

GDIGM Major Findings Overview

based on Gender Stereotypes: An Analysis of Popular Films and TV

Dr. Stacy L. Smith - Annenberg School for Communication • Crystal Allene Cook - The Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media

STUDY 1

G-rated Films, 1990-2005

Dr. Stacy Smith and her team at the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Southern California analyzed the amount and the nature of portrayals of male and female characters in 101 of the top-grossing G-rated movies from 1990 to January 31st, 2005 based on Nielsen EDI© estimates. In total, we tracked over 3,000 individual speaking characters, roughly 1,000 characters who spoke in all male or all female groups, and more than 40 narrators.

Key findings from Study 1 included:

Fewer than one out of three (28%) of the speaking characters (both real and animated) are female.

More than four out of five (83%) of the films' narrators are male.

85.5% of the characters in G-rated films are white, 4.8% are black, and 9.7% are from "other" ethnicities.

STUDY 2

G-, PG-, PG-13, R-Rated Prevalence & Portrayal, 1990-2006

Based on Nielsen EDI© estimates, we content analyzed 400 of the top-grossing G, PG, PG-13, and R-rated theatrically-released films in North America between January 1, 1990 and September 4th, 2006.3 It is important to note that this study employed a somewhat different set of G-rated movies from the first study (only 100 films, and including movies through much of 2006). This second study also included 100 movies in each of the other rating categories. Additionally, some of the criteria for coding were changed from the first study.

In Study 2, the results across these four ratings reveal that 73% of the characters are male. This translates into a ratio of 2.71 males to every 1 female.

Examining over 4,000 characters across 400 G, PG, PG-13, and R-rated movies, our data reveal that two types of females often frequent film: the traditional and the hypersexual.

Females were over five times as likely as males to be shown in sexually revealing clothing, which was defined as attire that enhances, exaggerates, or calls attention to any part of the body from neck to knees.

Females were nearly three times as likely as males (10.6% vs. 3.4%) to be shown with a thin figure.

Style of presentation affects how females are featured in G-rated films. Animated females are more likely to be shown in a thin and sexy light than are live action females.

STUDY 3

Qualitative Analysis: An In-Depth Look at 13 Female Leads in G-rated Films

We analyzed 13 films, featuring live action and animated action, princesses and non princesses, and recent releases as well as timeless classics. Specifically, we assessed the protagonists' aspirations, romantic inclinations, and appearance norms within the context of the plot. A thematic analysis was undertaken on the 13 films. One of the study's authors initially watched a few of the films and noted similarities and differences appearing across the storylines and main characters. All information from the film was incorporated in the assessment, including narration, story text, plot, soundtrack, and all main, supporting, and background characters. From this pass at the content, four general areas or themes emerged that were germane to female leads.

Appearance is heavily focused upon in these films. However, the aspirations and heroic actions of certain general audience female leads should be commended. The latter is important -- as such portrayals depict females in a compelling light to both males and females in the viewing audience.

STUDY 4

TV for Kids 11 and Under: Prevalence, Portrayal, Appearance

In the fourth analysis, we assessed gender roles in television content made for children. To this end, we randomly sampled 1,034 shows from 12 network, public broadcast, and cable outlets including

534 hours of programming between June 12 and August 18th, 2005 to assemble a typical week of children's television programming. We examined the prevalence of males and females, as well as the nature of their demography, appearance, personality, and likeability.

Male characters occur roughly at twice the rate of female characters in television created for children. Sample-wide, the ratio of males to females was 1.67 to 1, including characters presented alone, in groups, or as narrators. Animated programs in particular are more likely to show males.

In live-action formats, females occur more frequently in groups than males. However, an almost equal portrayal appears with single-speaking male and female live action characters (ratio = 1.24 males to 1 female).

The research suggests that the "healthiest" balance of male and female representation is found in shows rated TVG. Further, TVG shows depict the highest proportion of non white, ethnic minority characters.

Similar to our other studies, we observed significant deviation in alluring attire and body shape variables. Females are almost four times as likely as males to be shown in sexy attire. Further, females are nearly twice as likely as males to be shown with a diminutive waist line. Unrealistic figures are more likely to be seen on females than males.

Females in animated contexts are more likely to be shown in sexually revealing attire than are females in live action contexts (24.5% vs. 17.4%). Females in animated stories are more likely to have small waists (36.9% vs. 6.9%) and have an unrealistic body shape (22.7% vs. 1.2%) than are females in live action stories

Additionally, animated action males are more likely than their live action counterparts to have a large chest (15.4% vs. 4.9%), small waist (18.4% vs. 4.3%), and unrealistically muscularized physique (12.5% vs. .5%).