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PAGEANT MOMS:
MOTHERS' ACCOUNTS OF THEIR PARTICIPATION IN
CHILD BEAUTY PAGEANTS

by
Darla Smith

A Thesis
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

Major: Sociology

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ABSTRACT

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Using the voices of nine mothers whose daughters participate in child beauty pageants, I analyzed these mothers' accounts of their participation in an activity widely viewed as deviant using neutralization theory. In this most recent wave of media attention towards child beauty pageants the focus has shifted away from the deviance of the mothers and toward the pageant industry. By focusing on the mothers' accounts of their participation in child beauty pageants this study shows the ways in which these women think about and justify their participation. Their accounts demonstrated that while these mothers recognized that child beauty pageants are seen as deviant, they typically did not agree. Respondents used verbal accounts to neutralize the deviant label placed on pageants including: denial of injury, condemnation of condemners, appeal to higher loyalties, justification by comparison, and metaphor of the ledger.

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Figure 1 <http://pageantstarsusa.blogspot.com/p/the-pageant-spotlight.html>

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCING ACCOUNTS OF CHILD BEAUTY PAGEANTS

When we think about beauty pageants the image that comes to mind is one of little girls in sparkling dresses prancing around on a stage in front of a crowd. We think of elaborate costumes, big hair, make-up, and spray tans. We imagine mothers and daughters spending weekends playing dress-up and tiaras as rewards for being beautiful. We also think of crazy overbearing mothers and young girls being inappropriately dressed and forced into warped gender roles. These images come from the popular media's portrayal of child beauty pageants. Research has demonstrated the important role that media plays, acting as the voice of and reproducing the norms of society (Curran, Gurevitch, and Woolacott 1982/2005). In the case of child beauty pageants, their representation in the media is more often than not, negative. Media attention and scholarly research concerning child beauty pageants can be separated into two waves.

The popular media and scholarly research during the first wave argue child beauty pageants and the mothers who involve their children in them are deviant (Giroux 1998; Heltsley and Calhoun 2003; Lieberman 2009-2010). Also, research conducted in the wake of the death in 1996 of young pageant princess, JonBenet Ramsey, when the media first took notice of child beauty pageants, found that mothers who choose to have their child compete in pageants understand the criticisms, but used verbal justifications for their involvement (Heltsley and Calhoun 2003). These verbal justifications, or neutralization techniques (Sykes and Matza 1957), were used to reduce the blame and account for their behavior.

In the last decade, the media and the general public has taken a much larger interest in the pageant industry and have created a large controversy. The focus of this debate has shifted away from the mothers and on to the children and the pageant industry. (Bagley 2006; Blumer-Thompson 2007; Levey 2009; Lieberman 2010; Price 2003; Robinson and Davies 2008; Tamer 2011-2012) Research on child beauty pageants during the second wave is divided into two groups. The first group present beauty pageants as a form of children's work, arguing that pageants provide these young girls with valuable skills and capital that will help them in their futures (Levey 2009; Lieberman 2010). The second group, following the same trends as the media, suggests that pageants are harmful to the children involved in them (Bagley 2006; Blumer-Thompson 2007; Price 2013; Robinson and Davies 2008; Tamer 2011-2012).

Despite the negative image the general public often holds of child beauty pageants, they remain quite popular. It is estimated that each year child beauty pageants draw nearly 3 million contestants with girls between the ages of 6 months and 16 years the most common participants (Schultz and Murphy 2011). In recent years pageants have grown in size, pageant culture has become more visible because of exposure in the media and on the Internet, and more types of neutralization have been identified in the literature. In light of these advances and the shift in focus from the moms to the children by the media and scholars, in this project I seek to explore if and how the accounts given by the mothers to explain their participation in child beauty pageants have changed.

CHAPTER TWO

PREVIOUS RESEARCH ON CHILD BEAUTY PAGEANTS AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Wave 1- Deviant Mothers

Pageants began receiving substantial media attention after the death of young pageant princess JonBenet Ramsey on December 25, 1996. During this time, both the discourse in the mainstream media and academic research suggested that beauty pageants were harmful to the children who participated and that parents who put their children in them were deviant. In this section I discuss media and academic accounts of pageant moms as deviant as well as the mothers' own accounts.

The media coverage surrounding the JonBenet Ramsey case launched an outcry from television and radio reports arguing that this child was targeted because of her involvement in pageants and her parents were ridiculed for having their child on display for potential predators (Giroux 1998:37). It was argued that pageants provide “an attractive package for somebody looking to violate a young person” (Briggs 1997:A4, A1). Throughout this period, the media's common portrayals of beauty pageants resulted in a bad reputation and it was parents (usually mothers) who took the brunt of the harassment and blame (Heltsley and Calhoun 2003).

In a paper published in 1998, in the midst of the attention to the JonBenet Ramsey case, Henry Giroux describes the photos of JonBenet as a child “playing the role of an alluring sex kitten” and argues that “the abuse children suffered in pageants was due to overbearing mothers trying to control their daughters lives” (1998:38). In 2001, HBO released a documentary titled “Living Dolls: The Making of a Child Beauty Queen”

which focused on the world of child beauty pageants, arguing that it is full of relentless pressure that parents put on their small children to compete and succeed. Despite the large amount of negative attention that resulted from the JonBenet Ramsey trials, the pageant industry continued and flourished.

In 2003, Helsley and Calhoun published an article discussing the accounts given by mothers who put their daughters in beauty pageants. The authors sent out questionnaires to 43 mothers from 1996-1997 after the first wave of negative media attention on beauty pageants. They found that these mothers used neutralization techniques to avoid the deviant label that was being assigned to them. Neutralization theory was first put forth in 1957 by Sykes and Matza.

Neutralization Theory. Individuals, who have done some deviant act or are considering it, will verbally attempt to rationalize the behavior to themselves and others (Mills 1940). Since people know the general norms of society through interaction with others, they are aware that some things are considered deviant and must justify these behaviors in order to resist the deviant label and to keep from internalizing that label. Cohen (1955) argues that deviant individuals begin to stop looking for guidance or acceptance from the goals of the mainstream society and join others who are similar to them, finding new ways to gain success. As a group and unified front, they are able to reverse and reject the mainstream culture. They must find ways to show that they are not in fact deviant or that the label that is being placed on them is not justified. This allows the individual and/or the group to avoid internalizing the deviant label. Several sociologists have theorized about these verbal justifications, or neutralization techniques (Cromwell and Thurman 2003; DeYoung 1989; Eliason and Dodder 1999; Fritsche 2005;

Gauthier 2001; Hansmann *et al.* 2005; Hewitt and Stokes 1975; Jarvinen and Demant 2011; Matza and Sykes 1961; Philaretoua 2006; Scott and Lyman 1968; Storch, Storch, and Clark 2002; Sykes and Matza 1957).

Influenced by Goffman, Mead, and Weber, C. Wright Mills developed a well-known theory of motives. According to Mills “Motives are accepted justifications for present, future, or past programs or acts” (1940:901). To be clear, this is not a theory of motivation. What is of interest concerning motives is not what truly guides a person’s actions. This is not about the sincerity of the motives given. It is about how people communicate about that action in socially acceptable ways. Mills “is not concerned with what basic needs or drives encourage human action, but rather the constructive language and vocabulary that is considered an acceptable reason for a given behavior” (Franzese 2013:287).

According to Mills, we are taught as children what is and is not socially acceptable behavior. We are also taught socially acceptable reasons for behavior. We are taught that there is a time and a place for things to happen and there must be a good reason for acting differently than what is expected. Because we are limited by social sanctions in what is appropriate behavior and under what circumstances, individuals must learn to verbalize their motives to make the action that is in question seem acceptable to themselves and others. Mills argues, “The differing reasons men give for their actions are not themselves without reasons” (1940:904). The reasons that people give for their behavior says something about the social situation and the norms of that environment.

Later Scott and Lyman (1968) contribute to the discussion of vocabulary of motives by introducing the idea of an account. An account is similar to a motive, but it

takes place after an act has occurred. They define an account as “a linguistic device employed whenever an action is subjected to evaluative inquiry” (Scott and Lyman 1968:46). Scott and Lyman’s contribution pertains exclusively to deviant behavior (Franzese 2013; Stephens 1984). There are two kinds of accounts: excuses and justifications.

Excuses are used when the individual hears and accepts that a behavior was wrong or deviant but denies being responsible for the behavior. Scott and Lyman (1968) name four types of excuses. First, one might claim *accident* as the reason for the unusual behavior by arguing that it was not intentional and unavoidable. Second, appealing to *defeasibility* involves not knowing any better and acting because of a lack of information, acting against one’s will, or both as in the case of intoxication. Third, appealing to *biological drives* involves arguing that their actions cannot be helped because they are natural and innate. Finally, the fourth type of excuse is *scapegoating*. *Scapegoating* involves placing the blame for deviant behavior on another person or group.

The second kind of account, justifications, is used for the same reasons as excuses, to explain an action and its consequences when they are called into question. But, unlike excuses, “Justifications recognize a general sense in which the act in question is impermissible, but claim that the particular occasion permits or requires the very act” (Scott and Lyman 1968:51). Scott and Lyman’s list of types of justifications includes Sykes and Matza’s “techniques of neutralization”.

Neutralization Techniques. Neutralization theory was first proposed by Sykes and Matza (1957) as a way of explaining juvenile delinquency. They found that the delinquents they were studying knew that their behavior was considered wrong by society

but “rather than standing in opposition to conventional ideas of good conduct, they were likely to adhere to these dominant norms, but rendered them ineffective in practice by holding various attitudes and practices which served to neutralize them” (Matza and Sykes 1961:712). By using a number of linguistic devices they were able to make their behaviors seem appropriate in their own minds (Gauthier 2001).

Sykes and Matza (1957) describe five neutralization techniques that people may use to justify or rationalize delinquent or deviant behavior. First, *denying responsibility* involves taking the blame off of the delinquent by putting the behavior out of their hands. For example, a person who is delinquent may make the case that their behavior cannot be helped because they do not have loving parents or they live in a bad neighborhood. Second, one might *deny injury*. One may justify his or her deviant behavior by making the argument that nobody was hurt. Third, we have *denial of the victim*. In this case, the delinquent justifies his or her actions by arguing that it is not wrong in light of the circumstances such as fighting in the case of retaliation. Fourth, one might *condemn the condemner*. By arguing that the person labeling him or her as deviant is in fact deviant, the delinquent is able to take the blame off of him/herself. Fifth, one might *appeal to higher loyalties* and justify ones involvement in a deviant act by appealing to moral imperatives. Neutralization Techniques can protect an individual from self-blame and provides a way for the individual to stay dedicated to the dominant cultural value systems while participating in those activities perceived as deviant (Cromwell and Thurman 2003).

Neutralization theory has been used extensively since then to explain several different types of deviant behavior ranging from criminal activity to minor infractions of

cultural norms. Fritsche (2005) acknowledged around 40 different studies examining things from delinquency and cheating to sexual preferences and environmentally harmful behavior. Likewise, Gauthier (2001) found several studies pertaining to scams, price fixing, embezzlement practices, tax fraud, etc., all attempting to explain the behaviors. Philaretou (2006) studied female exotic dancers and their use of neutralization techniques to justify their deviant occupation. Similarly, Jarvinen and Demant (2011) examined the use of neutralization techniques by young people who normalize the use of cannabis.

Five neutralization techniques were originally posited, but over the years several more have been added to the list. First, *defense of necessity* refers to justifying deviant behavior on the grounds that the individual perceives a real need to do so. Second, the *metaphor of the ledger* involves taking the individual's previous behaviors into account in order to assert that all in all he or she is a moral person. Third, *denial of the necessity of the law* is similar to *condemning the condemner*. The deviant simply argues that the law or social norm is not reasonable. Fourth, the claim that *everyone else is doing it* means just that, as long as others are participating in the deviant action as well, the action is justified. Fifth, the *claim of entitlement* is used when the deviant individuals feels that they are owed something (Cromwell and Thurman 2003). Cromwell and Thurman also discovered two other techniques while studying shoplifting. They used *justification by comparison* where they argued that if they were not doing this they would just be doing something else that is just as bad or worse, and *postponement* where they claim to have had a momentary lapse in judgment that resulted in the deviant behavior. Neutralization theory has been used over the last 50 years and still remains relevant today (Adler and Adler 2006; Goode 2004).

Helsley and Calhoun (2003) found that mothers whose daughters competed in pageants during the first wave of media attention used multiple neutralization techniques to avoid the deviant label that was being assigned to them. ‘Condemnation of the condemners’ was the most frequently used neutralization technique by the mothers surveyed in this study. While respondents used four out of the five original neutralization techniques, condemning the condemner was the most popular strategy. In order to deflect blame away from them, mothers typically blamed the media for the deviant label.

Wave II – Harming Children

The second wave of media attention and literature about child beauty pageants came around after the premier of the hit TLC reality television show *Toddlers and Tiaras* (Giroux 1998; Lieberman 2009-2010), featuring the lives of young children as beauty pageant contestants and their mothers. People from all over were able to get a glimpse into the world of child beauty pageants while never leaving the comfort of their homes. *Toddlers and Tiaras* is known for portraying rambunctious children, emotional parents, and the work and money that goes into competing in beauty pageants. The show produced a good deal of controversy about whether or not pageants are good for children with numerous stories appearing in various media outlets including CNN, Fox News, Good Morning America, The Today Show, This Week, Time Magazine, The New York Times, etc., including a cover story in People Magazine in 2011 that questioned whether child beauty pageants had gone too far.

Toddlers and Tiaras is not alone in its quest to bring child beauty pageants to the small screen. Women’s Entertainment Television created *Little Miss Perfect*, a reality show that follows 10 children and their parents participating in child beauty pageants.

Bravo's *Showbiz Moms & Dads* and MTV's *Tiara Girls* also wish to give viewers an inside look into the world of child beauty pageants. Several television stations ran special exposés about child beauty pageants following the success of *Toddlers & Tiaras* trying to get a better look into the lives of these tiny beauty queens and their families.

Thanks to the appearance of *Toddlers & Tiaras* and others, as well as the Internet, anyone and everyone can be a critic. For the first time, people are getting a look inside the world of beauty pageants and anyone with a computer can become the expert. So not only are media outlets and journalists criticizing the pageant industry, their general public is also stigmatizing it.

Recently, in 2013, a ban on beauty pageants has been proposed in France (Rubin 2013). Legislators in France argue that beauty pageants promote the “hyper-sexualization” of young children, arguing that dressing young girls in this way is inappropriate. If passed, participating in beauty pageants or promoting them will lead to fines and even jail time. The question in many people's minds now is will the United States follow suit? While it seems unlikely that such a ban will occur in the United States, some are concerned with the performances and appearances that contests such as these entail (Healy 2013). In 2010, a member of the North Carolina House of Representatives, Annie W. Mobley, proposed a bill that would appoint a committee whose sole job would be to assess whether or not regulations for child beauty pageants are necessary. It is likely that Americans will continue to push for regulations to protect these children from any harmful situations.

What Has Changed? In the years following the death of JonBenet Ramsey, media outlets focused much of their attention on mothers who put their young daughters in pageants. Journalists and news reporters villainized pageant moms because they were seen as responsible for these girls' loss of innocence and vulnerability to predators. More recent media reports focus on the pageant industry as a whole as being responsible for harm done to these children.

Academic research on child beauty pageants during the second wave can be separated into two camps: those who argue that pageants should be considered children's work, and those who argue child beauty pageants are detrimental to children.

Pageants as Children's Work. The topic of children's work is one that researchers shy away from (Levey 2009). It brings to mind images of young people being forced to produce and/or sell products in exchange for little or no pay. We do not like to think about children being pushed to take on responsibilities and focus on things other than their studies and having fun too soon. However, childhood scholars have begun to extend the definition of what qualifies as children's work. According to Levey, "This research is quite important as it makes visible, without trivializing, how children's efforts can benefit their families and communities" (2009:196).

Charles and Chris Tilly (1998) define work as anything that is done that produces human capital and/or some value that can be used in the future. Levey (2009) argues, based on this definition, that there are five types of children's work. First, anything that is compensated with money can be considered work. This includes child actors/actresses as well as children who have after school or weekend jobs that take place outside of the formal economy such as delivering newspapers, cutting grass, or babysitting. The second

type includes involvement in family owned businesses. Children who assist around the family company are learning invaluable skills needed to continue working in this line of work in the future. Similarly, scholars have suggested that the third type of work, chores, teach children the value in keeping up with household duties (Levey 2009; Orellana 2001). While the second and third types may or may not be compensated with pay, they are producing human capital for the future.

The fourth type of children's work is schoolwork. While many believe that children should not work because they should be focused on their studies, others would argue that school is a form of children's work (Levey 2009; Qvortrup 1994). With more emphasis being placed on education in recent years and many employers requiring a certain number of years of education before being qualified for certain positions, it is clear that education is being used today as a form of human capital that is useful in bettering our futures. Finally, Levey (2009) takes this a step further arguing that the fifth type of children's work is organized activities. Organized activities for children provide useful tools for future success.

There are two main pieces of research that take the approach that participation in child beauty pageants is children's work. Utilizing data collected from observations and in-depth interviews, Levey (2009) makes the argument that participation in child beauty pageants can be conceived of children's work. According to Levey, pageants produce human capital. They are acquiring intangible skills and lessons through their participation – or different forms of cultural, social and human capital – that will help them in future production of goods and services, particularly in terms of the instructional aspects of the activities” (Levey 2009:206). These include gaining confidence, gaining the ability to

speak in front of crowds and strangers, learning good sportsmanship, and gaining a good work ethic through practice.

Lindsay Lieberman (2010) also argues that child beauty pageants should be considered children's work. She contends that child beauty pageant participants, similar to child actors/actresses, are entertaining audiences and are developing skills in the same ways and the title of child entertainer should include pageant contestants. Pageants consist of "performing art that combines modeling, acting, dancing, and singing [and...]" Contestants provide a thrill to viewers by performing in front of large audiences both live and on television" (Lieberman 2010:765). Pageants also provide material rewards such as trophies and cash. Often times, cash rewards are reinvested in the pageant circuit in order for the child to continue competing for larger prizes or it is put back for the child's future such as college funds (Lieberman 2010).

This research on child beauty pageants as children's work does not portray child beauty pageants and participation in them as deviant. Rather this literature normalizes participation in such pageants by likening it to a job where one culminates life skills and transferable use value that can later be used in the production of goods and services. Child beauty pageants reward children with material rewards such as cash and trophies as well as non-material rewards in the form of social capital that can be expended to better their futures. However, the remaining scholarly work on beauty pageants gives a contrasting account, maintaining that pageants are damaging to children (Giroux 1998; Heltsley and Calhoun 2003; Price 2003; Tamer 2011-2012).

Pageants as Harmful to Children. Price argues, "parents of the contestants put their children into pageantry for education, fun and bonding. However what is produced

is a high-anxiety, high-stress and high-pressure system focused on the contestants presentation of self as a standardized and feminized woman” (2003:2) Several researchers have analyzed television shows such as *Toddlers and Tiaras* and films such as *Painted Babies* (1995) and have found the young girls represented are powerless victims of haughty mothers and pageant promoters.

Bagley (2006) and Robinson and Davies (2008) argue that child beauty pageants are detrimental for girls because they rob the girls of their innocence, reward girls for being docile and trainable, and punish girls who fail to adapt to the standards of the pageant system. Robinson and Davies point out the sexualized nature of the costumes, make-up and performances rob the girls of their innocence. Young girls are taught and trained to perform according to the standards set by those in power—pageant directors and parents. Pageants produce and reproduce norms of the pageant on the stage. Young girls are devoid of any power and succumb to the ‘rules’ of good behavior (Bagley 2006). The girls in these pageants are powerless, docile bodies conforming to the ideals of adults (Robinson and Davies 2008).

Blumer-Thompson (2007) discusses how child beauty pageants are simultaneously damaging and desirable for young girls of lower socio-economic status. She argued that for these girls pageant involvement is seen as a means of upward mobility. The girls must find ways to reconcile that they are both rewarded and victimized. Because pageants involve creating docile behavior through images of ideal beauty structures that promote discipline, participants must find ways to overcome these barriers (Blumer-Thompson 2007:205). For Blumer-Thompson then the pageant does not

rob girls of all agency. While the pageants may reinforce docility, the girls in her study found ways to exert their agency by using the pageants as a means of upward mobility.

Media accounts and academic research has changed focus during the second wave of media attention. Reporters and scholars are more concerned with the children involved in pageants and the effects of pageant culture on them, positive or negative. With the change in perceptions about child beauty pageants throughout the second wave, using data collected from nine in-depth interviews with mothers who have daughters competing in beauty pageants, this study explores if and how mothers' accounts and perceptions of their participation in child beauty pageants have changed in this second wave of media attention towards child beauty pageants.

CHAPTER THREE

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON BEAUTY PAGEANTS

The concept of the beauty pageant was first introduced in America by B.T. Barnum. Women paraded around, their beauty admired by fans, in his renowned circus performances (Lieberman 2010). In the following years, popular pageants such as *Miss America*, *Miss USA*, and *Miss Universe* were created. Atlantic City, where *Miss America* originated is a United States pageant hub, where beauty pageants are common entertainment for visitors. The first official child beauty pageant took place in New Jersey in 1961 (Miet 2013). The *Little Miss America* pageant attracted children and parents from all over to participate and/or watch these entertaining performances. The success of the *Little Miss America* pageant as well as a few others that began in the 1960's, led to hundreds more popping up in the 1970's and 80's. Today, it is estimated that each year child beauty pageants draw nearly 3 million contestants with girls between the ages of 6 months and 16 years (Schultz and Murphy 2011).

From Elimination Style to Open Registration

Child beauty pageants have mushroomed rapidly over the last 30 years and have become a growing part of popular culture in America. What began as a phenomenon found primarily in the southern states; has since spread across the United States (Lieberman 2010). There are two systems for participant selection in beauty pageants: elimination and open registration.

The film *Little Miss Sunshine* hit the big screen in 2006. The comedy follows young Olive Hoover and her family in their cross-country road trip to the Little Miss Sunshine Pageant. Olive was given the opportunity to compete in the Little Miss

Sunshine Pageant because the winner of a preliminary pageant had been disqualified. Because Olive had been awarded runner-up, she was next in line to compete in the national level pageant. This elimination style system is used in the most famous pageant in the United States, Miss America.

The Miss America Pageant is televised and viewed in homes all across the country one day a year. Contestants first compete in state level competitions. After winning at the state level, the contestants are invited to compete against one another for the title of Miss America. It is no surprise that producers of *Little Miss Sunshine* chose to portray this recognizable system. The elimination style of competition can also be seen in other films that portray pageant culture such as *Miss Congeniality (2000)*, *Drop Dead Gorgeous (1999)*, and *Beautiful (2000)*.

However, this pageant formula is not typically used in child beauty pageants systems today. Most child pageants are open to anyone who wishes to compete. Participants may simply fill out and send in paperwork along with a fee for registration to the director of the pageant. For a price, anyone can compete for the highest titles and the biggest crowns. Pageant fees run from about 50 dollars up to 1000 dollars or more. Also, within a given competition, participants may choose to pay a smaller fee to compete in only one event such as evening gown, or they may pay more for multiple stage events such as swimwear or talent.

Pageants are usually separated into systems organized by a director or group of directors. Each system has its own name, judges, and set of criteria for what is and is not allowed. Directors usually hold their pageants throughout the year and each pageant takes place annually. For example, one system may hold a Valentines themed pageant in

February and a Halloween themed pageant in October every year. However, these pageants may or may not be held in the same location from year to year. Also, every pageant is open to anyone who would like to compete. Contestants may compete in multiple pageants from different systems each year. Parents and children usually travel around to different places on the weekends to compete in pageants that appeal to them.

Competition

Most pageants are broken down into age categories where children who are around the same age are competing against each other. For instance, age may be broken down into 0-23 months, 2-3yrs, 4-5yrs, 6-7yrs, and so on. Most pageants are open to girls and women of any age often offering a misses category usually specifying 18 or 20 years of age and up. It is not unheard of for mothers and daughters to compete in the same pageant.

While there may be an overall highest score awarded, usually children are competing with other children of the same age category. Each child is scored individually based on attire, personality, stage presence/poise, and modeling. They are then awarded a title based on their individual scores. There is typically a winner and alternates chosen from each age category. Then, there are overall winners awarded for the highest scoring participants from the entire pageant.

Beyond Sunday Best

When child beauty pageants began in the 1960's, young girls were paraded across the stage in beautiful, yet simple, party dresses. Over the years, the costumes have become more elaborate and ornate. Also, girls were allowed more and more makeup and beauty enhancements during the competitions. It is common in the pageant world for

beauty enhancers to be used on girls as young as 2 years old. Fake hair is commonly used to make the appearance of thick long locks. This includes the use of partial wigs called “falls” that clip to the natural hair on the top of the scalp, or extensions, which are tracks of human hair that are glued or sewn in to the natural hair at the scalp. Another commonly used beauty enhancer is spray tanning. Parents will have their children spray tanned prior to the pageant because it is thought that the stage lights can make the child appear “washed-out” or fairer than they actually are.

Also, fake teeth, commonly referred to in the pageant community as “flippers” are becoming more and more popular. In the early nineties, parents began having wire retainers fashioned with tiny fake teeth attached to fill gaps when the child lost a tooth or two. Now they are made more like a mouth guard that covers all of the teeth and is used when teeth are missing or to cover any discoloration or imperfections. Other enhancers commonly used are heavy make-up, false eyelashes, false fingernails and toenails, and contact lenses. Today, child beauty pageants range from those that allow absolutely no makeup or beauty enhancers of any kind to those where anything goes.

Glitz vs. Natural

In the pageant community there is a divide between those who compete in natural pageants and those who compete in what is now called glitz pageants. Natural pageants are those where the children compete in an off the rack dress and little to no beauty products such as makeup. Glitz pageants are those that allow for custom dresses and outfits and the use of enhancers such as makeup and fake hair. Below I will explain the differences and similarities between the two types of pageants.

Differences: For glitz pageants, pretty much anything goes. Participants are allowed to use any number of enhancers such as make-up, wigs, fake teeth, sunless tanners, false eyelashes, and false nails. They may choose to use a few of these things or all of them together. Natural pageants allow some age appropriate make-up (usually no make-up under the age of 13), but no other enhancers are allowed. For example, a 15-year-old girl may be permitted to wear small amounts of eye shadow or mascara and lip-gloss. Another big difference between natural and glitz pageants is the apparel. Glitz pageant dresses are usually covered in a lot of beading and stones while natural dresses are simple off the rack garments that could be worn to church on Sunday or to a holiday celebration with family. Also, swimwear and any midriff-bearing outfit are typically only seen at glitz pageants.

Similarities: Both natural and glitz pageants are open to children of all ages. Also, both pageants charge an entry fee for participants and often charge a door fee for guests who come to watch the pageant. Competitions in formalwear and other modeling and talent competitions are offered at both natural and glitz pageants. Both types of pageants offer prizes for the winners such as trophies, tiaras, sashes, and cash.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

Sampling

The sample group for this study consists of nine mothers to girls who are currently competing in beauty pageants or have competed in the past. Although I did not intend to interview mothers exclusively, only women agreed to participate in this study. Mothers ranged in age from 25 to 56 while their daughters ranged in age from 2 to 25. All respondents were white and varied in social class. Five of the mothers interviewed became involved in pageants when their daughters were under the age of 2. The remaining four got involved when their children were under the age of 5. For this study I chose to interview mothers from the South for two reasons: First, it was more convenient as I am located in the south and the interviews were conducted face-to-face. Second, a large number of glitz child beauty pageants take place in the south (Heltsley and Calhoun 2003). It was important that I interviewed mothers whose daughters competed in glitz pageants because they have more stigma attributed to them. The vast majority of media attention towards child beauty pageants has focused on girls in the glitz pageants with their big hair, spray tans, extensive makeup, fake teeth and elaborate dresses.

I used a non-probability snowball sampling technique. A snowball sample is one in which the sample is collected by beginning with data collected from a few participants that one is able to locate, then allowing those individuals to recruit others who may be willing to participate and meet the criteria for the study, and pass on the researcher's information (Andres 2012:101-102). This technique is typically used when the target population is difficult to find or they want to keep their identity hidden (e.g. homeless

individuals, illegal immigrants, and underground subcultures). This strategy is useful for this research since beauty pageant participants are few and far between. I recruited four participants in this manner. In addition I was also in contact with a local pageant director who passed on information about my study to pageant participants in her system. I recruited 5 participants in this manner.

Data Collection

I conducted a series of focused semi-structured interviews with pageant moms about their child's participation in pageants. Semi-structured interviews allowed the respondent the time and scope to talk about this topic and their feelings and opinions about it. They also allowed the interviewer and interviewee to build a rapport through more conversational interaction. It was important for the respondent to feel comfortable and trust that the research and the researcher were objective and unbiased. Semi-structured interviews helped to reduce pre-judgment. Semi-structured interviews allowed questions to come up based on the interviewee's responses and proceed like a friendly, non-threatening conversation.

The interviews had a specific focus. In addition, I felt that it was important to be open to topics coming up that I had not previously considered. I offered the respondent prompts for conversation in the form of open-ended questions. By leaving the questions open-ended, the respondent had the opportunity to elaborate on and clarify their responses. It also allowed the respondent to ask questions if they were not sure about what was being asked. Furthermore, we had the ability to go off script a little and elaborate on something the respondent said or move the conversation in a new direction. I was invited to attend a holiday themed pageant in order to meet and interview six

mothers whose daughters would be attending. On the day of the pageant, I met with the mothers prior to the pageant starting and arranged to meet with them one-on-one in room adjacent to the ballroom where the pageant took place during a lunch break or after the pageant ended. The director of the pageant also introduced me to the remaining three participants who I later interviewed in their homes. Interviews lasted between 10 and 45 minutes. See Appendix A for interview schedule.

Analysis

I recorded the interviews using an Olympus digital recorder. I then saved the recordings into a password-protected folder on my personal computer. I transcribed all the interviews verbatim. I completed the transcribing using headphones and Microsoft Word. Then, the recordings were saved to an external hard drive and deleted from the recording device. Analysis of the in-depth interviews was done in two parts. I began by looking for broad common themes such as “media” and “fun”. I then separated them according to the type of neutralization technique being used. In the following section I will outline the ways in which the pageant moms I interviewed for this study used these neutralization techniques.

CHAPTER FIVE

RESULTS

The women in this study were asked about how they got involved in pageants, their best and worst experiences in beauty pageants, and how they prepare for pageants. Additionally, they were questioned about the skills children learn from pageants, why they thought people did not like child beauty pageants, the role that popular media plays in the common perception of pageants, and what family members and friends thought about their participation. Many of the mothers expressed hearing criticism from family members and others online. Nicole¹ stated:

I'm forcing my child to do pageants. I'm making her grow up too fast. I shouldn't be putting makeup on her. I shouldn't be allowing her to wear this swimsuit in public. I'm living through my child. I wanted to grow up doing pageants. This is my dream. Oh, and there are pedophiles watching. I mean, everything you can think of, I've heard it all.

Nicole expressed frustration with hearing these negative characterizations about her involvement in beauty pageants with her daughter. She claimed to be very aware of the criticisms that others had and to be used to hearing them. Carrie shared a similar story:

Some people don't like the makeup and her looking too old. They think we are living through our kids. We are not crazy. Not all of us do it because we are living through our kids. I don't do this because I want to fulfill some childhood fantasy. (Carrie)

Carrie also discussed receiving criticism from family members, stating: "With my family, another issue is the money. It is really expensive. They are always asking how I can afford to do this and why I would spend that kind of money." These mothers discussed hearing different criticisms, but unlike the mothers in Heltsley and Calhoun's study, they were not really concerned with defending themselves as much as they were interested in

¹ All names used in the thesis are pseudonyms.

defending pageantry and defending their children. Gina stated: “I don’t care. Say whatever you want about me. Just don’t talk about my kid.” While I still found evidence of neutralization, the neutralization employed by these mothers was aimed at the criticisms launched at the pageant culture.

The mothers interviewed in this study, use three out of the five original neutralization techniques originally posited by Sykes and Matza, with *denial of injury* being the most common, as well as two neutralization techniques that have been added since the original publication. In the following section, I will outline the accounts given by the mothers I interviewed

Denial of Injury

Denial of injury was a very common technique used by the mothers in this study. This technique involves arguing that as long as no one is harmed, the behavior can be justified. Another way to think about this is “no harm, no foul”. Every single mother interviewed wanted people to know that the competition is a very small part of what pageants are all about. When asked about how she and her daughter got involved in pageants, Natalie responded: “We had a friend whose daughter competed in pageants, and it was just fun, girly stuff to do together.” These mothers wanted me to understand that their children were happy and wanted to be participating in this activity. If they were able to show that their children are not being harmed in any way by doing pageants and in fact enjoy participating in the activity, then there was no harm in doing it.

When asked about what her child likes most about competing in pageants, Carrie responded: “For her, it’s about going on stage and having fun. It’s about playing, being with friends, and meeting new people.” Carrie was arguing that the media fails to show

the friendships that are made and how much fun her child is having. She seemed to be saying that her daughter places very little emphasis, if any, on the competition itself, and is happy just being there. Barbara expressed that these things were very important to her and her child as well: "It can be a lot of fun if you want it to be. You meet a lot of people. You have a lot of friends and that is how I intend for it to be. It is for all of us girls to go away and have some fun away from the guys." Barbara argued that this is a good way for mothers and daughters to spend time together and bond without their spouses, boyfriends, etc. She also highlighted the benefits gained from pageants including traveling and meeting new people.

The moms discussed the ways in which pageants have benefitted their children including teaching their children about the world and how to deal with others. Like Barbara, when asked about what she liked most about pageants, Margie stated: "We got to hang out with a lot of different people from different backgrounds, and you learn how to appreciate what is fun in everybody and look for those things." Margie argued that pageants help to teach her daughter about making friends and having fun doing it. Making friends with children from all over was a common theme among these parents.

This is not the only positive attribute that mothers felt pageants provided their children. Pageant moms argue that their children are gaining important personality traits that will help them in future endeavors. For others, overcoming shyness was very important. Nicole revealed:

When she was an infant she did not like anybody. She did not want to be held by anybody but me. And now, it has opened her up. She is an all around child now. She's just a ball of personality now. She is very outgoing.

Nicole felt like pageants helped her child to become more outgoing and more accepting of other people. Also, many spoke of the ways in which pageants help to build confidence and help children learn to speak in front of crowds. When asked about her daughter's future, Gina expressed an interest that her teenage daughter has in becoming a professional singer/performer. According to Gina: "She is able to have confidence to go on stage and perform. She can do something she wouldn't have been able to do before." Gina attributes her daughter's ability to perform to being involved in child beauty pageants for many years. For these mothers, pageants were not hindering their children. By focusing on these positive attributes, pageant moms were able to deny any injury.

Condemnation of Condemners

Condemnation of Condemners, as stated earlier, refers to a technique used commonly by those who participate in behaviors that are considered deviant as a way to deflect the blame off of them and on to those who are standing in judgment of them. Pageant moms are very aware of the ways in which pageants are portrayed in the popular media such as movies and television. They argue that these depictions give pageants a poor reputation because they are not accurate. The pageants shown on shows such as *Toddler and Tiaras* usually take place over an entire weekend starting with registration on Friday night, the competition on Saturday, and the awards ceremony on Sunday, but the television show only airs 40 minutes of that weekend. Almost every mother interviewed for this study argued that these television shows choose to show only the negative things about beauty pageants while eliminating the good parts. Carrie states:

You can't form an opinion based on what you see on television because all it's done is make it look like we're being horrible to these kids, but if they could see their faces when they come off that stage and see them right now

(after a pageant) as they're running around and playing, that's what pageants are about. Its about having fun, and they don't show that.

Carrie argued that the media focused on a very narrow range of what the pageant experience was about. She argued that the experience is much richer for the children than is depicted in these television shows. Gina shared a similar sentiment, stating: "I think a lot of it is misrepresented. They pick and choose what they want to pull out of it just to make a story, just like anything else." Gina was critical of the media's intentional editing of reality. She understood the media as an entity that is only concerned about their own image and less interested in protecting the images of the people they choose to depict. Likewise, Barbara states: "I hate the way that pageants are portrayed in the media. I have had people ask me if that is what pageants are really like and I tell them no. I hate that people judge it based on what they see on TV." Barbara was clearly blaming TV for the negative perceptions that people have about child beauty pageants.

Appeal to Higher Loyalties

Appealing to higher loyalties involves understanding the norms and values of society, but when those norms and values contradict with the behaviors of the group, the individual will remain loyal to their group. Margie argued:

The idea that any of these mothers think their children need all of the hair and makeup and all that to be beautiful is completely inaccurate. Nobody in any of these ballrooms thinks that their child needs any of that to be beautiful. We do it because we want to be competitive and we want to have a chance."

Margie was aware that the enhancers such as hair and makeup for a child is out of the ordinary and that some may find it unnecessary. She would agree, but she argued that in order to be competitive, they must continue to do it. This speaks to the competitive nature of beauty pageants and the willingness to do whatever it takes to win. Similarly, Mary

stated: “My brother doesn’t like seeing her in all the hair and makeup. He thinks she’s gorgeous all by herself. She doesn’t need all that. I think everyone pretty much thinks that right? Not her though. She loves it.” Like Margie, Mary agreed with her brother that the beauty enhancers were not necessary for the girls, but because her daughter expressed a desire to wear the hair and makeup, she continued to allow it.

Justification by Comparison

Justification by Comparison, as mentioned earlier, is a neutralization technique that involves referring to a similar activity that others participate in that would be the same if not worse than what they are doing. Three of the participants in this study continuously compared child beauty pageants to other child activities. While discussing the preparation and time that goes in to getting ready for a competition, Natalie affirmed:

It’s like any other activity like dance, cheer, soccer, football, [or] little league. You go to a coach to learn your routines just like you go to practice to learn to play a sport before game day. All of them have their own uniforms. Ours just happens to include hair extensions and fake teeth.

Likewise, Nicole stated:

I like to compare it to sports. You’ve got your cheerleaders that put on those little skirts. Your football players put on all that gear. That’s their uniform. Her uniform is her hair. It’s her makeup. It’s her attire. Once the game is over, it comes off. So, it’s no different than a sport.

Natalie and Nicole argued that pageants are similar to other child activities in many ways. They were suggesting that if their daughters were not competing in child beauty pageants, they would still be doing a lot of the same things in other activities. Similarly, Sheila argued: “To me, it’s just like any other sport or activity that kids do. My daughter also cheers competitively. It’s the same thing.” Holly took a slightly different approach by stating: “I think it’s important for kids to be involved in something. Whether it’s pageants

or something else. It keeps them out of trouble and builds character.” Holly argued that pageants are like other extracurricular activities for children by pointing out the benefits that come from children’s activities in general. Each of these mothers was able to justify their child’s participation in pageants by comparing them to other activities that children participate in. They argued that pageants and other child activities provide children with transferable skills and do so in similar ways.

Metaphor of the Ledger

According to the literature, *metaphor of the ledger* refers to when deviant individuals discuss other parts of their lives to show that as a whole they are a moral person. For pageant moms, this involves showing that their child is the same as other children and that they are the same as other moms by proving that they are interested in more than just pageants. Two of the mothers in this study did just that. When asked about her daughter’s interests, Nicole replied:

Well, she’s in Taekwondo. She just graduated to her yellow belt. She enjoys doing that. She loves doing the weapons. We have also done a lot of community stuff. We go to the library. She’s in the summer reading club the library does every year, so we go to the library all the time. So, I mean, we find ways of being active. We just like to branch out, outside of pageants.

For Nicole, it was important for her daughter to have interests other than beauty pageants. She seemed to be expressing that her child had a well-rounded life and was doing things that other children do. Nicole used the word “we” to show that just like her daughter, she too was involved in these things with her daughter. In the same way, Carrie discussed how she and her daughter spend their time outside of pageants:

We like to just do normal stuff. She goes to school. We go to dance. She does ballet and tap. I’m a stay at home mom slash working mom. I work a lot of different jobs. But, she dances and sings and is running usually all

over the place. We play video games and go to the movies. She likes going to the movies. We just like to have fun.

Carrie, like Nicole discussed the things that she and her daughter liked to do. She was arguing that they are “normal” because they do things that are considered “normal”.

While Helsley and Calhoun focused on the mother neutralizing their own participation in child beauty pageants, I find that the focus has shifted away from the mother’s deviance and towards neutralizing the deviance of the children involved and the pageant industry itself. In some ways neutralization theory is still appropriate because the women do recognize that greater society views child pageants as being deviant. On the other hand, the mothers in this study also deny that the pageants are deviant, and the real problem is the inaccurate portrayal of the pageants in the media.

Neutralization theory rests on the idea that the individual recognizes and accepts that a behavior is deviant, but seek out ways to avoid internalizing that deviant label when participating in that behavior. The mothers in this study challenge the idea that child beauty pageants are deviant in the first place. Yet while these mothers challenge the deviant label placed on child beauty pageants they do recognize that society in general views them as deviant.

CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSION

In previous research conducted during the first wave of media attention on child beauty pageants, mothers' accounts focused on neutralizing the deviant label that others had placed on them. Because the attention, in recent years, has shifted away from the mothers and is now aimed at pageantry, the current discussion of mothers' accounts is warranted. Also, with the growth of pageants across the United States, the impact of peer criticism via the Internet, and the recent contributions to the literature on neutralization techniques, further research with pageant moms was warranted.

Despite an overwhelmingly negative image portrayed in the media of child beauty pageants, they remain very popular, particularly in the South. In this paper I sought to explore how the mothers of children in child beauty pageants attempt to reconcile their involvement in an activity that most of society has adverse opinions on. While pageant moms do not typically view child beauty pageants as deviant, they are very aware that others do and must reconcile their participation in pageants with this negative perception from the media and society. Like previous accounts, the mothers I interviewed used neutralization techniques to accomplish this. However they were used in different ways. In this study the women are focusing on neutralizing the deviance placed on the pageants and not so much on the mothers themselves.

In the previous research, mothers, to neutralize their own deviance, used *denial of injury*. Mothers argued that they should not be seen as doing anything wrong because they were not harming their children or anyone else by participating in pageants. In this study, the mothers were not concerned with their own deviance; they were interested in

proving that their children were not deviant for competing in pageants. They wanted to show that their children were just like other kids. While mothers interviewed during the first wave of media attention used *condemnation of the condemner* the most, *denial of injury* was the most commonly used technique for mothers taking part in this study. By making these arguments most of the mothers in this study maintained that their child is not a victim or a troubled child.

The second most common technique used in this study is *condemnation of the condemner*. Because the media attention during the first wave was overwhelmingly negative and focused on the mothers' supposed deviance, previous accounts given by pageant mothers concentrated on the media's criticisms. The mothers in this study, however, discussed how the media today is the main source of information for people, whether it is television or the Internet, and portraying child beauty pageants in a negative light, has led to a common perception of pageants as deviant. These mothers are arguing that the media portrayal of pageants is inaccurate and unfair. They argued that child beauty pageants are nothing like what one sees when watching shows such as *Toddler and Tiaras*. By making this argument, they suggested that the true problem is the media portrayal of child beauty pageants, and not the pageants themselves.

Appeal to Higher Loyalties is used when the norm of society and the norms of the deviant group do not line up. The individual will argue that the social norms of the group take precedence over those of the general public. This is the only technique that was consistently employed during both waves in the same way. Unlike some of the other neutralization techniques, by appealing to higher loyalties the individual is accepting that the behavior is outside of the norm, but feels it is necessary to take part anyway. This

technique was employed the least but is important and interesting because these mothers acknowledged taking part in a deviant activity, but justified their behavior by arguing that the use of beauty enhancers such as hair and makeup are a necessary concession if they wish to be competitive and to continue taking part in the activity.

Heltsley and Calhoun (2003) focused only on the five neutralization techniques posited by Sykes and Matza (1957). Several techniques have been added to the list since this publication. The mothers in this study used two of these additional techniques to neutralize the negative depictions of child beauty pageants during the second wave.

Justification by Comparison is a neutralization technique used by individuals who are considered deviant by arguing that if they were not taking part in this behavior they would be doing something that is just as bad or worse. Pageant moms used a variation of this technique by comparing child beauty pageants to other activities that they feel are the same as what they are doing but are not criticized in the same way. This technique was used multiple times. The mothers in this study felt that all childhood activities are the same and beauty pageants are no exception.

Metaphor of the Ledger is a verbal justification that involves appealing to all of the other things that the individual does in their life. By focusing on all of the positive things they do or have done, the individual is able to argue that they should not be considered deviant based on only one aspect of their life. The mothers in this study used this technique to discuss their child's well roundedness and show that these children are interested in much more than just pageants and beauty. It is my belief that this finding would not have been present during the first wave of media attention because at that time the mothers were focused on neutralizing their own presumed deviance. With attention

now being focused on the children, the mothers were interested in defending their child's participation in pageants by showing that they are just as well rounded as other children.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

There are some limitations to this study. Due to the limited number of participants and the lack of ethnic and cultural diversity, these results are not generalizable. Those from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds may have a different understanding of deviance and social norms and may have had different experiences with criticism from friends, family and the media. Also, pageants in regions other than the south may yield different results. Pageants have been around in the south much longer than in other regions of the United States. It might be the case that people in the south are somewhat more accepting of pageant culture than in other parts of the country. Pageant moms in the south may not see themselves as deviant nor the pageants themselves as being deviant because their neighbors are more accepting of the activity. Pageant moms in other areas may encounter more backlashes from their communities and may have a different interpretation of their experiences. Future research should seek to address these limitations. Future research may also wish to go beyond mothers and talk to fathers as well as others who contribute to pageant production such as directors, judges, hair and makeup artists, photographers, and vendors.

This paper makes an important contribution to the research on child beauty pageants by examining the accounts of pageants moms during this second wave of media attention towards child beauty pageants. During the first wave of media attention Helsley and Calhoun found that pageants moms attempt to neutralize their own participation in child beauty pageants. This is perhaps not surprising considering the media attention during this time was more focused on pageant mothers. In this paper, I find that the

mothers focus less on themselves and justifying their participation, and more on justifying and neutralizing the deviance of child beauty pageants. I am arguing this is because the media's focus has shifted towards portraying the pageants as being deviant and harmful to children, with less focus places on the mothers. The mothers in this study attempt to neutralize the deviance placed on the contestants and pageantry. In fact, in some cases the mothers argue that the beauty pageants themselves are not deviant at all. However they do recognize that the broader culture perceives pageants as being deviant and harmful to children and they therefore do attempt to neutralize this deviance.

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APPENDIX A

Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Parental Experiences with Child Beauty Pageants

WHY ARE YOU BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH?

You are being invited to take part in a research study about your experiences being involved in child beauty pageants. You are being invited to take part in this research study because you are a consenting adult who has volunteered to share your experiences. If you volunteer to take part in this study, you will be one of about 15 people to do so.

WHO IS DOING THE STUDY?

The person in charge of this study is Darla Smith of University of Memphis Department of Sociology. Her faculty advisor, Dr. Jeni Loftus, is guiding her in this research. There may be other people on the research team assisting at different times during the study.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?

This study seeks to examine how and if parents of beauty pageant contestants perceive themselves as deviant for participating in this activity and, if so, in what ways do they verbally construct their sense of self in the face of being perceived as deviant.

ARE THERE REASONS WHY YOU SHOULD NOT TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?

If you are younger than the age of 18, you should not take part in this study. If your child has not competed in a pageant in the last 12 months, you should not take part in this study. If you are a relative of the researcher, you should not take part in this study. If you are a personal friend of the researcher, you should not take part in this study.

WHERE IS THE STUDY GOING TO TAKE PLACE AND HOW LONG WILL IT LAST?

You will have the choice to participate in either a face-to-face interview or a telephone interview. If you choose to participate in the telephone interview, it is not within the researcher's ability to control the privacy within your physical location during the phone interview. The researcher will take all possible measures to secure privacy on her end of the line, however if you are engaging in the telephone interview while in a public place, the researcher will not be able to control who might overhear the conversation. If you elect to participate in face-to-face interview, you will have a choice of setting. The researcher is willing to meet you at a mutually agreed upon safe, non-public, location. The one-time interview will take anywhere between 30 minutes to 2 hours.

WHAT WILL YOU BE ASKED TO DO?

You will be asked to take part in a private interview. No identifying information will be taken from you. You will work with the Investigator to create a pseudonym (false name). This will serve as the only identifier for you. With your permission, interviews will be recorded. No identifying questions, such as real name or phone numbers, will be asked. The recordings will be stored in a locked file until the end of the project, at which

time they will be destroyed. Transcripts will be made for each recording. The survey and transcript will be kept in a separate locked file from the audio recordings. Any identifying information that might come up during the interview, such as a high school name or address will be replaced with a false name. An example is instead of East High School, something along the lines of Urban High School or Rural High School will be substituted.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS?

To the best of our knowledge, the things you will be doing have no more risk of harm than you would experience in everyday life. You may find some questions we ask to be upsetting or stressful. If so, we can refer you to the following mental health hotline that you may use: 1-800-950-6264 (national Alliance on Mental Illness).

WILL YOU BENEFIT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

There is no guarantee that you will get any benefit from taking part in this study are no direct benefits to you. Your willingness to take part, however, may, in the future, help society as a whole better understand participation in beauty pageants.

DO YOU HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY?

If you decide to take part in the study, it should be because you really want to volunteer. You will not lose any benefits or rights you would normally have if you choose not to volunteer. You can stop at any time during the study and still keep the benefits and rights you had before volunteering.

IF YOU DON'T WANT TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY, ARE THERE OTHER CHOICES?

If you do not want to be in the study, there are no other choices except not to take part in the study.

WHAT WILL IT COST YOU TO PARTICIPATE?

There are no costs associated with taking part in the study.

WILL YOU RECEIVE ANY REWARDS FOR TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

You will not receive any rewards or payment for taking part in the study.

WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION THAT YOU GIVE?

We will make every effort to keep private all research records that identify you to the extent allowed by law.

Your information will be combined with information from other people taking part in the study. When we write about the study to share it with other researchers, we will write about the combined information we have gathered. You will not be personally identified in these written materials. We may publish the results of this study; however, we will keep your name and other identifying information private.

We will make every effort to prevent anyone who is not on the research team from knowing that you gave us information, or what that information is.

No identifying information will be taken from you. You will work with the

Investigator to create a pseudonym (false name), which will serve as the only identifier for you. With your permission, interviews will be recorded, but no identifying questions, such as name or phone numbers, will be asked. The recordings will be stored in a locked file until the end of the project, at which time they will be destroyed. Transcripts will be made for each recording, however; only a pseudonym (false name) will be used. Any identifying information that might come up during the interview, such as a high school name or address will be replaced with a broad description. An example is instead of East High School, something along the lines of Urban High School or Rural High School will be substituted. You will have an option of telephone or face-to-face interviews. The setting for face-to-face interviews will also be flexible within reason. These options allow you to choose a location that is comfortable and secure. If you opt for telephone interviews, the researcher cannot control who might overhear the conversation on your end of the line. All measures will be taken to secure privacy for you on the researcher's end of the conversation. We will keep private all research records that identify you to the extent allowed by law. However, there are some circumstances in which we may have to show your information to other people. For example, the law may require us to show your information to a court or to tell authorities if you report information about a child being abused or if you pose a danger to yourself or someone else. Also, we may be required to show information which identifies you to people who need to be sure we have done the research correctly; these would be people from such organizations as the University of Memphis.

CAN YOUR TAKING PART IN THE STUDY END EARLY?

If you decide to take part in the study you still have the right to decide at any time that you no longer want to continue. You will not be treated differently if you decide to stop taking part in the study.

The individuals conducting the study may need to withdraw you from the study. This may occur if you are not able to follow the directions they give you or if the researcher decides to stop the study early for a variety of scientific reasons.

ARE YOU PARTICIPATING OR CAN YOU PARTICIPATE IN ANOTHER RESEARCH STUDY AT THE SAME TIME AS PARTICIPATING IN THIS ONE?

You may take part in this study if you are currently involved in another research study. It is important to let the investigator/your doctor know if you are in another research study.

WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU GET HURT OR SICK DURING THE STUDY?

While we do not foresee any reason why you would have an injury or illness from participating in this study, it is important for you to understand that the University of Memphis does not have funds set aside to pay for the cost of any care or treatment that might be necessary if you get hurt or sick while taking part in this study

WHAT IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS, SUGGESTIONS, CONCERNS, OR COMPLAINTS?

Before you decide whether to accept this invitation to take part in the study, please ask any questions that might come to mind now. Later, if you have questions, suggestions, concerns, or complaints about the study, you can contact the investigator, Darla Smith at dcsmith6@memphis.edu or 901-734-4838. If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, you may contact Jacqueline Y. Reid, Administrator for the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, via e-mail atirb@memphis.edu or by phone at 901-678-3074. We will give you a copy of this consent form to take with you.

WHAT IF NEW INFORMATION IS LEARNED DURING THE STUDY THAT MIGHT AFFECT YOUR DECISION TO PARTICIPATE?

You may choose to stop the interview process at any time and withdraw information from the study.

WHAT HAPPENS TO MY PRIVACY IF I AM INTERVIEWED?

The only identifying information attached to any document or recording will be the pseudonym (false name). Recordings and transcripts will be kept in a locked file until the study has been completed. Recordings will be kept in a locked file separate from your transcripts and demographic survey information. After completion of the study, all recordings and transcripts will be destroyed.

WHAT ELSE DO YOU NEED TO KNOW?

Your continuation with this study indicates that you agree to the following:

- 1) I have been informed of any and all possible risks or discomforts.
- 2) I have read the statements contained in this consent form and have had the opportunity to fully discuss my concerns and questions, and fully discuss the nature and character of my involvement in this research project as a human subject, and the attendant risks and consequences.
- 3) I am 18 years or older.

Signature of person agreeing to take part in the study

Date

Printed name of person agreeing to take part in the study

Name of [Authorized] person obtaining informed consent

Date

APPENDIX B

COVER SHEET

SECTION I:

FIRST, WE'D LIKE TO ASK YOU A FEW QUESTIONS ABOUT YOURSELF.

1. Age _____

2. Gender _____

3. Is your ancestry

- White (non-Hispanic)
- Latina/Hispanic
- Black or African-American
- Native American
- Asian
- Pacific Islander
- Other (specify) _____

4. Occupation:

5. What is the highest level of standard education you have received:

- 8th grade or less
- Some high school
- High school
- Some college or two year degree
- Four-year college degree
- Advanced degree

6. Approximate total household income

- Under \$15,000
- \$15,000-19,999
- \$20,000-29,999
- \$30,000-39,999
- \$40,000-49,999
- \$50,000-74,999
- \$75,000-99,999
- \$100,000-150,000
- Over \$150,000

7. How many children do you have? _____

8. How many children do you have that have participated in beauty pageants?

SECTION II:

IN THIS SECTION, WE'D LIKE YOU TO KNOW ABOUT YOUR SIGNIFICANT OTHER, IF YOU HAVE ONE.

9. Are you currently in a significant relationship with another person?

- Yes
- No

10. If yes, what is the relationship status?

- Currently married
- Currently living together and not married
- In a significant relationship but not married and not living together

11. Have you ever been divorced?

- Yes
- No

If you are currently in a significant relationship, please answer the following questions about that individual. (If you are not currently in a significant relationship, please skip ahead to question 15.)

12. What is the ancestry of the person with whom you are in a significant relationship?

- White (non-Hispanic)
- Latina/Hispanic
- Black or African-American
- Native American
- Asian
- Pacific Islander
- Other (specify) _____

13. What is the highest level of standard education your significant other has received?

- 8th grade or less
- Some high school
- High school
- Some college or associates degree
- Four-year college degree
- Advanced degree

14. Significant other's occupation :

15. In any written reports for this project you will be identified by a pseudonym (fake name). If there is a name you would like us to use for you, please indicate it here:

APPENDIX C
INTERVIEW GUIDE

Tell me about yourself.

Tell me about your child(ren).

Tell me the story of how your child became involved in pageants.

Whose idea was it to participate?

What has been good about having your child participate in beauty pageants?

What has been bad about having your child participate in beauty pageants?

Tell me the story of your very best experience of having your child participate in beauty
pageants.

Tell me the story of the very worst day of having your child participate in beauty
pageants.

How do you and your child prepare for a pageant?

Have you seen pageant culture described in the mainstream media?

What was it like?

Do you feel it was accurate?

Why or Why not?

In general, do you think mainstream media portrayals of beauty pageant culture are
accurate, or not?

Do your family and friends support your child's participation in pageants?

Has anyone been unsupportive of your child's participation?

If yes, How so? How did you respond to that?

Have you ever felt criticized for participating in pageants with your child?

If yes, how did these criticisms make you feel?

Have you ever felt like your child was discriminated against because of his/her participation in pageants?

If yes, Tell me about it, What happened?

Have pageants influenced your child's life outside of pageants?

If yes, How so? If no, Why not?

What does the future look like for you and your child regarding your participation in beauty pageants?

Are there any questions you were expecting me to ask that I did not ask?

Are there any questions I should be asking about their child's participation in beauty pageants?

Is there anything you think people really need to know about parents with children who compete in beauty pageants?

*Thank you for taking the time to participate in this interview!

APPENDIX D

IRB APPROVAL

The University of Memphis Institutional Review Board, FWA00006815, has reviewed and approved your submission in accordance with all applicable statutes and regulations as well as ethical principles.

PI NAME: Darla Smith

CO-PI: PROJECT TITLE: Parental Experiences with Child Beauty Pageants

FACULTY ADVISOR NAME (if applicable): Jeni Loftus

IRB ID: #2885 APPROVAL DATE: 11/1/2013

EXPIRATION DATE: 10/31/2014

LEVEL OF REVIEW: Expedited

Please Note: Modifications do not extend the expiration of the original approval

Approval of this project is given with the following obligations:

- 1. If this IRB approval has an expiration date, an approved renewal must be in effect to continue the project prior to that date. If approval is not obtained, the human consent form(s) and recruiting material(s) are no longer valid and any research activities involving human subjects must stop.**
- 2. When the project is finished or terminated, a completion form must be completed and sent to the board.**
- 3. No change may be made in the approved protocol without prior board approval, whether the approved protocol was reviewed at the Exempt, Expedited or Full Board level.**
- 4. Exempt approval are considered to have no expiration date and no further review is necessary unless the protocol needs modification.**

Approval of this project is given with the following special obligations:

Note: Review outcomes will be communicated to the email address on file. This email should be considered an official communication from the UM IRB. Consent Forms are no longer being stamped as well. Please contact the IRB at IRB@memphis.edu if a letter on IRB letterhead is required.