

University of Mississippi

eGrove

---

Honors Theses

Honors College (Sally McDonnell Barksdale  
Honors College)

---

2019

## There She Evolves: The Financial, Marketing and Journalistic Sustainability of the Miss America Organization

Blair Wortsmith  
*University of Mississippi*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://egrove.olemiss.edu/hon\\_thesis](https://egrove.olemiss.edu/hon_thesis)



Part of the [Finance and Financial Management Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Wortsmith, Blair, "There She Evolves: The Financial, Marketing and Journalistic Sustainability of the Miss America Organization" (2019). *Honors Theses*. 1161.

[https://egrove.olemiss.edu/hon\\_thesis/1161](https://egrove.olemiss.edu/hon_thesis/1161)

This Undergraduate Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Honors College (Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College) at eGrove. It has been accepted for inclusion in Honors Theses by an authorized administrator of eGrove. For more information, please contact [egrove@olemiss.edu](mailto:egrove@olemiss.edu).

THERE SHE EVOLVES: THE FINANCIAL, MARKETING AND JOURNALISTIC  
SUSTAINABILITY OF THE MISS AMERICA ORGANIZATION

by  
Blair Wortsmith

A thesis submitted to the faculty of The University of Mississippi in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements of the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College.

Oxford  
May 2019

Approved by

---

Advisor: Professor Bonnie Van Ness

---

Reader: Professor Del Hawley

---

Reader: Professor Dwight Frink

© 2019  
Blair Wortsmith  
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is impossible to begin this thesis without extending the most heartfelt gratitude to those that helped make this project a reality. I am extremely thankful for the guidance of the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College staff members, especially Dr. Jennifer Parsons, Dr. John Samonds and Dr. Douglass Sullivan-González. Thank you for providing an outlet to combine my interests and studies as I embarked on the most fulfilling academic project of my life thus far. Acknowledgement must be made to Dr. Bonnie Van Ness and my advising group. It was an exciting and rewarding whirlwind of an experience conducting research under a phenomenal Advisor alongside some of the brightest finance students at the University including Elizabeth, Alex, Harris and Daria. In addition, Dr. Del Hawley, Dr. Dwight Frink and Dr. Milorad Novicevic served as excellent resources throughout this process. I will forever cherish the sweet memories made during the late nights at the Honors College and Tri Delta with Katherine and Ann Weston working on our papers. To my parents, sisters, the pageant community and the Ole Miss family, thank you for supporting me as I tirelessly worked on my Thesis. I am deeply grateful to every friend and stranger alike that took the time to complete my survey. The vast number of people from across the nation that shared their honest opinions with me through my questionnaire was overwhelming and humbling. I am indescribably appreciative of the support and encouragement that I have received from so many people throughout the duration of this Thesis.

I am forever appreciative of the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity I had to travel to Atlantic City, New Jersey for the 2019 Miss America Competition in September 2018 thanks to research funds granted to me from the SMBHC. Gauging reactions in real-time, networking with individuals from across the country that would further assist in this project and seeing firsthand why this research is so deeply important to me personally and for the Miss America community as a whole are all tremendous benefits gained from my trip to the birthplace of the Miss America Competition.

At this time, I grant permission to quote copyrighted material. I hope that this Thesis can serve as a reminder of why so many people have poured into and treasured this Pageant over the past 98 years, a resource as various stakeholders in the Organization evaluate its current situation and a call-to-action to create unity through collaboration and compromise.

## ABSTRACT

BLAIR WORTSMITH: There She Evolves: The Financial, Marketing and Journalistic Sustainability of the Miss America Organization  
(Under the direction of Bonnie Van Ness)

Adrian Phillips, a Pageant President and volunteer in the Miss America Organization for more than seven decades, stated that, “Things evolve. The press likes to refer to ‘changes,’ but most everything that has happened has been a precedent of something *evolving*. It *comes* by evolving and it *disappears* by evolving. And *that* has been the history of the Miss America Pageant” (Bivans).

With the centennial anniversary quickly approaching and drastic changes made recently within the Miss America Organization, my Thesis examines the program’s evolution and evaluates its sustainability through finance, marketing and journalism perspectives. To do this, I drew information from a plethora of books, news publications, articles and statements. In addition, I created and distributed an anonymous survey through social media platforms to gauge the public’s perception of the current state of the Organization. Through the compilation of the history of the program and an analysis of the nearly 1,000 survey responses recorded, I observed that the current state of the Miss America Organization is not sustainable and that immediate action needs to be taken in order to guarantee the continuation of the Pageant.

From the start of the Competition in 1921, the Miss America Organization has faced many of the same challenges year after year. Back lack and criticism, the ever-

present need to prove its relevance, shifts in media outlet utilization, the frequent adaptation of Miss America's role to fit societal expectations and the reliance on outside entities for a substantial amount of funding have not stopped the Pageant from continuing in the past. However, as the current situation of the Organization weakens, it must fight to sustain itself as a relevant program. Resolved internal dispute, a relatable image the public connects with, strong financial backing, revised competition elements and scoring criteria, a network broadcast partnership and a renewed sense of belief in the Pageant are all immediate needs that must be met in order for the Miss America Organization to both survive and prosper beyond its upcoming 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

## PREFACE

The evening before my 20<sup>th</sup> birthday in January of 2017, I experienced an invigorating “light bulb moment” that gave me a small glimpse into two of the most important upcoming events of my college career. At the time, I was a sophomore at the University of Mississippi attending the PULSE Leadership Conference. As I listened to Sam Haskell, the CEO of the Miss America Organization at the time, and Savvy Shields, Miss America 2017, speak on how the Pageant has progressed since 1921 and the plans to promote the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Pageant in its 99<sup>th</sup> year, two ideas came to my mind that still haven’t left to this day. I decided that I wanted to learn a lot more about how this program came to be, and I specifically wanted to be Miss America in the 99<sup>th</sup> year to share that evolution with the nation throughout my year of service.

Although I had competed in the Miss America’s Outstanding Teen program, I was not a participant in the Miss America Organization at that time. However, I’ve known I eventually wanted to compete since I was 15 years old. I did not know for several months that I was going to receive my first ticket to compete in the Miss Mississippi Pageant 12 short days following the Conference when I was crowned Ole Miss Most Beautiful 2017 because this pageant had never sent its winner to the state competition before. After a contestant was unable to fulfill her obligation to compete, I was invited to fill this spot in late April less than two months prior to the competition. I knew an opportunity like this did not come up coincidentally, so I accepted the offer to compete.



That fall, after being named Miss Vicksburg 2018, the time had arrived for me to select a Thesis topic. I was confused, anxious and discouraged about how I would combine my managerial finance major, marketing and journalism minors and desire to explore a topic I was passionate about into a project. During an advising session, Jennifer Parsons suggested including my “pageant stuff.” My mind instantly raced back to PULSE ten months prior, and I experienced another eye-opening moment; I was going to conduct my Thesis research on the evolution of the Organization from these three perspectives.

However, a curve ball came my way one month later when Sam Haskell and several other leaders resigned when their correspondences using derogatory language to describe former Miss America winners were exposed. I was confused, anxious and discouraged yet again. Was this a program I even wanted to be a part of? Could the Pageant possibly survive? As I strived to put my mind to ease, I reminded myself that the Miss America Organization and the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College have both taught me to dig deeper and look broader than my own experiences to see the full scope of a situation to form educated opinions on controversial issues. I was determined to do just that as I decided to use this project to evaluate my participation and decide how I really felt about the Organization.

As I currently live out my dream of being Miss University 2019 that originated on a campus tour my senior year of high school, I find it my personal responsibility to not blindly agree that the Pageant can weather any storm but instead use historical and factual information along with personal testimonies of those involved to analyze the direction the Miss America Organization is heading and develop a plan to help ensure that the program I know and love so much continues far beyond its upcoming 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>LIST OF FIGURES</b> .....	X
<b>LIST OF TABLES</b> .....	XI
<b>CHAPTER I: EVOLUTION THROUGH THE LENSE OF MEDIA</b> .....	1
<b>CHAPTER II: FINANCIAL STABILITY</b> .....	10
THE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM .....	15
<b>CHAPTER III: MISS AMERICA 2.0</b> .....	19
THE SCANDAL .....	19
THE 2019 COMPETITION .....	25
THE LAWSUIT .....	31
<b>CHAPTER IV: SURVEY ANALYSIS</b> .....	37
MISS AMERICA'S ROLE .....	40
2.0 REBRANDING .....	45
CHANGES TO THE COMPETITION .....	48
LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE .....	53
SUSTAINABILITY AND RELEVANCE .....	56
<b>MY RECOMMENDATIONS: MISS AMERICA 3.0</b> .....	65
FUNDING AND SPONSORSHIPS .....	65
RESOLVE CONTROVERSY .....	68
REVAMP THE COMPETITION .....	72
INCREASE PARTICIPATION .....	77
<b>CONCLUSION: PROVING RELEVANCE</b> .....	82
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b> .....	84

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2-1	Scholarships Awarded Over the Years .....	16
Figure 4-1	Importance of the Traits of a Miss America .....	41
Figure 4-2	Importance of the Roles of a Miss America .....	42
Figure 4-3	Miss America Rebranding Efforts .....	46
Figure 4-4	Reasons for Not Participating in the MAO .....	47
Figure 4-5	Changes to the 2019 Miss America Competition .....	49
Figure 4-6	Scoring System Measuring a Contestant’s Ability to Succeed .....	50
Figure 4-7	Suggested Host Cities for the Miss America Competition .....	51
Figure 4-8	Important Characteristics of a New Host City .....	52
Figure 4-9	Governance Structure of the MAO .....	54
Figure 4-10	Stance on the Lawsuit .....	55
Figure 4-11	Greatest Benefits Reaped Through Participation .....	58
Figure 4-12	Sustainability of the Organization .....	60
Figure 4-13	Miss America’s Relevance .....	61
Figure 4-14	Providing a Scholarship .....	63
Figure 4-15	Satisfaction with the Direction of the MAO .....	64

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 2-1	Scholarships Utilized in 2014 .....	18
Table 3-1	Preliminary Scoring of the 2019 Miss America Competition .....	27
Table 3-2	Final Scoring of the 2019 Miss America Competition .....	29
Table 4-1	Average Ranking of the Roles of a Miss America .....	43
Table 4-2	Viewership of the 2019 Miss America Competition .....	49
Table 4-3	Average Ranking of the Characteristics of a New Host City .....	53
Table 4-4	Average Ranking of the Benefits Reaped .....	58

### **Evolution Through the Lense of the Media**

“Atlantic City needed an attraction, and Atlantic City area newspapers needed to increase circulation. Voila! A perfect opportunity for an enduring partnership!” (Osborne, 1995). The pageant was launched in 1921 after a group of East Coast newspapers decided to hold contests to increase readership and circulation of their papers by inviting readers to submit photos of beauties in their towns. These journalists worked in conjunction with a group of Atlantic City businessmen aiming to extend the summer season beyond Labor Day (“Our History,” n.d.). Winners were selected and traveled to Atlantic City during the annual Fall Frolic to compete for the Golden Mermaid trophy and what is now known as the title of Miss America. Although only eight contestants competed, the first year was perceived to be so successful that planning for the next year began immediately (Deford, 1971, p. 115).

The pageant director began writing to distinguished newspapers across the country to hold local contests, what has been viewed as, “a public relations gold mine, prompting thousands of words of free publicity in newspapers across America,” according to Osborne. The competition grew over the next several years. By 1923, seventy-four contestants competed in the pageant, and there were eighty-three in 1924 (Riverol, 1992, p. 22). Live radio coverage of the event began in 1925 (“Our History,” n.d.). “From newspaper publicity stunt to full-blown glamour event, the Pageant’s earliest years evolved into something no one could foretell – an American tradition” (Osborne, 1995, p. 62).

However, opposition quickly grew during these beginning years of the Miss America Pageant, and by 1927, “women leaders in educational, civic, religious and social organizations sponsored a nationwide campaign to stop beauty pageants in Atlantic City.” The competition was very quickly perceived as scandalous, and the hotelmen’s association voted to no longer continue the pageant (Osborne, 1995, p. 78).

Negative publicity surrounded the attempted return of the competition in 1933 as tabloid reporters documented forgotten bathing suits, a case of appendicitis, a married contestant and two nonresidents of the states being represented (Osborne, 1995, p. 85). Newspapers were no longer sponsoring the contestants; those vying for the title now received their ticket to Miss America through carnivals and amusement parks (Riverol, 1992, p. 27). However, with the help of Lenor Slaughter, the pageant began to take a different direction when The Showman’s Variety Jubilee was started in 1941 (Riverol, 1992, p. 31). The public perception of the organization shifted from “cheesecake to do-goodism” during this time as community service and scholastic achievement were introduced as important aspects of Miss America (Deford, 1971, p. 150). The show was no longer limited to radio and newspaper; by 1938, it was estimated that half the nation saw Miss America crowned in the newsreels, according to Deford. In this same year, talent became a required part of the competition (Riverol, 1992, p. 33).

As Miss America headed into the war years, the competition, “become a symbol of hope to American soldiers” (Osborne, 1995, p. 94). The organization made a deal with the War Finance Department for funding in exchange for war bond sales, and the 1943 winner, “sold more Series E bonds than anyone else in the United States” (Deford, 1971, p. 157). Her travels across the country that year launched the idea of the nationwide tour

that Miss America winners still embark on today. While Miss America was visiting the University of Minnesota chapter of Kappa Kappa Gamma, a member suggested the idea that the pageant winners should receive scholarships for participation (Riverol, 1992, p. 39). The first scholarship was awarded in 1945, and the foundation for academic success began (Deford, 1971, p. 160). Miss America continued to evolve into what a reporter called, “a pageant I would be proud to have my own daughter take part in” when the winner was crowned in a gown instead of a swimsuit in 1948 (Bivans, 1991, p. 21). As Miss America shifted into her new identity, she began facing a problem that still exists today. Despite the new focus on patriotism, service and education, “the press (found) itself surprised every time a beauty pageant winner (was) something other than a classic dumb blonde” (Deford, 1971, p. 157).

Regardless, Miss America dove into a new era, commonly known as the Golden Age of the pageant, in the early 1950’s when the organization was approached with the idea of televising the final competition (Osborne, 1995, p. 106). The presidents of Miss America and ABC struck a deal with Philco Company, a television production business, and the first live show was produced in 1954. For the first time, 27 million viewers in 8.714 million homes tuned in to the crowning of Miss America (Riverol, 1992, p. 56). In five years, the viewership nearly tripled (Bivans, 1991, p. 25). The competition served as a venue for technological innovation as the television industry expanded (Osborne, 1995, p. 106). From six black and white tripod cameras and heat-generated lights in the beginning to color picture, computer-controlled lights, wireless microphones and crab cranes for cameras in the mid sixties, the competition adapted and thrived in the new age of television.

During the fifties, full state representation was accomplished (Bivans, 1991, p. 25). Bert Parks became the host of the competition and performed to the iconic song, *There She Is*. It was continually performed throughout the years, and “the tune remains deeply ingrained in the public’s perception of Miss America.” The television presence continued to rise. The pageant’s first year on television garnered a 20.9 rating with 39% share of the viewing audience, and by 1970, the show had a 37.2 rating with 66% share (Deford, 1971, p. 308).

As Miss America took a pause on making any major changes, the world around the pageant moved into an extremely different time. Television progression, war and social activism all took its toll throughout the 1960’s, but in the midst of this, “the pageant was a constant. And people liked it for that. For a while.” (Osborne, 1995, p. 118). However, the competition began to experience the effects of being stagnant as the decade ended. The progression was described by Riverol as a pendulum; the early onset of the competition was met with pushback but “swung in favor of the pageant” in the 1940’s and 50’s. The season of disapproval for the competition returned as women’s groups began targeting the pageant yet again. Bra burning displays were highlighted during the pageant week for several years in Atlantic City beginning in 1968 (Bivans, 1991, p. 26). One of the organizers of these displays was Yolande Betbeze, Miss America 1951 (Osborne, 1995, p. 135). Despite efforts to combat the disruptive nature of these protests, it was leaked that one of the contestants was allegedly undercover and going to denounce the pageant during the live show. This scene didn’t happen, but no one can be sure whether conspiracy was in the works or not (Deford, 1971, p. 258). In addition, the progression of the civil rights movement increased pressure for diversity in the



competition. With the first African American contestant competing in 1970, “an important milestone in pageant history that fostered an immediate increase in the visibility of ethnic minorities in the program” was achieved (Bivans, 1991, p. 27).

The 1980’s kicked off a wave of headline grabbing stories for the pageant. Bert Parks, the longtime host of the competition, was fired from his role (Bivans, 1991, p. 29). As the news broke, fans protested and developed a “Bring Back Bert” campaign. The brief exit of *There She Is* followed Bert’s dismissal in the midst of a copyright dispute. However, it was reinstated when the conflict was resolved.

A year full of both highs and lows for the organization was experienced throughout the reign of Miss America 1984. Vanessa Williams was the first African American to be crowned, and she had an excellent year of service up until the summer before she passed on her crown when news arose that she had posed for sexually explicit photos prior to her reign (Riverol, 1992, p. 103). Pageant officials were faced with a difficult task when having to ask Vanessa to resign. In addition to this scandal, a Miss California contestant resorted to, “shameless publicity gimmicks” when displaying a banner that read “Pageants Hurt All Women” during the live telecast (Bivans, 1991, p. 31).

Although Miss America was indeed making continual changes over the years, the newly appointed CEO in 1987, Leonard Horn, felt that the public had a perception of the pageant that was “stuck in a time warp” (Osborne, 1995, p. 119). Ticket sales began to slow, and market research revealed that viewers saw it as a “turn-off” not a “turn-on” show. Miss America had yet another set of problems that are still present and growing today: an increased variety of show options, VCR capabilities and more pageants

competing with Miss America. Because of these obstacles, Horn set out on a mission to make sure the pageant was advancing. His first five tasks were to, “put the pageant on a solid financial base, change the way the contestants present themselves, modernize the television show, reorient the judges as to what they should be looking for, and convince sponsors of the value of the program.”

These initiatives resulted in many changes, the first being the establishment of the Miss America Organization with Pageant, Scholarship Fund and Foundation branches to better enhance the structure in order to provide more scholarships to contestants and beyond (Bivans, 1991, p. 32). A widespread public relations campaign set out to shift the perception of Miss America, drawing in contestants like Gretchen Carlson, a classical violinist with an Ivy League education (Osborne, 1995, p. 120). After Lani Rae Rafko used her time onstage to discuss the importance of hospice care in light of her career as a nurse for terminally ill patients, Horn added the requirement in 1990 that each contestant adopt a specific platform issue to seek solutions for and promote throughout the year. Throughout the 1990’s, winners advocated for a variety of social justice issues including awareness about AIDS, domestic violence and diabetes education (“Our History,” n.d.).

The future of the Miss America Organization looked seemingly bright at the close of the century. It was noted by Bivans (1991) that, “the public has watched her remarkable transformation from a flirtatious seaside ‘National Beauty Tournament,’ to a Hollywood-struck ‘Showmen’s Variety Jubilee,’ to a golden-era television extravaganza, and finally to the status of the modern-day ‘Miss America Organization’ – the largest private scholarship program for women and the *grande dame* of pageants.” However, the onset of the new century presented the pageant with the task of maintaining its relevancy.

The new century brought about a challenge the Miss America Organization had to adapt to extremely quickly – reality TV. It was time “to catch up with an audience whose tastes have wandered far beyond the Miss America pageant’s mild tone” (Peterson, 2005). Shows like “American Idol,” “Stacked,” and “Fear Factor” were captivating the attention of young individuals. The interview and talent phases of competition, the defenses against critics of the show, were proven through data to not be the popular appeal of the show. However, “the swimsuit part still had the power to bring viewers back from the kitchen.” The 2004 pageant was the fifty-year anniversary of the show on television (“Our History,” n.d.). It attempted to capitalize on the interests of viewers by only having the final two contestants display their talents in a “head-to-head talent showdown” (“Miss Alabama Crowned,” 2004). A quiz show was brought in and a casual-wear competition was introduced (Hennessey, 2006).

The attempts proved unsuccessful. The number of viewers fell below 10 million viewers, a 20% drop since 2000 and roughly half of the viewing in 1984 (Hennessey, 2006). Approximately 7 million households viewed the pageant. The Miss America Pageant was dropped from its network broadcast on ABC after the 2004 pageant (Peterson, 2005). As a result, the decision was made to move the competition to Las Vegas after 85 years in Atlantic City (Shaw, 2018). Art McMaster, then CEO of the MAO, stated, “What we wanted to do was find a new host city that has all the glitz and glamour Miss America is known for” (“Miss America packs her sash,” 2005). Country Music Television (CMT) picked up the pageant for the first two years in Las Vegas then The Learning Channel (TLC) obtained it in 2008 (Shaw, 2018). An interactive component was added, and a reality TV show titled “Miss America: Reality Check” was

aired in the weeks leading up to the competition. Viewership began to steadily rise, and ABC picked the pageant back up in 2011. In 2012, the competition audience surged by 13% in adults 18-49, which was the highest it had been since 2004 (TV by the Numbers, 2012). The six-part series received great scrutiny, but its effects were measurable in the median age of viewers dropping from 58 to 38 by 2013 (Spatz, 2013).

As Miss America was regaining relevance, the decision was made in 2013 to return to Atlantic City under the leadership of Sam Haskell, the new MAO chairman (Ein, 2013). McMaster was pleased with the “monumental milestone for the organization to return to the Jersey shores where Miss America began,” but Las Vegas hotel sources felt betrayed by the move due to their investment in putting the pageant back on the map (Leach, 2013).

The ever-increasing, widespread use of social media to comment on and criticize the pageant was apparent after the crowning of the winner that year. As the first Indian American winner, Miss America 2014 was the target of racist comments and accusations of terrorism online (Hafiz, 2017). The following year, Miss America 2015 faced her own onset of social media backlash after using a red plastic cup as a part of her talent performance (“Miss America 2015 Kira Kazantsev,” 2014). By the 2016 competition, the show was at the top of Nielsen’s Twitter ratings for the week (TV by the Numbers, 2015).

Miss America was forced to adapt yet again. “The contest has a lot to contend with to hold its place in the national imagination, especially with an increasingly progressive, web-native generation” (Bryant, 2016). Josh Randle, former COO of the Miss America Organization, stated in 2016, “It’s more about being able to get our brand

out and (the contestants') individual brands out to our fan base and out to the world" (Schweder, 2016).

Americans had a new way to access Miss America, and it didn't just have to be for one night in early September. The social media presence of titleholders has become increasingly important as they utilize this platform to share with their fan bases. Savvy Shields, Miss America 2017, exposed the world to the reality that the job as a titleholder entails through her social media accounts. She shared that, "Being Miss America is more than a full-time job, it is a 24/8 job," and fans were able to see that through her posts (Shields, 2018). Sharing about coffee naps, packing extra socks on airplanes and maintaining authenticity on social media advanced the relatable nature and relevance of Miss America.

The Miss America Organization was in a seemingly stable place in terms of its media relations as it quickly approached its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary, but that very quickly changed at the end of 2017 as scandal and conflict arose for the pageant that has yet to cease.

### **Financial Stability**

The Pageant began in 1921 as a simple swimsuit showcase, and nearly 100 years later, the show has become a multimillion-dollar production. In 1920, the International Rolling Chair Pageant had a budget of \$5,916 (Riverol, 1992, p. 22). The budget of the first Fall Frolic, now referred to as Miss America, had a budget of \$27,000 with a \$1,000 donation from Atlantic City, and in 1922, the city contributed \$12,500 of the \$50,000 production budget. In the early years, the parties and parades became more elaborate with each passing year. “It was a frivolous Fall Frolic which kept in step and in tune with the spirit of the Roaring Twenties.” However, by 1928, the competition had endured enough scrutiny that the founders of the once thriving competition chose not to continue the festivities (Osborne, 1995, p. 78). At the end of that seventh year, the Pageant had a \$52,000 deficit.

The competition was officially resurrected in 1935, but its large debt outstanding followed it (Deford, 1971, p. 151). After a couple of successful pageants, the notes were paid off. Even though the show had been perceived to be a “catch-as-catch-can operation,” the Organization declined a \$50,000 grant offered by the city in order to prove Miss America’s ability to independently survive.

In 1940, the partnership with the United States Junior Chamber of Commerce led to the establishment of local and state preliminary competitions to Miss America run by volunteer labor (Deford, 1971, p. 154). Members of the “Jaycees” supplied the manpower and funds for the competitions. A network resulted in “300,000 community volunteers

who conduct approximately 2,000 Miss America preliminaries from the Hawaiian Islands to the New England Coast” (Bivans, 1991, p. 18). This volunteer structure has continued with the Pageant since.

Catalina Swimwear, an original scholarship sponsor, retracted its funding when Jean Bartel refused to pose in a bathing suit following her crowning as Miss America in 1951 (Deford, 1971, p. 181). Jacque Mercer, the previous year’s Miss America, continued to make appearances for Catalina. When the company expressed frustration about the situation, Mercer made the suggestion that they start their own pageant. The idea was born for Miss Universe, Miss America’s biggest competitor. At the time, Miss America quickly recovered. Bartel viewed her time with the title “strictly from a business sense” and helped the pageant secure other outlets of income. However, the financial effects of this competing pageant still linger today.

The Pageant’s source of funding was altered indefinitely in 1954 when a broadcast agreement was reached with ABC to air the show on television for the first time (Riverol, 1992, p. 49). ABC paid a \$10,000 fee for the rights, and the sponsor, Philco Corporation, supplied \$12,500 for endorsements. The price was raised to \$25,000 for the corporate sponsorship the following year, and Philco agreed to it (Bivans, 1991, p. 23). Miss America was thriving; as stated by the Pageant director, Lenora Slaughter, “We had more money than we had ever had to pay our bills and have a few dollars extra.”

By 1974, sponsors and NBC contributed \$2.7 million to the final telecast, and the Pageant had a budget of \$127,000. It was said, “If the Boardwalk Parade and the three nights of Preliminaries were discontinued, and all that was left of the Miss America Pageant was the telecast of the Finals, the Pageant would still make money.”

However, for the first time in the Pageant history in 1986, selling spots for the show in Atlantic City had become a problem (Osborne, 1995, p. 119). The questionable perception of the Pageant due to negative publicity, a perceived lack of progress by the public, a growing number of network varieties and different outlets for advertising all played a part in sponsors reevaluating their contributions. Put quite simply, “Costs were going up, and ratings were going down.” The launch of public relations initiatives and the addition of personal platforms for contestants were techniques utilized to combat the problems. In 1987, Leonard Horn was the first CEO to receive compensation for his work on the Board (Osborne, 1995, p. 149). Horn carried the Organization toward the new millennium.

The financial situation of the Miss America Organization took a turn for the worse at the onset of the new century. By 2002, the Organization was \$1 million in the red and had failed to make a profit the previous five years (Poole, 2002). Unsuccessful attempts at Miss America-branded slot machines, awarding six-figure salaries to governing council members and having two CEOs in a three-year period were all stated by Poole as contributors to the struggling financial situation. In 2004, the pageant lost \$1.7 million, and ABC dropped its contract with the show (“Miss America packs her sash,” 2005). The Organization faced the difficulties of continuing operations without the \$3.2 million broadcast contract they once had (Peterson, 2005). Art McMaster, the President of the MAO in 2005, stated, “The days of getting the big money are sadly over. We realized to survive we needed to take this show on the road” (Gettleman, 2005). At the time, the visitors’ bureau of Atlantic City had been giving \$720,000 annually to “turn a historic hall on the boardwalk into a temporary television studio for the contest,” but



according to Atlantic City officials, this was seemingly “not enough for the pageant.” The decision to leave New Jersey was made in August of 2005.

As the Organization looked for a new host city, it used the opportunity to examine its current situation and develop a plan to better enhance the stability of the organization. Kevin McAleese, the director of the Miss Philadelphia Pageant at the time, posed the question, “How do we adapt to (the competitiveness of television) and bend the rules a little, but not give up all the values we’ve stood for 85 years?” (Peterson, 2005). This dilemma was continually present through the search and beyond as the pageant made its home in its new host city of Las Vegas (“Miss America packs her sash,” 2005).

Through its two years with Country Music Television and three with The Learning Channel, additions including the reality show and interactive components proved successful in improving ratings and showcasing the relevance of the show. ABC picked the pageant back up in 2011 for the Pageant’s 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in Nevada (Shaw, 2018).

The decision to leave Atlantic City after the 2004 competition was financially motivated, and the return to the East Coast appeared to be based on the monetary benefits of coming back as well. When the pageant made the decision to go back to New Jersey, a deal was struck in May 2013 with the Casino Reinvestment Development Authority (CRDA) in Atlantic City for a three-year contract (Kuperinsky, 2018e). The CRDA agreed to provide capital obtained from casino fees and luxury taxes to cover half of the pageant’s production costs and half of the building operations costs capped at \$2.267 million annually. The organization received the maximum funding over those three years. In February of 2016, another three-year contract was approved. The second agreement

provided the Organization with 80% more funding than the first with contributions of \$12.536 million over the span of three years.

Prior to the establishment of the first agreement, an economic impact study was conducted that estimated \$60.4 million in benefits to the community as a result of the competition's move back to Atlantic City. After the pageant in September 2016 and more than six months after signing the second agreement, the CRDA measured actual benefits at \$23.2 million including television exposure that was not previously accounted for.

Despite the transition of leadership in December 2017, the CRDA kept its commitment in the last year of its contract with the Miss America Organization by approving \$4.3 million in April 2018 for the competition in September of 2018. Over the past six years, the CRDA has provided more than \$19 million in total for the competition (Carroll, 2018f). The contract with Atlantic City as well as the \$2 million contract with ABC network both expired after the 2018 competition (Bauerlein, 2018a).

It is plausible that the CRDA of Atlantic City will not be a source of funding for the competition in 2019. In December 2018, the Press of Atlantic City obtained a copy of a request for proposal (RFP) to explore other potential host cities for the next two years of competition (Carroll, 2018h). Smaller venues in Atlantic City were also under consideration. The RFP was filed with the CRDA on September 25. The Organization stated its intent to promote a new city through news conferences, the TV broadcast, its website and the competition magazine (Betz, 2018). In return, the RFP outlines the need for 4,289 hotel rooms for the two-week period, a presidential suite for Gretchen Carlson, a venue with at least 3,000 seats, a week's worth of meeting spaces, a \$2.5 to \$4.5 million subsidy for production costs and \$325,000 for additional expenses (Carroll, 2018i).

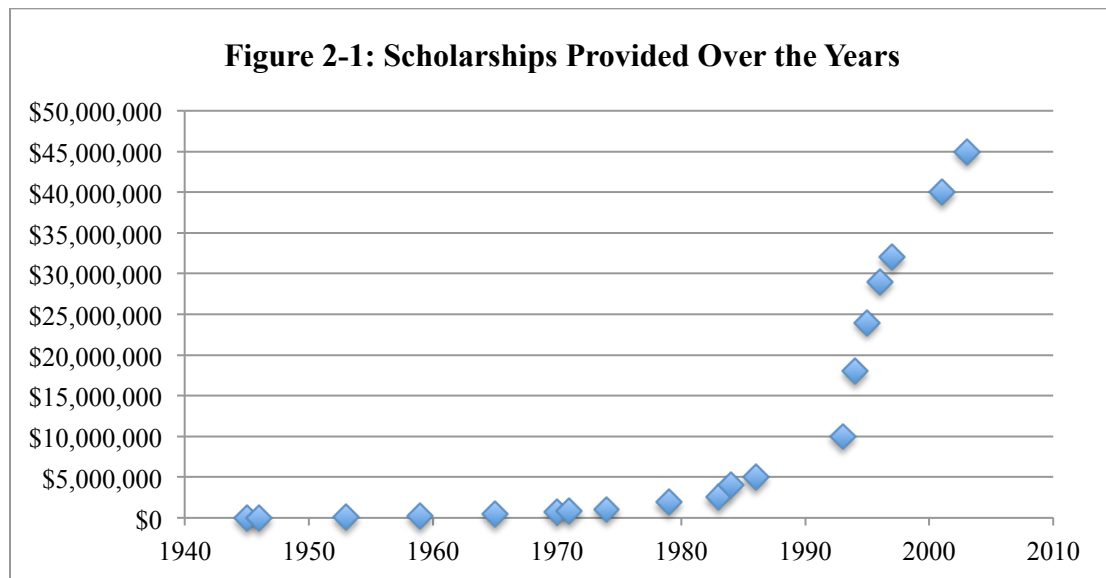
It was stated that, “proposals from the approached cities were to be submitted to MAO CEO Regina Hopper by October 12 with a decision to be made in December” (Carroll, 2018h). No updates on the matter have been made public from the Miss America Organization at this time.

### **The Scholarship Program**

Miss America began one of its biggest financial endeavors in 1945 when it introduced the scholarship program (Bivans, 1991, p. 19). In the first year, \$5,000 was awarded to the winner through the contribution of \$1,000 by five donors. The following year, five \$5,000 gifts were contributed for \$25,000 in awards to the top 15 national finalists. The state scholarship programs arose in 1947 with \$16,500 distributed, and local pageants joined the effort in 1948 by giving out \$50,000 in awards. By 1953, the \$100,000 mark nationwide was reached, and \$250,000 was given each year by 1959. According to the Miss America Organization’s website, the milestone of \$500,000 was reached by 1965 and \$1 million by 1974.

The 1980s and 1990s saw exponential rises in scholarship funds available to contestants across the country according to information available on the Miss America Organization website. In 1983, \$2.5 million was made available for contestants at the national, state and local level. This number rose to \$5 million in three years, and by 1993, \$10 million was made available. Four years later in 1997, \$32 million was up for grabs. The start of the new millennium slowed this growth, and the last reported number on the Organization’s page is \$45 million in 2003. Figure 2-1 compiles numbers from Bivans for the years 1945 through 1964 and the Miss America Organization’s website for the

years 1965 through 2003 on the scholarship offerings made available over time and displays the rapidly increasing trend. According to the live telecast of the Miss America Competition in 2014, the number remained at \$45 million.



Source: Bivans and the Miss America Organization

The validity of the scholarship program was questioned after the 2014 competition. On “Last Week Tonight,” John Oliver expressed skepticism of the claim that “\$45 million was made available annually” to contestants (Kuperinsky, 2014). He and his team investigated the amount awarded not just at the national competition but also across all levels. Oliver obtained the tax forms from 33 of the state competitions, and he discovered the ambiguity was in terms used like “provided” and “made available.” When referring to the amount of money that was utilized by contestants nationwide, he stated, “Even making the most generous assumptions for every state and local pageant that we didn’t get, we couldn’t get even close to \$4 million.” The Miss Alabama

Pageant's partnership with Troy University was used to describe the disparity. The pageant claims that Troy offers \$2.592 million of scholarships; however, that number was developed by multiplying the \$54,000 that is offered to the winner by the number of contestants that could theoretically utilize it, 48 in total. In reality, none of the money was awarded that year even though the \$2.592 was provided.

Nearly one year later, the Miss America Organization announced the preliminary results of a nine-month review (Kuperinsky, 2015). In 2014, nearly \$6 million was awarded through cash scholarships and in-kind tuition waivers. A statement made by Sam Haskell read, "In previous years, the Organization maintained that it made available \$45 million in scholarships annually. While accurate, this figure did not convey the actual acceptance and utilization of scholarships, especially in the form of in-kind tuition waivers."

In addition, the Organization released a scholarship overview that describes a transparent, detailed description of the differences between cash and in-kind scholarships as well as the allocation of awarded funds in 2014 ("Scholarship Overview," n.d.). It was explained that cash scholarships are paid directly by a local, state or national organization to the college or university through a cash transaction, and the amount awarded appears on bank statements and annual tax returns. In contrast, in-kind scholarships are waived tuition fees by an academic institution. No money is exchanged in the transaction between the Foundation and a college or university, so the gift amount is not recorded on IRS forms. Table 2-1 from the Miss America Foundation showcases the distribution of the \$5.9 million accepted and utilized by contestants in 2014.

**Table 2-1: Scholarships Utilized in 2014**

<b>Award</b>	<b>Amount</b>
National Cash Scholarships	\$416,500
Academic & Community Service (Cash)	\$106,000
State Cash Scholarships	\$2,109,682
State In-Kind Scholarships	\$651,952
Local Cash Scholarships	\$1,943,497
Local In-Kind Scholarships	\$677,898
<b>Total Awarded</b>	<b>\$5,905,529</b>

Source: The Miss America Foundation

Of the nearly \$6 million distributed nationally, 77.48% of the scholarships were cash scholarships, which equates to nearly \$4.58 million. The remaining \$1.33 million utilized by contestants were in-kind tuition waivers from academic institutions across the country. Of the \$45 million was that “made available” by the MAO, \$39 million of it was in-kind offerings. This shows that only 3.4% of the in-kind scholarships made available through the Foundation were granted to contestants that year.

The goal of the Miss America Foundation, stated in the Scholarship Overview report, is for the Organization to, “increase the number and amount of cash awards while working with colleges and universities to increase the utilization of their in-kind tuition waivers by a larger number of young women.” Although statements with bold scholarship totals are no longer made during the competition, the Miss America Organization is still the leading scholarship provider exclusively for women (“Scholarship Overview,” n.d.).

## **Miss America 2.0**

A new wave of controversy arose within the Miss America Organization at the end of 2017 and has continued through the present time. An unprecedented amount of changes in leadership, division within the pageant community, uncertainty of what the future of the competition will look like, confusion around the role of Miss America and the introduction of Miss America 2.0 have all been present over the course of the past 15 months. This section will piece together the events that have taken place beginning with the initial scandal in December of 2017 to the Miss America 2.0 Competition in September of 2018 all the way through the withdrawal of the lawsuit filed against the Miss America Organization in March of 2019.

### **The Scandal**

On December 21, 2017, Yashar Ali, a writer for the Huffington Post, leaked emails he had obtained written by Sam Haskell, other board members and pageant staff (Ali, 2017a). These conversations contained vulgar language about the weight and sexual activity of former Miss Americas including Mallory Hagan, Miss America 2013, Gretchen Carlson, Miss America 1989, and Kate Shindle, Miss America 1998. Within twenty-four hours of the story being published, forty-nine former Miss America winners signed a petition calling on the top leadership to resign (Ali, 2017b). The Board voted to suspend Haskell as they launched an investigation. Within forty-eight hours of the initial

release, Sam Haskell (CEO), Josh Randle (COO) and Lynn Weidner (Board Chair) all submitted their resignations (Ali, 2017a).

Brent Adams, a former employee of Haskell, and Regina Hopper, a previous Board member and Miss Arkansas 1983, had presented Dick Clark Productions, the organization's broadcast sponsor, with the emails in August (Kuperinsky, 2017). Two executives from the company were said to have presented the emails to other Board members at the time to enact a change in leadership, but when that did not happen, Dick Clark Productions resigned both its Board positions and cut ties with the program (Chokshi & Khatib, 2017).

Gretchen Carlson, an outspoken critic of the outgoing leadership, was named the new Chairman of the Board of Directors on January 1, 2019 (Isidore, 2018). In addition, Kate Shindle was appointed to the Board alongside two other former titleholders, Laura Kaeppler Fleiss, Miss America 2012, and Heather French Henry, Miss America 2000. It was stated in a press release from the Organization, "Most previously serving directors have resigned from the Board" (Mineur, 2018). Ali Tweeted that day, "The women who were the targets are now in charge of the organization" (Ali, 2017b).

Carlson appeared on Good Morning America on January 5. She shared about how empowering it was in the midst of the #MeToo Movement that the majority of the Board was now made up of former Miss America winners; this shift was especially relevant to her due to her experiences with exposing sexual harassment in her workplace eighteen months prior (Robach, 2018). Two weeks later, the Executive Directors of the Miss Arkansas and Miss South Carolina Competitions were "put forward by their fellow state and Executive Directors to represent the states at this critical phase of restructuring" to



serve on the Board as well (Post, 2018). Jennifer Vaden Barth, Miss North Carolina 1991 and Valerie Crooker Clemens, Miss Maine 1980, were also added on February 23 (Carroll, 2018a).

After little news had been announced and the state pageant season quickly approached, Miss America appointed its new CEO and President as well as its Chairman of the Foundation in mid-May (Salam, 2018). Regina Hopper assumed the roles that Sam Haskell and Josh Randle previously possessed, and Marjorie Vincent-Tripp, Miss America 1991, replaced Lanny Griffith. Both women formerly served in various capacities within the Organization and Foundation (Karwejna, 2018a). It was also shared that, “Their appointments are significant and mark the first time in history where both organizations are being led by women who are products of the Miss America program.”

Carlson appeared on Good Morning America on June 5 to make much-anticipated announcements that would affect the Miss America Competition in September (Thorbecke & Kindelan, 2018). She introduced many changes including having an interactive session with the judges in place of the swimsuit competition, not judging contestants on their physical appearance, modifying the evening gown competition and launching the new Miss America 2.0 branding. In addition, new terminology was used like “social impact initiative” instead of “platform,” “candidate” instead of “contestant,” and “competition” instead of “pageant.” The hashtag #byebyebikini was posted on social media to spread awareness of the changes (Kim, 2018).

On June 22, the Miss America Organization announced the election of three new Board members (Karwejna, 2018c). Dr. Shelley Robertson, Mary Jane Clark and Dr. Debbye Turner Bell, Miss America 1990, were all selected as new Trustees. A week

later, a post was made on the “MAO Fan Forum” Facebook page by Jennifer Vaden Barth stating that she and three other Board members would no longer serve as Directors in a conjoined letter (Bauerlein, 2018b). Shindle and Fleiss cited, “a lack of governance and a toxic culture” as their reasoning for resigning from the Board, and Barth and Clemens said they were forced to resign due to the enforcement of “pre-written resignation letters they had submitted when they were originally named interim members.” The post informed members of the group that they believed that when they were elected to full Trustee seats, the letters were unable to be executed under the provisions of their new status (Barth, Clemens, Fleiss, & Shindle). Carlson responded to the statement by sharing a letter on the same Forum (Carlson, 2018). She shared that Fleiss and Shindle executed, “repeated, unethical and ultimately failed attempts to advance their own personal interests, to unseat the duly-elected Chair and to take over the Organization.” In addition, Carlson stated that both had failed to disclose conflicts of interest.

Disputes arose within the Miss America community around the decision to eliminate the swimsuit competition as, “Some former directors and state pageant heads said they felt pressured by Ms. Carlson and other executives to choose to end the swimsuit competition or risk having the pageant not being broadcasted on television” (Bauerlein, 2018b). The Organization stated, “the elimination of the swimsuit competition was not a prerequisite to airing the telecast on ABC” (Kuperinsky, 2018a). However, it was said that, “certain production partners were no fans of the swimsuit competition.”

By the first week of June, twenty-two state organizations had signed a petition stating a “vote of no confidence and a demand for the immediate resignation of the entire Miss America Board of Trustees and President/CEO” due to “a lack of transparency and adherence to best practices” (Carroll, 2018b). Thirty former Miss Americas responded by expressing support for the current leadership through a separate letter. On July 24, Vincent-Tripp submitted her letter of resignation as the chair of the Miss America Foundation (Carroll, 2018c). That same week, the 2019 Miss America candidates attended their orientation in Orlando, Florida during the Miss America’s Outstanding Teen competition (Rosenberg, 2018).

When visiting with the Associated Press on August 8, Carlson shared that, “It would be important that we all try to come together and have a healing process” (Parry, 2018a). She also “dismissed critics as ‘a noisy majority’ unhappy over the elimination of the swimsuit competition.” Hopper commented on the franchise relationship that the Miss America Organization has with its state competitions with the analogy, “Just because you have a voice doesn’t mean your particular opinion gets accepted. States are licensees. If I’m a McDonalds licensee and the corporate office decides, ‘We’re going to serve chocolate French fries’ and I’m sitting here saying, ‘I don’t want to serve chocolate French fries,’ well, you’re going to serve chocolate French fries.”

Shortly thereafter, eleven former Miss Americas started a petition calling for the resignation of Carlson and Hopper (Kuperinsky, 2018a). The letter stated the women’s dissatisfaction with the “fear-based governance,” the lack of a national search for a CEO that instead only included a single candidate and the lack of trust from contestants and volunteers.

On August 17, the chaos deepened when a detailed letter written by Cara Mund, Miss America 2018, to the former Miss Americas was publicized stating that she had been, “bullied, manipulated and silenced by the pageant’s current leadership” (Parry, 2018b). She claimed that she was not included in speaking engagements and interviews, was required to speak on specific talking points when she was able to present, had a weak line of communication with the leadership, was addressed by the wrong name, was not allowed to wear certain clothing and felt that her voice was not heard nor wanted (“2018 Miss America Cara Mund,” 2018).

Carlson responded in a series of Tweets that were eventually combined in a cohesive statement; she stated the difficult state of the Organization when assuming her role, how she was saddened by the letter, the falseness of the accusations being made against her, how Cara is a part of a “historic moment for women,” and that consequences come from actions (Mallenbaum, 2018). The immediate repercussion Carlson referenced was the alleged loss of a \$75,000 scholarship due to Mund’s accusations.

The Organization released an official statement on the issue saying, “The Miss America Organization supports Cara. It is disappointing that she chose to air her grievances publicly not privately. Her letter contains mischaracterizations and many unfounded accusations. We are reaching out to her privately to address her concerns” (Karwejna, 2018d).

By August 21, nineteen former Miss Americas were calling for the resignation of Carlson and Hopper (Vagianos, 2018). A week later, Ashley Byrd resigned from the Board of Directors (Serpico, 2018). The Organization announced six new Trustees

including Shenan Reed, Barbara Moore, Jeffery Tobias Halter, Shelley Diamond, Sharlene Wells Hawkes and Kathleen Neville (Karwejna, 2018e).

An investigation was launched into the bullying allegations made by Cara Mund (Carroll, 2018e). The Board of Trustees selected Employment Practices Solutions Inc. to conduct the questioning. Mund was not willing to speak to Stephanie Davis, the investigator, until after the competition being held on September 9. The investigation took place between August 27 and September 5, and, “the majority of Miss America 2018 Cara Mund’s allegations of bullying and belittling by Miss America Organization leadership were unfounded, according to a report issued less than 12 hours after the crowning of her successor.”

Tensions were high and uncertainty was present as the 50 candidates vying for the title of Miss America 2019 made their way to New Jersey for nearly two weeks of festivities and pageantry. The public was unsure of what exactly the competition format would look like, and people were eager to see what the revamped pageant would look like without the infamous swimsuit competition that began on the Boardwalk 98 year’s prior.

### **The 2019 Competition**

On August 30, the candidates arrived to Atlantic City at their official arrival ceremony (Kuperinsky, 2018c). When commenting on the event, Kuperinsky rhetorically asked readers, “Did you notice a tension hanging in the air so thick you could slice it with any number of rhinestone-encrusted, pointy crowns?”

During the ceremony, Carlson announced the vision statement for Miss America 2.0, which reads as follows: “There she is. Miss Neurosurgeon, Miss Social Activist, Miss Jet Pilot, Miss Investigative Journalist, Miss Expert Coder, Miss CEO... Miss Whatever-She-Was-Created-To-Be. And yes, she is beautiful. Beautiful in the way she is smart, principled and passionate. Stunning in how she leads, commands a room and makes an impact. Striking in her genuineness, fearlessness and ability to take her influence and use it to impact the world. Never guided in what society deems she ‘should do’ but forever driven by what she ‘can do’. She has the confidence and skills, and is empowered to make it happen. There she is. Miss America. No wonder she has a crown. She rules” (“Miss America 2.0,” n.d.).

By September 5, the first day of preliminary competition, 46 of the 51 state organizations had called for the resignation of Hopper and Carlson (Kuperinsky, 2018c). It was stated that, “the only states holding out are Carlson’s native Minnesota and Hopper’s native Arkansas, along with Vermont, Nevada and Kentucky.” That evening, the 2019 candidates began participating in three nights of preliminary competition like they did in previous years; however, the phases of competition and the scoring breakdown changed from years prior (Karwejna, 2018b). With the removal of the swimsuit phase of competition, the preliminary awards announced each night would now go to the Talent and On-Stage Interview winners instead of the Talent and Swimsuit winners.

**Table 3-1: Preliminary Scoring of the 2019 Miss America Competition**

<b>Phase of Competition</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>
Evening Gown	20%	15%
On Stage Question	5%	20%
Private Interview	25%	20%
Swimsuit	15%	0%
Talent	35%	50%

The following morning, two posters were hung on Atlantic City streetlights featuring the cover of Carlson’s book “Be Fierce” replaced with the title “So Fake” (Carroll, 2018d). In addition, a blue sash with the words “Gretchen Sucks” appeared on the Miss America statue outside of Boardwalk Hall.

The tradition of the Shoe Us Your Shoes Parade continued the day before the Final Night of the competition as each contestant rode down the Boardwalk in a convertible displaying a pair of shoes and attire that relate to the state she was representing (Kuperinsky, 2018d). Miss Alabama was dressed in an astronaut costume paying tribute to the U.S. Space & Rocket Center in Huntsville, Miss Mississippi wore hot air balloon shoes in honor of balloon festivals held across the state and Miss New York’s Rockette costume represented the Radio City Christmas Spectacular in New York City. During this time, tickets for Sunday’s show were being offered up for free to people walking by (Bennett & Simon, 2018). The flyer said, “All you need to do is get dressed up, really nice, and show up to Boardwalk Hall.” Despite a reconfigured arena to combat this issue, more free seats were given out than before.

The Final Night of the Competition had arrived, and the show began with a video of the candidates. “The camera pans to the stage, where a group of five women, most of them clad in jeans, is huddled together. “We are,” they say in unison, “smart, confident, strong”—at this, a piano plays plaintive chords. The camera quickly pans to another quintet. “Talented, accomplished, principled,” those women (jeans, jumpsuit, track pants) chime in. Another group: “Commanding and impactful.” Another: “Passionate and compassionate.” Another: “Diverse and inclusive.” (The piano swells some more.) “Sisters, daughters, friends.” “Beautiful, inside and out.” (Even more rousing piano swell.) “Future leaders, teachers, mothers.” (Piano status: currently at full crescendo.) They say the conclusion together: “We ... are empowered. And we ... are just getting started” (Garber, 2018).

The Parade of States followed with introductions that included their names, majors and academic institutions. Songs like Beyoncé’s “Run the World (Girls)” and Katy Perry’s “Roar” played in the background. The contestants were then narrowed down to 15 and competed in the first On Stage Interview portion where the candidates asked each other questions in Peer Interviews. Topics ranged from Miss America’s relevance, effects of social media, and the relatable nature of the Organization. From there, 10 were selected to participate in the Red Carpet Competition and Social Impact Statement phase. They strutted down a red carpet with the non-finalist candidates cheering them on along the sides. Then they recited a brief statement about their social impact initiative, formerly known as the platform. Women’s empowerment was a common theme in the statements.

As they made their way into the Talent phase of competition, the Top Ten played instruments, sang, danced and recited spoken-word poetry. Fun facts about their lives and



accomplishments as well as their scholarship winnings from the Miss America Organization were displayed on the screen. The pool was narrowed to five where the candidates were asked a final question selected at the discretion of the randomly selected judge. The topics included the qualifications to do the job due to home state, the desire or lack thereof to be famous, growing up in a fatherless home, the most challenging failure faced and desire to invent something. The candidates were then ranked on the Final Ballot to decide a winner.

Cara Mund had her final walk, and then the runners up were announced. The hosts, Carrie Ann Inaba and Ross Matthews, commented on being a part of history, the sisterhood amongst the candidates and the scholarship winnings of the Top Five. Nia Franklin, the representative from New York, was crowned Miss America 2019. The following chart displays the comparison of the scoring breakdown of the Final Night from 2018 and 2019 (Karwejna, 2018b).

**Table 3-2: Final Scoring of the 2019 Miss America Competition**

<b>Final Scoring</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>
Composite Score	25%	25%
Evening Gown	15%	20%
On Stage Question	20%	25%
Swimsuit	10%	0%
Talent	30%	30%
Final Conversation	No	Yes
Final Ballot	No	Yes

When reflecting on the show, Garber stated that she saw, “approximately 79 pairs of platform heels, 215 roses, 1,248 references to ‘empowerment,’ 5,679 references to ‘strength,’ and 700,698,432 sequins.” Debate arose regarding whether the new Miss America show was “2.0 or 2.no.” Jensen (2018) shared commentary made by viewers on Twitter. Medina Zerishnek tweeted, “This ‘red carpet’ format is boring and not elegant at all. This isn’t an awards show with paparazzi, its Miss America.” Grayson Bailey shared that it is “time to move to Miss America 3.0 because 2.0 is a train wreck.” Naomi Lemire, a fan of the new format, posted, “I don’t know why all of the upset about Miss America 2.0 was necessary. Tonight’s show made me feel proud to be a woman and confident to one day watch it with my future daughter.”

The television viewership of the competition hit its new low on ABC; 4.3 million viewers watched the show live (Fitzgerald, 2018). This number was down 23% from the year prior, and the number of people watching has declined each year since the competition returned to Atlantic City in 2014. In addition, viewership amongst the key demographic of 18-49 years of age was down by 36% and was lower than the years it aired on TLC and CMT cable channels (Maglio, 2018). However, Fitzgerald reminded readers that television as a whole has faced the effects of other outlets for television viewership like watching the show on different devices or recording it for later. She also stated that, “it may be unfair to read the year-to-year Miss America ratings declines as a rejection of the changes to the pageant. It could simply be a sign of the times, whether that means less interest in pageants or in live TV generally.”

The future of the Miss America Organization seemed more uncertain than it had prior to the competition. As Nia Franklin began her year of service as Miss America and candidates competed in local competitions across the nation, all the stakeholders of the program could do was wait to see what would unfold next.

### **The Lawsuit**

On September 23, 2018, Jennifer Vaden Barth, former Board member and Miss North Carolina 1991, started a “MAO Leadership Change Fund” GoFundMe with the goal of raising \$100,000 to “legally replace the leadership with one committed to maintaining a good relationship with the states and formers, reviewing and editing contract language, and embarking on a public-relations effort to rebuild public trust in the Organization” (Barth, 2018a).

Five days later, each state pageant organization received a letter of varying content from the Miss America Organization on September 28 (Carroll, 2018g). While some state organizations were thanked for their loyalty, the majority of the others were asked to make statements regarding their decision to speak out against the leadership, notified that they violated the terms of the state organization agreement or told that their licensing agreement would be terminated (Parry, 2018c). Approximately 15 were threatened with probation, and the licensing privileges of four states were revoked including Georgia, West Virginia, Pennsylvania and Tennessee. These pageants were required to replace their current leaders and can request an appeal hearing. In addition, those leaders and pageants cannot be affiliated with Miss America and must turn over scholarship funds to the Organization. When asked about the decisions made, a

spokesperson for the national organization stated, “The process regarding Miss America state licensees is confidential” (Bryant, 2018). The Board of the Colorado pageant resigned as a sign of protest (Gore, 2019).

In the week-and-a-half following, the GoFundMe donations rose from approximately \$3,000 to \$22,000 (Bryant, 2018). The number of former Miss America titleholders calling for the leadership team’s resignation rose to 23 winners, and nearly 23,000 people had signed the petition (Kuperinsky, 2018f). In addition, Paul I. Perkins of Kim & Bae, P.C. was selected as the counsel to prosecute (Barth, 2018b).

On November 30, three more states were notified that their licenses were not being renewed, bringing the total to seven terminations and one resignation (Parry, 2018d). The punished states include New Jersey, the home of the competition, New York, the state that has been home to four of the past seven Miss Americas including the current titleholder, and Florida, whose contestant was in the Top Five in the 2019 Competition.

The GoFundMe total exceeded \$40,000 by December 20 (Carroll, 2018k). All four of originally terminated states and Jennifer Vaden Barth, former Board member and Miss North Carolina 1991, filed a lawsuit on December 20, “requesting a temporary restraining order and preliminary court injunction to stop MAO Chairwoman Gretchen Carlson and Hopper from further damaging the operations of state organizations.” The Atlantic City Superior Court granted an order to show cause but did not issue the temporary restraining order (Carroll, 2018j). A court date was set for January 25.

The Miss New Jersey Education Foundation’s license was reinstated on December 27 for a year under the leadership of a new Director who served as a former

Board member (Shaw, 2018). New partners and Board members were to be sought out as a part of the agreement. Two weeks later, it was announced that the competition would be moving from Ocean City Music Pier, the home of the pageant for the past 22 years, to Atlantic City at the Resorts Casino Hotel's Superstar Theater (Carroll, 2019).

The academic world has recognized the unique situation the Organization is in. SAGE Publishing released a business case study titled, "Miss America 2.0: Staying Relevant in the #MeToo Era" (Robson, 2019). The learning objectives of the case include being able to, "understand the role of the swimsuit competition, assess whether the strategic choices made by the MAO are aligned with its goal of empowering women and provide recommendations for how the Organization should proceed in order to stay relevant in 2018 beyond."

With a new Director and a new Board appointed by the Miss America Organization, it was announced in January that two Miss Tennessee competitions would be held, one in Jackson and one in Knoxville ("Tennessee's Miss America Contestant," 2019). Jackson, the home of the competition for more than 60 years, will continue to host a scholarship pageant. The winner will not proceed to Miss America, but she will continue to serve as the Governor's ambassador and travel the state in her year of service. The official preliminary competition to Miss America will take place in Knoxville under the newly appointed leadership. However, this may not be the permanent new home of the competition. Eddie Smith, the competition's Foundation Board Chair, stated that the Board has "pledged to take the Miss Tennessee Competition into each grand division on a rotating basis."

When the court date arrived in late January, both sides left celebrating. “While a judge has allowed a lawsuit against the Miss America Organization’s new leadership to continue, the organization is not required to stop its current operations” (Auble & Carroll, 2019). Atlantic County Superior Court Judge Michael Blee denied the preliminary injunction because “the plaintiffs failed to prove the states experienced “irreparable harm” from the organization’s decision to terminate state pageants’ licenses in September. In addition, the judge “recognized and commended the efforts of the volunteers who have worked under these organizations for years.” However, he said the MAO had the right to make decisions. The next hearing was scheduled for February 12 but was rescheduled due to weather (Barth, 2019a).

After the Miss Georgia Director and Board had been replaced, the future location of the competition was temporarily in question (Wright, 2019). However, shortly after, it was announced that the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the competition would remain in Columbus. At the Miss Georgia Forum the first weekend of March, the current Miss Georgia 2018, Annie Jorgensen, shared about her experiences during the transition of leadership and posted a video and transcript of her speech on her personal Facebook page (Jorgensen, 2019). “I should be able to have insight on what competing at Miss America is like,” Jorgensen said. “But, right now, no one knows where the competition will be, when it will be or how it will look compared to previous years. My experience was incredible and incredibly frustrating at the same time.” She proceeded to share, “From an appearance stand point, I have had the absolute time of my life. From an administrative stand point, I wouldn’t wish this experience on anyone.” Jorgensen commented on lost sponsorships

and a lack of communication, and she urged candidates to ask questions about the future of the organization.

On Tuesday, March 5, the “lawsuit claiming ‘an illegal and bad-faith takeover’ of the Miss America Organization was withdrawn Monday for financial reasons” (Parry, 2019). Vaden Barth posted an update on the case on Facebook. She shared that both sides tried to reach a settlement but she “couldn’t accept what MAO offered because (she) believed it did not include any proposed changes that would ultimately improve the short- and long-term health of the Organization” (Barth, 2019b). The statement also included that she continues her view, “that this Organization is being led unethically, using intimidation tactics, primarily to serve personal agendas, and by those without the business skills necessary to manage and improve the financial health of the organization.” However, continuing the litigation “will cost at least as much as we have already raised.”

The Miss America Organization’s statement regarding the matter stated, “Jennifer Vaden Barth has voluntarily dismissed her action against the Miss America Organization and the other defendants. This is a reflection of the meritless and misguided nature of her suit and her false and defamatory claims. MAO disagrees with Ms. Barth’s characterization of the dialogue regarding ending this lawsuit and is now assessing its next steps” (Lemons, 2019).

On the same day, the Miss America Organization released the names of new Co-Executive Directors, a twelve-member Board of Directors and Chairman of the Board for the newly established Miss New York Scholarship Organization (Miss New York Leadership, 2019). Information on the status of the West Virginia, Colorado, Florida and Pennsylvania state competitions was not publicly available at this time.

The conversations, changes and future plans of the Miss America Organization are ongoing one month prior to the start of state competitions. The majority of the candidates going to Miss America will be crowned in June of 2019. All of the state competitions will be conducted under the criteria used for the Miss America Competition that took place in September of 2018. Opinions are strong, emotions are high and uncertainty is still present as candidates prepare for the 2019 state competitions. The following section will assess how stakeholders of all backgrounds are feeling at this point through survey data and analysis.



## **Survey Analysis**

In order to evaluate the opinions of a varied group of adults, I created a questionnaire to distribute to stakeholders across the nation. The survey included questions about the demographics of the participants and their personal involvement in the Miss America Organization as well as their perceptions of the role of Miss America, the success of the Miss America 2.0 rebranding efforts, the changes to the 2019 Competition, the benefits of participation, the potential change in host city for the coming years, the governance structure of the Organization and the sustainability of Miss America going forward.

The survey was distributed via social media on February 25, 2019. I shared the anonymous survey link via the “MAO Fan Forum” Facebook page with 4,231 members, my personal Facebook page with 4,205 friends and my personal Instagram story with 6,434 followers. On these platforms, some users who saw the post voluntarily tagged friends in the comments and shared the survey link to their personal pages to encourage others to participate. The survey expired on March 4. At the end of the week, 953 people completed a portion of the survey.

The survey reached a wide variety of people nationwide. Approximately 34.5% of participants were between the ages of 18-25, 14.4% were 26-35, 22.0% were 36-50, 28.4% were 51-75 and 0.7% were 76 and up. Of those surveyed, 830 were female and 115 were male. 51.8% currently reside in the Southeast region of the United States,

16.7% in the Midwest, 14.1% in the Northeast, 9.1% in the West and 8.4% in the Southwest. All 50 states were represented in the responses.

From the data pool, 350 of those surveyed stated they have been a contestant in the Miss America Organization, 189 have been a director, 402 have volunteered, 271 are closely related to someone involved, 106 were contestants in the Miss America's Outstanding Teen program, 112 have competed in another pageant system, 472 have been viewers and 53 claimed no involvement. Survey participants were allowed to select as many answers as applicable to this question. When asked about their years of involvement with the Organization, 73 claimed 0 years of involvement, 288 had 1-5 years, 177 chose 6-10 years, 176 picked 11-20 years, 128 selected 21-35 years, 65 had 36-50 years and 7 showed 51 or more years of involvement. Of the participants, 209 have held a local title, 123 have held a state title and 8 were Miss America. Of the remaining participants, 99 had not won a title and 462 had not ever competed.

Although the data sample is large, potential biases could exist that should caution a user from drawing holistic and representative conclusions of the entire United States population from the results. Due to the fact that the survey is centered on an organization for women, it is not shocking that significantly more women participated in the survey than men; because of the large number of female participants, the responses are more representative of women's views overall.

In addition, the largest age group represented includes those that are both eligible to be candidates and those that are in my age range. The strong representation from this demographic could potentially mean that current participants in the Organization felt more inclined to share their perspectives or that my age demographic was more aware of

the survey due to potential heavy social media usage even if they were not involved in the MAO. Although the age distribution was indeed well distributed, the strict use of social media to distribute the survey and the survey being digital could affect who was aware of the survey and chose to participate. It is probable that these reasons, along with the likely fact that there are more people living in the lower age ranges, explain why there was such a small number of 76-year-old and up participants.

Even though my personal network is widespread across the nation, it is naturally more concentrated in the Southeast since I have lived in the region my entire life. The number of people I know from the area, the potential that people who know me could have been more likely to participate in the survey and that the Southeast is typically perceived as a “pageant area” could all serve as explanations for this region having the most responses.

Because survey participants could be involved in the MAO in multiple capacities, the option was given for them to select multiple responses when describing their roles in the Organization. However, this option made it somewhat difficult to decipher what portion of the survey population was involved in what ways. Only 2.7% claimed no involvement in the Organization and 24.1% stated they were a viewer; however, 51.3% of the survey participants stated they had not competed. Knowing that the one fourth that claimed being a viewer could have included contestants, it must be assumed that many of those that had not competed were still closely involved as a relative of a contestant, volunteer or director. In hindsight, I wish I had included sponsor as an answer choice.

It is clear that the MAO is in a pivotal state of transition, and with major organizational changes comes varying opinions. As someone who has closely monitored

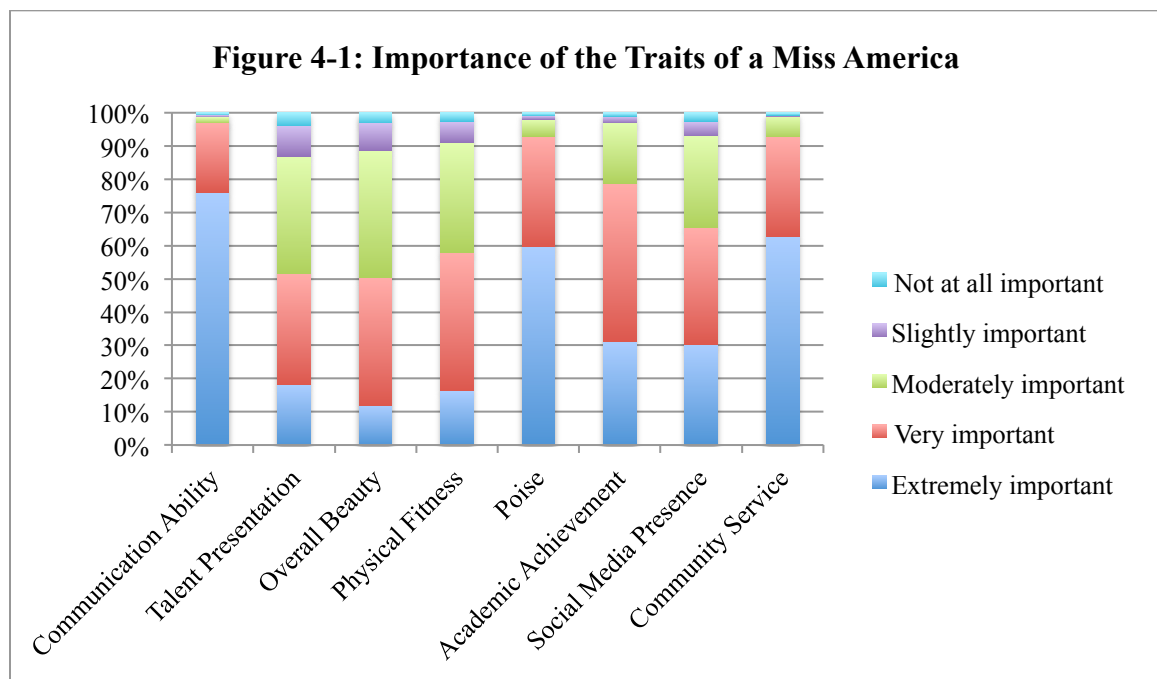
conversations on the matter on social media from the “MAO Fan Forum,” my personal friends’ pages and articles published, I have observed a reoccurring theme of frustration arising from the claim that the Organization has not sought out the opinions of those involved including contestants, directors and volunteers. Because of this agitation, I believe it is possible that those who felt inclined to complete this survey could have been seeking an outlet to express their voice on the matters at hand and that the desire to be heard could serve as an explanation for the views displayed in the data reported here.

All of the reasoning listed above is speculation, and knowing the cause behind all these factors is not necessarily needed for interpretation. It is important to consider and state again that this data should not be used to evaluate how “everyone” feels on these matters. However, these results are helpful to use as a beginning place in measuring where the Organization currently stands, the impact major changes to the competition have had on various stakeholders across the nation and how to best continue forward to stabilize and prosper through the Miss America Organization’s 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary and beyond. The survey results and analysis will be divided into five sections: Miss America’s Role, 2.0 Rebranding, Changes to the Competition, Leadership and Governance, and Sustainability and Relevance.

### **Miss America’s Role**

In order to analyze what people believe to be the most important roles of a Miss America winner, it was first important to see what the most important traits of a Miss America titleholder are to them. Survey participants were asked a series of questions about the necessity of certain traits in a Miss America. Based on the descriptions of both

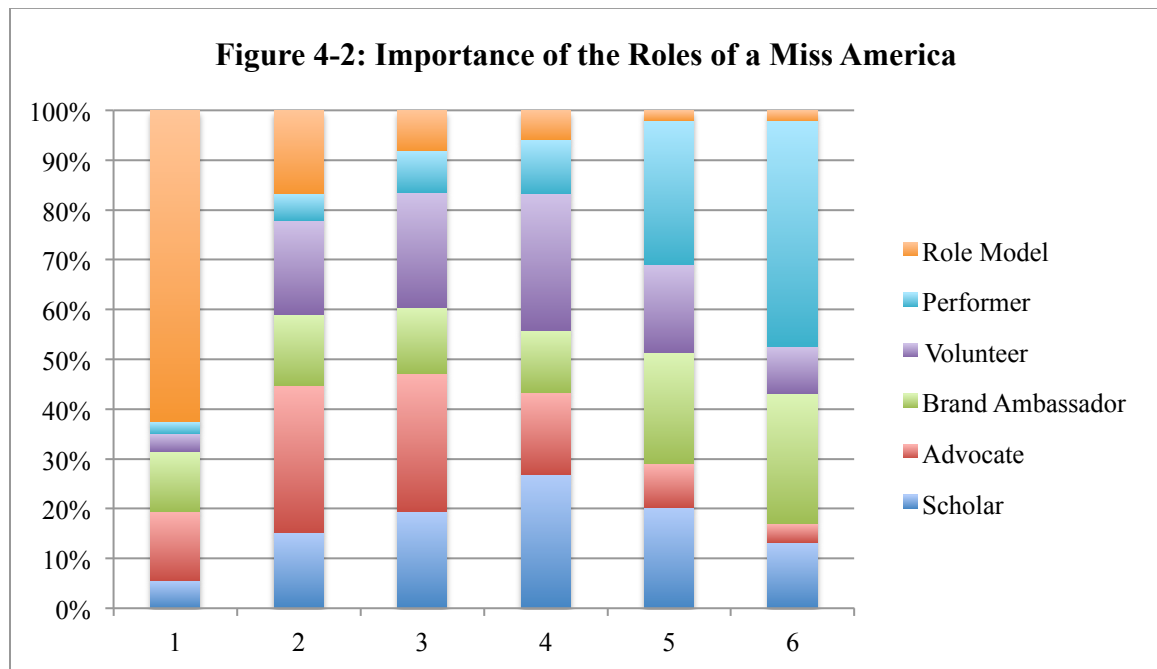
the former and new phases of competition and my awareness of important traits needed to complete the duties of a titleholder, I derived a set of traits to be evaluated in the survey that included communication ability, talent presentation, overall beauty, physical fitness, poise, academic achievement, social media presence and commitment to community service. Participants had the option of the following answers: extremely important, very important, moderately important, slightly important and not at all important. Results from the 866 participants who answered this set of questions are displayed in Figure 4-1 below.



This chart shows that of the traits described, communication ability, poise and commitment to community service received a majority answer of extremely important. In addition, fewer than 7% of the participants answered that these traits were moderately important, slightly important or not at all important. In contrast, talent presentation,

overall beauty and physical fitness received less than 20% of extremely important responses, and between 40-50% of respondents cited these traits as moderately important, slightly important or not at all important.

Following this series of questions, survey participants were asked to rank Miss America's roles of scholar, advocate, brand ambassador, volunteer, performer and role model in order with "1" being the most important and "6" being the least important. Responses from the 854 people that completed this portion of the survey are displayed in the Figure 4-2 below, and the mean of each response is recorded in Table 4-1 that follows.



**Table 4-1: Average Ranking of the Roles of a Miss America**

<b>Role</b>	Role Model	Advocate	Volunteer	Scholar	Brand Ambassador	Performer
<b>Average</b>	1.71	2.88	3.66	3.80	4.00	4.93

From the results of this figure and table, one can see that 65.3%, a majority of participants, perceived Miss America first as a role model. The following most important roles to those surveyed in order are as follows: advocate, volunteer, scholar, brand ambassador and performer. When referring to both the previous and the current format of the competition, the most evident way that five of the six traits would be evaluated is through the interview phases of competition. However, a measure of a candidate's ability to serve in the roles of an advocate, volunteer, scholar, brand ambassador and role model are all not guaranteed throughout a ten-minute private interview, a twenty-second onstage question or an eight-second social impact statement because of the subjective nature of these conversations. For example, if judges do not ask a candidate about her social impact initiative, they will not fully know her ability to serve as an advocate. Because only one conclusive score is given to a candidate during each of these phases to decipher her ability to serve in these capacities, the judges could very well overlook a candidate's proficiency or lack thereof in completing the necessary duties of a titleholder in what survey participants deemed the five most important roles of a Miss America.

The overall perception of the talent presentation was seen as a less important quality of a Miss America through the responses about the important roles; 44.9% of those surveyed ranked performer as the least important role of a Miss America from the six listed roles. This phase of competition was previously 35% of a contestant's score in

preliminary competition with the former scoring system, and it now accounts for 50% of the candidate's score in the new Miss America 2.0 format.

Having a strong social media presence and serving as a brand ambassador are aspects of being Miss America that received somewhat varying responses from one another in the traits and roles questions in the survey. Fewer than 7% of participants deemed the social media presence to be slightly important or not at all important, yet serving as a brand ambassador was perceived as next to last in the important roles. In order for the essence of a Miss America to be known more than one day of the year, she must rely on social media to relay important information, showcase the events she attends during her year of service and connect with followers of the program off of the Miss America stage, thus advancing the brand and image of the Miss America Organization as a whole.

Poise is a quality that has been expected of the winner since the very beginning of the Pageant, and according to the results displayed in Figure 4-1, it is still valued by survey participants with fewer than 2% saying that it is only slightly or not at all important. It is a fascinating trait that can be easy to pinpoint, hard to describe and nearly impossible to teach.

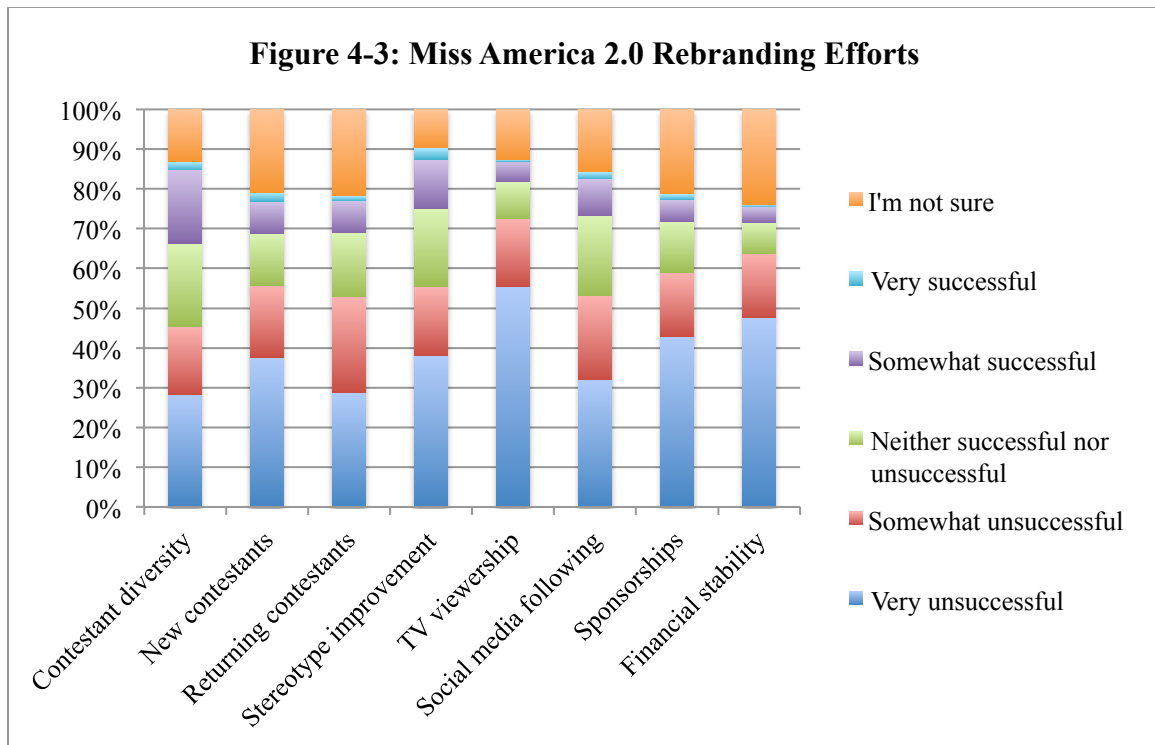
Throughout time, Miss America's role has evolved based on how society would perceive her as relevant at the time. From aspiring film star to patriot selling war bonds to advocate of education for women to spokesperson, it is clear when reading through Chapter 2 that pivotal moments for the Organization have defined how Miss America would next evolve. When the focus of the Organization is shifted through both advertisement and the judging criteria, different women participate and the role of Miss



America continues to shift. The MAO has undergone major changes in both marketing and evaluation of candidates through its latest promotional campaign, and thus the role of Miss America could very likely continue to evolve in the years to come.

## **2.0 Rebranding**

When the announcement of the changes to the new Miss America Competition was made in June of 2018, the “Miss America 2.0” rebranding efforts were introduced. Since then, the Organization has strived to shift its identify from a beauty pageant to a scholarship competition. To evaluate the public’s perception of the changes nine months following their introduction, participants answered a series of questions about the degree of success the rebranding has had on various factors that the Miss America leadership stated or implied as targets for growth including contestant diversity, new contestants, returning contestants, pageant stereotypes, television viewership, social media following, sponsorships and financial stability. Participants answered each question with one of the following responses: very successful, somewhat successful, neither successful nor unsuccessful, somewhat unsuccessful, very unsuccessful or I’m not sure. Figure 4-3 displays the results from 829 people that completed this section of the questionnaire.

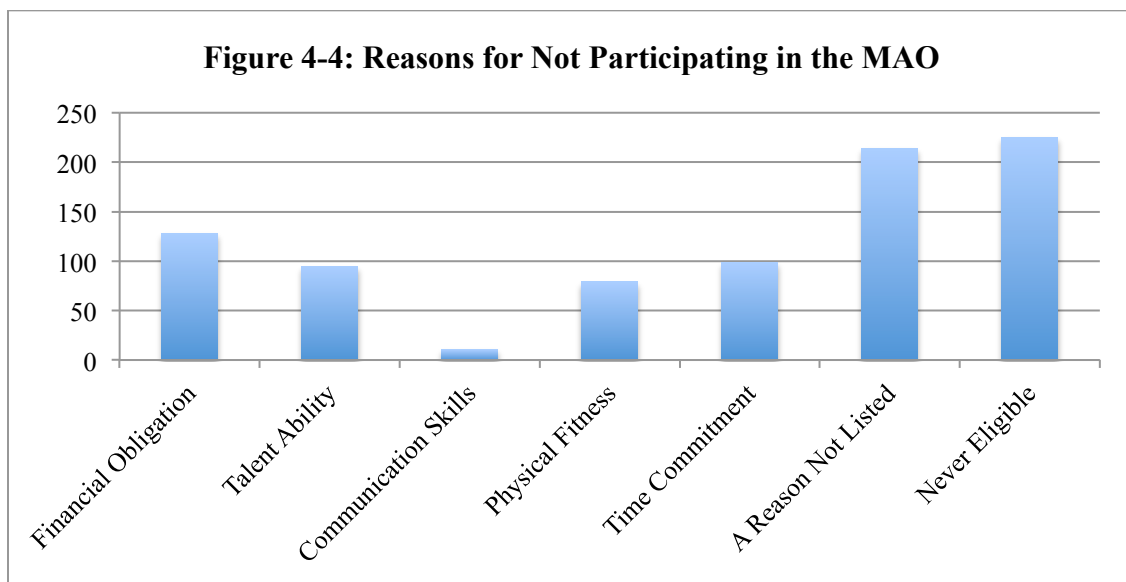


According to the chart, television viewership, the factor that received the most negative responses, was something measurable and publicized following the competition in September. Because of this data, it makes sense that fewer than 4% of those surveyed felt that the rebranding increased the number of people that watched the show. However, as stated in Chapter 3 on page 30, it is difficult to attribute the changes as the sole reason for the 23% decline because TV viewership as a whole is down, and the number of viewers of the competition has decreased each year since the pageant returned to Atlantic City in 2013.

In addition, the financial stability and sponsorships of the Organization are additional factors that received answer selections indicating lower levels of success, which is also understandable due to the current lack of a broadcast partner and host city. The sponsorships of Sherri Hill, American Airlines and Rebecca Minkoff were

announced last summer, but there have not been new companies announced as partners with the Organization since the competition in September.

A reason for the removal of the swimsuit competition was to attract candidates that did not want to participate in this phase. To evaluate the merit of this decision, the survey participants were asked the question, “If you have been eligible to compete in a Miss America local preliminary (you were the right age, etc.) but chose not to participate, why did you not?” Participants were able to select multiple answers, and Figure 4-4 below displays the results.



73.6% of survey respondents indicated they were once eligible to compete. Of those 626 people, only 12.6% stated physical fitness as a reason for not participating, and financial obligation, talent ability and time commitment all garnered more responses than fitness levels. The current leadership believed the removal of the swimsuit phase of competition would lead more women to compete, but it does not appear that this will be

the case. However, the effects of the removal of the swimsuit competition on the changes in candidates participating will not be fully evident until this phase is removed from all levels of competition. Changes were first made to Miss America in September of 2018, candidates at the state level competitions across the nation will participate without the swimsuit phase in the summer of 2019, and all preliminary competitions will see the removal of the swimsuit competition by the fall of 2019 for the 2020 season.

Results displayed in this portion of the survey analysis show room for growth as the Organization continues narrowing its focus to have a distinct and modern brand that is appealing to both current and prospective candidates. Rebranding efforts can be continuous, and the Organization will have more opportunities to display the future marketing vision for Miss America as state competitions quickly approach.

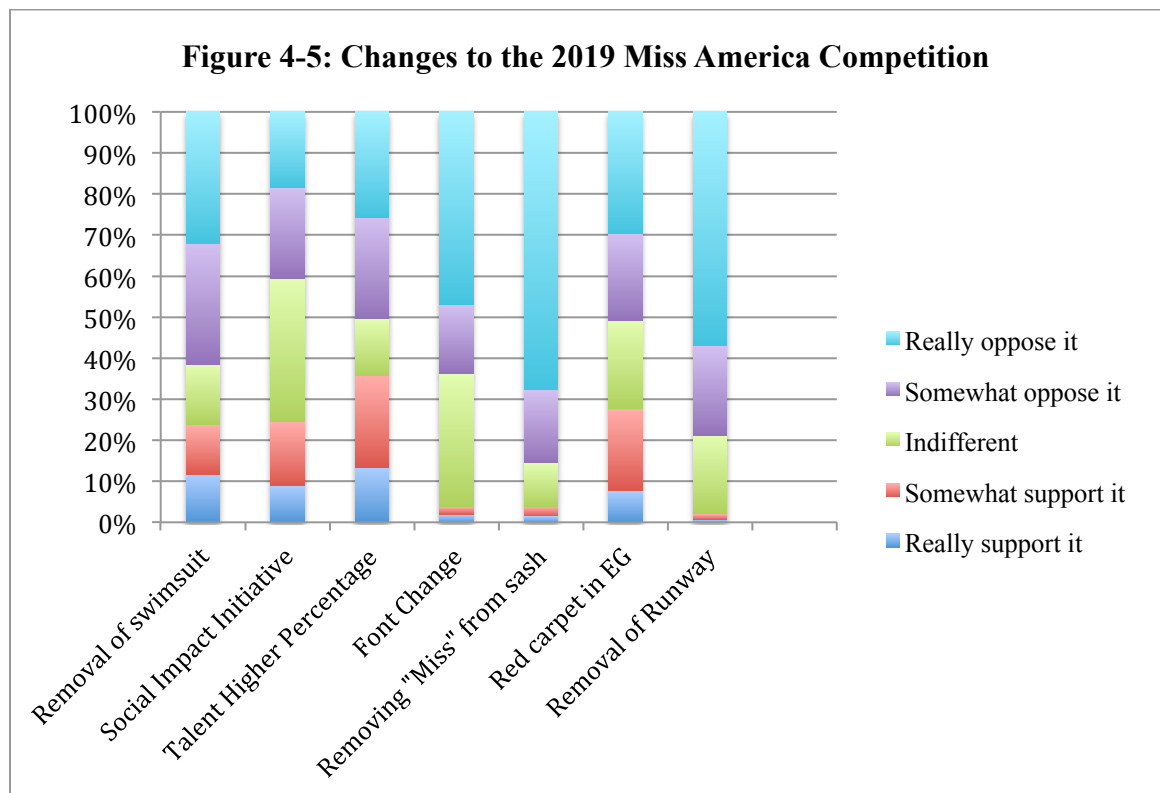
### **Changes to the Competition**

It was a significant year of change in 2018 as the Miss America Pageant shifted into the new Miss America Competition. Phases were added, removed and tweaked, the scoring system shifted and the presentation of the show was changed. Some of the most noteworthy changes evaluated in the survey were the removal of the swimsuit competition, the shift in terminology from “platform” to “social impact initiative,” the increased in weight of the talent phase, changing the font on the sash, the removal of the word “Miss” from the competition sashes, shifting “evening gown” into “red carpet attire” with a “social impact statement” and the removal of the runway in Boardwalk Hall. Participants were asked to indicate their level of support for each of these changes by answering with one of the following: really support it, somewhat support it,

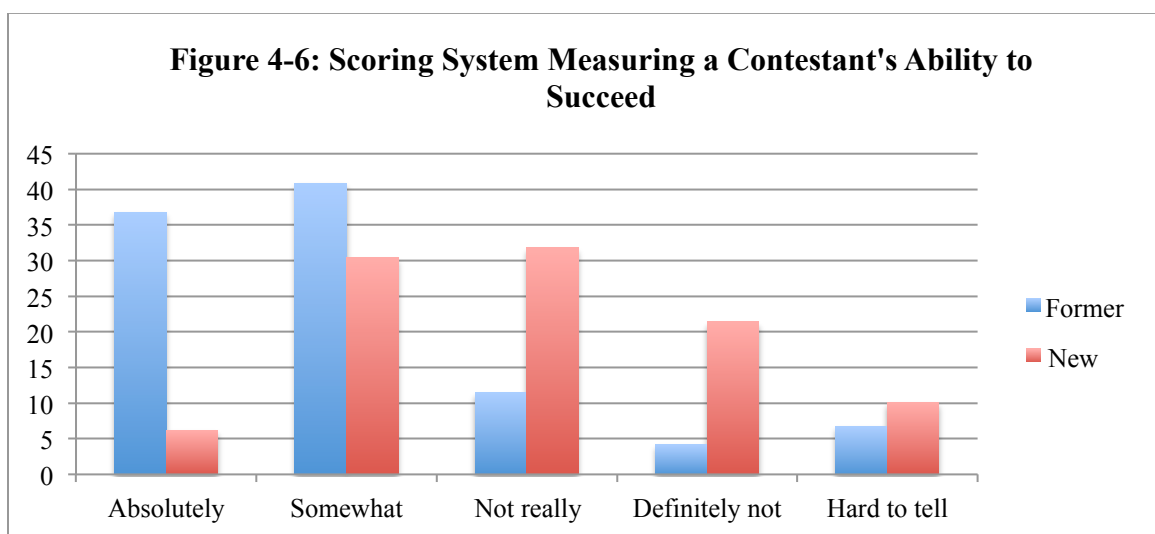
indifferent, somewhat oppose it or really oppose it. Table 4-2 displays the percentage of participants that watched the 2019 Miss America Competition in September of 2018, and Figure 4-5 displays the responses to the questions on the changes from the 819 participants of this portion.

**Table 4-2: Viewership of the 2019 Miss America Competition**

Yes, I watched the entire show	73.9%
Yes, but I only watched some of it	15.3%
No, I did not watch it because I did not know it was on	3.9%
No, I did not watch it even though I knew it was on	6.9%

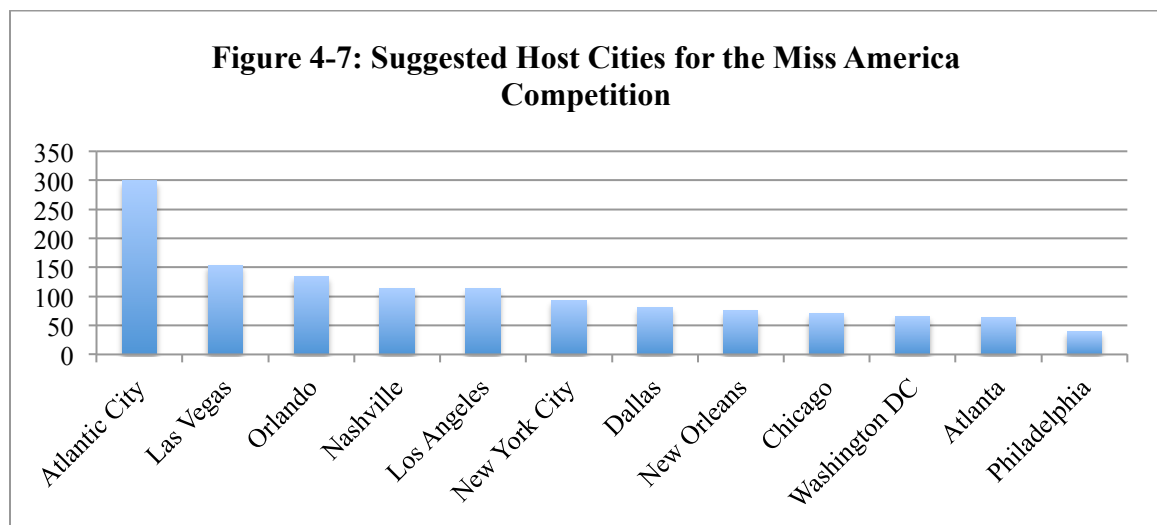


Amongst the survey participants, the changes that yielded the most opposition were those that did not directly affect the scoring of the competition. The removal of “Miss” from the competition sashes had 3.9% answer that they really or somewhat supported it, changing the font on the sashes garnered 3.9% of support and the removal of the runway in Boardwalk Hall had 2.1% show support. The highly controversial elimination of the swimsuit competition had the support of 23.8% of the participants, the addition of the social impact statement had 24.6% support, 35.7% were in favor of talent becoming a higher percentage of the contestants’ scores, and having a red carpet on the stage during the evening gown competition was liked by 27.7%. All of the categories had between 40.5% and 85.5% opposition from those that participated in the survey. Figure 4-6 represents the distribution of the 818 participants that stated whether both the former and new scoring systems served as an appropriate evaluation of a contestant’s ability to be successful as Miss America and had the option to answer absolutely, somewhat, not really, definitely not or hard to tell.

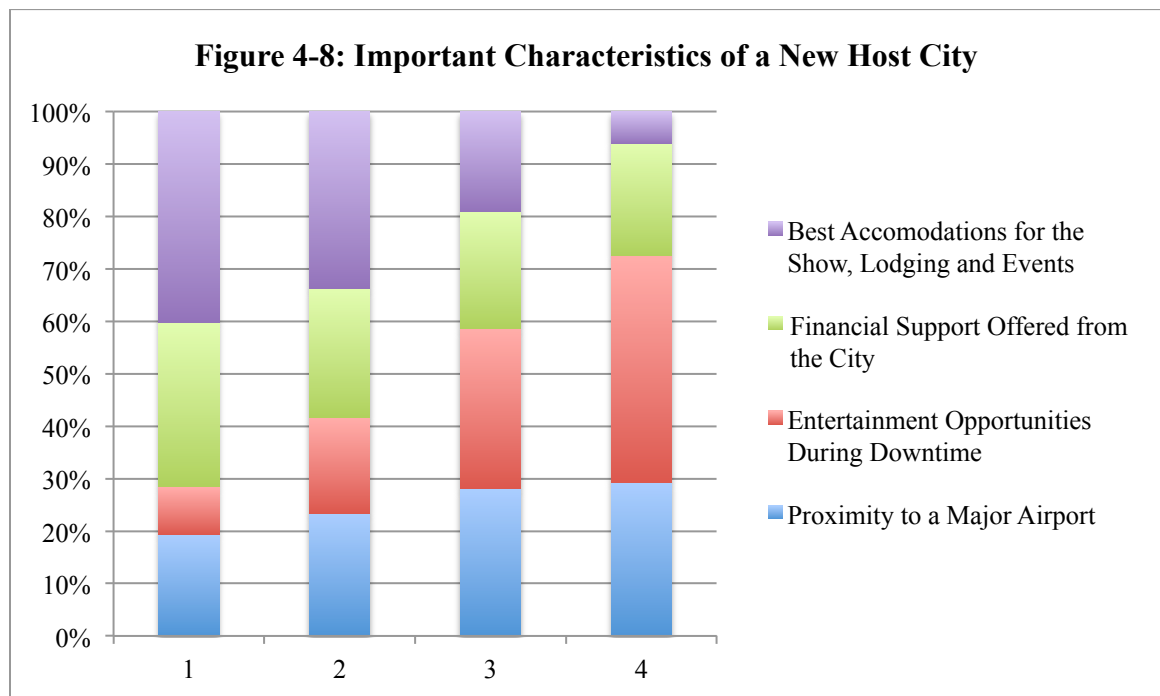


According to the survey results, more people were in favor of the old system over the new; 77.6% stating positive responses about the former system while 33.7% answered positively about the new. This insight raised the thought of whether the new scoring system lacks something that viewers feel is important for adequate evaluation, like the swimsuit phase, or contains something that viewers feel should not be included, like more on-stage questions. And these questions loop back to questions I have been seeking to answer since the beginning: What does it mean to be Miss America? What must she possess in order to be a “successful” titleholder? How do we best judge those needed qualities? These questions will be further analyzed in the following chapters.

As stated in Chapter 2 on page 14, the Miss America Organization has submitted a Request for Proposal for a new host city for the 2020 and 2021 competitions. Survey participants were asked a fill-in-the-blank question about where they would like to see competition located, and they were permitted to share as many suggestions as they desired. Figure 4-7 displays the most highly recommended cities by the 742 participants who made suggestions.



Of the participants, 299 recommended Atlantic City, the current host city of the Competition. 153 people suggested Las Vegas, the location of the Pageant for the crowning of Miss America 2006 through 2013. The third most popular proposed city was Orlando, the home of the Miss America's Outstanding Teen Pageant. Nine other large cities across the nation were frequently mentioned as potential candidates. It is unknown which of these cities, if any, made offers to be in the consideration pool. Following this question, those completing the questionnaire were asked about the most important characteristics of the new host city and to rank them in order. The responses are recorded in Figure 4-8, and Table 4-3 displays the average ranking of the four characteristics by the 742 participants.





**Table 4-3: Average Ranking of the Characteristics of a New Host City**

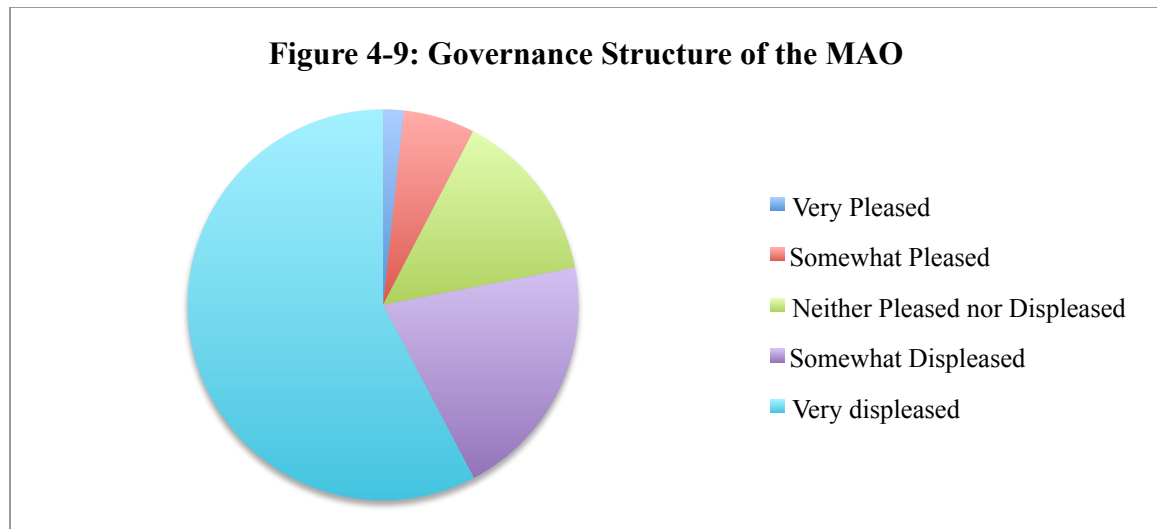
<b>Characteristic</b>	Accommodations	Financial Support	Airport	Entertainment
<b>Average</b>	1.89	2.32	2.70	3.05

The feature most highly prioritized by aspect of a new location by the group was the accommodations for the show, lodging and events with 41.5% of participants ranking it first. The financial support being offered by the city followed as the next most important to those that answered. These participants are more concerned with the amenities and funding of the Competition than they are with transporting themselves to the city and entertaining themselves while they are there. In the midst of a strenuous financial situation with a lack of major sponsors, the Miss America Organization will have to “take what it can get” when selecting the host city for the next two years.

### **Leadership and Governance**

Over the course of the past 15 months, many questions surrounding the governance structure of a nonprofit with a wide volunteer network and the roles of various stakeholders in an organization like the MAO have presented themselves. As displayed in Chapter 3, the frequent resignation and removal of Trustees, two full overturns of the Board of Directors, various petitions signed by people involved in the Organization, salaries that are not set for top leadership and a lack of voting rights for stakeholders have all manifested as concerns. The goal of this project has never been to see how pleased or displeased stakeholders in the Organization are with specific people in leadership positions but to instead evaluate the effectiveness of the framework for the

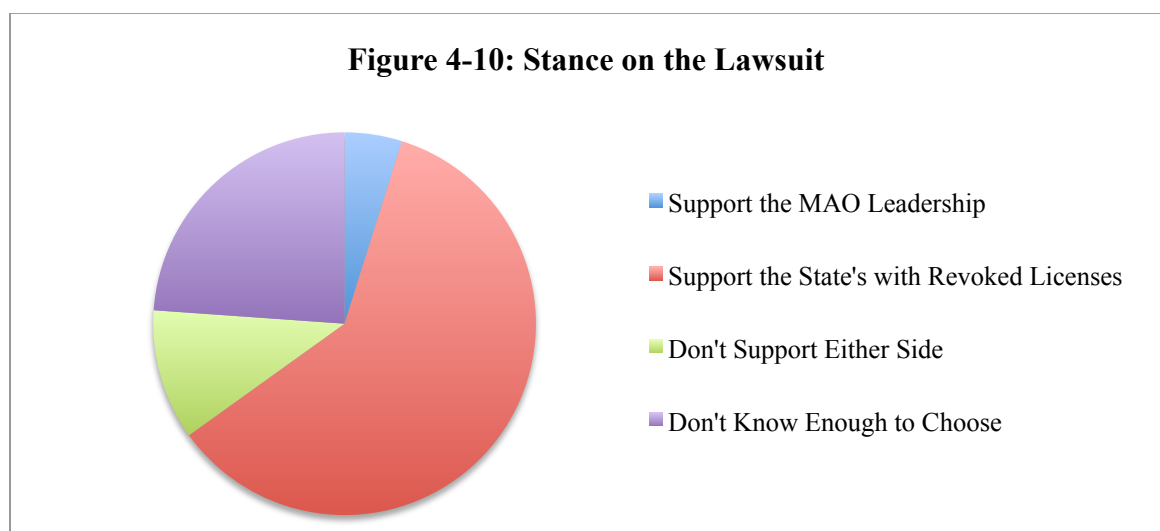
leadership. Figure 4-9 displays the results of the 761 people that stated how pleased they were with the governance structure of the MAO when given the following response options: very pleased, somewhat pleased, neither pleased nor displeased, somewhat displeased or very displeased.



Although some people could have been purely expressing their dissatisfaction with the current leaders, I have observed dialogue around aspects of the governance structure that could very well explain the 57.7% of participants that were very displeased with it. It is difficult to categorize the Organization and its constituents because of their unique position in it. Although directors, contestants, sponsors and other volunteers have all contributed capital to the Organization on the national, state or local level in some capacity, none of these groups are financially invested in a way that yields any official voting rights; this allows all decision-making authority to be granted to the Board of Directors, a group directly appointed by the Chair of the Board and the President/CEO.

In essence, as explained on page 23, the Miss America Organization state pageants are nothing more than “McDonald’s franchises,” according to Regina Hopper, CEO of the Organization. If this is how the program operates, those involved are simply customers of the “restaurant” that have the choice to either get food at McDonald’s or find somewhere else to eat. However, it is difficult to use this comparison due to the vested interest and emotional attachment to Miss America by so many.

Because of the rising questions around holding leaders in the Organization accountable, a former Board member and four state pageants filed a lawsuit this fall addressing the ethical nature of Carlson and Hopper’s rise to power as explained in the “Lawsuit” section beginning on page 31. The 762 participants in this portion of the survey were asked to state their stance on the lawsuit being filed against the Miss America Organization, the defendant, by a former Board member and former state licensees from Georgia, Pennsylvania, Tennessee and Florida, who served as the plaintiff. The results are displayed in Figure 4-10.



The survey was launched and completed prior to the March announcement of the withdrawal of the lawsuit. The court of law was not able to legally recognize the emotional investment that these state franchisees have made to the national organization and thus was not able to prove irreparable harm done. However, the data in Figure 4-10 shows that only 4.8% of those who completed this portion support the current Miss America Organization leadership in this regard while 60.2% are in alignment with the four state organizations and the former Board member. A position was not taken by 11.0%, and the remaining 23.9% did not feel that they knew enough to make a selection. Potentially due to the fear of backlash for speaking out and showing support for the plaintiffs, the \$100,000 fundraising goal was not met on the GoFundMe for the lawsuit. As a result, the lawsuit was not able to continue.

The challenges the Organization is currently facing are ongoing, and it is hard to know how these conflicts will be resolved in the weeks, months and years to come. However, the difficulties do lead into an evaluation of how sustainable and relevant participants perceive this competition to currently be and will dictate how the public views its Miss America in the future.

### **Sustainability and Relevance**

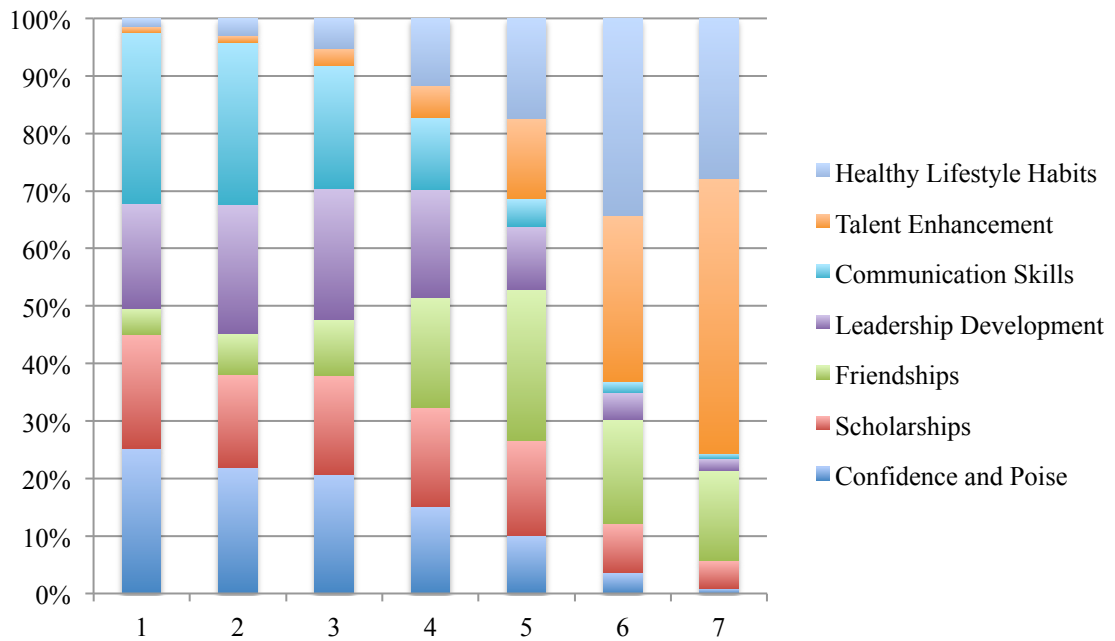
In the early 1970's, it was estimated that nearly 70,000 women from across the country vied for the chance to be Miss America each year (Deford 6). That number climbed to 80,000 in the early 1980's. As noted in Chapter 1 on page 5, the Organization began its uphill battle with proving its relevancy in the 1990's and early 2000's as it added platform requirements, changed locations, found new broadcast partners and

implemented changes to the phases of competition. By 2014, it was noted by the Organization that 10,000 women were participating in the competition annually. In a report on the financial situation of the MAO by the Wall Street Journal in 2018, it was stated that 4,000 were attempting to become Miss America that year. From 1980 to 2018, the Organization has experienced a 95% decline in the number of contestants competing. In this section, data on how sustainable Miss America is, the benefits contestants gain by participating, how relevant the competition is and people's satisfaction with the direction it is heading will be evaluated.

As someone that began participation in 2012 through the Miss America's Outstanding Teen competition and has been involved in the Miss America Organization for three years, I have seen first hand both the costs and benefits of competing. In addition, my younger sister and hundreds of friends across the nation have participated in these programs as well. Through my experiences during the past seven years, I have accumulated an awareness of the greatest benefits that are frequently noted as reasons for participation in the Organization.

The 769 participants in this portion of the survey ranked the following benefits from "1" being the most important to "7" as the least important: confidence and poise, scholarships, friendships, leadership development, communication skills, talent enhancement and healthy lifestyle habits. The results are displayed in Figure 4-11, and the average ranking of each answer is in Table 4-4.

**Figure 4-11: Greatest Benefits Reaped Through Participation**

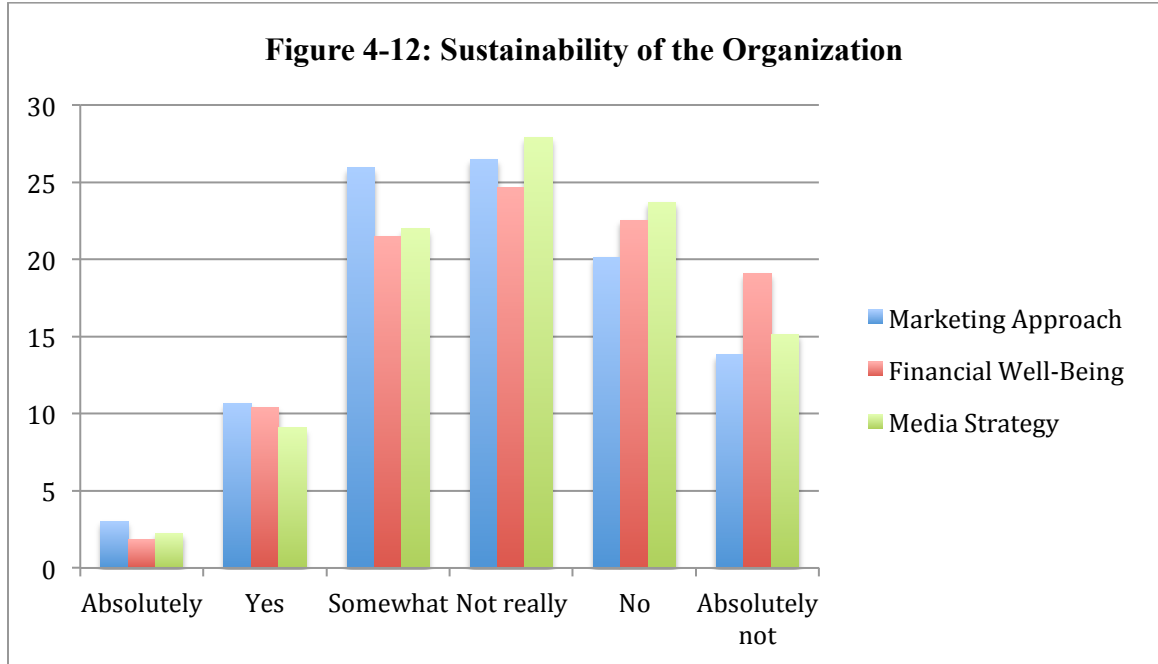


**Table 4-4: Average Ranking of the Benefits Reaped**

Benefit	Average
Communication skills	2.43
Confidence and poise	2.72
Leadership development	3.03
Scholarships	3.38
Friendships	4.70
Healthy lifestyle habits	5.53
Talent enhancement	6.03

The benefits that are perceived to be the greatest gains from Miss America participation align closely with the traits that participants felt were the most important traits of a Miss America, which were displayed in the “Miss America’s Role” section of this chapter. The communication ability and the poise of a titleholder were the two highest ranked selections in that question, and talent presentation was ranked last. It is fascinating to see that scholarships– a benefit that is very much dependent on performance in the competition, friendships– a benefit that those outside the pageant community continually question, and healthy lifestyle habits– a benefit that has been removed from the scoring of the competition when the swimsuit phase went away, have all been ranked higher than talent enhancement, the resulting benefit that comes from the phase that accounts for 50% of a contestant’s overall score. In hindsight, I wish I had included questions about the costs that come with participation followed by a question on whether the participant felt that the benefits outweighed the costs.

As a managerial finance major that is minoring in marketing and journalism, I have evaluated every piece of this thesis from these perspectives. Because of my educational background and areas of focus on this project, I did not want to simply ask whether the Miss America Organization was sustainable as a whole but instead see how the instable finance position, the drastically different marketing approach and the rising use of social media along with the recent loss of a broadcast partner are perceived in the minds of the 760 participants of this section. When asked if they view the Miss America Organization as sustainable based on its financial well-being, marketing approach and media strategy, those surveyed answered one of the following choices: absolutely, yes, somewhat, not really, no or absolutely not. The results are displayed in Figure 4-12.

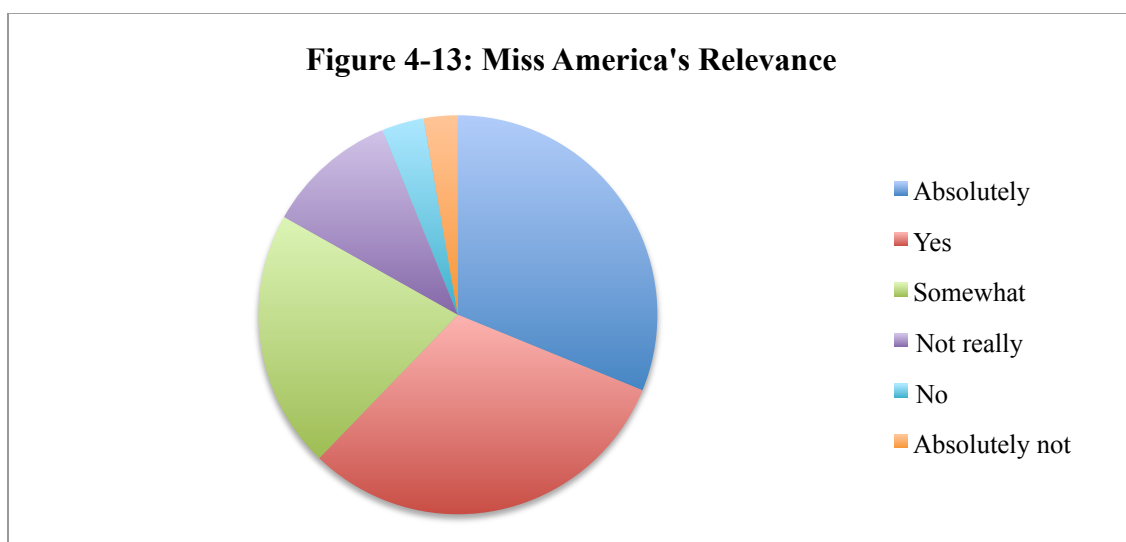


When evaluating the number of participants that stated the Organization is absolutely sustainable, 3.0% felt so in regards to its marketing approach, 1.8% for its financial well-being and 2.2% on its media strategy. The marketing sustainability was perceived as positive by 39.6% of participants, financial health by 33.7% and media strategy by 33.3%. The marketing approach had the lowest average answer, meaning it had the most optimistic answers, and the financial well-being receiving the most negative average answer with the highest mean. This information coupled with the decline in participants and viewership as well as the lack of sponsors and a host city all indicate a need to improve the viability of this Organization to increase its ability to sustain itself in the future.

A contributing factor to the continuation of the Organization is its relevance to society as a whole. There are four potential relationships between relevance and



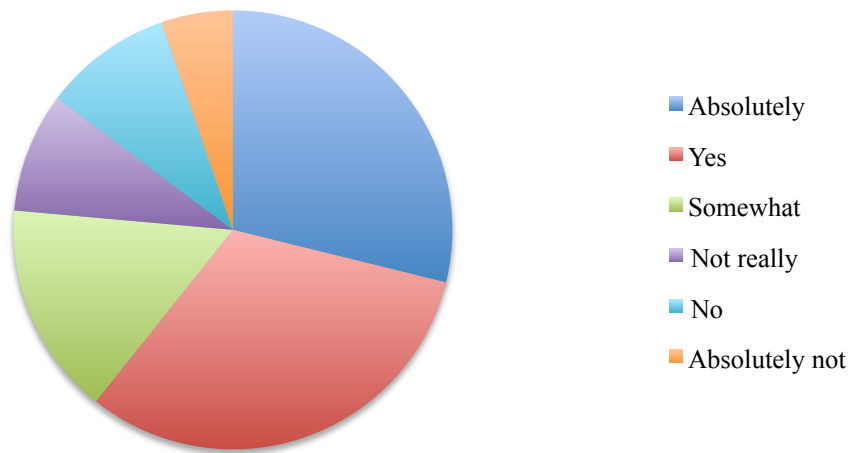
sustainability that could be displayed; two of these could be detrimental, one problematic and one ideal. This paper would most likely not have been written if it were obvious that this competition was widely seen as both sustainable and relevant, which sadly is not the case. If the Miss America Pageant was seen as neither, the competition would cease to exist extremely soon, which would be the worst-case scenario. If the Organization's financial stability, marketing tactics and journalistic position were all in a strong state but the public still did not see the competition as relevant, there would not be a need to work to "save" an "outdated pageant." Lastly, if there was consensus that the Organization is indeed still relevant but struggling to sustain itself, there is hope that with the right strategic steps going forward, Miss America could continue beyond its 100<sup>th</sup> birthday. To understand how these two factors currently coexist, the 760 participants in this portion were asked whether Miss America is relevant or not by selecting one of the following answers: absolutely, yes, somewhat, not really, no and absolutely not. The results are displayed in Figure 4-13.



The sustainability and relevance relationship displayed by the data showed that people are questioning the sustainability but still believe in the relevance of the competition. 83.2%% of the participants answered a positive response while 16.8% responded negatively. Although these results do not display the most ideal situation, they do show that even though fans recognize that this competition is struggling, they have not lost hope in the role of Miss America in 2019 and beyond.

One of the most immediate steps the Miss America Organization needs to take to grow is solidify funding for the 2020 competition. Hotels to accommodate candidates and staff, a venue for the competition and a city that can suit the needs of the competition all require the monetary contribution of sponsors. In addition, since the MAO prides itself on being the top scholarship provider exclusively for women in the world, an increase in cash scholarships at the national, state and local levels would be seen as a great indicator in the growth of the program. More information about the financial position of the Organization can be found in Chapter 2. Survey participants were asked if providing a scholarship or sponsorship for Miss America would be a worthwhile investment to them if they were financially able to do so, and the 759 respondents had the opportunity to answer absolutely, yes, somewhat, not really, no or absolutely not. Figure 4-14 displays the results.

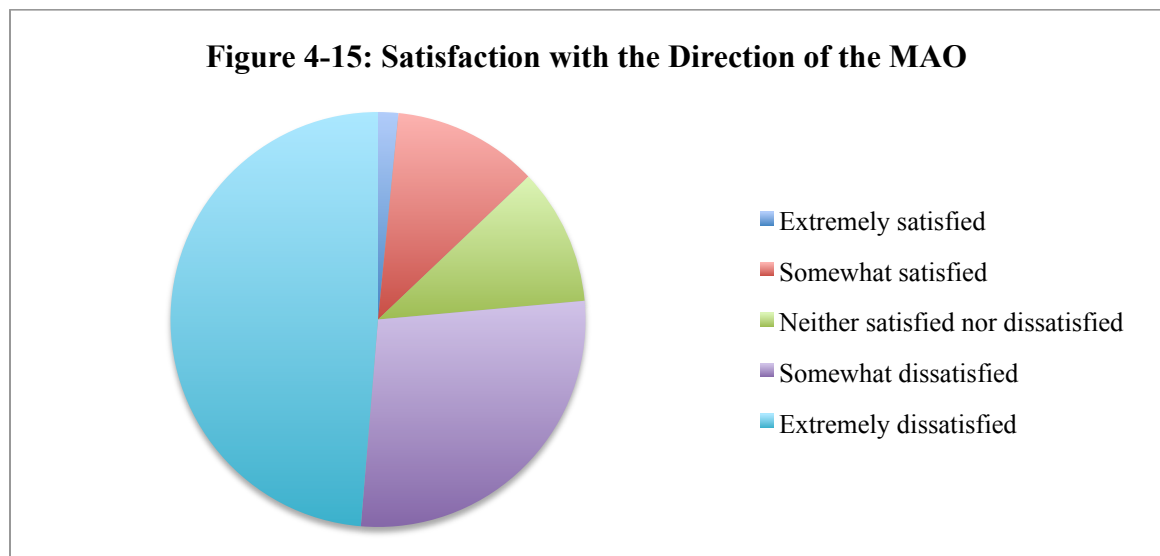
**Figure 4-14: Providing a Scholarship**



The results were very comparable to the results from the previous question on whether Miss America is relevant or not. Each of the possible responses had between 0.8% and 6.1% difference with an overall slightly more positive response to the relevance than the contribution of monetary backing. It is understandable that these results would closely resemble one another; for example, if someone felt that the competition is somewhat relevant, they would only be somewhat compelled to support it financially. I believe that it would be wise for the Miss America Organization to advertise how individuals or businesses can become more involved in supporting both the scholarship fund and the sponsorship of products and services for candidates on all levels.

If you read Chapter 3 or have even been slightly in tune with the Miss America Organization over the past 15 months, you know that it has undergone significant changes during this time. The last question of the survey encompasses everything that has progressed and changed. 760 people answered this portion of the survey to state their satisfaction with the direction Miss America is heading as it approaches its centennial

anniversary next year. Participants had the option to choose one of the following choices: extremely satisfied, somewhat satisfied, neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, somewhat dissatisfied or extremely dissatisfied. The results are displayed in Figure 4-15.



1.6% of participants stated being extremely satisfied, 11.3% were somewhat satisfied, 10.7% were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, 27.8% were somewhat dissatisfied and 48.7% were extremely dissatisfied with the direction the Organization is heading. In preparation for the 99<sup>th</sup> and 100<sup>th</sup> year of Miss America, it is vital that the leadership on all levels, participants, volunteers, viewers and other stakeholders come together, collaborate and compromise to create a shared vision for the future of this Organization before it is too late. The following section includes my personal analysis and takeaways from this survey data along with the information acquired in the previous chapters as I make recommendations for the program going forward.

### **My Recommendations: Miss America 3.0**

Based on the information compiled throughout this project, the survey data examined from people across the country and my own personal experiences as a participant, viewer and fan, I have developed a plan of action to increase the viability of the Organization that I am titling “Miss America 3.0,” although I do not actually care for the coining of this term. These recommendations account for frustrations expressed by stakeholders, incorporate aspects of the Pageant’s past that have proved successful and guide the MAO in a new direction on a variety of topics as well. This five-part plan is as follows: gather funding from sponsors, resolve internal and external controversy, revamp the competition format, increase participation and prove the relevance. Each of these points will be elaborated on in detail in the following pages.

#### **Funding and Sponsorships**

Without the acquisition of an extensive amount of funding in the near future, the Competition could potentially not happen this year. From the beginning, the Pageant has relied heavily on the support of Atlantic City to fund it. In addition, since the show was first broadcasted on television in 1954, various networks have contributed substantial amounts of capital to make it the extravagant show it is. In the current absence of both the support of the New Jersey Casino Reinvestment Development Authority (CRDA) and the American Broadcasting Company (ABC), there is not a clear source of funding that

would allow the Organization to continue producing a show and multi-week experience for the candidates like it has in the past. It is of the utmost importance for the Organization to prioritize the financial support potential host cities and broadcast sponsors can provide.

To entice broadcast partners to find value in the high price of producing the Competition, the Organization needs to further its reach and exposure in the other 364 days of Miss America's reign. The prestige and notoriety of the events Miss America attends need to be captivating to a larger audience than just the pageant community. Miss America was getting significant exposure through the Organization's partnership with Dick Clark Productions; she appeared at award shows, the New Year's Eve celebrations in Times Square and at the Macy's Thanksgiving Parade. However, since these ties were severed in 2017, Miss America's "celebrity status" events have declined. Focusing on increasing her exposure at showy events will help reestablish her national presence.

Since the Miss America Organization developed its volunteer framework in 1941 with the Jaycees, the Pageant has relied immensely on support built from the local level up. At its grass roots, local businesses heavily supported their titleholders with the support rising up from there. An array of factors have contributed to the shift away from widespread community support, but it is needed for the Miss America Organization to regain its strong support for local titleholders that runs up to state titleholders and all the way to Miss America.

By strengthening ties with local communities, the "perks" of competing are greatly increased. Not only would contestants be gaining things like communication skills and poise by competing, they would also obtain resources that have monetary value as

well. Gaining sponsors for casualwear, formalwear, hair, nails, fitness, dance, vocals, interview preparation and more would increase the support of the competition nationwide and make competing more financially realistic for contestants, which will be commented on in more depth in the “Increasing Participation” section. State titleholders could benefit from the local support garnered all across the state, and ultimately Miss America would benefit as well through interactions with these sponsors during her nationwide tour throughout her year of service.

One of the most dominant claims the Organization makes in stating its relevance is that it is a scholarship competition. While there is a large sum of money being distributed across the nation to contestants, when broken down, the average contestant isn't receiving much. In 2014, as stated in Chapter 4 on page 56, 10,000 women participated in the Miss America Organization that year. As revealed in Chapter 2 on page 18, \$5,905,529 was awarded in cash and in-kind scholarships on the national, state and local levels that year. If each contestant competing that year had received an equal amount of scholarship funds, that would have yielded an average of \$590.55 awarded to each contestant. This does not account for the amount exclusively given to contestants that compete at the national level, the significantly higher scholarship awards granted to Top Five contestants on the state level and the correlation that those that place higher in the competition would be likely to receive more of the other scholarships available such as preliminary competition awards since both are dictated by scores.

A hotel room in the host city of a state competition for the four nights of the show costs more than the average amount of funds a contestant wins when participating in a given year. The rhetoric around scholarships being the sole reasoning for competing in

the program must cease. If a young woman was looking to obtain absolutely necessary funding in order to pursue higher education, she should select a more guaranteed route to receiving those funds like academic or service scholarships, financial aid through student loans or employment while in college. The scholarships that result from competing should be perceived as an added bonus because the money awarded is directly tied to performance in the competition, and since there is no way to predict how one will perform and be scored, there is no way to guarantee a specific payout by participating.

Increasing the amount of scholarships awarded beyond the contestants that score the highest would further increase participation and thus aid in stabilizing the Organization. In addition, transparency on this topic is absolutely necessary in order to establish credibility within the scholarship aspect of the Pageant.

### **Resolve Controversy**

It is no secret that the Miss America Organization has endured a significant amount of internal strife over the past 15 months. A lawsuit, eight revoked or resigned state licenses and uproar on social media have all been clear signals that stakeholders within the MAO are not seeing eye-to-eye on many issues. However, as an Organization that is already struggling to prove itself to those outside of the pageant community, it simply cannot sustain itself with this level of conflict and frustration for long.

Transparent communication, compromise from all sides and collaboration to implement effective growth strategies are necessary for the continuation of the Organization.

One of the most important immediate steps the Miss America Organization needs to implement if it is interested in regaining the trust and support of those that care about it



is distributing a survey like mine to gauge stakeholder opinions. People are feeling like their voices are not being heard, and giving them an outlet to contribute input on the direction of the Organization would be valuable in making people on all levels feel like their thoughts are valued. I believe that the greatest mistake the current leadership made when implementing changes was not necessarily within the decisions made but with how they made them. They missed a key element that is taught at the very beginning of management classes in business schools; it is vital that leadership creates buy-in from the bottom-up when implementing major organizational changes. When Carlson made the announcements about significant adjustments to the Organization, she opted to air the information through news outlets like Good Morning America rather than through communication with those involved on the state and local levels first. Internal transparency is something the Organization should prioritize in the future.

The structure of the Miss America Organization creates a complicated position in regards to who the official representative of the program is. When Cara Mund, Miss America 2018, made allegations that Carlson and Hopper bullied and silenced her, she stated, “Right away, the new leadership delivered an important message: There will be only one Miss America at a time, and she isn’t me” (2018 Miss America Cara Mund, 2018). The potential confusion and danger of having a former Miss America leading the Organization was made clear when Carlson announced the elimination of the swimsuit competition. The leader of the program is the one who made the announcement, and Miss America was not in attendance. This brings about several questions. Should Mund have been present at Good Morning America that day? Should Carlson have been the only one to make the announcement? I do not believe this potential conflict was as prominent a

problem when a male leader that hadn't held a title in the program like Sam Haskell led as CEO. It is extremely important that Miss America has the year that she deserves in the spotlight with it only being a short, 365-day job.

Problems arose when there was little former titleholder representation on the Board prior to the scandal. Problems continued when almost every Board member was a former titleholder. Problems are still present following the removal of almost all of those formal titleholders. I think there is a great pressure to find an ideal balance of those involved in the Organization and those that contribute business skillsets to the Board of Directors. Too many titleholders could contribute too many emotions and ideas of what the system should look like through the viewpoint of when they served as a titleholder, but too many people without a personal vested interest in the Organization will view their involvement solely as a business endeavor, which is a dangerous position as well. It is a pendulum in a sense, and it seems like the necessary balance has not been found in recent years.

I think the Organization could overcome this tricky conflict while also reducing many of the struggles that arise from solely being a franchising system if it made changes to its governance structure. The current system allows the Chairman of the Board to pick the Board of Directors at his or her discretion. In addition, this Chair has the authority to recommend as many or as few candidates as he or she wants for positions like President, CEO, Foundation Chair, etc. Shifting into a structure that more closely resembles the voting rights of shareholders of a corporation could benefit the program. Giving each state director a vote in deciding who gets to serve on the Board and in major positions would greatly improve the relationship each state organization has with the national one.

In addition, local stakeholders would feel like they could share their input with the state organization they are a part of and actually have their voice heard by creating an advocacy system like the one citizens have with their elected congressional representatives.

On the other side, the current franchise system does not give those that feel passionately about the Organization the right to “call the shots” on how it is run. If more than 20,000 signatures on a petition, more than \$40,000 raised for legal fees and a lawsuit cannot convince the current leadership to step down from their positions, I am not sure what could at this point. If people want to continue to be involved in this Organization, they are going to have to stop posting Facebook rants and choose to find some positivity in the midst of their frustrations instead of spreading negativity about the program. This commentary is not only read by those interested in the Program but also by those that are not familiar with the current state of the MAO, which ultimately hurts the overall reputation of the Pageant more. There is a time and a place to share discontent, but supporters need to be showcasing positive aspects of pageantry in the difficult season for Miss America and these competitions as a whole.

Furthering the divide is clearly not working, and those that are truly passionate about this program must find it within themselves to seek solutions that will have positive and effective outcomes. Advocating for structural change over leadership change would be a beneficial step for upset stakeholders to take and would ultimately lead to long-term change to the Program that will aid it in the months and years to come. Now is the time for the Organization to take a look at its current structure, strategy and communications to seek resolution and move forward.

## **Revamp the Competition**

The Miss America Pageant has continually evolved over the years as the weights of the phases of competition have changed and the judging criteria have shifted. In 2018, the Miss America Pageant underwent one of its biggest changes to date when it announced the removal of the swimsuit competition, a shift in focus away from outer appearance, more points attributed to the talent phase and the addition of a second onstage question. “Miss America 2.0” continually emphasized women’s empowerment and highlighted women’s scholastic and career ambitions throughout the show.

In the “Changes to the Competition” section of Chapter 4, survey data revealed that the overall perception of the people that completed this portion of the survey was negative. It seems possible that the majority of these participants were loyal to the former scoring system with 77.6% stating absolutely or somewhat when asked if the scoring system was an appropriate evaluation of a contestant’s ability to succeed as Miss America while only 36.7% felt that the new scoring system succeeded in this way. I personally feel that neither system does a perfect job in truly evaluating the well-roundedness of a candidate to complete the many duties of a Miss America while fulfilling the roles that people expect the most of her as revealed in the “Miss America’s Role” section of Chapter 1. Because of the need for improvement, I have developed what I would recommend based on the feedback gained from survey participants and numerous sources I have read along with my own personal experiences.

As previously discussed in the survey analysis, the current and previous format both consist of one private interview that is 10 minutes long, which is the time for

candidates to share their passion for service, their insight on current events and political issues, personal information about themselves, their readiness to serve as a titleholder and more. However, there are not any set guidelines on how an evenly distributed interview would be achieved, and each contestant's interview is left to the subjective nature of the judging panel. It is likely that one contestant could have spent the bulk of her interview talking about politics while the next talked about her personal interests for the majority of the time and the one following shared about her social impact initiative for most of the interview. This unevenly distributed interview process is a huge disadvantage for contestants, does not give the judges a consistent way to evaluate candidates and makes preparing for the interview very difficult.

Because of this flaw, I propose that this one long interview be broken into different parts where each contestant participates in a brief interview about her community service, a separate one about her stances on current events related to her platform and her career ambitions and a final one to share about herself, her interests and her readiness to complete the job of a titleholder. Contestants would feel like the process is fairer and judges could more realistically and fairly evaluate the candidates in these very different categories. These interviews could each be three minutes or any amount of time the leaders of the Organization felt suitable. Decreasing the number of traits and capabilities judges need to look for in a contestant per interview would enhance their ability to focus on specific traits at a time, score these areas separately and increase their visibility into more important aspects of a quality titleholder. Contestants could participate in three different interviews on three separate days, or one interview could simply be broken into three separate parts and done back-to-back.

In addition, I believe a separate panel of judges should evaluate and score candidates on two other areas that are currently reliant on the private interview phase to be showcased. The social media presence of a titleholder is of the utmost importance as it determines the public's view of what Miss America does 364 out of the 365 days of the year. Although I recognize that current technology is limited, having a calculator that objectively evaluates someone's social media presence based on components like engagement, quality of posts and appropriateness of content would be extremely valuable in measuring a contestant's ability to promote the Organization during her year of service. In the meantime, while this technology doesn't exist, a diverse, young group of social media influencers should serve as the judges in this portion of the Competition. This panel should include people that have competed and others that are not involved in the Organization but are known for their strong social media presence. A rubric that evaluates the components previously mentioned would be used for this panel to give a score to each contestant. Ensuring that the titleholder connects well with those following her, creates relatable and impressive content, keeps her accounts free of inappropriate posts and consistently promotes high-quality imagery would help further develop the Miss America brand in the digital age. State and some local titleholders participate in social media challenges leading up to national or state competitions, and the subjects of these posts need to be reevaluated and centered on more relevant content. In addition, unbiased outsiders like those mentioned above need to judge the contests. These challenges are not currently a part of a contestant's score, but it is something to consider adding if the contests were shorter in duration and more relatable to younger audiences.

Another trait of Miss America that should have a separate scoring portion to evaluate is academic achievement. A clear focus has been made for scholastic success since the introduction of the scholarship program in 1945 and has been reiterated within the Miss America 2.0 branding, but there is not a clear way to evaluate it in the scoring system. Having a separate panel of judges that are proficient in the field of higher education with various backgrounds from differing institutions to evaluate the candidates would greatly benefit the Organization if they want titleholders to excel in the area of academics. A rubric that accounts for GPA, academic standing of colleges, the challenging nature of a candidate's major and the academic awards received should be developed. In addition, the rubric should also incorporate the contestant's on-campus involvement through leadership positions held, campus organizations participated in and recent volunteer engagement. I feel that skills I have gained and the attributes I have displayed excellence in through both my campus involvement and academic work are not effectively taken into consideration as I currently compete. However, attracting well-rounded and high-achieving students from universities across the nation would greatly increase the quality and number of contestants that chose to participate in the Miss America Organization.

I commend the Organization's attempt to create an opportunity for contestants to showcase their community service through the social impact statement during the evening wear phase of competition, which was discussed in Chapter 3 on page 28. However, only giving the candidates approximately 10 seconds to effectively share their dedication to a community service project of their choice is not realistic, and the time that was dedicated in the final night show for the peer interviews should be reallocated and

combined with the social impact statement. Depending on how much time can be given based on television screen time, candidates on the final night should have between 30 to 60 seconds to describe their work with their social impact initiative, formerly known as their platform, and what their specific plans for advancing it are during their year of service if crowned. This longer phase would be an opportunity for each candidate to showcase the importance and relevance of the cause she supports, the connections she has to spread its reach across the nation, state or area and the ideas and plans she has in place to succeed. One of the most relevant and impactful things that Miss America winners do along with state and local titleholders is create change for dozens of charitable causes nationwide, and showcasing the candidate's accomplishments in their selected areas would be very valuable in showcasing the relevance of the Pageant.

Although it is mentioned during the Miss America Competition, "outsiders" are generally unaware of how the private interview phase of competition works. In order to make the public more conscious of the difficulty of these interviews and the impressive nature of the candidates, a small portion of the interviews should be played during the Final Competition at Miss America. Each candidate should have the opportunity to choose a couple of questions or comments that she would like to see played if she makes it to the finals.

Other changes I would like to see made to the show itself would include allotting more time for the current Miss America to share about the various events she attended throughout her year when she is giving her farewell statement before crowning her successor. She travels across the nation giving back for an entire year, and the public should know about it. In addition, without the swimsuit phase of competition, the overall



consensus of the Miss America 2.0 Competition that I observed in Atlantic City and from speaking to people following was that it was “boring.” To combat the lack of “excitement,” Miss America needs to add in something “fun,” which could include live musical performances from a popular artist, more elaborate production numbers or maybe even another phase of competition that showcases a softer side of the contestants. This would likely help combat the declining television viewership of the Pageant.

The final change I would make to the production would be for the hosts and candidates to refrain from using buzzwords like “women’s empowerment” and “passionate” as frequently and instead just showcase that the contestants are indeed both empowered and passionate. The accomplishments, poise, articulation and talent of the women competing all display their identity as strong, modern women, and the overuse of these words is not necessary to convey their achievements and instead came across as unauthentic.

Miss America has the opportunity to maintain its relevance and become a show that people want to watch. In addition, there are a number of ways to improve the Competition to ensure that the right woman for the job is selected based on the unique traits she can contribute that align best with the role of Miss America. Moving past “Miss America 2.0” and implementing further changes would be extremely beneficial in stabilizing the program.

### **Increase Participation**

Even though the Miss America Organization has had troublesome spots throughout the years, it did not arrive at the problems of decreased viewership and

dwindling participation until the early 1990s, as explained in Chapter 1. For the first time in 75 years, the national Pageant had to work hard to get women to compete. Aside from the competition being aired on television, there is little proof to observe that the Organization in Atlantic City had done much in the past to market itself; in contrast, the local level competitions were the ones that put in the effort to spread awareness about their competitions to gather participants, and those contestants proceeded to the state competition and national pageant.

Now, in a time where social media dominates, the MAO has opportunities to reach contestants and engage in marketing efforts themselves, and it has chosen to work on this. I believe recruiting influential media personnel to assist titleholders and those that run the social media accounts of the local, state and national levels with social media training would benefit them as they develop their presence online, which impacts the Organization's brand and ultimately affects participation. However, I also think local level competitions could do more to attract contestants to participate in their competitions.

I regularly see local directors posting the dates for their competitions repeatedly on their personal social media as their main means of promoting their pageants, but this only targets the girls currently participating in the Organization or those that are friends with the directors outside of the pageant. Local directors need to be recruiting at universities, dance studios, show choir performances and instrumental recitals in order to attract new contestants to the Organization. In addition, in reference to my commentary at the beginning of this Chapter in the "Funding and Sponsorships" section, local directors and current local titleholders need to be actively seeking new sponsorships and

scholarship awards for the contestants that compete. During my time as Miss University this year, I have already welcomed a nail sponsor and a fitness sponsor for myself and for titleholders to follow. It is very expensive to participate in the Miss America Organization, and the more benefits that come from competing, the more likely it is that people will choose to participate and be financially able to do so.

Another measure that would increase participation by combating the financial obligation that comes with competing would be to remove the pressure to spend extravagant amounts of money on wardrobe pieces, especially evening gowns, and on excessive amounts of coaching. Many contestants state that scholarships are their reason for competing in the Organization, but the reality is that the majority are not receiving anywhere close to what they put in to be competitive at the state or national competition, as revealed in the “Funding and Sponsorships” portion of this chapter. Contestants are spending thousands and thousands of dollars on their wardrobe pieces, professional headshots, travel and private lessons for talent, walking, exercise and interview training. In addition, the cost of having family members attend the multiday competition alone can easily exceed the scholarship payout for contestants that do not receive awards throughout the week.

While I am an advocate for the scholarship part of the program and have seen a tremendous amount of growth in myself through the training I have received over the years, it is not realistic for many contestants to say they are “graduating debt free thanks to the Miss America Organization,” which is a line I hear all too often. Many of the people competing in this Organization would be graduating debt free regardless of whether they competed or not due to having a family in a strong financial position,

scholarship dollars acquired outside the Miss America Organization or employment while they were in college. Contestants should be grateful for the assistance they receive in funding their education, but they should not be stretching the truth to make the scholarship payout seem much greater than it is.

If the Miss America Organization is truly seeking participants that simply could not graduate college without taking out student loans, they need to drastically decrease the cost of competing by lowering the expectations of the contestants in the judging criteria by not expecting them to be the perfect combination of a professional performer, public speaker, fitness trainer, role model, etc., because that is the reason people are pouring such tremendous sums of money to be a part of the program. If it was less financially exclusive, more people might be willing participate as revealed by survey data on page 47.

The biggest detriment to the Organization in the past 25 years was increasing variety of television content, especially reality television, as explained in Chapter 1 on page 7. In its early days, Miss America was one of the very few outlets where a young woman could showcase her ability to sing, dance or play an instrument on a large scale. However, that is not the reality of today. Shows like *America's Got Talent*, *The Voice* and *So You Think You Can Dance* have made it very difficult for Miss America contestants to be the most impressive performers someone can watch on TV. However, by making the talent phase of competition worth 50% of the score, the Miss America Organization is attempting to compete with these shows.

As displayed in the survey data on page 42, the least important role of a Miss America to the survey participants is being a performer, and the least important trait of a

Miss America is her talent presentation. People are not expecting their Miss America to be a Broadway-ready performer, so the MAO needs to significantly decrease the weight of the talent competition immediately to combat this expectation.

Another potential reason contestants choose to not compete is the large time commitment involved. Preparing a talent, staying up to date on current events, doing mock interviews, exercising, practicing walking, completing dozens of forms and contracts, attending workshops, watching local pageants across the state, advancing a social impact initiative and volunteering for a variety of charitable programs are all things contestants competing on the state level do while attending school or working.

Contestants should not have to dedicate every ounce of time and energy they have to participating in this Organization, and they should not appear as if it is their only ambition. Making the program more attractive to potential candidates by making the preparation and participation in the program more practical for busy college students or young professionals would very likely increase the number and quality of candidates participating nationwide.

There are potential contestants across the nation that would be great assets to the program if they could be convinced to compete, and taking the measures outlined in this section would help the Organization attract a larger quantity and quality of contestants on all levels. My final step for my “Miss America 3.0” recommendations will be discussed in the following section as I conclude my work and discuss how Miss America can prove itself as a relevant program.

### **Conclusion: Proving Relevance**

One of the biggest takeaways from this project is that the Miss America Competition is at a defining point in its history, and this important moment is only amplified due to its upcoming centennial anniversary. In its current state, the program is most definitely not sustainable; morale is low, funding is absent, chaos is present, confusion is looming and concrete solutions from leadership are either being withheld or simply do not exist. If appropriate action is not swiftly taken and if the next two pageants are not considered extremely successful, I cannot see how this program could possibly sustain itself for much longer in its current state.

In the midst of every trying situation the Miss America Pageant has faced since its inception in 1921, it has been able to stabilize itself, evolve into what it needed to become to adapt to the times and continue operations despite the difficulties being faced. This Pageant has survived and thrived over the years in a way that is hard to truly understand from a business perspective. People within the Organization have believed in it enough to make it work over the years; funding was acquired, broadcast support was garnered and contestants competed. Miss America has served in a variety of roles over the years, and she has the potential to continue evolving. I truly believe that there is room for a Miss America in our society in the years to come, but there isn't much time left for this nearly 100-year-old icon to successfully redefine what it means to be Miss America.

The spirit of what has made this competition so special is embodied in the lyrics to the infamous, “There She Is, Miss America,” song sung by Bert Parks for so many years at the Pageant. “There she is, walking on air, she is. Fairest of the fair, she is, Miss America.” For years and years, Miss America has survived because a cycle of young girls, including myself, tuned in to the show growing up and fell in love with the magical idea of being Miss America one day. I have dreamed of being on that stage since I was a little girl, and making this hope a reality has been a tremendous part of my life since my dance teacher encouraged me to enter my first Miss America’s Outstanding Teen local pageant when I was 15-years-old.

I believe there are two things that must happen more than anything else in order for Miss America to have a chance at continuing. The first is that those who have loved the Organization for so long have to be won back to continue passionately supporting it again. The second will show the most long-term effects, and it is that Miss America must once again put a sparkle in the eyes of young girls watching the show on their TV screens. If the next generation isn’t tuning in and the seeds for dreams of being “a real-life princess” are not planted, there will ultimately not be women wanting to hold this iconic title in the years to come.

I hope that I have the opportunity to serve as Miss Mississippi and Miss America to educate the public on the content of this project, implement changes to help the Organization appropriately evolve and ultimately prove that young women like myself are relevant, capable and ready to serve as a role model and advocate with the Miss America title.

## LIST OF REFERENCES

- ABC's Miss America Pageant Surges 13% Year to Year Against the NFL Playoffs.  
(2012, January 15). Retrieved from <https://tvbythenumbers.zap2it.com/network-press-releases/abcs-miss-america-pageant-surges-13-year-to-year-against-the-nfl-playoffs/>
- Ali, L. (2018, September 07). Is the Miss America pageant - make that 'competition' - worth saving? Retrieved from <https://www.latimes.com/entertainment/tv/la-et-st-miss-america-pageant-essay-on-controversy-20180907-story.html>
- Ali, Y. (2017a, December 23). The Miss America Emails: How The Pageant's CEO Really Talks About The Winners. Retrieved from [https://www.huffpost.com/entry/miss-america-ceo-emails\\_n\\_5a3bd266e4b025f99e153fdb](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/miss-america-ceo-emails_n_5a3bd266e4b025f99e153fdb)
- Ali, Y. (2017b, December 29). Ali Twitter Thread. Retrieved from <https://twitter.com/yashar/status/946563348392480768>
- Angeles, O. P. (2002, April 14). Miss America competition faces bankruptcy threat. Retrieved from <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/northamerica/1390877/Miss-America-competition-faces-bankruptcy-threat.html>
- Auble, A., & Carroll, L. (2019, March 06). Lawsuit against Miss America Organization dismissed. Retrieved from [https://www.pressofatlanticcity.com/missamerica/lawsuit-against-miss-america-organization-dismissed/article\\_1dd5726d-1802-5288-9753-889a1addf5fe.html?fbclid=IwAR3\\_X7gV163jhWX3uio1aQmiz7A-](https://www.pressofatlanticcity.com/missamerica/lawsuit-against-miss-america-organization-dismissed/article_1dd5726d-1802-5288-9753-889a1addf5fe.html?fbclid=IwAR3_X7gV163jhWX3uio1aQmiz7A-)



VEqYrg1Gyd5YYoo4HQhVo-fPuqUPDI0

Auble, A. (2019, January 25). Lawsuit continues for Miss America, but so does pageant confusion. Retrieved from

[https://www.pressofatlanticcity.com/missamerica/lawsuit-continues-for-miss-america-but-so-does-pageant-confusion/article\\_48729327-5d58-5f97-a3f4-9ff5ebce5a54.html](https://www.pressofatlanticcity.com/missamerica/lawsuit-continues-for-miss-america-but-so-does-pageant-confusion/article_48729327-5d58-5f97-a3f4-9ff5ebce5a54.html)

Barth, J. V. (2018a, September 23). MAO Leadership Change Fund. Retrieved from

<https://www.gofundme.com/MAO-Leadership-ChangeFund>

Barth, J. V. (2018b, October 01). GoFundMe and Attorney Update. Retrieved from

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/596839997142436/search/?query=barth&epa=FILTERS&filters=eyJycF9jaHJvbm9fc29ydCI6IntcIm5hbWVcIjpcImNocm9ub3NvcnRcIixcImFyZ3NcIjpcIlwifSJ9>

Barth, J. V. (2019a, February 12). Weather Rescheduling. Retrieved from

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/596839997142436/search/?query=barth&epa=FILTERS&filters=eyJycF9jaHJvbm9fc29ydCI6IntcIm5hbWVcIjpcImNocm9ub3NvcnRcIixcImFyZ3NcIjpcIlwifSJ9>

Barth, J. V. (2019b, March 05). Withdrawal of the Lawsuit. Retrieved from

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/596839997142436/search/?query=barth&epa=FILTERS&filters=eyJycF9jaHJvbm9fc29ydCI6IntcIm5hbWVcIjpcImNocm9ub3NvcnRcIixcImFyZ3NcIjpcIlwifSJ9>

Barth, J. V., Clemens, V., Fleiss, L. K., & Shindle, K. (2018, June 27). Departure from the MAO Board of Trustees. Retrieved from

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/596839997142436/search/?query=jennifer>

vadenbarth&epa=FILTERS&filters=eyJycF9jaHJvbm9fc29ydCI6IntcIm5hbWV  
cIjpcImNocm9ub3NvcnRcIixcImFyZ3NcIjpcIlwifSJ9

Bauerlein, V. (2018a, July 08). Miss America Organization Split by #MeToo Era Swimsuit Decision. Retrieved from <https://www.wsj.com/articles/miss-america-organization-split-by-metoo-era-swimsuit-decision-1531047601?mod=e2tw>

Bauerlein, V. (2018b, August 03). Miss America's Finances Uncertain as It Fights for Relevance. Retrieved from <https://www.wsj.com/articles/miss-americas-finances-uncertain-as-it-fights-for-relevance-1533288600?ns=prod/accounts-wsj>

Bennett, J., & Simon, S. (2018, September 10). Here's What You Didn't See on Miss America. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/10/style/miss-america-2019-pageant.html>

Betz, B. (2018, December 19). Miss America pageant looking to flee Atlantic City -- again -- amid declining attendance, internal conflicts, reports say. Retrieved from <https://www.foxnews.com/entertainment/miss-america-looking-for-other-venues-amid-declining-attendance-internal-conflict>

Bivans, A., & Horn, L. C. (1991). *Miss America: In Pursuit of the Crown*. Atlantic City, NJ: MasterMedia Limited.

Bogdan, J. (2014, February 09). Miss America's finances fluctuate, records show. Retrieved from [https://www.pressofatlanticcity.com/news/breaking/miss-america-s-finances-fluctuate-records-show/article\\_3c8ab438-913a-11e3-9c28-001a4bcf887a.html](https://www.pressofatlanticcity.com/news/breaking/miss-america-s-finances-fluctuate-records-show/article_3c8ab438-913a-11e3-9c28-001a4bcf887a.html)

Bryant, K. (2016, September 14). At the Miss America Pageant, It's Always an Election Year. Retrieved from <https://www.vanityfair.com/style/2016/09/miss-america->

2017-savvy-shields

Bryant, K. (2018, October 09). The War Within Miss America Just Went Nuclear.

Retrieved from <https://www.vanityfair.com/style/2018/10/miss-america-state-leadership-purge-gretchen-carlson-regina-hopper?fbclid=IwAR3EaE3nPykCPU35LIYwlcHd9LXlAfkYnlthQ75ZOdFTLADOEjd238l-0>

Carlson, G. (2018, June 27). A Statement to Set the Record Straight. Retrieved from

[https://www.facebook.com/groups/596839997142436/search/?query=carlson&epa=SEARCH\\_BOX](https://www.facebook.com/groups/596839997142436/search/?query=carlson&epa=SEARCH_BOX)

Carroll, L. (2018a, March 17). Miss America Organization finalizes new board of

directors. Retrieved from [https://www.pressofatlanticcity.com/missamerica/miss-america-organization-finalizes-new-board-of-directors/article\\_3f496821-4971-59dd-9821-fb7446e71158.html](https://www.pressofatlanticcity.com/missamerica/miss-america-organization-finalizes-new-board-of-directors/article_3f496821-4971-59dd-9821-fb7446e71158.html)

Carroll, L. (2018b, July 08). Split developing in Miss America Organization over new leadership. Retrieved from

[https://www.pressofatlanticcity.com/missamerica/split-developing-in-miss-america-organization-over-new-leadership/article\\_66843ce8-51e4-5cb0-bec8-af7a62faba4d.html](https://www.pressofatlanticcity.com/missamerica/split-developing-in-miss-america-organization-over-new-leadership/article_66843ce8-51e4-5cb0-bec8-af7a62faba4d.html)

Carroll, L. (2018c, July 26). Miss America scholarship foundation chairwoman resigns.

Retrieved from [https://www.pressofatlanticcity.com/missamerica/head-of-miss-america-foundation-reportedly-resigns/article\\_5539a650-d2aa-58d3-865c-07cbdef81818.html?fbclid=IwAR2SvW5H5DlbeKnXSBVkUDq7HeuQ\\_OkCtuJZ42GyB6W2tMTwrtVy6W0hXwo](https://www.pressofatlanticcity.com/missamerica/head-of-miss-america-foundation-reportedly-resigns/article_5539a650-d2aa-58d3-865c-07cbdef81818.html?fbclid=IwAR2SvW5H5DlbeKnXSBVkUDq7HeuQ_OkCtuJZ42GyB6W2tMTwrtVy6W0hXwo)

Carroll, L. (2018d, September 06). 'So Fake' Gretchen Carlson posters appear in Atlantic City. Retrieved from [https://www.pressofatlanticcity.com/missamerica/so-fake-gretchen-carlson-posters-appear-in-atlantic-city/article\\_6f5313e0-4788-53c1-be64-610a9bc2502e.html](https://www.pressofatlanticcity.com/missamerica/so-fake-gretchen-carlson-posters-appear-in-atlantic-city/article_6f5313e0-4788-53c1-be64-610a9bc2502e.html)

Carroll, L. (2018e, September 10). Report says Cara Mund's Miss America Organization bullying allegations unfounded. Retrieved from [https://www.pressofatlanticcity.com/missamerica/report-says-cara-mund-s-miss-america-organization-bullying-allegations/article\\_903a26cc-06d0-5f3f-8a92-5955b7750a3b.html](https://www.pressofatlanticcity.com/missamerica/report-says-cara-mund-s-miss-america-organization-bullying-allegations/article_903a26cc-06d0-5f3f-8a92-5955b7750a3b.html)

Carroll, L. (2018f, September 12). CRDA failed to provide documents on Miss America costs. Retrieved from [https://www.pressofatlanticcity.com/news/crda-failed-to-provide-documents-on-miss-america-costs/article\\_051b2c57-d4f9-5b13-8a82-d3602bb15db6.html](https://www.pressofatlanticcity.com/news/crda-failed-to-provide-documents-on-miss-america-costs/article_051b2c57-d4f9-5b13-8a82-d3602bb15db6.html)

Carroll, L. (2018g, October 09). Miss America Organization seeks to remove defiant state pageant leaders. Retrieved from [https://www.pressofatlanticcity.com/missamerica/miss-america-organization-seeks-to-remove-defiant-state-pageant-leaders/article\\_a5edadaa-9332-5d07-a06e-31f0ebfcafc3.html?fbclid=IwAR2WBNprGxYV6t-qzZWvhwPPVdJQMnb23oHhicpaV50sLvqHgzhTI-oMJic](https://www.pressofatlanticcity.com/missamerica/miss-america-organization-seeks-to-remove-defiant-state-pageant-leaders/article_a5edadaa-9332-5d07-a06e-31f0ebfcafc3.html?fbclid=IwAR2WBNprGxYV6t-qzZWvhwPPVdJQMnb23oHhicpaV50sLvqHgzhTI-oMJic)

Carroll, L. (2018h, December 18). Miss America in search of a new home; Ocean Resort offers to help. Retrieved from [https://www.pressofatlanticcity.com/missamerica/miss-america-in-search-of-a-new-home-ocean-resort/article\\_99c5ed91-80b7-5cd2-8867-a1c217c2701b.html](https://www.pressofatlanticcity.com/missamerica/miss-america-in-search-of-a-new-home-ocean-resort/article_99c5ed91-80b7-5cd2-8867-a1c217c2701b.html)

- Carroll, L. (2018i, December 19). Fans hope to see Miss America make it to 100 in Atlantic City. Retrieved from [https://www.pressofatlanticcity.com/missamerica/fans-hope-to-see-miss-america-make-it-to-in/article\\_d5dcfc59-dce2-5c4d-96ff-9fa1c7c00351.html](https://www.pressofatlanticcity.com/missamerica/fans-hope-to-see-miss-america-make-it-to-in/article_d5dcfc59-dce2-5c4d-96ff-9fa1c7c00351.html)
- Carroll, L. (2018j, December 28). As state licenses are reinstated, Miss America is headed to court. Retrieved from [https://www.pressofatlanticcity.com/missamerica/as-state-licenses-are-reinstated-miss-america-is-headed-to/article\\_33781ad6-337d-5650-bead-25afff4eeb92.html?fbclid=IwAR0Nb1tBsX3IA4Hha7qIVwxcMyxB8\\_aMaU4blodJcacAj\\_1982A8uwLYbVE](https://www.pressofatlanticcity.com/missamerica/as-state-licenses-are-reinstated-miss-america-is-headed-to/article_33781ad6-337d-5650-bead-25afff4eeb92.html?fbclid=IwAR0Nb1tBsX3IA4Hha7qIVwxcMyxB8_aMaU4blodJcacAj_1982A8uwLYbVE)
- Carroll, L. (2018k, December 20). Carlson, Miss America Organization respond to lawsuit. Retrieved from [https://www.pressofatlanticcity.com/missamerica/ex-board-member-terminated-state-pageants-file-lawsuit-against-miss/article\\_8842bb61-c69f-520f-ab74-01f16ffbcd80.html?fbclid=IwAR0WQHUbA7cGLsN4xCrxWTd-D2P7whfHZ80rI88hwstDYK4jcYgzjtRT92I](https://www.pressofatlanticcity.com/missamerica/ex-board-member-terminated-state-pageants-file-lawsuit-against-miss/article_8842bb61-c69f-520f-ab74-01f16ffbcd80.html?fbclid=IwAR0WQHUbA7cGLsN4xCrxWTd-D2P7whfHZ80rI88hwstDYK4jcYgzjtRT92I)
- Carroll, L. (2019, January 10). Miss New Jersey competition leaving Ocean City. Retrieved from [https://www.pressofatlanticcity.com/missamerica/miss-new-jersey-competition-leaving-ocean-city/article\\_68fa4ee0-14cd-5700-89ea-d253cab9d687.html?fbclid=IwAR1An3w8gVU3izQbUbJ1OcIjda0q6SYgl1ndmlwSeY\\_RjNskkP4HO\\_PechQ](https://www.pressofatlanticcity.com/missamerica/miss-new-jersey-competition-leaving-ocean-city/article_68fa4ee0-14cd-5700-89ea-d253cab9d687.html?fbclid=IwAR1An3w8gVU3izQbUbJ1OcIjda0q6SYgl1ndmlwSeY_RjNskkP4HO_PechQ)
- Chokshi, N., & Khatib, J. (2017, December 22). Miss America Leaders Resign Amid Scandal Over Derogatory Emails. Retrieved from

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/22/business/miss-america-emails-sam-haskell.html>

Daniels, C. S. (2018, August 14). Sign the Petition: Miss America NEEDS YOU!

Retrieved from <https://www.change.org/p/statelicensees1-gmail-com-miss-america-needs-you>

Deford, F. (1971). *There She Is: The Life and Times of Miss America*. New York, NY: The Viking Press.

Ein, M. (2013, August 31). Conversation with Miss America Organization CEO Sam Haskell. Retrieved from [https://www.pressofatlanticcity.com/conversation-with-miss-america-organization-ceo-sam-haskell/youtube\\_4a311762-11dd-11e3-8ff6-0019bb2963f4.html](https://www.pressofatlanticcity.com/conversation-with-miss-america-organization-ceo-sam-haskell/youtube_4a311762-11dd-11e3-8ff6-0019bb2963f4.html)

Fitzgerald, T. (2018, September 10). Miss America 2019 Ratings: Viewership Falls Again For Revamped Pageant. Retrieved from <https://www.forbes.com/sites/tonifitzgerald/2018/09/10/miss-america-2019-ratings-viewership-falls-again-for-revamped-pageant/#2555644f5215>

Garber, M. (2018, September 12). I'm Still Confused About 'Miss America 2.0'.

Retrieved from <https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2018/09/what-happened-at-the-miss-america-pageant/569731/>

Gettleman, J. (2005, August 26). There She Isn't: Miss America Pageant Leaves Atlantic City. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2005/08/26/nyregion/there-she-isnt-miss-america-pageant-leaves-atlantic-city.html>

Gore, L. (2019, January 04). Miss America revokes local pageant licenses in 7 states,

- including Florida and Georgia. Retrieved from  
<https://www.al.com/news/2018/12/miss-america-revokes-local-pageant-licenses-in-7-states.html>
- Hafiz, Y. (2017, December 07). You Don't Need To Be Blonde To Be Miss America, Folks. Retrieved from [https://www.huffpost.com/entry/nina-davuluri-miss-america-religion\\_n\\_3934428](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/nina-davuluri-miss-america-religion_n_3934428)
- Hennessey, K. (2006, January 18). Miss America pageant moves to Vegas. Retrieved from <https://www.ocregister.com/2006/01/18/miss-america-pageant-moves-to-vegas/>
- Isidore, C. (2018, January 02). Gretchen Carlson tapped as new chair of Miss America Organization. Retrieved from  
<https://money.cnn.com/2018/01/02/media/gretchen-carlson-miss-america-chairman/index.html>
- Jensen, E. (2018, September 10). 'Miss America just isn't the same': Twitter rips new red carpet competition. Retrieved from  
<https://www.usatoday.com/story/life/entertainthis/2018/09/10/twitter-miss-america-2019-critics-say/1253506002/>
- Jorgensen, A. (2019, March 08). Miss Georgia Forum Facebook Post. Retrieved from  
<https://www.facebook.com/annie.jorgensen.9/posts/10211469611854393>
- Karwejna, M. (2018a, May). The Miss America Organization and The Miss America Foundation Make History With First All-Female Leadership Team. Retrieved from <https://missamerica.org/the-miss-america-organization-and-the-miss-america-foundation-make-history-with-first-all-female-leadership-team/>

- Karwejna, M. (2018b, June 04). Miss America 2.0. Retrieved from <https://www.missamerica.org/miss-america-2-0/>
- Karwejna, M. (2018c, June 22). The Miss America Organization Board of Trustees Elects Three New Trustees. Retrieved from <https://missamerica.org/the-miss-america-organization-board-of-trustees-elects-three-new-trustees/>
- Karwejna, M. (2018d, August 17). Official Statement in Response to Letter from Miss America 2018, Cara Mund. Retrieved from <https://missamerica.org/official-statement-in-response-to-letter-from-miss-america-2018-cara-mund/>
- Karwejna, M. (2018e, August 27). Miss America Organization Board of Trustees Announces Six New Trustees. Retrieved from <https://missamerica.org/miss-america-organization-board-of-trustees-announces-six-new-trustees/>
- Kim, E. K. (2018, June 05). Miss America gets rid of swimsuit competition. Retrieved from <https://www.today.com/style/miss-america-gets-rid-swimsuit-competition-gretchen-carlson-announces-we-t130278>
- Kuperinsky, A. (2014, September 22). John Oliver eviscerates Miss America scholarship claim on 'Last Week Tonight'. Retrieved from [https://www.nj.com/entertainment/tv/2014/09/miss\\_america\\_john\\_oliver\\_scholarships.html](https://www.nj.com/entertainment/tv/2014/09/miss_america_john_oliver_scholarships.html)
- Kuperinsky, A. (2015, September 05). Following John Oliver critique, Miss America Organization shares review of scholarship program. Retrieved from [https://www.nj.com/entertainment/2015/09/following\\_john\\_oliver\\_critique\\_miss\\_america\\_shares.html](https://www.nj.com/entertainment/2015/09/following_john_oliver_critique_miss_america_shares.html)
- Kuperinsky, A. (2017, December 22). Miss America Organization rocked by leaked



emails and damning report on CEO's behavior. Retrieved from  
[https://www.nj.com/entertainment/2017/12/miss\\_america\\_organization\\_rocked\\_by\\_leaked\\_emails.html](https://www.nj.com/entertainment/2017/12/miss_america_organization_rocked_by_leaked_emails.html)

Kuperinsky, A. (2018a, August 10). 11 former Miss Americas call for resignation of Gretchen Carlson from pageant. Retrieved from  
[https://www.nj.com/entertainment/2018/08/miss\\_america\\_letter\\_call\\_for\\_gretchen\\_carlson\\_resi.html](https://www.nj.com/entertainment/2018/08/miss_america_letter_call_for_gretchen_carlson_resi.html)

Kuperinsky, A. (2018b, September 06). Miss America contestants mourn loss of swimsuits, 'leverage' in pageant (VIDEO). Retrieved from  
[https://www.nj.com/entertainment/2018/09/miss\\_america\\_contestants\\_mourn\\_loss\\_of\\_swimsuits\\_leverage\\_in\\_pageant\\_video.html](https://www.nj.com/entertainment/2018/09/miss_america_contestants_mourn_loss_of_swimsuits_leverage_in_pageant_video.html)

Kuperinsky, A. (2018c, September 07). Miss America's tangled crowns. A guide to the backstage chaos at the 2019 pageant. Retrieved from  
[https://www.nj.com/entertainment/2018/09/miss\\_america\\_2018\\_cara\\_mund\\_bullying\\_allegations\\_g.html](https://www.nj.com/entertainment/2018/09/miss_america_2018_cara_mund_bullying_allegations_g.html)

Kuperinsky, A. (2018d, September 09). At Miss America parade in Atlantic City, tradition trumps controversy. Retrieved from  
[https://www.nj.com/entertainment/2018/09/miss\\_america\\_show\\_us\\_your\\_shoes\\_parade\\_2018.html](https://www.nj.com/entertainment/2018/09/miss_america_show_us_your_shoes_parade_2018.html)

Kuperinsky, A. (2018e, September 14). Casino authority agreed to more money for Miss America but didn't track spending, audit says. Retrieved from  
[https://www.nj.com/entertainment/2018/09/crda\\_audit\\_miss\\_america\\_contract\\_atlantic\\_city.html](https://www.nj.com/entertainment/2018/09/crda_audit_miss_america_contract_atlantic_city.html)

- Kuperinsky, A. (2018f, October 08). Miss America conflict rages on as national organization revokes state licenses. Retrieved from [https://www.nj.com/entertainment/2018/10/miss\\_america\\_revokes\\_state\\_pageant\\_licenses.html?fbclid=IwAR2FZMC80Gd9OEVxmRDY0PXXACNMuR9wgn1G\\_1Afu8AOEIC3wa4otJxUXyo](https://www.nj.com/entertainment/2018/10/miss_america_revokes_state_pageant_licenses.html?fbclid=IwAR2FZMC80Gd9OEVxmRDY0PXXACNMuR9wgn1G_1Afu8AOEIC3wa4otJxUXyo)
- Leach, R. (2013, February 14). Why did Miss America dump Las Vegas for Atlantic City? Retrieved from <https://lasvegassun.com/vegadeluxe/2013/feb/14/why-did-miss-america-dump-las-vegas-atlantic-city-/>
- Lemons, M. (2019, March 05). MAO Statement Regarding Withdrawal of the Lawsuit. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/groups/596839997142436/search/?query=barth&epa=FILTERS&filters=eyJycF9jaHJvbm9fc29ydCI6IntcIm5hbWVcIjpcImNocm9ub3NvcnRcIixcImFyZ3NcIjpcIlwifSJ9>
- Maglio, T. (2018, September 10). Ratings: 'Miss America' Nosedives to All-Time Low – Yes, Counting the Years on Basic Cable. Retrieved from <https://www.thewrap.com/miss-america-2019-ratings-sunday-night-football-rel/>
- Mallenbaum, C. (2018, August 20). Gretchen Carlson: I 'never bullied' Miss America Cara Mund, her letter cost org \$75,000. Retrieved from <https://www.usatoday.com/story/life/people/2018/08/17/miss-america-cara-mund-leadership-bullied-manipulated-silenced-me/1019920002/>
- McDermott, M. (2017, December 23). Miss America CEO Sam Haskell suspended over offensive emails. Retrieved from <https://www.usatoday.com/story/life/people/2017/12/22/former-miss-america->

mallory-hagan-slams-disgraced-ceo-sam-haskell-following-email-scandal/976037001/

Mineur, C. (2018, January 01). Miss America Organization Announces New Leadership Team. Retrieved from <https://www.missamerica.org/miss-america-organization-announces-new-leadership-team/>

Miss Alabama Crowned Miss America 2005. (2004, September 19). Retrieved from <https://www.foxnews.com/story/miss-alabama-crowned-miss-america-2005>

Miss America concedes; No more measurements. (1986, September 08). Retrieved from <https://www.upi.com/Archives/1986/09/08/Miss-America-concedes-No-more-measurements/6279526536000/>

Miss America Crowned; Whatever Happened To Beauty Pageants? (2010, January 31). Retrieved from <https://tvbythenumbers.zap2it.com/network-press-releases/miss-america-crowned-beauty-pageant-tv-ratings-history/>

Miss America Organization Judges Manual. (2017, February). Retrieved from <https://misslanecounty.org/contestant-forms/judges-resources/>

Miss America packs her sash for Vegas. (2005, November 17). Retrieved from <https://www.today.com/popculture/miss-america-packs-her-sash-vegas-wbna10077361>

Miss America Pageant: Last Week Tonight with John Oliver (HBO). (2014, September 21). Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oDPCmmZifE8>

'Miss America' Top Nielsen's Twitter TV Ratings for the Week of September 7-13. (2015, September 14). Retrieved from <https://tvbythenumbers.zap2it.com/internet/miss-america-top-nielsens-twitter-tv->

ratings-for-the-week-of-september-7-13/

Miss America Whistleblower Who Revealed Insulting Emails: 'I Wish I'd Said Something Sooner'. (2017, December 28). Retrieved from <https://www.insideedition.com/miss-america-whistleblower-who-revealed-insulting-emails-i-wish-id-said-something-sooner-39351>

Miss America 2015 Kira Kazantsev defends red cup talent. (2014, September 15). Retrieved from <https://www.foxnews.com/entertainment/miss-america-2015-kira-kazantsev-defends-red-cup-talent>

Miss America 2019: Contestants arrive in Atlantic City amid pageant unrest. (2018, August 30). Retrieved from [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_h2qbqD4aEE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_h2qbqD4aEE)

Miss America 2.0. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.missamerica.org/>

Miss New York Leadership. (2019, March 05). Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/MissAmericaNewYork/posts/793128534378182>

Moniuszko, S. M., & Alexander, B. (2017, December 24). Miss America CEO Sam Haskell resigns with other top brass amid leaked email scandal. Retrieved from <https://www.usatoday.com/story/life/people/2017/12/23/3-miss-america-organization-leaders-resign-amid-scandal/979182001/>

Osborne, A. S., Whitestone, H., & Horn, L. C. (1995). *Miss America: The Dream Lives On*. Dallas, TX: Taylor Publishing Company.

Our History. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.missamerica.org/organization/history/>

Parry, W. (2018a, August 08). Miss America head Gretchen Carlson seeks 'healing process'. Retrieved from <https://apnews.com/79ce91db4f9b4b4ca20ff860211fd4ad>

Parry, W. (2018b, August 17). Miss America: Leadership bullied, manipulated, silenced me. Retrieved from <https://apnews.com/c497560a9204420ba6c756f4154b4b1a>

Parry, W. (2018c, October 08). Miss America Organization strikes back at rebellious states. Retrieved from <https://www.apnews.com/f45744999b6a4289aa49c7daa5e43387>

Parry, W. (2018d, December 06). Miss America terminates agreements with NJ, NY and FL. Retrieved from <https://apnews.com/a60f36cd4af648028b598f48c78f75b9?fbclid=IwAR106RH4GLOOuP2gHRwyw9fbhmqfCXbBfW31PZce-peJDnqVXksVMl4eHBQ>

Parry, W. (2018e, December 22). Miss America Organization tabs new leaders in 3 states. Retrieved from <https://www.apnews.com/3945fbdcae724b9db54f3b6a38e14db5>

Parry, W. (2019, March 05). Lawsuit on 'takeover' of Miss America pageant is withdrawn. Retrieved from <https://apnews.com/23828deda30e4a94810babbea8ab62cc?fbclid=IwAR2eEbTNkwzB6AGLXEsRh0zgMn-cZBqavdovcvPAkXCm9YgzFQOnNcQ5KB0>

Peterson, I. (2005, April 09). A Challenge for Miss America in Reality TV Era. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2005/04/09/nyregion/a-challenge-for-miss-america-in-reality-tv-era.html?module=inline>

Poole, O. (2002, April 14). Miss America competition faces bankruptcy threat. Retrieved from <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/northamerica/1390877/Miss-America-competition-faces-bankruptcy-threat.html>

Post, M. B. (2018, January 19). Miss America announces two new board members.

Retrieved from [https://www.pressofatlanticcity.com/missamerica/miss-america-announces-two-new-board-members/article\\_46eb04a7-10e1-5bed-be93-d28cb1600612.html](https://www.pressofatlanticcity.com/missamerica/miss-america-announces-two-new-board-members/article_46eb04a7-10e1-5bed-be93-d28cb1600612.html)

Riverol, A. R. (1992). *Live from Atlantic City: The History of the Miss America Pageant Before, After, and In Spite of Television*. Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Popular Press.

Robach, A. (2018, January 05). Gretchen Carlson on how she wants to reinvent Miss America. Retrieved from <https://www.goodmorningamerica.com/news/video/gretchen-carlson-reinvent-miss-america-52157968>

Robson, K. (2019, January 02). Miss America 2.0: Staying Relevant in the #MeToo Era. Retrieved from <http://sk.sagepub.com/cases/miss-america-2-staying-relevant-in-the-metoo-era>

Rosenberg, A. S. (2018, July 25). With weeks to go, is Miss America 'coming apart at the seams?' Retrieved from [https://www.philly.com/philly/news/new\\_jersey/shore/miss-america-gretchen-carlson-atlantic-city-swimsuit-regina-hopper-20180725.html](https://www.philly.com/philly/news/new_jersey/shore/miss-america-gretchen-carlson-atlantic-city-swimsuit-regina-hopper-20180725.html)

Salam, M. (2018, May 18). Miss America Appoints Women to Top Positions, Months After Email Scandal. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/17/us/miss-america-women.html>

Scholarship Overview. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://missamericafoundation.org/scholarship-overview/>

Schweder, H. (2016, August 19). How social media usage sometimes makes, or breaks,

pageant competitors. Retrieved from

[https://www.pressofatlanticcity.com/missamerica/how-social-media-usage-sometimes-makes-or-breaks-pageant-competitors/article\\_f9912474-657a-11e6-b471-aba1c768d87d.html](https://www.pressofatlanticcity.com/missamerica/how-social-media-usage-sometimes-makes-or-breaks-pageant-competitors/article_f9912474-657a-11e6-b471-aba1c768d87d.html)

Serpico, E. (2018, August 27). Miss America board member resigns, says organization is

'deeply divided'. Retrieved from

[https://www.pressofatlanticcity.com/missamerica/miss-america-board-member-resigns-says-organization-is-deeply-divided/article\\_7f908bc1-d615-5317-8461-272806533232.html](https://www.pressofatlanticcity.com/missamerica/miss-america-board-member-resigns-says-organization-is-deeply-divided/article_7f908bc1-d615-5317-8461-272806533232.html)

Shaw, C. (2018, December 27). Miss America reinstates New Jersey license for one year.

Retrieved from [https://www.pressofatlanticcity.com/missamerica/miss-america-reinstates-new-jersey-license-for-one-year/article\\_bf4453d7-1675-5470-9277-2fcab52042c.html?fbclid=IwAR3Gcmszj-3AaIjXt7a0GTfitvLbhh8FK5hEqx7u72Vq\\_huBziT11JuvuWE](https://www.pressofatlanticcity.com/missamerica/miss-america-reinstates-new-jersey-license-for-one-year/article_bf4453d7-1675-5470-9277-2fcab52042c.html?fbclid=IwAR3Gcmszj-3AaIjXt7a0GTfitvLbhh8FK5hEqx7u72Vq_huBziT11JuvuWE)

Shaw, G. (2018, October 09). THEN AND NOW: How the Miss America pageant has

changed over the years. Retrieved from <https://www.thisisinsider.com/miss-america-pageant-changes-evolution-2018-9#the-90s-saw-winners-become-more-invested-in-social-justice-causes-every-winner-was-required-to-have-a-platform-that-they-would-speak-about-on-their-national-speaking-tour-26>

Shields, S. (2018, September 04). 17 Things I've Learned as Miss America. Retrieved

from <https://www.cosmopolitan.com/entertainment/a12173549/savvy-shields-miss-america-2017-story-life-crown/>

Spatz, D. J. (2013, September 11). She's Back! Miss America 2014 Returns to Atlantic

- City. Retrieved from [https://www.atlanticcityweekly.com/news\\_and\\_views/she-s-back-miss-america-returns-to-atlantic-city/article\\_fc0d9db7-439e-5a3b-af70-10a3eafba744.html](https://www.atlanticcityweekly.com/news_and_views/she-s-back-miss-america-returns-to-atlantic-city/article_fc0d9db7-439e-5a3b-af70-10a3eafba744.html)
- Tennessee's Miss America contestant will be crowned in Knoxville this year. (2019, January 14). Retrieved from <https://www.wbir.com/article/news/tennessees-miss-america-contestant-will-be-crowned-in-knoxville-this-year/51-90698e48-c5aa-409a-81dd-8eaf73934ac5>
- Thorbecke, C., & Kindelan, K. (2018, June 05). Miss America is scrapping its swimsuit competition. Retrieved from <https://www.goodmorningamerica.com/culture/story/miss-america-scrapping-swimsuit-competition-longer-judge-based-55638426>
- Vagianos, A. (2018, August 21). Former Miss Americas Demand Board Resigns After Gretchen Carlson Bullying Accusations. Retrieved from [https://www.huffpost.com/entry/former-miss-americas-demand-board-resigns-after-gretchen-carlson-bullying-accusations\\_n\\_5b7c1e65e4b0a5b1feb2b87](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/former-miss-americas-demand-board-resigns-after-gretchen-carlson-bullying-accusations_n_5b7c1e65e4b0a5b1feb2b87)
- Watson, E., & Martin, D. (Eds.). (2004). *There She Is, Miss America: The Politics of Sex, Beauty, and Race in Americas*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Weiner, J. (2017, December 23). The End of Miss America. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/22/opinion/miss-america-pageant-haskell-email.html>
- Wright, B. (2019, February 16). Miss Georgia Scholarship Competition staying in Columbus, mayor Henderson says. Retrieved from <https://www.ledger-enquirer.com/news/local/article226382015.html>



2018 Miss America Cara Mund, Shares Details of Disturbing Behind The Scenes

Treatment. (2018, August 17). Retrieved from <https://acprimetime.com/2018-miss-america-cara-mund-shares-disturbing-behind-the-scenes-treatment/>