

# Gender Stereotypes: An Analysis of Popular Films and TV

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## Introduction

The following four diverse studies on gender and children's entertainment prove the need for more females and more diverse portrayals of females and males in movie and television entertainment aimed at children. No one can argue that viewing again and again an imbalanced fictional "world" where females are often underrepresented or unmotivated can be good for young females or young males. Females take up half the space in society, yet, especially in films aimed at children, they appear much less frequently than do males. Nevertheless, when they do make it onto the silver or small screen, their portrayals can undermine their presence by being "hyper-attractive" or "hypersexual" and/or passive. It is certainly not the intent of this research to suggest that all female portrayals be uplifting or inspirational nor that "pretty" females not be depicted. Rather, the findings from all four studies point to the need for a shift: away from creating females as adornment, enticement, or with inclination to romance as the main or exclusive personality trait or motivator. These four studies open the area of female character-development to an important possible antidote to female under representation as well as overemphasis on physical appearance: the creation of diverse, complicated females who initiate and/or actively participate in their destinies.

Although the main focus of these four studies is entertainment aimed at children, children's entertainment is not the only area with imbalance at issue. The results of one of the following four studies reveal that little change has occurred in the prevalence of single speaking female characters in G, PG, PG-13, and R rated films over the last 16 years. While a few executive women can be commended for breaking through the glass ceiling in the entertainment industry, their influence has had limited results with respect to gender parity and portrayal. Maybe the answer is that for change to occur even more women are needed in the creative process (i.e., producers, writers), where key decision making occurs at the pitch and story development level. In fact, research on television reveals that the participation of women writers and producers increases the percentage of females on screen.<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, another suggestion may be that more women also are needed to join the ranks of casting directors, cinematographers, and show runners so that gender sensitive decisions can be made in the hiring and presentation of female actors in television and film.

Additionally, animators are encouraged to think outside-the-box about the types of characters they construct. Many of the females in animated fare are depicted as hypersexualized and thin. Story artists can incorporate more women as primary and secondary characters to the plot so that a full range of females and males

(short and tall, thin and heavy, attractive and unattractive) can be drawn or computer-generated.

Clearly, along the entire creative and marketing process, participants can develop, design, and engage in practical solutions to the problem of gender under representation and flat portrayal in entertainment aimed at children. As balance and portrayals improve, children now and the next generations of children will be the winners. They will be exposed to entertainment in which females take up half the space and both females and males are active, diverse, and complex.

*For your reference, according to the U.S. Census, in 2006, females made up 51% and males made up 49% of the population of the United States.*

Below, we overview a series of studies conducted by Dr. Stacy Smith and her research team. The studies were not conducted chronologically. Rather, each investigation addressed different research questions and employed different approaches and measures.

### Study 1: G-rated Films, 1990-2005

The aim of the first study was a comprehensive examination of gender portrayals in general audience films. Not one study has rigorously content-analyzed G-rated films in both live and animated formats across a variety of distributors. This investigation filled that void. We 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 31<sup>st</sup>, 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.

The key findings from this study included: fewer than one out of three (28%) of the speaking characters (both real and animated) are female. Fewer than one in five in this sample (17%) of characters in crowd scenes are female, though this finding should be interpreted with caution.<sup>2</sup> In this sample, more than four out of five (83%) of the films' narrators are male.

Gender was not the only aspect of imbalance in these films. We evaluated the apparent ethnicity as characters as well. A full 85.5% of the characters in G-rated films are white, 4.8% are black, and 9.7% are from "other" ethnicities. No differences emerged by character gender.



## Study 2: G-, PG-, PG-13, R-Rated Prevalence & Portrayal, 1990-2006

The purpose of study 2 was to examine quantitatively the prevalence and portrayal of single, speaking characters in popular motion pictures. 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 4<sup>th</sup>, 2006.<sup>3</sup> 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. Below, we report our results for the prevalence and portrayal of male and female characters.

*Prevalence.* Our complete study examined over 15,000 single-speaking characters in four rating categories of films. The results across these four ratings reveal that 73% of the characters are male ( $n=11,371$ ) and 27% are female ( $n=4,197$ ). This translates into a ratio of 2.71 males to every 1 female. Significant but trivial deviation<sup>4</sup> occurred by rating (G=2.5 to 1; PG=2.6 to 1; PG-13=2.8 to 1, R=2.9 to 1).

An analysis was also undertaken to see if the proportion of males to females changed over time. Films were categorized by release dates in one of three epochs: 1990 to 1995; 1996 to 2000; and 2001 to 2006. Re-released films were removed from the analysis. The results showed no change over time across the entire sample of films or within a rating. Thus, in this study, the prevalence of females in films has neither increased nor decreased over the last 16 years.

*Portrayal.* It has been argued that exposure to a thin, attractive, sex-saturated culture may be having a negative effect on youngsters' socio-emotional development.<sup>5</sup> On one hand, viewing these types of portrayals may overemphasize the importance of appearance norms among developing youth. With time and repeated viewing, girls may become dissatisfied with how they look or who they are. Indeed, psychologist Sarah Murnen<sup>6</sup> recently stated, "The promotion of the thin, sexy ideal in our culture has created a situation where the majority of girls and women don't like their bodies...And body dissatisfaction can lead girls to participate in very unhealthy behaviors to try to control weight." Given this concern as well as the recent release of the report of American Psychological Association Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls,<sup>7</sup> it

became important to examine how frequently children may be seeing these attractive and sexy characters, particularly females, in popular films.

We also wanted to see if other stereotypes dominate motion picture content. In particular, we are interested in the traditionality surrounding males and females. According to one parent,<sup>8</sup> “Though it’s been more than 30 years since feminists first drew attention to the stereotyped gender messages delivered by mainstream television, movies, and books, men and women are still often portrayed in very traditional roles.” Another writer points out that media such as television, commercials, and parenting magazines<sup>9</sup> “still show mom with the babies and kids. Most domicile publications still show women vacuuming, cleaning and cooking.”

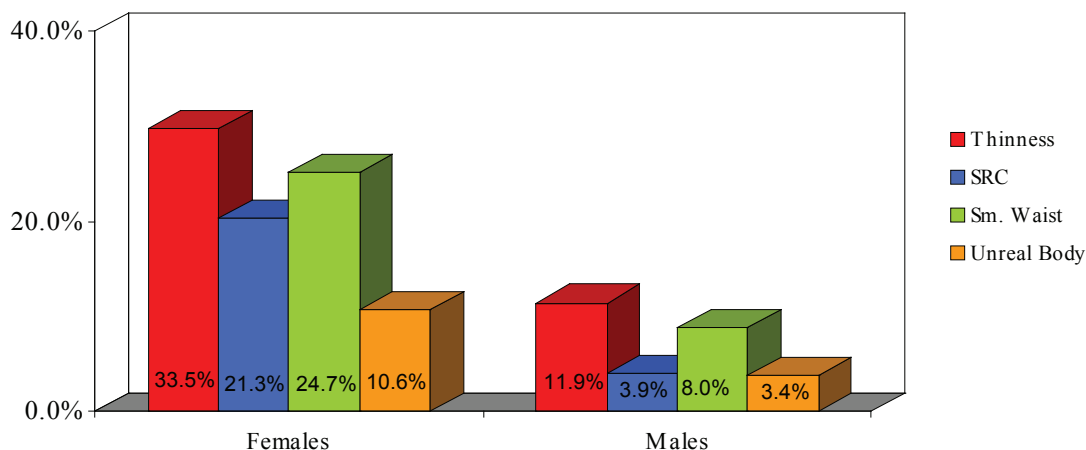
Examining over 4,000 characters across 400 G, PG, PG-13, and R-rated movies, our data reveal that two types of females frequent film: the traditional and the hypersexual. Traditionality was a function of the character’s relational and parental status. Females are more likely than males to be depicted as parents (52.2% vs. 40.4%) and in a committed relationship (59.9% vs. 47.4%) in motion pictures. Interestingly, rating had an influence on these distributions. G and PG females were more likely than G and PG males to be shown as parents. A similar trend is observed for relational status across G, PG, and PG-13 films. No gender differences in parental status or relational status were observed in R rated films, however. Over half of the female characters children see in movie content are depicted in a nurturing and stereotypical manner.

In stark contrast, another significant proportion of the females in film are shown in a hypersexualized fashion. Hypersexuality refers to an overemphasis on attractiveness and sexuality by way of clothing (i.e., alluring attire) and body proportions (i.e. uncharacteristically small waist, hourglass figure, thinness). We examined characters to see if males and females vary in hypersexuality. Our results show that they do (see Figure 1).

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. Alluring apparel was often draped on a female with a distorted thin ideal. Nearly a quarter of the females in film had particularly small waists, leaving little room for a womb or any other internal organs. Yet only 8% of males were featured with such a comparatively misshapen midsection. Rounding out these results, females were nearly three times as likely as males (10.6% vs. 3.4%) to be shown with a thin (and in the case of females, an hourglass-shaped) figure. No differences emerged for chest size (males=14.8%, females=15.2%).

Hypersexuality of Males and Females in Popular Films

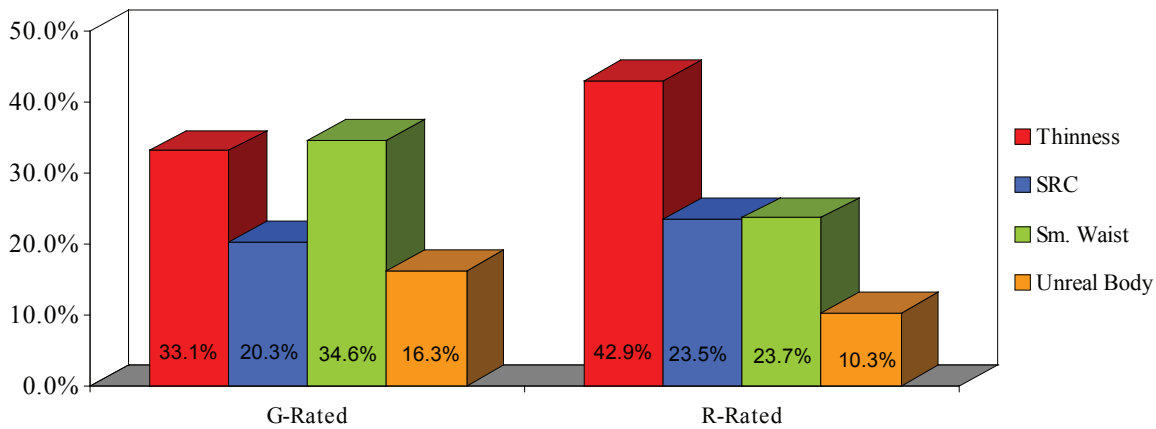
Figure 1



#### *The Hypersexualization of Females Varies by Rating*

Given the above findings, we examined the prevalence of female hypersexualization by rating. Rating had a significant impact on how females are portrayed. A few of the differences were between G- and R-rated films.<sup>10</sup> R-rated females are more likely than G-rated females to be depicted as thin (42.9% vs. 33.1%). G-rated females are more likely than their R-rated counterparts to be shown with a small waist (34.6% vs. 23.7%), a large chest (20.6% vs. 13.8%), and an unrealistic body shape (16.3% vs. 10.3%).

Hypersexuality of Females By Film Rating  
Figure 2



*Animated Females Often are Abnormal in Shape, Sexy in Appearance*

In addition to rating, we also evaluated how style of presentation affects hypersexualization. To this end, we analyzed females presented in live vs. animated action. We then looked for differences on the hypersexuality measures listed above. There are three reasons for this analysis. First, young children are often reared on general audience films. For example, over half of 0- to 6-year olds have at least 20 videos or DVDs in the home<sup>11</sup> and 46% of the children in this age bracket watch one video or DVD on a “typical” day. Thus, some of children’s earliest media memories and favorite characters may come from G-rated motion picture content. Content in videos and DVDs may have a particular influence on children’s social learning about gender because they tend to watch the same movies innumerable times.

Second, since females are less likely than males to appear in G-rated silver screen content, when they do appear, the impact of their portrayal may be stronger (that is, since there are fewer females with which to sympathize or to emulate, those that do appear may find their impact overly weighted). Third, animated females are creative constructions of animators and story artists. As a result, these types of characters may be the easiest to alter and change over time.

Style of presentation affects how females are featured in G-rated films. As shown in Table 1, the format females are presented in affects hypersexualization. Animated females are more likely to be shown in a thin and sexy light than are live action females.

Hypersexuality Indicators by Style of Presentation for G-Rated Film Females  
Table 1

Measure	Animated Characters	Live Action Characters
SRC	23.4% (n=85)	16.8% (n=52)
Small Waist	45.2% (n=152)	22.4% (n=66)
Large Chest	27.7% (n=96)	12.5% (n=38)
Thinness	39.1% (n=136)	26.3% (n=80)
Unrealistic Ideal	24.6% (n=86)	6.6% (n=20)

### Study 3: Qualitative Analysis: An In-Depth Look at 13 Female Leads in G-rated Films

Moving away from a solely quantitative approach, the third study took an in-depth look at how females are presented in G-rated films. In deciding how to approach this qualitative analysis, we had to identify a list of films to evaluate. First, we examined the top-grossing films that featured a female lead. Second, a selection of movies that depicted human or human-like females was desired, given that realistic portrayals seem to have a notable impact on viewers.<sup>12</sup> Third, we questioned whether the qualitative representations of females in G-rated films had changed over time. Our sample includes numerous re-releases of movies, which enabled us to select films distributed between 1937 and 2006.

Fourth, given the popularity of royalty-inspired toys and products,<sup>13</sup> we wanted some of the primary characters to be portrayed as sovereigns. Films about princesses are very profitable. And last but not least, we chose films in which the lead was, at the least, teenaged, as culturally children and pre-teens generally have less decision-making power than do teens and adults. We wanted to clear the path for the female leads to be of an age to make some decisions for themselves.<sup>14</sup>

Based on these criteria, the process yielded a total of 13 films for analysis, 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. Table 2 lists the movies in the qualitative analysis as well as year of release and name of female protagonist. Four key findings are discussed below.

Table 2

Title of Film	Year Released	Year Re-released	Protagonist
<i>Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs</i>	1937	1993	Snow White
<i>The Wizard of Oz</i>	1939	1998	Dorothy
<i>Cinderella</i>	1950	1987	Cinderella
<i>Sleeping Beauty</i>	1959	2002	Aurora
<i>The Little Mermaid</i>	1989	1998	Ariel
<i>Beauty and the Beast</i>	1991	2002	Belle
<i>FernGully</i>	1992		Crysta
<i>Pocahontas</i>	1995	2005	Pocahontas
<i>Anatasia</i>	1997		Anatasia
<i>Mulan</i>	1998		Mulan
<i>The Princess Diaries</i>	2001		Mia
<i>The Princess Diaries II</i>	2004		Mia
<i>Ice Princess</i>	2005		Casey

#### #1 Valued for their Appearance

Almost all of the females in this sample were praised for their appearance or physical beauty. Some of the movies depict the male love interest engaging in affirmation whereas other movies show friends, acquaintances, and even narrators extolling the exteriors of leading females. Social cognitive theory<sup>15</sup> suggests that reinforcements delivered to media characters can function as vicarious incentives to viewers. As such, positive reinforcements can *increase* the likelihood of learning whereas negative reinforcements can *decrease* such effects.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, a child viewer watching these films may vicariously learn that beauty is an essential part of being female.

In and of itself, appearance praise may not be problematic. Appearance praise becomes disconcerting when it is given only to characters that adhere to a narrow ideal of physical attractiveness, which is the formula for many of these females. Over half of the animated female leads in this study are shown with an unrealistic or exaggerated physique. And more than three fourths of live and animated females are de-

pictured in sexually revealing attire. Thus, the beauty ideal reinforced in many of the films is an unattainable standard of sexiness and perfection.

Another aspect which suggests that appearance is valued in these films has to do with social presentations and extreme makeovers. A social presentation refers to putting the protagonist on display for the gaze and evaluation of one or more characters. More than two-thirds of the female protagonists are put on exhibition in these films. The possible motivations behind a social presentation are numerous, such as a royal engagement, nuptials, or a skill-based activity.

Although a few characters in the sample are appraised for their physical abilities, others are evaluated solely for their appearance and demure behavior. If a protagonist is introduced to the audience as less than ideal, then she may need to undergo a metamorphosis prior to her introduction to society. More than a third of the females had an overhaul of their outer shell somewhere in the film. A social presentation, particularly after an extreme makeover, encourages the gaze of other characters and viewers and can reinforce the idea that females are most important in their function as adornments.

## **#2 Often Females' Aspirations are Short Sighted**

We assessed the goals or wishes of the female protagonists across the 13 films. Our analysis showed that G-rated females can have a distinct set of desires. Some long for romantic love. Others wish for family, adventure, or even an attempt to discover who they are or what they want out of life. We can categorize their character cravings in one of three ways: as *daydreamers*; as those that get *derailed* from their initial ambition; or as *daredevils* that risk it all to achieve a particular goal.

*The Daydreamers.* Daydreamers are those characters that possess no particular goal or dream only of romantic love. In films with daydreamers, the female lead is more passive, i.e. unlikely to set a chain of events into motion or take action to seek her goals. Instead, the protagonist may respond to changes in her environment while other characters propel the action. A few females are shown with no explicit aspiration. These females are simply reactive to external forces impinging upon the course of their life.

*The Derailed.* Some leading females express a desire for one thing and are broadsided by romantic love. When this occurs, it can be said that the protagonist is *derailed* from her initial ambition. Characters evidencing this theme may desire adventure or express an urge to explore, yet they fixate their entire intention on romantic involvement with another person. As a result, the derailed females often make unimaginable sacrifices in the name of love.

*The Daredevils.* Protagonists in this category express a goal or make choices that will move them toward their ambition. Unlike the derailed, daredevils may encounter romantic love but are not willing to relinquish their initial pursuits or accept romance as their only prize.

Overall, in the sample, love seems to be in an integral part of female protagonists' aspirations. Love may be an end state of, an interruption to, or an enhancement in the leading female's life.

## **#3 A Longing for One-Dimensional Love**

Almost all of the films in this sample depict a female lead pursuing a romantic relationship. In some of the movies, the females' romance is the primary focus of the plot, whereas in others it is secondary. The films in which it is secondary often show females capable of having a relationship as well as achieving other life goals.

We examined the process of young love, with three general trends emerging across the plotlines. Some of the heroines fall in love at first sight, which is often dramatically accentuated with song and/or dance.<sup>17</sup> The introduction is sometimes followed by little or no cultivation of the courtship. Despite this, the young couple may be shown declaring their undying love, journeying off into the sunset together, or even getting married. It must be noted that this type of love is grounded in a character's physical appearance, thereby reinforcing the attractiveness norm discussed above.

Many of the female heroines' romantic relationships are formed on deceptive foundations. The leading lady or her romantic partner is dishonest by way of outright lying or strategic omission of important information. Remarkably, the duplicitous actions of one character are likely to be forgiven quickly or remain completely unacknowledged by the relational partner.

A third pathway to love is through communication. This relational component may be found when two characters are shown verbally interacting over the duration of the film. Although it may seem obvious that conversation and quality time spent with one's potential life-partner are important, such negotiations are not always illustrated in general audience romances.<sup>18</sup>

Together, young viewers are not presented with a particularly healthy or realistic portrait of romance in the films reviewed here. Young love is often grounded in artificial or deceptive relationships. Nevertheless, two of the films in our study did show young women negotiating trials, with romance playing a nonexistent to minimal role.

#### **#4 Not Damsels in Distress**

A positive finding of the study is that the stereotypical damsel in distress was observed in fewer films than might be expected. Several films do depict male and female characters engaging in reciprocal relational rescues from grave threats.<sup>19</sup> Only one film from our study depicts a female protagonist who saves her love interest but is not shown in a reciprocal rescue.

The female protagonists are sometimes shown engaging in heroic acts to save friends, family members, and society. These acts involve costs that may range from minor inconveniences to major life-course impediments or even death. Several major rescues include: Dorothy saving the scarecrow from burning to death;<sup>20</sup> Ariel rescuing Flounder from being eaten by a shark; Belle sacrificing her freedom for Maurice's release from captivity; Mulan taking her father's place in the draft and becoming a soldier in the Imperial Army; and Crysta destroying Hexxus to save all living creatures in the forest.

Clearly, it seems that the completely helpless damsel in distress is no longer a popular choice for content creators. Instead, some female protagonists are shown in physically active roles with the ability to act heroically. The style of presentation is likely to influence the presence of risk and rescue scenarios. Animated content may depict scenes involving war, magic, or other dangers making them particularly suitable for altruistic behavior.

The purpose of this study was to take an in depth look at female protagonists in G-rated films. Four key themes were identified across the movies. Appearance is heavily focused upon in these films, potentially contributing to negative effects. 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 18<sup>th</sup>, 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.

*Prevalence.* 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,<sup>21</sup> or as narrators. Animated programs in particular are more likely to show males. In live-action formats, however, the landscape is a bit more promising: 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).

TV ratings were other criteria by which children's TV was evaluated. Children's shows can be rated TVY (suitable content for all children) or TVY7 (suitable content for age 7 and above, may contain fantasy violence or elements causing fear). Many programs rated TVG (suitable for all ages, little or no sexual content, violence, or strong language) are also targeted to young audiences. Out of the 1,034 shows in the sample, 48.4% were rated TVY, 34.1% were rated TVY7, and 17.5% were rated TVG.

The results indicated that shows rated TVY or TVY7 are more likely to feature males, while almost half of the single-speaking characters in TVG rated shows are female (44.7%). For TVY, there are 1.64 males to every 1 female that appears in group situations. In TVY7 shows, the ratio is 1.91 males to every 1 female. The ratio of females to males in TVG groups is 1.48 to 1. Only 25 TVG stories portrayed a narrator and the majority were female (72%). This suggests that gender representation indeed varies depending on the target audience. For those shows aimed directly at the youngest audiences, there are still more males on screen. The most equitable portrayals seem to take place in shows rated TVG.

The research also addressed how style of presentation and rating influences the context for gender representation. Not surprisingly, more humans are found in live action shows than animated ones. Live action stories depict more non white males (26.8%) than do animated stories (19.9%). No meaningful difference emerged for females, however. Males and females are less likely to be depicted as parents or relational partners in live as opposed to animated contexts.

For the rating analysis, it was found that TVY7 features the highest proportion of human males; TVG and TVY7 shows had the highest numbers of human male children. Adult females are more likely to be found in shows rated TVY than those rated TVY7 or TVG. TVG featured more non white male and female characters in general, and TVY had more non white female characters than TVY7. TVY-rated males and females have a higher chance of being depicted as parents and in romantic relationships than TVG- or TVY7-rated males and females.

### TV G: More Diverse, More Gender-Balanced

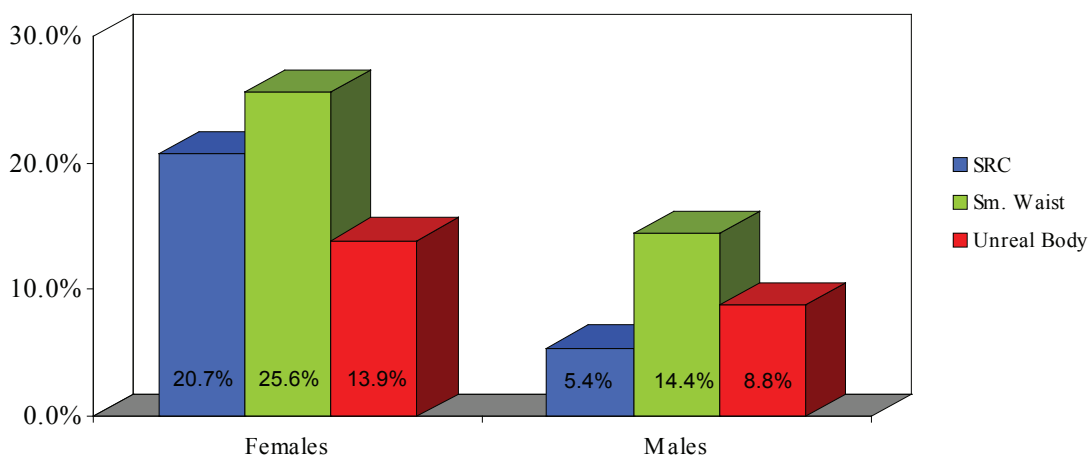
The research suggests that the “healthiest” balance of male and female representation is found in shows rated TVG. These programs present a more balanced treatment of characters by gender and in roles of familial responsibility (e.g., parent, romantic relationship). Further, TVG shows depict the highest proportion of non white, ethnic minority characters. A conclusion can be drawn that in G-rated fare, gender-balanced programming is profitable. An additional extrapolation from the near balance in G-rated television is that there is a high likelihood that both males and females are watching.

*Portrayal.* We also wanted to find out if the format of entertainment (e.g., live action or animated) and rating (e.g., TVY, TVY7, or TVG) affected the presentation of gender roles. In terms of style of presentation, animated males are more likely to be bad and strong and live-action males are more likely to be smart and funny. Live-action females are presented with more humor than those in animation.

In terms of rating, notable differences also emerged across the sample. Males in TVG- and TVY-rated shows are more likely to be depicted as good than are males in TVY7-rated shows. Males in TVY7 contexts are more likely to be strong than are males in TVG or TVY contexts. TVG males are more likely to be featured as smart than TVY males, while TVY7 females are most likely to be the ones with the brains. TVY7 seems to show its share of bad and strong characters independent of gender, perhaps attributed to the quintessential antisocial agents in cartoon type programming. TVG females possess more traditionally feminine attributes than do females of the other ratings. TVG and TVY7 males are more traditionally masculine than are TVY males.

*Appearance.* Similar to our other studies, we examined hypersexualized attributes of males and females. Sample wide, we observed significant deviation in alluring attire and body shape variables. See Figure 3 below. 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.

Hypersexuality of Males and Females in Children's Shows  
Figure 3

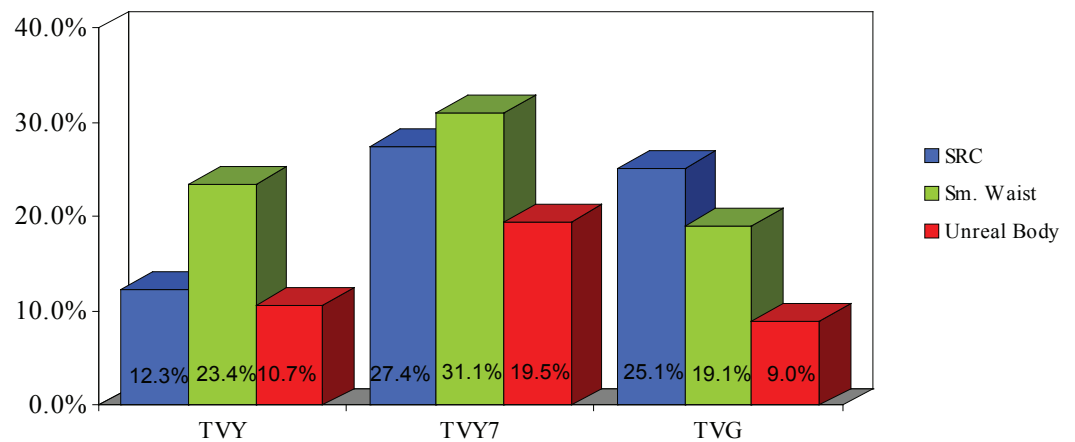




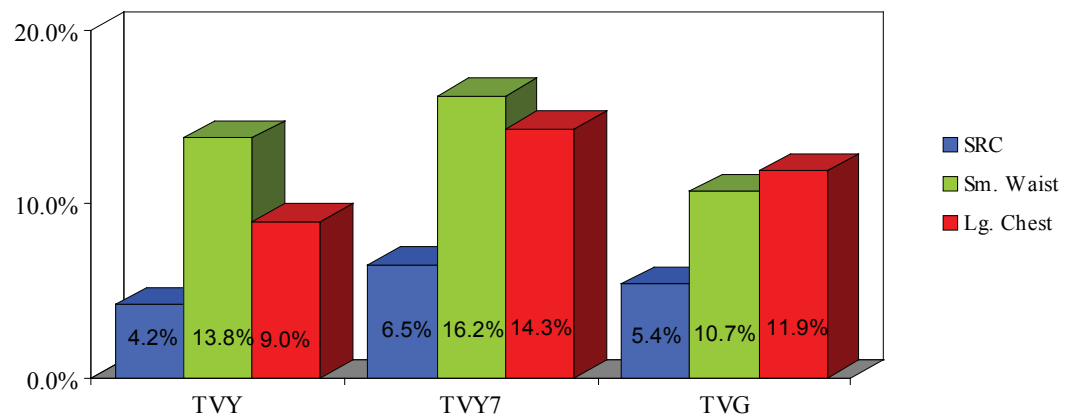
Looking at style of presentation, the format that females appear in affects their level of sexualization. Females in animated contexts are more likely to be shown in sexually revealing attire than are females in live action contexts (24.5% vs. 17.4%). Females in animated stories are more likely to have 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. Males are also assessed for style of presentation differences. No differences emerged for sexually revealing clothing. However, 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%). Clearly, animation appears to favor highly sexualized female characters with unrealistic body ideals. For males, animation seems to heighten their muscularity.

Rating also affects hypersexuality norms. The next two figures portray how a few hypersexuality measures differ by rating. As shown in Figure 4, the most problematic depiction of females occurs in TVY7.

Hypersexuality of Females in Children's Shows by Rating  
Figure 4



Hypersexuality of Males in Children's Shows by Rating  
Figure 5



We also examined the distribution of hypersexuality variables for males. No differences emerged for sexually revealing clothing or unrealistic body shape. However, chest size and waist size varied by rating.

### Conclusion

Although differing in samples and approach, the results from these four studies clearly point out that gender inequality is prevalent in both film and television aimed at children. The results from these investigations

reveal that much work is needed to be done to achieve gender parity and improved portrayal in film and in children's television. Despite the Civil Rights Movement in the 1950/60s and the rise of second wave Feminism in the 1970s, on screen gender equality still does not exist.

### Recommendations for Entertainment Executives and Creators:

1. Include more females as main characters, secondary characters, in crowds, and as narrators.
2. Provide female characters with aspirations beyond romance.
3. Develop the inner character of female characters, too.

### Recommendations for Scholars

*Other key areas of study*

1. The reasons why domestically-released G-rated television programs are far more gender-balanced than domestically-released G-Rated films.
2. Effects of gender-specific marketing on domestic male or female audience prevalence.
3. Key aspects of domestic and international market success of US-conceptualized G-rated films that are more gender-balanced and feature complex female characters.
4. Domestic and international product marketing for US-conceptualized G-rated television and G-rated films.
5. Effects of key international marketing demands on domestic G-rated film releases as well as domestic television programming aimed at children.
6. Content patterns and effects on children associated with stereotypical gender portrayals, both domestically and internationally.
7. Correlation between hiring patterns and on-screen gender balance.
8. Prevalence of males and females in domestic media tracked longitudinally over time.
9. Key aspects of financially successful (top box office) gender-balanced PG-rated films
10. The role of exposure to hypersexual portrayals on girls and boys' short- and long-term perceptions and beliefs about beauty, thinness, and physical attraction, domestically and internationally.
11. Gender inclusion strategies in other multi-national/global industries for possible application to the entertainment industry.

### Recommendations for Parents & Teachers

1. Co-view media content with children.
2. Spend time with children as they consume media content.
3. Critically engage and discuss what is present and absent in modern media-based stories.
4. Ask children who is missing in the story and whether the depiction looks like their family, social, or school environment.

### For your review. gender imbalance in other key positions of power and influence:

The National Association of Corporate Directors reports women occupy only 16.2 percent of Fortune 100 board seats.

From, Heidrick & Struggles article, 2006.

According to Govspot.com, in the 107th Congress, there are 74 women members: 61 women in the House out of 435 members (14%) and 13 in the Senate (26%).

Here are **The Animation Guild's** most recent statistics, in 2006.

Percentage of Women, 399 out of 2308, or 17.3% in these capacities:

Producers, 8%; Directors 14.9%; Writers 10.8%; Art Directors, 11.1%; Visual Development, 13.1%; Story Art, 13.8%; Layout, 17.8%; Model Designers, 21.4%; Background 25.6%; 2D Animation 21.3%; 3D Animators and Modellers, 13.0%; Compositors, 29.2%; Tech directors, 13.8%; Checkers, etc. 34.0%.

According to **WGA**, west's report, *Catching Up with a Changing America*:

In 2004, the total number of employed film writers was 1770. 18%, or 318, were women. The total number of TV writers for the same year was 3015. 27% of these, or 822, were women.

## Endnotes

1. Lauzen, M. M., & Dozier, D. M. (1999). The role of women on screen and behind the scenes in the television and film industries: Review and a program of research. *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, 23(4), 355-373.
2. The assessment of group characters proved to be an extremely difficult task in study 1. Coders had to determine that two or more characters were 1) speaking simultaneously or 2) looked similar (i.e., the male guards in *Aladdin*) but were overlapping in speech such that distinct characters could not be identified. For example, the opening scene of *Beauty and the Beast* features dozens of characters crisscrossing in and out of frame saying only one or two words. Once coders identified that a group met the definition, they were then expected to estimate using values from a scaled item (e.g., 5-10, 11-25, etc.) the highest number of males, females, and/or characters with an unknown gender in each group.

Given this complexity, our data set initially revealed that the coders were using values that were not valid when assessing mixed gendered groups (e.g., collectives with both males, females, and/or those with unidentifiable gender) and groups with only characters whose gender was not identifiable. Because of this, we only reported the results of groups with same-sex characters. A later reanalysis of reliability judgments of group size revealed that coders had difficulty with estimating the number of males (reliability coefficient over .38) and females (reliability coefficient over .80) in same sex and mixed-gendered groups.

The high reliability for females was largely a function of coders accurately assessing that there were no women or girls in three out of four reliability tests involving same sex groups. Some of the low reliability for estimating males in same sex groups can be attributed to 1) true differences in estimating size or 2) simply entering the wrong numeric value (i.e., entering a "5" instead of a "10" to represent the same level "5-10 characters") from a specified interval level in excel. When correcting for the later source of error, reliability for same sex groups reaches a more acceptable level. Based on this and the small number of decisions used to calculate reliability for estimating group size (n=7 total groups, across four tests), the data presented in the text on same-sex groups are to be interpreted with caution. Clearly, the coding of groups is a fertile ground for future researchers interested in content analytic studies investigating gender balance in motion pictures.

3. Two large groups of students evaluated the film content at the University of Southern California during the 2006/07 academic year. Students were taught to unitize characters as well as apply the conceptual and operational definitions of the variables to film content. A series of diagnostics were undertaken to ensure reliability in the coders' unitizing and variable-level judgments. Post training, these tests revealed consistency in unitizing characters and assigning levels (above .70%) across all the variables. Thus, the consistency of the coders' judgments across all of the measures in the scheme was acceptable.

Additionally, the G, PG, and PG-13 study was commissioned as a result of funds raised by Geena Davis. The R-rated study was funded by the Annenberg School for Communication.

4. Significance is defined in two ways. First, the statistical test must be significant at the  $p < .05$  level. Second, the percentages between any two or more categories must differ by at least 5%. Trivial was defined as a statistically significant finding that demonstrated less than a five percent difference between percentages.
5. MacPherson, K. (2005, ¶7-10). Is childhood becoming oversexed? Retrieved March 8, 2007 from <http://www.post-gazette.com/pg/05128/500945.stm>
6. Hellmich, N. (2006, ¶9). Do thin models warp girls' body image? Retrieved March 8, 2007 from [http://www.usatoday.com/news/health/2006-09-25-thin-models\\_x.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/health/2006-09-25-thin-models_x.htm)
7. Report of the APA Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls. (2007). Washington DC: Author.
8. Mithers, C. L. (2001, ¶18). Sugar & spice. *Parenting*, 15, 7, 90-95.
9. Cohen, E. (2006, June 18, ¶23). Daddy's home: And as a stay-at-home father, he's been there all day. *Press & Sun-Bulletin*, p. Lifestyle.
10. Some notable deviation occurred with the other ratings as well: Looking at females, the percentages are as follows: sexually revealing clothing (PG=15.6%, PG-13=24.5%), chest size (PG=13.9%, PG-13=14.3%), waist size (PG=20.7%, PG-13=22.8%), body realism (PG=6.3%, PG-13=11.1%), and thinness (PG=27.5%, PG-13=29.5%).

11. Kaiser Family Foundation. (2003). *Zero to six: Electronic media in the lives of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers*. Menlo Park, CA: Author.
12. Atkin, C. (1983). Effects of realistic TV violence vs. fictional violence on aggression. *Journalism Quarterly*, 60, 615-621. Thomas, M.H., & Tell, P.M. (1974). Effects of viewing real versus fantasy violence upon interpersonal aggression. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 8, 153-160.
13. Strauss, G. (2004). Princesses rule the hearts of little girls. *USA Today*. Retrieved November 11, 2005, from [http://www.usatoday.com/life/lifestyle/2004-03-02-princess\\_x.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/life/lifestyle/2004-03-02-princess_x.htm); Disney Consumer Products. (n.d.). Disney princess. Retrieved December 15th, 2007, from [https://licensing.disney.com/Home/display.jsp?contentId=dcp\\_home\\_ourfranchises\\_disney\\_princess&forPrint=false&language=en&preview=false&region=0](https://licensing.disney.com/Home/display.jsp?contentId=dcp_home_ourfranchises_disney_princess&forPrint=false&language=en&preview=false&region=0)
14. Additionally, films with a “buddy plot” or movies depicting a leading lady as a villain were not included in the qualitative analysis.
15. Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
16. Bandura, A. (1965). Influence of models’ reinforcement contingencies on the acquisition of imitative responses. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 1, 589-595.
17. To illustrate, Snow White longs for love at first sight when she sings “Someday my prince will come.” At that moment, Prince Charming arrives. Though she is serenaded by the young man, Snow White and the Prince never converse. Snow White later informs the dwarves that it was easy to fall in love with the prince because he was very charming. In *Cinderella* and *Sleeping Beauty*, each heroine has a brief encounter with the man of her dreams which is hastily characterized as love in song or dialogue with other characters. Finally, Ariel catches a glimpse of Prince Eric from the side of his ship, rescues him from drowning, and sacrifices her entire life course to be “part of his world.” Ariel is silent during her three day courtship with Eric; the two marry and sail off into the sunset.
18. Dimitri and Anastasia have an antagonistic relationship, but both parties feel free to express their true feelings to one another. In *Princess Diaries II*, Mia is shown bickering and competing with Nicholas in their clash for the crown. Their attraction grows along the course of the film. In *Ice Princess*, Casey and Teddy’s relationship develops slowly across the entire context of the plot. At first, the two are acquaintances and become friends, and finally share their first kiss after Casey’s skating competition.
19. It could be argued that reciprocal rescues are not evidenced in *FernGully* due to the nature of the hazardous circumstances in the plot. Multiple characters save Crysta from danger in *FernGully*, including Zak. Although it is true that Crysta saves Zak, she rescues multiple characters simultaneously. Crysta leads the charge to destroy Hexxus and saves all living creatures in the forest.
20. As Dorothy throws a bucket of water on the scarecrow, she also soaks the wicked witch and causes her demise. This action inadvertently frees all from the witch’s oppressive dominion.
21. Groups, in the TV study, included both mixed and same sex collectives.

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