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HAPPILY EVER AFTER: IS DISNEY SETTING US UP?  
A STUDY ON DISNEY PRINCESSES AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON YOUNG WOMEN  
AND THEIR PERSONAL LOVE NARRATIVES

A Thesis

by

**BRITTANY DANIELLE MINOR**

Presented to the Graduate Faculty of  
University of the Incarnate Word  
in partial fulfillment  
for the degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS**

December 2014

Communication Arts

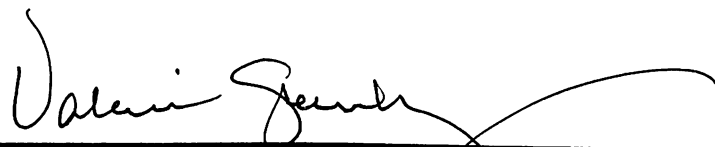
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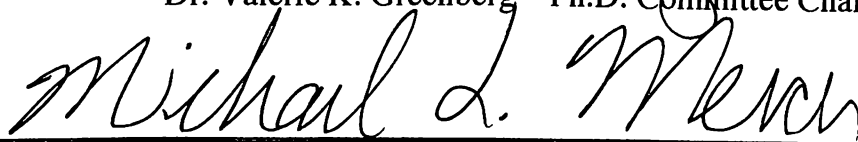
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# ABSTRACT

## Happily Ever After: Is Disney Setting Us Up?

A Study on Disney Princesses and the Influence they have on Young Women and their Personal  
Love Narratives

Brittany Danielle Minor, B.A., University of the Incarnate Word

This study discusses the issue of whether the influence of Disney films affects the girls who watch these films once they become adult women. Disney “princess” films are animated movies produced by Disney, featuring princess characters such as Snow White, Cinderella, Aurora, Ariel, Belle, Jasmine and Pocahontas. The purpose of this study is to discover how watching Disney princess films as a child affects the decisions adult women aged 20-37 make when it comes to their love lives. A survey, completed by 40 females aged 20-37, was conducted and relating literature was explored for data collection. The surveys were analyzed and transcribed. This data found women are influenced, whether consciously or unconsciously, by what they saw in Disney princess films while choosing mates, setting standards and establishing expectations for their lovers. These results will contribute to the current research on the influence of Disney on children, assist parents in deciding whether Disney princess films are a suitable choice to show their children, and will give adult women some insight as to why they think the way they do about love and companions.



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## INTRODUCTION

This study will explore the influence watching classic Disney princess films, like “Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs,” “Cinderella,” “Sleeping Beauty,” “The Little Mermaid,” “Beauty and the Beast,” “Aladdin” and “Pocahontas,” have on young women. This research and analysis will discover how young girls take what they observe and learn from watching Disney princess films and apply it in their adult lives. When speaking of influence and ideas learned from the Disney princesses, it means how they should be treated and what their mate (or Prince Charming) should be like. The question is: Are these learned ideas from the Disney princesses, when they’re young, influencing them psychologically when they get older? Are these influenced adult women unconsciously choosing their love lives in an attempt to model what they saw as a child? Also, are these Disney women truly good role models or, are they just setting young girls up for disappointment in the long run?

In response to the evident influence of Disney on the public, other researchers have composed studies developing the question as to how far the impact stretches. Vera Sonja Maass, in her work, “The Cinderella Test: Would You Really Want the Shoe to Fit?,” exclaims,

“Theologians, educators, literary critics, psychologists, and librarians have debated for centuries about reading fairytales to children and whether or not children should be exposed to the cruelty and superstition of make-believe worlds, as Zipes (1986) pointed out in the introduction to his book, ‘Don’t Bet on the Prince.’ Fairytales play an important role in early socialization, influencing children’s perception of the world and their place in it even before they begin to read. In fairytales the literature of fantasy and imagination can be tied together to create a new view of the world.”

Sheldon Cashdan speaks on his agreement about the impact Disney films have on their viewers and how he still recalls how overwhelming it was. "But my most vivid childhood memories of fairytales came by way of Walt Disney. I remember sitting on the edge of my seat in a darkened movie theater watching 'Snow White' and holding my breath as the gamekeeper prepared to cut out the heroine's heart." The authors of "Gender Role Portrayal and the Disney Princesses" discuss how Disney princesses influence young girls when it comes to gender role and product demand,

"Disney and its princess phenomenon have been identified as a powerful influence on children's media and product consumerism, contributing to a new girlhood that is largely defined by gender and the consumption of related messages and products (Giroux 1997; Lacroix 2004; McRobbie 2008; Orenstein 2006). Though Disney (princess) movies are produced in the United States and the phenomenon is American, Disney has a strong international presence and marketing efforts (Disney International 2010). Thus, the Disney (princess) line and its gender role portrayals have important implications for international children's media as well (Hubka et al. 2009)."

There are few deficiencies in these studies, but of course there are some. Most of the research and studies don't link what children learn to the actions and behaviors they end up doing in their adult lives. "The Cinderella Test" does address this connection, which is why it is the study or research which most relates to this thesis. The greatest hole in the current research on the influence of Disney is how far the influence transcends and if the impact of the influence is more positive or negative. Not many, if any, studies focused on adult women and their experiences with Disney princess influence. A variety of other focus groups or populations have been researched on this topic such as American girls, kindergarten classes, boys and young

immigrant Korean girls. There were none on adult women. Only one study, “The Cinderella Test” by Vera Sonja Maass, addressed the issue of the influence the Disney princess films have on the future decisions those young girls who viewed them make when picking a mate or choosing a love narrative as adults.

The scarceness of information on the influence of viewing Disney princess films on adult women who watched them as a child needs to be resolved because it will contribute to the question of the power of Disney influence on children. The subject matter, on this specific focus group, is important and useful to our society because of the current huge influence Disney has on the world, especially the United States. This study and research would contribute to the question of if exposing youth to Disney princess films impacts their lives more than we think and does something need to be done about it. This study examines the future choices young girls will make when they are adult women and are faced with love, relationships and marriage. This study also inspects both the direct and the unconscious psychological effects viewing Disney princess films causes and what possible moderations may be made in an effort to reduce or diminish these effects.

### **History of Disney**

Walter Elias Disney was born in Chicago, Ill., on Dec. 5<sup>th</sup> in 1901. Disney learned how to draw after he and his family moved to a farm just outside of Marceline, Missouri. Little did he know, he would be responsible for American culture’s meaning, look and sound. In 1923, as a teenager, Disney became an entrepreneur and started his own animation business. He moved his business to Los Angeles where his early films were known for their strong storylines compared to the many competitors.

Mickey Mouse was born after a distributor of Disney's earlier films took the rights of ownership of his main character, Oswald the Rabbit. According to Karla Ann Marling, from the John Hopkins University Press, Disney created his infamous Mickey Mouse while he was on the train home after losing Oswald the Rabbit. Mickey Mouse's first feature film, "Steamboat Willie," was the first animated film featuring sound and was a huge success for Disney. Soon after Mickey Mouse's first hit, Mickey Mouse was seen everywhere featuring in many more films like, "Plane Crazy" in 1928 and "Band Concert" in 1935. Marling states, "Almost from the beginning, however, Walt Disney's ambitions went far beyond the dramatic potential of Mickey Mouse." During the Great Depression, Disney created "The Silly Symphonies Series" where its featured characters metaphorically resembled influential people involved at the time of the Depression such as President Franklin Roosevelt.

Although Mickey Mouse made a name for Disney, his first animated princess feature film, "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs," is what brought him to the top of his career increasing his fame, success and wealth. Disney's "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs" premier in Hollywood, Calif., in 1937 and, according to Marling, "adult audiences wept openly when the cartoon dwarfs knelt at Snow White's funeral bier." This film opened the gates for new technical advances in Disney's company and films, including new animators and new camera technology to shoot the films in new interesting ways. Disney was known to call staff meetings before a production began and actually act out the characters in the scenes as he had imagined them to be in his mind. Marling discusses Disney and his work, "it shows the tireless drive and imagination of an American original for whom success was never enough."

Walt Disney continued to create animated films after his bust of success featuring, "Dumbo" in 1941, "Bambi" in 1942, "Cinderella" in 1950, "Alice in Wonderland" in 1951 and

“Peter Pan” in 1953. Disney believed his films related to and involved the characters in real-life current issues in American society at that time. Issues such as war, postwar life, Freudianism, domesticity and postwar standards of feminine beauty (Marling, 1). In the face of the negative historical events taking place, Disney found a way to incorporate the troubling current events into his films and still wrapped them up with happy endings. As said by Marling, “what made Disney films so appealing to their audiences was the sense that, somehow, this fairytale was directly relevant to them.”

Walt Disney passed away in Los Angeles, Calif., on Dec. 15, 1966, at the age of 65. Disney accomplished more than films and the development of an immensely successful company during his time. In 1955, just 10 years before his death, Disney came up with a place for all of his characters to come together featured in different “lands” but all in the same place called Disneyland. Disneyland has become a famous part of American culture and is even featured in other countries around the world. Disney came up with a final idea (called Project X or EPCOT) about creating a city in central Florida, during his final years of life, but sadly his plan died with him.

### **The Seven Classic Disney Princesses**

#### ***Snow White***

Snow White is the first Disney princess and is the star of Disney’s first animated feature film, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, which debuted in 1937. Snow White is a beautiful princess who was scared out of her kingdom by her evil stepmother who wanted her dead because of her beauty. She is an example of a damsel in distress because she is waiting for her one true love to come save her. Snow White is 14, making her the youngest Disney princess, and her personality can be described as cheerful, pleasant and naïve. Throughout the movie, Snow

White is seen singing, cleaning and being sweet to every character. In the end, Snow White is rescued by her prince and rides off into the sunset with him.

### ***Cinderella***

Cinderella is Disney's second princess and can be considered as the most popular of the Disney princesses. The animated film, "Cinderella," was released in 1950 and featured a common girl who was forced into servitude by her evil stepmother and stepsisters after her father's death. Cinderella dreamed of being rescued by a prince and her fairy godmother magically appears and helps her get to the prince's ball. In the end, despite her stepmother and stepsisters' best efforts, the prince finds Cinderella, rescues her and they get married. Cinderella's characteristics include honesty, kindness and having no backbone or the ability to stand up for herself. She is a damsel in distress because she is stepped on her whole life and she never does anything about it, so she needs Prince Charming to save her.

### ***Aurora (Sleeping Beauty)***

Aurora is Disney's third princess and is the main character in the 1959 animated film, "Sleeping Beauty." Aurora's story revolves around a curse that was placed on her by an evil fairy when she was a baby. The curse said Aurora would prick her finger on a spinning wheel and fall into a deep sleep for a hundred years. Aurora is sent to live, in hiding, deep in the forest with her three fairy godmothers. In the end, Aurora pricks her finger and falls asleep for years until a prince comes and wakes her up with true love's kiss. Aurora is an opinionated hopeless romantic who is described as being naïve, sophisticated and kind. She would be considered a damsel in distress because if the prince hadn't come and kissed her she would still be in a deep sleep, so she was rescued.

### ***The Princess Gap***

There is a gap of 30 years between “Sleeping Beauty” and “The Little Mermaid” where Disney did not produce any princess films. Aurora was Walt Disney’s last princess because he passed away after she made her debut and so every princess after her were created by other people in the Disney corporation. It is interesting and obvious there was a change in the Disney princesses from Aurora to Ariel because a sense of independence became present. Walt Disney spoke about the Disney princess films when he said, “Girls bored me – they still do. I love Mickey Mouse more than any woman I’ve ever known” (Walt Disney qtd. in Wagner, *You Must Remember This*). Perhaps this quote gives a little perspective and explains why Disney himself only produced three princess films during his time.

### ***Ariel (The Little Mermaid)***

Disney’s “The Little Mermaid” made its debut in 1989 and featured Ariel, Disney’s fourth princess. Ariel is King Triton’s youngest daughter who develops a fascination with humans and life out of the water. In an attempt to join the prince of her dreams in the human world, Ariel makes a deal with the evil sea witch to give her legs for three days in exchange for her voice. Through it all, the evil witch is defeated, King Triton gives Ariel permanent legs and Ariel and the prince get married. Ariel is bold, strong-willed and outspoken, which makes her one of the most unique Disney princesses. Ariel is also unique amongst the other Disney princesses because she and her prince rescue each other during the fight with the sea witch.

### ***Belle (Beauty and the Beast)***

Disney’s fifth princess, Belle, comes from the 1991 animated film, “Beauty and the Beast.” Belle is an intelligent young woman who doesn’t feel like she belongs in her small town and yearns for something more. She finds something more when a beast captures her father in his



enchanted castle and she trades her freedom for his life. Despite their rocky start, Belle sees past the beast's appearance and discovers the man inside. Belle falls in love with the beast and helps him and his kingdom break the curse and become human again. Belle is the Disney princess who really stands on her own because she saves her prince, he doesn't save her. She's the opposite of a damsel in distress and her characteristics include independence, and being headstrong.

### ***Jasmine (Aladdin)***

Disney's sixth princess is Jasmine from the 1992 animated film, "Aladdin", where she stars as the leading lady. Jasmine is a princess who is tired of the restrictions that come with her title and wants so much to be more independent. Aladdin comes along, posing as a prince, and she falls in love with him as he shows her life outside of her kingdom. Jasmine discovers Aladdin isn't a prince at all which would make it against the law for them to be married because he wasn't a royal. After defeating the evil Jafar, the Sultan (Jasmine's father), changed the law and permitted Jasmine and Aladdin to get married. Princess Jasmine's characteristics include being confident, adventurous and not letting anyone tell her what to do. Jasmine is somewhat of a damsel in distress because Aladdin saves her from her restricted life and from Jafar's reign, but she is different because she wasn't waiting on a man to come and rescue her.

### ***Pocahontas***

Pocahontas made her debut as Disney's seventh princess in the movie named out animated film in 1995. Pocahontas is the chief's adventurous daughter who has a gift with nature and the spiritual world. She falls in love with John Smith, a white man from England, after he and his men stumble upon her tribe on their hunt for gold. Pocahontas and Smith are forbidden lovers because their people hate each other and are constantly fighting. Pocahontas saves Smith and defies her tribe after he is captured and sentenced to death by her people. The story of

Pocahontas is unique because she does not end up marrying, or even being with, her lover. Her personality is caring, noble and spiritual as she communicates with animals, nature and her dead ancestors. Pocahontas would not be considered a damsel in distress because she did the saving.

### **Evolution of the Disney Princesses: Snow White vs. Tiana**

Disney princesses have evolved over time since Snow White in 1937 to Tiana, from "The Princess and the Frog," in 2009. Changes in the Disney princesses can be seen when comparing Snow White to Tiana in their body types, level of independence and characteristics. The Disney princesses have come a long way from Walt Disney's initial princess model and are continuing to change with society. Have the Disney princesses changed for the better when it comes to being positive role models for young girls?

When the Disney princess began, as Snow White, her body type was more realistic and had a healthier image for young girls to see. "It is realistic because her figure is proportionate to an actual human being's figure" (Speer, 3). When compared to Tiana and most of the other Disney princesses, Snow White is seen as the better role model because she shows the least amount of skin and wears the least amount of makeup. Tiana is shaped with a bigger bust, smaller waist and bigger hips. Kjirsten Speer, author of "Disney Princesses: Who is Your Child's Role Model?," describes Tiana's physique when she says, "Not only is her neck skinnier and longer than Snow White's, but her frame is much more unrealistic. Her bust is very definable, but her posterior is incredibly large." The body type Tiana is portraying is a negative image to young girls because it pressures them to look like her and it's unrealistic.

Tiana does not only differ from Snow White because she is the first African-American princess and her story is the first Disney film to feature an interracial couple.

Tiana is also extremely more independent and outspoken than Snow White. Tiana has dreams of starting her own restaurant, which have nothing to do with finding love and getting married. "Disney seems to be trying to adapt to a more realistic notion of love, rightly so as many young girls grow up waiting for their prince to arrive and sweep them [off] of their feet" (Isleifsdottir, 24). Snow White aspires to be saved by a handsome prince and to live happily ever after. Tiana is very vocal, independent and headstrong in her film as she works two jobs to open her own restaurant in honor of her deceased father. It is obvious, when viewing each film, Snow White and Tiana play totally different roles and are mirroring the current status of women in society during their time.

Snow White and Tiana share very few common characteristics. "In the movie, 'Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs,' Snow White is presented as the 'fairest of them all.' She is perfect, good-natured, respectful, pleasant, and the most beautiful girl in all of the land" (Speer, 3). Snow White's voice is also higher-pitched, when speaking and singing, when compared to Tiana's. Tiana is strong-willed and possesses more of an attitude than Snow White. Both princesses are clearly beautiful but Tiana, unlike Snow White, does not rely or rest on her looks to get her by. Snow White teaches young girls that if you wait, wish and dream it will all come true eventually. Tiana shows her audience hard work, perseverance and determination will get you what you want; wishing upon a star won't always get you there.

### **Cinderella: The Brothers Grimm vs. Disney**

The tale of *Cinderella*, in mainstream society, represents Walt Disney and Disney productions. But, like most fairytales, *Cinderella* originated long before Walt Disney created it into what it exists as today. The Brothers Grimm, known for their gory fairytale stories, created a

story of *Cinderella* or *Ashputtel*, which greatly resembles that of Disney's tale. The storylines of both *Cinderella* and *Ashputtel* share similarities in some ways, but remain different in most ways. This work will address how these two stories compare and contrast to one another on the basis of the overall storyline and characters of the two.

### ***Storyline***

The story line of *Cinderella*, from Disney, is particularly more upbeat and brighter than that of *Ashputtel*. First and foremost, the names of the two stories are obviously the noticeable differences with one being *Cinderella* and the other being *Ashputtel*. Second, the character *Cinderella* does live with her evil stepmother and stepsisters, loses her mother and gets treated like a slave in her own home in both stories. Next, in Disney's story, her father dies and leaves her in the hands of her stepmother, whereas in Grimm's story her father still lives and contributes to her abuse. The Brothers Grimms' tale contrasts with that of Disney's, for the most part, because of the blood and gore involved.

The birds plucking out the stepsisters' eyes at the end serves as an immense difference between the endings of each story. Both endings end with her and the prince marrying and living happily ever after, but the stepsisters being left to live life blind shows contrast of *Cinderella* and *Ashputtel*. The slipper or shoe used in each story proves as another similarity but difference. Disney uses a glass slipper as *Cinderella*'s shoe worn to the ball, while Grimm used a gold slipper. Last but not least, each stepsister tries on the missing slipper in each tale but the turn of events differ immensely. The first sister trying on the shoe squeezes her foot in and it proceeds to pop off, according to Disney, while Grimm describe the sister cutting her big toe off in order to make her foot fit. Also, Grimm describes the second sister cutting her heel off to fit her foot in, the shoe filling up with blood, and Disney simply shows the shoe not fitting at all.

### *Characters*

Similarities and differences between the characters in Cinderella and Ashputtel exist as well. For example, the main character in each story remains a kind and beautiful young woman, who goes through an abusive lifestyle after the passing of her mother. The rest of the characters either share the same qualities or differ completely. First, the young girl has a mythical entity assist her in each story, the fairy godmother in Disney's version and the little bird or her mother's spirit in Grimm's tale. Although the magical entities differ from one another, both beings help the young girl get to the ball to meet the prince. Disney's fairy godmother exists as a cheerful old woman who sings and makes magic happen with her wand, in comparison to the bird who represents her mother's spirit. The bird sings as well but turns out violent in the end as it plucks out the eyes of the two stepsisters', leaving them blind.

The father character is completely opposite in each story. In Disney's Cinderella, her father loves and adores her until his untimely death. In contrast, Ashputtel's father in the Grimm story treats her just the same as the stepmother and stepsisters do. The father's character describes Ashputtel to the prince as, "no, there is only a little dirty Ashputtel here, the child of my first wife; I am sure she cannot be the bride." Finally, the character of Ashputtel's mother or dead mother appears only in the Grimms' tale, which differs from the tale of Cinderella. The mother and her grave play a huge role in the story of Ashputtel. Her gravesite serves as a place of peace for the young girl to cry and meet with the bird who grants all of her wishes. In Grimms' tale, the mother serves as a guardian angel to the young girl while in Disney's story she is mentioned only briefly in the beginning.

The stories of Cinderella and Ashputtel share common similarities and differences. Ashputtel remains the original framework of the tale and was written in a time in history where,

it seemed, there were no happy endings in fairytales. Cinderella's purpose is to uplift the spirits of children and to inspire dreams and wishes. These two stories compare and contrast to each other in more ways but the characters and storylines point out a few of them.

### **The Idea of Disney's Prince Charming**

Why are young girls so attracted to the Disney princes in the first place? What qualities do they possess? The Disney princes play a crucial role in how the Disney princess films are perceived by young girls. The prince character is usually the one who saves the day in the end of most Disney fairy tales (except "Beauty and the Beast"). The seven classic Disney princes are Prince Florian from "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs," Prince Charming from "Cinderella," Prince Phillip from "Beauty and the Beast," Prince Eric from "The Little Mermaid," Beast from "Beauty and the Beast," Aladdin from "Aladdin," and John Smith from "Pocahontas."

Amy Davis' "Handsome Heroes & Vile Villains" gives a certain view of the Disney princes and their role in the films. The book argues Disney princes don't get much of a role at all in the Disney princess films because they are only given miniscule parts. "The Prince, however, fulfills potentially a more liminal role - he is potentially a future king, but is not king yet - or else is more of a supporting player: he marries the heroine and lives happily ever after at her side" (Davis 148). The book goes through each prince and discussed the evolution of the Disney prince as they become a bigger part of the narrative as time goes on.

If women are so influenced by Disney princess films, the princes must have some type of role and show some sort of personality traits. What do all of the Disney princes have in common and what common qualities do they possess? All of the princes share

masculinity and save the princess at some point in the films. The Disney princes are portrayed as being polite, loving, gentlemen, honorable, driven when it comes to earning the love of the princess and, just perfect. Disney does not show the princes doing real-life male activities like leaving the toilet seat up or watching sports all day on Sundays. Women are shocked and reject these actions when faced with them because it's not what a Disney prince would do.

The study, "Gender Role Portrayal and the Disney Princesses," by Dawn Elizabeth England, Lara Descartes and Melissa A. Collier-Meek, explores the level of masculinity and femininity found in the Disney princes. The study found when it came to masculinity, the most frequent characteristic was the princes being physically strong and the least frequent characteristic was the princes being described as handsome. When it came to feminine characteristics found in the Disney princes, they were found to show emotion most frequently and tend to their physical appearances least frequently. With the highest masculine characteristic frequency code being 96 and the highest feminine characteristic frequency code being 152, the study found the Disney princes to carry more feminine characteristics than masculine. The study also found the first three Disney princes -- Prince Florian, Prince Charming and Prince Phillip -- and the next five Disney princes differed from each other. "The prince characters became more complex over time as well... earlier princes were rarely shown and displayed very masculine traits. (Collier-Meek, Descartes and England, 563).

**Table 2** Masculine characteristics portrayed by the princes and princesses in the Disney princess films

Characteristic	Frequency code	Percent of total behaviors
<b>Princes</b>		
Physically Strong	96	9.71*
Assertive	90	9.10
Athletic	82	8.29
Curious Towards Princess	55	5.56
Unemotional	29	2.93
Gives Advice	29	2.93
Inspires Fear	28	2.83
Brave	24	2.43
Leader	14	1.42
Performs Rescue	13	1.31
Intellectual Activity	11	1.11
Wants to Explore	10	1.01
Independent	7	.71
Described as Handsome	6	.61
<b>Princesses</b>		
Assertive	204	12.47
Athletic	88	5.38
Brave	60	3.67
Independent	49	3.00
Wants to Explore	44	2.69
Intellectual Activity	38	2.32
Physically Strong	35	2.14*
Gives Advice	17	1.04
Performs Rescue	13	.80
Unemotional	13	.80
Inspires Fear	3	.18
Leader	3	.18

\*significant at  $p < .05$

maintained relative numbers of rescues and being rescued, suggesting that the princes participated in more action during their limited involvement. The princes often performed the climactic rescue of the movie on their own,

**Table 3** Feminine characteristics portrayed by the princes and princesses in the Disney princess films

Characteristic	Frequency code	Percent of total behaviors
<b>Princes</b>		
Shows Emotion	152	15.37
Affectionate	107	1.82*
Fearful	39	3.94*
Physically Weak	33	3.34
Tentative	28	2.83
Sensitive	27	2.73
Helpful	24	2.43
Asks for Advice or Help	20	2.02
Troublesome	16	1.62
Gets Rescued	13	1.31
Submissive	12	1.21*
Victim	11	1.11
Nurturing	9	.91*
Tends to Physical Appearance	4	.40*
Ashamed	0	.00
Collapses Crying	0	.00*
<b>Princesses</b>		
Affectionate	273	16.70*
Fearful	141	8.62*
Troublesome	93	5.69
Tends to Physical Appearance	81	4.95*
Helpful	69	4.22
Nurturing	61	3.73*
Tentative	57	3.49
Submissive	48	2.94*
Sensitive	37	2.26
Collapses Crying	37	2.26*
Described as Pretty	37	2.26
Asks for Advice or Help	34	2.08
Physically Weak	33	2.02
Ashamed	27	1.65
Victim	23	1.41
Gets Rescued	17	1.04

**Table 1 and 2: Results from "Gender Role Portrayal and the Disney Princesses" Study**

- England, Dawn Elizabeth, Lara Descartes, and Melissa A. Collier-Meek. "Gender Role Portrayal and the Disney Princesses." *Sex Roles* 64.7-8 (2011): 555-67.

**RESEARCHABLE QUESTION**

In what ways can we determine how adult women, aged 20-37, who during their childhood viewed films featuring Disney princesses, have influenced their behavioral goals in terms of their own love narrative?



## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

### **Over Arching Construct**

Exploring and expanding on the influence Disney princesses have on women is the primary objective of this study. The motivation behind this study comes from the researcher's own personal experience with the Disney princesses and their influence on her love-life decisions. This study and research is important because it contributes to the existing literature on Disney and its influence on society. The knowledge acquired through this study should be shared because it can be used by parents to decide whether exposing their children to Disney princesses is a good idea or not. The data also assists in addressing the question as to whether the Disney princesses are truly good role models for young girls.

The three main ideas this research aims to cover are if the women remember watching the Disney princess love stories, what their love life is currently like and what they hope for it to be. The research also aims to discover if the viewing of Disney princess films as a child has influenced the decisions made throughout their love lives, whether consciously or unconsciously. A thorough analysis of each of the seven specified Disney princesses was conducted and commonalities within characters and narratives were sought out. The commonalities, values and story endings were compared and contrasted with the results gathered from the survey results.

This thesis' main research method will be a mixed-method survey containing 14 multiple-choice questions and one open-ended question. The survey subjects consisted of women between the ages of 20 and 37. Using the results from the survey's multiple-choice questions, the study will discover demographical data, which Disney princess films the participants have viewed, and their views on love and marriage. The open-ended question gives the participants a chance to thoroughly explain their personal experiences with the Disney princesses and their

personal views on what influence or impact the princesses have had on their lives. The results from the participants' surveys will assist in determining whether viewing the Disney princess films, as a child, influences adult women and their love narrative decisions.

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this study is to address the influence, both negative and positive, Disney princesses have on adult women and their own personal love narratives. In this study, previous and current literature relating to Disney and their influence on women will be reviewed and analyzed. In the quantitative phase of the study, survey data will be collected from 40 women through email to compare to past findings, in order to discover whether there is a correlation.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Bridget Whelan's study, "Power to the Princess: Disney and the Creation of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Princess Narrative," analyzed the power of Disney fairytales and the influence they have on children. The author's purpose aimed to explore the idea that Disney has taken over the princess narrative and Disney has had a significant effect on children and parents. Also, with the Disney princesses, Disney is trying to establish the mindset of what the female role is in society. Whelan also compares Disney's tales of princesses with other author's tales such as the Grimm brothers and Hodgson Burnett. Furthermore, the analysis discussed the differences in the first princesses in earlier fairytales before Disney came and changed the characteristics of a princess. Whelan found the answer to whether Disney's version of princess tales has too much of a powerful influence on children was both yes and no.

There have been a few studies and research conducted concerning the influence Disney and their characters have on society, parents, children, etc. A study by Meredith Cox, Erin Garrett and James A. Graham focused on the influence that death in Disney films has on children who view it. "Death in Disney Films: Implications For Children's Understanding of Death" aimed to find out what children's concept of death is and what they feel about death after having watched death scenes in Disney movies. Twenty-three different Disney death scenes were analyzed and broken into different coding categories such as Character Status, Depiction of Death and Death Status. The study found -- based on their research -- that Disney movies portray death as both a good and bad concept. Also, children's reactions to the deaths differed when it came to certain categories of the scenes and mainly depending on which characters were dying. The research conducted relates to this study because it addresses the question of Disney having any type of influence on children in general.

"Cinderella and Sleeping Beauty: Developing a Course on Disney and Fairytale Movies" is an article that focuses on a course created and taught by Jennifer M. Bonds-Raacke called "The Psychology of Disney and Fairytale Movies." The purpose of the course was to examine how Disney movies and fairytales influence children, how people assume any movie with "Disney" on it is safe for their children to watch and how Disney movies portray stereotypical gender roles. With her article, Bonds-Raacke aimed to examine how the course came together and the outcome of teaching it to college psychology students. Her students were the participants in her research and she concluded most students found the class influential and enlightening as they came to their own conclusions and realizations.

Lori Baker-Sperry conducted a study the purpose of which was to discover how fairytales, specifically Cinderella, influenced children when it comes to gender roles. Sperry

explained how children in elementary schools identified with Cinderella and perceived the feminine and masculine roles after the story was read to them in her article, "The Production of Meaning through Peer Interaction: Children and Walt Disney's Cinderella." The fairytale story caused the children to split into two gender groups of boys and girls. The boys perceived the story of Cinderella as the "girl book" and the research showed gender roles and traits are learned and developed through fairytales passed down through traditional lines. The article also addressed the romantic element in the story of Cinderella and how it plays a big part in what children expect from love, marriage and the gender roles in those categories.

One study evaluated two kindergarten classrooms made up of boys and how they portrayed Disney princesses in a play. One of the little boys, Anthony, drew a picture of Cinderella and what he envisioned when he thought of her. He drew Cinderella with big lips, cleavage and long hair that showed how these little boys see Disney princesses because Disney makes them "models of uber-femininity" and Disney draws them all that way. In her study, "The Boys Who Would Be Princesses: Playing with Gender Identity Intertexts in Disney Princess Transmedia," Karen E. Wohlwend said, "I argue that Disney Princess transmedia are identity texts that circulate a dense set of expectations for children as viewers, consumers, producers, and players, producing a need for nuanced understanding of the complex ways that young children take up, replay, or revise the gendered messages designed into their favourite media."

Dorothy L. Hurley also discusses the influence Disney princesses have on children in her work, "Seeing White: Children of Color and the Disney Fairytale Princess." This article explores how children learn about their race and how they are expected to act, because of what race they are, through hearing and viewing Disney fairytales. Hurley explains how fairytales play a key role in a child's self-image and beliefs in society. The article also talks about how children are

not exposed to multicultural literature and why teachers and parents need to ensure that the children aren't only seeing everything from a white perspective. Hurley also touches on how African American children find it harder to identify themselves because of Disney's lack of multi culture in films. The Disney versions of these fairytales depict a white-only society with whites being privileged and portraying black as evil.

One study used young Korean immigrant girls to explore the influence Disney movies have on young girls when it comes to marriage and gender roles. Lena Lee discusses how these young Korean girls portrayed marriage and the role of each gender after seeing marriages of Disney protagonists. "Understanding Gender through Disney's Marriages: A Study of Young Korean Immigrant Girls" discovered these young Korean girls realized Disney princesses had to give up more than the Disney Princes in order to make their marriages happen. An example used in the article was how Princess Ariel had to give up her life under the sea and defy her father to marry Prince Eric. Prince Eric wanted to marry the woman who saved his life but his only problem was he could not recall who she was; nothing had to be given up.

The article, "Disney's The Princess and the Frog: The Pride, the Pressure, and the Politics of Being a First," by Neal A. Lester covered research conducted on Disney and its racial element in the first black Disney princess. The researcher analyzed the Disney film, "The Princess and the Frog," because it features a black princess and a non-white prince. A quote from a Disney scholar, Kathy Merlock, said, "Disney's influence [on children is] an almost inescapable part of growing up." The researcher asked participants to close their eyes and envision Cinderella in their minds for 10 seconds. When the participants opened their eyes, he asked them what they saw when they pictured her and he used the participants' responses to come to the conclusion Cinderella is seen as a young beautiful white girl to most people. Through his research, Lester

analyzes real-life royalty such as Princess Diana and Grace Kelly in relation to what being a princess is seen as.

An article posted by the *Huffington Post* by Lauren Duca discussed a different type of influence or attention that Disney princesses have on the public. The article, "Disney Princess Posters Promote Sexual Abuse Awareness," is about an artist/activist and her effort to promote sexual abuse awareness using the Disney princesses. Artist Saint Hoax has created a small series of disturbing art posters featuring a few of the Disney princesses kissing their fathers, seemingly against their will. The article offers a few samples of the posters: one with Jasmine, one with Aurora, and one with Ariel, all kissing their fathers. Each poster has a statement about sexual abuse being most commonly seen between family members. Hoax's inspiration for this project came from her recent discovery of her best friend being raped at the age of 7 by her own father. This touched Hoax so much she decided something needed to be done to make people aware and for victims to rise up and speak out. Her reasoning behind choosing to use the Disney princesses is because she believes her targeted audiences recognize and identify with the princesses and it will catch their attention. This article aids this study's research because it reveals and acknowledges the presence of influence between young girls, women and the Disney princesses.

Faith Dickens addresses the feminist outlook on the fairytale of "Beauty and the Beast" and explains her reasoning behind her theory in "The Guy with the Problem: Reform Narrative in Disney's Beauty and the Beast." The main purpose of this article was to prove "Beauty and the Beast" was more about the journey and growth of a male than it was about females. Dickens believes the fairytale of "Beauty and the Beast" surrounds the idea that males can go through a virtuous change with the help of a virtuous woman. The author comes to this certain conclusion on her own after reviewing the literature and she takes readers into a deep analysis of her ideas

and thoughts. Dickens labels “Beauty and the Beast” a reform narrative when she says, “such as Samuel Richardson’s novel ‘Pamela,’ features a male figure who is transformed through the presence of a virtuous female. Along with the similarity plot, “Beauty and the Beast” adopts the reform narratives’ exclusive focus on male change, its propagation of female innocence, and its idealization of domestic space and domestic virtue.”

Bruno Bettelheim gives his analytical perspective of Disney’s fairytales in his book, “The Use of Enchantment.” “Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs” is one of the tales in his work. In Bettelheim’s analysis on Snow White, he begins by comparing the beginning of various versions of the tale and comes to the conclusion that the world-known tale hides the Oedipal difficulties and leaves it up to the reader’s imagination. The other versions give the Oedipal difficulties up to the audience right away as they show the relationship between the father and Snow White and the stepmother and Snow White. Bettelheim says the stepmother or the man’s wife does not like Snow White because the man loves her, he doesn’t know her and she is a surrogate daughter. It seems the relationship between the young Snow White and the man is a sexual bond between a daughter and father figure and this is what the famous version, “Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs,” is trying to hide.

Bettelheim also explains how Snow White’s time of growth and knowing herself is seen in the years she spends living with the dwarfs, working through her troubles. Another point Bettelheim makes about the tale is that it shows the stages of Snow White’s life much more clearly than other tales do. Snow White is tossed out of her childhood when her stepmother deserts her in the forest. She’s in her adolescence when she is with the dwarfs and shows this when she acts so naively when tempted by the poisonous apple. When the prince reawakens Snow White, she is reborn into adulthood and knowing herself. Bettelheim sums up the

symbolism and meanings in this story with many different explanations; these are just a few examples.

In Bettelheim's analysis of "Sleeping Beauty," he really highlights the significance of the beginning of puberty for boys and girls. As an attempt to connect fairytale stories to the real world, Bettelheim describes the deep slumber as a time to get to know one's self after starting puberty. He also says that after the youth has taken that time or "slumber" to get to know themselves, they feel stronger and they feel they must go out and prove themselves by taking on an adventure, which is how they prove their womanhood or manhood and become themselves. Bettelheim also speaks about the notion that, in fairytales, the male and females seem to be different and find themselves in different ways. But according to Bettelheim's theory, the male and female characters show the two ways that self-discovery can be achieved, whether the person is male or female. One of the biggest and most significant examples of symbolism that Bettelheim points out is the moment when Aurora (Sleeping Beauty) pricks her finger on the spinning wheel; he says this moment symbolizes the beginning of the girl's menstrual cycle.

In Ruth B. Bottigheimer's book, "Grimms' Bad Girls & Bold Boys: The Moral & Social Vision of the Tales," fairytales and their influence on or relationship with society is discussed in the second chapter. Bottigheimer says the relationship between fairytales and society depends on whether one believes that fairytales are a reflection upon society, an influence on its readers/listeners or a mix of both. By reviewing fairytales, we can see the issues they face are issues that past societies have encountered but the story changes based on the storyteller's perception. Bottigheimer speaks about fairytales and society when she says, "fairytales have frequently been assessed uncritically and sometimes mistakenly as a reliable source of evidence for intrafamilial and social relationships, daily habits, nutritional levels, and psychological



realities.”

“The Cinderella Test,” by Vera Sonja Maass, discusses how women are influenced by Disney princesses into servitude and stereotypes. The book asks, “Would you really want the shoe to fit?” in reference to Cinderella. Maass examines growing up watching and listening to fairytales, which aided in which role models young girls looked up to. Fairytales influenced how women saw themselves and learned how they should act, according to the fairytales. The book is an exhaustive examination of which behaviors are translated in adult women after having watched the fairytale princesses. Maass believes that fairytales are used to show women where they belong in society and how women should act according to the tales. Fairytales such as Cinderella are programming women to conform starting at the young age when they start to encounter these princess fairytales.

Children’s responses and réactions to literature are explored in the book, “Journeying: Children Responding to Literature.” In Chapter 14, “The Princess Learns a Lesson: Three Studies of Theme in Individual and Interactive Contexts” by Susan Lehr, discusses how children identify themes and respond to realistic fiction and folktales. Lehr says reading interactive contexts to children helps them come up with their own meanings and respond to other children with their own ideas. Other research and studies, which focus on children creating their own meanings during story time, are mentioned in this chapter. Different age groups were analyzed, such as 5-year-olds, and researchers used an interactive classroom so children could read stories, share them with their peers and relate them to real-life experiences. This activity showed how children developed what the stories meant on their own while reading or hearing the tale.

The article, “Gender Role Portrayal and the Disney Princesses,” by Dawn Elizabeth, Lara

Descartes and Melissa A. Collier-Meek, follows a study about the gender roles in the Disney Princess fairytales. The researchers broke the nine Disney princess movies into three categories and examined each category and era of films by comparing and contrasting them. The three groups of movies were called “earlier movies,” “middle movies” and “most current films.” The researchers aimed to explore the different gender portrayals in each film within each era, and find out if and how they have changed over time. Examples of a film in each group are “Cinderella” for the earlier movies, “The Little Mermaid” for the middle movies and “The Princess and the Frog” as the most current film. The study used a coding procedure to determine how masculine and feminine each prince and princess is in each film and the data was put into a table. Their results ultimately showed the earlier movies portrayed more traditional gender roles than both the middle movies and the most current film.

Andra, the only name given as a writer for Pixel77.com, wrote an article, “Modern Disney Characters” about the artist Jose Rodolfo Loaiza Ontiveros and his art. The article features a quote by Hollywood producer Joss Whedon: “People used to laugh that academics would study Disney movies. There’s nothing more important for academics to study because they shape the minds of our children possibly more than any single thing.” The article outlines the history of Disney and its enormous influence in our current society. Ontiveros’ work features different Disney characters in some real-life scenarios, with other famous characters (such as ‘Nightmare On Elm Street’s’ Freddy Kruger) and dressed in modern-day clothing. The article gives the artist’s background and actually features pieces of his work. Andra writes about the artist’s reason for creating his work, “Modern Disney Characters,” when she writes, “He tries to measure his viewers’ tolerance levels by showing beloved characters in dark, sometimes gritty and realistic situations, giving his works real shock value, and exploring the general theme of

'loss of innocence'."

The "Encyclopedia of American Studies" featured an article by Karal Ann Marling titled "Disney, Walt." The article gave a brief outline on Walt Disney and his journey to his successful career with Disney productions all the way to the end of his life. Marling highlights pivotal moments in Disney's career and the setbacks he encountered along the way. The article begins with Disney's personal story featuring his birth, birthplace and when he began drawing in his youth. Marling mentioned the start of Disney's company next along with how his famous character Mickey Mouse came about. Disney's first films were discussed and most of his next animated works were touched on as well. Marling really focused on Disney as a person, his artistic habits when it came to his film and the causes of the audience's love of his films.

"Handsome Heroes & Vile Villains," by Amy M. Davis, discusses the male characters featured in Disney's animated films. Chapter 3, titled "Handsome Princes," goes over most of the Disney princes who end up with the Disney princesses such as Prince Eric from "The Little Mermaid," the beast from "Beauty and the Beast," and Prince Charming from "Cinderella." Other Disney princes, who aren't featured in Disney princess films, are also analyzed in this chapter such as, Emperor Kuzko from "The Emperor's New Groove." Within chapter 3, which serves as the main chapter aiding this research, the Disney princes are analyzed based on characteristics and the roles they played in the films. Davis believes Disney does not care about the princes in their stories and the princes' roles are very small and limited compared to the princesses. Davis argues her point of view by discussing certain parts in each film that involve the prince.

Peggy Orenstein wrote a book titled, "Cinderella Ate My Daughter," in which she

discusses how and why young girls are becoming sexualized by the new “girlie-girl” culture. Orenstein touches on the rise of “girl power” from the 1990s and today’s current society. Orenstein says parents can try and steer their daughters away from the girlie culture of pink and princesses but the challenge of telling your little girls “no,” when they ask for a princess doll, is overwhelming. Orenstein asks, “Being a princess is just make-believe, after all; eventually they grow out of it. Or do they? Does playing Cinderella shield girls from early sexualization - or prime them for it? Could today’s little princess become tomorrow’s sexting teen?” One of the many goals of “Cinderella Ate My Daughter” is to make parents aware of these questions and to aid them in deciding if they would like to try and steer their daughters away from this culture.

Ramin Setoodeh and Jennie Yabroff, writers for *Newsweek*, wrote an article about the influence of Disney princesses on women called “Princess Power.” The article discusses women and their dream weddings being influenced by princesses: from “bridezilla” to “princesszilla.” Lindsey Timberman is the feature bride of the article and her experience is highlighted and told throughout the article. Setoodeh and Yabroff talk about Timberman’s choice of wedding theme and wedding dress being “Beauty and the Beast.” Her dress is yellow, as Belle’s is, and her wedding flowers are red roses which are the main flowers from the film.

“Happily-ever-after tale: Timberman’s fiancé, Mark, won’t dress like the Beast, or even the prince trapped inside him. ‘I think he’s starting to get a little offended,’ says Timberman. ‘But he’s a sport. Our first trip to DisneyWorld, I was having my picture taken with Cinderella. She asked me if I had a prince with me, and I said, ‘I do!’”

“Princess Power” also discusses how Disney is using the princesses to get women to buy more things to look like and be more princess-like.

Another relevant study is Ai Itakura's thesis, "The Disney Princess in 'Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs,' 'The Little Mermaid,' and 'The Princess and the Frog': A Comparative Film Analysis." Itakura's work analyzes the three princess films in an attempt to find out if the Disney princesses have changed over time. The princesses Snow White, Ariel and Tiana are compared and contrasted in this thesis and three categories are used: meeting the prince, the relationship between the heroines and their father, and the villains. The thesis also gives an overview of princesses being assessed and discusses their characteristics and personalities. Itakura and his work helped determine the Disney princesses have changed over time and they are still the most important part of the narrative.

FlickeringMyth.com's writer, who goes by the name of ADMIN, wrote a series of articles about the progression of Disney princesses called, "The Evolving Princess: The Progressive Feminism in Disney Films: Part Two – Snow White" and "The Evolving Princess: The Progressive Feminism in Disney Films: Part Two – Beauty and the Beast." Both articles discuss how the Disney princesses have changed with society. The character of Snow White behaved like women in her era in 1937 and was submissive with no real expectations in life other than finding a prince to marry. Snow White lacked any level of ambition and was only known for her beauty. Belle's character in "Beauty and the Beast," in 1991, showed progression and evolution in the Disney princess role. Belle was more independent and was given more of a voice because of the current societal roles for women. Though Belle was a big step towards the feminist movement, the article suggests the progression isn't significant enough because her beauty is still her main asset.

Cassandra Stover discusses Disney princesses, where they come from and where they are headed, in terms of femininity, in her article, "Damsels and Heroines: The Conundrum of the

Post-Feminist Disney Princess.” Stover analyzes the history of the Disney princesses and how they started off dressing and acting. The early Disney princesses were said to be “Voiceless Beauties” as they were known mostly for their submissive beauty and not their voice or actions. The article then discusses the post-feminist princesses and what effect they had on society’s young girls. Stover states, “This sense of powerful spirit coupled with a longing for change positions these new Disney princesses as a representation of the pre-feminist woman, constrained by society through marriage pressure, royal status, or even having fins instead of legs.” After discussing how the princesses have evolved in post-feminism era, Stover also asks the question if these changes are any better for young girls or if it is all still the same.

“From Snow White to Tangled: Gender and Genre Fiction in Disney’s ‘Princess’ Animations,” a thesis by Iris Alda Isleifsdottir, discusses how the Disney princesses still hold underlying patriarchal values. Isleifsdottir reviews the Disney princess films and links them back to the pre-feminist ideals Disney began them with when Snow White first made her debut. The study also does a segment on “Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs” vs. “Tangled” as the author aims to discover commonalities between the two. After examining the film, Isleifsdottir found that even though the tales of Snow White and Rapunzel have many differences, they still share the same commonalities as all of the other Disney princess films. All of the Disney princess films are formed around the idea that a woman’s life begins when a man walks into it, looks are most important and women are evil. Isleifsdottir states, “It is apparent that ‘Tangled’ still follows the same model of how these princess movies should be like, the model that Walt Disney made himself.”

Libe Garcia Zarranz wrote “Diswomen Strike Back? The Evolution of Disney’s *Femmes* in the 1990s”, which examines the evolution of Disney princesses. Zarranz focused on the

evolution of four specific princesses: Ariel, Belle, Jasmine and Pocahontas and one other female Disney character: Esmeralda. The study examines the time period Zarranz calls "Disney Decade," which is the first years of the 1990s and uses other terms such as "Distory" and "Diswomen." Zarranz explains her use of the term "diswomen" when she says, "I propose to coin the term 'Diswomen' to refer to those female characters who trespass the boundaries of Disney's traditional Manichean definition of femininity, becoming multifaceted women who are successfully represented, consistent with a contemporary discourse on gender and sexuality." The study came to the conclusion Disney has stuck to the same patriarchal values and unsuccessful feminist representations. Even with the same underlying patriarchal concepts, Zarranz believes the five female Disney characters are worth discussing and are beginning to move into a different direction.

Seok-Cheol Shin analyzes "Beauty and the Beast" and its relation to feminism in, "The Creativity and Redemption of Feminism: A Theological Analysis of 'Beauty and the Beast'." The study discusses "Beauty and the Beast" in relation to the Bible and modern culture, during which Shin proclaims the stories, "Cinderella," "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs," and "Sleeping Beauty," are male-centered. Shin uses religion and feminist theory in order to reveal the feministic concepts found in "Beauty and the Beast." Shin speaks about the religious approach, "I have tried to raise the value of women by applying the inner nature of women to the creativity of God based on freedom and the redemption of God based on love." As Shin analyzes the story and history of "Beauty and the Beast," the character of Belle is examined and is said to use her beauty in the story because of "male selfish desire" (Shin, 2). Shin also discusses how "Beauty and the Beast" symbolizes love and redemption, with the love between Belle and the Beast and the Beast redeeming himself at the end and becoming human again.

Kjirsten Speer debates whether Disney princesses are good role models or not for young girls in her work titled, "Disney Princesses: Who is Your Child's Role Model?" Speer begins by telling a story of a young girl's first experience at DisneyWorld through her parents' eyes, "She looks up at you and says, 'Can we meet Cinderella? Please? Please? She's my favorite princess!' You may not have realized it then, but Cinderella was her role model. She looked up to her and many other princesses for advice on makeup, clothes, and men." Speer then goes into the evolution of the Disney princesses and does a comparison of Snow White and "The Princess and the Frog's" Tiana. The body types of the princesses are the main difference instantly recognized, where Snow White has a more realistic slim body type and Tiana is given an unrealistic skinny body frame. Speer concludes the Disney princesses are not good role models due to the unrealistic body types shown to young girls and the way the media portrays them. Nonetheless, Disney princesses remain influential to young girls.

Theresa Tonn's work, "Disney's Influence on Females Perception of Gender and Love," aims to contribute to current and future research involving influence, effects and impact of Disney. The study used a questionnaire given to female college students asking about their perceptions of love and gender after having watched romantic Disney films. From the participants' responses and current research, Tonn found, "Disney films create unrealistic perceptions of love and gender" (Tonn, ii). The study also examines the impact of television viewing on children, gender-role development and learning models amongst other topics. Tonn quotes S. Golden, author of "Slaying the Mermaid: Women and the Culture of Sacrifice,"

"[T]he sound of mothers' voice as she read to me from... 'The Little Mermaid' and 'The Snow Queen.' These emotionally wrenching tales, to which I raptly listened and to which I was powerfully drawn, instilled in me a longing to be overwhelmed by romantic passion



and led me in my teens and early twenties to attempt to emulate these self-sacrificing heroines” (Golden, 1998, p. 185).

“The Princess and the Magic Kingdom: Beyond Nostalgia, the Function of the Disney Princess” written by Rebecca-Anne C. Rozario, examines the role of the Disney princess in their relationships to bad boys, fathers, femme fatales, and her position in the kingdom. Rozario briefly discusses the evolution of the Disney princess when she states, “Walt’s princesses scrubbed and waited with boundless cheerful energy, knowing that these chores of their peasant past would be taken from them and they would again waltz into a regal future.” The study finds the role of Disney princesses in the kingdom is more powerful and important than viewers would believe. Rozario refers to Disney as “Team Disney” and credits them for giving the princess a role of disruption where she is actively taking part. The kingdom is still primarily run by the king, but the princess has been given a piece of the power and a say in what happens. “The Disney kingdom may still seem a man’s world, but it is a man’s world dependent on a princess. (Rozario, 57).

## METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the research was to discover if viewing the Disney princess films, as a child, has influenced adult women aged 20-37 and their personal choices when it comes to their love lives. Quantitative methods will be used in this research. A survey will be given to 40 participants who agree to take part in the study in order to gather input from women with the specified age bracket of 20-37 years old. A survey will be most beneficial to the research for the study because it will aid in collecting data that cannot be observed. The survey results have a good chance of gathering the participants’ true opinions and feelings towards the subject matter

because their identities will remain anonymous and their answers will be kept confidential. The questions will aim to collect versatile and non-generic results without using leading questions.

Subjects will be sent an informed consent form requiring their signature, before they are provided the survey, which they will sign, date and return before completing the survey. The subjects will be chosen at random and sent an email or message on Facebook asking for their participation, explaining the study, and the purpose of the study. The criteria for inclusion in the study is women aged 20-37 years. The women had to have been children when the Disney films were released. For example, if the subject is 24 years old, they were born in 1990 or 1989 and would have been a child when the film, "The Little Mermaid," came out in 1996.

The survey contains 14 multiple-choice questions and one open-ended question at the end. Only three demographic questions will be asked which will ensure that each participant meets the criteria of the study. Subjects will be asked their gender, age and marital status in the survey. Eleven of the multiple-choice questions will focus on the Disney princesses and each participant's perception of love. The final question asks the subjects to expand their answer to the research question as to whether viewing the Disney princess films has influenced them and in what way. This open-ended question will be the most essential part of the survey because the thoughts and experiences of the subjects will be exposed, if answered truthfully.

**DISTRIBUTED SURVEY**

*Survey*

- 1) Your age is? Circle one.    18-21    22-25    26-29    30-33    34-37
- 2) Are you a male or a female?
  - a) M
  - b) F
- 3) What is your status?
  - a) Married
  - b) Divorced
  - c) Single
  - d) Never been married
- 4) If you answered b, c, or d for #3, do you plan on getting married in the future?
  - a) Yes
  - b) No
- 5) Which answer best defines what "happily ever after" means to you?
  - a) Successful Career
  - b) Marriage and Kids
  - c) Happiness
  - d) Love
  - e) All of the above
- 6) Do you believe in love at first sight?
  - a) Yes
  - b) No

7) Are fairy tale endings possible in reality?

a) Yes

b) No

8) Did you view the Disney princess films when you were a child?

a) Yes

b) No

9) Which Disney princess stories would you most like your love life to imitate?

a) Snow White

b) Cinderella

c) Sleeping Beauty (Aurora)

d) The Little Mermaid (Ariel)

e) Beauty and the Beast (Belle)

f) Aladdin (Princess Jasmine)

g) Pocahontas

10) Do you believe that the Disney princesses convey a positive message or image for young girls?

a) Yes

b) No

11) Would you, or do you, show your daughters the Disney princess films?

a) Yes

b) No

12) Would you rather be rescued or be the rescuer?

- a) Rescued
- b) Rescuer

13) What Disney princess films have you viewed?

- a) Cinderella
- b) Snow White
- c) Aladdin (Princess Jasmine)
- d) The Little Mermaid (Ariel)
- e) Pocahontas
- f) Sleeping Beauty (Aurora)
- g) The Princess and the Frog (Tiana)
- h) Mulan
- i) Beauty and the Beast (Belle)
- j) Brave (Merida)

14) Do any of these things come to mind when you think of marriage? Circle all that apply.

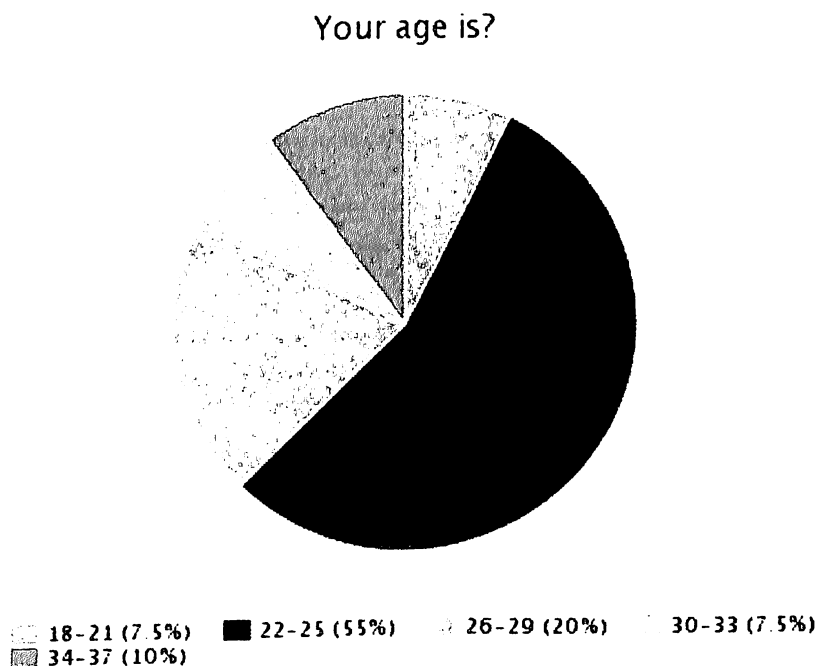
- |               |               |
|---------------|---------------|
| a) Happiness  | f) Infidelity |
| b) Love       | g) Abuse      |
| c) Friendship | h) Jealousy   |
| d) Trust      | i) Divorce    |
| e) Murder     |               |



## DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

I found women who watched Disney princess films as a child are influenced when it comes to their standards and expectations of their own love narratives. For the use of this study I conducted and analyzed a mixed methods survey made up of 14 multiple-choice questions and one open-ended question. I surveyed 40 women who were aged between 20-37 with no particular level of education, profession or economic status. For example, if the subject is 24 years old, they were born in 1989 or 1990 and would have been a child (6 or 7 years old) when the film, “The Little Mermaid” came out in 1996. The multiple-choice questions asked the participants about their perspective on love, marriage and the Disney princesses. Only three demographic questions were asked (age, gender and marital status) in order to assure the participants fit in the specific criteria the study calls for. The following graphs show the demographic result from those questions:

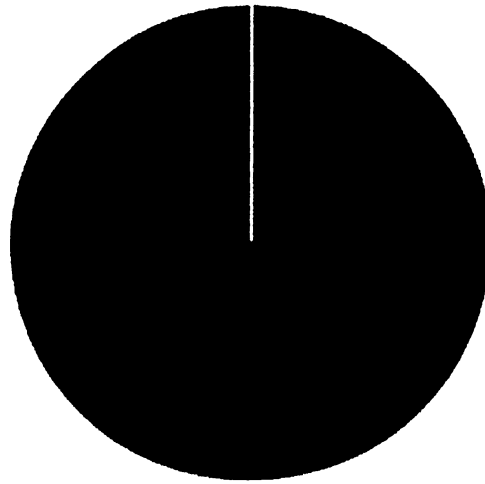
**Graph 1: Ages of the 40 participants of the survey**





**Graph 2: Gender of the 40 participants of the survey**

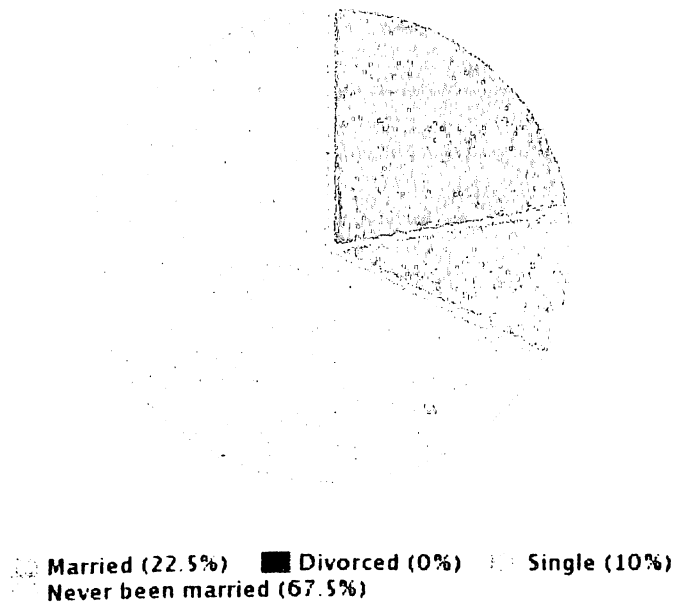
Are you a Male or Female?



M (0%) F (100%)

**Graph 3: Marital status of the participants of the survey**

What is your status?

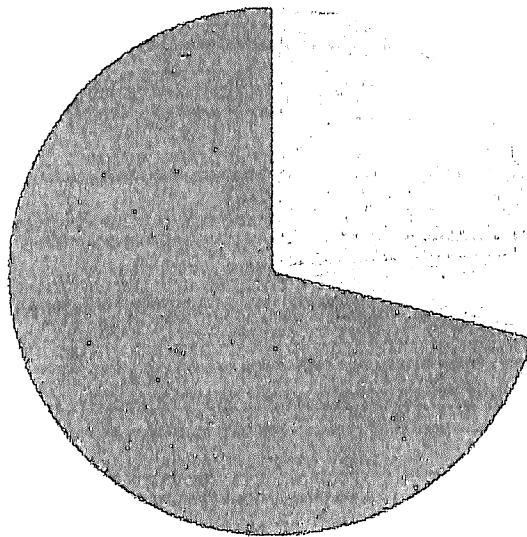


The fourth question on the survey asked the participants who answered they were not currently married if they planned on being married in the future. Of the 31 unmarried

participants, 83.87 percent answered they plan on getting married and 16.13 percent answered they did not plan on getting married. Question five asked the participants which of the five answers given best defined what "happily ever after" meant to them. Of the 40 participants, 25 percent chose happiness, 5 percent chose love and 72.5 percent chose all of the above which included successful career, marriage and kids, happiness and love. The following graph shows what the participants believe "happily ever after" means:

**Graph 4: Participants' answer to question five of the survey**

Which answer best defines what "happily ever after" means to you?



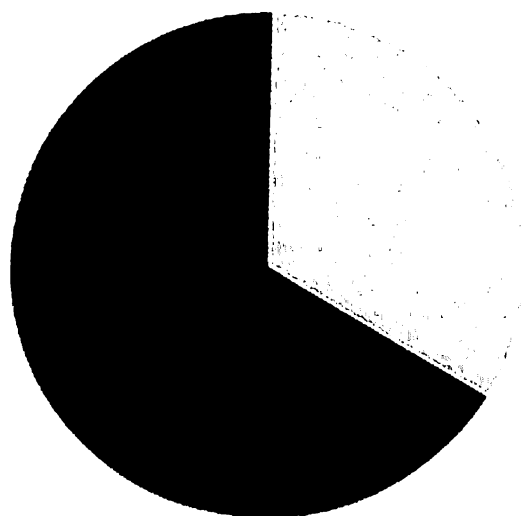
Successful Career (0%)
  Marriage and Kids (0%)
  Happiness (25%)
  Love (5%)
  All of the above (72.5%)

Question six of the survey asks participants if they believe in love at first sight and, of the 40 participants, 33.3 percent answered they do believe in love at first sight and 66.7 percent answered they do not believe in love at first sight. Survey question number seven asked if the participants if fairy tale endings are possible in reality and out of the 40 responses, 60 percent

said fairytale endings are possible and 40 percent answered fairy tale endings are not possible in reality. The following tables show the participants' responses to questions six and seven:

**Graph 5: Participants' responses to believing in love at first sight**

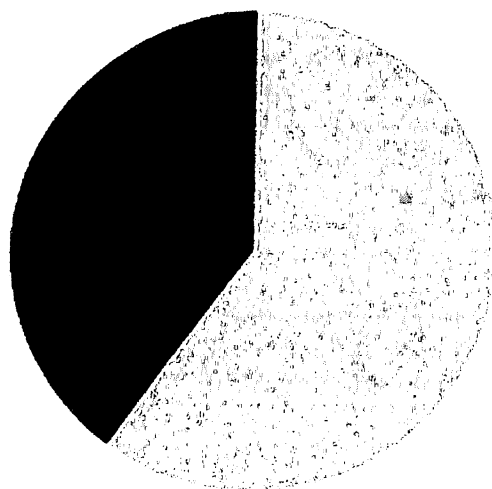
Do you believe in love at first sight?



Yes (33.33%) No (66.67%)

**Graph 6: Participants' responses to if fairytale endings are possible in reality**

Are fairy tale endings possible in reality?

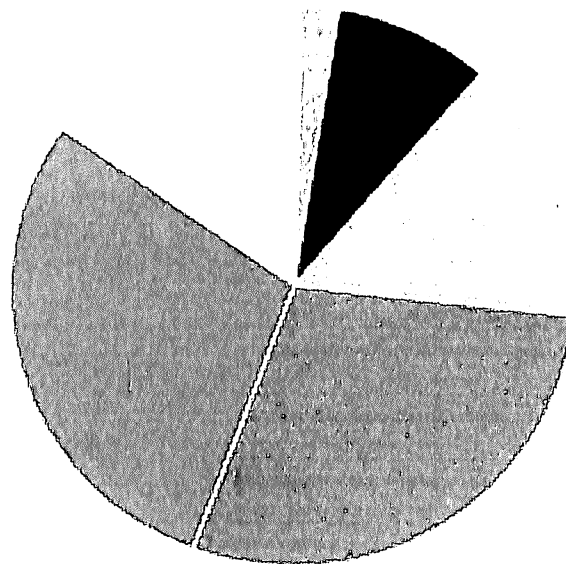


Yes (60%) No (40%)

In question eight the women were asked if they had viewed the Disney princess films when they were children and all 40 of the participants answered yes. The participants were asked, in question nine, which Disney princess films they would most like their love lives to imitate and the choices were “Snow White,” “Cinderella,” “Sleeping Beauty,” “The Little Mermaid,” “Beauty and the Beast,” “Aladdin” and “Pocahontas.” The 40 participants’ results of question nine can be found in the following graph:

**Graph 6: Participants’ choices of which princess story they would like their love lives to imitate**

Which Disney princess stories would you most like your love life to imitate?

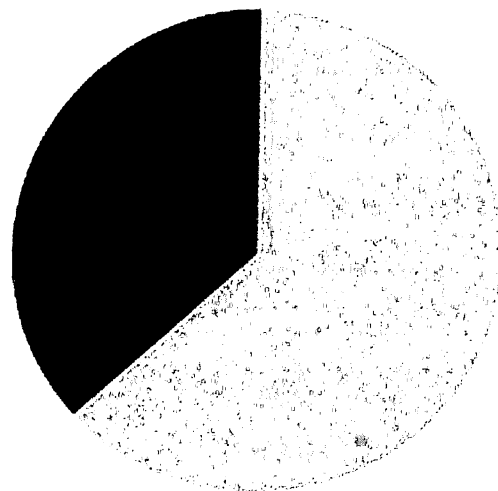


Snow White (2.56%)
  Cinderella (10.26%)
  Sleeping Beauty (Aurora) (0%)
  The Little Mermaid (Ariel) (17.95%)
  Beauty and the Beast (Belle) (33.33%)
  Aladdin (Jasmine) (33.33%)
  Pocahontas (17.95%)

Participants were asked if they believe the Disney princesses convey a positive message or image for young girls and, of the 40 responses, 63.2 percent said they do convey a positive message and 36.8 percent said they don't convey a positive message. Question 11 asked participants if they would or if they do allow their daughters to view the Disney princess films. Of the 40 surveyed participants, 95 percent answered they would allow their daughters to view them and 5 percent answered they wouldn't or don't show their daughters the Disney princess films. I found it interesting how more than half of the participants believe the Disney princesses are not positive role models for young girls but, an astounding 95 percent of them would or still show them to their daughters. The following graphs show the results of questions 10 and 11:

**Graph 7: Participants' responses to whether Disney princesses convey a positive message for young girls**

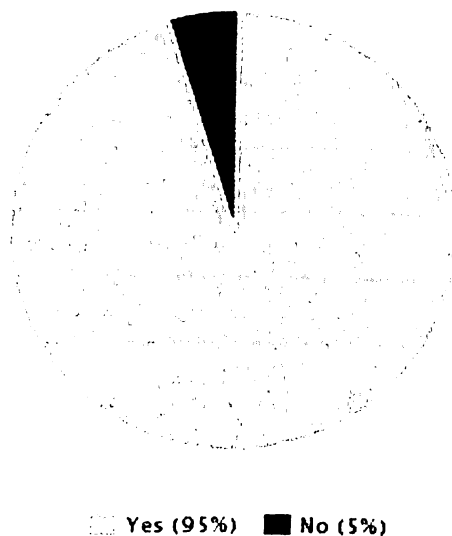
Do you believe that the Disney princesses convey a positive message or image for young girls?



Yes (63.16%) No (36.84%)

**Graph 8: Participants' responses to whether they would or do show their daughters Disney princess films**

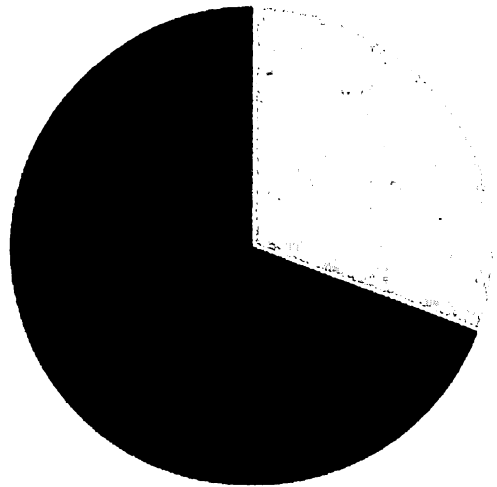
Would you, or do you, show your daughters the Disney princess films?



Question 12 asks participants if they would rather be rescued or be the rescuer when it comes to their love narrative. The results found out of the 40 participants, 30.8 percent would rather be rescued and 69.2 percent would rather be the rescuer. The participants were asked, in question 13, which Disney princess films they have seen and the choices were "Snow White," "Cinderella," "Sleeping Beauty," "The Little Mermaid," "Beauty and the Beast," "Aladdin," "Pocahontas," "Mulan," "The Princess and the Frog," and "Brave." It is interesting how the majority of the participants chose to be the rescuer rather than be rescued but, only 33.33 percent of them chose "Beauty and the Beast" as the story they would most like their love lives to imitate. Belle is the Disney princess most seen as being the rescuer because she rescued the beast and he didn't rescue her. This interesting correlation should be taken into account perhaps in future research. The following graphs show the results from question 12 and question 13:

**Graph 9: Participants' responses to being rescued or the rescuer**

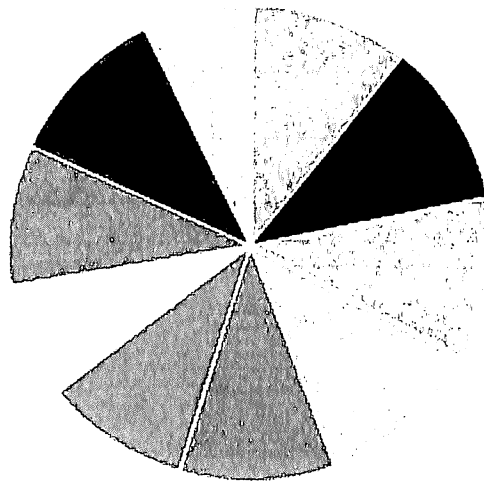
Would you rather be rescued or be the rescuer?



Rescued (30.77%) Rescuer (69.23%)

**Graph 10: Participants' responses of what Disney princess films they have viewed**

What Disney princess films have you viewed?

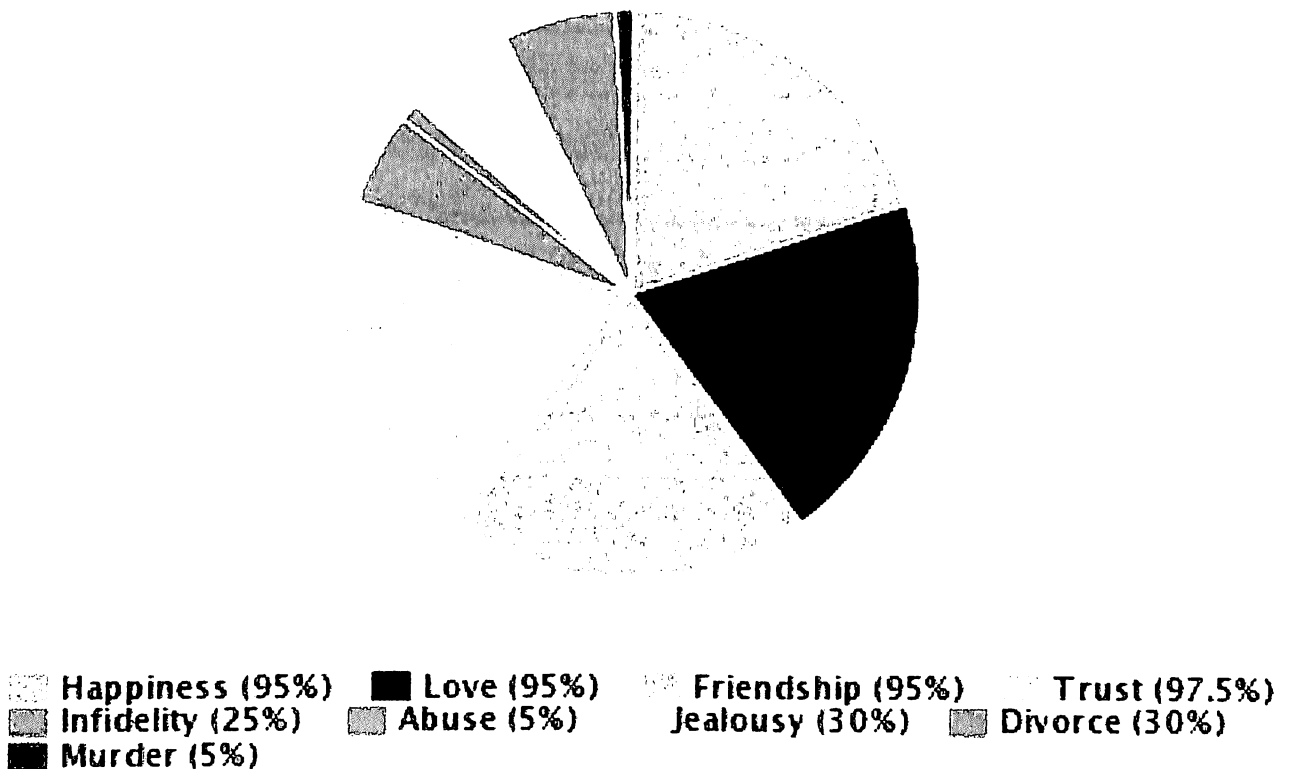


Cinderella (95%)    Snow White (97.5%)    Aladdin (Jasmine) (100%)  
 The Little Mermaid (Ariel) (100%)    Pocahontas (92.5%)  
 Sleeping Beauty (Aurora) (87.5%)    The Princess and the Frog (Tiana) (70%)  
 Mulan (85%)    Beauty and the Beast (Belle) (95%)    Brave (Merida) (65%)

The final multiple-choice question, number 14, asks participants if any of the terms listed are words they think of when they think of marriage. The answer choices were: Happiness, Love, Friendship, Trust, Infidelity, Abuse, Jealousy, Divorce and Murder. The following graph shows the results of what the women thought of when they thought of marriage:

**Graph 11: Participants' responses to what they thought of when they thought of marriage**

Do any of these things come to mind when you think of marriage? Circle all that apply.



The 15<sup>th</sup> question, the open-ended question, asked the participants what impact, if any, did watching the Disney princess films have on them and why. Out of the 40 surveyed participants, 36 reported an impact or some level of impact and four reported the Disney princess



films had no impact on them or their lives. The actual written or typed-out responses from the participants can be found in the appendices section.

## SIGNIFICANCE

The significance of this research is it contributes to the current research on Disney and the influence it has on society. This research is also significant because it gives women some perspective, when it comes to dating, and why they have made some of the decisions they have made in terms of choosing what they expect out of a mate. This study also aids in discovering whether the Disney princesses are positive role models for young girls and assists parents in deciding if exposing their children to these princesses is what they want to do.

“ ‘Fairytale, they do come true.’ This may seem harmless, but it does have tremendous effects on kids. Children will believe practically anything you tell them. If children believe this subtopic, then they will believe that all of the underlying messages are correct, and thus imitate them as close as possible” (Speer, 8).

“From premature sexualization to the risk of depression to rising rates of narcissism, the potential negative impact of this new girlie-girl culture is undeniable — yet armed with awareness and recognition, parents can effectively counterbalance its influence in their daughters’ lives” (“Cinderella Ate My Daughter,” front flap).

“Dangling the possibility — or perhaps even probability — of catching a prince for a husband would turn many a young girl into a docile and hardworking person. The promised reward is just too great to pass up. Transmitting repeatedly those fairy tales to little girls in the form of bedtime stories is likely to increase the influence on the young brain while it sleeps and dreams. Self-

sacrificing, hardworking, and patient women can be an asset to any determined and ambitious man” (Maass, 27).

## CONCLUSION

Disney and the Disney princesses have been and will continue to be a big part of American society ever since Walt Disney started it all. Influence between Disney and the American society is apparently present and many different examples can be used to show this. Because of the obvious influence Disney has on society, it is necessary to take a closer look into how the influence is happening and what can be done to prevent or stop it. Researching the influence Disney princess films have on women is an important step towards learning more about Disney and its influence. The Disney characters - princes and princesses - play a major role in why young girls are so attracted and attached to these films in the first place, as well as the characters’ stories. Therefore, researching where the characters have come from, where they are headed for in the future and the impact of media on society is crucial.

In conclusion, the Disney princesses do have an influence on women who viewed the films as a child. A survey of 40 women aged 20-37 and extensive literature review was conducted in order to come to this conclusion. The majority of this thesis’ findings came from the open-ended responses given from the participants. The findings of this study show the Disney princesses impacted 36 out of the 40 women surveyed. Some of the women who were impacted by the Disney princesses were impacted in a minute way while others were impacted in a significant way. This data will be an important contribution to the existing research because it shows firsthand responses and explanations from the surveyed women. This is significant because it relates to children and their development into their adult years. Parents and families

can use this research to learn more about what their children are viewing and who their role models really are. Perhaps, with this study, families will be able to determine if Disney princesses are positive for their young girls to view and look up to or if they should try their best to deter their girls away from them.

This study will also assist young women in the dating and love world by, perhaps, explaining why they choose the mates they do. I have found young women in the dating world hold up these "Prince Charming" expectations and wish to emulate all of the princess and prince qualities in their relationships. Disney is setting young women up for failure when they show these princesses being rescued by their prince charming, having perfect physiques, and living happily ever after. If young women set their standards based on these Disney princess films, they are most likely going to be let down if they refuse to bend their standards because all of those "Prince Charming" qualities cannot be found in one person in reality. If a young woman never strays away from the standards she has made based on what she has viewed from these Disney princess films, they may not ever find love because it won't be the perfect love they are looking for.

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To my dearest nephew Mykal; my sisters Deja and Jasmine; my brother Jermaine; and my uncle Clifford; I love you all and I thank you all for teaching me and influencing me more than you'll ever know.

To all of my friends, who I've known since Kirby Middle School and Wagner High School days, I adore all of you and I thank you for being such great friends, being there and keeping our friendship alive.

Antwoneous, my sweetheart, thank you for sticking with me and for putting up with my challenging ways. I love you.

To Dr. Greenberg, Mr. Mercer and the rest of the faculty who played a part in making my academic career and this thesis a success, I would like to bow and give you a round of applause. I thank you and appreciate your hard work, patience and kindness throughout my time at University of the Incarnate Word.

Submitted: Dec. 2, 2014

## APPENDICES

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  - **Graph 3: Martial status’ of the participants of the survey**
  - **Graph 4: Participants’ answer to question five of the survey**
  - **Graph 5: Participants’ responses to believing in love at first sight**
  - **Graph 6: Participants’ responses to if fairy tale endings are possible in reality**
- **Graph 7: Participants’ responses to whether Disney princesses convey a positive message for young girls**
- **Graph 8: Participants’ responses to whether they would or do show their daughters Disney princess films**
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  - **Graph 10: Participants’ responses of what Disney princess films they have viewed**
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  - **Disney Film Lessons Photo**



Consent Form

Fall 2014

My name is Brittany Minor and I am conducting research to obtain my Masters Degree in Communication Arts at the University of the Incarnate Word in the United States of America.

The topic of my research is: **Happily Ever After: Is Disney Setting us up? (A study on the Disney Princesses and their influence on young women and their personal love narratives)**

\*If you agree to this research, you will be asked a series of short questions/you will be asked to complete a survey.

\*Your answers will remain anonymous and will be treated confidentially.

\*You will be provided a copy of this form if you so desire.

Your answers will be kept securely locked/stored in a private place; no one will have access to this but the researcher (or me).

---

I give permission to use my words or portions of transcribed word as part of Brittany Minor's Masters thesis research.

Your information (name) will be coded in such a way that you will not be identifiable to readers of the thesis

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

**Participant Survey Open-ended Responses**

15) What impact did watching the Disney princess films have on you and why?

It showed me what love ~~would~~ ~~not~~ should look like.

A woman does not always need to be rescued by her knight and shining armor, she can fight for herself.

I am an independent person who wants to be loved. Mulan showed me that life.

15) What impact did watching the Disney princess films have on you and why?

As a child I thought I would grow up and find my prince, ~~or~~ really I was older than a child I was like 15 and I expected to find my one true love, who would be tall, blond and have a chiseled jaw.

I always felt like a princess and ~~I~~ I ~~felt~~ felt like I deserved to be treated like a princess.

At the same time I grew up thinking I needed to be a good princess, like Belle or Jasmine or ~~Pocahontas~~ Pocahontas, not ~~like~~ Ariel, she was a brat.

I still have to remind myself that I don't need to live in a castle and live like a princess. But I get sad when my hair doesn't look like a ~~Disney princess's~~ Disney princess's would when I'm dressed up for a formal event.







Number 15:

"When I was younger, I always thought that the "happily ever after" thing was real. A part of me still believes that because I was able to be apart of my grandparent's 50th wedding anniversary several years ago. That experience showed me that it is possible for a "fairy tale" and real love exists. One reason that the other part of me doesn't believe in a "happily ever after" is because my parents got a divorce when I was only in the 2nd grade. I grew up watching these Disney princess films so to experience my parents becoming separated and then getting a divorce while watching movies about girls being rescued and falling in love didn't match. That is the major impact that I would say that these films had on me. Plus, going back to the whole "rescue" thing, majority of the princesses were rescued. In my opinion, that showed that it was almost impossible for a woman to do things on her own or to even find love without a man rescuing her. A woman can also rescue a man and I would honestly rather be the rescuer than be rescued. This happens to people in everyday life, the Disney princess movies only portrayed one side of the whole "I finally found love" thing which is why I somewhat believe that these movies also conveyed a somewhat negative image as well. I grew up to realize that every woman doesn't need a man to find her in order to believe or experience true love. It is more of a want more than a need."

15) What impact did watching the Disney princess films have on you and why?

Growing up I loved watching Disney films! They are childlike ~~but~~ <sup>and</sup> really gave me an ideal image of what I hoped life would be like. To find love - a prince - and have a magical kiss!

My favorite moments were watching these films with my mom. She loves Disney and to this day we travel to Disneyland & DisneyWorld. It is my favorite place to be! And I love the princesses! To this day (36 years old) ~~I~~ my mom and I pay a lot of money to dine with the princesses. It is awesome! Go to <https://disneyworld.disney.go.com/dining/grand-fovidian-resort-and-spa/1900-park-fare/>

Growing up I learned that love and the concept of love changed. My days went from "when I grow up I want to be a mother and a daughter" to "I want to be a professor - a teacher so that ~~my~~ my kids and husband can have a parent around."



15) What impact did watching the Disney princess films have on you and why?

Watching Disney princess films gave me a positive image of what love should look like from a young age. Even though I did not continue to watch the films into my adulthood, I do feel like the influence of the films helped develop my overall expectation on how I desired to be treated.

15) What impact did watching the Disney princess films have on you and why?

Confusing @ first since it's not what it seems. It's not fair that it's not what it looks like. It's hard for young girls to understand, but coming from a good family I was guided in the right direction. I like how Frozen is diff from the old ones and it will be interesting what new ones will consist of. look like.

15) What impact did watching the Disney princess films have on you and why?

Disney Princess films really didn't have a huge impact on me. I loved to watch them because they were cute movies. But I was more of a super hero, I can save myself type of girl than a Disney Princess who was always helpless, somewhat ditzy, and waiting for a man to save her. Those films taught me that they were the girls I didn't want to be.

I don't feel that the Disney princess films had any major impact on my life or my outlook on love. The only thing I can say I got from the films is my love for "dress up" and make believe. I remember as a kid always wanting to dress up like Belle from Beauty & the Beast.





15) What impact did watching the Disney princess films have on you and why?

They were awesome! I loved them and I feel that they set standards for me and what I hope to find in a man. I have a boyfriend now and he treats me well, opens doors, serves me, etc. and I believe that I expected to be treated like a princess because of viewing Disney princess movies. I would show them to my daughters because they help set a good standard of self-respect.

15) What impact did watching the Disney princess films have on you and why?

I wish I really wanted to watch the princess movies when I was really young. My mother bought alternative Black & African movies and books for me. I got to watch Little Mermaid, Aladdin, and Pocahontas as a kid but that's about it. I'm glad my mother limited the amount of white beauty standards and ideals that I was shown. I think allowing me to appreciate people that looked like me was very important to my self-esteem and overall positive growth. So, the princesses didn't put much of an influence on my life.

15) What impact did watching the Disney princess films have on you and why?

Reminded me that despite the challenges the world faces upon you, and no matter the amount of evil that your enemies might have towards you, anything is possible to achieve. May that be finding "true love" or beating the odds to live another day (from villains).

Most importantly, a girl can achieve anything - not just ~~male~~ male characters.

15) What impact did watching the Disney princess films have on you and why?

It gives you the hope when you're younger that true love can exist. It also gives you hope when you are older that there's always another chance for love. Also that evil does exist, but if you're ethical, trusting and truthful the favor could end up in your favor.

15) What impact did watching the Disney princess films have on you and why?

It did its job. At a young age  
Disney movies are there to jump  
start your dreams and aspirations.  
As you grow older they may not  
seem as easy but my goals  
now are not the same as they  
were when I was 9. Disney, however,  
was my stepping stone.

15) What impact did watching the Disney princess films have on you and why?

The movies show you the easy parts of relationships they don't show you the fights, disagreements, frustrations, distance & miscommunication that happen to people who love each other.

A happily ever after can't be made in less than 2 hours.

These movies also show the women as the damsel in distress. Sometimes you do not get saved and you actually have to save him.

I love Mulan! It shows you how sometimes you have to prove you can do anything & even girls can do better @ a "man's job".





15) What impact did watching the Disney princess films have on you and why?

At such an impressionable age, you believe in the "idea" that love is supposed to be a fairytale and the ending is a happily ever after. However, as you grow up, you learn that such things are farfetched. The Disney princess films, showed me that love doesn't need to be this perfect fairytale and that everyone has a different idea about happily ever after. On a more positive note, the princess' did teach me valuable lessons: Stand up for your beliefs, (Pocahontas), Defy stereotypes (Mulan), see the good in all people (Belle) and some things require sacrifices (Ariel).

15) What impact did watching the Disney princess films have on you and why?

Watching Disney princess films growing up made me hopeful of one day meeting a princess and being more "princess-like" myself. I feel like princess movies made being a little girl fun! In fact, my five month old daughter has two princess costumes <sup>(Snow White & Cinderella)</sup> this year for Halloween. I think princess movies are fictitious, ~~and~~ fun, ~~meaningless~~ and wildly entertaining, made for young children to enjoy.

15) What impact did watching the Disney princess films have on you and why?

No impact. I view them as fantasy. They don't portray women as they really are. The only reason I like Belle from Beauty & the Beast is because she is a smart woman. :)

15) What impact did watching the Disney princess films have on you and why?

I feel the impacts it had was that in a way it gives hope for love and happiness. At the same time they show infidelity and rules to different societies. They all have there own meanings to every movie, but the way you perceive each one depends on how it will impact you throughout life.

15) What impact did watching the Disney princess films have on you and why?

The impact that the Disney princesses have on me is that it gives women unnecessary expectations on what could happen in reality vs what really should be happening. It also ~~raises~~ raises expectations that women hold on men.

15) What impact did watching the Disney princess films have on you and why?

HMM... WELL, IT HELPED TO KEEP ME  
POSITIVE WHEN THINGS WERE GOING WRONG,  
ESPECIALLY IN RELATIONSHIPS. THERE IS  
A PRINCE CHARMING OUT THERE, YOU JUST  
NEED TO FIND HIM. ALSO, THINGS AREN'T  
ALWAYS PERFECT YOU HAVE TO WORK ON  
THEM (RELATIONSHIPS WITH IN-LAWS, FRIENDS,  
WORK, SITUATIONS), OH, AND THERE IS  
A HAPPY ENDING, IF YOU WORK ON IT!

15) What impact did watching the Disney princess films have on you and why?

The impact that the movies had on me was  
just happiness and hope for love one day.  
which i have found, but know now we all  
cant have magical carpets or fairy god mothers  
to save us.

15) What impact did watching the Disney princess films have on you and why?

It impacted me by being friendly with others. It also taught how treat my future spouse nicely and with respect.



15) What impact did watching the Disney princess films have on you and why?

As a kid, my favorite Disney princess movie was The Little Mermaid because I liked her singing and I thought she was brave, independent and adventurous looking back, these were qualities I admired in women growing up and those which I tried to emulate. I never really felt impacted by the way the Disney princesses looked or their love lives, just their individual qualities - personality traits - that I found inspiring.

15) What impact did watching the Disney princess films have on you and why?

The impact the Disney princess movies have had on me is always fight for what you believe in, and always follow your heart. I believe these two things have had an impact on my life because so many people wanted to have a say in who I married but it has always been my decision and where I feel my heart truly belongs. Everyone is always going to try and sway you one way or another but if you don't agree with it then fight for what you do agree with and what you ultimately want. 😊

15) What impact did watching the Disney princess films have on you and why?

It had a positive impact on life. As a kid I believed that love existed like the films showed it. I never doubted that kind of affection in real life and still think that things can happen like that today.

15) What impact did watching the Disney princess films have on you and why?

Hope , Because there  
is some one other there  
for everyone!

15) What impact did watching the Disney princess films have on you and why?

**Watching the Disney princess films have made me have hope of finding love someday. I think it's difficult when watching them not to take them too literal. If we teach young girls that watching the Disney princess movies are okay, but real life doesn't always work out like the movies. If we do this don't feel there would be too much of a negative impact.**

15) What impact did watching the Disney princess films have on you and why?

As a child they made me "Dream Big"!

I knew they were only films and life wasn't as it was shown in the films.

Snow White taught me that no one should judge you or treat you as if <sup>if</sup> their superior than you no matter what sex/age you are. Cinderella taught me that not all families are like mine and there are evil people.

Beauty & the Beast taught me that looks don't matter and reading is important. Aladdin taught me that society doesn't define you and we are free to make our own choices.

Pocahontas taught me that we are all equal and never to call someone a "savage". The Little Mermaid taught me

that we should ~~not~~ appreciate what we look like and not trust everyone. Brave taught me to appreciate

my parents. Mulan taught me that your gender doesn't define what you can and can't do. ~~Soon~~ Growing up I watched

a variety of films however, personally, I don't believe they had a negative impact on me. My parents taught me what love was and should be.

15) What impact did watching the Disney princess films have on you and why?

Disney Princess Films show that  
if you love someone and truly try in the  
end it is always happy, because that  
is how they always end in the movies.

15) What impact did watching the Disney princess films have on you and why?

That love is possible, but you must be the damsel in distress in order to find your "true love".






15) What impact did watching the Disney princess films have on you and why?

They have impacted me in setting unrealistic standards in a man, and feeling ~~guilty~~ guilty for choosing a career over love.

~~no~~

15) What impact did watching the Disney princess films have on you and why?

At the time, I probably didn't watch these movies to see how they made me feel, but watched for entertainment. These princess movies made me want to be a special girl in someone's life and be treated like one. Every movie, I noticed, it seemed like there was always a "problem" or something stopping what was called "true love" from happening. Looking back, the women always had to prove themselves or "fight" to be with the one they loved. But what happened after happily ever after was achieved? They never really told you what else to expect after you have gotten what you worked so hard for. The women, almost always, never showed their true selves in my opinion. I knew I wanted to be a different kind of woman & wanted to be ~~fig~~ the one fought over not the one fighting for someone else. So if these movies have taught me anything, is to do completely opposite of what they did ~~if that~~ 

**Table 1 and 2: Results from "Gender Role Portrayal and the Disney Princesses" Study**

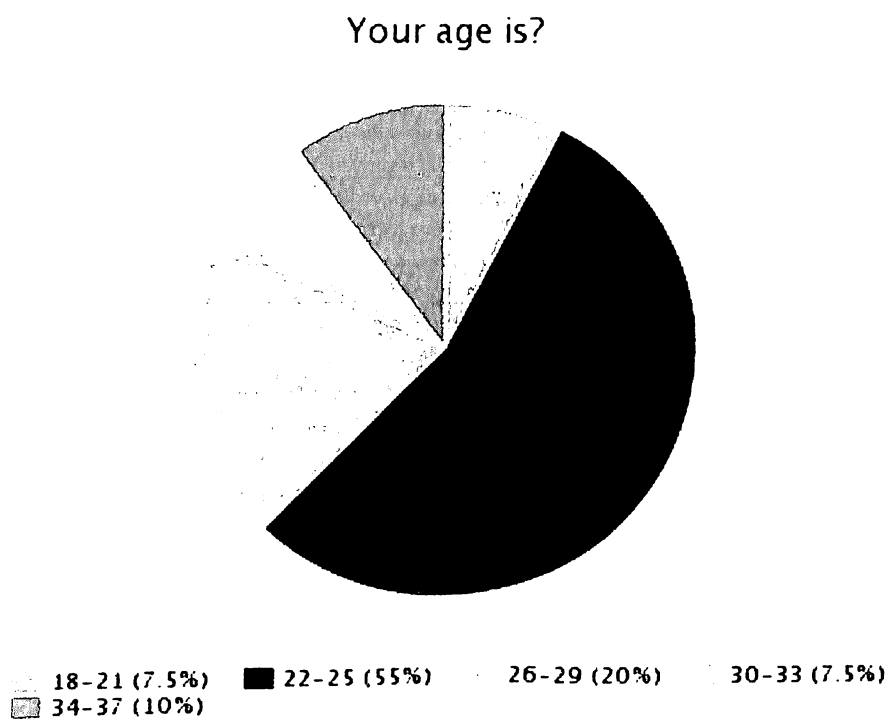
Table 2 Masculine characteristics portrayed by the princes and princesses in the Disney princess films			Table 3 Feminine characteristics portrayed by the princes and princesses in the Disney princess films		
Characteristic	Frequency code	Percent of total behaviors	Characteristic	Frequency code	Percent of total behaviors
<b>Princes</b>			<b>Princes</b>		
Physically Strong	96	9.71*	Shows Emotion	152	15.37
Assertive	90	9.10	Affectionate	107	1.82*
Athletic	82	8.29	Fearful	39	3.94*
Curious Towards Princess	55	5.56	Physically Weak	33	3.34
Unemotional	29	2.93	Tentative	28	2.83
Gives Advice	29	2.93	Sensitive	27	2.73
Inspires Fear	28	2.83	Helpful	24	2.43
Brave	24	2.43	Asks for Advice or Help	20	2.02
Leader	14	1.42	Troublesome	16	1.62
Performs Rescue	13	1.31	Gets Rescued	13	1.31
Intellectual Activity	11	1.11	Submissive	12	1.21*
Wants to Explore	10	1.01	Victim	11	1.11
Independent	7	.71	Nurturing	9	.91*
Described as Handsome	6	.61	Tends to Physical Appearance	4	.40*
<b>Princesses</b>			<b>Princesses</b>		
Assertive	204	12.47	Ashamed	0	.00
Athletic	88	5.38	Collapses Crying	0	.00*
Brave	60	3.67	<b>Princesses</b>		
Independent	49	3.00	Affectionate	273	16.70*
Wants to Explore	44	2.69	Fearful	141	8.62*
Intellectual Activity	38	2.32	Troublesome	93	5.69
Physically Strong	35	2.14*	Tends to Physical Appearance	81	4.95*
Gives Advice	17	1.04	Helpful	69	4.22
Performs Rescue	13	.80	Nurturing	61	3.73*
Unemotional	13	.80	Tentative	57	3.49
Inspires Fear	3	.18	Submissive	48	2.94*
Leader	3	.18	Sensitive	37	2.26
			Collapses Crying	37	2.26*
			Described as Pretty	37	2.26
			Asks for Advice or Help	34	2.08
			Physically Weak	33	2.02
			Ashamed	27	1.65
			Victim	23	1.41
			Gets Rescued	17	1.04

\*significant at  $p < .05$

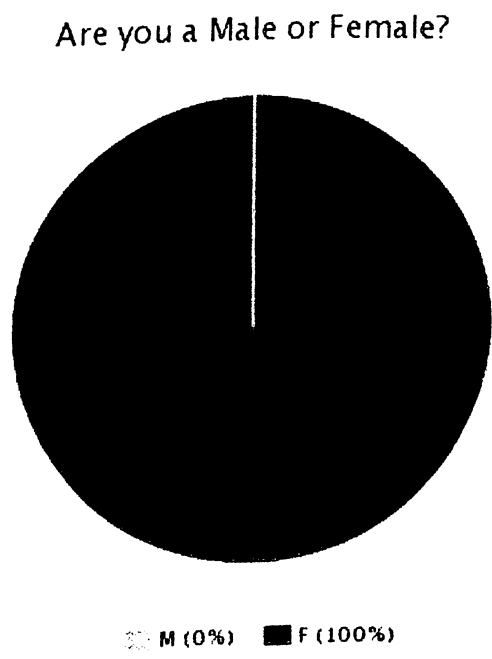
maintained relative numbers of rescues and being rescued, suggesting that the princes participated in more action during their limited involvement. The princes often performed the climactic rescue of the movie on their own,

\* England, Dawn Elizabeth, Lara Descartes, and Melissa A. Collier-Meek. "Gender Role Portrayal and the Disney Princesses." *Sex Roles* 64.7-8 (2011): 555-67.

**Graph 1: Ages of the 40 participants of the survey**

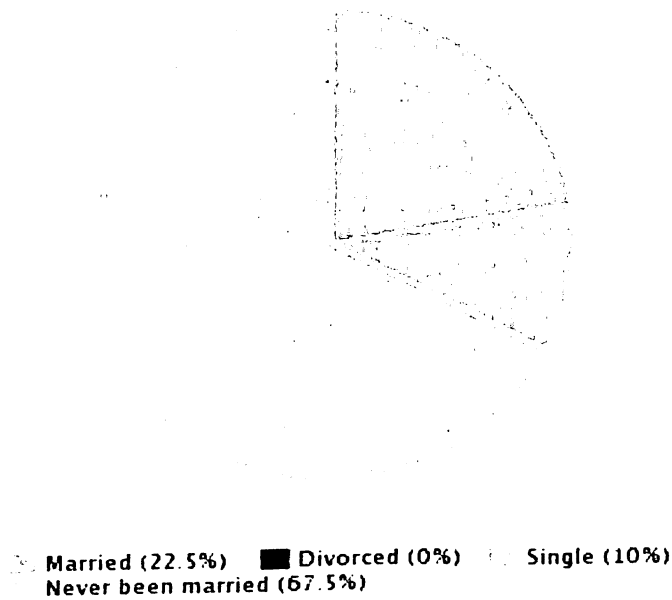


**Graph 2: Gender of the 40 participants of the survey**



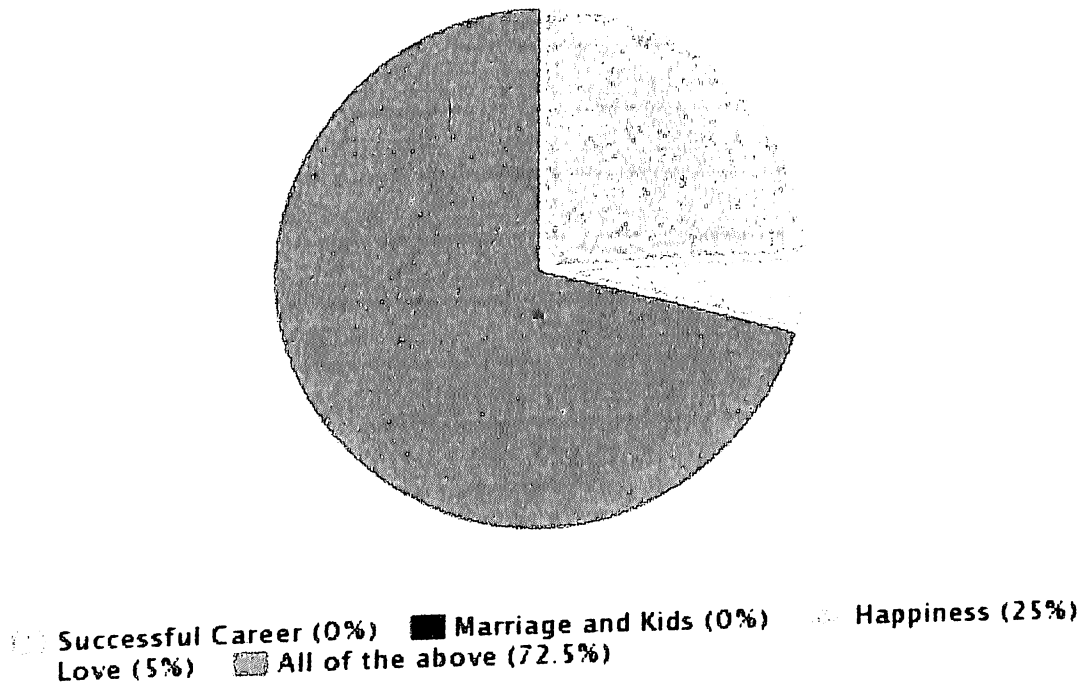
**Graph 3: Martial status' of the participants of the survey**

What is your status?



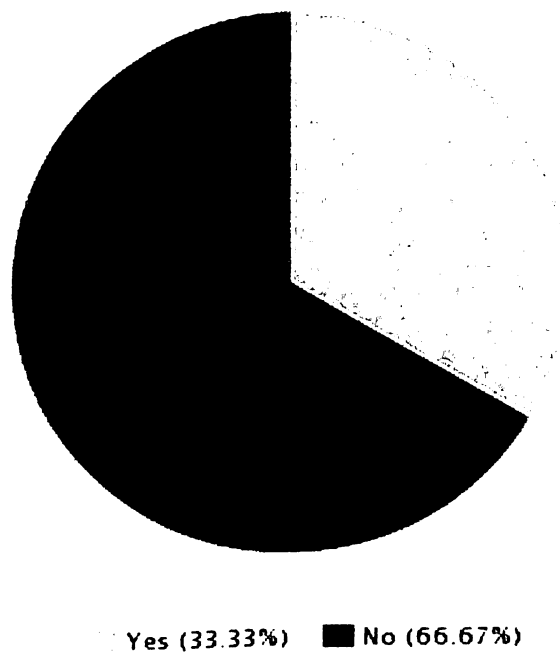
**Graph 4: Participants' answer to question five of the survey**

Which answer best defines what "happily ever after" means to you?



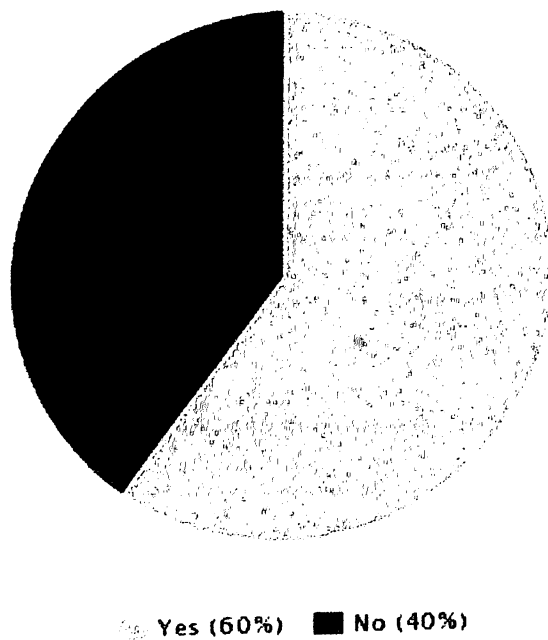
**Graph 5: Participants' responses to believing in love at first sight**

Do you believe in love at first sight?



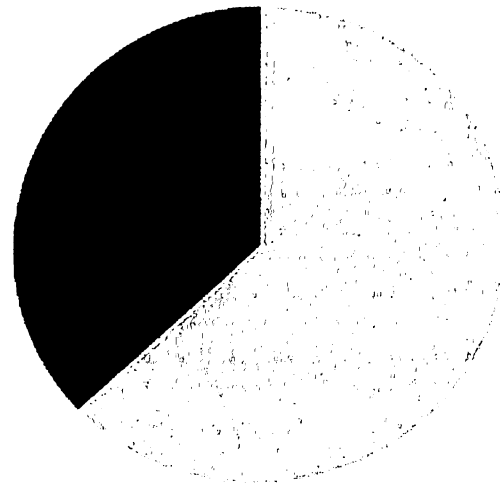
**Graph 6: Participants' responses to if fairy tale endings are possible in reality**

Are fairy tale endings possible in reality?



**Graph 7: Participants' responses to whether Disney princesses convey a positive message for young girls**

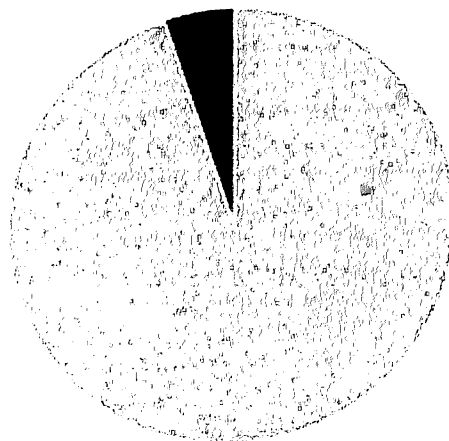
Do you believe that the Disney princesses convey a positive message or image for young girls?



Yes (63.16%) No (36.84%)

**Graph 8: Participants' responses to whether they would or do show their daughters Disney princess films**

Would you, or do you, show your daughters the Disney princess films?

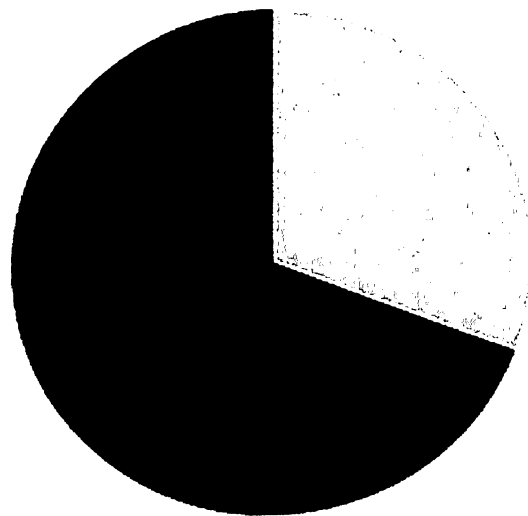


Yes (95%) No (5%)



**Graph 9: Participants' responses to being rescued or the rescuer**

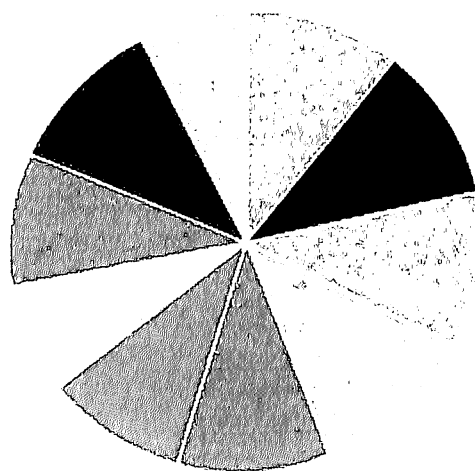
Would you rather be rescued or be the rescuer?



Rescued (30.77%) Rescuer (69.23%)

**Graph 10: Participants' responses of what Disney princess films they have viewed**

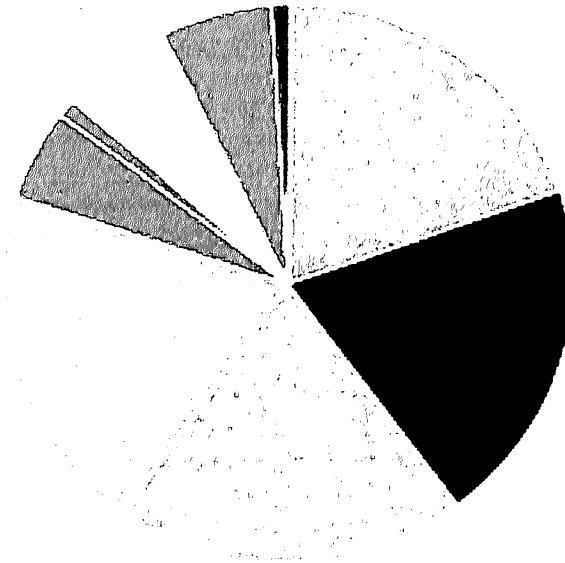
What Disney princess films have you viewed?



Cinderella (95%)    Snow White (97.5%)    Aladdin (Jasmine) (100%)  
 The Little Mermaid (Ariel) (100%)    Pocahontas (92.5%)  
 Sleeping Beauty (Aurora) (87.5%)    The Princess and the Frog (Tiana) (70%)  
 Mulan (85%)    Beauty and the Beast (Belle) (95%)    Brave (Merida) (65%)

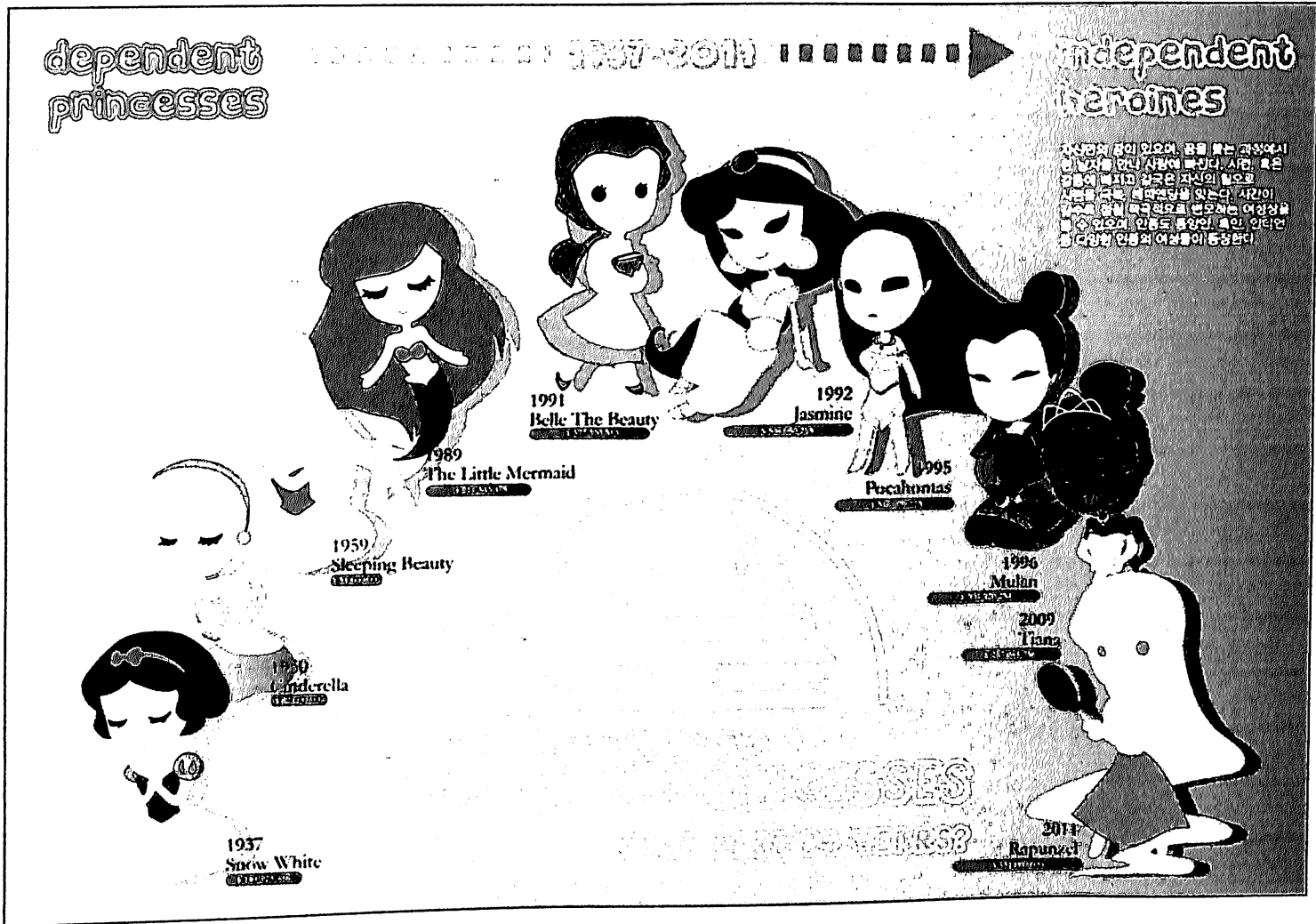
**Graph 11: Participants' responses to what they thought of when they thought of marriage**

Do any of these things come to mind when you think of marriage? Circle all that apply.



- |                  |            |                  |               |
|------------------|------------|------------------|---------------|
| Happiness (95%)  | Love (95%) | Friendship (95%) | Trust (97.5%) |
| Infidelity (25%) | Abuse (5%) | Jealousy (30%)   | Divorce (30%) |
| Murder (5%)      |            |                  |               |

# Evolution of Disney Princesses



시간의 힘이 있으며, 꿈을 보는 과정에서  
인생을 얻기 시작했다. 시간 혹은  
꿈을 잃고 싶은 자신의 힘으로  
시간을 극복, 현실의 꿈을 얻는다. 시간이  
가면, 점점 더 현실로 변모하는 여정상을  
보실 수 있으며, 인생의 통찰이, 혹은, 인간  
의 다양성, 연금의 여정을 이 동승한다.

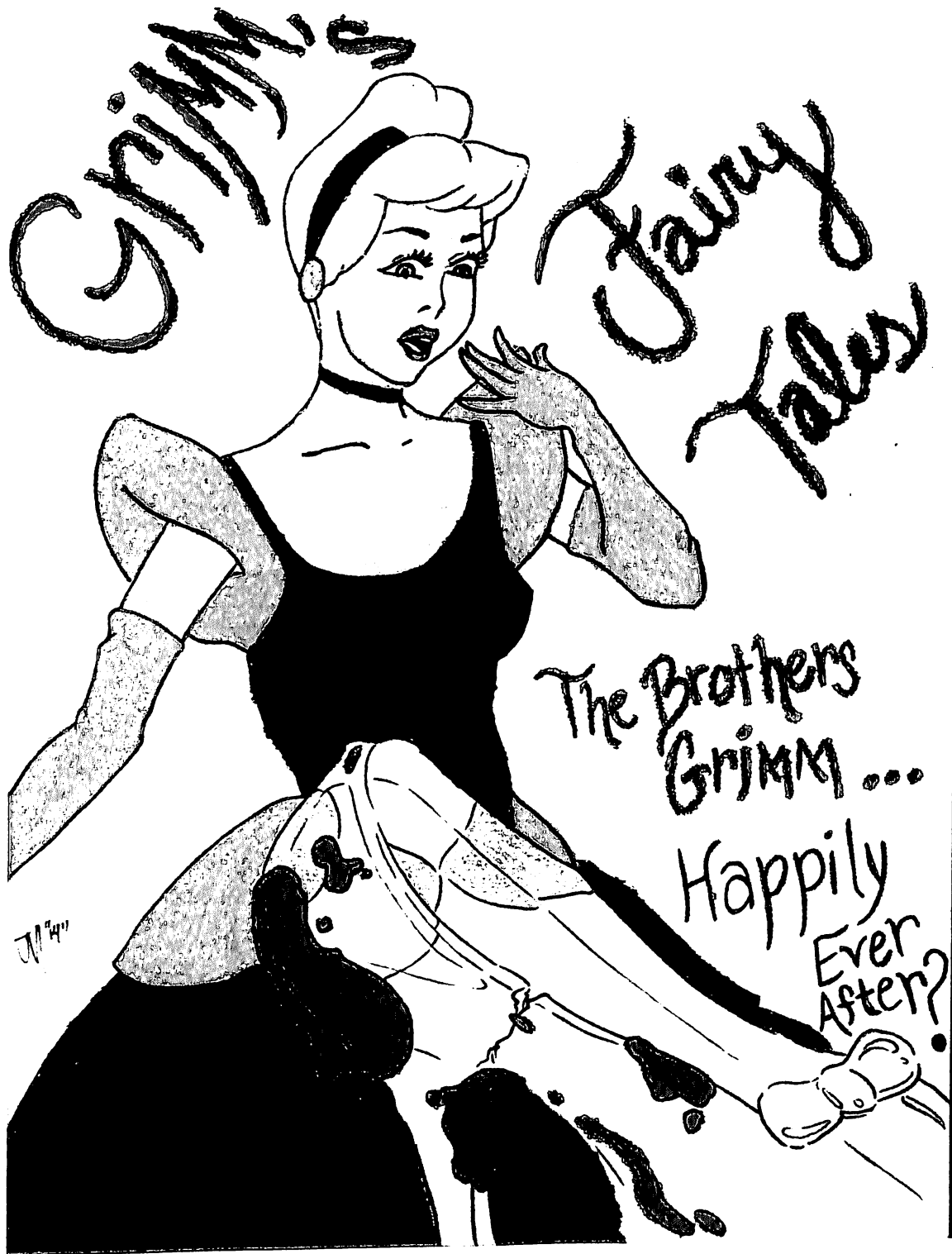
\* Disney Princesses Infographic by Lshyun. Disney Princess evolution.  
[http://fc03.deviantart.net/fs71/i/2011/195/8/e/disney\\_princesses\\_infographic\\_by\\_lshyun-d3r753s.jpg](http://fc03.deviantart.net/fs71/i/2011/195/8/e/disney_princesses_infographic_by_lshyun-d3r753s.jpg)

## The Classic Disney Princesses and Princess Tiana



\*Chesler, Areil. "Can Disney Princesses Be The Characters We Are Looking For?" *Role Reboot*. N.p., 16 Oct. 2014. Web. 25 Nov. 2014. <<http://www.rolereboot.org/family/details/2014-10-can-disney-princesses-characters-looking/>>.

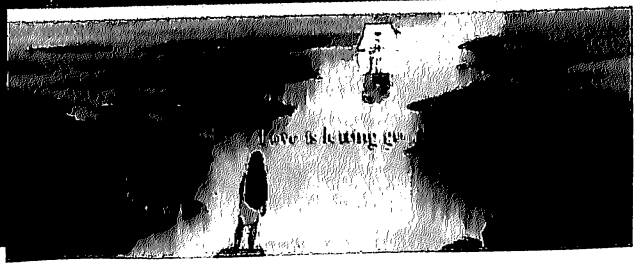
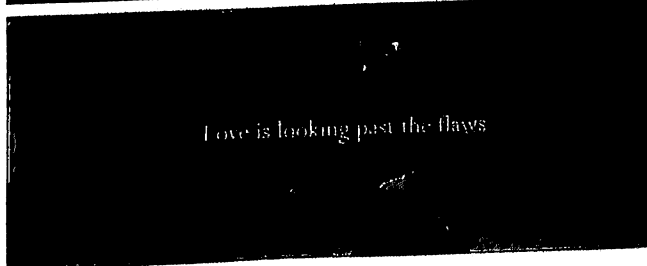
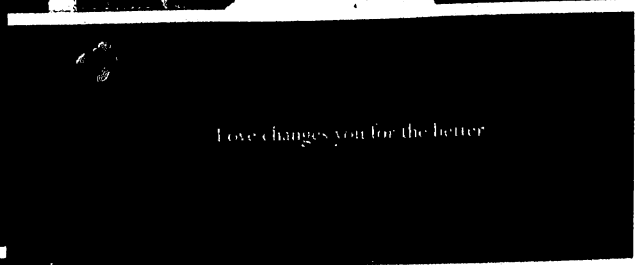
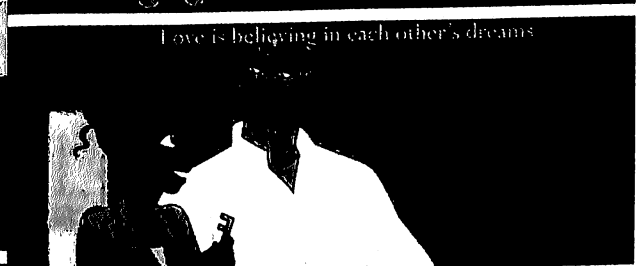
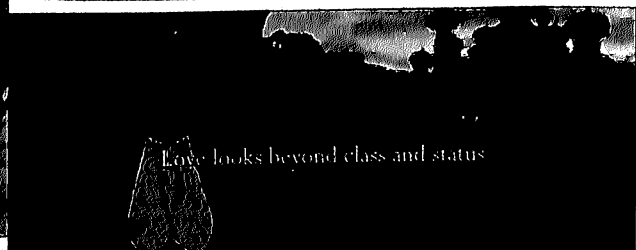
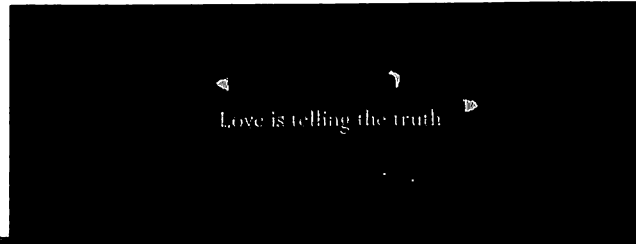
Cinderella: Disney vs. Brothers Grimm Drawing



\*Drawn by: Jermaine Mendoza and Colored by: Brittany Minor

### Disney Film Lessons Photo

PEOPLE SAY DISNEY GAVE US UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS ABOUT LOVE. IN SOME WAYS, THAT IS TRUE. BUT DISNEY ALSO TEACHES US SO MANY OTHER THINGS ABOUT LOVE.



**VITA**

Brittany Danielle Minor was born in Natchez, Miss., on March 7, 1990, the daughter of Deborah Kay Minor and Dewayne Minor. After completing her work at Wagner High School, San Antonio, Texas, in 2008, she entered the University of the Incarnate Word at San Antonio. She received the degree of Bachelor of Arts from UIW in May 2012. In January 2013, she entered the graduate program in communication arts at UIW.

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This thesis was typed by Brittany D. Minor.