive. They do not rely on gender as an organizing principle.”²³ At this stage in the film, it is unclear that Rapunzel is, indeed, androgynous. However, in searching for the combination of masculine and feminine elements of her character, viewers can begin to uncover small hints at her versatility. For example, as Rapunzel sings, she is shown as physically strong when she uses her hair to climb toward the ceiling of her tower and sit on the beams high above. For Rapunzel, her hair is not inanimate. Her locks are used to aid her as rope, and even to grab door handles, which then open with a slight tug (things that would be impossible with normal hair). Rapunzel displays individual strength through the use of

her hair, but even then, she does not recognize herself as a fully-grown human being. Her androgynous tendencies come through as the conflict begins to unfold. Certainly at this point, she remains unaware of herself and her condition, at least to the point that she does not recognize that her life could be any different. This is apparent in the closing lines of the song:

*And then I'll brush and brush and brush and brush my hair
Stuck in the same place I've always been
And I'll keep wondering and wondering and wondering and wondering
When will my life begin?*

These last lyrics are representative of the idea that Rapunzel is unconscious of her potential. The fact that she is stuck in the same place she's always been is not something she feels that she can change. While she does sing of a burning desire that her life could be something more, she passively wonders and wonders, believing that her destiny is out of her hands in the same way that Snow White, Cinderella and Aurora await true love's kiss. At this point in the plot, Rapunzel displays no signs of self-awareness, nor does she exhibit any desire to achieve her own goals. In fact, the song concludes with Rapunzel's hope that her destiny will change with external influence: "now that I'm older, Mother might just... let me go." However, there is no recognition that she has the power internally to make that decision on her own.

Mother's Control Conflicts with Princess's Ambition

The conflict in *Tangled* appears as Rapunzel suddenly becomes aware of the true nature of the relationship with her mother. What begins as a simple request for her eighteenth birthday present transforms into a moment of awakening for Rapunzel; she recognizes through this conflict that she is not free to make her own choices and consciousness-raising begins. Every year on her birthday, Rapunzel waits anxiously to

watch the floating lights appear in the night sky. Because Rapunzel is unaware of her identity, she has no idea why the lights appear consistently year after year; the “floating lights” are actually sent into the night sky by her real parents, in hopes that their “lost princess” will return home. Rapunzel’s curiosity prompts her to ask Mother Gothel if she may go see the floating lights in person for her birthday. In response, Mother Gothel tries to convince her that the “floating lights” are just “the stars,” but Rapunzel is too old to be fooled after years of tracking stellar patterns from her window. As Rapunzel insists that she is seeing something different, Mother Gothel begins a hyperbolic explanation of the evils outside in an attempt to distract her daughter’s one-track mind. This takes place in the song, “Mother Knows Best.”²⁴ In the song, Mother Gothel begins by framing the world as a dangerous place.

*Mother knows best
Listen to your mother
It's a scary world out there
Mother knows best
One way or another
Something will go wrong, I swear*

As Mother Gothel frames the outside world in this way, Rapunzel fearfully hides from theatric representations of poison ivy, quicksand, men with pointy teeth, and even the plague. Mother Gothel’s dramatizations cause Rapunzel to run back to her mother’s embrace, which allows the antagonist to regain control of the princess’s ambitions to explore the outside world. Her litany of perils morphs into another key moment, where Mother Gothel addresses Rapunzel directly in her song.

*Mother knows best
Take it from your mumsy
On your own, you won't survive
Sloppy, underdressed, immature, clumsy
Please, they'll eat you up alive*

*Gullible, naive, positively grubby
Ditzy and a bit, well, hmm vague
Plus, I believe, gettin' kinda chubby
I'm just saying 'cause I wuv you*

Perhaps most troubling is the second verse of this song, where Mother Gothel's lyrics degrade Rapunzel's sense of self in a way that causes the princess to second-guess her competence. As Campbell notes, women often had negative self-images partly due to their subordination to men. For Rapunzel, her subordination to Mother Gothel makes her feel incompetent. When she sings, "Plus, I believe, gettin' kinda chubby," Mother Gothel perpetuates Rapunzel's negative self-image even more by suggesting inadequacy in her daughter's physical appearance. Mother Gothel's song concludes with a final judgment, "Rapunzel...(Yes?)... Don't ever ask to leave this tower again." Rapunzel responds with a "Yes, mother," but it is clear that she has been put down and is dissatisfied with her mother's ruling. Rapunzel recognizes in this moment that she is not free to make her own choices, and through this, she experiences the onset of consciousness-raising. Aware of her condition, but still not sure if she can act disobediently Rapunzel begins to feel hopeless.

Just as it seems that Rapunzel has no hope of seeing the lights in person, Flynn Rider, the swashbuckling criminal on the run from his latest heist, climbs the tower and enters her home. Without warning, he is greeted with a frying pan to the back of the head and is swiftly knocked unconscious. Here we see a feisty and rather aggressive Rapunzel who behaves in a more masculine fashion than her princess predecessors as she physically defends herself against the intruder. This certainly is the most excitement that Rapunzel has ever experienced, and in her naivety she wishes to share this news with her mother. With the unconscious Flynn Rider now stuffed in a dressing cabinet, Rapunzel

begins to search through his satchel. Inside, she finds the crown of the lost princess, which Flynn has just stolen. In a moment of foreshadowing, Rapunzel places the crown on her head and stares in amazement at herself in the mirror. However, nothing becomes of this moment, as her pet chameleon, Pascal, shakes his head in disapproval and the call of “Rapunzel, let down your hair!” from Mother Gothel interrupts the moment. In this startled moment, Rapunzel hides the satchel and the crown away in order to keep the element of surprise. The enthusiastic Rapunzel intends to tell the news to her mother, who has just returned from a trip outside.

MOTHER GOTHEL: I brought back parsnips. I’m going to make hazelnut soup for dinner, your favorite—surprise!

RAPUNZEL: Well mother, there’s something I want to tell you.

MOTHER GOTHEL: Oh Rapunzel, you know I hate leaving you after a fight especially when I’ve done absolutely nothing wrong.

RAPUNZEL: Okay, I’ve been thinking a lot about what you’ve said earlier (and)...

MOTHER GOTHEL: I hope you’re not still talking about the stars.

RAPUNZEL: ‘Floating Lights’, and, yes, I’m leading up to that, and...

MOTHER GOTHEL: Because I really thought we dropped the issue, sweetheart.

RAPUNZEL: No, mother, I’m just saying, you think I’m not strong enough to handle myself out there.

MOTHER GOTHEL: Oh darling, I know you’re not strong enough to handle yourself out there.

RAPUNZEL: But if you just—

MOTHER GOTHEL: Rapunzel, we’re done talking about this—

RAPUNZEL: Trust me—

MOTHER GOTHEL: Rapunzel...

RAPUNZEL: I know what I’m saying (*places hand on the chair which is securing the cabinet with Flynn Rider inside*)

MOTHER GOTHEL: Rapunzel...

RAPUNZEL: Oh, come on...

MOTHER GOTHEL: (*furiously*) Enough of the lights, Rapunzel! You are not! Leaving! This! Tower! ... Ever!

RAPUNZEL: (*delicately lifts her hand off the chair*)

MOTHER GOTHEL: Ugh, great... Now I’m the bad guy.

Mother Gothel’s domineering tone, use of passive aggressive tactics, and manipulative language has multiple meanings. To the audience, she appears sinister; to Rapunzel, she

appears authoritative, and the princess does not dare disagree with her outright. The breaking point for Rapunzel is reached when Mother Gothel screams “You are not leaving this tower! Ever!.” As the tension escalates, Rapunzel realizes that she wants to experience what is beyond the tower but can never do so if her mother stands in the way of that freedom. Although Rapunzel experiences an awareness that she is not in control of her life, she still suffers from a lack of voice in this moment. In other words, consciousness-raising allows Rapunzel to recognize her personal oppression, but she has not achieved agency to speak up in defense of herself. Instead, Rapunzel resorts to trickery, seeing that this is the only way to combat the firm ruling laid out by Mother Gothel. In order to get her way, Rapunzel decides to keep Flynn’s presence in the tower a secret, and plots a way to make Mother Gothel leave. Realizing that she cannot reason with her mother, Rapunzel changes her birthday wish to “new paints” knowing that the materials to grant this request require a journey of three days’ time. In this moment of consciousness-raising, Rapunzel realizes that the only way she is ever going to get her way is if she misleads her mother. She chooses to act against her mother’s wishes, and does all of this without her finding out. In this sense, Rapunzel is working toward the freedom to make her own choices for the first time in her life. Recognizing that Rapunzel’s request for new paints is easier to facilitate than her request to see the floating lights, Mother Gothel agrees and begins on her journey.

Soon, Flynn comes to and Rapunzel bargains with him to achieve the end she desires. Using her hair, Rapunzel ties Flynn to a chair, forcing her captive audience member to hear her case. Rapunzel reveals that she has stolen his satchel, but promises to return it to him if he serves as her guide to see the “floating lights;” Flynn reveals that the

lights are actually “lanterns.” After much hesitation, Flynn reluctantly agrees to take Rapunzel, and they leave the tower together. In a crucial moment, the scene that follows contains a series of exclamations made by Rapunzel as she finally decides to be disobedient. Although a comical moment in the film, her inner turmoil is representative of a larger narrative where women still feel the pressure of doing what is socially expected versus what they truly want. Her angst is shown through a kind of dialogue with herself.

RAPUNZEL: I can’t believe I did this.
(*in disbelief*) I can’t believe I did this.
(*with excitement*) I can’t believe I did this! Haha!
Mother would be so furious.
That’s okay! I mean, what she doesn’t know won’t kill her, right?
(*with agony*) Oh my gosh, this would kill her.
This is so fun!
(*with disgust*) I am a horrible daughter. I’m going back.
I am never going back! Woo-hoo!
(*with agony*) I am a despicable human being.
Woo-hoo! Best. Day. Ever!
(*Rapunzel sobs*)

FLYNN: Hmm-mm-m. You know, I can’t help but notice you seem a little at war with yourself here.

RAPUNZEL: (*sniff*) What?

FLYNN: Now, I’m only picking up bits and pieces, of course. Overprotective mother, forbidden road trip. I mean, this is serious stuff. But let me ease your conscience. This is part of growing up. A little rebellion, a little adventure—that’s good, healthy even.

Rapunzel is not convinced by Flynn’s nonchalance. Although she has finally achieved “freedom,” she still feels inherently guilty about her quest toward consciousness-raising. Even in her freedom, Rapunzel still speaks of herself with a negative self-image when she expresses “I am a despicable human being.” Because she had to be deceptive to get her way, being free to make her own choices does not feel like freedom at all. Of course, deception is a major plot propellant between Mother Gothel and Rapunzel throughout. In

a sense, Rapunzel has learned to deceive others through the example set by her mother, and eventually those behaviors return back to Mother Gothel.

Soon after leaving the tower, Mother Gothel comes across a palace horse without a rider and instinctively rushes back to the tower to make sure no one has found Rapunzel. Not surprisingly, when Mother Gothel arrives she realizes that Rapunzel is gone. However, Mother Gothel finds the crown and Flynn Rider's wanted poster in his satchel in the process of searching the tower for her daughter. In her panic, Mother Gothel realizes that her daughter has been deceptive; she sets out to find Rapunzel and manipulate the princess into returning "home."

Shortly after, Mother Gothel comes upon Flynn and Rapunzel at a pub down the road. Rather than acting immediately, Mother Gothel waits in the shadows until an opportune moment appears. Rapunzel is ultimately confronted by her mother when Flynn walks away to find more firewood. Initially, Rapunzel becomes panicked and remorseful for her actions. Although Rapunzel had become aware of herself and her condition by leaving the tower, she is not yet confident enough to take responsibility for the choices that she has made. Thus, Rapunzel is not yet able to achieve the characteristics of being fully human. However, consciousness-raising unfolds in this moment to help the princess realize her oppressed state and begin to act in defense of her self-worth. In the reprise of the song, "Mother Knows Best," Rapunzel finally seems to accept her *disobedience*. As Mother Gothel cunningly reassures Rapunzel in this moment, she sings to her daughter, "this whole romance that you've invented just proves you're too naive to be here [...] don't be a dummy, come with mummy." As Mother Gothel concludes her musical

manipulation, singing “mother knows best,” Rapunzel indignantly shouts “No!” at her parental figure.²⁵

In this pivotal moment, Rapunzel not only rejects her mother’s authority, but also renounces her life as an obedient follower. The deception displayed by Mother Gothel toward Rapunzel is symbolic of the deception that women could not be fully actualized human beings and therefore reach consciousness of their roles in society. This moment links with broader culture as a moment of consciousness-raising. In Rapunzel’s moment of empowerment, her bold “No!” betrays all sense of typical, proper, feminine style, and her firm disobedience sets her apart as an androgynous protagonist, rather than a proper princess. Unlike the original “Mother Knows Best,” moment, Rapunzel gains voice when the song reprises. She finally shouts out in defense of her self-worth. The unwavering obedience to Mother Gothel’s control is finally severed in this moment of consciousness-raising; Rapunzel’s commitment is never the same again. The remainder of the film reveals important steps taken by Rapunzel to finally achieve the status of being fully human. As Rapunzel finally stands up for herself and rejects Mother Gothel, this is her moment of realization, of awareness, and of coming-to-consciousness.

Princess’s Ambition Reigns Over Mother’s Ambition

Mother Gothel allows Rapunzel to continue on her quest after she finds out what Rapunzel has done. More sure of her decision to be disobedient, Rapunzel continues to hide the satchel from Flynn in order to get what she wants. By refusing to return home with Mother Gothel, Rapunzel enacts active, rather than passive personality traits, and tries to take responsibility for her choices. It also seems as though Rapunzel has fallen victim to social learning, picking up on her mother’s deception as a means of tricking her

guide into doing what she wants. In the end, she is not trying to do this to harm Flynn, but does mirror similar behaviors to her conniving mother nonetheless. After exploring the kingdom with Flynn, Rapunzel passes by a mosaic of the king and queen with a baby girl. The depiction of the princess catches her attention, but much like the moment in the mirror at the beginning of the film, she quickly moves on. As night falls, Flynn escorts her out into the bay on a gondola where they anticipate viewing the lanterns rise into the night sky. While there, they converse:

FLYNN: You okay?

RAPUNZEL: I'm terrified.

FLYNN: Why?

RAPUNZEL: I've been looking out a window for eighteen years, dreaming about what it might feel like when those lights rise in the sky. What if it's not everything I dreamed it would be?

FLYNN: It will be.

RAPUNZEL: (thoughtfully) Hmm. And what if it is? What do I do then?

FLYNN: Well, that's the good part I guess. You get to go find a new dream.

Meanwhile, Mother Gothel awaits in shadows on the shore, convinced that she can still make Rapunzel see the foolishness of her actions and manipulate her into returning home. In order to force Rapunzel to abandon her adventure Mother Gothel sets an elaborate trap that results in Rapunzel "seeing" Flynn sail away with the crown moments after their nearly-romantic-ending in the gondola; what Rapunzel is actually seeing is an unconscious Flynn tied up to the helm of a small boat sailing toward the castle. Shocked by what has happened, Rapunzel is soon confronted by two "ruffians" who attempt to capture her for her "magic hair." As Rapunzel runs away, her hair gets caught in tree branches and she braces for her capture. However, a large thud is heard followed by the desperate cry of "Rapunzel!?" by Mother Gothel in the distance. As Rapunzel turns around, she sees her mother with a large club and the unconscious figures of the two

thugs that had attempted to kidnap her. Her mother's outstretched arms are indication to Rapunzel that she should have never tried to recognize herself as capable of making her own choices. As a result, Rapunzel has been convinced once again that there is no good in the world and that she should have never left her tower to begin with. Rapunzel reverts to believing that she is not capable of being a fully actualized human being. She compliantly returns to the tower without hesitation, and Mother Gothel has successfully regained her control over Rapunzel.

Once the pair has returned home, Rapunzel lays in her bedroom staring at the ceiling in utter dismay. After her journey to the kingdom, it is clear that Rapunzel is struggling with the consciousness that she has voice and agency, and the feeling of helpless compliance that has led her back to the tower. Mother Gothel reassures Rapunzel one last time, "I really did try, Rapunzel. I tried to warn you what was out there. The world is dark and selfish and cruel. If it finds even the slightest ray of sunshine, it destroys it." It is not until Rapunzel is staring at the ceiling that she has a flashback of her first days of life, looking up from her crib into the loving faces of her mother and father, the king and queen, that she experiences her epiphany in recognizing her identity. In finally sharing this personal realization out loud (and to the audience), Rapunzel's story culminates in a key function of third wave feminist consciousness-raising. According to Sowards and Renegar, sharing personal experiences, "becomes an avenue of consciousness-raising not only for the audience, but also for the individuals who share their personal experiences of oppression and discrimination."²⁶ The practice of consciousness-raising in the context of *Tangled* serves a dual function, allowing Rapunzel to express her feeling of oppression, but also by affecting the audience who

experiences this revelation with her. In this moment of the film, Rapunzel knocks her bedside table over, which forces Mother Gothel's attention.

MOTHER GOTHEL: Rapunzel? (*climbs stairs*) Rapunzel, what's going on up there?
(*Rapunzel gasps*)

MOTHER GOTHEL: Are you all right?

RAPUNZEL: I'm the lost princess.

MOTHER GOTHEL: Oh, please speak up Rapunzel. You know how I hate the mumbling.

RAPUNZEL: I am the lost princess! Aren't I? Did I mumble, Mother? Or should I even call you that?

MOTHER GOTHEL: Oh Rapunzel, did you even hear yourself? Why would you ask such a ridiculous question?

RAPUNZEL: It was you! It was all you!

MOTHER GOTHEL: Everything that I did was to protect... you.

RAPUNZEL: (*pushes Mother Gothel away*) Ugh!

MOTHER GOTHEL: Rapunzel!

RAPUNZEL: (*descends stairs*) I've spent my entire life hiding from people who would use me for my power...

MOTHER GOTHEL: Rapunzel!

RAPUNZEL: ... but I should have been hiding... from you!

MOTHER GOTHEL: Where will you go? — He won't be there for you.

RAPUNZEL: What did you do to him?

MOTHER GOTHEL:— That criminal is to be hanged for his crimes.

RAPUNZEL: (*gasps*) No.

MOTHER GOTHEL: Now, now. It's alright. Listen to me. Everything is as it should be. (*reaches to pat Rapunzel's hair*)

RAPUNZEL: (*apprehends Mother Gothel's hand*) No! You were wrong about the world. And you were wrong about me. And I will never let you use my hair again!

In terms of consciousness-raising, this is a key moment. She gains control of her life by using her voice to tell Mother Gothel that she may never use her hair again. Rapunzel's epiphanic realization serves to affect both the princess herself, and the film's viewers. For Rapunzel, the reign of Mother Gothel is over when she connects the dots that she is the lost princess and that her mother has been using her for her whole life. Rapunzel has regained consciousness at this moment, as she realizes that she no longer owes any loyalty to Mother Gothel. She has been lied to her entire life about her identity and about

her capabilities as a human being. With the revelation that Mother Gothel has been using her, Rapunzel finally displays the characteristics of being fully human, which can no longer be denied to her. Rapunzel is now fully aware of herself and her condition, she is finally free (and unafraid) to make meaningful choices, and she is responsible for those choices. For the film's viewers, the actions of Rapunzel illuminate a new sense of understanding about what a young woman is capable of doing. By standing up to oppressive authority, Rapunzel fights for what is rightfully hers: her freedom. This feminist message is promoted not through political activism, but through a fully accessible text that audiences can learn from. *Tangled's* princess speaks in a way that challenges the expectations of the feminine style. In her bold and powerful assertions, Rapunzel adopts an androgynous style for speaking that allows her to promote the importance of standing up for oneself.

Conclusion

Tangled translates its themes of consciousness-raising beyond the boundaries of the film and into a real-life understanding for its audience. Consciousness creates an identity for the rhetor as well as for an audience, both of which are necessary for rhetoric to function properly and ultimately to induce action. In this case, the rhetor is Rapunzel, and her message invites audience members (particularly, female audience members) to think about their roles in society. An examination of feminist gains historically can help to reveal how Rapunzel's narrative is able to affect society today. Campbell notes that early feminist rhetoric was inherently in need of consciousness-raising "because of the obstacles presented by women as audiences."²⁷ According to Campbell, "an audience is composed of agents of change, persons capable of acting to implement the rhetor's goals

[...] Women [were] not audiences because they [did] not see themselves as agents of change.”²⁸ This passive reality for women remained problematic until the second wave. Campbell cites studies published by Jo Freeman (1971) that reflected women’s negative self-image in a similar light in 1959 (helpless, small, uncertain, anxious, etc.).²⁹ However, the transformation of women’s self-perception from the second wave and into the third wave has allowed mass media to positively implement the tool of consciousness-raising. Author of *The World Split Open: How the Modern Women's Movement Changed America*, Ruth Rosen supports this notion when she states, “Unlike Second Wave feminist, who had met in consciousness-raising groups in women’s living rooms, Third Wave feminists mostly shared their revelations, desires, and dilemmas in magazines and on blogs and feminist Web sites”³⁰ In other words, third wave consciousness-raising has specifically utilized popular culture as a way to continue discussing women’s issues in the public realm.

Disney’s representation of Rapunzel as a young woman achieving consciousness is an important step toward creating agents of change in modern society. The portrayal of Rapunzel as an androgynous princess is a form of consciousness-raising that may serve to transform the understanding of how a woman ought to be. Of course, because these messages are packaged within the context of a popular children’s film, mass media relies on consciousness-raising as a rhetorical strategy. As Sowards and Renegar note, “third wave feminist consciousness-raising [...] creates new avenues to an individual’s own consciousness-raising because a person may engage in self-dialogue and persuasion to a greater extent than if she were participating in a small group consciousness-raising session.”³¹ By viewing Rapunzel as a role model, audience members may be influenced

by the film's narrative to change their perceptions of women's roles and subsequently model her behaviors. Rapunzel displays strength, persistence, and courage in her narrative as she combats the oppression of her mother. In this way, she challenges the previous dominant discourse of Disney princesses. As an act of consciousness-raising, Rapunzel's new take on "being a princess" serves to extend third wave feminist thinking to a viewership beyond political activists. Young girls might view Rapunzel's experience and be influenced to think differently about their own capabilities. In other words, *Tangled* may serve as the kiss that awakens an audience of sleeping beauties.

Notes

¹ I acknowledge that there are also dissimilarities between the films *Tangled* and *Brave*. Recognizing the similarity that conflict emerges through the maternal figure in both films does not suggest that the films are in any way identical. For instance, there are dissimilarities in the degree of feminist lessons that can be drawn from the texts. It can be argued that Merida is a more feminist character than Rapunzel based on her tendencies and her narrative. However, the investigation of the similarities between *Tangled* and *Brave* reinforces my decision to categorize the Disney princess line into a genre. I will revisit this line of thought in the final chapter of this thesis.

² Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, "The Rhetoric of Women's Liberation: An Oxymoron revisited," *Communication Studies*, 50, no. 2 (1999): 128.

³ Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, "Femininity and Feminism: To Be or Not To Be a Woman," *Communication Quarterly*, 31, no. 2 (1983): 105.

⁴ Stacey K Sowards and Valerie R Renegar. "The Rhetorical Functions of Consciousness-Raising in Third Wave Feminism." *Communication Studies* 55, no. 4 (2004): 537.

⁵ Theresa Rose Crapanzano, "Feminist Theory: Second Wave," in *Encyclopedia of Gender in Media*, ed. Mary Kosut (Thousand Oaks: SAGE, 2012), 104.

⁶ Stacey K Sowards and Valerie R Renegar. "The Rhetorical Functions of Consciousness-Raising in Third Wave Feminism." 541.

⁷ Ibid, 547.

⁸ Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, "Femininity and Feminism: To Be or Not To Be a Woman," 105.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Bonnie J. Dow and Mari Boor Tonn, "'Feminine Style' and Political Judgement in the Rhetoric of Ann Richards," *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 79 (1993), 288.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Kristina Sheryl Wong, "Pranks and Fake Porn: Doing Feminism My Way," in *Catching a Wave: Reclaiming Feminism for the 21st Century*, ed. Rory Cooke Dicker and Alison Piepmeier (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2003), 296.

¹⁴ Michele Byers, "Buffy the Vampire Slayer: The Next Generation of Television," in *Catching a Wave: Reclaiming Feminism for the 21st Century*, ed. Rory Cooke Dicker and Alison Piepmeier (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2003), 172.

¹⁵ Ibid, 171.

¹⁶ Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, "The Rhetoric of Women's Liberation: An Oxymoron," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 59, no. 1 (1973): 75.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Charles Conrad, "Agon and Rhetorical Form: The Essence of 'Old Feminist' Rhetoric," *Central States Speech Journal*, 32 (1981): 46.

¹⁹ Ibid, 53.

²⁰ Ibid, 48.

²¹ All scripted text and song lyrics taken from <http://www.digititles.com/animation/tangled-2010/scripts/tangled-movie-script>. This source is not an "official script." However, given the recency of this film's release, this was the only free version of the script that I was able to obtain. In order to verify accuracy, I have reviewed the selected excerpts compared to the actual film. No discrepancies between the site's script and what is present in the film itself were found.

²² For a full version of the song lyrics, see Appendix B.

²³ Sangeeta Rath and Aakankshya Mishra, "Gender-role Perception and Employment Status in the Self-Efficacy of Women," *European Journal of Sustainable Development* 2, no 3 (2013): 58.

²⁴ See Appendix C.

²⁵ See Appendix D for the full song lyrics and text.

²⁶ Stacey K Sowards and Valerie R Renegar. "The Rhetorical Functions of Consciousness-Raising in Third Wave Feminism," 542.

²⁷ Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, "Femininity and Feminism: To Be or Not To Be a Woman," 105.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Jo Freeman, "The Building of the Gilded Cage." *The Second Wave: A Magazine of the New Feminism*, 1971, quoted in Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, "Femininity and Feminism: To Be or Not To Be a Woman," *Communication Quarterly*, 31, no. 2 (1983): 105.

³⁰ Ruth Rosen, *The World Split Open: How the Modern Women's Movement Changed America* (New York and London: Penguin, 2000).

³¹ Stacey K Sowards and Valerie R Renegar. "The Rhetorical Functions of Consciousness-Raising in Third Wave Feminism." 541.

CHAPTER FOUR: Being *Brave*, A Princess's Alternative Narrative to Dominant Gender Expectations

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to uncover rhetorical messages about gender expectation in Disney/Pixar's *Brave* (2012). Like *Tangled*, themes of autonomy and rejection of authority become apparent in the film. However, because Merida is already self-aware, she does not experience a personal moment of self-discovery in the way that Rapunzel does. Instead, Merida's story is more useful to understand as a possible way for the film's audience to understand gender expectations. The primary conflict in *Brave* is carried out by the tension that Merida experiences with her mother. As the only princess in the kingdom, Merida is expected to marry a suitor from one of the neighboring clans. Unlike early Disney princesses, who would be more than thrilled at the prospect of finding a prince, Merida is disgusted by the mere thought. She is a wild, free-spirited, ambitious young woman who seeks to climb mountains and ride her horse into the sunset. Throughout the film, Merida struggles to make others understand her desire to change her fate. The princess wants nothing more than to break free from the norms that society has prescribed for her. In this chapter, I argue that Merida's words and actions construct an alternative narrative for its viewers, with the purpose of offering a new perspective on traditional norms for women.

In chapter three, I explored how Rapunzel's narrative rejects dominant gender expectations. In this chapter, Merida's narrative allows me to expose yet another way that Disney princesses defy traditional norms. For Merida, the ambition to do more in life is countered by themes of suppressive traditionalism from her mother, who initially exhibits

control over her daughter's destiny.¹ In the quest to change her fate, Merida is constantly at war with her mother, Queen Elinor. Ultimately, the princess gains control over her destiny by learning to communicate her wishes to her mother; Queen Elinor then recognizes Merida's intentions and complies with her daughter's request to choose her own path. Therefore, Merida's narrative contributes to a larger understanding of what it means to be a woman.

In order to illustrate how Merida's narrative impacts societal understanding, I explore a rhetorical tension that Julia Wood labels the "can-do discourse"² as one of the types of gender expectations that the movie defies. The can-do discourse is a structural norm which suggests that women should have grand professional aspirations and fulfill the duty of perfect homemaker, both of which can be achieved if they simply work hard enough to achieve this goal. As business-woman Anne-Marie Slaughter suggests, this goal is unrealistic because women can't actually have it all, "not with the way America's economy and society are currently structured."³ Because the can-do discourse has to do with the dominant expectations of society, individual determination is challenged. However, Merida's attitudes and behaviors challenge the implications of gender norms, which makes *Brave* a significant rhetorical text. *Brave* offers an alternative narrative to the dominant can-do discourse, by portraying Merida's journey as a quest for self-efficacy, or control of one's life. As a result, Merida's story works to revise the perceptions of women's roles in society, by illustrating ways to counter the dominant ideology. Recognizing this alternative narrative in the newest princess's story, I argue that Merida's experience invites and enables women to think differently about themselves. In other words, as a film narrative that breaks down perceptions of women's

roles, *Brave* suggests moral messages about how the world ought to be.

I begin by investigating women's roles in society that were accepted during the time in which *Brave* was released. These societal changes fall in line with the implications of the can-do discourse. This discourse is problematic for women because it fails to acknowledge that society is responsible for this expectation; in the same way, the expectations of Queen Elinor weigh heavily on Merida, who decides to reject conformity as a result. I provide background of the can-do discourse and describe the ways this phenomenon functions in society. In the analysis section of this chapter, I discuss how Merida's rejection of tradition is illustrated as a desire for her own self-efficacy. Through her individual determination, Merida rejects the norms laid out by her community, which helps to understand how women might interact with the social norm of the can-do discourse in society. In this analysis, I explore how Merida rejects her mother's plans and thereby provides an alternative narrative about the relationship between women and dominant expectations of society. This chapter concludes with an investigation of the possible impact of Merida's narrative on society.

Woman's Role and Social Climate: 2008-2012

Recent social conditions in the wake of the economic recession have resulted in several changes regarding "typical" or "traditional" gender roles in American society. According to psychologists Sangeeta Rath and Aakankshya Mishra, "gender-role refers to the social and behavioral norms that are considered appropriate for an individual of a given gender."⁴ The way that women's gender roles are perceived in American society has certainly changed in the last 50 years. For many years, the definition of "success" for women was determined based on her status as a wife, mother, and homemaker. This

model has been broken down in recent decades, as many women now hold high-level positions and work in professional career fields.⁵ In an opinion editorial titled “Why Women Still Can’t Have it All,” Anne-Marie Slaughter states, unlike past generations of women “we have choices about the type and tempo of the work we do. We are the women who could be leading, and who should be equally represented in leadership ranks.”⁶ This is not to say that all women are afforded this opportunity today. Slaughter, as well as myself, speaks for “[our] demographic - highly educated, well-off women who are privileged enough to have choices in the first place.”⁷ However, while this highly educated demographic of women may have options and choices for career advancement now, the lingering traditionalism of the past remains in tension with their ambition.

In the midst of recent economic turmoil, many American families found it necessary to redefine traditional gender roles for the sake of financial stability. In the process, the familial model of father as breadwinner and mother as homemaker became even less of a standard. According to reports of the U.S. Census Bureau, the number of stay-at-home moms decreased from 5.3 million to 5 million in 2009 and has remained relatively constant at this amount through 2012.⁸ Additionally, the U.S. Census Bureau reports among mothers with infants, 62.1% were in the labor force in 2013; there has been a significant increase in the number of working moms since 2006, when the number of mothers with infants in the labor force was 57%.⁹ Concerning these recent changes, sociologist Gayle Kaufman states that societal changes in gender role attitudes have begun to reverse tradition altogether, giving rise to mothers as “bread-winners” and fathers in child rearing roles.¹⁰ This trend can be seen in the rise of paternity leave, which has further reinforced revisions to gender expectations. *Atlantic* writer Liza Mundy

discusses the effects of ‘the daddy track’ stating, “while paid paternity leave may feel like an unexpected gift, the biggest beneficiaries aren’t men, or even babies. In the long run, the true beneficiaries of paternity leave are women, and the companies and nations that benefit when women advance.”¹¹ While paternity leave may be a “brilliant and ambitious form of social engineering: a behavior-modification tool that has been shown to boost male participation in the household, enhance female participation in the labor force, and promote gender equity in both domains,”¹² this ideal social construction is not yet a norm that has been widely embraced. Kaufman notes that “a majority of women do not expect a shared division of labor but rather anticipate performing most of the household chores and childcare.”¹³ Paternity leave may be a step in the right direction, but it is still the case that women are expected to perform at home despite the efforts they are making in the professional world.

There appears to be a double standard in the expectation that women are expected to work professionally and still take care of the home; men, on the other hand, do not experience this expectation in the way that women do. In December of 2013, Mundy notes that only three U.S. states (California, Rhode Island, and New Jersey) guaranteed paid leave for fathers, leaving the responsibility of domesticity in the hands of mothers for the majority of U.S. women.¹⁴ Women are still expected to perform their motherly duties while managing an oppositional push to remain driven and career-minded. In her editorial piece “Why Nobody Can Win the Having-It-All Race” law professor Chimène Keitner responds to Slaughter.

For those of us who might be described as "driven," what drives many of us is the desire to excel according to socially recognized criteria, such as graduating with highest honors or having the most prestigious job. These criteria, which can end up defining our sense of success and self-worth, are too often exclusively

professionally focused and hierarchically defined [...] Instead of abandoning ambition, we should seek to redefine it. We need to engage in a renewed conversation about what it means to lead a successful life.¹⁵

Keitner's struggle with socially recognized criteria enforces the supposition that women can "have it all" *only* if they are willing to work hard enough for their goals. With *Brave*, we can begin to explore a larger understanding of how Disney is working to renew the conversation about what it means to lead a successful life through Merida's narrative.

The key phrase here is that the expectations of women are "socially recognized criteria" which are prescribed by society. Dominant expectations are unrealistic for working women who, like Keitner, recognize that "those of us who combine careers and parenting often feel that we're falling short in both."¹⁶ In other words, women have no control over this dynamic. This struggle is indicative of a phenomenon labeled by communication scholar Julia Wood as the "can-do discourse." According to Wood, the "can-do discourse encourages [young women] to imagine they will have high status careers and successful families *if they are but willing to invest sufficient effort* (emphasis added)."¹⁷ This discourse is problematic because it implies that women are in control of this dynamic, not society. According to Wood, "the can-do discourse holds that each person is responsible for her own successes—or failures; [most importantly,] those who don't succeed didn't try hard enough. They only have themselves to blame."¹⁸ In order to be career motivated, Wood states women feel pressure to maintain rich and fulfilling home lives, working a "second shift"¹⁹ of sorts in order to fulfill their matriarchal duties.²⁰ According to communication scholar Susan Brydon, to be a mother,

reproduction alone is insufficient. Again, the message was [and is] loud and clear. If women do not engage in and embrace what some would call "intensive mothering" — staying home full-time, investing hour after hour into extensive, hands-on interaction each day — they are to blame for social

problems and can be assured that their children will end up, at best, not performing to their intellectual and creative capacities and, at worst, in real physical danger.²¹

Brydon therefore suggests that working women are incomplete or inadequate if they do not assume the role of nurturing and devoted mother as well. Additionally, if a woman tries to conform to the dominant expectation of the “can-do discourse” and fails to succeed in either the professional or personal domain, it is her own fault for not investing enough effort. Slaughter argues that the expectations of the can-do discourse represent a falsehood that having it all is simply a function of personal determination.²² The “can-do discourse” is troubling because it forces young women to assume that falling short is a result of their insufficient effort.

With traditionalism and feminism at odds in the can-do discourse, twenty-first-century women are subsequently expected to conform to expectations set forth by society. In other words, women do not have control over their own destiny. If a woman chooses to conform to society’s expectations, she gives up the agency to set her *own* expectations about her life. Therefore, the struggle that women face due to dominant discourse is in need of alternative interventions. The alternative intervention that is needed in this discourse is the voice of the individual woman. A woman’s personal expectations must be heard in order to resolve the tension caused by social expectations.

The struggle between social expectation and personal determination is one that Merida seems to recognize very early in the film, *Brave*. Merida struggles with the fact that her personal determination is out of line with what her society has prescribed for her. This struggle reflects way that society has prescribed an unrealistic discourse for real women, thereby challenging their quest for self-efficacy. According Rath and Mishra,

“self-efficacy refers to the belief that one has complete control over his/her life.”²³ Women’s self-efficacy is lacking in society today, because women are forced to conform to the expectations of society. A woman cannot truly have control over her life if society expects her to strive toward an unrealistic norm. Merida’s nonconformity illustrates that self-efficacy can be achieved by rejecting what society prescribes. While the can-do discourse may promote the ideal that with hard work, women can achieve anything and everything, this discourse creates a false sense of responsibility for failures. The struggle women face to be dedicated to both domestic life and professional life does not lie in self-determinism. Instead, the fault lies with the social expectation that ‘having it all’ was a reachable goal to begin with. Self-efficacy can be manifested as a craving for control over one’s destiny, and it is this theme that appears as a central struggle in *Brave*.

Analysis

This chapter reveals ways that Merida’s story serves as an alternative narrative to the can-do discourse. Merida achieves a different fate than the one prescribed to modern day women by striving for self-efficacy. Merida’s discourse with her mother showcases her desire to control her own life; in order to do so the princess must reject what is expected of her. In describing the themes present in Disney princess films between 1989 and 1998, professor of English Ann Hall and communication scholar Mardia Bishop reveal the following:

The princesses featured in Disney Princess movies are good girls, for the most part. They want to make their fathers happy, and they rebel only to the extent they must in order to win the hearts of their dream princes [...] In other words, these girls, feisty though they may be, do not overtly challenge patriarchal society, but rather turn to that very authority to grant them what they wish.²⁴

Instead, Merida undermines the implication that all of Disney's royal girls fit the mold described by Hall and Bishop. The messages pertaining to women's roles in *Brave* are uniquely bold in comparison to the messages in previous princess films. In *Brave*, the most recent Disney princess narrative, I notice an opposing trend to that described by Hall and Bishop. First, Merida is not a good girl. In fact, she is recalcitrant, quick to pick a fight with any and everyone, and noticeably more brazen than other Disney princesses. Second, while Merida does her best to make her father happy, she does so only to spite her mother. Her rebellious attitudes and actions do not come from her desire for a prince, but instead come from her desire to be in control of her life (self-efficacy). Lastly, Merida completely challenges social expectations by adamantly opposing betrothal, and turns against the authority of her mother to do so. Contrary to popular criticism of Disney's damaging effects on young child viewers, the way Merida negotiates what is expected of her suggests new ways of renegotiating women's roles in society. For the first time in Disney standards, Merida rebels outright against the expectations of gender-norms and gains self-efficacy in the process. As a result, the messages found in *Brave* offer viewers an alternative narrative to the dominant can-do discourse. What follows is an investigation of the tension between tradition and ambition in the Disney/Pixar film *Brave* (2012).

Mother's Tradition Imposed on Princess's Ambition

Brave begins with a short flashback to Merida's childhood, which reveals her family and the foundation of her adolescent life. The young, spunky, and free-spirited princess is immediately portrayed in contrast to her prim and proper mother, Queen Elinor. The traditionalism of Elinor appears in the form of nagging, as every little thing

that Merida does is shaded “improper.” In the opening minutes of the film, Elinor is seen instructing Merida in a variety of traditional, royal expectations. In the process of shaping her daughter to be a *perfect* princess, Elinor appears to be the reason why Merida is miserable and frankly bored with her existence. In a series of quick scene changes, Elinor nags, “A princess must be knowledgeable about her kingdom... She doesn't make doodles... Princesses don't chortle... Doesn't stuff her gob!... Rises early!... Is compassionate! ... patient!... cautious!... clean!... And above all else, a princess strives for perfection.”²⁵ In a subsequent scene, Elinor greets her daughter's placement of her bow and arrow with a prompt, “Merida, a princess does not place her weapons on the table.” Merida appears stifled by her mother's rule, but unlike Rapunzel, she does not remain obedient to her mother. She complains about her responsibilities, and deliberately acts in ways that she knows her mother will disapprove of (e.g. eating with less-than-perfect table manners, and sneaking sweet treats to her triplet brothers underneath the dinner table). Through it all, Merida's father, King Fergus, appears supportive of his daughter's anti-princess tendencies, and subsequently appears to be the parent she aligns with most. This increases the tension between Merida and Elinor.

Initially, Elinor's motives behind grooming her daughter to be “perfect” appear selfish, much like the motives of Mother Gothel in *Tangled*. Rather than thinking about the best interest of Merida, Elinor works to shape the perfect daughter for preservation of the royal image, which in turn reflects favorably on herself as the queen. However, in getting Merida to comply with her vision for perfection, Elinor's personal agenda appears less vindictive than that of Mother Gothel's. Instead Elinor is convinced, based on her own standpoint, that her daughter is destined to act like a princess based on birthright.

This falls in line with professor of English, M. Keith Booker's observation that "to a surprisingly great extent, Disney's films are consistently informed by a conception of individualism that sees each individual as endowed by nature, from birth, with particular built-in characteristics that make that individual suited to play certain specific roles in society."²⁶ This conception of individualism, like the can-do discourse in society, suggests that being a princess is contingent on what the princess's community expects. Because of her royal status, Elinor perpetuates the image of the ideal princess as she interacts with her daughter because she believes this is the only appropriate destiny for Merida. However, the social norm of what a princess ought to be is not the path that Merida desires, and her narrative thereby rejects the norm of Disney films suggested by Booker. Merida's actions are representative of women recognizing the inequity of gender roles and striving for a different fate. In order to break free from the life that she is fated to live, Merida experiences conflict with her mother.

Mother's Tradition Conflicts with Princess's Ambition

The conflict that emerges in *Brave* propels the majority of the film's plot. It is clear that no agreement can be reached between mother and daughter about what is "best" for Merida. The princess seems to reach her breaking point at news that the neighboring clans of the kingdom have accepted an invitation to present their finest suitors. The presentation consists of games that show off the suitors' strengths, and of course, the prize is Princess Merida's hand in marriage; a betrothal would subsequently indicate the unity of the clans to all. If no announcement of the princess's future husband is made, Elinor believes tension between the clans will ensue and war will likely commence. Though difficult to describe in writing, the key moment that defines the conflict between

Elinor and Merida is a pair of monologues set together as a dialogue, but in different physical locations. In this scene, Merida speaks out loud about her frustration to her horse, Angus, while Elinor speaks candidly with her husband, Fergus. Fergus tells Elinor to pretend he is Merida, so that the Queen can practice saying the things she wishes to express to her princess daughter. As the animation moves between physical locations, it appears that the two are finishing each other's sentences. In the following "exchange" of words, the frustration between the mother-daughter dyad is revealed as the central tension.

ELINOR: Merida, all this work, all the time spent preparing you, schooling you, giving you everything we never had. I ask you, what do you expect us to do?

MERIDA: Call off the gathering. Would that kill them? You're the queen. You can just tell the lords the princess is not ready for this. In fact, she might not ever be ready for this, so that's that. Good day to you. We'll expect your declarations of war in the morning.

ELINOR: I understand this must all seem unfair. Even I had reservations when I faced betrothal. (*Fergus glances up from listening to his wife at this moment*)

ELINOR: But we can't just run away from who we are.

MERIDA: I don't want my life to be over. I want my freedom!

ELINOR: But are you willing to pay the price your freedom will cost?

MERIDA: I'm not doing any of this to hurt you.

ELINOR: If you could just try to see what I do, I do out of love.

MERIDA: But it's my life, it's... I'm just not ready!

ELINOR: I think you'd see if you could just...

MERIDA: I think I could make you understand if you would just...

ELINOR: Listen.

MERIDA: Listen.

Perhaps then, the conflict between traditionalism and non-traditionalism is not being communicated, but instead miscommunicated. The miscommunication in *Brave* reflects the expectations of society compared to the ability for women to truly obtain self-efficacy. As this dialogue suggests, there appears to be a miscommunication between Merida's desire for control of her destiny and the expectations that her mother and

society have in mind for her. This key moment in the film suggests that if women work to communicate about the ways that they are misunderstood, women's expectations can be redefined. Through Merida's narrative, *Brave* suggests that by communicating dissatisfaction, changes can potentially be made to society and women can gain control of their destinies. The value of communication becomes a central part of the story in *Brave*, as Merida and Elinor seek to understand one another.

Merida then requests that the suitors compete in an archery tournament, where the contestant closest to the target will win her hand in marriage. Of course, Merida has something up her sleeve from the start. The first two competitors (of the Macintosh and MacGuffin clans) send their arrows flying toward the target, unable to hit the bullseye. It is the third suitor, young Dingwall, who (by some sort of miracle) lands his arrow directly in the center. In the film's pivotal moment, the princess rises from her seat, storms toward the archery targets and declares, "I am Merida, and I'll be shooting for my *own* hand." As she reaches for her bow, she recognizes that the dress she has been stuffed into will not allow her to draw back her arrow. In this passionate moment of disobedience, she intentionally rips the dress at the seams, proceeds to shoot toward each of the three targets, and hits directly in the center the bullseye on the first two; on the third bullseye, Merida splits in two the perfectly centered arrow shot by her would-be husband. In this moment, it is clear that a breaking point has been reached and the conflict is now at a climax.

Both mother and daughter feel like they are not being heard. They both believe that if the other would just listen, they would reach a point of clarity. In the heated disagreement between mother and daughter that follows, Elinor confronts Merida, who

begs her mother to listen to her perspective. Elinor has reached a breaking point of her own, as she feels that her daughter's actions will lead to great consequence for the kingdom.

ELINOR: I am the queen! You listen to me!

MERIDA: Oh! This is so unfair!

ELINOR: Huh! Unfair?

MERIDA: You were never there for me! This whole marriage is what you want! Do you ever bother to ask what I want? No! You walk around telling me what to do, what not to do! Trying to make me be like you! Well, I'm not going to be like you!

ELINOR: Ach! You're acting like a child!

MERIDA: And you're a beast! That's what you are!

ELINOR: Merida!

MERIDA: I will never be like you!

In a critical moment of the argument, Merida points her sword at the tapestry her mother has been working on, which depicts the royal family. After her actions at the archery competition, it is clear at this point that a verbal exchange will not be enough to get her mother's attention. Merida draws her sword toward the top of the tapestry, and cuts a line between the embroidered representation of herself and the rest of her family. Her action can be read as a representation of women breaking free from the expectations of society, as Merida literally cuts her obedience to tradition out of her life. As Merida screams, "I'd rather die than be like you!," it is clear that she has both verbally and symbolically removed herself from her family, and the role that she was destined to play in her world. Alternatively, this moment reflects a first, dramatic step toward openly rejecting the expectations of her community. As the princess, Merida is expected to sew as her mother taught her. By cutting into the tapestry, she rejects one of the royally necessary tasks her mother frequently nagged her to perform. In this sense, Merida has finally communicated her dissatisfaction, by expressing herself in a way more powerful

than her complaints. She begins to stand up for herself in this moment through disobedience, and commits to a quest for self-efficacy. While Merida does lose her temper, the message she sends is a powerful one: she refuses to be like her mother and insists that she will never be the prim and proper domestic wife she is destined to be. Instead, she wishes to change her fate and become something more than what her mother has planned. Merida's strength comes from her rejection of the dominant discourse that has attempted to define her identity, and her subsequent quest for self-efficacy.

Princess's Ambition Reigns Over Mother's Tradition

Relating back to the dialogue/monologue argument between Merida and Elinor, Merida has two conflicts that require resolution in her story. Both of these conflicts relate to Merida's desire for self-efficacy. First, the miscommunication between mother and daughter presents Merida with the need to gain agency and find a way to articulate her perspective to her mother. In this part of Merida's conflict, communication is key. For Merida, the way to gain voice is to seek out supernatural aid in the form of a witch. Merida begs of the witch, "I want a spell to change my mom. That'll change my fate." In response to Merida's ambiguous request, the witch conjures a cake, which Merida gives to Elinor. At this point, Merida is convinced that she has found a solution to her problem with the oh-so-clear request to simply "change" her mother. No surprise at all, the witch gives her a "bad spell" that turns her mother into a bear.

After eating the bewitched cake, Elinor is no longer able to speak; this gives Merida an opportunity to finally get her point across without being interrupted. Elinor, the bear, recognizes that she must trust Merida in order to understand what has happened. As a result, the mother-daughter pair run back to the safety of the woods. As a symbolic

gesture of Elinor's insistent traditionalism, she puts her queen's crown on top of her furry head and insists on walking upright, even though she is a bear. This moment can also be read as Elinor's attempt to uphold her own dignity. By placing the crown on her head, Elinor suggests that she is still the authority in the relationship. She represents her authority over her daughter, and her authority over the social norms of her kingdom by continuing to wear the crown. Elinor is still bound by her own standpoint, and has not recognized Merida's perspective at this point in the story.

Merida and Elinor venture back to the witch's cottage, only to discover that the witch has moved away. The only thing the witch has left behind is a message, "By the second sunrise your spell will be permanent, unless you remember these words: *Fate be changed, Look inside. Mend the bond, torn by pride.*" Merida realizes that she has made a terrible mistake, and she and her mother remain in the woods overnight without much hope for the situation. However, even in the predicament that they are both in, Merida responds to her mother's attempts to communicate with a sarcastic, "Sorry! I don't speak bear." And of course, even bear-Elinor uses non-verbals to request that her daughter remove her bow and arrow from the makeshift breakfast table. At this point in the plot, Merida has not yet found a way to articulate her position to her mother.

With her ability to speak up, Merida alerts her mother to the poisonous berries and worm-infested water that Elinor has prepared for their breakfast. Realizing that she has no idea how to live in the forest, Elinor (quietly, of course) allows her daughter to show her the way. In the scene that follows, Merida catches a salmon for her mother in the nearby stream with a perfect shot of her arrow. Elinor claps her paws together in approval, and Merida cunningly responds, "Oh, wait! A princess should not have

weapons, in your opinion.” However, Elinor has no voice to respond. Rather than objecting with Merida’s response, Elinor begins to devour the salmon prepared by her daughter. After Elinor requests more and more salmon with a wave of her paw, Merida eventually becomes fed up with serving her mother, and responds by pointing Elinor toward the stream. In a symbolic moment, Elinor removes the crown from her head, and places it on a rock before venturing to the stream to catch her own meal. This moment is important because it is the first time that we see Elinor acting *unexpectedly*. By removing her crown and placing it on the rock, she physically separates herself from the artifact that symbolizes her royal status. As Elinor ventures toward the stream and fishes with the guidance of her daughter, the queen’s authority becomes less apparent. As a result, mother and daughter share in a simple task of fishing as equals. In this sense, the social expectations of both the queen and the princess are ignored. The exchange between mother and daughter in this scene is what I see as the beginning of Merida’s attempts to communicate to her mother.

The song “Into the Open Air”²⁷ plays in the background of the scene where mother and daughter work together to catch fish. Unlike the songs in *Tangled*, which are sung by the characters in the form of a cinematic musical, the songs in *Brave* appear only as background to the film’s plot. I read this unique aspect of *Brave* as a further justification that the verbal exchanges between characters act as the alternative narrative to dominant discourse. Rather than packaging the messages of the film in catchy Disney musical lyrics sung by the characters, the songs in *Brave* appear as backing or ambiance to the struggle faced by the princess. With the songs in this film as a backdrop, the words spoken by Merida become the central focus for understanding the messages. However,

while not the explicit focus of the film, the lyrics found in the songs do implicitly promote the film's goal to revise dominant discourse about women's roles.

By examining the lyrics to "Into the Open Air" it is evident that Merida's struggle to control her own destiny is reflected through this song. The lyrics of this song seem to speak directly to Merida's desire to reach out to her mother and communicate her views. In the lyrics "*I try to speak to you every day, but each word we spoke, the wind blew away,*" the nature of Merida's first conflict is perfectly articulated. Mother and daughter have previously been unable to accept one another, and now, in this silly moment of fishing, there is an unspoken understanding. Elinor realizes she must rely on her daughter's skill, and Merida experiences a hint at self-efficacy; the princess has started to gain control of her destiny and because her mother is forced to listen, Merida has the power to enact this control. In another key lyrical moment, the song's chorus reveals that a transformation has taken place within the song itself. The first chorus' lyrics are:

*Could these walls come crumbling down?
I want to feel my feet on the ground
And leave behind this prison we share
Step into the open air*

In this chorus, the phrasing of the first line as a question implies the possibility that they may still not understand one another. The "I" in this moment refers to both Merida and Elinor, who both want their perspective to be understood. By examining the lyric, "and leave behind this prison we share," a commonality can be found between Merida and Elinor. For both mother and daughter, the expectations of their society become the prison that they share together. For Elinor, the dignity and perfection she works tirelessly to maintain are a result of the duties of being a queen. Their society has prescribed these expectations on Elinor, in the same way that the queen prescribes a fixed destiny for her

daughter. Neither mother nor daughter has achieved a self-efficacious life. Although the characters do not realize it themselves, both Merida and Elinor are situated in a shared prison of social expectations. The second chorus in this song is similar, but with important changes to the wording of the lyrics.

*And now these walls come crumbling down
And I can feel my feet on the ground
Can we carry this love that we share
Into the open air?*

Here, the lyrics reveal that a resolution has begun. The walls that both mother and daughter had built up between them are beginning to fall as they play and laugh in the stream. The song concludes as Elinor leaves the water, and finally abandons her crown. At the conclusion of this scene, the tension between mother and daughter has been lifted. Now, Elinor relies on Merida and the princess feels that she can finally communicate with her mother. While the communication is not directed toward the second conflict in Merida's story at this point of the film, Merida has reached a resolution of her first conflict. The cooperation between Merida and her mother indicates that the princess has broken the surface of self-efficacy and is one step closer to achieving control of her destiny.

The second conflict for Merida comes with the desire to "change her fate." Now that she has found a way to articulate her position, Merida must explore avenues to change her mother's perception of her princess status. The pair realizes that the way to "mend the bond" lies in fixing the tapestry previously torn by Merida, and they venture back to the castle to do so. To sneak in, Merida realizes she must distract the clans who are warring with food and arrows in the great hall. She waltzes past the clan leaders and begins a lecture of sorts to the clansmen. In her speech, however, it becomes apparent

that Elinor has changed her mind about Merida's fate. Merida begins by describing the great bond that exists between the clans and tells the story of their kingdom. In the history of the clans, their past cooperation had been forged by fighting a common enemy: the great bear Mor'Du. Based on some of the stories told by the clans' leaders, it becomes clear that their greatest legends focus on battles fought to avenge Mor'Du's attacks on the kingdom. Merida engages the rowdy audience with the following words:

MERIDA: Yours was an alliance forged in bravery and friendship and it lives to this day. I've been selfish. I tore a great rift in our kingdom. There's no one to blame but me. And I know now that I need to amend my mistake and mend our bond. And so, there is the matter of my betrothal. I decided to do what's right, and...

As she looks around the room, Merida notices Elinor in the background trying to stop her from saying what she is about to say.

MERIDA: And...and break tradition.

Merida looks over at Elinor, who again uses gestures to prompt the words spoken by her daughter to the clans.

MERIDA: My mother, the queen, feels...uh, in her heart, that I...that we be free to...write our own story. Follow our hearts, and find love in our own time.

The clans react to Merida's speech quite favorably, and she recognizes that her mother has changed in her heart. At this point in the film, Merida has achieved self-efficacy. She now has control over her life, and she feels confident enough to present this viewpoint to the others. It is interesting that in this moment Merida has achieved control over her life through a monologue that her mother has essentially fed to her. This suggests that Merida actually desired something more complex than self-efficacy alone; to truly have control over her destiny, Merida wanted the approval of the dominant authority in her life. With her traditional mother's approval of her desires, Merida proclaims for all to hear that she

no longer feels the responsibility of meeting the expectations of society. She says to the clansmen, "The queen and I put the decision to you my lords. Might our young people decide for themselves who they will love?" In this question, Merida rejects the notion that tradition can control one's fate. To put it another way, Merida does not reject the expectations of her society without restraint; she still seeks the approval of the dominant structure before she boldly states her case. This moment contributes to a societal understanding that women want to revitalize conversation about women's roles in order to have their views accepted by dominant authority, in the same way that Merida seeks her mother's approval. Even Merida's desire to seek approval from others is self-efficacious; Merida controls the terms by which she changes her fate, and in her eyes this change must be recognized and accepted by her mother. Even though Merida has achieved her goal, her success is masked by the conflict that remains: Elinor is still a bear, and it is Merida's responsibility to change her back. In the process of gaining control of her own life, Merida also grows up. The princess recognizes the need to help her mother out of the mess she has caused by trying to gain control of her life.

As the bear-human pair finally reach the tapestry, Elinor is spotted by Fergus, which instigates a wild bear chase with the clansmen through the woods. Merida cleverly escapes the castle with the tapestry in hand, stitching the family back together as she rides Angus in pursuit of her mother. When Merida catches up to the others, she realizes that they have captured bear-Elinor, and are ready to put an end to her. As King Fergus raises his sword, Merida's arrow knocks his blade away. The princess is now brave enough to stand up to the patriarch of the kingdom in an effort to save her mother. She points her arrow directly at her father and screams "Get back! That's my mother!" Just as Fergus

realizes that Merida is telling the truth, the evil bear of kingdom legend, Mor'Du, appears and attacks. As Merida is about to be devoured, Elinor escapes capture to fight off the bear to protect her family. She is now the only one strong enough physically to fight off Mor'Du, but with cooperative thinking, Merida and Elinor work together to knock an enormous boulder on top of Mor'Du and end his reign of terror on the kingdom forever.

Merida and Elinor celebrate their cooperative success, but their relief does not last long. As the second sunrise peaks over the horizon, Merida quickly drapes the now mended tapestry over her mother and waits for the spell to reverse. As the sun inches up over the hills, Merida begins to panic and vocalizes her remorse to her mom. "I'm sorry. This is all my fault. I did this to you... to us. You have always been there for me. You've never given up on me. I just want you back. I want you back, mummy... I love you." Merida sobs as she hugs the bear. In this pivotal moment, Merida realizes that although she has gained control over her life, she never wanted her quest for freedom to result in the loss of her mother. In vocalizing her feelings, Merida does in fact break the spell, and Elinor's human hand is finally seen wrapped around her daughter. In shock, Merida cries, "Mom, you're back! You changed!" Elinor, in tears and laughter says lovingly, "Oh, darling... we both have."

The final moments of the film clearly summarize the intended message of the narrative more generally. As the clans leave the kingdom by boat, the song, "Learn Me Right"²⁸ plays in the background. Again, the song's chorus is where the lyrics seem to reflect the film's message.

*We will run and scream
You will dance with me
We'll fulfill our dreams and we'll be free*

The phrasing of the final lyric appears most indicative of the dynamic between traditionalism and non-traditionalism described earlier in this analysis. “We’ll fulfill our *dreams*,” suggests to the audience that both mother and daughter have different goals for their lives, otherwise the lyric would have suggested that they fulfill the same *dream*. Additionally, by fulfilling the separate duties in their hearts, they are each free from the emotional struggle of trying to accept one another.

In the end, Merida and Elinor each change their ways by embarking on a journey of introspective examination. Ultimately the way they change their fate is through love, communication, and an understanding of one another. From the start, the expectations of her mother and her society are at odds with Merida’s pursuit for self-efficacy. As the princess, she is fated to speak, dress, behave and simply *be* a certain way based on what her patriarchal society believes is acceptable. In the end, Merida is still traditional enough to sew a tapestry together in order to save her mother, but she will always be more motivated by the prospect of adventure and independence. Likewise, Elinor is bold enough to ride a horse alongside her daughter to a precipice at the edge of the kingdom, but she still is most comfortable in her role as the traditional matriarch of the kingdom. Merida breaks down the social construction of a woman in her own world, and subsequently suggests ways for this to occur in reality. Merida sends a particular message to the film’s audience that suggests the way to gain control over one’s destiny starts with a deconstruction of the high standards women are held to. By illustrating the value of control over one’s life (self-efficacy), Merida tells young girls that they can do and be anything they wish. The narrative illustrates to the film’s audience that Merida just wants to have control over her life—even just to wait to make her own choice.

The “resolution” between traditional and non-traditional in this film offers an intriguing suggestion for society. To recognize the value of Merida’s desires, the resolution could only be achieved by literally stifling the voice of the traditional. As a bear, Elinor could no longer speak to articulate her traditional views. The suppression of traditionalism is less likely to happen in society. As Wood concludes, “It is ironic and deeply troubling that the can-do narrative that society encourages young women to embrace is not matched by structural or normative support for achieving it.”²⁹ While this may be true for society, I argue through this analysis that *Brave*, and the character Merida specifically, serves to exemplify a way in which social norms can be revised. Through the resolution of Merida’s two conflicts, *Brave* invites viewers to accept that a revision to dominant discourse comes from increased communication and allowing women to write their own expectations. As a result, *Brave* defies social standards like the can-do discourse by presenting Merida in pursuit of her personal convictions.

Conclusion

“If you had the chance to change your fate, would you?” - Merida (*Brave*)

Merida’s embrace of independence and bravery to break free from norms is a promising step in the right direction. Merida, in this sense, is a feminist role model for young girls. She not only refuses the typical knight-in-shining-armor ending to her story, but she also blatantly rejects the traditional gender roles of her community. As Merida’s story suggests, young girls *cannot* have it all, and frankly *should not* want it all to begin with: they should simply want the power to choose their destinies. Merida is the only Disney princess that displays a complete rejection of dominant discourse in pursuit of her own personal satisfaction. Although Rapunzel rejects gender expectations in pursuit of

self-consciousness, she conforms to the dominant expectations by marrying Flynn Rider in the end. By means of Merida's narrative, there are signs that conforming to society's expectations is not the only option for young women.

While Merida does demonstrate the importance of pursuing self-efficacy, it is notable that the film does not seem to suggest that Merida will never marry at all. The question seems to remain open. The open-ended conclusion to Merida's story contributes to a larger understanding about the messages that Disney films can teach through princess narratives. Merida serves as a way for Disney to revise its kingdom of gender to suggest that finding a prince is not always a necessary criterion for achieving a "happily ever after." Merida breaks down the belief that a fairy-tale ending is needed, even though the princess genre has traditionally suggested otherwise. Similarly, even though society has suggested that a woman should conform to being a rock star professional and exceptional homemaker, many agree that breaking down this perception is necessary for society. Slaughter notes, "you should be able to have a family if you want one, however and whenever your life circumstances allow, and still have the career you desire."³⁰ However, as she explains, society has not yet made this possible for real women. Wood further supports this idea when she states, "the structural and normative barriers that persist mean that if today's young women want to have it all, they may, quite literally be required to *do* it all."³¹ As Merida's narrative suggests, having control over one's life comes with the power to choose what is best for oneself, rather than what society deems is best. Merida does not feel required to do what society expects of her, however, in her acquisition of self-efficacy she still has the power to choose marriage at some point if she would choose to do so.

The can-do discourse and other structural expectations regarding gender remain problematic for women in society today. As Wood notes, “the ensconced narrative authorizing this inequity shows no signs of abating and remains a site for feminist research and critique.”³² Perhaps the place to start is in films that display strong female leads that challenge patriarchal society. The final words spoken in the film *Brave* serve as a sign that the narrative authorizing this inequity may be changeable if only we look inside ourselves. Merida’s voice is overheard narrating the conclusion to the film; “Some say fate is beyond our command, but I know better. Our destiny is within us. You just have to be brave enough to see it.” In her final words, Merida suggests to the audience that our fate is not laid out for us to follow. Instead, we must decide what we want and pursue our goals, even if they fall outside the expectations of society. To put it simply, there is no need to feel pressured to be one way or another. If she feels the desire to be *brave* and pursue self-efficacy instead, then the ties of traditionalism should not hold any young woman back from “chasing the wind and touching the sky.”³³

Notes

¹ The words “destiny” and “fate” are used differently in this chapter because for Merida, these concepts are not set in stone. Instead, she sees destiny and fate as fluid, changeable aspects of her life. For instance, in theatrical trailers, the film *Brave* was advertised with the tag-line, “If you had the chance to change your fate, would you?” This tag-line will help to frame the conclusion section of this chapter.

² Julia Wood. “The Can-Do Discourse and Young Women’s Anticipations of Future.” *Women & Language* 33, (2010).

³ Anne-Marie Slaughter, “Why Women Still Can’t Have It All,” *The Atlantic Monthly*, July/August 2012, accessed February 2014, <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2012/07/why-women-still-cant-have-it-all/309020/>.

⁴ Sangeeta Rath and Aakankshya Mishra, “Gender-role Perception and Employment Status in the Self-Efficacy of Women,” *European Journal of Sustainable Development* 2, no 3 (2013): 58.

⁵ See Chapter 2 for a discussion of the women that now hold high-level positions in the Disney corporation, specifically.

⁶ Anne-Marie Slaughter, “Why Women Still Can’t Have It All.”

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ “U.S. Census Bureau News: Facts for Features: Mother’s Day: May 12, 2013,” last modified May 12, 2013, https://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/facts_for_features_special_editions/cb13-ff11.html.

⁹ “U.S. Census Bureau News: Facts for Features: Mother’s Day: May 9, 2010,” last modified May 9, 2010, http://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/facts_for_features_special_editions/cb10-ff09.html.

¹⁰ Gayle Kaufman, “Gender role attitudes and college students’ work and family expectations,” *Gender Issues* 22, no 2 (2005): 60.

¹¹ Liza Mundy, “Daddy Track: The Case for Paternity Leave,” *The Atlantic Monthly*, December 22, 2013, accessed March 2014, <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/01/the-daddy-track/355746/>.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Gayle Kaufman, "Gender role attitudes and college students' work and family expectations," *Gender Issues* 22, no 2 (2005): 60.

¹⁴ Liza Mundy, "Daddy Track: The Case for Paternity Leave," *The Atlantic Monthly*, December 22, 2013, accessed March 2014, <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/01/the-daddy-track/355746/>.

¹⁵ Chimène Keitner, "Why Nobody Can Win the Having-It-All Race," *The Atlantic Monthly*, July 17, 2012, accessed March 2014, <http://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2012/07/why-nobody-can-win-the-having-it-all-race/259901/>.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Julia Wood. "The Can-Do Discourse and Young Women's Anticipations of Future." 103.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ As mentioned in Chapter 2, this phrase was first coined by Arlie Hochschild in her book, *The Second Shift: Working Parents and the Revolution at Home*.

²⁰ Julia Wood. "The Can-Do Discourse and Young Women's Anticipations of Future." 104.

²¹ Susan G. Brydon, "Men at the Heart of Mothering: Finding Mother in *Finding Nemo*," *Journal of Gender Studies* 18, no. 2 (2009): 133.

²² Anne-Marie Slaughter, "Why Women Still Can't Have It All."

²³ Sangeeta Rath and Aakankshya Mishra, "Gender-role Perception and Employment Status in the Self-Efficacy of Women," 58.

²⁴ Ann Hall and Mardia Bishop, *Mommy Angst: Motherhood in American Popular Culture* (Westport: Praeger, 2009), 39.

²⁵ All scripted excerpts taken from <http://imeldasanders123.wordpress.com/pixar-brave-script/> and from personal transcription of the film. This source is not an "official script." However, given the recency of this film's release, this was the only free version of the script that I was able to obtain. In order to verify accuracy, I have reviewed the selected excerpts compared to the actual film. No discrepancies between the site's script and what is present in the film itself were found.

²⁶ M. Keith Booker, *Disney, Pixar, and the Hidden Messages of Children's Films* (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2010), 175.

²⁷ For full song lyrics, see Appendix E.

²⁸ For Full song lyrics see Appendix F.

²⁹ Julia Wood. "The Can-Do Discourse and Young Women's Anticipations of Future." 104.

³⁰ Anne-Marie Slaughter, "Why Women Still Can't Have It All."

³¹ Julia Wood. "The Can-Do Discourse and Young Women's Anticipations of Future." 106.

³² Ibid.

³³ Taken from the film's opening song "Touch the Sky," which features music by Alex Mandel, lyrics by Mark Andrews and Alex Mandel, and is performed by Julie Fowlis and produced by Jim Sutherland with Éamon Doorley and Julie Fowlis.

CHAPTER FIVE: Long May She Reign, Disney Princesses as Moral Role Models for Society

Introduction

“I am a princess. I am brave sometimes. I am scared sometimes. Sometimes I am brave, even when I am scared. I believe in loyalty and trust. I believe loyalty is built on trust. I try to be kind. I try to be generous. I am kind, even when others are not so generous. I am a princess. I think standing up for myself is important. I think standing up for others is more important, but standing with others is most important. I am a princess. I believe compassion makes me strong, kindness is power, and family is the tightest bond of all. I have heard I am beautiful. I know I am strong... I am a princess, long may I reign.”¹

Taken from a new Disney campaign titled, “*I Am a Princess*,” the words above are narrated alongside a commercial video displaying the faces of young girls, intermingled with iconic animated images of Disney princesses. The girls shown in the video clip represent various ethnic groups, sizes, ages, and abilities that are all indicative of a real-life princess. The picture-perfect image of the Disney princess is replaced by the diverse smiles of young girls from around the world, and the words that narrate their joy are profound. According to opinion editorial writer, Katie Patton, “the ‘*I Am A Princess*’ campaign is finally taking a stand to show that being a princess means being beautiful on the inside; making it known that little girls everywhere are princesses each and every day.”² The words of this commercial are affectively powerful, and Patton’s commentary expresses the very argument being made through this thesis: Disney princesses are not what they were 75 years ago, and their narratives do not necessarily teach messages that may be interpreted to indoctrinate false realities about gender expectations. Through this campaign, we see that young girls are princesses just by being who they are, which has little to do with the shimmer of a ball gown, or even the charm of a prince.

In this way, the *I Am A Princess* campaign serves as a way to synthesize the

purpose of this project as a whole by summarizing a number of the observations presented in the analysis chapters of this thesis (chapters three and four). With *Merida*, Disney showcases the strength of girls within, and the importance of standing up for yourself. With *Rapunzel*, Disney showcases that kindness is, in fact, power, and that believing in loyalty and trust does not make a person any less strong. In this final chapter, I will discuss how the findings of this thesis contribute to larger society in the form of moral messages about gender expectations, particularly those pertaining to the female experience. As discussed in chapter one, moral messages have served as a framework for understanding the rhetorical function of these films. Using Annalee Ward's work as a foundation, the final chapter of this project will specifically focus on "the messages about how we ought to live, about morality."³ Therefore, this thesis culminates with a discussion of the moral messages found in *Tangled* and *Brave* as a way of bridging the messages within the films to the real world.

Contributions to Society

This thesis contributes to larger society by the very nature of the artifacts under investigation. Through an analysis of the characters *Rapunzel* and *Merida*, particular messages about gender expectations are revealed in the films *Tangled* and *Brave*. Therefore, with the vast reach of Disney films and the Disney princess line specifically, these films suggest important ideas about gender to a global audience. This is especially important because young children are the primary target audience for these films. As Sharon Downey notes, Disney's princess films "must provide sufficiently safe, clean, and wholesome advice and appropriate models of behavior to mollify parents while entertaining both child and adult members of the audience."⁴ This thesis illustrates

several key moments of “wholesome advice” that are present in *Tangled* and *Brave*, and may be internalized by young viewers (especially young girls). As such, parents (adults) serve as another target audience for these films. These newest princess films invite adult audience members to consider their understanding of gender expectations in society. Primarily, because Disney princess films contain messages about gender expectations, these messages are inherently rhetorical insofar as they describe the expectations of gender in reality. Based on the rhetorical nature of Disney films, it is necessary to synthesize the messages that are being promoted through the specific films in this analysis. It is important to note that the number of moral messages synthesized here by no means constitutes an exhaustive list. For example, moral messages pertaining to beauty and appearance were certainly present in the two films. While these messages are of course useful to an overall rhetorical understanding of Disney princess films, exploring these moral lessons is outside the scope of this project. The focus of this study has been to uncover the textual and lyrical messages about gender in the two films; therefore, an exploration of moral messages about appearance enters the realm of visual rhetoric, which does not fit with this analysis. However, with specific focus on the rhetorical functions of consciousness-raising and androgyny⁵, and the quest for self-efficacy through alternative narrative to dominant discourse⁶, certain moral messages are more productive to this study than others.

As discussed in chapter one, a generic grouping of Disney princess films helps to reveal important comparisons of like to like and comparisons of like to unlike. Because the moral messages in *Tangled* and *Brave* step beyond the moral messages that have been identified in the first and second generation princess films, this study reveals a key

comparison of like to unlike. As such, these films contribute to new understandings about the Disney princess genre as a whole. By identifying the moral messages in *Tangled* and *Brave* we can understand the way that Disney princess narratives reach society. As education scholar Henry Giroux notes, “[Disney’s] films inspire at least as much cultural authority and legitimacy for teaching specific roles, values, and ideas [as] more traditional sites of learning such as public schools, religious institutions, and the family.”⁷ One cultural authority that Disney has claimed is the power to define what “princess” means. In this thesis, the films *Tangled* and *Brave* are also different in their messages about what it means to be a princess, and therefore accomplish a narrowed comparison of like to unlike within the genre. It is important to note that Rapunzel and Merida are certainly not identical. Both Rapunzel and Merida invoke different ideas about what it means to be a princess. Therefore, I acknowledge that it is possible that there is more dissimilarity between Rapunzel and Merida that I have not had time to explore in this thesis. However, it is important to understand the ways that Rapunzel and Merida function *similarly* to teach about the way the world ought to be through their narratives.

The moral messages found in *Tangled* and *Brave* serve two key functions in society. First, the messages appearing in the narratives of both Rapunzel and Merida are framed as messages about the way the world “ought to be.” These messages are the way that the films primarily reach an audience of children, and are framed as moral lessons that can be drawn from the films’ narratives. Secondly, the moral messages I have selected for discussion are unique to *Tangled* and *Brave*; as a result, these films add to the understanding of moral messages already present in other princess films. If Rapunzel and Merida represent moral messages that are not explicitly present in other Disney

princess films, then this indicates strides toward a new definition of what it means to be a Disney princess. The inclusion of Rapunzel and Merida in the princess genre indicates a new understanding of “princess” that echoes with the words of the “*I Am A Princess*” campaign noted above.

Moral Messages in *Tangled* and *Brave*

With the two key functions above in mind, the following sections will present the moral messages that are unique to *Tangled* and *Brave*. In each, the sections will begin by expressing how the theme appears as a moral message for the film’s audience. Each section will conclude by working to evaluate the presence of each moral message in the new princess films compared to previous princess films. Comparing these messages to previous princess narratives reinforces the study of these films as a genre. The moral messages that I believe are most significant to this study of gender expectations in Disney princess films are as follows: (1) marriage is not a necessary end; (2) rejecting authority is necessary in the quest for self-discovery; and (3) a princess should embody the virtues of femininity and masculinity. Again, these moral messages do not constitute an exhaustive list. However, they are the lessons unique to the plots of *Tangled* and *Brave*, and do not appear prominently in the other films in the Disney princess line.

Marriage is a Not a Necessary End

“I don’t want to get married! I want to stay single and let my hair flow in the wind as I ride through the glen, firing arrows into the sunset!” - King Fergus impersonating his daughter, Merida (*Brave*)

In both Rapunzel’s and Merida’s narratives, marriage is not viewed as the goal for the princesses. Rapunzel’s goals rest in her curiosity about the world around her; she desires knowledge and self-discovery, and this desire propels her actions. In the end, she

does fall in love and chooses her prince in Flynn Rider, but this is not the necessary end for her quest. The necessary end for Rapunzel is the need to see the floating lanterns and subsequently discover her identity. In a pivotal moment of the film, Rapunzel questions the moment when she is finally about to see the light, asking Flynn, “what if it is [everything I dreamed it would be]?” Flynn replies, “Well that’s the good part, I guess. You get to go find a new dream.” In the end, Flynn becomes Rapunzel’s new dream, but this only occurs after she has achieved her personal goals. This signifies to viewers that marriage is not a necessity, but that if it presents itself in one’s life it is still an acceptable end. The key distinction here is that marriage is not a necessary end for Rapunzel; she could have still achieved personal satisfaction in simply seeing the floating lanterns and discovering her true identity. After all, Rapunzel repeats at several points that she has dreamed of seeing the floating lights for her whole life. This indicates that her true dream lies in this quest, not the quest for a man. Fitting with Disney princess tradition, Rapunzel realizes through Flynn’s comment that life is a series of dreams and that marriage is simply the next dream available in her life. She chooses to pursue this dream, only after achieving the personal dreams she had in mind for herself. In this sense, Rapunzel achieves a degree of self-efficacy like Merida; she seeks control of her life, gains that control, then chooses marriage in the end. Ultimately, Rapunzel’s quest for self-discovery is the action most central to her film.

For Merida, the requisite of marriage is rejected instead. In Merida’s eyes, marriage is not only undesirable, but also entirely unnecessary for her to feel fulfilled as an individual. She is not the first princess to display this desire, but she is the first to follow through with her convictions. Rejecting marriage, as indicated in chapter four, is

representative of Merida's rejection of traditional gender expectations. Like Rapunzel, marriage is not the primary goal for Merida. This sends the message to film viewers that the world ought to view marriage not as a necessary end, but as an option instead. In terms of the two newest princesses, there is no prerogative to being wed, and marriage can be outwardly rejected if that is what she truly feels is her fate. This moral message is important for young girls to experience in Disney princess narratives, especially considering the critique that princesses teach girls to embrace unrealistic expectations about weddings and marriage.⁸ Traditionally, Disney princess films end with a wedding scene, or an implied marriage. This suggests to young viewers that stories should end in this way, and is therefore a moral message that has been historically prominent in the Disney princess line. Therefore, Merida and Rapunzel's narratives regarding marriage appear as alternatives to the dominant Disney princess ending.

By completely rejecting marriage as the end to her story, Merida also separates herself from all other Disney princesses. For example, in *Beauty and the Beast* (1991), Belle, while not a princess by birth, is portrayed as an intelligent, female lead who always has her "nose stuck in a book." Initially, her intelligence dissuades her from accepting the advances of the town brute, Gaston, and she rejects his forced marriage proposal countless times as a result. At least at the onset of the film, Belle appears to be a strong-willed protagonist that knows what she wants in life and will not settle for less. Of course, her rejection of marriage does not last long and her quest for knowledge is put on the back burner at the opportunity to change a ferocious beast into a caring, compassionate man, with whom she falls in love. The moral messages associated with this ending are troublesome from a relational communication perspective. In the end,

Belle's desire to remain autonomous and free-spirited is not the moral message associated with her story. Instead, the more recognizable moral message associated with *Beauty and the Beast* goes something like this: *a compassionate and patient woman can turn even the most abhorrent man into a prince.*

In addition, *Aladdin's* (1992) Princess Jasmine reaches a similar conclusion at the announcement of her father's search for her suitors. She initially affirms the notion that she does not want to be married, but it is soon made clear that she only wants marriage if she can marry who she wants. At the Sultan's request that she marry a suitor of his choosing, Princess Jasmine expresses disinterest in being a princess based on the laws that require her to marry. However, it does not appear that much else bothers her about her life as a princess. Even though she states, "maybe I don't want to be a princess!" she in fact does want to fit the Disney princess mold based on her subsequent actions. Her struggle throughout may be to find a suitable husband for her standards, but her goal is to be married in the end.

While the plot of *Brave* initially mirrors the "you must be married as soon as possible" theme found in *Beauty and the Beast* and *Aladdin*, the influence of this theme is not as meaningful for Merida as it is for Belle and Jasmine. Merida, on the other hand, breaks all the rules of Disney princess expectations when she ultimately rejects the notion of betrothal completely, and becomes the first Disney princess without an implied marriage by the end of her film. Even though Rapunzel does get her prince in the end, it is not her main or even secondary pursuit within her story. The narratives of both Rapunzel and Merida are working to kickstart a new trend for Disney princesses: a lack of focus on marriage replaced with new focus on self-discovery.

Rejecting Authority Is Necessary in the Quest for Self-Discovery

“Does your mother deserve it? No. Would it break her heart and crush her soul?
Of course. But you’ve just got to do it.” –Flynn Rider to Rapunzel (*Tangled*)

Rejecting authority is something very central to both Rapunzel and Merida’s quests for self-discovery. Both princesses reject authority by displaying blatant disobedience toward their maternal figures. As I have mentioned in previous chapters, mothers have been largely absent from Disney princess films, and even then their roles have been minimal. However, both Rapunzel and Merida experience antagonism through the relationship with their respective mothers. The antagonism elicited by the mothers is the need for their daughters to remain obedient through adherence to dominant gender expectations. Rapunzel and Merida both reject these expectations by disobeying the wishes of their mothers. In *Tangled*, Rapunzel agonizes over her decision to act against Mother Gothel’s wishes in pursuit of her own goals. In the end, it is easier for Rapunzel to reject Gothel’s influence because the princess discovers that Gothel is not really her mother. In other words, being disobedient is necessary for Rapunzel to break free from the imprisonment of Gothel. Similarly, Merida experiences remorse for her bold, self-motivated actions when she believes that she cannot take back what she has done in order to save her mother. The quest for self-discovery fuels the plot of both films, which makes up for any disobedience or rejection of gender expectations that the girls have exhibited. With these things in mind, the moral message that self-discovery must be achieved by any means possible is an important feature of both *Tangled* and *Brave*. The presence of this message indicates to viewers that it may be an agonizing and conflicted process, but self-discovery should be the goal of young girls. Central to both plots is the moral message that the process of self-discovery requires a rejection of authority.

Compared to other Disney princess films, the prevalence of this message is most noticeable in *Tangled* and *Brave*. In the early Disney princess films, disobedience for self gain is almost unheard of, as in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* and *Sleeping Beauty*. However, the princesses between 1989 and 1998 are trademarked on disobedience (see Ariel, Belle, Jasmine, Pocahontas, and Mulan). While these girls are all rebellious in their own way, they ultimately do not reject traditional gender expectations for the pursuit of self-discovery; in other words, discovering who they are is not the primary motive in their journeys. For Ariel, the rejection of her father's authority is motivated for personal gain in attracting the attention of the human, Prince Eric. Belle rejects the expectations of her community by falling in love with a beast, Jasmine by falling in love with a "street-rat," and Pocahontas by falling for the white man. Mulan seems to reject traditional expectations outright, but her primary motivation is to save her father, not to gain understanding about herself. By striving to understand their identities, Rapunzel and Merida embody a moral message that has been previously unrepresented in Disney princess films. Through understanding herself, Rapunzel is able to achieve her goals; likewise Merida's rejection of her mother's tradition is the only way to not only understand herself, but to insist that others understand her perspective. This common moral message signifies to viewers the importance of self-discovery, regardless of how society expects young girls to behave.

Princesses Should Embody the Virtues of Femininity and Masculinity

"Leave her be! Princess or not, learning to fight is essential." – King Fergus (*Brave*)

Finally, both *Tangled* and *Brave* display the newest princesses with androgynous tendencies. With marriage not being needed in the end, and a quest to reject tradition for self-exploration, it is not surprising that an embodiment of the virtues of femininity and

masculinity also plays a key role in these films. In order to reject the dominant discourse of their worlds, both Rapunzel and Merida appear more gender fluid than previous princesses. These characteristics, according to Rath and Mishra, are indicative of androgynous individuals, who “do not rely on gender as an organizing principle”⁹ As a result, androgynous individuals display industrious autonomy, but are simultaneously compassionate and emotional. In other words, androgynous individuals display a balance of gender expectations; both Rapunzel and Merida are displayed with androgynous tendencies in their own right.

First, Rapunzel is an explicitly androgynous character as she is both physically strong and emotionally capable. As she wields her frying pan as a weapon, she is unafraid to confront a large group of ruffians on the way to the kingdom. With a swift throw of her golden locks, Rapunzel pulls back a large log, and releases her grip as the log springs back to hit the head of a “malicious, mean, and scary” man. She bravely shouts, “find your humanity!” with no sign of fear toward the man. When it comes time to see the floating lanterns, we see the thoughtful and compassionate side of Rapunzel, as she dances through the kingdom encouraging stranger townsfolk to dance and participate in the festivities. Perhaps the most androgynous moment for Rapunzel lies in the fact that she is the princess who saves the prince. As the disfigured body of Mother Gothel careens from the tower window to the earth below, Rapunzel outstretches her arms as if to save the woman who was moments from destroying all her dreams.¹⁰ With Flynn dying in her arms, Rapunzel grieves at the thought that her new dream is now lifeless. She sheds a single tear, which because of the magic inside her, is enough to save Flynn and bring him back to life. Even in grief, she is his savior. Rapunzel’s narrative suggests the moral

message that androgyny is an acceptable and even celebrated way to be. In other words, society ought to value individuals that strike a balance in their gender conformity.

As a point of comparison, Rapunzel seems to embrace both aspects of the can-do discourse: traditionalism in choosing marriage with Flynn Rider as her suitor, and non-traditionalism in breaking past the barriers that were once set in front of her in order to discover her identity. Merida is overwhelmingly masculine in her actions, but there are still aspects to her character that suggest androgyny. For example, even though she despises the traditional skills that her mother teaches her, she is quite skilled despite her discontented quips. When it comes time for her to “mend the bond,” Merida skillfully sews the tapestry together while riding full speed into the forest atop her horse, Angus. Merida is also depicted with emotionality, and she cries hysterically when she realizes that her mother may remain a bear forever. Coupled with the courageousness of fighting against the evil bear, Mor’Du, and the perfect aim she possesses in archery Merida embraces androgyny in her actions and words. Her rejection of the can-do discourse and her fearlessness are not diminished by her emotionality. With Rapunzel and Merida as exemplars, society ought to value the versatility of androgyny as a positive aspect of womanhood.

The prominence of androgyny in the films *Tangled* and *Brave* compared to past princess movies is important to understanding the value of this moral message. Rapunzel and Merida are distinct from princesses like Cinderella and Ariel, for example, because androgyny is not an explicit tendency for these royal girls. For example, Cinderella does not display a balance of gender expected tendencies. Rather than acting rebelliously to stand up for herself, she awaits the aid of a fairy godmother, who grants her the

stereotypical princess image she desires. Rapunzel, on the other hand, walks around barefoot and defends herself against enemies. As another example, Ariel, while brave enough to make a deal with Ursula the sea-witch, still primarily conforms to female gender expectations. Without her voice, Ariel uses “her looks,” “her pretty face,” and “body language”¹¹ to win her prince’s affection. Her story, like Cinderella’s, is primarily focused on maintaining a Disneyfied understanding of female gender expectations.

Certainly other princesses have been androgynous in their tendencies (e.g. Pocahontas and Mulan), but the narratives of Rapunzel and Merida seem to address this tendency with more deliberate focus. Neither Rapunzel nor Merida employs gender as a defining principle for their actions. Rapunzel walks through the forest in bare-footed stride, and uses her hair as her most trusty weapon of choice. Merida fights off a bear ten times her size and speaks out adamantly in order to make her voice heard. By painting the two newest princesses in this image, Disney is promoting the ideal that princesses are not always what meets the eye. Both Rapunzel and Merida are dynamic, brave, and independent. At the same time, they are fearful, empathetic, and emotional. What is most important is that these tendencies help align the moral message of androgyny with the messages found in the *I Am A Princess* campaign. From this, the world ought to expect princesses to be unique, and no longer fit a mold that was originally designed in 1937.

Future Directions

This project contributes to current academic literature in a variety of ways. First, the linking of mass media and rhetoric provides new avenues for research in gender studies. As evidenced by the analyses in chapter three and chapter four, theoretical lenses based in rhetoric are effective tools for the exploration of women’s roles in society. When

women's roles are defined through mass mediated texts (e.g., film) scholars have the opportunity to interpret messages that affect society. Specifically, *Tangled* and *Brave* depict Rapunzel and Merida in ways that invite viewers to reconsider the behaviors, goals and attitudes of women; simultaneously the reconsideration of what constitutes a Disney princess comes to mind. The media's influence on women's perceptions in real life is a phenomenon worthy of future study because of the prevalence of mass mediated messages in our lives. These messages shape reality not only for girls, but for all those who expect girls to conform to such messages. Finally, this research is an addition to the area of Disney studies because little has been done to discuss recent Disney princesses. This is important for communication studies because it contributes to a breadth of scholarship in our field. While I have started to explore these films for gender expectations, additional investigations will add depth to this area of rhetorical studies. This is the case not only for rhetorical investigations, but also for Disney scholarship more generally. Disney studies can benefit from a reinvestigation of what it means to be a princess according to Disney. This thesis demonstrates that Disney is actively interested in expanding the conception of "princess," and reminds readers of the significance of the princess genre of films. Rapunzel and Merida suggest new moral messages to be added to the Disney princess line, which help to expand the reach of this genre; additionally, the moral messages are situated with the "I Am A Princess" campaign, because these messages showcase a variety of princess characteristics that can be emulated in reality. Also, this study opens new doors for the analysis of future Disney princess films. As a case in point, I would like to provide an extension for future research pertaining to the Disney princess genre.

The most recent Disney Animation Studios film, *Frozen* (2013) is bound to produce one, if not two, new members of the Disney princess line. Although not yet officially a Disney princess film, *Frozen* seems to be an inevitable addition to the marketing line. The film has been received with rave reviews and even Oscar distinction. On March 2, 2014, *Frozen* won two Oscars. The film received the honor of Best Animated Feature, an award category that has only been established since 2001; the award for Best Original Song was given to “Let It Go,” which accompanies the pivotal musical moment of the film *Frozen*.¹² On the same day, worldwide, box-office sales for the film peaked at over 1 billion dollars.¹³ Due to the success of this newest film, it seems likely that *Frozen*’s royal sisters will soon be added to the official marketing line; after all, excluding the princesses of a \$1 billion success would appear slightly irresponsible.

What makes a future investigation of *Frozen* a fruitful endeavor is the focus on its leading ladies. “For the first time in forever,”¹⁴ Disney has included a pair of sisters as princesses in a single film. Anna and Elsa are the heirs to the kingdom of Arendelle, and shortly after the film’s start, Princess Elsa becomes Queen Elsa as the oldest heir. However, Elsa has a secret that she has been forced to keep hidden from everyone, including her sister. Elsa has magic within her that makes the world freeze around her when she is scared, or upset. Initially, she believes that she must conceal her powers in order to keep her little sister safe. However, this tactic backfires at a coronation ceremony; Elsa accidentally hurts her Anna, freezing the younger princess’s heart in a moment of panic. Anna discovers that the only way to thaw a frozen heart is with love. In a stereotypical Disney moment, Anna believes that “true love’s kiss” is the solution to her

problem. What ensues as the actual solution is what warrants this film as an area of future research.

Rather than a fairy godmother, or a handsome prince arriving to save the day, Anna saves herself. With her heart nearly completely frozen, she struggles to reach Kristoff, the film's leading male, in the midst of a blizzard caused by Elsa. As the snow becomes denser, Hans corners Elsa. Hans is convinced that the only way to end the eternal winter is to kill the snow queen. Even though Anna is moments from death herself, she turns away from true love's kiss in order to jump between Hans and her sister. In the process, Elsa is protected, as Anna turns to ice just as Hans lowers his sword toward the snow queen. Initially, it appears that it is too late, but moments later Anna thaws and comes back to life. The love between sisters is expressed as the strongest and most powerful bond of all. This calls to question new investigations about the nature of Disney princess films and the messages they teach. Unlike any other princess story, Anna was able to *save herself*. Her bravery broke the curse all because she was selfless enough to sacrifice her life for her sister's safety. The film concludes with the sisters sharing the relational bond that they both desired all along, but that Elsa was too afraid to embrace for fear that she would hurt her sister in the process. To understand the rhetorical potential of Anna and Elsa's narrative, we need look no further than the words of *Frozen* songwriters Kristen Anderson-Lopez and her husband, Robert Lopez. Upon winning the Academy Award for "Let It Go," the couple "dedicated the honor to their two daughters and 'the hope,'" Anderson-Lopez said, "that you never let fear or shame keep you from celebrating the unique people that you are."¹⁵ This dedication indicates a moral message contained in the film that has a larger meaning for society. *Frozen* is yet another step in

the right direction for the Disney princess line because it promotes individuality and bravery through the actions of strong female protagonists. It is my hope that future research investigates the rhetorical influence of *Frozen* as an important Disney princess film for understanding gender expectations and the roles of women in society as a whole.

Conclusion

With Rapunzel and Merida as examples, today's young girls now have additional types of role models to look up to. By recognizing that every young girl is a princess in her own right, Disney has made great strides to represent the princess genre in new light through *Tangled* and *Brave*. The moral messages expressed by Rapunzel and Merida strengthen the rhetoric of the "*I Am A Princess*," campaign. As rhetorical texts, the narratives of these two newest princesses indicate that being a princess today is different from being the type of princess exemplified by Snow White, or Cinderella. Waiting for a handsome prince to rescue us is no longer the norm in society. Instead we can be bold, strong, and independent, just like today's Disney princesses. Of course, what it means to be a bold, strong, and independent woman is not a mystery today. Patton writes, "as adults, we know that what makes a princess, of the Disney or real-life variety, isn't what she is wearing or how she looks; whether prince charming sweeps her off her feet or she carves her own independent path. What makes a princess is who she is and what she stands for."¹⁶ With the most recent princesses, it is now easier than ever for young girls to reach this conclusion on their own.

If Rapunzel or Merida is the present day role model, it is safe to say that the children who look up to them are in good hands. Disney has recognized its influence as a cultural force and used princess narratives to promote this influence productively. As

William Powers of the *Washington Post* states, "Disney's power begins with children for whom Disney products are so powerful; they teach life lessons (think Pinocchio's nose!) and they build dreamscapes. Children grow into adults, who are fond of Disney because it shaped the way they think of the world."¹⁷ If today's children grow up fond of a world where a girl can and should be self-aware, have control of her life, and be a fully capable human being without a prince if she wishes, then Disney may be positively shaping the lives of a new generation of *brave* young women. The girls of today can look to Rapunzel and Merida and emulate the moral messages that they teach. The beauty of Disney films is that the messages we find present within them are not lost to a single generation of viewers. They are bound to be shared for generations to come, and to influence the future "princesses" of society. Through Disney princess films, every girl has the ability to recognize herself as a princess, capable of any and everything she wishes to achieve. With role models like Rapunzel, Merida, and soon hopefully Anna and Elsa, young girls can feel confident in embracing the words, "... *I am a princess, long may I reign.* "

¹ “I Am A Princess,” September 27, 2012, video clip, accessed March 3, 2014, YouTube, http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=qUGnu0gXtn4.

² Katie Patton, “The Princess Redefined; Long May She Reign.” *Hello Giggles*. last modified October 26, 2012, <http://hellogiggles.com/the-princess-redefined-long-may-she-reign>.

³ Annalee Ward. *Mouse Morality: The Rhetoric of Disney Animated Film*. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002), 1.

⁴ Sharon Downey, “Feminine Empowerment in Disney’s *Beauty and the Beast*,” *Women’s Studies in Communication* 19, no. 2 (1996) : 187.

⁵ See chapter three for the discussion of these elements in the film *Tangled* (2010).

⁶ See chapter four for the discussion of these elements in the film *Brave* (2012).

⁷ Henry Giroux, “Animating Youth: The Disneyfication of Children’s Culture,” *Socialist Review* 24, no. 3 (1994): 24-25.

⁸ For an account how traditional weddings are perpetuated by the media, see Erika Engstrom, *The Bride Factory: Mass Media Portrayals of Women and Weddings* (New York: Peter Lang, 2012).

⁹ Sangeeta Rath and Aakankshya Mishra, “Gender-role Perception and Employment Status in the Self-Efficacy of Women,” *European Journal of Sustainable Development* 2, no 3 (2013): 58.

¹⁰ This further reinforces the message, “I am kind, even when others are not so generous,” which appears in the *I Am A Princess* campaign video.

¹¹ Taken from the song, “Poor Unfortunate Souls,” performed by Pat Carroll as Ursula, with music by Alan Menken and lyrics by Howard Ashman.

¹² Todd Martens, “Oscars 2014: ‘Frozen’ out by a Disney Princess in Song Category,” *Los Angeles Times*. last modified March 3, 2014, <http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/envelope/moviesnow/la-et-mn-oscar-music-20140303,0,377106.story#axzz2vFukVeO5>.

¹³ Brooks Barnes, “At Disney, A Celebration That Was a Long Time Coming,” *New York Times*, last modified March 3, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/05/business/media/at-disney-a-celebration-that-was-a-long-time-coming.html?_r=0.

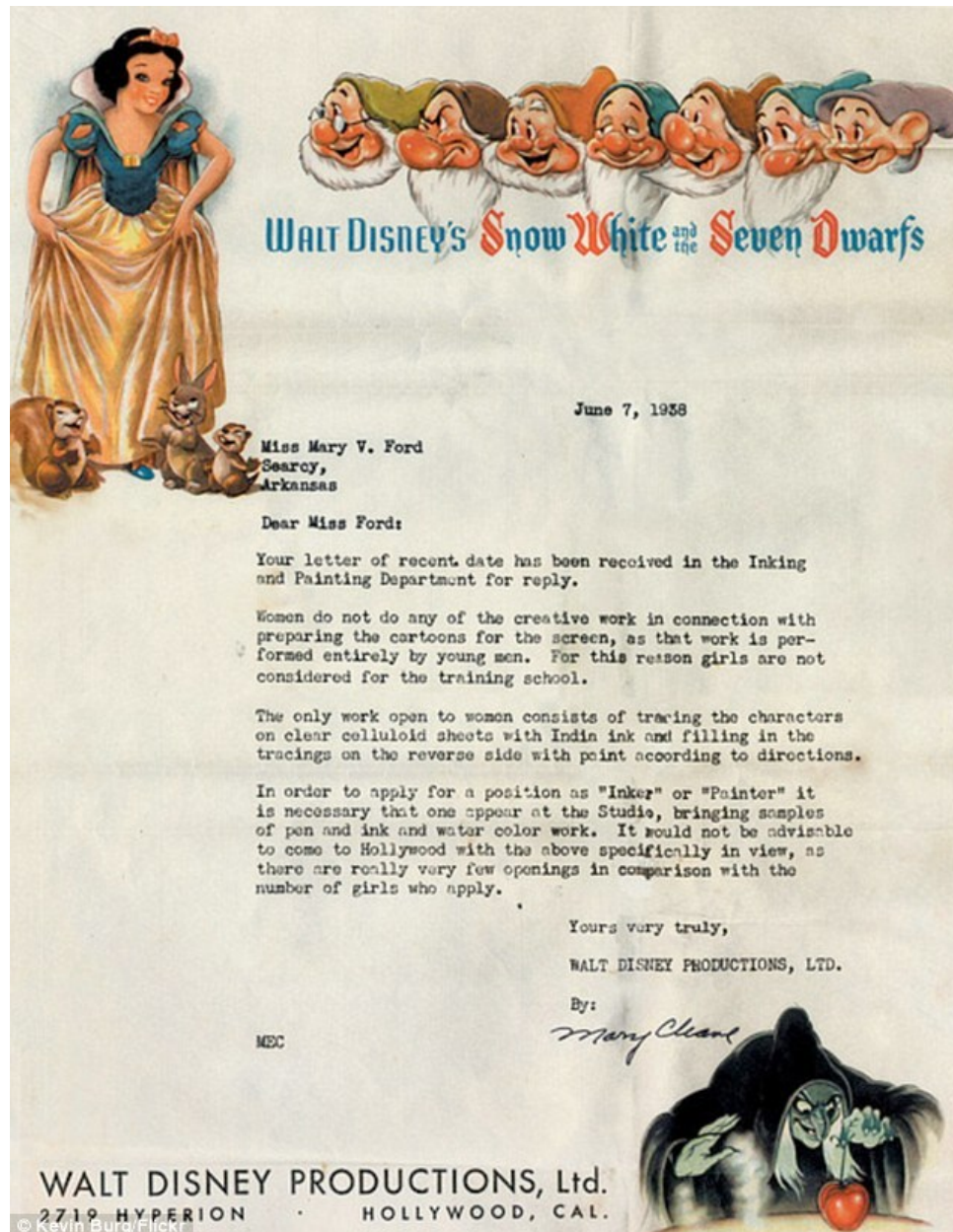
¹⁴ Included in reference to the film's song of the same name, "For The First Time in Forever."

¹⁵ Joshua Ostroff, "'Let It Go' Wins Oscar For Best Original Song (And Best Speech, Non-Lupita Edition)," *Huffington Post*. last modified March 2, 2014, http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2014/03/02/oscar-best-song-let-it-go_n_4886525.html.

¹⁶ Katie Patton, "The Princess Redefined; Long May She Reign." *Hello Giggles*. last modified October 26, 2012, <http://hellogiggles.com/the-princess-redefined-long-may-she-reign>.

¹⁷ William Powers, "Eeek? Disney Is Big and Getting Much Bigger. Should We Be Afraid of the Mouse?," *Washington Post*, Aug. 6, 1995.

APPENDIX A: Disney Letter of Rejection to Mary Ford, 1938



APPENDIX B: Lyrics to song “When Will My Life Begin?”

Music by Alan Menken

Lyrics by Glenn Slater

Performed by Mandy Moore

Produced by Scott Cutler, Anne Preven and Alan Menken

Arranged and Orchestrated by Michael Starobin

Recorded and Mixed by Frank Wolf

Wonderland Music Company, Inc. (BMI)/Walt Disney Music Company (ASCAP)

(leaves window of tower)

RAPUNZEL: *Seven a.m., the usual morning lineup
Start up the chores and sweep till the floor's all clean
Polish and wax, do laundry, and mop and shine up
Sweep again, and by then it's, like, seven-fifteen
And so I'll read a book or maybe two or three
I'll add a few new paintings to my gallery
I'll play guitar and knit and cook and basically
Just wonder when will my life begin?*

(paints lights in a mural on the wall)

*Then after lunch it's puzzles and darts and baking
Papier-mache, a bit of ballet and chess
Pottery and ventriloquy, candle-making
Then I'll stretch, maybe sketch, take a climb, sew a dress!*

*And I'll re-read the books if I have time to spare
I'll paint the walls some more, I'm sure there's room somewhere
And then I'll brush and brush and brush and brush my hair
Stuck in the same place I've always been
And I'll keep wondering and wondering and wondering and wondering
When will my life begin?*

(back to window)

*Tomorrow night, the lights will appear
Just like they do on my birthday each year
What is it like out there where they glow?
Now that I'm older, Mother might just let me go...*

APPENDIX C: Lyrics to song “Mother Knows Best”

Music by Alan Menken
Lyrics by Glenn Slater
Performed by Donna Murphy
Produced by Alan Menken
Arranged and Orchestrated by Michael Starobin
Recorded and Mixed by Frank Wolf
Wonderland Music Company, Inc. (BMI)/Walt Disney Music Company (ASCAP)

MOTHER GOTHEL: *Mother knows best
Listen to your mother*

RAPUNZEL: *(Agh!)*

MOTHER GOTHEL: *It's a scary world out there
Mother knows best
One way or another
Something will go wrong, I swear
Ruffians, thugs, poison ivy, quicksand
Cannibals and snakes... The plague!*

RAPUNZEL: *No!*

MOTHER GOTHEL: *Yes!*

RAPUNZEL: *But—*

MOTHER GOTHEL: *Also large bugs*

RAPUNZEL: *(Agh!)*

MOTHER GOTHEL: *Men with pointy teeth, and stop, no more, you'll just upset me
Mother's right here, mother will protect you
Darling here's what I suggest
Skip the drama, stay with mama
Mother knows best
Ah, hahahaha...*

*Mother knows best
Take it from your mumsy
On your own, you won't survive
Sloppy, underdressed, immature, clumsy
Please, they'll eat you up alive
Gullible, naive, positively grubby
Ditzy and a bit, well, hmm vague
Plus, I believe, gettin' kinda chubby
I'm just saying 'cause I wuv you*

*Mother understands, mother's here to help you
All I have is one request*

(spoken)

MOTHER GOTHEL: *Rapunzel?*

RAPUNZEL: Yes?
MOTHER GOTHEL: Don't ever ask to leave this tower again.
RAPUNZEL: Yes, Mother.
MOTHER GOTHEL: Uh, I love you very much, dear.
RAPUNZEL: I love you more.
MOTHER GOTHEL: I love you most. (*kisses Rapunzel's forehead*)
(*sung*)
MOTHER GOTHEL: *Don't forget it, you'll regret it*
Mother knows best!

APPENDIX D: Lyrics to song “Reprise of Mother Knows Best”

Music by Alan Menken

Lyrics by Glenn Slater

Performed by Donna Murphy

Produced by Alan Menken

Arranged and Orchestrated by Michael Starobin

Recorded and Mixed by Frank Wolf

Wonderland Music Company, Inc. (BMI)/Walt Disney Music Company (ASCAP)

MOTHER GOTHEL: Well! I thought he'd never leave!
RAPUNZEL: Mother!
MOTHER GOTHEL: Hello dear.
RAPUNZEL: But I, I, I, I don't, uh... How did you find me?
MOTHER GOTHEL: Oh, it was easy really. I just listened to the sound of complete and utter betrayal and followed that.
RAPUNZEL: *(sigh)* Mother...
MOTHER GOTHEL: We're going home, Rapunzel. Now.
RAPUNZEL: You, you don't understand. I've been on this incredible journey and I've seen and learned so much. I even met someone.
MOTHER GOTHEL: Yes, the wanted thief, I'm so proud. Come on, Rapunzel.
RAPUNZEL: Mother, wait. I think... I think he likes me.
MOTHER GOTHEL: Likes you? Please, Rapunzel, that's demented.
RAPUNZEL: But mother, I...

(song begins)

MOTHER GOTHEL: This is why you never should have left
(Rapunzel sighs)
MOTHER GOTHEL: *Dear, this whole romance that you've invented
Just proves you're too naive to be here
Why would he like you? Come on now, really.
Look at you! You think that he's impressed?
Don't be a dummy, come with mummy
Mother...*
RAPUNZEL: No!!!
MOTHER GOTHEL: No?! Oh. I see how it is.
*Rapunzel knows best
Rapunzel's so mature now
Such a clever grown-up miss
Rapunzel knows best
Fine, if you're so sure now
Go ahead, then give him this! (satchel)*
RAPUNZEL: How did you...?
MOTHER GOTHEL: *This (crown) is why he's here!
Don't let him deceive you!*

RAPUNZEL: *Give it to him, watch, you'll see!*
I will!
MOTHER GOTHEL: *Trust me, my dear*
That's how fast he'll leave you
I won't say I told you so!
No, Rapunzel knows best!
So if he's such a dreamboat
Go and put him to the test
RAPUNZEL: Mother, wait—
MOTHER GOTHEL: *If he's lying, don't come crying,*
'Mother knows best'! (vanishes)

APPENDIX E: Lyrics to song “Into The Open Air”

Music and Lyrics by Alex Mandel

Performed by Julie Fowlis

Produced by Jim Sutherland with Éamon Doorley and Julie Fowlis

Julie Fowlis and Éamon Doorley appear courtesy of Machair Records

*This love, it is a distant star
Guiding us home wherever we are
This love, it is a burning sun
Shining light on the things that we've done*

*I try to speak to you everyday
But each word we spoke, the wind blew away*

*Could these walls come crumbling down?
I want to feel my feet on the ground
And leave behind this prison we share
Step into the open air*

*How did we let it come to this?
What we just tasted we somehow still miss*

*How will it feel when this day is done
And can we keep what we've only begun?*

*And now these walls come crumbling down
And I can feel my feet on the ground
Can we carry this love that we share
Into the open air?
Into the open air?
Into the open air?*

This love, it is a burning sun

APPENDIX F: Lyrics to song “Learn Me Right”

Written, Arranged and Produced by Mumford & Sons
Performed by Birdy with Mumford & Sons
Birdy appears courtesy of Warner Music UK Limited
Mumford & Sons appears courtesy of Gentleman of the Road under exclusive license to
Universal Island Records, Glassnote Entertainment Group, Co-operative Music and Dew
Process Pty Ltd.

*Though I may speak some tongue of old
Or even spit out some holy word
I have no strength with which to speak
When you sit me down and see I'm weak*

*We will run and scream
You will dance with me
We'll fulfill our dreams and we'll be free*

*We will run and scream
You will dance with me
We'll fulfill our dreams and we'll be free*

*We will be who we are
And they'll heal our scars
Sadness will be far away*

*So I had done wrong but you put me right
My judgment burned in the black of night
When I give less than I take
It is my fault my own mistake*

*We will run and scream
You will dance with me
We'll fulfill our dreams and we'll be free
We will be who we are
And they'll heal our scars
Sadness will be far away*

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Axelrod, Mark. "Beauties and Their Beasts & Other Motherless Tales from the Wonderful World of Walt Disney," in *The Emperor's Old Groove: Decolonizing Disney's Magic Kingdom*, by Brenda Ayers, 29-38. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2003.
- Ayers, Brenda. "The Poisonous Apple in Snow White: Disney's Kingdom of Gender." In *The Emperor's Old Groove: Decolonizing Disney's Magic Kingdom*, by Brenda Ayers, 39-50. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2003.
- Bahadur, Nina. "Disney Rejection Letter From 1938 Tells Candidate, 'Girls Are Not Considered.'" *The Huffington Post* (New York, NY), March 30, 2013.
- Barnes, Brooks. "At Disney, A Celebration That Was a Long Time Coming." *New York Times*, Last modified March 3, 2014.
http://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/05/business/media/at-disney-a-celebration-that-was-a-long-time-coming.html?_r=0.
- Beattie, Andrew. Walt Disney: How Entertainment Became An Empire, *Investopedia*, December 1, 2011, <http://www.investopedia.com/articles/financial-theory/11/walt-disney-entertainment-to-empire.asp>.
- Bell, Elizabeth. "Somatexts at the Disney Shop: Constructing the Pentimentos of Women's Animated Bodies." In *From Mouse to Mermaid: The Politics of Film, Gender, and Culture*, edited by Elizabeth Bell, Lynda Haas, and Laura Sells, 107-124. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995.
- Booker, M. Keith. *Disney, Pixar, and the Hidden Messages of Children's Films*. Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2010.

- Brummett, Barry. "Burke's Representative Anecdote as a Method in Media Criticism." *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, 1, (1984): 161-176.
- Brydon, Susan G. "Men at the Heart of Mothering: Finding Mother in *Finding Nemo*." *Journal of Gender Studies* 18, no. 2 (2009): 131-146.
- Buescher, Derek, and Kent Ono. "Civilized Colonialism: Pocahontas as Neocolonial Rhetoric." *Women's Studies in Communication* 19, no. 2 (1996): 127-154.
- Buhler, Stephen. "Shakespeare and Company: *The Lion King* and the Disneyfication of *Hamlet*." In *The Emperor's Old Groove: Decolonizing Disney's Magic Kingdom*, by Brenda Ayers, 117-129. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2003.
- Burke, Kenneth. "Literature as Equipment for Living." *Direction* 1, (1938): 253-262.
- Byers, Michele. "Buffy the Vampire Slayer: The Next Generation of Television." in *Catching a Wave: Reclaiming Feminism for the 21st Century*, edited by Rory Cooke Dicker and Alison Piepmeier, 171-187. Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2003.
- Campbell, Karlyn Kohrs. "Femininity and Feminism: To Be or Not To Be a Woman." *Communication Quarterly*, 31, no. 2 (1983): 101-108.
- . *Man Cannot Speak For Her. Volume I: A Critical Study of Early Feminist Rhetoric*. New York: Praeger, 1989.
- . "The Rhetoric of Women's Liberation: An Oxymoron," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 59, no. 1 (1973): 74-86.
- . "The Rhetoric of Women's Liberation: An Oxymoron revisited." *Communication Studies* 50, no. 2 (1999): 125-137.

- Campbell, Karlyn Kohrs, and Kathleen Hall Jamieson. "Form and Genre in Rhetorical Criticism: An Introduction." in *Readings in Rhetorical Criticism*, ed. Carl R. Burgchardt, (State College: Strata Publishing, 2010), 444-462.
- Chapman, Brenda. "Stand Up for Yourself, and Mentor Others." *New York Times* (New York, NY), Aug. 12, 2012.
- Cheu, Hoi F. "Disney and Girlhood." In *Girl Culture: An Encyclopedia* Volume I, editors Claudia Mitchell and Acqueline Reid-Walsh 48-56. Westport: Greenwood Press, 2007.
- Condit, Celeste Michelle. "The Rhetorical Limits of Polysemy," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 6, no. 2 (1989) : 103-122.
- Conrad, Charles. "Agon and Rhetorical Form: The Essence of 'Old Feminist' Rhetoric." *Central States Speech Journal*, 32 (1981): 45-53.
- Crapanzano, Theresa Rose. "Feminist Theory: Second Wave," in *Encyclopedia of Gender in Media*, edited by Mary Kosut, 103-106. Thousand Oaks: SAGE, 2012.
- "Critical." *Merriam-Webster Online*, Accessed April 18, 2014. <http://www.merriam-webster.com/thesaurus/critical>.
- Davis, Amy. *Good Girls and Wicked Witches: Women in Disney's Feature Animation*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006.
- Dewey, John. *The Public and Its Problems*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 1954.
- Do Rozario, Rebecca-Anne. "The Princess and the Magic Kingdom: Beyond Nostalgia, the Function of the Disney Princess." *Women's Studies in Communication* 27, no. 1 (2004): 34-59.

- Dow, Bonnie J., and Mari Boor Tonn. "'Feminine Style' and Political Judgement in the Rhetoric of Ann Richards." *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 79 (1993): 286-302.
- Downey, Sharon. "Feminine Empowerment in Disney's Beauty and the Beast." *Women's Studies in Communication* 19, no. 2 (1996): 213-228.
- Edwards, C. Frozen' Story Head Paul Briggs Talks About Truth in Storytelling, *Cartoon Brew*, December 13, 2013, <http://www.cartoonbrew.com/disney/frozen-story-head-paul-briggs-talks-about-truth-in-storytelling-92787.html>.
- England, Dawn Elizabeth, Lara Descartes, and Melissa A. Collier-Meek. "Gender Role Portrayal and the Disney Princesses." *Sex Roles* 64, no. 7-8 (2011): 555-567.
- Engstrom, Erika. *The Bride Factory: Mass Media Portrayals of Women and Weddings*. New York: Peter Lang, 2012.
- Finkelstein, Richard. "Disney's Temptest: Colonizing Desire in The Little Mermaid." In *The Emperor's Old Groove: Decolonizing Disney's Magic Kingdom*, by Brenda Ayers, 131- 147. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2003.
- Garcia, Jason. "Disney World President Meg Crofton promoted." *Orlando Sentinel* (Orlando, FL), July 5, 2011.
- Giroux, Henry. "Animating Youth: The Disneyfication of Children's Culture." *Socialist Review* 24, no. 3 (1994): 23-55.
- Glover, Rebecca, Lance Garmon, and Darrell Hull. "Media's Moral Messages: Assessing Perceptions of Moral Content in Television Programming." *Journal of Moral Education* 40, no. 1 (2011): 89-104.
- Goudreau, Jenna. Disney Princess Tops List Of The 20 Best-Selling Entertainment Products, *Forbes*, September 17, 2012,

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/jennagoudreau/2012/09/17/disney-princess-tops-list-of-the-20-best-selling-entertainment-products/>.

Hall, Ann., and Mardia Bishop. *Mommy Angst: Motherhood in American Popular Culture*. Westport: Praeger, 2009.

Henke, Jill Birnie, Diane Zimmerman Umble, and Nancy J. Smith. "Constructions of the Female Self: Feminist Readings of the Disney Heroine." *Women's Studies in Communication* 19, no. 2 (1996): 228-249.

Hines, Susan, and Brenda Ayers. "Introduction: (He)gemony Cricket! Why in the World Are We Still Watching Disney?" In *The Emperor's Old Groove: Decolonizing Disney's Magic Kingdom*, by Brenda Ayers, 1-12. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2003.

Hoernner, Keisha. "Gender Roles in Disney Films: Analyzing Behaviors from Snow White to Simba." *Women's Studies in Communication* 19, no. 2 (1996): 213-228.

Hoshchild, Arlie. *The Second Shift*. New York: Penguin Group, 1989.

"I Am A Princess." September 27, 2012. Video Clip. Accessed March 3, 2014. YouTube. [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=qUGnu0gXtn4), http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=qUGnu0gXtn4.

Jasinski, James. *Sourcebook on Rhetoric: Key Concepts in Contemporary Rhetorical Studies*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2001.

Kamberelis, George. "Genre as Institutionally Informed Social Practice." *Journal of Contemporary Legal Issues* 6, (1995): 117-171.

Kaufman, Gayle. "Gender role attitudes and college students' work and family expectations." *Gender Issues* 22, no 2 (2005): 58-71.

Keegan, Rebecca. "72 years before 'Frozen,' Walt Disney spoke on women in animation."

Los Angeles Times (Los Angeles, CA), Nov. 29, 2013.

Keegan, Rebecca. "'Frozen,' 'Get a Horse!' female directors mark firsts for Disney." *Los*

Angeles Times (Los Angeles, CA), Nov. 22, 2013.

Keitner, Chimène. "Why Nobody Can Win the Having-It-All Race." *The Atlantic*

Monthly, July 17, 2012. Accessed March 10, 2014,

<http://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2012/07/why-nobody-can-win-the-having-it-all-race/259901/>.

Lacroix, Celeste. "Images of Animated Others: The Orientalization of Disney's Cartoon

Heroines From The Little Mermaid to The Hunchback of Notre Dame." *Popular*

Communication: The International Journal of Media and Culture 2, no. 4 (2004):

213- 229.

Lieberman, Marcia. "'Some Day My Prince Will Come': Female Acculturation through

the Fairy Tale." *College English* 34, no. 3 (1972), 383-395.

"Lorna Cook." *IMBd.com*. Accessed March 28, 2014.

http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0177170/?ref_=ttfc_fc_wr15.

Ma, Sheng-Mei. "Mulan Disney, It's Like, Re-Orients: Consuming China and Animating

Teen Dreams." In *The Emperor's Old Groove: Decolonizing Disney's Magic*

Kingdom, by Brenda Ayers, 149-164. New York : Peter Lang Publishing, 2003.

Martens, Todd. "Oscars 2014: 'Frozen' out by a Disney Princess in Song Category." *Los*

Angeles Times. Last modified March 3, 2014.

<http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/envelope/moviesnow/la-et-mn-oscar-music-20140303,0,377106.story#axzz2vFukVeO5>.

- McMahan, David. "What We Have Here Is a Failure to Communicate: Linking Interpersonal Communication and Mass Communication." *Review of Communication* 4, no. 1/2 (2004): 33-56.
- Mechling, Elizabeth Walker, and Jay Mechling. "The Atom According to Disney." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 81, (1995): 436-453.
- Miller, Carolyn. "Genre as Social Action." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 70, (1984) : 151-167.
- Mundy, Liza. "Daddy Track: The Case for Paternity Leave." *The Atlantic Monthly*, December 22, 2013. Accessed March 10, 2014, <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/01/the-daddy-track/355746/>.
- O'Brien, Pamela. "The Happiest Films on Earth: A Textual and Contextual Analysis of Walt Disney's *Cinderella* and *The Little Mermaid*." *Women's Studies in Communication* 19, no. 2 (1996): 155-184.
- O'Neill, William L. *Feminism in America: A History* 2nd revised ed. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1989.
- Orenstein, Peggy. *Cinderella Ate My Daughter*. New York: Harper-Collins Publishers, 2011.
- Ostroff, Joshua. "'Let It Go' Wins Oscar For Best Original Song (And Best Speech, Non-Lupita Edition)." *Huffington Post*. Last modified March 2, 2014. http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2014/03/02/oscar-best-song-let-it-go_n_4886525.html.

- Parekh, Pushpa Naidu. "Pocahontas: The Disney Imaginary." In *The Emperor's Old Groove: Decolonizing Disney's Magic Kingdom*, by Brenda Ayers, 167-178. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2003.
- Patton, Katie. "The Princess Redefined; Long May She Reign." *Hello Giggles*. Last modified October 26, 2012. <http://hellogiggles.com/the-princess-redefined-long-may-she-reign>.
- Peri, Don. *Working with Walt: Interviews with Disney Artists*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2008.
- "Pocahontas: Full Cast and Crew," *IMBd.com*. Accessed March 28, 2014.
http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0114148/fullcredits?ref_=tt_ov_wr#writers.
- Powers, William. "Eeek? Disney Is Big and Getting Much Bigger. Should We Be Afraid of the Mouse?." *Washington Post*, Aug. 6, 1995.
- Rath, Sangeeta, and Aakankshya Mishra. "Gender-role Perception and Employment Status in the Self-Efficacy of Women." *European Journal of Sustainable Development* 2, no 3 (2013): 57-64.
- "Rita Hsiao." *IMBd.com*. Accessed March 28, 2014.
http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0398763/?ref_=tt_ov_wr.
- Roach, Catherine. "Loving Your Mother: On the Woman-Nature Relation." *Hypatia* 6, no. 1 (1991): 46-59.
- Rome, Jennifer. "Disney Princess '2.0': A Feminist Critique of Disney's Newest Generation of Princesses." Master's thesis, University of Nebraska, 2013.
- Rosen, Ruth. *The World Split Open: How the Modern Women's Movement Changed America*. New York and London: Penguin, 2000.

Sachko Macleod, Dianne. "The Politics of Vision: Disney, Aladdin, and the Gulf War."

In *The Emperor's Old Groove: Decolonizing Disney's Magic Kingdom*, by Brenda Ayers, 179- 192. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2003.

Sells, Laura. "'Where Do the Mermaids Stand?': Voice and Body in *The Little*

Mermaid," in *From Mouse to Mermaid: The Politics of Film, Gender, and Culture*, eds. Elizabeth Bell, Lynda Haas, and Laura Sells, 175-192. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995.

Sherman, Sharon R. "Perils of the Princess: Gender and Genre in Video Games."

Western Folklore 56, no. 3/4 (1997): 243-258.

Shuler, Sherianne. "Review of *Cinderella Ate My Daughter: Dispatches from the Front*

Lines of the New Girly-Girl Culture. Peggy Orenstein. New York, NY: Harper Collins, 2011." *Women and Language* 34, no. 1 (2011): 97-98.

Slaughter, Anne-Marie. "Why Women Still Can't Have It All." *The Atlantic Monthly*,

July/August 2012, accessed February 27, 2014,

<http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2012/07/why-women-still-cant-have-it-all/309020/>.

Sowards, Stacey K., and Valerie R. Renegar. "The Rhetorical Functions of

Consciousness-Raising in Third Wave Feminism." *Communication Studies* 55, no. 4 (2004): 535-552.

Staninger, Christiane. "Disney's Magic Carpet Ride: Aladdin and Women in Islam." In

The Emperor's New Groove: Decolonizing Disney's Magic Kingdom, by Brenda Ayers, 65- 77. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2003.

- Stone, Kay. "Things Walt Disney Never Told Us." *The Journal of American Folklore*, 88, no. 374 (1975): 42-50.
- Stover, Cassandra. "Damsels and Heroines: The Conundrum of the Post-Feminist Disney Princess," *LUX: A Journal of Transdisciplinary Writing and Research from Claremont Graduate University*, 2, no. 1 (2013) : 1-10.
- "Sue C. Nichols," IMBd.com. Accessed March 28, 2014.
http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0629734/?ref_=ttfc_fc_wr9.
- Tiggemann, Marika, and Amanda Pickering. "Role of Television in Adolescent Women's Body Dissatisfaction and Drive for Thinness." *International Journal of Eating Disorders* 20, no. 2 (1996) : 199-203.
- "U.S. Census Bureau News: Facts for Features: Mother's Day: May 9, 2010." Last modified May 9, 2010.
http://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/facts_for_features_special_editions/cb10-ff09.html.
- "U.S. Census Bureau News: Facts for Features: Mother's Day: May 12, 2013." Last modified May 12, 2013.
https://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/facts_for_features_special_editions/cb13-ff11.html.
- "Walt Disney." *Forbes*. Accessed March 10, 2014.
<http://www.forbes.com/companies/walt-disney/>.
- Ward, Annalee. *Mouse Morality: The Rhetoric of Disney Animated Film*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002.

- Welter, Barbara. "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860." *American Quarterly*, 18 (1966) : 151-174.
- Whelan, Bridget. "Third Wave Princess: Reconstructing and Redefining the Traditional Princess Narrative." Master's thesis, University of Louisiana at Lafayette, 2012.
- Wise, Christopher. "Notes from the Aladdin Industry: Or, Middle Eastern Folklore in the Era of Multinational Capitalism." In *The Emperor's Old Groove: Decolonizing Disney's Magic Kingdom*, by Brenda Ayers, 105-114. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2003.
- Wohlwend, Karen. "Damsels in Discourse: Girls Consuming and Producing Identity Texts through Disney Princess Play." *Reading Research Quarterly* 44, no. 1 (2009): 57-83.
- . "The boys who would be princesses: playing with gender identity intertexts in Disney Princess transmedia." *Gender and Education* 24, no. 6 (2012): 593-610.
- Wong, Kristina Sheryl. "Pranks and Fake Porn: Doing Feminism My Way," in *Catching a Wave: Reclaiming Feminism for the 21st Century*, edited by Rory Cooke Dicker and Alison Piepmeier, 294-307. Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2003.
- Wood, Julia. "The Can-Do Discourse and Young Women's Anticipations of Future." *Women & Language* 33, (2010): 103-107.

CURRICULUM VITA

Caitlin J. Saladino

saladin4@unlv.nevada.edu

Education

University of Nevada Las Vegas - Master of Arts in Communication Studies

Master's Thesis:

Long May She Reign: A Rhetorical Analysis of Gender Expectations in Disney's Tangled & Disney/Pixar's Brave

Graduate Teaching Assistant

Graduate & Professional Student Association (GPSA) Representative

Certificates: Graduate College **Research & Teaching** Certificate Program (GCRCP & GCTCP) Student

Graduation - May 2014

GPA: 4.0

University of Nevada Las Vegas - Bachelor of Arts in Communication Studies/Minor in Italian Studies

Honors Thesis: *Music Lessons and Second Language Accent Proficiency*

Graduated May 2012

Summa Cum Laude distinction

L'Università degli Studi della Tuscia - Study Abroad Student- Viterbo, Italy

Attended Jan. - May 2011

GPA: 4.0

College of Southern Nevada - Associate Degree in International Languages (emphasis in Italian)

Graduated May 2009

GPA: 4.0

College of Southern Nevada High School - High Honors Diploma, *Valedictorian*, GPA: 4.0

Work Experience

CSN (College of Southern Nevada) Adjunct Instructor	Dec. 2013-present
<i>Serving as an instructor for the basic course in public speaking (COM 101)</i>	
UNLV Graduate Teaching Assistant - Dept. of Communication Studies	Aug. 2012-present
<i>Serving as an instructor for the basic course in public speaking (COM 101), teaching 3 class sections per semester</i>	
CSN (College of Southern Nevada) Part-Time Site Coordinator	August 2012-present
<i>Administrator responsible for nighttime operations at the CSN Henderson Campus.</i>	
SAGE Academy: Recruitment & Alumni Coordinator	June 2012 - Sept. 2012
<i>Working with educators and professionals in the Las Vegas area to secure scholarship donations and recruit instructors and students for participation in SAGE Academy</i>	
Language Education Intern at public schools in Viterbo, Italy	Jan. 2011 - May 2011
<i>Teaching 6 hours each week in K-12th grade classrooms to assist Italian students in learning English language skills</i>	
SAGE Academy: Undergraduate Assistant	Aug. 2010 - May 2012
<i>Managing the recruitment activities for the SAGE Academy program and creating marketing materials to promote the program to future students.</i>	
UNLV Honors Orientation Seminar Course Instructor	Aug. 2010 - Dec. 2010
<i>Creating lesson plans and teaching a course to first semester Honors College students as one of only 10 undergraduate student instructors at UNLV.</i>	
SAGE (Summer Advanced & Gifted Education) Academy Teacher Assistant	July 2010, 2011, & 2012
<i>Teaching courses in Public Speaking and Communication, and Italian Language for a UNLV sponsored program offered to 6th-12th grade students during the summer</i>	
Clark County School District - Substitute Teacher	Dec. 2009 - Present
<i>Working as a guest teacher to instruct students in the absence of their teacher</i>	
Staff Writer – CSN's Collegiate Review Newspaper	Sept. 2007- May 2009
<i>Writing stories for the success of a college print journalism operation as both a staff writer and entertainment columnist</i>	
Guitar Instructor – Private Lessons for Beginning Guitarists	Dec. 2007-July 2013
<i>Teaching the basics of the instrument including note reading and rhythm</i>	

Awards, Scholarships, and Accomplishments

• Recipient of Graduate Teaching Award - Department of Communication Studies	2014
• GLVAR (Greater Las Vegas Association of Realtors) Scholarship Recipient	2012-2013
• UNLV James F. Adams GPSA Scholarship Recipient	2013
• UNLV Alumni Association Scholarship Recipient	2013
• Dean's Honor List, UNLV College of Urban Affairs	2010-2012
• UNLV Honors College Scholarship Recipient	2010-2012
• Member - Lambda Pi Eta National Communication Association Honors Society	2012
• Dept. of Foreign Languages - Abbey Award Nomination Committee Member	2012
• CSUN Student Government Leadership Scholarship Winner	2011
• Tom Weisner Academic Scholarship Winner	2011
• USAC (University Study Abroad Consortium) Study Abroad Scholarship Winner	2011
• CSUN Student Government Study Abroad Scholarship Winner	2011
• UNLV Student Affairs Leadership Scholarship Recipient	2010
• Member - Phi Kappa Phi Honors Society	2010
• NV Energy Powerful Partnership Scholarship Winner	2009
• <i>Valedictorian - College of Southern Nevada High School</i>	2009
• College of Southern Nevada High School Principal's Award Recipient	2009
• KLAS Channel 8 – Nevada Pride Recipient	2009
• Regents Scholar - Nevada Board of Regents	2009
• Whalen Group Scholarship Winner	2008
• National Honor Society President - College of Southern Nevada High School	2008-2009
• Coca-Cola Undergraduate Scholarship Winner	2008
• Augustus Society Scholarship Winner – Foreign Exchange Program in Italy	2007

Presentations

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic Poster Symposium Presentation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "Long May She Reign: A Rhetorical Analysis of Gender Expectations in Disney's <i>Tangled</i> and Disney/Pixar's <i>Brave</i>" - Graduate Research Symposium: Greenspun College of Urban Affairs -Las Vegas, NV 	April 2014
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research Forum Presentation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "The Rhetoric of Gender Expectations in Recent Disney Princess Narratives" - Graduate and Professional Student Association Research Forum - Las Vegas, NV - Awarded First Place in Platform Session 	March 2014
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic Conference Key Presenter <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "Professor, How Old Are You?: Tips for Young College Instructors" - League for Innovations in the Community College Conference - Anaheim, CA - Awarded Travel Funding from GPSA (Graduate & Professional Student Association), Dean's Associates Fund (Greenspun College of Urban Affairs), and UNLV Department of Communication Studies 	March 2014
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic Conference Key Presenter <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "Disney's <i>Pocahontas</i>: Public Memory of the Powhatan Princess" - Far West American Cultural Association Conference - Las Vegas, NV 	February 2014

Service

• Graduate & Professional Student Association (GPSA) Council Representative Dept. of Communication Studies	2013-2014
• Proxy Representative - Dept. of Communication Studies Graduate & Professional Student Association (GPSA) Council meetings	2012
• Smith Center Grand Opening Event - UNLV Student Ambassador	2012
• Treasurer - UNLV Chapter: National Communication Association Student Club	2012
• UNLV Career Day Fair – Volunteer Host	2010
• College of Southern Nevada High School Recruitment	2009
• Catechist - Christ the King Catholic Community (5 hours per week)	2007-2009
• Chair of the Henderson Blue Ribbon Commission	2007-2009
• Vocalist & Cantor for Church Choir (2 hours per week)	2006-present
• Team Leader for the Making Strides Against Breast Cancer Walk	2002-present

References Available Upon Request