

**We Don't Talk About Influence: An Analysis of Disney's *Encanto* & Its Influence on  
Viewers' Perceptions of Colombian Culture**

**By**

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I have no known conflict of interest to disclose.

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**Approvals**

This Master's Thesis is accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation from the School of Communication and The Arts at Liberty University.

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### **Abstract**

The purpose of this study, “We Don’t Talk About Influence: An Analysis of Disney’s Encanto & Its Influence on Viewers’ Perceptions of Colombian Culture,” was to analyze the way Colombian culture is presented in Disney’s *Encanto* as well as to determine whether viewers of *Encanto* learn and develop a favorable view of Colombia and Colombian culture after watching the film. In this qualitative research study, 20 participants completed two questionnaires, which were used to determine their perceptions of Colombian culture prior to and after watching *Encanto*. The collected data was analyzed through the lens of the communication strategy of entertainment-education. This research bridges the current gap in the literature concerning the examination of how Colombian culture is perceived based on an artifact that accurately depicts the culture. This study contributes to the current base of literature in the areas of intercultural communication, entertainment-education, and movies as a form of communication. The findings of this study indicate that Disney’s *Encanto* did contribute to a favorable viewer perception of Colombian culture.

*Keywords:* Colombia, intercultural communication, entertainment-education, perceptions

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## Chapter I: Introduction

Just a short time ago, Colombian culture appeared to be at the forefront of many people's minds and social media as they sang and danced along to "We Don't Talk About Bruno." This song had been on TikTok, in the news, and topped music charts as Disney's most famous song in history. This song is just one of the numerous songs found in Disney's *Encanto* (IMDB, n.d.). The movie became wildly popular at the end of 2021 and showcased the country of Colombia. As people of all ages have watched this movie on repeat, a discussion of the presented Colombian culture also appears to be afoot. The film seems to have sparked an interest in learning more about the magical land where the characters live and to examine whether this land is as magical as it appears in the movie. Though, in *Encanto*, Colombia is displayed as a magical place that is full of vibrant culture and joyous people, it appears that some people believe this to be true only of the fictitious land shown in the film.

### Overview

The purpose of this qualitative research was to analyze the way Colombian culture is presented in Disney's *Encanto* as well as to determine whether viewers of *Encanto* learn and develop a favorable view of Colombia and Colombian culture after watching the film. The problem that is being investigated is that individuals have a misconception of Colombia and Colombian culture due to misrepresentation of Colombia by the media. This chapter is an introduction to the rest of this study. The contents of this chapter include a background of the study, the problem statement, the purpose statement, the significance of the study, the research questions, and this chapter ends with a summary.

## **Background**

The following study observes individuals' perceptions of other cultures, how perceptions are garnered through consumption of mass media, specifically film, and how media organizations communicate other cultures through film to international audiences. Film as a form of mass media communication has been used for decades to communicate different narratives to audiences around the world. This is significant as individuals from around the world can consume the media that is communicated through such films, thus when media organizations choose to depict another culture, certain ethical responsibilities come with that choice. Filmmakers sometimes make choices concerning how they communicate elements about a culture, which audiences of those films are then exposed to. In turn, audience members must determine what facets of the illustrated culture are accurate to that culture and which are not. This can prove to be difficult for audience members who have not directly interacted with or been to the illustrated culture. This has proven specifically true of the Colombian culture and its corresponding representation within the media. Consequently, this research study investigates how Disney's *Encanto* affects viewer perception of Colombia and Colombian culture as well as whether viewers have a favorable perception of the culture after watching the film.

## ***Historical Overview***

Historically, individuals from other cultures have not been able to agree on how Colombia and Colombian culture should be viewed. Some people appear to not think of Colombia as a vibrant, diverse, warm, urban, or passionate nation. Rather, some individuals think of drug trafficking and guerilla warfare as the primary features which come to mind when thinking of Colombia (Naef, 2018). Both elements are certainly part of Colombia's history, but they should not define the country. Pablo Escobar, perhaps, is the most remembered Colombian

in history, and this has left a stain on what many people believe Colombia to be and stand for. Due to “the infamous drug lord Pablo Escobar” and his heinous reputation around the world, Colombia remains “a key symbol of narco-business” (Naef, 2018, p. 485). This drug mogul has cast a shadow over what Colombia is because of the countless murders and enormous cocaine smuggling operation orchestrated by him and carried out by his cartel members throughout the late 1900s (Naef, 2018). The drug trade that ran rampant in Colombia seems to have become a defining factor in many people’s perception of what Colombia is.

When considering Colombia, people may also think of guerilla warfare as “violence as a means of political discourse, insurgent and guerilla action has utilized weaknesses in the state to increase their political demands” (Young & Gray, 2011, p. 65). In the 1960s, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – in Spanish, and henceforth referred to in this paper, as Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) – was created (Leech, 2011; Troyan, 2008). This group used violence and terrorism to gain control by instilling fear in the public (Leech, 2011). Over the years, this revolutionary guerilla group has made attempts to control territory throughout Colombia, especially in areas that are not heavily populated, and participated in arms and drug trafficking (Leech, 2011). Even though a peace treaty was signed between FARC and the Colombian government in 2016, there are still some active members who will act on behalf of the organization in a similar manner as before the treaty (U.S. Department of State, 2021). This group has caused considerable turmoil over the decades, and this may have also had an impact on individuals from other countries’ perceptions of Colombian culture. Due to the long history of drug and arms trade as well as acts of violence from cartels and guerilla groups, it appears that some people have perspectives about Colombia that are in direct contradiction to the

way Colombian culture is presented in Disney's *Encanto* (Naef, 2018; Martínez & Aristizábal, 2019).

From Walt Disney Animation Studios' "first fully-animated feature film— 1937's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* to 2022's *Strange World*," there is a long legacy of animated movies from this family entertainment enterprise (Disney Enterprises, Inc., 2022). Disney has produced a variety of films. Many of these films give a glimpse into cultures around the world, such as the film *Mulan*'s presentation of Chinese culture and the film *Moana*'s presentation of Asian-Pacific culture. Released on November 24, 2021, "Walt Disney Animation Studios' "Encanto" tells the tale of an extraordinary family, the Madrigals, who live hidden in the mountains of Colombia, in a magical house, in a vibrant town, in a wondrous, charming place called an Encanto" (Disney, n.d., para. 1). Like many Disney movies, the film brings the situation to life with settings containing vivid imagery and striking details. Throughout the movie, Disney illustrates Colombian culture through music, imagery, historical references, and humor, among other things, to give viewers a taste of what Colombia is like. There are several references to Colombian history in the film, such as tall palm trees from Colombia's Valle de Cocora, guerilla warfare, typical Colombian cuisine like arepas con queso, coffee, buñuelos, and ajiaco, common children's toys, traditional clothing, allusions to Colombian Nobel Prize for Literature winner Gabriel Garcia Marquez's yellow butterflies, and more (Baker, 2022; Carrier, 2022).

In the movie, Mirabel Madrigal is the only person in her family who was not given a unique gift by the Encanto, magical home, that her family lives in (Disney, n.d.). The family is given unique gifts in order to serve and support the local community. However, after Mirabel "discovers that the magic surrounding the Encanto is in danger, Mirabel decides that she, the

only ordinary Madrigal, might just be her exceptional family's last hope" (Disney, n.d., para. 1). The movie tells the story of how Mirabel uncovers secrets within her family, navigates familial tension and dysfunctional communication, helps several family members realize where their true worth lies, and ultimately saves the magical home they live in. The Madrigal family could be said to represent the whole of Colombia as they are of varying skin tones, have ranging levels of expressiveness, and hold a strong conviction to the responsibility to their family.

### ***Societal Impact***

In modern society, movies are a part of everyday life, and this is highly unlikely to change in the future. Movies are a central means by which modern societies communicate narratives and entertain audiences around the world (Kerrigan, 2018). As film is considered as a communication tool, the societal impact that they have cannot be overlooked nor underestimated. Onyekuru et al. (2020) explain that film has truly shaped even the most remote parts of society due to individuals' access to it worldwide. Due to the ease of accessibility, there are more opportunities for the communicative content within the films themselves to be cause for change. Audiences around the world can be exposed to differing points of view with relative simplicity. Junsheng et al. (2019) write that mass media, including movies, is one of the most influential tools for employing social change in modern society. This then informs how individuals can make assumptions and gain perceptions of other cultures based on how they are portrayed in films. Martínez and Aristizábal (2019) explain that Colombia has often been portrayed in a light that only emphasizes its history of violence, displacement, narco-trafficking, and other dire situations. The combination of the possibility of movies being utilized for communicative and persuasive purposes, the reality that individuals develop assumptions based on the media they consume, and the manner in which Colombia has been represented in the media in the past

presents a particular phenomenon to be considered. With this in mind, the benefits of this study to society include furthering current literature concerning intercultural communication and increasing public knowledge on how biases, perceptions, and stereotypes of other cultures can be affected by watching films.

### ***Theoretical Overview***

This study employed entertainment-education (E-E) as a means by which to determine whether Disney's *Encanto* informs its audience on Colombian culture in addition to entertaining audience members. This communication strategy was developed by Miguel Sábido to rhetorically analyze telenovelas in the 1960s (Singhal & Rogers, 2002). Sábido sought to understand how these television dramas educated audiences on a variety of health-based topics while also providing a means of entertainment, which would allow more individuals to watch the presented media. This communication strategy is informed by several communication theories, but the main communication theories that inform this communication strategy are social cognitive theory (Wood & Bandura, 1989) and the extended-elaboration likelihood model (Slater, 2002; Moyer-Gusé, 2008). Through the use of this communication strategy, consumers of different media can be both entertained, meaning viewers want to continue watching the media, and educated on topics that they may not be prone to consuming information based on. E-E was used in this study as a lens for the researcher to analyze and compare answers given in both the primary and secondary questionnaires. The researcher sought to determine whether viewer perception of Colombian culture has changed based on answers to questions before and after watching Disney's *Encanto*, which is why this communication strategy was selected as a means by which to analyze the findings in this study.

### *Author's Background*

Throughout the author's childhood, their father traveled consistently for work and would tell the author stories of his travels as well as bring back soccer jerseys from the countries to which he travelled. They would listen to stories of the people and places that the father had seen, and the author would imagine what it might be like to travel the world and to interact with all the people their father had talked about. Thus, the author became interested with intercultural interactions from a young age.

The author first, personally interacted with another culture through immersion when in when they were an adolescent. In 2011, the author was plunged into a culture entirely different than anything they had previously experienced in the United States when their family moved to Stuttgart, Germany. The author enjoyed expanding their point of view, learning about other cultures through this immersion, traveling throughout Europe, and eating lots of great food along the way. Since their two years in Germany, and over the past 12 years, the author has participated in formal language learning, nine and a half of which focused on the Spanish language.

Through numerous courses taken by the author in secondary education and undergraduate studies, a deep appreciation for and an interest in, Latin American culture was established. The author first visited a Spanish-speaking country, in December 2020, when they went to Bogotá, Colombia for three weeks. During this trip, the author stayed with a Colombian family, learned about the culture, and grew their appreciation for the ways people from differing cultural backgrounds live. This brief stint of time in Colombia allowed the author to gain a new understanding of the Latin American tradition as well as piece together more of their own understanding of Colombian culture and the importance of effective intercultural



communication. Additionally, the author learned of the many stereotypes and preconceptions that they were unaware they had developed about Colombia before visiting. This trip has played a foundational role in the desire for sharing the true beauty of Colombia with others, rather than simply allowing others to know it by what it has come to be known through the lens of popular culture.

In November of 2021, when Disney's *Encanto* was released in theaters, the author immediately went to see the film with their family, and they were instantly enamored with the way Disney brought Colombia to life on screen. After watching the film at the theater, the author spent time researching what went into making the film, the inspiration for the film, watching videos on social media about it, and talking about the importance of the film with others. While the author already enjoyed plenty of Disney movies, this specific film quickly became one of their all-time favorite animated movies.

A few months later, from May to July 2022, the author spent time living and working in Quito, Ecuador. Throughout this time, the author spent their time growing their knowledge of the Spanish language as they were fully immersed in the culture. Through this experience, the author uncovered some of their own personal bias or preconceptions concerning Latin American cultures. These same thoughts and uncovering of biases were further developed and enhanced when the author visited Colombia a second time from December 2022 through January 2023. During this second trip to Colombia, the author visited Hacienda Nápoles, which was once Pablo Escobar's lavish personal estate, as well as Barichara, known as the most beautiful town in Colombia, and the Valle de Cocora which both served as major sources of inspiration for the setting of Disney's *Encanto*. As the author learned more about their own preconceptions over time, they sought to understand why these preconceptions were developed in the first place and

how to think about other cultures from a viewpoint that is based on accuracy rather than stereotypes or predispositions. Through this desire and search for truth in thinking about other cultures, the concept for this study was truly born. The purpose of this qualitative research was to analyze the way Colombian culture is presented in Disney's *Encanto* as well as to determine whether viewers of *Encanto* learn and develop a favorable view of Colombia and Colombian culture after watching the film.

### **Problem Statement**

This study endeavored to determine the effect of Disney's *Encanto* on viewer perception of Colombia and Colombian culture. The problem is that current scholarly literature has not altogether addressed how film viewers perceive Colombian culture, specifically in relation to a piece of media that accurately depicts the culture. As scholars seek to understand how perceptions of other cultures are formulated based on media representations of said cultures, it is worthwhile to consider whether the artifact is a faithful exemplification of the culture. There also appears to be a gap in current scholarly literature concerning the importance of portraying other cultures accurately in films. Thus, this study addresses that topic in Chapter II: Literature Review. There is significant research dedicated to intercultural communication as well as how Colombia has been represented within the media; however, little research exists concerning perceptions of cultural otherness, with even less in specific regard to Colombia exclusively. Other studies have addressed how Colombia has been portrayed in reference to its violent history, both fictionally and in accurate accounts of the events that have transpired in the nation. However, this study addresses the influence of additional aspects of the country's culture, other than its violent history but not exclusive of it, in *Encanto* and how the portrayal of the country affects viewer perception of the nation and culture at large. This study is beneficial to the field of

communication overall because it adds to the field of research on intercultural communication, brings more awareness to how other cultures are presented within mass media outlets, and informs on how media can be both entertaining and educational simultaneously.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative research was to analyze the way Colombian culture is presented in Disney's *Encanto* as well as to determine whether viewers of *Encanto* learn and develop a favorable view of Colombia and Colombian culture after watching the film. In, Chapter II: Literature Review, an examination of the current literature regarding the topic at hand is presented, then Chapter III: Methodology reports a more in-depth overview of the organization and procedure that was used to conduct this study. Following this, Chapter IV: Findings provides a background of the results of the study. Data revealed in this chapter highlights the perceptions that participants held concerning Colombia and Colombian culture prior to and after watching Disney's *Encanto*. This information also provided the researcher with further insights into the thoughts and understanding that participants had in relation to how Colombia is represented in the media. This was insightful as it allowed the researcher to contribute to existing qualitative and entertainment-education literature in a more meaningful manner. Lastly, Chapter V: Discussion provides a dialogue concerning the data that was uncovered throughout the entirety of this study as well as concluding thoughts.

### **Significance of the Study**

Each person and organization have an ethical responsibility to illustrate cultures honestly and accurately within any piece of media. Since individuals can already have preconceptions of other cultures before they know much about them or have ever interacted with said culture, illustrating cultures accurately across all mediums is even more important because viewers can

develop further predispositions based on how any given culture is illustrated. Movies are a form of mass communication that are easily accessible and widely used around the world, and cultures are constantly illustrated through this form of visual storytelling. This topic is of importance to communication scholars because biases towards or against other cultures can be cultivated due to the ways said cultures are communicated to audiences through a variety of mediums, including movies. There is a plethora of information and research present on this aspect of communication studies, but this study focused specifically on audience perceptions of cultural otherness regarding the Colombian culture exclusively.

Additionally, this study is important for individuals interested in coming to understand other cultures in a way that is based on truth rather than potentially unfounded misconceptions. This study aimed to provide readers with a greater understanding of intercultural communication by means of film. The study did this by achieving results that provide value to its readers concerning intercultural communication from characters in a film to the viewers of said film, specifically through the lens of Disney's *Encanto*. While there are only characters from Colombia portrayed in the film, this film is intercultural in nature because the film was created for international audiences, many of whom are not Colombian or will not interact with Colombian culture in their lifetime. This study sought to understand how the Colombian culture was communicated to audiences in Disney's *Encanto* as well as how the film influenced viewers' perceptions of Colombia. This study intended to determine and explain how individuals from other cultures viewed the Colombian culture before watching *Encanto* in comparison to their views of the culture after watching the film. This study contributes to literature within the field of communication that focuses on the communication strategy of entertainment-education.

**Research Question**

For this qualitative research study, the following research question was proposed, and the researcher sought to gain data throughout this process:

⇒ Do the cultures and stereotypes communicated in Disney's *Encanto* contribute to favorable viewer perceptions of Colombian culture?

**Summary**

This thesis is a report of a qualitative study, and it was conducted using two questionnaires. The purpose of this qualitative research was to analyze the way Colombian culture is presented in Disney's *Encanto* as well as to determine whether viewers of *Encanto* learn and develop a favorable view of Colombia and Colombian culture after watching the film. This study is of importance to the field of communication as it relates to how biases, perceptions, and stereotypes of other cultures can be affected by watching films. This chapter included the relevant background of the study, problem statement, purpose statement, significance of the study, and delineated the research question.

## Chapter II: Literature Review

### Overview

This paper evaluates how Disney's *Encanto* affects viewer perception of Colombian culture. As noted in Chapter I: Introduction, and discussed in more detail in Chapter III: Methodology, this study utilized two questionnaires to evaluate the collected information through a qualitative method. The researcher sought to understand how Colombian culture is understood by participants before watching the movie, then compared this to perceptions of Colombian culture after the film was viewed. This chapter contains a review of relevant literature to better understand the context and background of the study.

The first section of this literature review explains how movies are a medium of communication. This is important and relevant to the study as the primary artifact was an animated movie produced by Disney, called *Encanto*. Also in this section, a discussion of movies as a means of persuasion is presented. Then, the important topic of intercultural communication is introduced. This topic is vital to this study as the study hinges on the consideration of the Colombian culture being communicated to other cultures. Topics within this section of the literature review are especially important as they are vital to understand how the study was developed and created.

Next, a discussion of Colombian culture is presented. In Disney's *Encanto*, the setting is a magical version of Colombia. An understanding of Colombian culture is vital when looking at the film. Related to this, in the third section of this literature review, an overview of Colombian culture as portrayed by the media, meaning portrayals of Colombian culture in popular television and movies, is presented. The purpose of including this in the presented

research is to provide context on how perceptions of Colombian culture can be based off media that is sometimes biased.

The subsequent sections focus on Disney itself. The fourth section of this literature review focuses on animated Disney films. Research concerning these movies is important as it provides a history of how Disney films have impacted popular culture around the world and the history of the films. After reviewing animated films produced by Disney, a section is consequently provided to address how Disney films are often gendered, focus on popular topics within the media, and do not necessarily stay true to the fairy tales that the stories are based on. This relates to the study as it shows how films affect individuals and their perceptions of different topics. For Disney films, this topic is typically in reference to perceptions of gender roles and cultural otherness. Accordingly, a section is presented that includes an in-depth discussion of how Disney has historically presented differing cultures in their movies. Since the focus of the study is to better understand how *Encanto* affects viewer perception of Colombian culture, an understanding of how cultural otherness is presented in Disney films is necessary. The second to last section is presented to discuss information as it relates to the movie, *Encanto*. Since participants in this study watched this movie between taking the separate questionnaires, readers need to understand what the film is, how it is regarded within society, and information about its rise to notoriety.

The final section of this literature review concentrates on the communication strategy that informs this research. An in-depth discussion on current literature concerning entertainment-education is presented, including how the communication strategy came into being, defining how the strategy is used, what this strategy is within the field of communication, and current literature that exists that has used entertainment-education as a lens. There are several communication

theories that inform the use of entertainment-education, the main two—social cognitive theory and the extended-elaboration likelihood model—are discussed. Studies using these theories use the socio-psychological tradition, thus this tradition is defined.

### **Movies as a Medium of Communication**

Communication is a vital part of daily life, and there are variety of forms of mass communication that most individuals partake in each day, including watching movies. Kerrigan (2018) argues that movies are more than simply something to watch but they are a storytelling device that can be used to change emotions, entertain, educate, record history, serve as cultural icons, and more. B. C. Johnson (2015) explains that movies play an important role in shaping individual's worldview and individual identity. Fearing (1947) explains the significance of film to the individual in the following way:

Like the folk tale, classic drama, primitive story-telling, or the medieval morality play, the film may be regarded as a means through which the individual understands himself, his social role, and the values of his group. It is also a means by which the individual orients himself in a universe of events which appear to occur haphazardly and chaotically. His need for meaningful experience is a need for order This need has emotional components, since the lack of coherence in experience creates anxiety within the individual, from which he seeks relief. (p. 70)

Ward (2002) shares how storytelling through popular films has become a hallmark of modern society. They further add to the discussion by explaining that films can both educate, entertain, and communicate all types of stories to audiences (Ward, 2002). There is a certain potential power that movies have due to the combination of dialogue, visuals, and music (Ward, 2002). When information is shared with an audience in a narrative manner is it more likely to be



remembered (Wyer et al., 2002). This goes to show the communicative benefits of utilizing this medium depending on the objectives of the message at hand.

Rieger and Hofer (2017) explain how movies can help ease intense emotions about difficult topics, such as the fear of death, for some viewers. Movies can help individuals cope with topics like death depending on the way things are communicated in the film, such as when the protagonist of a film dies in a meaningful way. Martínez and Aristizábal (2019) maintain that “[l]iterature, film, graphic novels, *telenovelas*, and various forms of artistic practices are privileged sites for interrogating hegemonic ideas about historical violence ... and allow for a productive unpacking ... both at the symbolic and the systemic level” (p. 12). Houseman (1956) writes that movies in the United States have become vague symbols of the American Dream and that there is an opportunity for films to be more than just an escape from the realities of everyday life or the mere flaunting of accessible luxuries. In each of these ways, movies are more than what they appear to be at first glance and there is an opportunity for movies to have an even greater effect on viewers due to the potential persuasive nature.

### ***Movies as a Means of Persuasion***

Since many movies are viewed by international audiences, there is an opportunity for media conglomerates to share messages, products, ideals, and the like with a large and willing group of consumers. While some individuals realize the persuasive messages being portrayed within films and simply dismiss them as such, not all viewers are adept to identifying the messages within the content they consume. Junsheng et al. (2019) discuss how mass media, including movies, is conceivably one of the most authoritative mechanisms for implementing social change in modern society. Building off the work of Junsheng, Onyekuru et al. (2020) present how climate change can be affected by movies, writing that:

Movies like many other forms of entertainment (music, literature, story-telling, and dance) have been the source of communication since the origin of cinema and have permeated every facet of human endeavors, from personal life to family lives, to the community, and throughout the fields of science, art, culture, and politics. (p. 415)

Movies, then, can be used as a means of change for social, behavioral, health, educational issues, and more. They provide an opportunity for the makers of movies to communicate about a wide variety of issues, if used effectively. This is not necessarily indicative that a behavior change is caused by viewing a specific film or genre of films frequently though. As BeVier (2004) remarks, images and videos produced in popular media do not provide ample cause or correlation to violent actions taken by individuals who have viewed movies with violent themes included.

Individuals have recounted how mass media, such as movies, can be used for persuasive purposes. In their study, Igartua and Barrios (2012) examined how controversial movies could be utilized to change participants' real-world beliefs. They found, through using the extended-elaboration likelihood model, that participants' views concerning religion were negatively affected after watching a controversial film due to the process of narrative persuasion (Igartua & Barrios, 2012). Unsworth (2015) discusses how semiotics communicated within different films can impact viewers' opinions on a wide variety of topics. Taking the conversation a step further, yet in a different direction, Butsch (2001) writes about how movies have insighted fear concerning different topics at times. It has also been discussed that some "media has greater potential to influence students' mindsets in the classroom compared to lectures and discussions. Popular culture materials like documentaries, feature films and television shows, if used effectively, could play a role in facilitating the active learning" in educational settings (Pandey,

2011, p. 330). Giroux (1994) contributes to the conversation by positing that “[t]he significance of animated films as a site of learning is heightened by the widespread recognition that schools and other public sites are increasingly beset by crises of vision, purpose, and motivation” (p. 25). They continue by saying that there is a necessity to question films as content that is educational rather than merely just entertaining in nature (Giroux, 1994). Movies can impact the way people are educated on and see different topics and the world around them because movies themselves are conduits of communicating a variety of ideas and messages to international audiences. B. C. Johnson (2015) agrees, writing that “movies have a knack for creating, maintaining, and inverting social issues in America ... [t]he line between entertainment and educational message is often blurred” (p. 2).

Presenting the conversation concerning movies as a means of persuasion in a different light, Griffin and Sen's (1995) study focuses on the relationship between how well-liked movies about the Vietnam War can impact the perceptions of how veterans readjusted to society after the returning to the United States. This study shows how popular media communicates topics to individuals, even if they do so unintentionally. Media can impact public opinion of many different topics based on the way they are depicted.

Many brands take the opportunity to use product placement in feature films (Li & Liu, 2020; Redondo et al., 2018). In their study, Redondo et al. (2018) utilized social cognitive theory to understand how viewers of films with branded and unbranded alcohol experience those brands in their lives after watching the film. They found that after watching films with an alcohol brand present and few depicted consequences for the film characters after drinking said alcohol, viewers were more likely to purchase that brand in the future (Redondo et al., 2018). Li and Liu (2020) explain how micro-movies have been used more recently as a means by which to

persuade audiences to travel to new destinations. They explain that “the storylines of tourism micro-movie can be used to naturally place a travel attraction or product to persuade viewers in a non-aggressive manner” (Li & Liu, 2020, p. 384). In this way, movies are so much more than just a way to pass time or as a means of entertainment, rather movies are a medium of communication and persuasion.

### **Intercultural Communication**

As one of the foundational features of this study is the idea that when different cultures encounter one another there is the potential for miscommunication, a discussion of intercultural communication is indispensable. This miscommunication can be due to a variety of different causes however, it is vital to consider how to achieve effective intercultural communication. One prominent authority in the field of intercultural communication, Ting-Toomey (2019), defines intercultural communication in the following way:

[A] symbolic exchange and meaning negotiation process between persons of different cultural communities. The general goal of effective intercultural communication is to create shared meanings between intercultural strangers in an interactive situation in a sociocultural-macro environment. (p. 28)

Developing shared meaning is easier said than done between intercultural individuals. Costalas (2009) states that “[s]ensitive awareness of the feelings and perceptions of others and devotion to detail are needed to communicate among cultures” (p.160). They continue by explaining that when intercultural communication exchanges occur, individuals will judge the situation and the other individual through their own cultural lens (Costalas, 2009). This is made more difficult as individuals grapple with the difference between the culture and identity. Hofstede (2005) explains it in this way:

People are conscious of their identity, and to some extent they can change their identity but may not be able to change their cultural conditioning. One's culture, in many cases, is not only a source of deeply felt pride and belonging, but it is often deeply ingrained as part of an individual's worldview. This cultural conditioning denotes the most solid moral circle in which they feel included. (p. 90)

Because of this, it is not hard to understand why individuals bring their own presuppositions of the world, or their worldview, and the individual into each interaction, so this can make intercultural communication more difficult. Since different cultures have different ways of observing the world and each individual thinks differently, misunderstandings can often ensue. As everyone brings their own traditions, norms, language, perceived interaction rules, and more into each interaction, they may not consider the other individual's similar process in the interaction. This is one reason why Hunter et al. (2006) developed the following figure to show the characteristics it requires for someone to have global competence. Hunter et al. explain that each person must understand their own preconceptions, or cultural box, before looking at, or stepping into, someone else's (p. 278). Hunter et al.'s (2006) Global Competence Model shows the different levels of understanding that an individual must achieve in order to attain global competence. The model consists of four layers of concentric circles, with the inner most circle being the epicenter of global competence; the second layer of the model including competencies of diversity, openness, and recognizing others' differences; the third layer's competencies are globalization and world history; and, the outermost circle consists of collaboration across cultures, identifying cultural differences to compete globally, and effective participation both socially and in business globally (Hunter et al., 2006). This model is beneficial to this study as individuals consider their own potential cultural biases when learning about other cultures.

Essentially, Hunter et al. (2006) explains that having an open mindset and actively seeking to comprehend the cultural norms and expectations of others is when true global competence, and therefore effective intercultural communication, can happen.

Other scholars propose that there are different levels of learning when it comes to intercultural communication scholarship. For example, King and Baxter Magolda (2005) suggest that learners progress from being more relatively ethnocentric, meaning they evaluate other cultures according to the standards of their own culture, to a more ethnorelative and mature level, where the learner is more open to other cultures from the beginning. When individuals are unaware of their ethnocentric tendencies, this can lead to a host of difficulties when attempting to engage in intercultural communication because the individual is evaluating the intercultural other according to their own cultural norms and standards. This is important because individuals need to understand the context of the other culture they are interacting with so effective intercultural communication can be attained. When the intercultural other's culture is not understood properly, as explained by King and Baxter Magolda (2005) it can be more difficult for effective intercultural communication to take place. They demonstrate those presumptions of intercultural learning in the following table (King & Baxter Magolda, 2005, p. 576). King & Baxter Magolda's (2005) Three-Dimensional Developmental Trajectory of Intercultural Maturity model shows the progression an individual undergoes to develop intercultural maturity, which includes three levels of development—initial level, intermediate level, and mature level—and three domains of development—cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal. As an individual moves toward the mature level of development, offered in the model, they become more able to participate in effective intercultural communication. This model offers that individuals can often view differences with others as a threat to themselves. The chart suggests that using this

intercultural knowledge the individual has, if they are only willing to view the cultural other as a threat, is nearly impossible. However, if an individual takes the opportunity to view a cultural other's differences as nothing more than differences and an opportunity to learn and grow with that individual, then that individual is no longer a threat to them. In this manner, the cultural other may then even be observed as an equal. In this way, intercultural communication and intercultural maturity, as described by King & Baxter Magolda (2005) are tied together. As one understands and grows in their intercultural maturity level and develops cognitively, they are more inclined to participate in efficacious intercultural communication interactions with cultural others.

When interactions between two or more individuals from different cultures happen, meaning an intercultural communication exchange occurs, there are essentially two main ways that can be utilized to categorize the systems from which the individuals' cultures could have stemmed: low-context or high-context (Hall, 1976). These systems essentially refer to how each culture derives meaning from the way they communicate, meaning that some cultures are more overt in their communication than others. Low-context cultures are characterized by being more explicit, or direct, in their verbal communication style. In contrast to low-context cultures, high-context cultures are described as being more ambiguous in their communication and relying more on the context of the situation and assumed cultural factors. This framework was illustrated and reviewed in Ting-Toomey's (2019) *Low-Context and High-Context Communication Framework*. Ting-Toomey (2019) explains, through the framework model, that low-context cultures tend to have more individualistic values and communicate with linear-logic, verbal-based understanding, and speaker-oriented style. Examples of cultures which use extremely low-context communication include countries like Germany and Denmark whereas countries like

China and Japan use extremely high-context communication (Ting-Toomey, 2019). In contrast, Ting-Toomey (2019) explains, through the framework model, that high-context cultures tend to be more collectivist in nature and use spiral logic, context-based understanding, and listener-oriented style.

A problem can occur, which is central to the discussion of this study, if individuals are not aware of their cultural biases as well as their intercultural maturity level is stereotyping. Cross-cultural communication scholars Hurn and Tomalin (2013) explain that “stereotyping provides a quick, simple way of classifying people, particularly those from other cultures, but it does not allow for variation and may be positive or negative” (p. 13). They go on to explain that stereotyping can be extraordinarily detrimental to intercultural communication because it can encourage racism and promote judgments that are not based on personal experiences with said cultural other. Peng (2010) writes that “[i]n intercultural communication, positive stereotypes can create illusionary expectations toward communication effectiveness, whereas negative stereotypes will, to a large extent, reduce the motivation and confidence of the communicators (p. 245). Yet again, if individuals are unaware of any stereotypes they possess for or against another culture, this can make achieving effective intercultural communication difficult to attain. Peng (2010) explains the importance of breaking down stereotypes by understanding how they are developed as well as knowing how to identify them properly. Peng goes on to posit that individuals need intervention if they have stereotyped other cultures.

### **Colombia and Colombian Culture**

It is relevant to examine Colombia and Colombian culture accordingly as *Encanto* is based in the South American nation. On the national website for Colombia, Brand Colombia (n.d.) provides an internal point of view into Colombia and Colombian culture. From traditional



cuisine to dancing to festivities and traditions, Colombia boasts a variety of different cultural experiences. A common drink that many people may associate with Colombia is coffee, and one of many famous Colombian foods is arepas which are “corn cakes made out of corn dough or precooked corn flour in a flat circular shape, similar to a pancake. It can be cooked on a grill, fried, or roasted” (Brand Colombia, n.d.c, para. 1). Velandia Silva and Diab (2021) write how the coffee region of Tolima, Colombia is a cultural landscape that is a “unique historical and cultural phenomenon” (p. 351). Pineda et al. (2019) continue the dialogue concerning the popular beverage, explaining that Colombian coffee production has molded the nation economically, socially, and culturally.

Since Colombia is known as “the land of a thousand rhythms,” it is no surprise that a highlight of the culture is music and dancing (Brand Colombia, n.d.d, para. 2). Expanding on the musical theme, Olave-Soler (2021) describes how music in Colombia has taken on many different tunes depending on the part of the country as well as what type of influence is most heavy in said region. Olave-Soler (2021) continues to explain that Colombian culture and society have been deeply influenced since the colonial period by “European, Indigenous and African traditions” (p. 39). Restrepo (2018) explains in their article:

Colombia is the country with the third highest Afro-descendant population in the Americas, and the first in Hispanic America. In official data, Afro-Colombians constitute more than 10 percent of the population, although some organizations consider them to be at least a quarter of Colombia's inhabitants. In some regions of the country, such as the Colombian Pacific, Afro-Colombians comprise 90–95 percent of the population. Other areas of the country also present a clear presence of black people, such as the insular and

continental Caribbean, as well as the inter-Andean valleys. Most Afro-Colombians live in cities like Cali, Cartagena, Medellin and [Bogotá]. (p. 460)

This is significant as it shows the extreme diversity of the population that is present in Colombia. This diversity of people has effects which can be seen clearly translated into other aspects of Colombian culture. For example, one of the most popular and well-known musical genres to come from Colombia is known as cumbia, which is “a specific rhythm present prominently along the Colombian Caribbean coast ... [and is] of Black and Indigenous descent” (Olave-Soler, 2021, p. 40). Cabarcas Ortega (2023) writes how Afro-Colombians use a type of music, called champeta, to shape their cultural identity and community. Aldana (2013) agrees, explaining that champeta music has become a means for cultural and political organization for afro-descendants in Colombia. These authors explain that music is more than merely entertainment for Colombians; rather it is a moving force in their lives and a deep segment of their cultural identity. In reference to the arts, in another article, Martínez (2019) specifically details how the Colombian film production industry has soared over the past fifteen years.

Another author, Stanfield (2013), writes extensively about the culture of Colombia, specifically in reference to the geography of this extremely biodiverse nation. Stanfield discusses how the geography of Colombia, with extremely high mountains, coasts on both the Pacific and Atlantic oceans, rainforests, coastal lowlands, and bountiful farming areas, greatly impacts the culture of the nation. Stanfield adds that there are numerous resources found in Colombia, like emeralds, coffee, gold, and coal.

Costalas (2009) explains that Colombia is a culture that would be considered high context, meaning, as more heavily explained in the intercultural communication section of this literature review, that it “is characterized by long-lasting relationships, clearly identified insiders

and outsiders of the culture, spoken agreements, and ingrained and slow-to-change cultural patterns ... how and where it is said, is significant and gives meaning to what is said” (p. 161). In reference to relationships, Adrade Navia et al. (2023) conducted a quantitative study to determine the correlation between relationship marketing and customer loyalty amongst neighborhood stores in Colombia. Their findings indicate that there is a correlation between culture and relationships in these neighborhood stores, specifically finding key indicators of trust, satisfaction, and loyalty being reciprocated between storekeeper and customer. The participants indicated they had “socializing links” with the other parties rather than it simply being a business transaction to them (Adrade Navia et al., 2023). Costalas (2009) would agree with this assertion as they explain that Colombians have a flexible orientation towards and understanding of time since they focus more on their interpersonal relationships. This is just one example of the strong value that Colombians place on relationships in their cultural systems.

Another important aspect that is important to consider within Colombian culture is family dynamics. Di Giunta et al. (2011) explain in their article that mothers and fathers in Colombian families typically have very specific roles. They go on to explain that while the participants in their study did not note a specific correlation between their own personal attributions and attitudes and their children’s successes or failures, fathers did report having more authoritarian features in their parenting than mothers did (Di Giunta et al., 2011). Di Giunta et al. (2011) also discussed the collectivist culture that characterizes Colombian family dynamics, referring to the fact that all family members look to the common interests of the entire family when making individual decisions. Caicedo and Jones (2014) show in their study how Colombian adolescents were less likely to exhibit aggressive behaviors if they were shown love and care from parental figures. This shows the importance of the family to Colombian culture overall and to the

individual as well. In conjunction with the Colombian family, comes the issue of gender dynamics in Colombian culture. Moreno-Gómez et al. (2022) did a study in Colombia and explain how having a parent who is an entrepreneur affects whether the child will choose to also become an entrepreneur or not. They go on to explain that this effect is deepened depending on whether the entrepreneurial parent was the father or the mother of the child in question. Pineda et al. (2019) write that although women in Colombia have a more “traditional participation in domestic work” they have, as recently as 2009, been able to participate more actively in the coffee production industry (p. 65). Addressing the issue of gender in Colombia in a different light, Phelan and True (2021) explain that the inclusion of women in the bargaining efforts between FARC and the Colombian national government in 2017 was a foundational element that led to the ultimate success of the peaceful resolution of those accords.

González Santa Cruz et al. (2020) discuss the culture of Colombia in relation to the booming tourism industry that the nation has seen over the past several years. They write that local communities within the nation have had to work alongside several organizations in an effort to protect their intangible cultural heritage due to the strong influx of tourists in recent years. An example of this intangible cultural heritage in Colombia, as explained by González Santa Cruz et al. (2020), is the town of Popayán's Holy Week celebrations, which have been practiced since the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Another aspect of this article is how tourism has become a part of Colombia's culture. As the country has progressed over the years, Colombia has become a popular tourist destination, and the tourists who visit the nation are often loyal to visit the nation numerous times for its history, accessibility, entertainment, and landscape (Santa Cruz et al., 2020). Cabarcas Ortega (2023) also writes concerning tourism and the cultural heritage of Colombia, but they focus on the coastal city of Cartagena. Their article takes the conversation in

a slightly different direction and discusses racial inequality and how tourism in Cartagena has further affected Afro-Colombians in the area (Cabarcas Ortega, 2023). Restrepo (2018) also discusses these struggles by explaining how the shift to multiculturalism in the country during the 1990s and more recognition of Afro-Colombian communities have brought old forms of racism back to the surface of Colombian society. Naef (2018) illuminates the tourism industry of Colombia in a different light than Cabarcas Ortega, writing about the narco-tourism that has resulted from the years of Pablo Escobar's influence in the country. They explain that Medellín, Colombia, where Escobar and several of the other Medellín Cartel members resided during the 1980s and 1990s, has become a hot spot for tourists looking to explore narco-heritage sites and learn more about the drug mogul.

### **Media Portrayals of Colombian Culture**

Having a firm understanding of how Colombia has already been portrayed by the media is of importance for this study, as much of how Colombia is presented by the media is centered on less favorable portions of the culture or the nation's history. Herrero-Olaizola (2010) explains that mass media corporations frequently take advantage of, commercialize, and fictionalize the contexts of Colombian life in a way that bears false witness to the way Colombia truly is. Expanding on the conversation of Herrero-Olaizola, Martínez and Aristizábal (2019) discuss how Colombia is a nation that has been depicted as a violent country and that this is the only lens by which the nation has been viewed for decades. They continue by explaining that countless variables—such as the migration of individuals looking for better lives who become victims of sex and human trafficking, narcotrafficking, terrorism, and guerrilla warfare, among others—have created a lucrative market for the media to capitalize on and take advantage of. Martínez and Aristizábal (2019) write that “[w]riters, intellectuals, and artists have found themselves ...

encouraging the exploitation of dire social and political realities in ways that often flatten or even foreclose analysis” (p. 7). As discussed, this leads to an ethical dilemma as it relates to how cultures are portrayed within media. When cultures are not accurately portrayed, this can lead to a false understanding of what the country is like and can lead to incorrect biases to be formulated and potential stereotyping if even these situations are not portrayed accurately or if these are the only histories of the country that are recounted.

Smith and Huber (2018) examine race in film, specific in reference to how Colombians are represented in films, from the United States, with themes of criminal behaviors as well as white morality. Utilizing content analysis of seven feature films, they explain how “racial “other[s]” converges with representation whiteness” to produce “two dynamics: (1) the reproduction of stereotypical and racist representations of Colombians, and (2) the normalization of white (especially male) representations” (Smith & Huber, 2018, p. 108-109). This is significant as the authors of this article reveal how “U.S. filmmakers have yet to shift away from the criminalization of the Colombian. These themed images of negative racialization combined with legal and political policies that further racialize Colombians are settled into the consciousness of an audience” (Smith & Huber, 2018, p. 128). Sanchez Parra and Lo Iacono (2019) contribute to the conversation in a slightly different manner as they explained how “the attention granted to wartime sexual violence in the online and printed media seemed to be accompanied by an almost absolute silence around the human beings born as a result of that violence” (p. 22). This study concerns the children born as a result of wartime violence in Colombia and the way these children are represented in the media. As media continues to portray Colombia and its citizens in this manner, individuals of other nations may be less likely to

formulate opinions about the nation that are based on findings other than the media that is focused on its criminalized history.

There are a variety of media portrayals of Colombian culture, many of which focus on the history of drug trafficking in the country. For example, Naef (2018) writes concerning how the Medellin, Colombia cartel boss, Pablo Escobar, has made Colombia a hotspot for narco tourism. Naef (2018) writes the following concerning the commercialization of communities that are the inspiration for popular culture:

The abnormal conditions of life in countries plagued with drug trafficking and violence represent an extremely important source of inspiration for entrepreneurs in the fields of popular culture. Narco-violence rooted in everyday life contributes to building modern mythology, linking the familiar and the strange in cities deeply affected by drug trafficking. ... [E]veryday life in certain places in Colombia or Mexico has a strangeness that is marketable in industries such as film television, and publishing, as well as tourism. (p. 489)

This is shown in the Netflix series *Narcos*, which is “[a] chronicled look at the criminal exploits of Colombian drug lord Pablo Escobar, as well as the many other drug kingpins who plagued the country through the years” (IMDB, n.d., para. 1). While some claim the show was “a perfect blend of entertainment and education,” there are countless times throughout the series when numerous pieces of evidence from the United States Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) were disregarded (Britto, 2016, para. 1). Bockino’s (2019) study explains how shows such as *Narcos*, contribute to a poor perception of Colombia by individuals from other cultures. They continue by addressing how “from 1980 through 2013 the word “drug” was included in a *New York Times* headline with Colombia more times than any other word with any other South American

country” (Bockino, 2019, p. 513). The author explains that this is significant because individuals are more likely to retain the information, and find the information significant, if it is found in the headline in an article. Therefore, Bockino (2019) suggests that “the more times the word “drug” is seen in a headline with Colombia, the more likely a frequent New York Times reader during this specific time period will associate the country with narcotics” (p. 514). Another show that features the exploits of the notorious narcotrafficker is *Pablo Escobar: El Patrón del Mal* [The Boss of Evil in English] (IMDB, n.d.). The show chronicles Escobar’s life from the time he was a child to the start of his days as a drug runner to height of his wealth and finally his death. In a different Netflix series, based in Colombia, called *Distrito Salvaje* [Wild District in English], “Jhon Jeiver, a lethal guerrilla fighter who escapes from the jungle after the signing and referendum of the Colombian Peace Agreements, arrives in Bogotá escaping from his past, and tries to reinsert himself into society” (IMDB, n.d., para. 1).

While most portrayals of Colombia and Colombian culture are surrounding war, narcotrafficking, terrorism, or the like, there are some other illustrations of Colombia in the media. Colombian-born actress Sofía Vergara played a lead role in ABC’s *Modern Family* (IMDB, n.d.). Vergara played Gloria Delgado-Pritchett; a Colombian woman married to one of the other main characters. Nunez (2014) explains how Vergara received criticism over the years for her role as Gloria because many people say that the character is played to be a stereotyped and sexualized Latina, yet Vergara remains firm in her belief that she portrays the character as analogous to her own Colombian mother and aunts as possible. In another article, Martínez (2019) compares two Colombian-produced films, *Colombia magia salvaje* [Colombia wild magic in English] and *La sirga* [The towline in English], which both portray the country. They write that both films “are contrasting iterations of a shared desire to redefine the symbolic space



of the Colombian nation both at the local and the international level, and they do so by advancing different ways of looking at the country's conflict as well as its landscape" (Martínez, 2019, p. 123). The culture of Colombia has historically been presented in terms that can appear unfavorable to individuals who are not personally familiar with the nation or culture on their own.

### **Disney's Cultural Impact**

The following research provides a discussion as to how Disney has created a cultural impact rhetorically through its use of film. Giovanni (2003) writes that Disney has become an important part of popular culture around the world, particularly within the United States, since their audience is people of all ages. Even though many of Disney's movies are animated, this does not necessarily mean that the audience is entirely made up of young viewers. Tyner-Mullings (2022) agrees that Disney has become a large part of popular culture but adds to it by highlighting that the Disney princess films play a fundamental role in the overall identity of the Disney brand and their feature films. Giroux (1994) writes that as a cultural institution, Disney's films have become an educational construct as individuals of all ages find characters they identify with and situations that help them position themselves in the world. Ward (2002) notes the strong implications of a 'Disney worldview' for culture:

Given the significant presence of Disney in culture, as well as its active worldview (even if it is a conflicted worldview), Disney may be becoming a competitor of religion and a hegemonic power that not only dominates interpretations of narratives but also creates the narratives while it acts as moral educator. (p. 128)

Tiffin (2009) offers that “the second half of the twentieth century saw Disney animated fairy tales rising to replace most other kinds of fairy-tale narrative in the popular consciousness” (p. 206).

The rhetoric of Disney animated films is examined by Ward (2002). Ward (2002) explained that the way some moral issues are addressed in several animated Disney films proves problematic when viewed by children. Building on and challenging the work of Ward, de Leeuw and van der Laan (2018) write that certain prosocial behaviors have been found among children who repeatedly watch Disney movies, especially young boys who watch Disney's princess movies. Huang (2021) discusses several external influencing factors which contribute to the creation of each character in Disney movies, including historical background, culture, societal consensus, as well as positive feedback, and limitation in production. Hundertmark (2021) explains in their article about the Disney films can and often do vary from the traditional fairy tales that their premises are based on, such as films like *Sleeping Beauty*, *Cinderella*, and *Snow White*. Hundertmark remarks that a more modern twist on the story of *Sleeping Beauty*, which focuses on the fairy tale's villain and reframes Maleficent as the protagonist, *Maleficent* makes the character more rounded and not framed as a two-dimensional character.

Gender stereotypes around the world are framed for children and people of all ages, by popular culture, and a leader, regardless of whether it is intended to be a leader or not, in identity-shaping media has been Disney films (Wohlwend, 2012). In their article, R. M. Johnson (2015) explains how Disney princess films heavily affect how children view gender roles, romantic relationships, as well as body image. Wohlwend explains how the *Disney Princess* films include themes that are frequently found to be gendered in nature. Children often watch the films, then include the characters and the characters' personalities in their personal lives through

drawings, use of toys, and roleplaying, which materializes the characters from the films as well as potentially distorting gender roles and boundaries. Wohlwend looks at the play of male children and how the gender roles in *Disney Princess* films affect their play. Wohlwend continues by saying that princesses are often illustrated as passive characters, self-sacrificing, who are narrowly focused on romance and typically helpless in whatever situation they might find themselves. Hoerrner (2015) goes beyond the work of Wohlwend by explaining how full-length Disney films have contributed to a gendered worldview for adolescent audiences. Golden et al. (2018) explain that “[a]lthough Disney has endeavored in recent years to produce characters that eschew traditional gender roles (e.g., their bow-and-arrow wielding heroine, Merida from *Brave*), the majority of the Disney Princesses continue to reflect many antiquated notions of femininity” (p. 300). England, Descartes, and Collier-Meek (2011) explain how dating and romance habits portrayed in Disney films often showed a correlation between viewers’ perception of norms within romantic relationships.

From a different perspective, Griffin, Harding, and Learmonth (2016) offer that Disney animated films have indirectly and complexly affected female children’s perspectives of work in terms of gender roles. The present argument in this article is that young girls believe that they must be weak and strong, depending on how they are influenced by different Disney animated films (Griffin et al., 2016). Streiff and Dundes (2017) critically analyze Disney’s *Frozen* to determine how the two main characters, who are sisters and princesses, are presented as one capable of finding love and the other capable of holding power. Streiff and Dundes posit that the major issue with the film is concerning its reinforcement of gender stereotypes as it relates to glorifying female compassion and how females must sacrifice romance if they want to have power. Concerning influence on female youth, Sciele, Louie, and Chen (2020) posit that several

Disney, and Pixar, animated movies have been used to press forward feminist agendas for consumption by female youth, particularly in reference to Disney's 2019 rendition of *Aladdin*. Their article argues that Disney's inclusion and promotion of gender-related topics in modern films was forced by feminism becoming a more prevalent issue during the #MeToo movement (Sciele et al., 2020). Hundertmark (2021) writes that "[b]y including current trends of thought, like debates about gender equality arising in the context of #MeToo, fairy tales are updated for contemporary audiences and a different perspective on them is provided" (p. 2).

### **Disney's Presentation of Cultural Otherness**

For this study especially, it is important to determine how Disney has historically presented other cultures as perception of another culture relies heavily on how the film's producing organization chooses to present the chosen culture. Di Giovanni (2003) offers that for the past few decades, and specifically in the 1990s, Disney has attempted to present cultural otherness in its animated films. Brode (2005) explains that Disney encourages multiculturalism in its films due to a utopian vision of a world that respects and celebrates all people. Sharma (2016) explains how viewers of Disney movies "come to make assumptions about the beliefs and mores of ethnic cultures, using the tools of critical semiotic analyses of Disney" (p. 95). Disney utilizes a variety of symbols in their films that facilitate viewers to make assumptions about cultural others. These presented symbols can also further enforce or deconstruct stereotypes. Sharma (2016) further elaborates on how a complete understanding of the semiotics of Disney's animation assists "learners to examine how [such] stereotypes and misconceptions arise through the uncritical consumption of contemporary visual storytelling" (p. 95). The worldwide reputation of Disney's animated films impacts global popular culture and the perception of cultural otherness across the globe. This can provide "teaching opportunities at multiple levels of

formal and informal education, including K-12, higher education, and lifelong learning settings” (p. 95).

Belkhyr (2012) contributes to the conversation by adding that “[i]n reproducing and maintaining similar images about the “Other,” Disney cartoons serve an ideological function whereby the individual subject takes an assumed privileged position or perspective compared to the represented other” (para. 17). Di Giovanni’s (2003) study mainly focuses on how language is used to present said cultural otherness; however, Wang (2017) presents a different point of view in their study. Wang (2017) discusses hybridization, which “refers to the fusion of different cultural elements and forms and the new cultural forms and connotations produced in this process,” of cultures by Disney (p. 270). Their study introduces how deculturalization is utilized specifically in Disney’s *Mulan* to present eastern cultures, specifically the Chinese culture, in a way that is more favorable and idealized by western audiences (Wang, 2017). Ward (2002) adds to the conversation by explaining the following:

Because *Mulan* is a film produced in the United States but is based on a Chinese legend, the potential for misunderstanding and misrepresentation is great, especially since Disney’s attempts to reach the largest audience possible, including the international audience, mean that it tries to include something for everyone. Consequently, Disney needed to clearly establish the Chinese cultural values in order to respect the original material, but it also needed to communicate contemporary Western values in order that a Western audience would accept the film. Significant dimensions of interculturalism that Disney ought to have considered include the Chinese collectivist mind-set, the high communication context style, and cultural values. (p. 96-97)

Since Disney is an international media organization, their movies and other media must be marketable in multiple international markets; therefore, they must have something to offer to numerous consumer groups, regardless of cultural background. For this reason, this can be a problem for creative teams at Disney as they attempt to stay true to the cultural values of the cultures they attempt to portray in the films while also making films that are marketable to international audiences. However, this becomes problematic when cultures become portrayed in a light that is not accurate to what they truly are, as Ward and Wang discuss, and this is what played out in *Mulan*, as Ward explained in their book. Ultimately, a truly accurate portrayal of the Chinese culture in the film was somewhat abandoned in order to utilize a somewhat Westernized version of the characters, story, and mindset. This is in accordance with the ideals set forth by Said (1978) in their book, *Orientalism*, where they describe how European imperialism has caused a domino effect over the course of generations that in turn has caused Western depictions of Eastern nations and their cultures to be engendered with stereotypes and often one-dimensional in nature. This is significant as it further reinforces how Western media organizations have been faulty, in the past, in their presentation in cultural otherness, which poses a noteworthy ethical issue.

Anjirbag (2018) also takes issue with Disney's portrayal of cultural otherness in both *Mulan* and *Moana*, saying that "both films also have provoked concerns that they promote a narrative capable of supplanting other more culturally-authoritative narratives as well as the global perception of that culture, via their reach and status as Disney films" (p. 2). They continue in their discussion by examining the importance of critically reviewing Disney's presentation of cultural otherness due to the corporation's global positionality and power, and they posit that such presentations of cultural otherness in animated films have proven to be a profitable market

(Anijrbag, 2018). Gagnon (1998) agrees that Disney films presenting cultural others should be critically reviewed and claims that, throughout Disney's historical presentation of cultural otherness, there has been a problem in the way other ethnicities are presented. Agreeing with Gagnon, Tyner-Mullings (2022) postulates that Disney's animated princess films present an underlying pattern of race, class, and gender in their presentation of the films' protagonists and antagonists.

### **Disney's *Encanto***

While Disney may have a scarred past in terms of illustrating cultural otherness, Breuer (2021) suggests that "Disney is increasingly recognizing its flaws and now seems to have understood its responsibility in the representation of other cultures" (para. 22). Released by Disney in November 2021, *Encanto* is a critically acclaimed animated film set in Colombia (IMDB, n.d.). The film focuses on the story of a girl named Mirabel Madrigal, the only child in her family who does not have a magical gift (Disney, n.d.). According to film critic, Rooney (2021) "this is a film that commits to the timeless folklore of its South American setting to a transporting degree" (para. 1). While there are some people like Meléndez Hernández (2021) who said that *Encanto* is not about Colombia or Colombian culture but rather a family of Latinos, or Hilkinger (2021) who wrote that the film falls short in its portrayal of Colombia due to the team behind the film not being Colombians, this is not representative of the majority opinion concerning the 2021 Disney film. Ayala (2022) explains that while there is "bound to be some creative license where fantasy stories are involved, but Disney made sure the smaller details mattered and consulted with Colombian cultural authorities" (para. 2). This was the exact role of Alejandra Espinosa Uribe throughout the creation process of the Disney film. Alejandra Espinosa Uribe worked as the Colombian culture and history consultant to Disney as they

created the animated feature film, *Encanto* (personal communication, September 30, 2023). She shared that the film is an excellent representation of the nation of Colombia and Colombian culture.

Prior to working with Disney, she got a degree in literature and moved seven hours away from where she grew up in Bogotá, the capital of Colombia. When she moved to Barichara, she got the opportunity to give history and nature tours, which is how she got connected with the Disney producers when they came to visit her town and were looking for a tour guide who could also guide them along the way with the cultural intricacies of the town and country (personal communication, September 30, 2023). She went on to explain that, during their time working for Disney, she spent four years helping the creative team to ensure even the smallest details of the film's setting and characters align with what is true of Colombia, its people, and Colombian culture.

From the films' portrayal of Colombian arepas, the scenery in the small town, the characters' love of coffee, and the importance of family to Colombian culture, there are countless allusions to the country where the movie is set (Ayala, 2022). This film utilizes these items commonly found in Colombia to signify the importance of these items to the overall culture. For example, in the film, the children of the town can be seen drinking coffee numerous times, which is an allusion to the importance of the coffee industry in Colombia. Espinosa Uribe (personal communication, September 30, 2023) explained that there are many details within the film that allude back to Colombia as well as Colombian culture, traditions, and heritage that individuals who are unaware of them would not recognize, but it can give joy to many Colombians as they see the many details from their nation throughout the film. Some specific examples she shared include the specific type of coffee cups that the children in the film are seen using, as well as the



specific skirt that the main character, Mirabel, wears throughout the film. Espinosa Uribe remarked how she sent a traditional skirt to the Disney producers in Los Angeles from Vélez, Colombia, so the creative team there could understand the proper quality, heaviness, and movement of the fabric, that is handmade by women in this region of Colombia over the course of six months, that the character should be featured with.

Brand Colombia (n.d.) encourages people to watch the film and mentions the numerous allusions to the country's culture, flora and fauna, and traditional attire, amongst other things. Other prominent references in the film to Colombian culture and history include "the appearance of yellow butterflies in *Encanto* is a nod to celebrated Colombian writer Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, where they embody a lifetime of love and happiness" (Ayala, 2022, para. 5). Another aspect that Espinosa Uribe explained was a central part of the film and alluded to Colombian culture was the centrality of the diversity in the film and the family (personal communication, September 30, 2023). She shared that she hoped that if individuals from other cultures learned anything from the film about Colombia, it would be the great diversity that the nation has. Espinosa Uribe clarified that extended family in Colombia is very important, and it is almost tribal in nature, which is also alluded to in the film. This is part of the culture and history of Colombia, where entire families would move together for better opportunities, and this is part of the coffee region's history as well (Espinosa Uribe, personal communication, September 30, 2023).

Since the film was released more recently, there is not much academic literature about the film. However, a majority of the literature concerning *Encanto* exists within the field of psychology. As someone who was born and raised in Colombia, Hilkinger (2021) notes that the film provides a glimpse into the cultural trauma and diversity that is experienced by many

Colombians. Hans (2021), a culture writer and former film critic for *The Guardian*, speaks further into Hilkinger's comment on cultural trauma, by adding that "[w]hat's interesting and unexpected is the film's subtle acknowledgment of culturally specific generational trauma and displacement" (para. 2). Conroy (2022) brings this together a bit more, while also developing the discussion from a psychological point of view, by describing how *Encanto* is a representation of both historical and intergenerational trauma. They go on to explain how intergenerational trauma is shown in the film throughout the three generations in the Madrigal family (Conroy, 2022). They also note that "*Encanto* has the potential to be more than pure entertainment for families," especially within the field of psychology and mental health counseling (Conroy, 2022, p. 310).

Other researchers further discuss allusions in the film, like *Moroca* (2022), who expands on the discussion of displacement in *Encanto* by explaining how conflict is a common thread in Colombian history and how this was alluded to in the film as the reason the 'encanto' was created in the first place, as a haven for displaced people. Displacement of people in Colombia has been historically caused by the Colombian war for independence from Spain to civil wars to guerilla warfare during 'La Violencia' (Karl, 2017; Moroca, 2022; Quiroga-Villamarín et al., 2022). Espinosa Uribe (personal communication, September 30, 2023) commented that she discussed Colombia's Thousand Days' War with the producers at Disney, which occurred in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, as inspiration for the scenes in the film where men on horseback ravage the characters', Abuela Alma and Abuelo Pedro's, town and kill Abuelo Pedro. The men on horseback illustrated here were shown to be faceless on purpose, so it could have been the conservatives or liberal party. She went on to say that this part of history was selected because it is important to show that the nation does have trauma attached to it, so the movie could be cathartic for Colombians as they deal with their nation's history of trauma (Espinosa Uribe,

personal communication, September 30, 2023). She also shared that while the producers of the film wanted to focus on the magic of the plot more originally, Espinosa Uribe urged them to include realism in the plot as well so audiences around the world would be more inclined to connect this narrative with the actual history of Colombia since there is a history of violence in the nation.

The music in the film was wildly popular for months after the movie's premiere (Sisario, 2022). Rich (2022) explains that the lead composer of *Encanto*, "Franco's music captures a kind of magic that hasn't previously existed in a Disney film, full of the studio's familiar wonder but also the sounds of female choirs and rhythms that belong entirely to Colombia" (Rich, 2022, para. 2). In January 2022, the *New York Times* reported, "'Encanto' is the first Disney soundtrack to have multiple turns at No. 1 since 'Frozen,' which notched a total of 13 weeks at the top in the first half of 2014" (Sisario, para. 4). Social media platforms like TikTok proved instrumental in leading the films' music to mainstream popularity as people danced and sang along to the film's most popular song, "We Don't Talk About Bruno;" landing it at second on the Billboard 200 chart in January 2022 and in top spots of the chart for 10 consecutive weeks (Sisario, 2022; Walsh, 2022). This proves significant in corroborating the entertainment value of the film around the world and its acclaim with the general public regardless of cultural background.

Walsh (2022) shares that the #Encanto hashtag "has been viewed more than 15 billion times" (para. 7). "We Don't Talk About Bruno," written by Lin-Manuel Miranda, "has been praised for its celebration of Latin American music. It's even reportedly been used as a therapeutic tool for speaking about generational trauma and the immigrant experience" (Walsh, 2022, para. 7). Caulfield (2022) adds to the discussion of the popularity of *Encanto's* musical

popularity by sharing that “Encanto is one of only five soundtracks to spend at least seven weeks at No. 1 on the Billboard 200 in the last 30 years” (para. 5). Thus, the music of *Encanto* proves to have helped the film to gain worldwide popularity.

### **Entertainment-Education**

Of critical importance and examination for this research, is a discussion of entertainment-education, as it is the primary theoretical lens by which the data was analyzed throughout this study. Entertainment-Education (E-E) was pioneered by Miguel Sábido in the 1960s, in rhetorical analyses of telenovelas – soap operas mainly produced in Latin America – meant to educate audiences while providing an entertaining means by which to consume information (Singhal & Rogers, 2002). Singhal and Rogers (2002) explain that Wood and Bandura’s (1989) social cognitive theory and E-E go hand in hand since each seeks to provide different types of role models as a means by which to influence the behavior of viewers. Wood and Bandura (1989) developed social cognitive theory (SCT) to explain how individuals are influenced by forces outside of themselves and how they standardize their actions in relation to these influences. Slater and Rouner (2002) explain that “[s]ocial cognitive theory focuses on the effects modeling and vicarious learning have on self-efficacy and the acquisition of new behavior” (p. 173). Shown in the following figure—which was published in Wood and Bandura’s (1989) article “Social Cognitive Theory of Organizational Management” where they first introduced the theory. Wood and Bandura’s (1989) Model of Reciprocal Determinism shows how different factors can influence an individual, while potentially not equally nor simultaneously, and how an individual can also affect their environment (Wood & Bandura, 1989). There are three factors shown in the Wood and Bandura’s (1989) model, including personal, behavior, and environment. Personal factors include cognitive processes, beliefs,

attitudes, and emotional responses within an individual (Wood & Bandura, 1989). Behavioral factors are observable actions and reactions that individuals take part in while participating in communication actions (Wood & Bandura, 1989) The last factor, environmental factors, include any external variables that may influence an individual, including the social and physical contexts that an individual finds themselves in (Wood & Bandura, 1989). In this manner, an individual can choose the information they choose to consume and allow it to affect them; however, there is the possibility that they will be exposed to media that will have an effect on them (Singhal & Rogers, 2002). This is significant in that media can act as an outside influence for an individual, and their knowledge can then be accordingly affected, thus bringing E-E into the conversation consequently.

Singhal and Rogers (2002) postulate that theories regarding E-E include “social learning/social cognitive theory, the elaboration likelihood model, audience involvement, dramatic theories, social constructivism, uses and gratifications, agenda setting, knowledge-gap, cultivation, and the diffusion of innovations” (p. 116). The theories that inform this communication strategy stem from the socio-psychological tradition within communication studies (Craig, 2007). This is because these theories “focus on psychological variables, individual effects, personalities, traits, perceptions, and cognitions” (Littlejohn et al., 2021, p. 35). This communication strategy focuses mainly on perceptions and psychological variables that impact viewers of messages that are both entertaining and educational in nature. Moyer-Gusé (2008) writes that most E-E research is based on either SCT or the extended elaboration likelihood model (E-ELM). Moyer-Gusé contends that, in accordance with SCT, “viewers do not come into a media exposure as a blank slate ... individuals bring preexisting values, norms, and attitudes that influence their motivation to engage in various health behaviors” (p. 412). E-ELM

in comparison is produced in E-E by the possibility that “viewers are less likely to counterargue with the embedded persuasive message, making it easier to influence, beliefs, attitudes, and behavior” (p. 413). Slater and Rouner (2002) explain that SCT is not, in itself, enough to explain the background of E-E because it focuses on attainment of new behaviors, and they elucidate by presenting E-ELM as a key to bridge that gap.

Both SCT and E-ELM help explain how the E-E strategy can help inform and persuade an audience on any given topic by reducing resistance to the persuasion process.

Studies concerning entertainment-education have been focused mainly on communicating themes of health (Literat & Chen, 2014; Cardey et al., 2013; Kim & Noriega, 2019; Gonzalez & Benuto, 2022; Booker et al., 2016) and social issues (Hust et al., 2017; Gesser-Edelsburg et al., 2010). Moyer-Gusé (2008) and the Kaiser Family Foundation (2004) indicate that popular media entertainment can be used to positively affect public comprehension and behaviors concerning matters of both health and social issues, within the scope of E-E. Singhal & Rogers (2002) explain that “[e]ntertainment-education is not a theory of communication, but rather a strategy used to disseminate ideas to bring about behavioral and social change” (p. 117).

The work of Moyer-Gusé (2008) is referenced by other researchers, such as Kim and Noriega (2019). Kim and Noriega (2019) further the conversation on E-E by explaining how it is a popular strategy by which health communication is elaborated and can be used for influencing audience knowledge and attitudes. Murphy et al. (2011) conducted a study where they utilized E-E to determine the likelihood of viewers to get a precautionary medical test after being a regular viewer of a television show where one of the main character's got diagnosed with cancer after getting the same medical test done. Gonzalez and Benuto (2022) utilized E-E to create “a culturally specific video” that was intended to “[reduce] stigma and [increase] mental health

literacy” amongst Latina populations (para. 1 & 6). Kim and Noriega (2019) explain that E-E “literature can reveal producers’ intentions and vision for the show, genre conventions that determine the narrative and characters, and how character portrayals ultimately fit into the history of Latino media representation” (p. 26). To further contribute to E-E studies, Gesser-Edelsburg et al. (2010) found that after viewing a drama concerning the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, viewers’ perception of promoting peace, through a reduction of mutual delegitimization, in the region had been affected. This is significant as it shows the connection between media and viewer perception of a given topic. Moyer-Gusé and Nabi (2010) found that, in alignment with E-ELM, audiences process narrative and nonnarrative based communications differently. This was illustrated in their study concerning E-E and narrative persuasion, and this further contributes to current E-E literature significantly because it addresses how audiences can be resistant to the persuasive nature of E-E.

Though not an E-E scholar, as the work was published prior to the development of E-E, Fearing (1947) explains the dichotomy that individuals often identify between media, meaning that it is either entertaining or educational. However, Fearing explains the following:

The term “entertainment” is psychologically ambiguous. Applied to films, the term “pure entertainment” would appear to mean that motion pictures may be made without meaningful content and without effects on those exposed to them. This a formulation which affords a ready rationalization for not making “serious” films, that is, films which are concerned with current problems, particularly if those problems are controversial. Many of those who support this view are fearful that films may be made which have meaningful content and hence have effects on behavior and attitudes. They rationalize this position by insisting that such films are without entertainment value. (p. 72)

This is significant in that content, particularly those made in the format of a motion picture, can be simultaneously entertaining and educational on a given topic. This is in direct correlation to the purpose of this study, as it sought to discover how viewer perception of Colombia and Colombian culture was affected after watching Disney's *Encanto*.

### **Summary**

In summary, this chapter provided an overview of the current scholarly literature that exists in regard to this study. The chapter began with a discussion of movies as a medium of communication, as this is of central importance to this study since the primary artifact was a movie. and this section also covered the persuasive nature of films since this study discussed the influence that movies can exert on their audiences. The next sections covered topics concerning intercultural communication as well as Colombia and Colombian culture. After this, discussions were presented describing Disney's cultural impact and Disney's presentation of cultural otherness as both these topics provided background for the current study. Then, an in-depth discussion of the artifact for this study, Disney's *Encanto*, was introduced. Lastly, current literature concerning and an overview of the communication strategy, entertainment-education, by which data for this study was analyzed was discussed.



### Chapter III: Methodology

#### Overview

The purpose of this qualitative research was to analyze the way Colombian culture is presented in Disney's *Encanto* as well as to determine whether viewers of *Encanto* learn and develop a favorable view of Colombia and Colombian culture after watching the film. In this chapter, topics include the research design, the role of the researcher, trustworthiness, setting and participants, ethical considerations, and procedures, and the chapter concludes with a summary.

#### Research Design

The principal objective of this research is to determine whether Disney's *Encanto* can be considered educational as well as entertaining in reference to how it affects viewer perception of Colombian culture. With this in mind, a qualitative approach was implemented in this research. Questionnaires were used as the research method for this study to determine the effects of Disney's *Encanto* on viewer perceptions of Colombian culture. Qualitative research was chosen for this study because it focuses on social experiences and understanding why things happen (Cardano, 2020). Unlike quantitative research, which looks at numeric data, the researcher chose a qualitative research design to determine the perceptions and attitudes of the participants in the best way possible.

This study employed two questionnaires as the primary method of data collection. The participants in this study came together at a mutually agreed upon location and time. At which time, the researcher gave the participants access the first questionnaire, through a QR code and hyperlink, which they took virtually through a system called Qualtrics. Once all participants had finished taking the first questionnaire, they were asked to put away any electronic devices that they had on their person, and the researcher then showed Disney's *Encanto* to the participants as

a group. This was done by the researcher to ensure that participants viewed the entirety of the film and did not have access outside sources, while watching the film, that may have impacted their answers to the second questionnaire. After the film ended, the researcher gave virtual access to the second questionnaire, again through a QR code and hyperlink, to participants, who then submitted the second questionnaire. The researcher ensured all questionnaires were submitted prior to the participants leaving the space.

The researcher hoped to determine whether the film made an impact on viewers' perception of Colombian culture through education, even though the overt purpose of the film was to entertain the audience. As discussed in Chapter II: Literature Review, entertainment-education is a method by which media can be both entertaining and educational. So, the research purpose was to analyze the way Colombian culture is presented in Disney's *Encanto* as well as to determine whether viewers of *Encanto* learn and develop a favorable view of Colombia and Colombian culture after watching the film, based on the discussion of the film presented in both Chapters I and II. Abundant research exists concerning entertainment-education in reference to health and social issues, but less research exists concerning perceptions of cultural otherness.

Since, as Cardano (2020) explains, qualitative research seeks to "observe the unobservable," this study allowed the participants to share unique perspectives and descriptions in an anonymous manner that could ultimately lead to an uncovering of perceptions toward how other cultures are perceived based on their representations in media. Many media products are either entertaining or educational. Still, it appears, according to entertainment-education (E-E) research, that there can be an intersection of these two constructs. This thesis sought to find whether one such intersection had been, while potentially unintentionally, found in Disney's *Encanto*.

**Research Question**

For this qualitative research study, two questionnaires were utilized to collect data. The following research question was proposed for this study:

⇒ Do the cultures and stereotypes communicated in Disney's Encanto contribute to favorable viewer perceptions of Colombian culture?

**Trustworthiness**

In order to provide the optimal responses and data from participants from this study, the researcher utilized two questionnaires as the means by which to collect data. The use of questionnaires allowed responses to be anonymous and open-ended, meaning they could be full of information that could be analyzed by the researcher to the fullest extent possible. In order to ensure that any findings were credible, several aspects that augment trustworthiness of the study were included and are described in the following paragraphs.

***Transferability***

The transferability of this study is slightly limited since the researcher contacted participants through social media in order to gain initial participation interest. However, other than this measure of the study, the researcher laid out the steps of the research situation in a very detailed manner that other researchers, should it be their desire to do so, should be able to duplicate in order to determine the same or similar effects. Through the vivid descriptions of the stages of analysis and other procedures in Chapter III: Methodology, other researchers should be able to clearly see the steps the researcher took to undergo this research endeavor. Other researchers could also use this research as inspiration or guidance as they create their own quantitative research study.

### ***Dependability and Confirmability***

In order to ensure dependability and confirmability measures were met for this study, the researcher provided a variety of means to extend confidence in the study. In Chapter III: Methodology, the researcher provided the means by which all data was collected and analyzed as well as a timeline for how participants were contacted. Then, in Chapter IV: Findings, the researcher further specifies how participants were treated and the timeline for how the researcher went about conducting the study in an ethical manner. Also in this chapter, the researcher provided numerous quotes from the participants' answers to questionnaire responses in order to provide the exact manner in which participants phrased their answers.

### **Setting and Participants**

The target participants of this study included individuals who are from nations other than Colombia and other Latin American nations, meaning that all participants were not of Latin American heritage or origin. This criteria was necessary as individuals with deep knowledge of the Colombian culture could render the results of the study moot. Participants of the study could not have extensive background experience with Colombia or Colombian culture because their perceptions may already be deeply rooted and potentially biased in this case. As a qualifier of 'extensive background experience,' participants were deemed ineligible if they ever traveled to or lived in Colombia at any point in time. To further avoid bias amongst participants, participants were deemed ineligible for this study if they were raised in a home where one or more primary caregiver was of Latino heritage, as this could also increase the likelihood of bias being present. The participants in this study were at least 18 years old, but there was no maximum age allowed, and both male and female participants were included.

While children may appear as the ideal candidates for participants in this study due to the animated film, the participants were adults—or individuals 18 years of age or older—because Disney markets its films to individuals of all ages. Children were also not ideal participants for this study because they may not have a developed understanding of what Colombia is, let alone Colombian culture. Additionally, it was not of significance if participants in this study had not seen the movie in the past because the study did not seek to discover initial impressions of the film or whether the participants enjoyed the film. Since the quality and popularity of the film were previously determined and attested to by statistics and other sources throughout the literature review, the researcher deemed that if participants had or had not seen the film already was not a factor of eligibility for the study.

A total of 20 participants were secured to contribute to this study and identify significant themes and information from questionnaire responses (Miles et al., 2014). The research for this study took place during September 2023. Participants expressed interest in participating in the study after the researcher posted a graphic on social media platforms. Social media platforms were chosen as the method by which to contact participants due to the accessibility of a wide variety of individuals from different backgrounds who may have responded to the call for participants on social media platforms. The social media platforms the researcher posted on to gather participants were Instagram and Facebook. These two social media platforms were chosen by the researcher due to the variety of individuals who use these platforms, and these platforms could be utilized to reach potential participants from a variety of backgrounds, who would not be from Latin American heritage. Participants were asked screening questions to verify that they met eligibility requirements, as described. The following screening questions were asked of all

participants, using Qualtrics, prior to beginning the first questionnaire to ensure eligibility requirements were met:

- ⇒ Are you 18 years of age or older? (Needed to answer “Yes”)
- ⇒ Were you or any of your known ancestors from a Latin American country? (Needed to answer “No”)
- ⇒ Have you ever traveled to Colombia? (Needed to answer “No”)
- ⇒ Were you raised in a home where a primary caregiver was of Latin American heritage? (Needed to answer “No”)

All 20 participants met these eligibility requirements. The questionnaires were anonymous in nature to protect the identity of the research participant. The results of these questionnaires are reviewed and discussed in the following chapter. An attempt was made to make modifications to the timing of the study as appropriate for the participants' availability since participation can pose an extra obligation on the schedule of the participants (Stake, 1995).

### **Ethical Considerations**

The ethical practices during any research are an important matter to consider (Tolich, 2021). For this study, the researcher made sure to follow ethical procedures. Prior to conducting research for this study, approval was received from the Institutional Review Board (IRB). During the research process, if any changes were required, the researcher made sure all necessary parties were notified in a timely manner, including the IRB. Additionally, all participants in this study were treated with the utmost respect throughout this process, and they were presented with truthful information concerning all aspects of the study. There was no deception used in this study, and all parties in this study were knowledgeable of the purposes of this study at all times.

Additionally, the researcher was available for questions throughout the entirety of the study to all associated parties.

Prior to participating in the study, participants were presented with a consent form which was made corresponding to the criteria set forth by the IRB, which they did not need to sign or return to the researcher (see Appendix B). The purpose of the consent form was to ensure the participants were aware of the purpose, risks, and associated measures of the research of which they would be a part. The potential risks from participating in this study were minimal, which means that they were equivalent to the risks participants may have encountered in routine life. The consent form also stated that participation in the study would be entirely voluntary, meaning that the participants were informed that they could, at any point in time, remove themselves from the study without cause or repercussions. Participants were also made aware, both verbally and on the consent form, that all of the answers to the questions would be kept anonymous. Also, participants were not asked for their names in order to further protect their identity throughout the study. This meant that the researcher would not be able to tie any of the answers to the participants and the researcher would not identify the participants throughout the reporting and publishing of the study to ensure anonymity. To further ensure the protection of all data for this study, all data was stored on a password-locked computer. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted, and all hardcopy records will be shredded.

## **Procedures**

### ***Data Collection***

To understand whether the film is educational as well as entertaining, two questionnaires were filled out by study participants. The primary questionnaire focused on determining initial perceptions of Colombian culture, prior to the group screening of the film. In order to access the

primary questionnaire, participants either scanned a QR code or used a private URL link if their device would not allow them to access the questionnaire via the QR code. Using a QR code or a private URL link provided participants with a quick, hassle-free way to fill out the questionnaire and for the researcher to have all the data easily collated in an anonymous way since the researcher was not able to determine what order each participant submitted their questionnaire. The primary questionnaire established a baseline from which the researcher was able to compare the results of the second questionnaire. After answering initial questions, which led the researcher to understand the group's perceptions of the culture, the researcher had the group watch Disney's *Encanto* together, in the same sitting. After watching the film, the researcher proposed some of the same questions the participants were asked prior to watching the film, as well as some additional questions in the second questionnaire. The group again used either a QR code or a private URL link to access the questionnaire. By having the participants answer questions prior to and subsequently to watching the film, the researcher was able to analyze whether the film impacted the participants' perceptions overall. The results of the questionnaires helped the researcher determine whether the film educated the participants on the nation of Colombia and Colombian culture.

Since this study is qualitative in nature, the data collection method for the study was two questionnaires. This collection method was beneficial to this study as it allowed the participants to remain anonymous throughout the study. Since the researcher was not able to connect a participant with their response, any potential risk for participants was reduced. Another benefit of using questionnaires is that the questions were open-ended, so the participants had the ability to answer the question with as much depth as possible. In the primary questionnaire, questions were asked of the participants to establish their overall, preexisting perceptions of Colombian



culture. Additional questions were asked after the film had been viewed to determine if there had been a change in perceptions due to learning during the film. The purpose of this method was to gain a deeper understanding of each group member's perception of Colombian culture both before and after watching *Encanto*. Consent by each participant was given prior to their participation in the study. Questionnaires in Qualtrics were used to collect data from participants. This use of this platform was beneficial to this study because it uses encryption software of all transmitted data to help make certain that the participants' data is secure.

### *Data Analysis*

The purpose of this qualitative research was to analyze the way Colombian culture is presented in Disney's *Encanto* as well as to determine whether viewers of *Encanto* learn and develop a favorable view of Colombia and Colombian culture after watching the film. The lens by which the data was analyzed is through entertainment-education, which says that media can be both entertaining and educational. Entertainment-education is the communication strategy by which both the film and the participants' questionnaire responses were analyzed. While it has been proven that the film was entertaining, this study sought to understand if it also educates viewers on Colombian culture. The analysis compared the results from the responses from the first questionnaire—answered before the participants watched the film—to the results from the second questionnaire—answered after the participants watched the film.

The researcher coded and analyzed the responses to ascertain codes and themes which were extrapolated from the participants' questionnaire responses. Saldaña (2013) explains that “[a] code in qualitative inquiry is most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data” (p. 3). This analysis method provided the appropriate codes and themes for a table

of codes (see Table 2 in Chapter IV) so the researcher could determine the rate of recurrence at which participants used frequent words and phrases in their questionnaire responses. This method of analysis also allowed the researcher to create numerous tables of codes and themes, found in Chapter IV: Findings, which represent the prominent data represented in participant responses. The coding process for this research entailed repeatedly reading through participant questionnaire responses to search for correlations amongst participant answers. Once these correlations were found, the researcher would identify these correlations and label them as codes. When these correlations were abundant then they were be labeled as a theme.

### *Questionnaires*

Guided by this study's research questions, posed in earlier chapters, the questionnaire (see Appendix A) was created to understand viewer perception of Colombian culture as well as to gauge whether they found Disney's *Encanto* to be both educational and entertaining. The questions were presented to the participants in a manner that allowed them to disclose the most relevant information pertaining to the study. Purposely, the questions were phrased in an open-ended manner so participants would offer more information about their experiences, thoughts, and opinions, and so it would be more difficult for participants to answer any questions with one-word answers unless prompted to do so. The topics the questions pertained to in the first questionnaire mainly concerned Colombia, Colombian culture, media portrayal of Colombian culture, and movies. In the first questionnaire, a total of seven open-ended questions were asked. Then, in the second questionnaire, which participants took after viewing the film, some of the questions remained the same to gauge whether the film had changed the viewer's perception of Colombia and Colombian culture, but additional questions were added in reference to whether they believed the culture was portrayed accurately in the film, intercultural communication, as

well as educational considerations. Several of the questions from the first questionnaire are asked again in the second questionnaire. This was done to determine whether the viewers had been educated about Colombia and Colombian culture while watching the film. Since several of the questions would be answered both before and after watching the film, the responses provided the researcher with the opportunity to compare whether the participants' views, or perceptions, of the culture changed through education about the culture through watching the film. In the second questionnaire, a total of 16 open-ended questions were asked. For the purpose of this research, each of the questions for this study correlated with the topics referenced in Chapter II: Literature Review, as described above.

### **Summary**

This chapter has explained the method of research by which this qualitative study was conducted. Using questionnaires, this study sought to better understand whether Disney's *Encanto* has educated its audience on Colombian culture, since it has already proven to have entertained audiences around the world. Topics covered in this chapter included the researcher's role, the trustworthiness of the research, the setting and participants, ethical concerns, and, finally, procedures.

## Chapter IV: Findings

### Overview

In this fourth chapter, the purpose is to present the findings of this qualitative research concerning the analysis of how Colombian culture is presented in Disney's *Encanto* as well as to determine whether viewers of *Encanto* learn and develop a favorable view of Colombia and Colombian culture while watching the film. The methodology for this study, as described in the previous chapter, showed certain commonalities, which are described in the following pages. Topics in this chapter include a description of the participants, codes, and themes development, and finally, the results of the research questions. A summary is presented at the end of the chapter.

### Participants

Twenty participants took part in this study. Participants for this study were 18 years of age or older, as described in Chapter III: Methodology, as this age group was deemed to be most likely to be able to both understand what a country and culture is as well as be able to communicate that understanding effectively in the questionnaires. Additionally, the participants were not of Latin American heritage nor were they raised in a home where any primary caregivers were of Latin American heritage. The purpose behind this was to aid in removing any potential predisposition from participants prior to consenting in participation in the study. Another aspect of note is that none of the participants had ever lived in or traveled to Colombia. This aspect is of weight to this study and its results as having lived in or traveled to Colombia in the past would have meant that participants may have already developed a perception of Colombia and Colombian culture that would not then contribute to the purpose of this study. Participant responses to the questionnaires in this study were anonymous to protect their identity.

### **Research Question**

For this qualitative research study, findings were deduced from detailed data that provided insight to answer the question of this research:

⇒ Do the cultures and stereotypes communicated in Disney's *Encanto* contribute to favorable viewer perceptions of Colombian culture?

### **Codes and Themes Development**

The purpose of this qualitative research was to analyze the way Colombian culture is presented in Disney's *Encanto* as well as to determine whether viewers of *Encanto* learn and develop a favorable view of Colombia and Colombian culture after watching the film. There were 20 participants involved in this research study, who took the two required questionnaires. From these questionnaires, the participants' anonymous answers were collated and became the data for this study. From this data, repetitive subject matters became apparent and were established as the codes and themes. These themes were affiliated with the topics described in Chapter II: Literature Review, including Miguel Sábido's entertainment-education and the associated communication theories—social cognitive theory (SCT) (Wood & Bandura, 1989) and the extended-elaboration likely hood model (E-ELM) (Slater, 2002).

### ***Coding***

Questionnaires were utilized to collect data that would garner information about the participants' perspectives concerning Colombia and Colombian culture. The researcher read and analyzed the responses to examine whether there were any topics that numerous participants mentioned several times to look for similarities amongst participant responses. From the commonalities that emerged during this analysis, the researcher established the codes for this study. From these codes, the researcher further categorized topics to form theme categories. Due

to the nature of the study, the researcher categorized the themes and codes from the two questionnaires in separate tables, in each section, in order to compare the results from each questionnaire respectively and to ease reader comprehension. The themes from the first questionnaire, the questionnaire that participants took before watching the film, are reported in Tables 2, 4, 7, 8, and 10 in the main theme sections below. The themes from the second questionnaire, the questionnaire that participants took after watching the film, are reported in Tables 3, 5, 6, 9, and 11 in the main theme sections below.

The analysis from this study yielded five themes, which were created from the identification of 22 codes within the participant questionnaire responses from inductive analysis. The codes and major themes from Questionnaire One are shown in tables 2, 4, 7, 8, and 10. This information is comprised of excerpts of participant responses from the primary questionnaire which participants took prior to watching the movie for this study. Furthermore, codes and major themes from Questionnaire Two are highlighted in tables 3, 5, 6, 9, and 11. This information consists of excerpts of participant responses from the secondary questionnaire that participants took after watching the movie for this study. The following Frequency of Codes and Themes table has been developed in order to present the rate of recurrence of the codes throughout participant responses during data collection.

**Table 1**

*Frequency of Codes and Theme Table*

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Codes</b>	<b>Appearances across all data sets</b>
Community	Helping	5
	Community	16
	Communal	3

Family	Family	175
Danger	Danger	10
	Drugs	18
	Violence	5
	Crime	6
Culture	Culture	120
	Food	25
	Dancing	8
	Colors	21
	History	14
	Spanish [Language]	12
Media Representation	Media	99
	Portrayal	33
	Representation	17
	News	9
	Bad Reputation	3
	Stereotypes	13
Entertainment and Education	Entertainment	42
	Education	25

### *Theme Development*

Considering the presented data from each of the above tables, six themes emerged from the coding process. The following six themes were established for this research study: family, culture, community, danger, media representation, and entertainment and education.

### Theme 1: Family

The most prominent theme that emerged from the collected data, between both questionnaires, was the topic of family in Colombian culture. Several participant quotes that highlight this theme from either questionnaire are listed in the tables below. Table 2 highlights a few participant quotes from before participants watched *Encanto*, and Table 3 highlights several participants quotes from after they watched the film.

**Table 2**

*Codes and Themes from Questionnaire One*

Themes	Codes	Participant quotes
Family	Family	“A predominantly Spanish speaking country with strong familial values.”
	Family	“I think that the families are close knit, that the fathers are the primary leaders of the family.”
	Family	“I think my biggest thing I know that family is a big priority with this type of people.”
	Family	“It’s a very lively and involved culture, family oriented.”

**Table 3**

*Codes and Themes from Questionnaire Two*

Themes	Codes	Participant quotes
Family	Family	“I think the emphasis on family and the pressure it entails. There is a lot of generational history that comes with family. And the desire to meet needs of family is important.”
	Family	“Rooted in tradition and family, matriarchal.”
	Family	“The family unit is so beautifully strong.”



Family

“I think the culture is beautiful in its emphasis on family and friendship.”

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Participants referred to the concept of family in a variety of ways throughout their responses in both questionnaires. The researcher was not surprised that participants frequently referred to the Colombian family throughout this study since a primary premise of Disney's *Encanto* concerns the family and family dynamics. Participants noted the large role that families play in the lives of Colombians and Colombian culture. In the first questionnaire, numerous respondents noted that families and familial values were one of the primary concepts they would associate with their overall perception of Colombia (Participants 6, 8, 12, 14, 17, personal communication, September 2023). In comparison, in the second questionnaire taken after watching *Encanto*, over double the number of participants said that they would associate families, “strong family ties,” and familial values with their overall perception of Colombia (Participants 1, 2, 5, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 18, 19, personal communication, September 2023).

Participants mostly agreed, in both questionnaires that Colombian families are rooted in tradition and rules. In questionnaire one, many participants mainly mentioned the strong family ties and values that Colombian hold, but they did not refer to the constructs or dynamics of Colombian families. In comparison, in questionnaire two, participants noted that there can be external pressure from other family members in Colombia, observing, “I think the emphasis on family and the pressure it entails. There is a lot of generational history that comes with family. And the desire to meet needs of family is important” (Participant 18, personal communication, September 2023). Participant 1 agreed with Participant 18 and continued this concept of rules within Colombian family dynamics by saying, in questionnaire two, that:

Colombian families might have harsh rules but that holds the family bonds to stay strong. Maybe it's just hard for older people in the family to express their real emotions behind their harshness but it seems like usually it's because they feel responsible to hold up the whole family. (Personal communication, September 2023)

In questionnaire two, the large majority of participants agreed that each individual within a Colombian family must look to the collective interest of the family when making decisions, explaining that "Colombian culture is focused a lot on what is best for the family, and less on how the individual looks to better their own life" (Participant 14, personal communication September 2023).

A small change that was identified in how participants viewed Colombian family dynamics was in their leadership hierarchy. Participant 8 mentioned, "I think that the families are close-knit, that the fathers are the primary leaders of the family" in questionnaire one, prior to watching the film (personal communication, September 2023). Whereas several participants noted the importance of a matriarch to a Colombian family in the second questionnaire, explaining that "Colombia is family-oriented and puts high value on each family member and their contribution to the family, as well as matriarchal families are typical" (Participants 8, 17, 19, personal communication, September 2023). One participant noted, in the second questionnaire, how the matriarch in *Encanto* "saw beyond the expectations she had placed on her family and realized that she could love them even when they didn't "measure up"" (Participant 8, personal communication, September 2023). This shows the dynamics of the character in the film but also how the participant was able to identify the change in the relational dynamics that play out in Colombian families.

Participants frequently commented concerning how Colombian family members interact with one another as well. Participants noted, in both questionnaires, the importance of giving respect to and showing appreciation for elder family members (Participants 5, 8, 17, 19, 20, personal communication, September 2023). Participant 17 shared, in the second questionnaire, “I would say there is a higher emphasis on respect for elders, even if the elder is wrong, unyielding obedience in that is what differs” (personal communication, September 2023). Several participants also recorded how they saw interactions between family members play out in *Encanto*. Participant 15 wrote, “I love the relationship between Mirabel and Abuela at the end of the movie” (personal communication, September 2023). This is significant as it shows both the power of the matriarch in the film and the relationships between family members and their relational power that is illustrated. Another participant wrote in the second questionnaire, “I liked that they let Bruno back in and were welcoming to the family and outsiders at the end” (Participant 19, personal communication, September 2023).

## **Theme 2: Culture**

Another common theme that emerged from the collected data was that of culture. Each participant mentioned Colombian culture several times throughout the course of both questionnaires. Participant quotes that highlight this theme are provided below, with quotes and codes from questionnaire one—prior to watching the movie—in Table 4 and quotes and codes from questionnaire two—after watching the movies—in Table 5. Additionally, the sub-theme of collectivism appeared throughout the analysis of the data, so a discussion of that sub-theme is included below, and Table 6 provides supplementary codes and quotes that participants offered in questionnaire two.

**Table 4***Codes and Themes from Questionnaire One*

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Codes</b>	<b>Participant quotes</b>
Culture	Time	“The people are friendly and outgoing. Little though about timeliness, as people are the main focus.”
	Culture	“A very fun, exciting, and passionate place full of a very distinct culture.”
	Culture	“A nation where the people hold importance on cultural roots and family bonds. Additionally, it seems like the people are very nice, giving respectful according to all the friends I know who are from Colombia.”
	Culture	“I see [Colombia] as a culturally rich place with delicious food and cool music.”

**Table 5***Codes and Themes from Questionnaire Two*

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Codes</b>	<b>Participant quotes</b>
Culture	Culture	“The culture is very family oriented and expressive. From facial and body movements, to words themselves, to colors and clothing, everything was very expressive!”
	Culture	“They are loud, passionate, in each others business, but they love each other fiercely. I also like how was saw the farming aspects of [Colombia] and how food is an important part of their culture.”
	Culture	“I think our lifestyle in general is very different such as food and music as well as what we consider normal, such as living with any kind of extended family.”
	Culture	“Primarily the language in addition to various social expectations and interactions. It seems

	to be more emotive than most western cultures.”
Way of life	“I think I can see how much [Colombia] has to offer. Just their way of life seems simpler but more sincere than here in America.”
Spanish [Language]	“I think Colombia and its Spanish are the most beautiful out of all of Latin America.”

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Participants noted topics such as food, culture, lifestyle, the language, time, and way of life, which all led to the development of this theme. Costalas (2009) mentions the nature of Colombian culture, including how the language, people, and way of life all affect the culture of the nation. The researcher was not surprised to see this as a result of the data collection because of the nature of the study itself. Participants were specifically asked questions concerning Colombia and Colombian culture, so it was natural for participants to reference culture with an increased frequency. In the first questionnaire, prior to watching the film, 16 of the 20 participants mentioned topics pertaining Colombian culture when they were asked to describe their overall perception of the nation. Participant 11 remarked “That it is a country with a vibrant culture and deep historical roots. I assume it had some European (Spanish) influence” (personal communication, September 2023).

When asked to describe Colombia and Colombian culture before watching the film, participants commonly referred to character traits of Colombian people, saying Colombians are “outgoing,” “loud,” “passionate,” “dramatic,” “beautiful,” “desperate,” “strong,” “carefree,” and “intense” (Participants 1, 2, 5, 6, 10, 12, 14, 18, 20, personal communication, September 2023). In comparison, participants mentioned other characteristics of Colombian people when describing the culture after watching the movie, such as “loyal,” “bright,” “vibrant,” “charming,” “hospitable,” “strict,” “romantic,” and “loving” as well as some of the same characteristics like,

“passionate,” “strong,” “loud,” “beautiful,” and “expressive” (Participants 1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 13, 15, 17, 18, 20, personal communication, September 2023).

According to Participant 1, when asked to describe their overall perception of Colombia in questionnaire one, they recorded that “The people are friendly and outgoing. Little thought about timeliness, as people are the main focus” (personal communication, September 2023).

Answering the same question in questionnaire one, Participant 19 shared that they view the people in Colombia as very welcoming. In the second questionnaire, participants answered the same question slightly differently in reference to culture, as they did not mention the Colombian people as much as other aspects of the culture. For example, in questionnaire two, Participants 3, 6, and 11 wrote about “dancing and singing,” the “unique architecture and vibrant colors,” and “music and [food]” when they were asked what first comes to mind when they think of Colombia (personal communication, September 2023).

### *Sub-Theme: Community*

**Table 6**

#### *Codes and Themes from Questionnaire Two*

<b>Sub-Theme</b>	<b>Codes</b>	<b>Participant quotes</b>
Community	Helping	“I think of a group of people who care for each other, helping out and thoughtfully reaching out when they need help.”
	Community	“Family and community centered culture.”
	Community	“I learned that the family unit and connection to your community is very important. I learned that they had a difficult past and many were displaced and lost loved ones. It seems to have a rich and unique culture.”
	Communal	“I learned that Colombians are very communal and that neighbors are more like family.”

## Community

“I would say that this movie painted Colombia in a more vibrant, communal, and colorful light than I expected.”

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Predominantly mentioned in questionnaire two, only mentioned once in questionnaire one in comparison, participants discussed the importance of community and collectivism to the Colombian culture. Participants 3, 8, 12, and 19 specifically made observations concerning the collectivist mindset and nature of Colombian culture in questionnaire one. Participant 8 pointed out how Colombian culture is more collectivist, responding to the question of how they would describe their overall perception of Colombia in questionnaire one, by saying:

They have more group culture than America. They are less individualistic and more of a group mindset. I generally think they have less of an expendable income and are less materialistic than America is. I think due to the cultural and materialistic difference that they are more likely to share resources and help others around them. (Personal communication, September 2023)

Participant 14 continued this thought of collectivism in Colombian culture in questionnaire two by comparing Colombian culture to their own culture by explaining, “my [own] culture is much more focused on the individual and how they can improve their life. Most times away from family rather than living with or close by immediate family member and living as a community” (personal communication, September 2023). As shown, participants answered relatively similarly in both questionnaires in relation to their perception of Colombia and community.

### **Theme 3: Dangerous**

Another recognized theme was concerning Colombia being a dangerous country in which to live. This theme emerged solely in data collected from the first questionnaire, which

participants took prior to watching Disney's *Encanto*. The following table, Table 7, provides the codes and relevant participant quotes that were collected from this questionnaire, which led the researcher to establish this theme as a part of the study.

**Table 7**

*Codes and Themes from Questionnaire One*

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Codes</b>	<b>Participant quotes</b>
Dangerous	Dangerous	"Very scary and dangerous place that most people might not want to live."
	Dangerous	"The big cities are overrun with crime and it's a relatively dangerous place to travel to."
	Dangerous	"Dangerous to visit."
	Drugs	"The most common thoughts I have are associated with Pablo Escobar and the drug trade."
	Drugs	"There is a big issue with drugs and violence."

Several participants noted their perception of Colombia as a nation that is dangerous as well as full of criminals and drugs. Participants commented on how they associate the nation with ideas of criminals or criminal behaviors, such as drug use and narcotrafficking. Seven of the 20 participants noted in the first questionnaire that they would associate drugs, criminal behaviors, and thoughts of danger with Colombia when asked what their overall perception of Colombia was (Participants 3, 4, 10, 13, 15, 18, 19, personal communication, September 2023).

Some participants directly mentioned their belief that Colombia is a dangerous nation to live in or to visit, such as the comment that "The big cities are overrun with crime and it's a relatively dangerous place to travel to" (Participant 10, personal communication, September 2023). Similarly, other participants agreed with this thought and revealed that they think



Colombia is “very scary and dangerous place that most people might not want to live in” (Participant 4, personal communication, September 2023). In a similar manner, several participants mentioned that they associate Colombia with drugs and criminal behaviors. Participant 15 explained that “The most common thoughts I have [of Colombia] are associated with Pablo Escobar and the drug trade” (personal communication, September 2023). Agreeing with Participant 15, Participant 19 noted that “there is a big issue with drugs and violence” (personal communication, September 2023).

When asked how the participants who commented about Colombian culture being dangerous learned what they know about Colombia, these participants (Participants 3, 4, 10, 13, 15, 18, 19) shared that they gained their knowledge of Colombia through Spanish language classes, television, the news, and movies. Participant 18 added that they learned about Colombia “Through friendships in college, as well as in media and tv shows and music such as *Narcos* and Camilo [a Colombian singer and musician]” (personal communication, September 2023).

#### **Theme 4: Media Representation**

An extremely prominent theme that emerged from the collected data in both questionnaires concerned media representation. Codes relating to this theme included media, portrayal, news, stereotypes, bad reputation, and representation. Table 8 presents the associated codes and relevant participant quotes from the first questionnaire in relation to media representation, and Table 9 presents the associated codes and relevant participant quotes from the second questionnaire in relation to media representation.

**Table 8***Codes and Themes from Questionnaire One*

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Codes</b>	<b>Participant quotes</b>
Media Representation	Media	“Next is the media, where it is portrayed as a place people go on the run”
	Portrayal	“I think it’s portrayed as a poor and crime driven country. I don’t believe that’s true of all of [Colombia] but I do think it might be true of some of the bigger cities.”
	News	“I think in the movies, they put emphasis on the family and tradition. However – in the news – I would see more about the political and terrorist issues. I believe both sides are accurate.”
	Media	“For fictional media (movies and tv shows) characters and the country itself are very dramatic and low class. In news, they portray it to be the slums dictated by drug lords.”
	Media	“The only media I’ve seen about [Colombia] is news about people dying there, cartels, and the economy getting worse there I think. I’d assume that the news is fairly accurate.”

**Table 9***Codes and Themes from Questionnaire Two*

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Codes</b>	<b>Participant quotes</b>
Media Representation	Media	“The media usually paints other cultures in negative ways and this brings a new life and respect to Colombian culture.”
	Media, Stereotypes	“Most other media I see about Colombia doesn’t focus on family, rather the negative stereotypes of the culture.”

Portrayal	“The amount of detail put into the movie was given so much thought, the portrayal seemed to try and imitate actual Colombian culture.”
Portrayal	“I like Colombia strictly based off this portrayal.”
Bad Reputation	“Although Colombia may get a [bad reputation] from the media, people should not take it all as fact and do their own research before pressing such agenda.”
Media	“I always see [Colombia] depicted in media as a corrupt country that has a lot of crime and gangs.”
Media	“After watching the movie, I am much more interested into the culture and seeing how media has misconstrued the truth about Colombia.”

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Across both questionnaires, the theme of media representation, specifically of Colombia, was prominent. Smith and Huber (2018) explain the negative racialization of Colombians in the media in comparison to Caucasian individuals, who are typically painted as the heroes of stories, whereas Colombians are typically painted as villains. This could be seen throughout various participants' answers to questions in both questionnaires. In the first questionnaire, participants' answers concerning media representation mainly concerned how they recollected seeing Colombia portrayed in the past. In comparison, in the second questionnaire, most participant answers were in reference to how they believed this specific piece of media represented Colombia as well as how the media, in general, should represent Colombia with more accuracy rather than with tainted imagery. While most participants commented that the movie had broadened their perspective of what Colombia and Colombian culture were truly like, not all participants shared that opinion.

When asked in the first questionnaire, prior to watching the film, how they believe

Colombia is portrayed in the media and whether those portrayals are accurate, participants shared mixed assessments. Participants 1, 4, 8, 12, and 19 shared in this preliminary questionnaire that they believe media portrayals of Colombia are accurate, with Participant 4 saying, “the only media I’ve seen about [Colombia] is news about people dying there, cartels, and the economy getting worse there I think. I’d assume that the news is fairly accurate” (personal communication, September 2023). Another participant shared that “I think in the movies, they put emphasis on the family and tradition. However – in the news – I would see more about the political and terrorist issues. I believe both sides are accurate” (Participant 12, personal communication, September 2023). There were several participants who, in comparison, said that media portrayals of Colombia were only partially accurate (Participants 2, 10, 13, 18, personal communication, September 2023). Participant 10, for example, wrote, “I think it’s portrayed as a poor and crime driven country. I don’t believe that’s true of all of [Colombia] but I do think it might be true of some of the bigger cities,” and Participant 18 wrote “I think it is portrayed as a place that is very dangerous, because of drugs and crime, but it is also beautiful in its topography and nature” (personal communication, September 2023). Then, there were Participants 3, 14, and 17, who were of the dissenting opinion that portrayals of Colombia were completely inaccurate, with Participant 17 explaining:

I think [Colombia] is portrayed as a culture with a lot of gusto or pride. I think is portrayed as a culture that is very big on holding your own. And I think that sometimes this can be a bit of an extreme. It’s not exactly the most accurate representation to say that their pride is too much for people. (Personal communication, September 2023)

There were several participants who noted that they rarely saw depictions of Colombia in the media and could not make an informed answer as to whether portrayals are accurate or not

(Participants 7, 9, 11, 16, 20, personal communication, September 2023).

In comparison, when asked in the second questionnaire—after watching the movie—if the participants thought the film portrayed an accurate view of Colombia in comparison to how the culture is in reality, the participants had mixed opinions but largely thought or hoped that the movie was accurate in depicting how the culture truly is. For example, Participant 8 wrote that they think *Encanto* was a respectable overall representation of Colombia:

I think the movie did a great job of representing what a family in [Colombia] is probably like. They are loud, passionate, in each others business, but they love each other fiercely. I also like how was saw the farming aspects of [Colombia] and how [food] is an important part of their culture. The movie touched on the violence but I don't think it fully showed how and why it has become so prevalent in the country. (Personal communication, September 2023)

However, other participants commented on the parallels they noticed in the movie and in Colombian culture, including Participant 2 who said, “For the most part. The expressiveness and loudness was very accurate to what I've seen from my sister-in-law and her family. Even the fast speaking, keeping face when in front of people, and more seemed really accurate” (personal communication, September 2023). Yet, there were additional participants of other, dissenting opinions (Participants 4, 6, 7, 17), saying that the film did not portray the culture realistically, with Participant 17 saying:

No, I think that part of this highly capitalized on the better parts of the culture and painted them in a completely positive yet unrealistic light, with there being a lack of other external factors to make it “Colombian” rather than Latino. (Personal communication, September 2023)

In another question in the second questionnaire, participants were asked whether the Colombian culture, as presented in Disney's *Encanto*, was what they expected, based on other media they may have seen about the nation. A majority of the participants agreed that *Encanto* illustrated Colombia in a new light compared to the other media they had seen about the nation. In their response to the question, Participant 9 articulated that they thought the film did present Colombia in a manner consistent with what they expected, saying "I think it definitely highlights the beauty and love of the culture. The media [usually] paints other cultures in negative ways and this bring a new life and respect to Colombian culture" (personal communication, September 2023). Agreeing with this sentiment, another participant shared, "Most other media I see about Colombia doesn't focus on family, rather the negative stereotypes of the culture" (Participant 14, personal communication, September 2023). As presented in Chapter II: Literature Review, these presentations of Colombia are mentioned by Naef (2018) as they explain that the perceptions that individuals from other nations gain of Colombia when it is largely only associated with negative images and stereotypes can easily be skewed as dire situations in the nation are commodified.

In the second questionnaire, after watching the film, several of the participants (Participants 7, 9, and 10) also conveyed how they believe that Colombia has received a bad reputation due to the way it has been portrayed by the media, and Participant 7 shared, "After watching the movie [*Encanto*], I am much more interested in looking into the culture and seeing how the media has misconstrued the truth about Colombia" (personal communication, September 2023). Agreeing, Participant 9 explained, "I think it's beautiful and I would love to know more about [Colombian culture]. I wish we saw more accurate information portrayed in the media" (personal communication, September 2023). Lastly, Participant 10 expressed in their response, "Although [Colombia] may get a [bad reputation] from the media, people should not take it all as

fact and do their own research before pressing such agenda” (personal communication, September 2023).

### **Theme 5: Entertainment & Education**

The co-existing themes of entertainment and education, in direct reference to one another and media, also became apparent through the analysis of collected participant data. Relevant codes and participant quotes from questionnaire one are presented in Table 10, and relevant codes and participant quotes from questionnaire two are presented in Table 11.

**Table 10**

*Codes and Themes from Questionnaire One*

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Codes</b>	<b>Participant quotes</b>
Entertainment and Education	Entertainment, Education	“Entertainment, typically when I go about watching a new movie, I tend to focus more on whether I was entertained with it and the educational factor is a second thought.”
	Entertainment, Education	“I mainly watch movies for entertainment purposes because it helps me relax and enjoy the art of something beautiful. Many times, on another note, I find movies to be very educational as well.”
	Entertainment	“Entertainment, because they are typically more fun.”
	Entertainment	“Entertainment – I view it as a primary form of escapism.”
	Entertainment, Education	“We are constantly impacted and changed by the media we take in. Subliminal messaging and cultural representation impact our worldview.”
	Entertainment, Education	“It’s possible to make education fun and I think Disney movies do a great job of that.”

**Table 11***Codes and Themes from Questionnaire Two*

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Codes</b>	<b>Participant quotes</b>
Entertainment and Education	Entertainment	"I go into a Disney movie for entertainment and only entertainment."
	Education	"I would not [consider the movie educational], because I don't trust Disney to give me accurate information that I can act on or can help shape my worldview or opinions on international affairs or culture."
	Education	"The flashbacks of the dispersion give historical context for the people and their culture."
	Education	"It shows a lot about their culture, both social and familial."
	Education	"I think it was very educational and [I] learned more about my own perceptions of the culture and how it may have been wrong."
	Education, Entertainment	"I do not consider the movie educational. I believe it is entertainment. That tied a countries culture wonderfully."

The final theme identified through the analysis of the collected questionnaire data was that of entertainment and education. These two concepts are interconnected in this context, and thus considered a singular theme. Throughout both questionnaires, participants referred to the entertainment and educational value of movies at large as well as Disney's *Encanto* specifically.

In the first questionnaire, participants were asked if they believed that movies could be entertaining and educational simultaneously and to explain their answer. Participants unanimously agreed that movies could share these two characteristics of being entertaining while also being educational. Participant 15 shared, "Yes I think they can be both [entertaining and educational]. I think movies shape the way a culture thinks and acts so I like to analyze how it



speaks to the audience and what it says in addition to how it entertains” (personal communication, September 2023). Another participant agreed, explaining that “because we learn subconsciously through what we see and hear. We make inferences based on our experiences and perceptions of the media we consume” (Participant 11, personal communication, September 2023). While still agreeing that media can be both entertaining and educational, there was one participant who shed light on their response by clarifying the following:

Absolutely, travel documentaries and food shows are as enjoyable as they are educational. But I do not find myself educated during Disney movies or coming of age movies so to their romanticized nature of the environments in which they are set. Due to certain Disney agendas I keep myself an unaffected viewer when watching their movies specifically. (Participant 5, personal communication, September 2023)

However, when prior to watching the movie participants were asked, in the first questionnaire, whether they typically watch movies for entertainment or educational purposes, the vast majority of participants shared that they watch movies only for entertainment purposes. Participants 6, 10, 13, and 17 commented that they use movies as an escape mechanism from the stresses or monotony of their everyday lives, with Participant 13 writing, “Mostly entertainment, but if they do both that’s the best kind of movie. Movies give me a break from my current stresses to be able to “visit” somewhere new” (personal communication, September 2023). Participant 3’s response seemed to give an answer that provided an overview of many of the other participants answers as well, as they wrote, “Entertainment, typically when I go about watching a new movie, I tend to focus more on whether I was entertained with it and the educational factor is a second thought” (personal communication, September 2023).

In comparison, in the second questionnaire, participants referred to entertainment and

education in a different light. When asked if they would consider Disney's *Encanto* to be educational and why, 65% of participants—or 13 out of the 20 participants—said that they would consider the film to be educational in one way or another. Participants 11 and 17 mention multiple aspects of the film that contributed to their answer, including “the flashbacks of the dispersion give historical context for the people and their culture” (Participant 11, personal communication, September 2023) and “in the case of a Colombian/Latin family and the culture of helping their neighbors as seems to be customary in Latin culture” (Participant 17, personal communication, September 2023)

### **Summary**

In Chapter IV: Findings, the results of this study were expounded upon and illustrated. The chapter began by providing an in-depth description of the participants who were included in this study, including information concerning the eligibility requirements that were necessary prior to being accepted as a participant for this particular research project. Ensuing this section, was the development of the codes and themes for this study. The researcher presented the codes and themes which were inductively established through the analysis of participant responses to the two questionnaires, including numerous tables and participant excerpts that support the overall findings of this study. Corresponding with each table, the researcher provided a narrative explanation of the results to the questionnaires. To conclude this chapter, a summary is present.

## Chapter V: Discussion

### Overview

The purpose of this qualitative research was to analyze the way Colombian culture is presented in Disney's *Encanto* as well as to determine whether viewers of *Encanto* learn and develop a favorable view of Colombia and Colombian culture after watching the film. Two questionnaires were utilized as the methods by which to collect data for this study with participants. These questionnaires were used to determine whether participants' perception of Colombia and Colombian culture had changed to a more favorable perception after watching *Encanto*, meaning the film had, therefore, educated the audience. The process for this research included detailed research of the current academic literature concerning topics like intercultural communication, Disney's presentation of cultural otherness, Disney's *Encanto*, Colombia and Colombian culture, and Entertainment-Education. Following this review of the literature, an overview of the qualitative methodology for this study was presented, including data collection, information concerning the participants who gave their consent for this study, and data analysis. Then, a presentation of the findings of this study was illustrated through the exhibition of codes and use of participant quotes from the questionnaires. The final chapter of this study includes a discussion of the results, several implications, limitations of the study, and recommendations for future research.

### Discussion

As explained in Chapter I: Introduction, and throughout many of the other sections in this study, the purpose of this analysis was to determine whether the cultures and stereotypes communicated in Disney's *Encanto* contribute to a favorable viewer perception of Colombian

culture. Thus, the following research question for this research was developed to fulfill this purpose and guide the research:

⇒ Do the cultures and stereotypes communicated in Disney's *Encanto* contribute to favorable viewer perceptions of Colombian culture?

Based on the data presented in Chapter IV: Findings, the answer to this research question can be answered as follows: The communicated cultures and stereotypes in Disney's *Encanto* do contribute to a favorable viewer perception of Colombian culture.

While only six participants shared in the first questionnaire that they would associate Colombia with crime, drugs, and violence—which are generally considered unfavorable stereotypes of the nation, as explained in Chapter III: Literature Review—none of these participants associated Colombia with these same traits in the second questionnaire after watching Disney's *Encanto*. Additionally, even the participants who originally mentioned perceptions of Colombia that were favorable were led to further mention and develop enhanced understandings of the nation through their viewing of the film according to their responses in the second questionnaire. Many participants elaborated on their understanding of Colombian culture by specifically referencing aspects that relate to the communication of Colombian people, traditions, family dynamics, societal norms, and more. Thus, it can be determined that through the way the culture and stereotypes are illustrated in the film *Encanto*, viewers are led to have a more favorable perception of Colombian culture.

Several participants noted that the film made them more aware of their bias against the country of Colombia or at least their preconceptions about the country. Participants remarked that, due to the way that Disney illustrated both the nation and the culture in the film, they saw Colombia in a new way for the first time. They explained that they saw Colombia's regard for

collectivism as well as respect for family and elders to be central elements that they drew from the film, which was also explained in Chapter II: Literature Review by Costalas (2009). Other aspects that they gained from watching the film that led to a more favorable perception of Colombian culture included the innate reliance on tradition that was established throughout *Encanto*. Various participants remarked that the traditions presented in the film were something they had never considered or knew about Colombia before. Thus, the viewers were educated about Colombia in this way while watching the film.

A finding that was of note for this study, which was not one of the inherent intents of the researcher for this study, was that various participants noted how the way Colombia has historically been portrayed by the media was drastically different in comparison to *Encanto*. Participants explained that the film made them wonder why other illustrations of Colombia and Colombian culture mainly focused on the bad reputation, violence, and stereotypes of the nation. As discussed, Naef (2018) wrote concerning this topic of how the violent history of Colombia has been commercialized and monetized by the media in the past. Thus, the theme of media representation in this study showed how the participants viewed media representations of the Colombian culture in the past in comparison to how the culture is portrayed in Disney's *Encanto*.

While there were several participants who said that they would not consider *Encanto* to be educational in nature, these same participants made comments throughout the second questionnaire that were indicative that they were educated about Colombia and Colombian culture through watching the film. This shows that while individuals may not consider a piece of media to be inherently educational, it can still have educational attributes. As Giroux (1994) posited, and as was discussed in Chapter II: Literature Review, movies can influence the way people are educated about and perceive different topics and their worldview. As the title of this

study also suggests, movies play a role in influencing the perceptions of individuals on the world around them. Thus, the influence that movies exert on their audiences was of centrality to this study specifically, and this was the basis of the research question and problem behind this study. Further, Giroux (1994) explained that movies are channels of communicating a variety of ideas and messages to international audiences. This is exhibited in the findings of this study as what *Encanto* did, even if the creators did not inherently intend for the film to be educational in nature while creating the film.

### **Implications**

The implications for this study are the product of its the research question: Do the cultures and stereotypes communicated in Disney's *Encanto* contribute to favorable viewer perceptions of Colombian culture? The following sections delineate the theoretical, empirical, and practical implications that were found due to the analysis that was conducted throughout this study.

### ***Theoretical***

As explained in Chapter I: Introduction and more extensively in Chapter II: Literature Review, the communication strategy that informed this research project was entertainment-education. This communication strategy was developed by Miguel Sábido in the 1960s to study the educational properties of telenovelas on health education of adolescents (Singhal & Rogers, 2002). As previously discussed, this strategy is informed by six different communication theories, but the two primary theories are social cognitive theory (Wood and Bandura, 1989) and the extended-elaboration likelihood model (Slater, 2002) (Moyer-Gusé, 2008). It has been determined that Disney's *Encanto* is entertaining due to its worldwide acclaim and other data provided in Chapter II: Literature Review. In this study, the researcher sought to know whether

the film was also educational, regardless of whether it was intended to be educational by its creators. The researcher investigated both the informative and persuasive nature of *Encanto*. Entertainment-education was applied as the lens by which the movie was examined and used to determine the effects of the movie on viewer perceptions of Colombian culture after watching the film. Specifically, participants were asked some of the same questions in the second questionnaire—after watching *Encanto*—as in the first questionnaire—which they took before watching the film. This helped the researcher compare answers from the participants and determine that participants were in fact educated while watching the film and gained a more favorable perception of Colombian culture due to watching the film, as illuminated in Chapter IV: Findings.

### ***Empirical Foundations***

As explained in Chapter I: Introduction, there is a gap in existing academic literature concerning how international audiences perceive the Colombian culture in relation to media's representation of the culture. Research has been done in relation to the commercialization of dire social situations in Colombia (Aristizábal, 2019), as well as studies about the criminalization of the idea of Colombians in general (Smith & Huber, 2018). Studies have also been conducted concerning how media's presentation of Colombia is in relation to its history of narco-trafficking—in shows like *Narcos*—increases a poor overall public perception of Colombia (Bockino, 2019). However, the consideration of viewer perception of Colombian culture based on a favorable presentation of the culture had yet to be fully addressed in academic literature.

When a researcher wants to determine whether an audience has developed a favorable perception of another culture and they use a film as their research artifact, it is important to first consider whether the film is a faithful exemplification of said culture. This study addressed the

violent history of Colombia in order to acknowledge that significant piece of the country's history. However, there is more to the nation of Colombia than its violent history. Therefore, this study sought to understand if viewers developed a favorable view of Colombian culture including the violent history of the nation while also acknowledging the other cultural aspects that make up the entirety of the culture. This study is constructive to the field of communication in general because it contributes to the current literature concerning intercultural communication, helps to bring awareness to how other cultures are portrayed in mass media, and informs on how media can be both entertaining and educational simultaneously.

### ***Practical Implications***

The implications of this study for individuals vary depending on the purpose of the reader. The application of the results of this study can be applied to all people as they pertain not only to individuals who create or contribute to entertainment-education media. The results of this study provide context for individuals of all vocations and backgrounds to consider as they consume all media. Individuals can and should consider whether or not the media they are consuming is an accurate representation of the topic at hand, and if it is not an accurate depiction then the consumer should be aware of that knowledge and be critical of how they allow themselves to be affected by it. As discussed in Chapter II: Literature Review, B. C. Johnson (2015) shares how the persuasive nature of movies shapes individuals' worldviews and perspectives on different issues. Thus, it is important for consumers of media to understand the influences that are exerted upon them and to be cognizant of how they are allowing those influences to play out in their life.

Another practical result of this study for the general public is to serve as a reminder to consider their own preconceptions, biases, and the potential stereotypes that they have



concerning other cultures. Individuals may be unaware of the perceptions they have of other cultures if they are not directly addressed. Evaluating one's assumptions and understanding why someone thinks the way they do about cultural others is beneficial when engaging in intercultural communication (King & Baxter Magolda, 2005). Therefore, in order to interact with cultural others more effectively, it would be beneficial to consider from where assumptions about another culture stem, as well as if that source is credible and if the information is accurate.

The results of this study also have practical implications for individuals within the field of cinema who contribute to how other cultures are presented through this form of mass media. The results of this study can help inform these individuals should they seek to intentionally take entertainment-education to new depths, beyond current health and social issue topics in entertainment-education research. As shown through the presented data, viewers have a desire to see cultures accurately presented through film. Also, as discussed by Aristizábal (2019) as well as Smith and Huber (2018) the criminalization of Colombians in film as well as the monetization of dire social situations in Colombia have been a consistent theme in the media in recent history. There is an opportunity for filmmakers to present Colombia in a new light that is not only more accurate but may change people's perspectives about Colombia around the world.

### **Limitations**

As with all research, there were limitations to this study. This research utilized a qualitative methodology, and the researcher chose to use questionnaires as the collection tool to gather data from participants. In total, 20 participants contributed to this study. While this number of participants provided a variety of data for the researcher to code and analyze for the purposes of this study, having more participants would lend to the possibility of greater variety in

response answers and therefore more trustworthy results. Therefore, one limitation of this study is the low number of participants included in the study.

To contact participants for this study, the researcher posted on social media platforms to garner interest. This did provide for a variety of individuals from different backgrounds. However, it may be difficult for future researchers to duplicate this research because the individuals who would see the posts could change dramatically depending on who the researcher is. Hence, another limitation of this study would be transferability.

It is of note that, since the collection tool for this research was questionnaires, the researcher was not able to ask clarifying questions of any of the participants. Also, the participants read each question and answered to the best of their ability without asking clarifying questions. Therefore, there is a chance that participants may not have understood the meaning of particular questions. While this is beneficial in order to keep participants anonymous and reduce bias for the researcher, this may have inadvertently caused confusion for participants while answering questions.

### **Future Research**

The research conducted in this study helped to provide guidance for future research to contribute to the body of literature that is relevant to these topics. Future research could include individual interviews with participants prior to watching the film and then after watching the film or a focus group where individuals could have conversations with one another about their thoughts on the film. This would be beneficial as it would allow the researcher to ask clarifying questions of the participants if there were any areas of confusion in answers or if the researcher would like more details from a participant about a particular question. Also, in reference to participants, future research would benefit from having a greater number of participants in the

study. This would encourage not only a greater number of answers but also more in-depth information concerning both initial perceptions of Colombia and Colombian culture, as well as how those perceptions were influenced after watching the film.

Another way research on this topic could be expanded is through the use of quantitative research to determine whether *Encanto* positively or negatively affected viewer perception of Colombian culture. Through quantitative research on this topic, researchers would be able to measure the influence that the film had as well as potentially gauge what public opinion of Colombia is in general, as this seems to be somewhat of a gap in current scholarly research, as most research concerning perceptions of Colombia are qualitative in nature and mainly focus on the way Colombia is presented in films rhetorically.

### **Summary**

The purpose of this qualitative research was to analyze the way Colombian culture is presented in Disney's *Encanto* as well as to determine whether viewers of *Encanto* learn and develop a favorable view of Colombia and Colombian culture after watching the film. This research began by providing an introduction, including a background of relevant topics, proving the significance of this particular research, and defining the research question that guided this research process. The following chapter provided an overview of the current relevant body of scholarly literature, such as intercultural communication, movies as a form of communication and their persuasive nature, how Colombia has been represented in the media in the past, as well as an in-depth discussion of the communication strategy that this research utilized for analysis, entertainment-education. The data for this study was collected from a total of 20 participants who willingly consented to take two questionnaires for this research. From this data, coding and

analysis was conducted to inductively identify six major themes: family, culture, dangerous, media representation, as well as entertainment and education.

An analysis of these themes through the lens of Miguel Sábido's entertainment-education provided practical implications for individuals as they seek to understand other cultures and engage in intercultural communication more effectively as well as potentially identify their own presuppositions in relation to other cultures. This study also yielded practical implications for individuals who have a hand in producing media that represents other cultures, especially as it relates to the importance and ethical responsibility of portraying cultures accurately due to the nature of movies as a form of mass communication. The empirical implications of this study further add to the current body of literature that exists pertaining to entertainment-education, media representation of Colombia, movies as a form of communication, as well as intercultural communication. Recommendations for future research were provided based on different limitations of the current study, including a low number of participants and the inability of the researcher to ask supplemental questions for clarity. The results of this study answered the research question by showing that the communicated cultures and stereotypes in Disney's *Encanto* do contribute to a favorable viewer perception of Colombian culture.

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## Appendix A

### Questionnaire Questions

#### Questionnaire 1 – Before Watching the Movie

1. How would you describe your overall perception of Colombia?
2. What are three words you would use to describe Colombia and its culture?
3. How did you learn what you know about Colombia?
4. How do you believe Colombia is portrayed in the media, and do you think these portrayals are accurate?
5. Do you typically watch movies for entertainment or educational purposes? Why?
6. When was the last time you watched a Disney movie?
7. Do you think movies can be entertaining and educational simultaneously? Why or why not?

#### Questionnaire 2 – After Watching the Movie

1. What first comes to mind when you think of Colombia?
2. What are three words you would use to describe Colombia and its culture?
3. What did you perceive the theme of this movie to be?
4. What did you perceive the message of this movie to be?
5. What did you learn from this movie about Colombia and its culture?
6. What did you like best about the movie?
7. Would you say the culture presented in the film is what you expected, based on other media you may have seen about Colombia? Explain.
8. Do you think the way that Colombia was portrayed in the film was accurate to how the culture is in reality? Why?

9. How do you think Colombian culture differs from your own culture?
10. How does the film make you feel about Colombia?
11. Are there any stereotypes or misconceptions you may associate with Colombia?
12. How has your view of Colombia changed from before you watched this movie?
13. Would you like to share any other thoughts about Colombia?
14. Would you like to share any other thoughts about Colombian culture?
15. Do you believe Disney movies typically present other cultures accurately? Explain.
16. Would you consider this movie to be educational? Why or why not?

## Appendix B

### Consent

**Title of the Project:** We Don't Talk About Influence: An Analysis of Disney's Encanto & Its Influence on Viewer's Perceptions of Colombian Culture

**Principal Investigator:** Olivia Keyser, Graduate Student, School of Communication & the Arts, Liberty University

#### Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be 18 years of age or older. To avoid bias, individuals will be ineligible if they have Latino heritage, have been raised by people of Latino heritage, and/or have specifically lived in or traveled to Colombia. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research.

#### What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of the study is to analyze the way Colombian culture is presented in Disney's *Encanto* as well as how this affects viewers' perception of the culture.

#### What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following:

1. First task, fill out a questionnaire concerning your knowledge and perception of Colombia and its culture. This will take no more than 15 minutes to complete.
2. Second task, participate in an in-person, screening of the Disney film *Encanto*. This will last approximately two hours.
3. Third task, fill out a follow-up questionnaire concerning your knowledge and perception of Colombia and its culture after watching the film. This will take no longer than 35 minutes to complete.

The total participation time will last approximately three hours.

#### How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Benefits to society include furthering current literature concerning intercultural communication and increasing public knowledge on how biases, perceptions, and stereotypes of other cultures can be affected by watching films.

#### What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The expected risks from participating in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

I am a mandatory reporter. During this study, if I receive information about child abuse, child neglect, elder abuse, or intent to harm self or others, I will be required to report it to the appropriate authorities.

#### **How will personal information be protected?**

The records of this study will be kept private. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Participant responses will be anonymous.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted, and all hardcopy records will be shredded.

#### **Is study participation voluntary?**

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time.

#### **What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?**

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please exit your questionnaire and close your internet browser. Any data that has not yet been collected will not be included in the study. However, because the data will be anonymous, once it is collected, the researcher will not be able to identify nor delete your questionnaire responses should you choose to withdraw.

#### **Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?**

The researcher conducting this study is Olivia Keyser. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at [REDACTED]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Marie Mallory, at [REDACTED].

#### **Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?**

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the IRB. Our physical address is Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA, 24515; our phone number is 434-592-5530, and our email address is [irb@liberty.edu](mailto:irb@liberty.edu).

*Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.*