ETCHED INTO HISTORY: ANALYSIS OF MALE AND FEMALE PORTRAYALS IN AMERICAN FILMS BETWEEN 1950-2012

A Thesis by

Hulda Bocchino

Bachelor of Arts, University of California-Santa Barbara, 2009

Submitted to the Department of Communication
and the faculty of the Graduate School of
Wichita State University
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

May 2014

ETCHED INTO HISTORY: ANALYSIS OF MALE AND FEMALE PORTRAYALS IN FILMS BETWEEN 1950-2012

The following faculty members have examined the final copy of this thesis for form and content, and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in Communication.

Patricia Dooley, Committee Chair

Lisa Parcell, Committee Member

Glyn Rimmington, Committee Member

DEDICATION

Special thanks to my parents and my brother without whose help I would not be where I am today. I would also like to thank my closest friends for their constant support and encouragement.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my advisor and committee chair, Patricia Dooley, for her support and encouragement during my transition to, and time at, Wichita State University. I would also like to thank my committee members, Lisa Parcell and Glyn Rimmington, for their support and suggestions. The three of you have been instrumental in not just completing my thesis but also in my general academic success at Wichita State University and my desire to continue with my academic studies. A very special thanks also goes out to my father, Stefán, for always providing me with a second pair of eyes in looking over every paper I have ever written during my time as both an undergraduate and graduate student.

ABSTRACT

As the medium of film has become ubiquitous, it has become an influential vehicle for the transmission of gender-related values. Because gender portrayals in popular entertainment film play a role in the formation of social identity, and can affect human behavior, this thesis studies a group of popular American entertainment film's portrayals of their male and female characters. The method used to study the films, which were selected from the years 1950-2012, utilizes qualitative content analysis. The findings suggest that the female characters within the films studied broke old gender stereotypes more consistently than did their male characters. That said, there was some progress in terms of how some of the later films portrayed their primary male characters.

FOREWORD

Many studies have been made on the portrayals of men and women in the media. Particular emphasis has been on female portrayals, as the assumption appears to be that the female gender is disadvantaged, comparatively. I do not disagree with that assertion. The vast majority of cultures around the world have a history of being patriarchal. Generally speaking, when those in power, regardless of who they are, are threatened with losing that power, they will utilize said power to subjugate those who are trying to gain more of it.

As can be seen through my thesis research, woman-in-the-home is the most salient portrayal of women through the 19th century and into the 20th century. Even today, when the word equality is said to have been achieved, or close to it, a woman who does not conform to the happy homemaker model is regarded with suspicion. It appears to me that the only equality that has been achieved is that in some places women are allowed to be successful outside of the home so long as they are successful inside of the home. Love and family still trump professional success and are considered a valid goal, often at the expense of any other dreams or goals held previously.

This assertion is based on the culture within America. I am not American though. I am born and raised in Iceland, where the idea of equality is considerably more real than anything that I have observed in America, in my experience. However, after being in America for 14 years, I feel qualified to see through the American prism of gender, though I do not pretend that it is not influenced by my European background. In fact, it is probably precisely due to my European background that I find it so peculiar that people seem to acquiesce so easily to the idea that things are just as they are and have always been without any need for a change when it comes to gender.

As a female, I am certainly interested in studying female portrayals but I do not believe that males are free of stereotypes and expectations that are presented, and enforced, through mediums such as film, as women are. In fact, to get a more realistic look at gender portrayals, I feel that one must look at the interplay of both genders at the same time instead of one or the other and that is precisely what I will be doing here.

To presume that one gender is unfairly subjugated is tantamount to also presuming that the other gender is free and clear to be true to who they are. The truth is that within each gender there exists a myriad of individual identities that manifest in diverse interests and belief systems, among other things. Film, unfortunately, seems to provide the audience with a unilateral look at a handful of traits that cannot even begin to equal the complexity of a human being of either gender.

It is my hope that this thesis will lay the groundwork for a deeper look into the gender portrayals present in popular movies and to see what the past 60 years have shown. Have gender portrayals really evolved, remained stagnant, or has there at any point been a reversal back to traditional roles after a period of independence during these decades? It is important to know where gender portrayals in popular movies have been in order to even proffer a suggestion as to what can be done to better represent the many individuals that exist in society through the popular medium of film.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS (continued)

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Because of the ubiquity of the American entertainment film industry, movies are often considered powerful cultivators of social identity and behavior. According to one group of scholars, "Extensive media exposure leads audience members to adopt media reality as their own, and these altered conceptions of reality can in turn influence behavior" (Rudy, Popova, & Linz, 2010, p. 708). Thus, it can be argued that studying a film's gender-related portrayals of its most prominent female and male characters can help us understand how gender stereotypes are formed, maintained, and broken. In light of such arguments, this thesis studies uses qualitative analysis to study the portrayals of the primary female and male characters within a group of the most successful films from 1950 to 2012.

This chapter provides a brief history of American film's development into one of the country's most influential mediums; a review of literature on film's relationships to the formation of personal identity and stereotypes; and a description, as gleaned from research on gender, of how film typically portrays men and women. Only when film is studied with an eye toward understanding how they can both create and break gender-based stereotypes will we be able to understand the power that film holds in transmitting gender norms to society as a whole.

1.1 A Condensed History of the American Entertainment Film Industry

Filmmaking has been around for more than a century. It is a medium that has been valued enough that it has survived the inevitable social and economic changes that accompany the passing of a century, including two world wars and economic depressions. Before discussing the film's potential effects on gender, this time capsule of the American film industry provides a

historical context that will make the thesis's research findings more comprehensible. The following paragraphs are based on the scholarship of American film historian Robert Sklar (Movie-Made America: A Cultural History of American Movies, 1994).

From its earliest peep shows and nickelodeon theaters of the early years of the 20th century, the film industry grew in popularity as it transitioned from silent films into the talkies of the 1930s. Films were mostly black and white up to the 1930s, when color films were first produced. Production quality was shoddy by today's standards, but it was a time of innovation.

The 1930s and the 1940s are called the Golden Age of Hollywood. World War II drastically reduced theater attendance but after the war ended, together with advanced filmmaking technology, there was an increase in film attendance. One can also ascertain that the content of films adapted in line with the social context of various periods. In the Depression era of the 1930s, the topic was escapism. In the war-ravaged 1940s, patriotism was a common theme. By the 1950s, traditional had become boring and rebellion and youth-targeted movies were in. Epics, musicals, and westerns also grew in popularity.

The 1960s-1970s saw social upheaval and a battle with television dominance as the preferred medium of entertainment. Financial difficulties carried over and the old studio control gave way to independent, and more experimental, filmmakers. As a counter-culture movement grew, filmmakers took risks as they made films that explored topics related to free love, civil rights, rock and roll, and drugs.

The 1970s also saw the beginning of the concept of the blockbuster movie. This carried over into the 1980s, as the drive to reach bigger and bigger audiences shaped the American film into an ever-more formulaic medium. Technology continued to improve, including the use of CGI, or computer generated images. By the 1990s, production costs had soared and expensive

stars had become the norm in a blockbuster. Computer generated imagery and sequels were the name of the game. Mainstream films had become the focus of movie studios, since their owners' ultimate goal was to make big profits. To do this, they tended to create films that appealed to the broadest segments of the population. By the 2000s, advances in technology enabled filmmakers to make epic films on a scale never before seen. Franchises began to grow as they represented safety for the studios. Fantasy was in high demand.

Today, American film is a billion-dollar industry that caters to what people want to see and are willing to accept. Along with parents and peers, popular media has become a powerful force in society (Signorielli & Kahlenberg, 2001). Filmmakers realize they can no longer rely solely on star names or a franchise attachment to achieve success. While Hollywood has always changed with the times, innovation in big budget films is not valued unless they are proven to be capable of making a profit. As long as audiences continue to buy tickets, Hollywood will not be motivated to change when it comes to using stock stereotypes.

1.2 American Film, Social Identity and Gender

A key element in any film is its characters (Brooks, 2011). Not only do they help move the plot forward through the creation of momentum and tension but audience members who identify and empathize with film characters can play a role in the generation of box office buzz. Blockbuster films often rely on external stimuli, such as explosions and car chases, to attract audiences. However, even the most explosive, most expensive film cannot engage an audience if their characters fail to move the story forward. Scholars have established that the gender, race, age, physical characteristics, and/or the life experiences of film characters affect how audience members react to movies (Hoffner & Buchanan, 2005), and when it comes to young female film characters, physical attractiveness is of paramount importance (Furia & Biebly, 2009).

Social identity scholars posit that mass media, including film, contribute to audience members' formations of "self." One's identity can be defined as a person's set of human characteristics, which are often shared by members of particular social groups. The idea of identity in society is attributed to George Herbert Mead's symbolic interaction theory, which has been further refined by other theorists such as Sheldon Stryker (2008). Stryker is most closely identified with personal identity, i.e., that which makes every person unique. He writes about how we perform the roles assigned to us by society, and about how we often make snap judgments about others. He argues that such judgments are based on internal schema that shape individual's experiences. As we make such judgments about the people we come into contact with, we are able to impose order on the chaos in life, and this gives us the illusion of control.

One of the ways we categorize people is to observe them in relation to gender (West and Zimmerman, pg. 122). A person's gender is different from their biological sex, and pertains to the ways in which we speak, act, dress, and engage with others. Gender is learned rather than something we are born with, and what is considered appropriate in terms of gender is socially and culturally constructed. We begin to learn what is and isn't acceptable according to society's gender-related norms in early childhood. And even before giving birth, parents will choose clothing, toys, and even wall colors based on gender. Pink is for girls, blue is for boys.

Albert Bandura's social learning theory (1971) has also been influential in guiding prior research in relation to film and their gendered portrayals of characters. The key component is the idea of modeling. People learn from observing a person, from verbal instructions, or by symbolic or vicarious experience, which would include fictional characters in movies. The first step is attention, or the actual observation and learning of the behavior. Second, a person must remember what was observed, or retain the behavior. Third, a person must then choose to

reproduce the previously observed behavior. The final component is motivation, which is whether or not the action will be beneficial or not to the actor.

People are able to anticipate possible consequences, positive and negative, of planned actions through previous experience and observation. According to Bandura, "Behavior is extensively controlled by its consequences" (1971, pg. 20). The ability to anticipate and make decisions beforehand is enabled by our constant use of forethought. For example, people will decide what to wear not based on the weather but rather based on the anticipated activity of the day coupled with anticipated social interactions.

Social learning theory also emphasizes the idea of vicarious reinforcement (Bandura, 1965). That is, people can observe behavior and the subsequent reward or punishment for it without risking themselves in a real-life social situation. Behavior changes come out of our observations of others, and can be extrapolated on a larger scale. For example, if a person is repeatedly inundated with images of men cheating without losing their dutiful wives or girlfriends, this is a vicarious learning example that might be modeled. On a grand scale, this allows and excuses such male behavior while conditioning the female that this is just the "way it is." Social learning theory is particularly pertinent when it comes to this study of film and gender portrayals through the decades, since if gender stereotypes are never broken by film characters, heavy consumers of film, particularly young people, will not be challenged in ways that will help them question the boundaries of contemporary life's predominant gender roles.

Film attendance is a favorite pastime of many, and even young children watch films with relative frequency. Young viewers are more likely to accept what is seen at face value. This means that gender portrayal, as it is presented in the context of the film, is taken as fact (Robinson, Callister, Magoffin, and Moore, 2007). Behavior of film characters admired by

young people is mimicked because of such character's attractiveness, and as a way to test societal boundaries. If parents or others do not put limits in their children, such modeling behavior becomes normal.

1.3 Gender Portrayals and Stereotypes in American Film

Film characters portrayed in gendered ways often maintain the power of unrealistic and uncomplimentary stereotypes. Stereotypes are oversimplified yet widely accepted thoughts or beliefs about people both as individuals and as members of groups. Sexual and racial stereotypes are commonplace, for example, as well as those that relate to sub-groups of populations, such as jocks, Goths, and geeks. Thought it has been the case for a long time today's cultural conventions still earmark blue for boys and pink for girls. Toy cars are for boys, and dolls are for girls. However, stereotypes concerning what is considered appropriate for girls and boys change over time. According to one source, "Stereotypes are living organisms, subject to laws of cultural evolution" and "the most prolific progenitor of stereotypes today is the media: movies, TV, music, newspapers, and magazines" (Guerilla Girls, 2003, pg. 8). Thus, films provide a plethora of information on particularly salient character portrayals and how they affect stereotypes.

Exposure to film begins in childhood. Constant reinforcement of a prescribed way of behaving normalizes what objectively can be recognized as gender disparity. Failure to recognize gender disparities results in people believing that nothing needs to change; therefore nothing does change (Smith & Choueiti, 2010). Common female portrayals in film and other media that reinforce gender stereotypes include the following: stay-at-home women whose primary role is mother and caregiver; women who are physically weaker than their male counterparts; and women who are damsels in distress and/or flirts who distract men from their

roles. Ultimately, female film characters are rarely in charge because they are not considered capable or strong enough to handle much responsibility, and if they are put in charge, they are typically portrayed in ways that emasculate their male film counterparts. Men are, of course, also subject to stereotypical portrayals. Men love outdoor activities, can fix anything, love working on cars, not domestic, lazy, always in control, capable of high-level and high stress jobs, and ultimately, they are seen as capable of handling responsibility far beyond the reach of women (Brewer, unknown).

These gender portrayals emphasize women film characters as less valuable and able than their male counterparts (Smith & Choueiti, 2010). Constant exposure to such messages normalizes expectations, sometimes forcefully so. There is empirical evidence that children learn from observation and observation creates schemas that influence their future behavior. In fact, by around four years of age, children are aware enough of social behavior to employ these schemas (Frieze, Parsons, Johnson, Ruble, & Zellman, 1978). Gender portrayals have important implications when it comes to the kind of information that is being transmitted to society as a whole through the medium of film. When the audience sees the treatment of women, or men, in films in relation to their role, regardless of what it specifically may be, it legitimizes that treatment. Legitimizing actions through films can have a detrimental effect on the societal fabric because it encourages the acceptance of those actions (Kirsh, 2010). Even small actions count, and the possibility of breaking the stereotypes presented are lowered if the general population seems to support the stereotype in question.

Today's American film studios, because of their need to make a profit, pander to male audiences, acting on the assumption that men are active participants in activities outside the home, while women are passive (Keegan, 2013). In reality, women make up half of all filmgoers.

And in the 18-24-year old age bracket, women outnumber male movie audience members 4.2 million to 3.3 million (Smith, Granados, Choueiti, Erickson, & Noyes, 2010).

The erroneous, yet entrenched, perception that movies should cater to male audiences is prevalent because the big studios are unwilling to break away from their tried and true models. While this thesis does not address the political economy of American filmmaking, it's worth noting that as long as audiences continue to accept subpar gender portrayals in movies, the studios will continue to make them.

1.4 Female Portrayals

Only by understanding what other scholars have found in their research on the gendered portrayals of film characters is it possible to design a study that complements previous work. To begin, scholars have published extensively on female gender portrayals in film. In fact, female portrayals have been studied more extensively than male portrayals. Ironically, the role of women in a variety of media has been extensively studied, even though women as a group are still under-represented in the media (Collins, 2011). In many films, the female character is an afterthought, placed to attract the female audience and to give the hero a reason for his quest or domestic partner (Mendelson, 2013). According to Dermietzel, "These caricatured heroines are merely a reflection of our rapid decline into an image-obsessed culture" (2013, paragraph 4). A study of the top 100 movies in 2012 revealed that women are scantily clad 31.6% of the time, an increase over the past five years, and that only "28.4% of speaking characters were female," which is a decrease from the past three years (Keegan, 2013, paragraph 3). Since 1950, males have outnumbered female characters in film at a rate of two to one (Klos, 2012).

The following subsections break the scholarly literature on how films portray females into sections related to career, sex, and love; archetypical portrayals of female characters; and how certain film genres portray women.

1.4.1 Social Roles: Career or Not?

A brief introduction to the history of American women provides a context for understanding how the film industry has characterized its female characters. Until the mid-20th century, U.S. women were largely confined to the roles of wife and mother. World War II called for an unprecedented move of women from the domestic sphere and into the workplace, with the understanding that once the war was over, women would return home (Frieze, Parsons, Johnson, Ruble, & Zellman, 1978). However, though many did return home, a fundamental shift had begun. Through the next couple of decades, women were still focused on the home and family, but more were starting to work part-time. As society changed in the 1960s and the 1970s, women began to step outside of the home and assert their independence (Levy, 1991). However, as freedom increased, expectations for women were still to become wives and mothers. From the 1990s on many have sought to "do it all." This is termed as the super-women, who can be viewed as the result of mixed gender messaging as some aspects of traditional stereotypes are broken (Taylor & Setters, 2011).

One of the most salient portrayals of women in film is one that places the woman in the home (Royo-Vela, Aldas-Manzano, Küster, & Vila, 2008). This traditional view has been present in movies from the 1940-1950s and onward (Hoover, 2010). This portrayal persists even today when many women work outside of the home. Despite this, women are more likely than men to be seen in film playing traditional roles (Collins, 2011). The most compelling and realistic female characters often came from female directors, but they are rare in the Oscars

(Smith, Choueiti, Granados, & Erickson, 2008). Hollywood has a tendency to exaggerate, so instead of glamorizing domestic life, for example, it is shown as full of conflict and of loneliness (Powers, Rothman, & Rothman, 1993). However, it is not about truth or true representation; it is simply a case of new myths replacing old myths (Powers, Rothman, & Rothman, 1993). Often this manifests in the emphasis on a woman's life as a wife and as a mother, doing tasks such as shopping or cooking. Dermietzel wrote, "On screen, women are far more likely to be depicted as a 'housewife' over anything else. Where men are usually portrayed as being strong, women are normally shown as being weak and needy" (2013, paragraph 3). Even if the woman has a career, that career takes a backseat to taking care of the family and to romantic aspirations If a career is emphasized in a good way, it is often because the career itself involves playing on the caring nature of women, such as portraying the woman as a nurse. Even if portrayed as part of a predominantly male profession, such as law enforcement, such female characters often are shown comforting victims, a behavior male law enforcement officer characters rarely engage in. This seems to be an effort in counterbalancing the tough profession, and the gritty world in which it resides with the more gentile goodness of femininity (Lauzen, Dozier, & Horan, 2008).

On the other end of the spectrum is the woman who has made it outside of the home, often in a male-dominated career that goes against the accepted gendered stereotype (Hammer, 2010). Such female film characters are most often portrayed as lacking in femininity. As such, they aren't typically set up as viable love interests for their film's primary male characters. The idea here is that a woman cannot both retain her femininity and be successful in a demanding career. In addition, female film characters that choose career over family are often played up as not living up to society's expectations of what it means to be a woman (Signorielli & Kahlenberg, 2001).

Strong women are still considered a novelty, and successful women must be explained away via stereotypes. Women film characters are generally case as either ice queens or fragile flowers. A man can be a bachelor for his entire life without social repercussions; a woman who is unmarried is looked upon as an anomaly and is referred to as a spinster or old maid, both of which have acquired derogatory connotations in modern times (Goudreau, 2011). Merit is the way men rise to the top, whereas successful women are often dismissed as not having earned their positions (Goudreau, 2011). Ultimately, men and women who conform to social norms are rewarded, and, fundamentally, this means men are portrayed as aggressive go-getters, and women as passive cheerleaders (Haeberle, 1983). Even though there is evidence in contemporary film of a decrease in emphasis on marriage and children for female characters, they are still often shown in lesser roles and not as the masters of their own fates (Elasmar, Hasegawa, & Brain, 1999).

1.4.2 Love and Sex

Female film characters are typically cast as individuals whose primary purpose is to take care of the sexual and emotional needs of their male counterparts (Bleakley, Jamieson, & Romer, 2012). At the same time, female characters must be physically attractive and dress in ways that please men (Cohen, 2010; Smith, McIntosh, & Bazzini, 1999).

Indeed, there is great power in beauty. Attractive people are admired and desired, and they are viewed as intelligent. Most female character's futures depend on a film's leading man (Hedley, 2002). That does not mean that love is, or should be, trivialized, but that the casting of female film characters in such ways can create a biased view on what the role of a woman is in life (Vazques, 2002).

If a female character she is too strong, she risks losing the feminine quality that attracts men to her. When women characters are treated as objects, they become, in essence, subservient to most men. Some have argued that the continued prevalence of women as objects in the media, both print and otherwise, is part of a broader societal backlash against the growth of female independence as a result of the women's movement (Stankiewicz & Rosselli, 2008).

In line with society's norms and values, female film characters are punished for venturing outside of what the mainstream considers sexually acceptable behavior for women Gilpatric, 2010). As a result, even though sex is a natural part of life, female characters portrayed as sexually active are subject to disapproval. According to Welsh, "Sexually assertive women are still evaluated negatively for violating gender norms" (2010, p. 771). This is true in broader society as well, where sexually active women are often considered sluts.

1.4.3 Archetypical Stereotypes in Film

Many films base their female and male characters on over-simplified and unrealistic character archetypes that are so successful they induce filmmakers to replicate them. Mlawski (2010) created a flowchart of various female film archetypes that helps explain how Hollywood treats its female lead characters. Examples include the *femme fatale*, who uses sex as a weapon or a means to get her way; the *mean girl*, who is frequently found as the antagonist in romantic comedies; the *token female*, whose role is to balance the male protagonists out; the *voice of reason*, who is often cast as nerdy; the *bossy girl*, or the one armed with sarcasm; and *the mother*, whose primary job is to defend and help her kids. Other archetypes that reinforce stereotypes include the *ditz*, the *gossip*, the *slut*, the *damsel in distress*, the *ugly duckling*, the *crazy career woman*, the *long-suffering wife*, and the *prude*, among others.

The fact is, that American filmmakers mistakenly think that women don't go to the movies as often as men, and that when women do go to the movies, their boyfriends or husbands decide what to see (Smith, Granados, Choueiti, Erickson, & Noyes, 2010). As a result, female archetypes appeal primarily to the average male moviegoer, and thus reinforce the values inherent in such portrayals (Avni, 2005).

Archetypical female film characters do not flatter real women: Female characters who are virgins lacks confidence; earth mothers worship their husbands and adore their children beyond everything else; women typically need to be rescued; career women are bitches who play games; and film sluts are never respected. Only rarely does film portray their female characters as multifaceted realistic women (Perry, 2013). And for a film's male character to be considered successful, he has often been portrayed as a hero who rescues women in distress.

1.4.4 Children's Films

Film characters geared toward children and adolescents have been studied in order to understand how they portray gender (Smith, et al., 2010; England, Descartes, & Collier-Meek, 2011; Behm-Morawitz & Mastro, 2008). Timeless stories like Cinderella and Sleeping Beauty are criticized for teaching children how to behave in stereotypical ways (Kolbenschlag, 1990). In fact, children as young as five years old have demonstrated that after watching a stereotype-heavy program, they score higher in sex-role stereotyping than do children who watch programs without stereotypes (Davidson, Yasuna, & Tower, 1979).

In a nutshell, young moviegoers who see women consistently portrayed as meek and dependent along with the message that men are always strong and motivated are being subjected to unrealistic and unfair gender stereotypes (Barner, 1999).

1.4.5 Family Films

Disney has become synonymous with family entertainment, yet it is difficult to find a true Disney heroine. Of all the Disney princesses, perhaps the most unusual is Pocahontas, who decides against romance for the sake of taking care of her village. However, Pocahontas gives up one female stereotype for another when she put others needs above her own (Dundes, 2001).

In family films, male characters outnumber female characters 3 to 1, and women are four times more likely to serve as eye candy than men (Smith & Choueiti, 2010). As a result, two categories of women predominate in family film: namely the *sex pot* (young/sexualized) and the *sex not* (wife/mother) (Smith, Choueiti, Prescott, & Pieper, 2010). These categories reinforce old ideals while teaching young girls that their value lays in their appearance and not in any sort of skill set. Normalizing skewed perceptions and unrealistic expectations from a young age will lead to adults who might be incapable of seeing gender bias in the context of their individual lives (Smith, Choueiti, Prescott, & Pieper, 2010). In addition, female characters are shaped in ways that reinforce the idea that if they would only change their appearance, the rest of their problems would be solved. A common theme not only in family films, but in female-focused films, is the idea of the makeover. Critics argue that this is dangerous because it "reinforces the idea that females are most important in their function as adornments" (Smith & Cook, 2008, pg. 6).

Family films also emphasize their female characters' need for love and romance, and to achieve such, they must be physically attractive. In general, family films amplify the physical appearances of their female characters so that the attractive ones are as beautiful as they can be, and the unattractive ones are as ugly as they can be. They also tend to associate physical attractiveness with general goodness, and unattractiveness with ugliness of personality. This is

particularly evident in animated films, which introduce children to film gender stereotyping (Filmandmedia12).

1.4.6 Action and Slasher Films

Slasher films, e.g., the popular Halloween series, emphasize themes that glorify the violent power of men over women (Friedman, 2012). Interestingly, while more men than women are murdered in slasher films, the murders of their female characters get more screen time in elongated death scenes that emphasize their fear and helplessness (Sapolsky, Molitor, & Luque, 2003). In slasher films, women are rarely allowed to stand up for themselves, and if they fail to defer to men, they pay the ultimate price (Hedley, 2002).

Even a cursory look the American film industry's action films, such as the Indiana Jones and James Bond series, reveals the portrayals of female characters in highly stereotypical ways. That said, in the most recent Bond films, 007's love interests are portrayed as more assertive than their predecessors (Neuendorf, Gore, Dalessandro, Janstova, & Snyder-Suhy, 2010).

Idealizing female action hero's aggressive behavior has worried some that girls might mimic their aggressive behaviors, but research has not demonstrate that to be the case (Greenwood, 2007). A female action hero can represent that it is possible for women to be strong without a man. But while action films portray female action heroes fighting in brutal worlds because they have to, they still get wrapped up in romance. In addition, female action hero's costumes are typically sparse, seeming to grow sexier as series progress. Some female action heroes comment on their wish to lead a normal life and that, if given a choice, they would prefer a quiet home life with a fulfilling romantic relationship (Magoulick, 2006).

1.5 Male Portrayals

There is a dearth of research on male film character portrayals and stereotypes. In a study of 2012's top films, 55 lead characters were male compared to 12 female characters (Smith, 2013). The reality is that all people are affected by the stereotypical constructions of gender in film. Since any film male and female characters are inextricably linked, it is important to study them simultaneously.

1.5.1 Masculinity in Society: Past and Present

In the past, "to be manly was to be ready to destroy, not to create" (Slater, 2008, pg. 68). For a multitude of reasons, particularly after the start and spread of empires, humanity has been characterized by a warrior culture based on political conflict and war. Wars cannot be fought, or won, without warriors, and warriors have nearly always been male. However, as civilization grew, so did human's desire for peace. Wars are still fought, but aggression in everyday life is no longer as acceptable as it once was. In some places, group sports have become a sanctioned activity that allows male aggression to be accepted and even celebrated (Slate, 2008).

According to Alex Gibson (2008), men suffer from the stereotype that all men are emotionally stunted, cavorting, beer-drinking beasts. Building on Gibson's observation, it stands to reason that men are looked upon as less than manly when they partake in any activity not considered masculine. Men are supposed to be their family's breadwinners (Royo-Vela, Aldas-Manzano, Küster, & Vila, 2008), and not being accomplished in a career means that the man is presumed to not be capable of taking care of himself and his family. Men are supposed to be society's protectors, and must be able and willing to defend their property. Showing emotion is considered a weakness, i.e., a female characteristic. Men are considered less talkative than women, and this has resulted in the "strong silent male" archetype (Sharrett, 2009).

Sometime in the past several decades, the idea began to grow that it was acceptable for men to exhibit behaviors such as caring and sensitivity that previously would have been considered unmanly. That said, such men are still greatly outnumbered by males whose focus is on strength, ambition, success, and conquest (Tasker, 1995).

1.5.2 Categorizing Men

Like female film characters, male characters have historically been portrayed in ways that have constructed and maintained gender stereotypes. Some of the most common male stereotypes have included *the joker*, who serves as the comic relief and is often portrayed as less than attractive; *the jock*, who is the fighter who other men admire and women want; the quintessential *strong silent type*; the *big shot*, who is successful and wealthy; and the *action hero*, who is always on the move and frequently resort to violence as the means to the end (Media Smarts). Such portrayals are so common that they impose and reinforce concepts of what it means to be a man.

Recently, there has been a trend in films to normalize, and even encourage, grown men to act as if they are adolescents (Smith, 2013). This allows men to attain a cultural accepted excuse to act inappropriately to other people, especially in objectifying and utilizing women as sexual objects or decorations.

Today, men are getting mixed messages more than ever before. Societal expectations are schizophrenic at best, where men "are encouraged to be in touch with their own emotions and yet are criticized for it" (Dermietzel, 2013, paragraph 11). Society wants a man to adhere to typical male standards, where physical strength and looks are valued. However, society is now tired of the brutish, uncommunicative man and desires a man who also is able to express himself freely with words and emotions (Gibson, 2008). This creates a kind of disconnect between reality and

fictional portrayals. The communicative man who is in touch with his emotions is still frequently not portrayed as handsome or physically strong. He is often the nice guy, not the hero. Even if the classic hero is endowed with some limited communicative skills, the expressed emphasis will still be on his traditional male attributes. Film cannot quite match up to the expectations that are forming in reality, resulting in mixed messages to men as to what constitutes a real man.

Based on this chapter's review of literature, it is clear that there is a need to address the interplay of male and female portrayals in films over time. Thus, the thesis' research questions include the following:

RQ1: How do the top grossing and most popular-Oscar nominated films, between 1950 and 2012, portray the gender roles of their primary male and female characters?

RQ2: Do the portrayals of gender roles of primary male and female characters in top grossing and most popular-Oscar nominated films change over the 1950-2012 period and, if so, how?

In the past, researchers' emphasis has been disproportionally focused on studying female film characters. Instead, scholars should study the interplay of gender in film. To do so will help us understand how Hollywood has not only constructed and maintained male and female gender stereotypes, but has at times moved toward a more equitable portrayal of all of their characters.

Chapter two describes the methodology used to address the thesis's research questions.

CHAPTER 2

METHODOLOGY

Research conducted for this thesis used a qualitative content analytic method to identify gendered portrayals of male and female characters in 14 of America's top grossing and Academy Award nominated films released during the period 1950 to 2012. Of particular interest was whether portrayals of such characters perpetuate and/or break male and female stereotypes. More specifically, the research addressed the following questions:

RQ1: How do the top grossing and most popular-Oscar nominated films, between 1950 and 2012, portray the gender roles of their primary male and female characters?

RQ2: Do the portrayals of gender roles of primary male and female characters in top grossing and most popular-Oscar nominated films change over the 1950-2012 period and, if so, how?

This chapter explains the method used to address the thesis's research questions, and identifies how and why certain films and characters were selected for study.

2.1 Period Studied

Based on the recommendations of Tilly (1971) and others who urge scholars to use comparative historical analytic methods to study phenomena over long periods of time, I have examined films and film characters across 1950-2012. The year 1950 was selected as the research's starting date because it was thought that a comparison of films released before and after the advent of the 1960s-70s women's movement might reveal whether the social upheavals of this period may be reflected in film's representations of gender.

2.2 Film Selection

Two films were selected for analysis from each decade from 1950-2012, for a total of 14 films. They were identified using the following process:

Step 1. Identify each period's top grossing film.

Since top-grossing films can be considered an indicator of their popularity, it was decided that each period's most popular films should be studied because they represent something that is admired or desired, either in general or as an escape. Analyzing the top film for each decade across the board will also show how the decades evolve.

Figures from Box Office Mojo were used to identify each decades top-grossing film. For example, Box Office Mojo lists *The Ten Commandments* (1956) as the 1950's top-grossing film. Based on the adjusted for inflation domestic overall chart, the top movies for each decade were chosen. Box Office Mojo is a well-known and respected record keeper of box office numbers and the chart used can be found at www.boxofficemojo.com/alltime/adjusted.htm. Animated films, as well as film remakes and sequels, were excluded from the research. Remakes and sequels were excluded because they can often leverage good will from the first film into popularity that is not earned which could skew the results of this study.

Step 2. Identify top-grossing Academy Award nominated films.

Next, from each period's opposite time frame within each decade, a second film was selected from its top-grossing Academy Award nominated films. The decision was made to use nominated films instead of winning film in order to achieve a larger pool from which to draw popular films from. Since the 1950's top-grossing film was released in 1956, the top-grossing award-winning film was selected from the 1950-1954 period, i.e., *The Robe* (1953). Such award-nominated films are highly regarded, and this adds to their impact among film audiences. The

following Academy Award nomination categories were searched: Best Picture, Actor in Leading Role, Actress in Leading Role, Directing, and Writing. These specific categories were chosen because they represent the key elements that compose the story, from the creators to the lead actors, who breathe life and likeability into the characters. The Academy Award nomination and award information is all taken from the official Academy Award website, specifically from www.oscars.org/awards/academyawards/legacy/index.html. Finally, all other information used has been taken from the DVD covers or from within the film itself, unless otherwise noted.

Table 1, shown below, identifies each of the 14 films analyzed in the research.

TABLE 1

FILMS SELECTED FOR ANALYSIS

Time Period	**Top-Grossing Films**	**Top-Grossing Academy Award Nominated Films**
1950s	The Ten Commandments (1956)	The Robe (1953)
1960s	The Sound of Music (1965)	Mary Poppins (1964)
1970s	Star Wars (1977)	The Exorcist (1973)
1980s	E.T (1982)	Back to the Future (1985)
1990s	Titanic (1997)	Forrest Gump (1994)
2000s	Avatar (2009)	Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring (2001)
2010s	Marvel's The Avengers (2012)	Inception (2010)

The Ten Commandments, released in 1956, was the number one box office success of the decade. According to the domestic gross numbers at Box Office Mojo this movie ranks sixth

with an adjusted gross of $1,068,960,000. It was nominated for several Academy Awards, including best picture, but received none.

The Robe was released in 1953. Based on the Box Office Mojo domestic gross numbers it made $534,109,100, placing it at #45 overall. It was qualified for this study for being from the opposite part of the decade as *The Ten Commandments* as well as being nominated for several Academy Awards, including the qualifying categories of best actor and best motion picture. Though this film did not win those categories, it did win for art direction and costume design. On the domestic gross adjusted chart, there were two movies in between *The Ten Commandments* and *The Robe: Ben-Hur* and *Sleeping Beauty*. *Sleeping Beauty* was disqualified, since is an animated movie. *Ben-Hur* was releasedin 1959, and was therefore disqualified for being from the same part of the decade as *The Ten Commandments*.

The Sound of Music was released in 1965 and it was the most successful movie of this decade. According to Box Office Mojo, the film made $1,162,109,500, placing it third on the domestic gross chart after being adjusted for inflation. It was nominated for several Academy Awards, winning for directing, film editing, music, best picture, and sound.

Mary Poppins was released in 1964 and, according to the label on its DVD, it is based on the "Mary Poppins" books by P.L. Travers. On the Box Office Mojo domestic gross chart, adjusted for inflation, it ranks at number 25, with an adjusted gross of $637,963,600. It was nominated for several Academy Awards, including the qualifying categories of best actress, directing, best picture, and writing. It won for best actress, film editing, music, and special visual effects. Between this film and *The Sound of Music* are *Doctor Zhivago, 101 Dalmatians, and The Graduate*. *101 Dalmatians* is excluded, as it is an animated film. *Doctor Zhivago* is

from 1965 and *The Graduate* is from 1967. Both are disqualified as they are from the same section of the decade as *The Sound of Music*.

Star Wars came out in 1977 and it topped the charts for this decade. Box Office Mojo places it at #2 on the adjusted for inflation domestic gross chart, with a total adjusted take of $1,453,455,900. It was nominated for several Academy Awards, including directing, best picture, and writing. It won for art direction, costume design, film editing, music, sound, and visual effects.

The Exorcist was released in 1973. It has a lifetime adjusted domestic gross of $902,489,200, placing it at #9 on the Box Office Mojo domestic gross chart, adjusted for inflation. It was nominated for several Academy Awards, including best actress, directing, best picture, and writing. It won for sound and writing. *The Exorcist*, based on a book by William Peter Blatty, was inspired by a real-life exorcism (Fry, 2008, pg. 130).

E.T. appeared in theaters in 1982. The domestic gross is set at $1,157,531,400, according to Box Office Mojo. This places it at #4 on the all-time chart for domestic grosses adjusted for inflation. It was nominated for several Academy Awards, including directing, best picture, and writing. It won for music, sound, sound effects, editing, and visual effects.

Back to the Future was released in 1985, and ranks #61 on the Box Office Mojo chart for domestic gross with an adjusted take of $481,853,300. It was nominated for several Academy Awards, including writing. It won for sound effects editing. Between this movie and the number one movie, *E.T.,* there were several movies. *The Empire Strikes Bac*k and *Return of the Jedi* are both sequels and therefore disqualified. As *E.T.* is from 1982, it disqualifies those that were made between 1980 and 1984. These include *Raiders of the Lost Ark* from 1981, *Ghostbusters* from 1984, and *Beverly Hills Cop* from 1984. *Batman* was released in 1989, but it

failed in the Oscar qualifying round as it was nominated for art direction only, which is not one of the primary categories. *Back to the Future*, on the other hand, was nominated for writing, one of the five primary categories.

Titanic first appeared in theaters in 1997. According to Box Office Mojo, it ranks #5 on the domestic gross chart with an adjusted take of $1,105,471,700. It was nominated for several Academy Awards, including best actress, directing, and best picture. It won for art direction, cinematography, costume design, directing, film editing, music (original dramatic score and song), best picture, sound, sound effects editing, and visual effects. It was the most popular film of the 1990s.

Forrest Gump was released in 1994. It ranks #24 on the Box Office Mojo domestic gross chart with an adjusted gross of $640,932,200. It was nominated for several Academy Awards, including the qualifying categories of best actor, directing, picture, and writing. It won for best actor, directing, film editing, picture, visual effects, and writing. Between this film and the number one film of the decade, Titanic, three other high ranking films included *Jurassic Park, Star Wars Episode 1: The Phantom Menace,* and *The Lion King*. *The Lion King* was disqualified because it is animated, and *Star Wars Episode 1* was disqualified because it is a sequel. *Jurassic Park* was disqualified because it was not nominated in any of the qualifying Oscar categories, even though it was from 1993, the right part of the decade opposite of *Titanic*.

Avatar came out in 2009. It was the number one film of the 2000s and it comes in at #14 on the Box Office Mojo domestic gross chart with a total take of $793,603,000. It was nominated for several Academy Awards, including directing and best picture. It won for art direction, cinematography, and visual effects.

The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring appeared in theaters in 2001. Based on a classic book by J.R.R. Tolkien, it ranks #77 on the domestic gross chart with a total adjusted take of $447,162,100. It was nominated for several Academy Awards, including directing, best picture, and writing. It won for cinematography, makeup, original music (original score), and visual effects. Between this film and the number one film, *Avatar*, there are eleven films. *Shrek 2* and *Finding Nemo* are animated and therefore excluded. *The Dark Knight, Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest, Lord of the Rings: Two Towers, Lord of the Rings: Return of the King, Spider-Man 2,* and *Star Wars Episode III* are all sequels and therefore disqualified. That leaves three movies, *Spider-Man, The Passion of the Christ*, and *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*. All of them meet the date criteria but not the Oscar criteria. *Spider-Man* was nominated for sound and visual effects only and is excluded as neither one is one of the five primary categories. *The Passion of the Christ* was nominated only for cinematography, makeup, and music (original score) and therefore excluded. *Harry Potter* was nominated for art direction, costume design, and music (original score), none of which are the primary categories and it is therefore excluded.

Films released between 2010-2012 were also studied in the research. *Marvel's The Avengers*, a 2012 film, was the period's top-grossing film. Based on a set of Marvel comic books, its ranking on the Box Office Mojo domestic gross chart is based on the actual gross, as not enough time has passed for there to be an adjusted gross. As a result, it ranks #27 with a take of $623,357,910. It was nominated for an Academy Award for visual effects but did not win.

Inception was a 2010 film to be included in the research. Its domestic gross is listed as $300,304,600, which places it at #189 on the adjusted domestic gross chart on Box Office Mojo. It was nominated for several Academy Awards, including, best picture and writing. It won for

cinematography, sound editing, sound mixing, and visual effects. This decade is very limited in that it only contains three years for analysis. Between this film and *The Avengers* there are eleven films. *Toy Story 3* is excluded for being both animated and a sequel. *The Dark Knight Rises, Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Part 1, Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Part 2, Transformers 3, Iron Man 2, James Bond: Skyfall,* and *Twilight: Eclipse* are all sequels and therefore excluded. That leaves three movies between *The Avengers* and *Inception*, namely *The Hunger Games*, *Alice in Wonderland*, and *The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey*. As there are only three years to choose from, it was decided to pick the second film from the year 2010. This excludes *The Hobbit*, which is from 2012, and *The Hunger Games*, also from 2012. Additionally, *The Hobbit* was only nominated for visual effects, makeup and hairstyling, and production design for the Oscars and *The Hunger Games* was not nominated for any awards. Therefore they are both excluded. This leaves *Alice in Wonderland*, which makes the cut for being made in 2010. However, for the Oscars, it was nominated for art direction, costume design, and visual effects, none of which are primary categories. *Inception*, however, was nominated for art direction, cinematography, music (original score), best picture, sound editing, sound mixing, visual effects, and writing. Therefore, it is qualified.

2.3 Film Character Selection

Within each movie, only the female lead and the male lead were selected for analysis. For the most part, each primary male and female character was selected because of the central roles they play in their film's story. Major secondary characters and antagonists are mentioned in the findings, but only when their inclusion is central to an understanding of each film's primary male and female characters. Table 2 breaks down each of the primary female leads and the primary male leads for each film used for analysis.

TABLE 2

CHARACTERS SELECTED FOR ANALYSIS

Film	**Female Character**	**Male Character**
The Ten Commandments (1956)	Nefretiri	Moses
The Robe (1953)	Diana	Marcellus
Sound of Music (1965)	Maria	Georg von Trapp
Mary Poppins (1964)	Mary Poppins	George Banks
Star Wars (1977)	Princess Leia	Luke Skywalker
The Exorcist (1973)	Chris McNeil	Damien Karras
E.T. (1982)	Gertie	Elliott
Back to the Future (1985)	Lorraine	Marty McFly
Titanic (1997)	Rose DeWitt Bukater	Jack Dawson
Forrest Gump (1994)	Jenny	Forrest Gump
Avatar (2009)	Neytiri	Jake Sully
Lord of the Rings (2001)	Arwen	Frodo Baggins
Marvel's The Avengers (2012)	The Black Widow	Iron Man, Thor, The Hulk, Captain America, Hawk Eye
Inception (2010)	Ariadne	Dom Cobb

2.4 Analytic Procedures

The primary method of analysis is qualitative content analysis. The primary units of analysis are the films themselves, and within each film, the portrayals of their female and male

lead characters. The specific focus is on the conforming to, or breaking of, traditional portrayals as has been established from the films from the 1950s.

Each film was viewed several times as careful notes were taken on the portrayals of their primary male and female characters. All knowledge in respect to each decade was extrapolated solely from the films themselves. The base level of male portrayals and female portrayals was established by the two 1950s films. The goal was to learn through comparison of gender portrayals through the years whether stereotypes are maintained and/or broken. For example, Nefertiri, the primary female character in *The Ten Commandments,* exists only in relation to Moses. Because her every action is for the sake of, or to spite, Moses, she does not possess autonomy. In contrast, two decades later, Princess Leia from *Star Wars* is portrayed as intelligent and capable. During a confrontation with a number of Storm Troopers during which she, Han Solo, Chewbacca, and Luke Skywalker are trapped, she shoots a hole in the wall and they are able to escape. Leia's portrayal thus breaks from earlier films' portrayals of their female characters.

Chapter three includes the results gleaned from the qualitative content analysis of the 14 films and the 28 characters selected for study.

CHAPTER 3

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

This chapter reports on the analysis of seven of the period 1950-2012's top-grossing films, along with seven of its top-grossing Oscar-nominated films. The research concerns the gender-based portrayals of each film's primary female and male characters, and whether they maintained and/or broke stereotypes. Each decade's section includes film synopses, descriptions of their portrayals of their primary male and female characters, and comparative analyses of their portrayals of primary female and male characters, with special attention to whether such portrayals perpetuate and/or break from previously displayed stereotypes.

3.1 The 1950s

This section of the chapter describes and analyzes the films selected from the 1950s—the decade's top-grossing film, *The Ten Commandments* (1956), and the top-grossing Oscar-nominated film, *The Robe* (1953).

3.1.1 *The Ten Commandments*

Moses and Nefretiri are the primary male and female characters of the 1950's top-grossing film—*The Ten Commandments*. The film is a Biblical epic that recounts the life of Moses, the son of Hebrew slaves, who was found and raised by the Egyptian Pharaoh's sister alongside Pharaoh Seti's son, Rameses. Egypt's next pharaoh will either be Moses or Rameses. However, when Moses learns he is the son of Hebrew slaves, he follows a new life path dominated by his love of his God and his people. The story follows Moses as he is exiled from Egypt, returns to Egypt to free his people, endures the Biblical plagues brought on by Rameses' refusal to free the slaves, leads the final exodus of the Hebrew people to the holy land, is selected by God to receive the tablets that include *The Ten Commandments*.

Although the film contains a plethora of characters, it fails to become a true ensemble film. Indeed, not only is it a male-centric, but Moses-centric film. As it establishes Moses' strength, benevolence, humility, leadership, and eventual dedication to his religion and the Hebrew people, it gives short shrift to Nefretiri, who in comparison appears in far fewer of the film's scenes. Nefretiri is the throne princess, meaning that she must marry either Moses or Rameses, whichever one Pharaoh Seti decides shall be his successor. Moses never appears to desire becoming pharaoh, though he does desire to be with Nefretiri, who favors him over Rameses, who she finds distasteful.

Nefretiri's lack of strength is displayed when she discovers the truth about Moses' true origins and is easily swayed by Moses to tell him the truth about his origins. The scene begins with her choosing fabrics for her wedding, believing that Moses is all but sure to be chosen as the next pharaoh. Here Nefretiri learns from the slave Memnet that Moses is the son of Hebrew slaves. Memnet was present when Moses was found in the river, and shows Nefretiri Moses' swaddling cloth, one that bears Hebrew markings. In response, to protect her future with Moses, Nefretiri kills Memnet off screen. Moments after this happens, Moses comes to her door.

MOSES
Nefretiri?
Nefretiri?
Have you closed your doors to make a beggar of a prince?

NEFRETIRI
I'm the beggar, Moses, begging you to hold me in your arms.
Kiss me. Just kiss me.

MOSES
You're no beggar, my love.
You're a conqueror, and I am your captive for life.

NEFRETIRI
One lifetime will not be half enough.
You will be king of Egypt, and I will be your footstool.

MOSES
The man stupid enough to use you for a footstool would not be wise enough to rule Egypt.

SLAVE
Princess! Princess, the raven has dropped a black feather at your door!

MOSES
Who...?

NEFRETIRI
No, Moses, no, leave the world outside.

SLAVE
Pardon. Pardon,Royal One.
The old nurse Memnet...

NEFRETIRI
Go away. I don't want to hear anything.

MOSES
What about Memnet?

SLAVE
She's dead. She must have fallen from the balcony.

NEFRETIRI
I will not hear unhappy things tonight.
Go away!

MOSES
Old Memnet must have walked that balcony a thousand times.

NEFRETIRI
What is the death of one slave to us?

MOSES
She was a faithful servant to you.
Can one so rich in love be so poor in pity?
What kind of a woman holds me captive?

NEFERTIRI
One who loves you and will not lose you.
One who will be your wife.
Nothing in the world can change that, nothing...neither Rameses' princely plots nor Memnet's evil lies.

MOSES
You've heard Memnet grumbling all your life.
Why should it upset you now?

NEFRETIRI
Because she grumbled against you.
Oh, let her threats be buried with her.

Look. The night's a crown of stars, and the darkness a robe of forgetfulness.
Come, love, let's share them.
We'll use the moon for a scepter.

As the pair walks out into the balcony, Moses notices something on the floor.

MOSES
Oh. A piece of Hebrew cloth.

NEFRETIRI
Memnet may have dropped it.

MOSES
Memnet was not a Hebrew.
Why would she bring this here?

NEFRETIRI
I don't know.

MOSES
Yes, you do. Tell me.

NEFRETIRI
She was taking it to Rameses...to destroy you.

MOSES
How could Rameses destroy me with a piece of cloth?

NEFRETIRI
Oh, Moses, Moses, why do you question me?
Why do you care?
Yes! I killed her.
What does it matter? A hundred slaves die every day.
What's done is forgotten.

MOSES
It is not forgotten.
What has this cloth to do with me? Tell me.

NEFRETIRI
It will make no difference between us?

MOSES
How could it make a difference?

NEFRETIRI
A child was wrapped in it.

MOSES
What child?

NEFRETIRI
Bithiah took him from the river.

Memnet was with her.

MOSES
Who was this child?

NEFRETIRI
Memnet is dead.
No one need know who you are.
I love you.
I killed for you.
I'll kill anyone that comes between us.

MOSES
Why did you kill for me, Nefretiri?
If you love me, do not lie.
Who was the child?

NEFRETIRI
Hold me in your arms.
Hold me close.
You were not born prince of Egypt, Moses.
You're the son of Hebrew slaves.

MOSES
You believe that?

NEFRETIRI
I'll believe anything you want me to believe.
Say you are not, I believe you are not.

MOSES
Love cannot drown truth, Nefretiri.
You do believe it, or you would not have killed Memnet.

NEFRETIRI
I love you. That's the only truth I know.

After Moses asks Nefretiri whether this child had a mother, and Nefretiri says Memnet called her Yochabel, he departs to ask Bithiah, his adoptive mother, about the cloth and where he really came from.

The lengths Nefretiri goes to establish Moses' power, e.g., "you will be king," along with her admissions that she will be his footstool, that loving him is the only thing she knows, and that she lied about Memnet's death, demonstrate her subservience. Willing to lie and commit murder for love, Nefretiri's weakness ruins her chance to marry Moses. After losing him, she marries Rameses.

Unlike Nefretiri, romantic love does not sway Moses. When he learns he is the son of Hebrew slaves, he devotes himself to his people and their religion. When in exile, Moses marries Sephora, a Hebrew shepherdess who devotes herself to his support and aid. Sephora is not presented as Moses' equal, but neither is she portrayed as weak.

Nefretiri's continued devotion to Moses is visible in a scene near the film's conclusion wherein she visits his small modest home dressed in a shimmering silver costume decorated with gold jewelry and a purple cape. In contrast, Sephora is dressed more plainly. Moses is not at home, and Nefretiri and Sephora have a conversation about the danger the Hebrew couple's son is in. Nefretiri's love for Moses compels her to try to save his son.

NEFRETIRI
You're the shepherd girl that Moses married.

SEPHORA
The queen of Egypt is beautiful, as he told me.
My husband is not here.

NEFRETIRI
Is this Moses' son?

SEPHORA
Yes, this is our son.
What do you want of us?

NEFRETIRI
You need have no fear of me.

SEPHORA
I feared only his memory of you.

NEFRETIRI
You have been able to erase it.

SEPHORA
He has forgotten both of us.
You lost him when he went to seek his God.
I lost him when he found his God.

NEFRETIRI
At least he left you a son to cherish.
I am here to save his son.

SEPHORA
From what?

NEFRETIRI
From Pharaoh's decree that the firstborn of Israel must die.

SEPHORA
Die?
God of Abraham...
Don't let him do this.
Not to the children.

NEFRETIRI
A caravan for Midian is waiting for you and your son.
My chariot will bring you to it.

The next scene cuts to Nefretiri, still dressed in shimmering silver, arriving to visit Moses after Sephora and her son have left on the caravan. It takes Moses a moment to notice Nefretiri standing in the doorway.

MOSES
What do you want, Nefretiri?

NEFRETIRI
You, Moses.
Everything about us is coming to an end.
You will destroy Egypt or Egypt will destroy you.
I belong to you, Moses.

She caresses him, but as she speaks, he pushes her aside and walks to the table.

NEFRETIRI
She's gone with your son to Midian.

MOSES
Why would she leave?

NEFRETIRI
She knew you would try to save the other children before your own son.

MOSES
Save the other children? From what?

NEFRETIRI
Rameses is massing the Libyan axmen, the chariots, the Sardinian swordsmen.

MOSES
Why? Tell me why!

Moses grabs Nefretiri.

NEFRETIRI
To destroy the firstborn of Israel.

MOSES
Oh, God!
My God!
Out of his own mouth comes thy judgment.

NEFRETIRI
But I have saved your son, Moses.

MOSES
It is not my son who will die.
It is, it is the firstborn of Egypt.
It is your son, Nefretiri.

NEFRETIRI
No. You would not dare strike Pharaoh's son!

MOSES
In the hardness of his heart, Pharaoh has mocked God and brings death to his own son.

NEFRETIRI
But he is my son, Moses.
You would not harm my son.

MOSES
By myself, I am nothing.
It is the power of God which uses me to work His will.

NEFRETIRI
You would not let him do this to me.
I saved your son.

MOSES
I cannot save yours.

NEFRETIRI
Your god listens to you, Moses.

MOSES
About midnight, the Destroyer will come into the midst of Egypt, and all the firstborn shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh to the firstborn of his servants.

NEFRETIRI
When you were prince of Egypt, you held me in your arms.
When you were a condemned slave, I threw myself at your feet before the court of Pharaoh, because I loved you, Moses.

MOSES
It is the Lord who executes judgment, Nefretiri.
Go back to your son.

NEFRETIRI
Your love for me is stronger than the power of any god. You will not kill my son.

Nefretiri walks away, assured that Moses would never harm her son.

In a final act of vengeance, Nefretiri goads Rameses into following Moses after he and his people have left. She blames him not only for the death of her only son, who was taken by the plague, but also for Moses' refusal to choose her. This final framing of Nefretiri's character portrays her as vengeful, unable to transcend beyond her earthly desires. In contrast, Mose, as an old man, brings his people to their promised land.

Moses drives *The Ten Commandments*' narrative; all of the film's characters exist only in relation to his past and future. Moses is the only character who grows and changes in the narrative. Nefretiri, who represents the material world, never abandons her willingness to do anything to be with him. In contrast, Moses changes from a worldly man to one who is single-minded in his devotion to God and his people. Moses chooses Sephora because she shares his beliefs and represents the spiritual, simpler life he desires. Neither Nefritiri nor Sephora are portrayed as weak per se, but they are not portrayed outside of their relationships with Moses.

3.1.2 *The Robe*

The Robe's primary female and male characters are Diana and Marcellus. This film is a historical religious epic, with its Biblical theme matching that of *The Ten Commandments*. The source material for the film is a fictional book of the same name that recounts the story of Marcellus, a military tribune in charge of the unit who crucified Jesus. After Jesus' crucifixion, when Marcellus acquired his robe as a keepsake, he begins feeling guilty and acting irrationally, believing that the robe cursed him. After Marcellus abandons the robe, the Emperor gives him the chance to redeem himself by searching not only for the robe, but the Christians, who are considered the enemies of Rome. When Marcellus finds the robe, he is healed by it and becomes a believer of Jesus. Caligula, the new emperor, who persecuted the Christians in the mistaken

belief that they were plotting against the state, sentences Marcellus to death. Marcellus chooses death rather than forsaking Jesus, and, in the process, gives up Diana, the woman he loved planned to spend his life with.

In *The Robe*, Marcellus is on the screen for the majority of the film, but shares scenes with Diana for less than half of the film. She has less than a handful of scenes with characters other than Marcellus and less than a quarter of the scenes contain neither Marcellus nor Diana.

The Robe's Marcellus begins without a clear goal of his own, but his benevolence is shown when he buys an unruly slave, Demetrius, and tasks him with meeting him at home. Reading between the lines, Marcellus gave Demetrius a chance to run away. Demetrius chooses not to, setting both of them up as honorable, righteous men. Marcellus is from a wealthy family, and, early in the story, the audience meets Diana, who he had hoped to marry since childhood. However, Marcellus is sent away to Jerusalem, where he wins the robe of Jesus after his crucifixion. It is at this point that Marcellus begins to think he is crazy and blames the robe. However it is the beginning of his journey of self-discovery that culminates in him becoming a follower of Jesus.

All of *The Robe*'s characters function in relation to Marcellus and his journey. They provide Marcellus with obstacles to overcome, or the wisdom to move forward, and Diana is no different. In the same scene in which she is introduced, Diana is Marcellus' love interest. This happens even as the emperor has promised her to Caligula, who will become the next emperor. Her entire function in the movie is to serve as an aid or intermediary for Marcellus. She is the one who begs the emperor to offer Marcellus a chance to search for the robe and find the disciples so that he can redeem himself. She is also the one who convinces the emperor to allow them to marry, even after Marcellus is thought crazy. It is never made clear why the emperor

would listen to Diana's wishes regarding Marcellus. Even with that in mind, Diana denies her personal power when she states she is nothing without Marcellus. In her first appearance in *The Robe*, Diana brings up a marriage promise made by Marcellus a decade earlier. They have not seen each other since they were children.

DIANA
It's good to see you, Marcellus.

MARCELLUS
It's ah - good to see you - again.

DIANA
Then you do remember me?

MARCELLUS
Ah - yes, of course. Let me see now, it was the - was the...

DIANA
And your promise, have you forgotten that too?

MARCELLUS
What promise?

DIANA
To marry me.

MARCELLUS
Was I drunk?

DIANA
That's not very flattering, Marcellus.

MARCELLUS
Oh, I - I mean, if you'd tell me when I was supposed to have said this - the circumstances...

DIANA
Oh, I remember them perfectly. I'd cut my finger, and I cried. And then you took a dagger and cut your own finger to show that it didn't really hurt, and then you kissed me, and I stopped crying - and then you promised to marry me when we grew up.

MARCELLUS
Diana! Where have your freckles gone?

DIANA
I lost them.

MARCELLUS
Oh, I loved every one of them.

DIANA
Then I'm sorry I lost them.

Diana tells Marcellus that she became the ward of the Emperor when her father died.

Diana comes to represent gentleness and simplicity, in stark contrast to the tormented Marcellus. Her subservience is established after Marcellus has been arrested and condemned. When he tells Diana to be strong, she states she cannot be strong without him. In a later scene, after Marcellus has returned from Palestine and has spoken with the Emperor about his illness and Jesus, Diana has this conversation with Tiberius as Marcellus stands to the side and listens.

EMPEROR TIBERIUS
For your sake I interfered, when my wife wanted to give you to Caligula. For your sake I brought your tribune back from Palestine. For your sake, I now free you from him.

DIANA
Sire, I have no wish to be free.

EMPEROR TIBERIUS
Have you gone mad too?

DIANA
He had everything then. He could have had me too. I wanted him, but I wasn't sure that I loved him. Now I am sure.

EMPEROR TIBERIUS
I see it my duty to forbid you to see him again. As a child you were wise, now you reason like a woman - foolishly.

DIANA
I can’t help being a woman sire but I try to reason as you taught me.

Tiberius then tells Diana she would have been a suitable wife for an emperor, and he gives Marcellus, another chance. Diana and Marcellus kiss and they depart the palace and the scene.

The film’s final scene once again portrays Diana in a subservient position. After Caligula becomes emperor, Marcellus is put on trial and condemned to death unless he renounces God. Marcellus refuses and states that the Christians are not plotting against the emperor. With

Marcellus' fate decided, Diana chooses death, not because of her belief in his God, but because she would rather be dead than live without Marcellus. In response, Marcellus pleads with her that there is no reason for her to die alongside him.

DIANA
Sire, Marcellus is my chosen husband. I ask to go with him.

CALIGULA
Stand back! You're not on trial! There's no evidence against you!

DIANA
Then if it pleases you, sire, I'll provide evidence. I have no wish to live another hour in an empire ruled by you! You dare to call yourself a Caesar. Once the Caesars of Rome were noble, but in you, noble blood has turned to poison. You corrupt Rome with your spite and malice.

CALIGULA
Stop! Stop it!

DIANA
That you should be Caesar, vicious, treacherous, drunk with power, an evil, insane monster posing as emperor.

CALIGULA
STOP IT!

DIANA
As for me, I have found another king. I want to go with my husband into his kingdom.

CALIGULA
Then, by the gods, you shall!
Go, both of you, into your kingdom!

The guards turn from Caligula to face Marcellus and Diana, who are hand in hand. They begin to walk out of the hall where the trial was held. As they continue to walk, the background fades into a blue sky with a hint of clouds. Diana's final choice is to be with Marcellus, while Marcellus' choice is to be with God.

3.1.3 The 1950s Films' Establishment of a Gender-Portrayal Baseline

The Ten Commandments and *The Robe* paint a black and white picture of gender roles and, in doing so, establish a base against which future decades' gender-based portrayals are

compared. These successful and popular films suggest that the 1950s may be the decade of the powerful male lead. Both Moses and Marcellus are the driving forces in their respective stories. They evolve from being individuals largely interested in material wealth to less worldly seekers of spiritual wealth. Their decisions affect those around them, especially Moses, who becomes the leader of the Hebrew slaves. Both establish that the only entity they are subservient to is God. When on trial before the emperor, Marcellus refuses to renounce God and is sentenced to death. In *The Ten Commandments*, Moses likewise chooses his fate—he will live among his people as a slave.

In comparison, the primary female characters in *The Ten Commandments* and *The Robe* are less important than their male counterparts. They are consistently portrayed as one-dimensional victims of their circumstances who lack the leadership and strength of Moses and Marcellus. While Nefretiri and Diana exert a modicum of influence over Moses and Marcellus, the two men's choices demonstrate their relative independence. After Moses learns he is the son of Hebrew slaves, he chooses a path unencumbered by his former ties to Nefretiri. And after he marries Sephora, Moses' devotion to his religion and the Hebrew people separate the couple. In *The Robe*, Marcellus is willing to die for his religion, thus choosing death over life with Diana.

3.2 The 1960s

The following sections describe and analyze the films selected from the 1960s—the decade's top-grossing film, *The Sound of Music*, and the top-grossing Oscar-nominated *Mary Poppins*.

3.2.1 *The Sound of Music*

This film is a family musical, telling the story of Maria, a nun in training. She is sent from the convent to become the governess for the seven children of a widowed naval officer in

Austria. The story is set in Austria in the late 1930s in Austria, just before World War II. It is based on a Broadway musical of the same name, which in turn is based on the book *The Story of the Trapp Family Singers*, the memoir of Maria Augusta von Trapp. Maria is the film's most important character, since this film is the story of her journey. Its primary male character is Captain Georg von Trapp, who plays a key role in Maria's journey.

The film follows the journey of Maria winning the children over as along with Georg, the children's father, falling in love. It continues with her return to the convent when she thinks Georg is better off with another woman and that she should be with God. Finally, the film culminates in Maria and Georg's marriage and subsequent escape from Austria so that Georg will not have to serve in the Nazi military, who have ordered him to report for duty.

The first character introduced in *The Sound of Music* is Maria. She is a nun in training who is an unconventional free spirit. The first song sequence features the nuns singing about Maria. It is here that the first impression is set up, that Maria is not predictable. She follows her heart, loves to sing, is resourceful, and is always happy. She is described as late for everything but meals, wonderful, easy to like except when she is not, often in trouble though in a lighthearted way. One of the lines of the song is "how do you catch a cloud and pin it down?" This is meant to capture the essence of Maria, who fails to do things by the rules. She makes her own way in accomplishing her goals. It is an excellent first impression that carries through the film, mitigating the change of story goals for Maria later in the film.

Maria's original story goal is becoming a nun. After being sent to be the governess for Captain von Trapp's children, she falls in love with Captain von Trapp and eventually they are married. As such, she falls in line with traditional expectation in marrying and gaining a family unit in the end. However, thanks to the early framing of Maria as a free spirit, the audience can

buy into the change as Maria following her heart instead of following convention. Her choices are presented in a safe traditional manner. One choice is becoming a nun and serving God, the other is marrying after falling in love with a man. Both put her existence in relation to someone, or something else, instead of allowing her to stand completely on her own.

At first, Maria seems to be a free spirit. On further reflection, she isn't as free as she first seemed to be, since at first she has chosen to give up her secular life for God, and later, she is centered on taking care of the von Trapp family children. Overall, Maria's character is portrayed as full of contradictions.

Maria's vivacious spirit is in contrast with the reserved Georg, who spends much of the first part of the movie in Vienna with the Baroness, the woman he had planned to marry. He is strict and it is only by seeing Maria bring happiness to his children that he begins to loosen up a bit. He is not presented as having a deep emotional character arc. He falls in love with Maria and in realizing this he eventually chooses Maria over the Baroness.

Georg is seen originally wanting to escape everything that reminds him of his dead wife, including his children. He accomplishes this by staying away for long periods of time. While he is away, the audience is aware that he is with the Baroness but the screen time is devoted to Maria and the children. Only upon Georg's realization that he loves Maria and not the Baroness does the story have a happy ending. If he did not love her back, Maria would have gone on to become a nun more than likely. The complexity of Maria is somewhat negated by the fact that Georg holds this decision for her. In the end it is not Maria who is choosing Georg or God, but Georg choosing Maria or the Baroness. It is his choice that decides Maria's future.

Though Maria is a free spirit, her goal is entirely changed for the sake of love, marriage, and being a part of a family. Maria says herself that one of her worst faults is being too

outspoken. However, this freedom is an illusion because it is only possible within the confines of a world that establishes early on that fate belongs to the choices of men. This is not exclusive to Maria, as the sentiment is carried over to the oldest daughter, Liesl. This first becomes evident in a song sequence that Liesl shares with her crush, Rolf. The words in the song sequence exhibit the restraints that women are under, and the fact that female independence is an illusion since, without a man, a woman's life is incomplete.

The following is the scene includes Liesl and Rolf speaking, and later singing, after Rolf delivers a telegram to Liesl's father. Liesl has excused herself from the family dinner table to meet Rolf in the yard.

LIESL
Rolf!
Oh, Rolf!

ROLF
No, Liesl. We mustn't!

LIESL
Why not, silly?

ROLF
I don't know—

LIESL
Isn't this why you're waiting?

ROLF
Yes, of course.
I've missed you, Liesl.

LIESL
You have? How much?

ROLF
So much that I even thought of sending a telegram just so I'd be able to deliver it here.

LIESL
Oh, that's a lovely thought! Why don't you, right now?

ROLF
But I'm here!

LIESL
Please, Rolf. Send me a telegram.
I'll start it for you. "Dear Liesl"

ROLF
Dear Liesl, I'd like to be able to tell you...
how I feel about you. Stop.
Unfortunately, this wire is already too expensive.
Sincerely, Rolf.

LIESL
Sincerely?

ROLF
Cordially

LIESL
Cordially?

ROLF
Affectionately?
Will there be any reply?

LIESL
Dear Rolf, Stop
Don't stop! Your Liesl.
If only we didn't always have to wait for someone to send Father a telegram.
How do I know when I'll see you again?

ROLF
Well, let's see...
I could come here by mistake.
With a telegram for Colonel Schneider! He's here from Berlin staying with..
No one knows he's here. Don't tell your father.

LIESL
Why not?

ROLF
Your father's so Austrian.
LIESL
We're all Austrian

ROLF
Some people think we ought to be German, and they're very mad at those who don't.
They're getting ready to--
Let's hope your father doesn't get into trouble

LIESL
Don't worry about father. He's a big naval hero. He was even decorated by the emperor

ROLF
I don't worry about him. I do worry about his daughter

LIESL
Me? Why?

ROLF
Well, you're so—

LIESL
What?

ROLF
Well, you're such a baby!

LIESL
I'm sixteen. What's such a baby about that?

ROLF
You wait, little girl
On an empty stage
For fate to turn the light on
Your life, little girl is an empty page
That men will want to write on

LIESL
To write on

ROLF
You are sixteen going on seventeen
Baby, it's time to think
Better beware
Be canny and careful
Baby, you're on the brink

You are sixteen going on seventeen
Fellows will fall in line
Eager young lads
And roués and cads
Will offer you food and wine

Totally unprepared are you
To face a world of men
Timid and shy and scared are you
Of things beyond your ken
You need someone older and wiser
Telling you what to do
I am seventeen going on eighteen
I'll take care of you

LIESL
I am sixteen going on seventeen
I know that I'm naive
Fellows I meet may tell me I'm sweet

And willingly I believe
I am sixteen going on seventeen
Innocent as a rose
Bachelor dandies
Drinkers of brandies
What do I know of those?

Totally unprepared am I
To face a world of men
Timid and shy and scared am I
Of things beyond my ken

I need someone older and wiser
Telling me what to do
You are seventeen going on eighteen
I'll depend on you

Though this song sequence does not directly involve the primary characters, it does showcase the reality that whatever superficial freedom is established by Maria is not carried through to the film's other female characters. As the oldest female child, Liesl looks up to Maria for guidance to see what is appropriate and expected behavior. Thus, Maria, whether purposeful or not, becomes the Liesl's role model. This song is performed again later in the film in a scene involving Maria and Leisl that commences shortly after Maria and Georg are married.

LIESL
Mother? That sounds so nice.
I like calling you mother

MARIA
I like hearing it

LIESL
You love Father very much. I can tell you do

MARIA
Very much

LIESL
Mother, what do you do when you think you love someone?
I mean, when you stop loving someone or he stops loving you?

MARIA
Well, you cry a little.
Then you wait for the sun to come out.
It always does

LIESL
There are so many things I think I should know but I don't.
I really don't

MARIA
How can you?

LIESL
Sometimes I feel the world is ending

MARIA
And then you feel it's just beginning?

LIESL
Yes!

MARIA
It was that way with me.
And for you it will be just as wonderful, I promise

LIESL
Do you really think so?

MARIA
When you're sixteen going on seventeen
Waiting for life to start
Somebody kind
Who touches your mind
Will suddenly touch your heart

LIESL
When that happens
After it happens
Nothing is quite the same

Somehow I know
I'll jump up and go
If ever he calls my name

MARIA
Gone are your old ideas of life
The old ideas grow dim
Lo and behold
You're someone's wife
And you belong to him

You may think this kind of adventure
Never may come to you
Darling, sixteen going on seventeen
Wait a year... or two

LIESL
I'll wait a year or two

TOGETHER
Just wait a year or two

Maria's message is that Liesl's life will be complete when she becomes a wife, and that marriage is worth waiting for. The overall conclusion that can be drawn from this is that a woman is a child first and then she is a wife. Anything other kind of life can be viewed as incomplete. Maria, despite all her free spirited nature, only attains a complete and happy life once she marries Georg. Maria does not achieve true independence, since her completeness as a human being depends on a male figure. Like the films of the 1950s, the only figure above a men and women is God.

3.2.2 *Mary Poppins*

Mary Poppins is a musical that tells the story of its namesake's involvement with the Banks family. Poppins, the film's main character, is a magical nanny who answers an ad to take care of the Banks children. After she moves in with the family, she takes the kids on fantastical adventures. Ultimately, the film is about the role the Poppins character plays in helping the Banks family members becoming closer, especially the kids and their father. While the film is centered on a family, it is also about the power of imagination, adventure, and the value of being happy with the little things in life.

The film's central male character could have been either Bert, Mary Poppins' friend, or George Banks, the father of the children Poppins takes care of. Mr. Banks was selected for analysis rather than Bert because the plot focuses largely on how Poppins helps the Banks family. Bert functions as a helper to Mary Poppins, but is not directly tied to the Banks family.

Mary Poppins' job is to fix families. She is a magical nanny who answers an ad made by the Banks children, a boy named Michael and a girl named Jane. Their father, George, tore it up and threw it in the fireplace but it still managed to make its way to Mary Poppins. It is worth

noting that one of the criteria the kids insisted on was that the new nanny must be pretty. This emphasizes film's emphasis on female appearance, which is established in the opening sequence where Mary Poppins is seen powdering her nose while sitting on a cloud above the city. Mary Poppins as a character is quite interesting as she operates outside of reality in a way. While in the normal world she is rather strict, the moment she is transported together with the children to her magical world everyone becomes happier and more carefree. Mary Poppins is never shown as having a love interest, though Bert is her helper and he seems to care for her.

George is disagreeable for most of the movie, but Bert helps George see that there are things that are more important than working, like being there for his kids. This also highlights that while Mary Poppins is the film's central character, she is incapable of making George see the importance of family. George is not, and cannot be told by a woman what he must do. Only another man has the capacity to do this.

The magical world of Mary Poppins is set up in contrast to George Banks, a wealthy banker who is able to employ a maid, a cook, and a nanny to help out. He is married to Winifred who, though a suffragette, builds up his ego by telling him how forceful he is. More realistically, however, George is rather disagreeable and tense most of the time. George is a practical man. His opening song sequence includes a reference to his wife and kids as his servants instead of as his family. Such portrayals of George contrast well the way George acts at the end of the story. Whereas early in the film, George's position at the bank means everything to him, after he is fired at the end of the story, he is not distraught. Instead, he dances, sings, and laughs as he leaves the bank. On the way home, very much out of character, he brings kites home for his children. As they fly them together, the audience sees all members of the Banks' family happy together for the first time.

Once the family is no longer broken, the winds have changed as Mary Poppins says, and she takes off because she is no longer needed. She has completed her story goal of helping the Banks family. Though Mary Poppins is never shown having a family of her own or a love interest, her entire job of helping kids and their families become closer falls squarely within the traditional role of a woman. The traditional role is not only about being a mother and a wife, but also about caring for others and placing others before oneself and Mary Poppins does just that. She is forgiven for not having a family of her own because she is doing work that falls within the traditional female sphere of influence, helping other families unite and become happy again.

In *Mary Poppins*, the division between males and females is evident in two scenes involving George and his wife Winifred. This first occurs near the beginning of the film the night before the official arrival of Mary Poppins in the story. After the children have run away again, their latest nanny has quit. George speaks sternly to Winifred, criticizing her for not handling her job of overseeing her children and their nannies in an effective way. George decides he must hire the children's new nanny.

WINIFRED
I'll try to do better next time

GEORGE
Next time? My dear, you've engaged six nannies in the last four months! And they've all been unqualified disasters

WINIFRED
I quite agree

GEORGE
Choosing a nanny for the children is an important and delicate task. It requires insight, balanced judgment, and an ability to read character. Under the circumstances, I think it might be apropos to take it upon myself to, uh, select the next person.

WINIFRED
Oh, would you George?

Toward the latter part of the film, another scene emphasizes Winifred's inability to manage her family and household. George has called Mary Poppins to tell her he does not approve of the fantastical things that his children have told him about their time together. Winifred women's suffrage and regularly goes to rallies to support this cause. On her way out he door for a meeting, Winifred is running late.

WINIFRED
Good evening, George. Is anything the matter?

GEORGE
I'm afraid there is

WINIFRED
I, I'd love to stay but I have to dress for my rally in Hampstead

GEORGE
Winifred, it is my wish that you be present

WINIFRED
Oh yes, George, of course

As she observes George and Poppins conversing, Winifred plays no part in the scene beyond echoing George's intermittent requests for her approval of everything he says. While Winifred's suffragette ideas and actions showcase women's quest for autonomy, ultimately, her ability to go to rallies depends on George approval. George, as the film's primary male character, leads the choices of every other character by virtue of his own choices. Like Georg, George is the master of fate in his story.

3.2.3 1960s: Female Central Characters Within Family-Centered Films

The 1960 films differ from those of the 1950s because their central characters are females who get more screen time than their male counterparts, they are musicals, and their focus is on the family rather than on religion. But while these films' are female-centered, their primary female characters are still portrayed in blatantly stereotypical ways. Since the freedom these films' primary female characters have is only present within the confines of male-dominated

families, their power is limited. Mary Poppins exists independently of a man and religion, but she safely navigates her freedom by devoting her life to helping families and taking care of children. At no point is she presented with any temptation to go beyond her prescribed role. Maria exists as a function of either her love of God, or her love of Georg. While she is an unusual character because of her free spiritedness, she still conforms to the expectations set forth in the 1950s that regardless of the choices made by the female characters fate lies with the primary male character's choices.

This decade is an odd mixture of stagnation and forward momentum for female characters. There is stagnation in that, like in the 1950s, the female characters are not masters of their own fates. Their lives are swayed by the decisions of the films' primary male characters. There is some forward momentum because the female characters are showing more complexity than in the 1950s. While still confined within their circumstance, there is more exploration of possibilities within those circumstances than before. Though not a step toward independence on its own, it does represent a very slow beginning for female characters to be allowed to grow and dictate parts of the story however small those parts may be at this point.

Compared to the 1950s, the male characters in the 1960s films seem to stagnate. Male characters began with the power of choice and the ability to influence not only the course of their lives but the lives of those around them. By starting so high on the scale of power there is little room for further upward growth. Instead, male characters now need to grow in complexity, to grow outward rather than upward. There is also a slight reversal for male characters in that they are presented here as more one-dimensional than in the 1950s. While it is true that Mr. Banks becomes more sensitive to his family, his lack of presence in the film harks back to the 1950s. In this decade, the primary male characters possess less screen time overall, but not to the detriment

of their position. This also furthers the point that the male characters do not have to be front and center to maintain power. This is detrimental to the female characters, as they spend more time on screen and more time developing the storyline, but are still ultimately at the mercy of the whims of the primary male character in their respective stories.

3.3 The 1970s

This section describes and analyzes the 1970s top-grossing film, *Star Wars*, with the top-grossing Oscar-nominated film, *The Exorcist*.

3.3.1 *Star Wars*

Star Wars' primary male and female characters are Luke Skywalker and Princess Leia. This sci-fi fantasy film's first scene introduces Luke Skywalker, a young man who discovers that his father was a Jedi knight. It starts with Luke's acquisition of two droids, R2D2 and C3PO. When cleaning R2D2, he accidentally activates a message that shows Princess Leia sending a distress message. Her message compels Luke, with the help of Obi Wan Kenobi, to go in search of her. Along the way, Han Solo and Chewbaca join Luke and the Princess in a quest to stop the evil Galactic Empire from using their Death Star space station to destroy planets.

In an early scene, Princess Leia's strength of character and ability to fight are evident as she saves herself, Luke, Han, and Chewbacca from a bunch of Storm Troopers who are after them. In the midst of the chaos, she grabs Luke's gun and shoots an escape route for them into the wall. The following interchange between Leia and Han picks up just after they get out of the holding cell on board the space station. They are trying to escape but they have become trapped in a hallway in a shoot-out with several Storm Troopers. Leia demonstrates that she is in charge.

HAN
Can't get out that way.

LEIA
Looks like you managed to cut off our only escape route.

HAN
Maybe you'd like it back in your cell, Your Highness.

LUKE
C3P0! C3P0!

C3P0
(over comlink)
Yes sir?

LUKE
Are there any other ways out of the cell
Bay? We've been cut off.
What was that? I didn't copy!
C3P0
I said, all systems have been alerted to your presence, sir.
The main entrance seems to be the only way in or out.
All other information on your level is restricted.

TROOPER VOICE
Open up in there!

C3P0
Oh, no

LUKE
There isn't any other way out.

HAN
I can't hold them off forever! Now what?

LEIA
This is some rescue. When you came in here, didn't you have a plan for getting out?

HAN
(pointing to Luke)
He's the brains, sweetheart.

LUKE
Well, I didn't...

It is at this point that Princess Leia grabs Luke's gun and fires into the lower section of the wall area in the hallway. Han is standing right next to it.

HAN
What the hell are you doing?

LEIA
Somebody has to save our skins. Into the garbage chute, fly boy.

HAN
(to Chewbacca)
Get in there you big furry oaf! I don't care what you smell! Get in there and don't worry about it.

Luke and Han continue to shoot at the Storm Troopers.

HAN
(to Luke)
Wonderful girl! Either I'm going to kill her or I'm beginning to like her. Get in there!

This scene involves a female lead character's use of a weapon. Princess Leia is not afraid to take charge of the situation, and her ingenuity is what gets them out of the hallway alive. This is path breaking, since it demonstrates that each character has strengths and weaknesses that are not tied to gender. Together the group is stronger than each individual.

Princess Leia carries a heavy responsibility, since she is the "custodian of the stolen plans that can save her people and restore freedom to the galaxy." The plans show how to destroy the Death Star space station. Her goal of saving her people becomes the shared goal of the group. In order to save people they, as a group, must rely on each other to destroy the Death Star. The characters complement each other and show a fairly equal standing as each has strengths and weaknesses that the rest of the ensemble can complement. Princess Leia is described as strong more often than she is described as beautiful, an indication of the evolution of female characters that previously were valued more for their beauty than for their abilities or intelligence.

3.3.2 *The Exorcist*

This horror film centers on a female character's quest to heal her daughter, who, as it eventually becomes known, is possessed by the devil. The film's central female character is named Chris MacNeil. A successful actress and caring mother, Chris becomes concerned when her daughter, Regan, becomes ill and starts doing strange things. After traditional medicine fails to heal Regan, Chris consults Roman Catholic priest Father Damien Karras, who, along with a

second priest by the name of Father Merrin, performs an exorcism on the girl. While they are successful in casting out Regan's devil, both priests are killed in the process.

Father Karras is portrayed as a deeply conflicted Jesuit priest with a psychiatric educational background who has begun to lose his faith. As such, his character breaks with many of the previously analyzed films' portrayals of strong men who aren't plagued by personal conflict. Father Karras eventually meets Chris, who has sought him out for help with Regan. At first, Karras does not believe the girl is in need of an exorcism, but he changes his mind, and helping Regan gives him a new purpose. It is at this point that the goals of Chris and Father Karras align to save Regan.

A pivotal scene in the film is the final exorcism of Regan. Father Karras is working alongside a second priest—Father Merrin—who has more experience performing exorcisms. When Regan's demon speaks directly to Father Karras as his deceased mother, he breaks down and Father Merrin asks him to leave the room. A short while later, after answering Chris' question on whether Regan will die with a firm no, Father Karras gathers himself and returns with renewed conviction to help Regan. Once Father Karras goes back into Regan's room he sees Father Merrin in a kneeling position, his head on the bed. In desperation, Father Karras grabs him and hits him on the chest hoping to save him. It is clear to the audience that the attempt is futile. Father Merrin is dead. Father Karras turns his attention back to Regan's devil.

KARRAS
You son of a bitch!

Father Karras lunges at Regan, who is sitting on the bed. He grabs her, pulling her to the floor and he begins punching her repeatedly. Father Karras begins to strangle her.

KARRAS
Take me! Come into me! God damn you! Take me! Take me!

Father Karras is shaking and he looks toward the window. The audience hears Regan's cries, and when the camera cuts back to Father Karras, his face shows that the demon has entered him. He falls back and then begins to reach for Regan, appearing as if he will continue to strangle her. Father Karras fights the demon and the audience sees his face change to normal. He cries out.

KARRAS
No!!

Father Karras lunges out the window, smashes through its glass, and falls down a set of stairs. As his body contorts in unnatural ways, he is killed by the fall. The scene ends with Regan, who is now back to normal, huddled in the corner of her room as she cries for her mother. A police detective is shown looking out the window at Father Karras' body at the bottom of the steps.

3.3.3 1970s: Gender Ambivalence

These two 1970s films portray their primary female and male characters in ways that break from the more traditional stereotypes of the 1950s and 1960s. In *Star Wars*, Luke spends just over a third of the film sharing the screen with characters other than Leia, while Luke and Leia share scenes in just over a third of the film. While Leia has less than a handful of scenes with characters other than Luke, she is nevertheless at the forefront when she is on screen as much as Luke is. The majority of scenes in *The Exorcist* contain Chris, while secondarily she shares them with Father Karras.

Even though *Star Wars* centers largely on Luke Skywalker and his journey, its other main characters exist in their own rights, providing valuable help or imposing obstacles. As a result, the film is in the ensemble category, i.e., its characters play off one another. This is an important evolution, as in reality people do not simply react to a single person. Each behavior is a communication that requires a response, and in an ensemble movie, that is precisely what happens.

As the films' female characters break established gender stereotypes—Princess Leia is a leader with battle skills that match or even surpass those of her male colleagues, and Chris MacNeil is a single mother and established actress—a new kind of gender neutrality is established. Gender seems to have evolved to a point where it isn't as important to maintain the more traditional gender identities of the films' characters. It is possible to replace Chris and her daughter Regan with any combination of genders and any combination of relationship while maintaining the story as it is. The story and its progression do not depend on Chris being a female and the mother. It depends on her status as a parent who is fighting for her child. This is yet another example of how the 1970s are establishing a new benchmark for female characters, moving toward greater independence in gender roles by making gender peripheral to the story and the characters.

The male characters also evolve past the established gender boundaries in that the primary male characters are no longer infallible or capable of single-handedly changing the course of life around them. This may signal the beginning of the flawed male lead. While the male leads in both films undoubtedly embody some of the power established in the past films, it is they who must pay the price for their choices in ways that did not happen before. This ultimate sacrifice harkens back to the 1950s when Marcellus chose death over renouncing God but there is a large difference. Where Marcellus accepted death because he would not renounce God, Father Karras sacrificed himself so that another person could have a chance to live. His sacrifice is tangible and therein lays the evolution.

Luke Skywalker, on the other hand, represents the naïve hero. He is inexperienced in worldly matters. He has lived most of his life rather remotely with his aunt and uncle. Every other male character presented in the film is older and more experienced than Luke. Along with

Leia, they serve as his mentors in one way or another. Even after learning that his father was a Jedi knight, Luke refuses Obi-Wan's offer to teach him the way of the Jedi because of his loyalty to his uncle. In order to be free to follow his fate, Luke first must lose everything with the deaths of his aunt and uncle toward the beginning of the film. This catapults him into the next stage of his life as a fighter as he joins Obi-Wan in search of Princess Leia.

The 1970s film female characters continue their growth curve with more evidence of independence. Female characters are no longer the victims of their circumstance in relation to gender. There are more layered characterizations, and a further push toward gender ambivalence wherein either the male or the female characters are portrayed as being capable of carrying on and influencing the story. The male character's primary evolution comes in the form of the flawed hero. Male characters no longer have the invisible hand of power, but instead show their progression from one point to another. This also reflects a deeper and more dimensional characterization, an improvement for both genders in their film portrayals.

3.4 The 1980s

The following section compares the top grossing film of the 1980s, *E.T.*, to its top-grossing Oscar-nominated film, *Back to the Future*.

3.4.1 *E.T.*

E.T. is a sci-fi, fantasy, family-oriented adventure film. It tells the story of Elliott, a ten-year-old kid who runs across an alien who has accidentally been left behind on Earth. They become friends and Elliott's siblings help him hide E.T. Eventually they realize that E.T. wants to go home and they want to help. They also realize that E.T. and Elliott are connected and that E.T. is dying since Earth is not his natural home. After E.T. is successful in phoning home, the government swoops in before the space character is able to leave. E.T. dies, only to be

inexplicably revived. Together with Elliott, his brother, and his friends, E.T. is able to get to the rendezvous point and board the spaceship that will take him home.

The story's focus is so highly tied up with E.T. and Elliott that it's difficult to select its primary female character. Of the film's two female characters—Elliott's mother and his little sister Gertie—the latter was selected because she is afforded more screen time than her mother, and plays an important role in the story.

3.4.2 *Back to the Future*

Back to the Future, like *E.T.*, is a sci-fi, fantasy, family-oriented adventure film. The story centers on the adventures of teenager Marty McFly and his adult friend and "mad scientist" Doc Brown. Doc makes a time travel machine, but he needs plutonium, which he steals from Libyan terrorists. They catch up with him after he shows Marty how the machine works and they shoot Doc. Marty escapes in the time travel car and goes back to the year 1955. There he meets his parents—George and Lorraine—as younger versions of themselves. He unknowingly triggers a different future, one where his parents would not fall in love, meaning he would not be born. Before Marty can go back to the future, he must devise a way for it to remain the same. If he fails, he will have no future, since he will no longer exist.

The film's primary male character and central story character is Marty McFly. The primary female character is Lorraine, who in the scenes that take place in 1955, she is Marty's future mom. She is the female character with the most screen time and strongest connection to the story's plot.

Toward the middle of the film, a scene develops portraying a conversation between Marty and Lorraine. Lorraine asks Marty whether he will take her to the school dance, but Marty tries to redirect the conversation, pointing out that George would love to take her.

Lorraine tells Marty that George did ask her, but she turned him down. She states she does not feel that George is her type because he is too weak.

LORRAINE
I think a man should be strong, so he can protect the woman he loves. Don't you?

This implies that she needs a man to complete her in some way. Whereas Marty is on an adventure, however inadvertently begun, Lorraine is more one-dimensional. A character can be considered one-dimensional when there is emphasis on a single story goal that does not change or when a character does not grow at all. While Marty does not grow much, he does learn about his parents. This gives him a new perspective.

Lorraine is a damsel in distress. In the world of film this means that she needs to be saved by a man, implying that she is by default incapable of saving herself. This is nowhere more evident than toward the end of the film at the high school dance. Marty is scrambling to get the past versions of his parents together to ensure that he will have a future to return to. Biff, the film's primary antagonist and a contemporary of his parents, puts a forceful move on Lorraine outside a school dance in a car. Lorraine can't get away, and is incapable of helping herself or calling for assistance. She shows a weakness here that demonstrates the damsel in distress stereotype. She has to be rescued or simply accept her fate as it is presented to her. Moments later George grows a spine for the first time in the film and comes to her rescue. He grabs Biff out of the car and hits him, effectively changing the course of his future as well as Lorraine's. In hitting Biff, George establishes himself through traditional male prowess as a real man in Lorraine's eyes. Never until this moment does Lorraine express any romantic interest in George because she does not see him as a man. In saving Lorraine, George establishes himself as an alpha male, capable of protecting himself and those around him.

While the film's male characters must show strength to be considered real men, this is not expected of women. This is a shift from the films of the 1970s, where Princess Leia, along with Regan's mother and accomplished actress Chris MacNeil, are represented as strong and capable individuals who as masters of their own destinies. The implication is that women are either incapable of the same level of strength, or that showing strength is not appropriate to her role. This is precisely why Lorraine represents a reversal. Once again, the primary female character becomes a victim of her circumstances, incapable of making decisions for herself.

3.4.3 1980s: Stepping Back

While the 1970s' films were a step forward for both female and male characters, the 1980s represent a return to the previous decades' stereotypes. Female characters are once again resigned to roles as human accessories while male characters, while retaining some of the flawed hero characteristics, revert back to success without much effort. This is similar to the 1960s. The emphasis on the family unit is once again evident in both *E.T.* and *Back to the Future*.

Most of the scenes in *E.T.* feature Elliott, whereas Gertie is included in comparatively few. She plays mostly a background role, even in those scenes she shares with the other characters. In *Back to the Future* most of the scenes feature Marty. Secondarily, Marty shares scenes with Lorraine, whereas she is given very little independent screen time.

Even though much of *Back to the Future* is set in 1955, its popularity does speak to what the audience of the 1980s desire to see. Lorraine is catapulted back into the love interest role with little else to offer the storyline. She is shown falling for Marty first, disrupting the flow of the past as Lorraine is meant to be with George, Marty's future father. The film has two parallel major storylines. One is Marty getting back to 1985. Before he can do that, he must find a way for Lorraine and George to fall in love. If he fails, he has no future. There is a certain handicap to

the character of Lorraine, as her story goal and purpose is so intrinsically tied to Marty that she has very little leeway in showing growth or autonomous decisions.

This relative lack of female centrality to the storyline is further highlighted in *E.T.* Elliott, its primary character, is the middle child of three. Elliott has one older brother and one younger sister. It is the younger sister, Gertie, who is the primary female lead in a film largely devoid of adult characters. While Gertie does help Elliott conceal E.T., she is not capable of doing much on her own due to her age. She is shown either with her mom or with her brothers and E.T. She functions only a helper to the primary storyline, but her overall influence is miniscule.

Elliott begins his story by befriending E.T., who he wants to keep him for himself. This goal evolves from a personal desire to control E.T., to a more generous desire to help E.T. go home. This selfish to selfless arc is an important point of growth for Elliott. His parents are divorced, and while that fact does not play an important part in the film, it demonstrates that filmmakers are ready to show nontraditional families. The story's treatment of Elliott's family situation also falls to some extent in line with society's expectations for men and women. The mother is at home with her three kids, shouldering the day-to-day responsibilities, while their dad is vacationing in Mexico with his girlfriend.

It can be easy to forget that nothing seen on screen is coincidental. Every casting, every word is carefully crafted and edited. Accept for a moment the premise that Elliott, the primary human protagonist, must be male. There is nothing evident in the storyline or the execution of the film that suggests that the older sibling must be a male and that the younger sibling must be a female. It is a choice. In this case, the choices made highlight the relative neglect of female characters by the creators of popular films. The more capable, older sibling is a male, while the cute and helpless younger sibling is a female.

One of the pivotal and iconic sequences in E.T. occurs toward its conclusion. After Elliott realizes that E.T. is alive, he enlists his older brother's help to liberate the alien from the scientists. Together, along with the older brother's group of male friends, they succeed and lead a chase across town. This completely male group is instrumental in allowing E.T. and Elliott to get away so that Elliott can help E.T. go home. Once again, the relative helplessness of female characters is highlighted via Gertie. While there are some stories where gender is deliberate for the sake of storytelling, this is not the case here. The outcome would have been the same story-wise regardless of the gender chosen for any of the siblings. This fact means that there was an opportunity to play with gender and break boundaries, but it was an opportunity wasted.

This reversal trend continues with the films' male characters. While Marty is action driven, he is also shown as resourceful and capable. He makes mistakes, but he is given the tools to rectify them. Conversely, there is not much strength to Lorraine as she sees herself as a part of a whole with a man. She exists as a function of the plot and of the primary male, which is a throwback to the 1950s. Marty and Elliott drive their respective stories with their actions, and everyone else is along for the ride. They both make mistakes, a small nod to the 1970s, but this influence is negligent compared to the throwback to the 1950s.

The overall trend for female characters until this decade had been of evolution, of breaking the boundaries set by the decade that came before in gender portrayals. This evolution has not only come to a halt, but has suffered a reversal. The trend for male characters up until this point has been one of stagnation, with a sense of evolution in the 1970s. This has also come to a halt, showing a clear reversal as well.

3.5 The 1990s

The following section will compare the top-grossing film of the 1990s, *Titanic*, with the

top-grossing Oscar-nominated film, *Forrest Gump*.

3.5.1 *Titanic*

Titanic is classifiable as a historical romance period piece. While the film's primary characters, Jack Dawson and Rose DeWitt Bukater, are fictional, its story is based on the real-life sinking of the U.S.S. Titanic in 1912. Rose is an upper class woman who loathes the fact that she is engaged to a man—Cal—she doesn't love because their marriage will help her mother maintain her upper-class lifestyle. Jack is a poor but talented artist who wins a ticket to get on the Titanic moments before it leaves the dock. Their first proper meeting takes place as she contemplates jumping off the ship to escape marriage to someone she doesn't love. Jack and Rose fall in love, thereby defying Rose's family. When the Titanic begins to sink after it hits an iceberg, Rose and Jack try to help each other escape death. Ultimately, they find themselves in the ocean's icy waters. Jack finds a piece of wood for Rose to lie on, but it is too small for the two of them. Jack dies of hyperthermia so that Rose can survive. Rose, who lived to be an old woman after a life full of adventure and freedom, is the film's narrator.

Rose is Jack's opposite in many ways: She is wealthy and he is poor; he travels in third class, while she travels in first class; she has a sense of propriety from her upbringing, while he is full of daring and a love for adventure. Rose is educated, intelligent, questioning, curious, and outspoken, all of which are rare qualities for women from her time. That said, until she meets Jack, she is not strong enough to resist the pressures she feels from her mother, and believes suicide is her only escape.

Rose notes during a tour of the ship that the lifeboats would only hold a portion of the Titanic's passengers. This serves both as a foreshadowing, and as a way to demonstrating Rose's keen intellect. Seriously contemplating suicide, after meeting Jack, she changes her mind. Once

she allows herself to fall completely in love, she becomes free of the perceived shackles she has been carrying around and she accomplishes her original goal. The idea that a married woman is her husband's property is underscored when Cal tells Rose that, as a wife, she will honor and obey him. After Rose chooses Jack over her old life, she tells Cal she would rather be Jack's whore than marry him. Her statement exemplifies the lack of freedom even rich women are afforded once they are married.

Jack, unlike Rose in the beginning of the story, is more inclined to seize the moment. His goals are fleeting; he wins the ticket at the last minute and decides to start a new life in America. He meets and falls in love with Rose, and she becomes his goal. Because he is poor, Jack has much less to lose than Rose. In contrast, born into wealth, Rose has been groomed for a high-class life, and this is difficult to let go of. Jack must convince Rose to leave her world behind. He does so, but, in the end, Jack does sacrifice himself for Rose, showing that their love is not one-sided.

In many ways, *Titanic* is more of a story about social class than about gender. That said, it does demonstrate progress in the breaking of gender stereotypes. In a scene that illustrates this, Rose is shown wielding an axe to save Jack, who he is handcuffed to a pipe deep in the sinking Titanic. After Rose discovers him, she learns the key to the lock is gone. Jack tells Rose to go for help. Rose wades through the water, unable to find anyone who can help. A steward attempts to make Rose give up her mission to help Jack and go to the ship's deck where she will stand a better chance of survival, but she punches him and he leaves her behind. She continues looking for help and finds an axe in a glass case. She breaks the glass, grabs the axe, and wades back to Jack through the deep water.

ROSE
Will this work?

JACK
I guess we'll find out. Come on

Rose wades toward Jack and gets ready to swing.

JACK
Wait, wait, wait, try a couple practice swings over there.

Rose takes a practice swing at the wooden cabinet across from Jack.

JACK
Good. Now try to hit the same mark again Rose, you can do it.

Rose hits it again for practice but is unable to hit the same mark.

JACK
Okay, that's enough practice.

Jack braces himself for what Rose is about to do.

JACK
Come on Rose, you can do it. Listen, just hit it really hard and really fast. Come on, wait, open your hands up a little more.

ROSE
Like that?

JACK
Listen Rose, I trust you. Go.

They both close their eyes, she swings, hits her mark and the chain between the cuffs is shattered.

JACK
You did it! Come on, let’s go

JACK
Oh shit, this is cold! Shit, shit, shit

ROSE
This is the way out.

JACK
We have to find another way. Come on.

The fact that Jack does not somehow miraculously escape showcases the equality and balance inherent in a story that doesn’t depend completely on old gender stereotypes. Rose saves Jack’s life through her ingenuity, intelligence, strength and fearlessness.

3.5.2 *Forrest Gump*

Forrest Gump, a film classified both as a comedy and drama, is based on a book of the same name written by Winston Groom. Its primary male and female characters are a man named Forrest Gump and his old girlfriend Jenny. Forrest, whose IQ of 75, recounts the story of his life to a stranger while they are waiting for a bus. The audience sees his childhood and how he meets and falls in love with Jenny, the love of his life. He wants to marry her, but her free-spirited nature makes that impossible until late in the film. Forrest wins an athletic scholarship because he can run really fast, and in Vietnam as a soldier. After Vietnam, Forrest plays ping-pong and acquires a shrimp boat to honor a promise he made to his friend Bubba. Finally, Forrest marries Jenny after she comes back to him when she knows she is dying. At that point, Jenny tells Forrest they have a son.

Forrest Gump has led an extraordinary life, and this film takes the audience on the fantastical journey with him from childhood to the present. Forrest is not smart, but he is kind and loyal, honest, and he will help anyone. Compared to the films of the 1950s-1980s, he represents anything but the stereotypical male. He has a simple view of life that strips away the importance of material gain and social status as the key ways to achieve success. To Forrest, success is being happy.

As simple as Forrest is, that is how complicated Jenny is. She had a difficult childhood, including being molested. She spends most of the film in and out of Forrest's life. All the while she is trying to forge her own path. Jenny's demons make for a complex character, but she is a shadow throughout the film as she spends little time on screen in comparison to Forrest. She tries to find herself in the hippie culture of the 60s and the drug and party culture of the 70s. She spends much of the film battling her demons. The only constant in her life is Forrest.

Contrary to many film characters, to Forrest, life isn't complicated. He never becomes distracted by his successes, and his focus is always on his mom, friends, and, of course, Jenny. He has loved Jenny for a long time, but she has never reciprocated his feelings. Jenny takes every road but the one right in front of her, the one with Forrest. She knows how he feels but she spends her life running away. She comes back to him for a little while, but leaves again. Forrest tells her that he may not be smart, but that he does know what love is. She does not return again until she sends him a letter, shows him their son together and tells Forrest she is dying. They marry and live happily for a short while until she passes away.

3.5.3 1990s: Neither Here nor There

The stakes are high moving into this decade after a lackluster 1980s. After the noticeable gender-based reversals of the 1980s, this decade represents an opportunity for film to continue to break new ground. Films that include unconventional primary male characters that are equal to, or even weaker, than their female counterparts; films with women characters that aren't portrayed primarily as helpmates, mothers, or sex objects; and films with women characters that pursue careers outside the home, could accomplish this, for example. While the films of the 1990s do move in such a direction, their progress does not match that of the 1970s films.

Titanic portrays Rose in ways that help break old stereotypes about women and their love lives. Although she chooses love, she does so in a way that flaunts social convention. In *Forrest Gump*, Jenny follows her dreams rather than Forrest, even when her pursuit of her dreams blinds her to the hardships they will bring her. And unlike Moses and Marcellus in *The Ten Commandments* and *The Robe*, Forrest and Jack dedicate themselves to the women they love. In fact, Jack dies for Rose.

Forrest isn't portrayed as male movie characters often are – as successfully enduring an endless stream of difficult situations in defiance of all odds. Instead, Forrest succeeds in everything he attempts to do without apparent effort. Forrest is shown as having loved Jenny since they were kids. Jenny represents the ultimate goal for Forrest. Everything is incidental and choices always circle back to her. Even though Forrest and Jenny spend most of the film apart, Forrest does eventually get Jenny. Though their time together is short, Forrest attains his ultimately goal. In contrast to his charmed life, not getting Jenny would have shown a flaw because it would remove the sense of entitlement that is attached to the male gender in films. This is a primary example of a reversal for male characters during this decade.

Ultimately, *Titanic* and *Forrest Gump* represent a small step forward for female portrayals. Rose is shown as intelligent and questioning and Jenny is shown as chasing her dreams and creating her own identity independent of anyone else. However, *Forrest Gump* represents stagnation for males when compared to the 1980s because his life is successful without effort. This leaves the 1990s largely in a stagnate state of limbo. The ingredients for evolution have been presented. Now, these ingredients must be mixed together in the future or popular film will continue to remain stagnant, recycling old ideas instead of presenting new ones.

3.6 The 2000s

The following section compares the most popular film from the 2000s, *Avatar*, with the most popular film that is also Oscar-nominated, *Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring*.

3.6.1 *Avatar*

This film is classified as a sci-fi adventure film. Set in the future, humans have traveled to a distant planet, Pandora, and are in the process of taking minerals back to Earth after depleting its resources. Some of people are also trying to get to know the native population

through educating them and teaching them English. The humans have been able to create *Avatar* bodies that enable them to swap their bodies for ones that allow them to breath on Pandora without aid. Such Avatar bodies also help the humans gain the trust of the native population.

The story chronicles the story of Jake Sully. As he learns to appreciate Pandora and its native population, he falls in love with the clan chief's daughter, Neytiri. Jake eventually fights against his world's military with the help of a handful of human friends and the entire Na'vi population. Jake Sully's side wins, though not without heavy loss and as a result, most of the humans are ordered off the planet with a few exceptions. In the end, Jake transfers himself permanently into his Avatar body.

3.6.2 *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring*

This fantasy adventure film is the first of a three-part series that chronicles the dangerous journey of a Hobbit by the name of Frodo, who is seeking to help his friend, Mordor. Frodo, who is eventually joined by eight companions, begins his journey by taking the magical and widely desiredt ring that belongs to Mordor to a place called Rivendell. It is there that he meets with the rest of the fellowship and continues his journey, which contains many dangers, since it seems that everyone is obsessed with the desire to steal the ring that Frodo carries.

The film's primary male character and central story character is Frodo, and its primary female character is Arwen, though in actuality she is in the story very little. The only other female character is Galadriel. Arwen is more central to the story than Galadriel is, which is why she is considered the primary female character.

3.6.3 2000s: Moving Forward

After the major reversal in the 1980s and the struggle to find footing again in the 1990s, this decade represents a continuation of forward momentum for both female and male primary

characters. Previous decades have shown obvious changes, but changes are subtler in the 1990s, and this trend continues in this decade.

Over half of the scenes in *Avatar* are shared between Neytiri and Jake. Neytiri does not have any true individual scenes while Jake shares the screen with characters other than Neytiri for a third of the film. In *Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring*, Frodo shares the screen with characters other than Arwen for two thirds of the film. Arwen has only two minor scenes with characters other than Frodo, and they share only two scenes together. Just under a third of the scenes feature characters other than Frodo or Arwen.

Avatar revolves around the internal evolution of Jake Sully. The audience follows him from apathy and indifference to leading the fight for freedom alongside the native population, known as Na'vi, on a recently colonized planet, Pandora. While this film does put him as the central character within the plot, he is also shown as ignorant of others who are different from him. He must learn about how the Na'vi live, and what they consider important. Jake's teacher is Neytiri, the chief's daughter Neytiri. As she schools him in the ways of her people and its culture, Jake falls in love with her.

Neytiri is capable, intelligent and she can take care of herself. Their first meeting does not go well, and it exemplifies her capabilities along with Jake's shortcomings. It introduces a dynamic that does not place Neytiri in a subservient role to Jake. They meet when Jake goes on an exploratory mission in his Na'vi body alongside several people from the human military base. He gets separated from his group and he cannot find his way back. When night falls, Jake is attacked by viperwolves. Just as he is about to be overwhelmed by one, Neytiri appears and saves him. Jake is taken aback for a moment and observes her as she goes over to the body of

one of the viperwolves who has been mortally wounded. She begins to offer a prayer in the Na'vi language.

JAKE
I would have been screwed if you hadn't come along..

Neytiri rises and walks away without looking at Jake.

JAKE
Hey, wait a second. Hey! Where you goin'? Wait up.

Jake follows her.

JAKE
Just, hey slow. I just want to thank you for killing those things.

Neytiri swiftly turns back to him. She hits him with her bow and he falls to the ground.

JAKE
Damn!

NEYTIRI
Don't thank! You don't thank for this!
This is sad. Very sad, only.

JAKE
Okay, okay, I'm sorry. Whatever I did, I'm sorry.

Neytiri gestures at the bodies of the viperwolves.

NEYTIRI
All this is your fault! They did not need to die.

JAKE
My fault? They attacked me. How'm I the bad guy..

NEYTIRI
Your fault!

She edges the tip of her bow into him as he is still down on the ground.

JAKE
Aye, wow, easy, easy.

NEYTIRI
Your fault! You are like a baby, making noise, don't know what to do.

Neytiri goes on to tell Jake that he has a strong heart and a lack of fear while stating again that he is like a child. The scene continues with him following her as they move through the forest.

Jake went to Pandora to learn about the Na'vi people so that he could convince them to move peacefully from their home base in order for the Americans to get the planet's minerals. He was brought on to the project after the death of his twin brother. Because Avatars are expensive and his DNA was compatible, Jake could be transferred into his dead brother's Avatar as if it were his own. And since Jake was a paraplegic, the Avatar allowed him to walk again.

Neytiri is assigned the task of teaching Jake, and does not want to do so because she thinks he is ignorant. But in teaching him, she helps him see Pandora's beauty. As Jake falls in love, he changes his goal. Instead of helping to rob Pandora of its minerals, he decides to protect it along side Neytiri and her people. Eventually, she falls in love with Jake, even though she did not wish to do so.

While there is time devoted to the progression of Jake and Neytiri's love story, the focus is more on showing her teaching him. When the Na'vi fight back against the unjust practices of the military, she fights alongside him as an equal. In fact, there is no distinction made between those females who fight and the men that fight. However, the male warriors do outnumber the female warriors, at least as far as the audience can see.

The fighting is also of particular interest in this film. Gender representation is fairly equal. Both male and female characters die in the final battle for freedom. Gender is displayed in progressive ways among some of the film's other characters. Jake's human friend Norm, for example, is the antithesis of a fighter. He is intellectual, but he does hold his own in the final battle. Conversely, Trudy is a female and a soldier through and through. However, Trudy dies while Norm lives. Grace, the head of the Avatar unit, is a pacifist who truly believes in coexistence. However, she dies before the final battle. Both Neytiri's dad and his male successor,

Tsu'tey, die in the final fight. Interestingly enough, of the main characters, both Grace and Trudy are human females, while Neytiri's father and Tsu'tey are male and Na'vi.

Neytiri represents a leap forward because she has within her both elements of strength and weakness that creates a balance. Some of the film's other female characters tend toward the extremes of being either too tough, or not quite tough enough. Thus, Neytiri and Jake are the film's most complex and evolved characters. Neytiri is more important to Jake's survival than he is to hers. That said, Jake remains the film's central character because it is through his words that the Na'vi are roused to fight.

Like Neytiri, The Lord of the Rings' primary female character, Arwen can take care of herself and does not need to be saved by another character, male or otherwise. Both of them save their film's primary male characters from death at least once. On Pandora, humans cannot breathe. Toward the end of the final fight between the Na'vi and the military, Jake's human body is starved of oxygen when the trailer his body is in is damaged. Jake passes out before reaching the breathing mask and it is Neytiri who finishes the fight and then brings the oxygen mask to Jake's human body reviving him. Likewise, Arwen saves Frodo, the primary male character in The Lord of the Rings, when he has been incapacitated. The following scene occurs toward the end of the first half of the film. It picks up right after Arwen shows up. Aragorn, Sam, Merry, and Pippin share the screen as well. The three hobbits, unsure of whether Frodo will make it through the night, have never met Arwen before. Arwen never speaks with the hobbits, only Aragorn.

ARWEN
He's fading. He's not going to last.
We must get him to my father.

Frodo is on the ground. Aragorn lifts Frodo up and walks toward the horse.

ARWEN
I've been looking for you for two days.

PIPPIN
Where are you taking him?

ARWEN
There are five Wraiths behind you.
Where the other four are, I do not know.

Aragorn places Frodo upon the horse.

ARAGORN
(in Elvish with subtitles)
Stay with the hobbits. I will send horses for you.

ARWEN
(in Elvish with subtitles)
I am the faster rider. I'll take him.

ARAGORN
(in Elvish with subtitles)
The road is too dangerous.

The scene briefly shows the three hobbits, who do not understand Elvish.

PIPPIN
What are they saying?

ARWEN
(in Elvish with subtitles)
If I can get across the river, the power of my people will protect him.

ARWEN
(in English)
I do not fear them.

ARAGORN
(in Elvish with subtitles)
As you wish.

ARAGORN
(in English)
Arwen, ride hard. Don't look back.

ARWEN
(in Elvish with subtitles)
Ride fast, Asfaloth, ride fast!

Arwen rides with Frodo away in the night. The scene cuts to the daytime, and Arwen is riding hard with Frodo sitting in front of her on the horse. The ringwraiths, cloaked in black without

faces, are closing in and growing in number. Arwen reaches the river and enters it. The ringwraiths and their horses stop short of going into the water. Arwen continues until she reaches the bank on the other side. She turns and faces them defiantly.

WITCH KING
Give up the halfling, She-Elf.

Arwen draws her sword.

ARWEN
If you want him, come and claim him.

The ringwraiths draw their swords. They enter the water and charge Arwen. She begins to speak in Elvish. The water rises up and comes with force down the side of the mountain. The water takes the shape of many horses, pummeling the ringwraiths as they try to ride away. As they are safe from the ringwraiths, Frodo gets noticeably worse.

ARWEN
Frodo, no! Frodo, don't give in, not now!

Frodo is breathing heavily. Arwen takes the small hobbit in her arms as tears swell up in her eyes. As she closes them, the tears fall and the scene fades as the audience hears her voice.

ARWEN
(voiceover)
What grace is given me, let it pass to him. Let him be spared. Save him.

The following moments show Elron speaking in Elfish to Frodo, while Frodo is slipping from consciousness. The next scene picks up when Frodo wakes up in a bed in Rivendell, safe and alive. Gandalf is with him, smoking a pipe.

Arwen plays a key, yet small role, in the overall story. She is shown as capable of fighting and fearless, while also being shown as feminine and elegant. She is the primary love interest of Aragorn, who is the key character after Frodo in the overarching story. This is the primary love story in the film, but it serves as a subplot at best. Arwen does not have a clear goal at this point, but she is one of a miniscule number of female characters in this film. This is

in contrast with the fellowship, which contains nine members, all of them male. This creates a skewed ensemble film that is centered on multiple story lines that all converge into the primary story of Frodo and the ring. This is why Frodo takes the center stage among the many primary-like characters here.

Just as Arwen shows strength beyond what is normally expected of female lead characters, so does Frodo represent a deviation from many primary male film characters. Physically, Frodo is the least likely choice to take the ring to Mount Doom in Mordor. Hobbits are known to love peace and quiet and are not normally adventurous. Once Frodo has recuperated enough, he is summoned to a council meeting that is led by Elrond, the Elf ruler of Rivendell. The following scene happens at the mid-point in the film. For most of the scene, Frodo sits quietly as the other men on the council trade opinions and bicker as to who will take the ring to Mordor as that is the only place that it can be destroyed. Soon, the voices begin to blend together, words becoming inaudible. Suddenly, a voice breaks through the cacophony.

FRODO
I will take it.
I will take it.

The council members fall silent.

FRODO
I will take the Ring to Mordor.

The mighty warriors, who moments before stood there bickering, stare in disbelief at the small hobbit.

FRODO
Though I do not know the way.

With a knowing look, Gandalf breaks the stunned silence.

GANDALF
I will help you bear this burden, Frodo Baggins, as long as it is yours to bear.

ARAGORN
If by my life or death I can protect you, I will.

Aragorn walks toward Frodo and kneels before him.

ARAGORN
You'll have my sword.

Legolas steps forward.

LEGOLAS
And you have my bow.

GIMLI
And my axe.

BOROMIR
You carry the fates of us all, little one. If this is indeed the will of the Council, then Gondor will see it done.

Suddenly, Sam pops out of his hiding spot from behind the bushes.

SAM
Mr. Frodo's not going anywhere without me.

ELROND
No, indeed, it is hardly possible to separate you. Even when he is summoned to a secret council and you are not.

Sam is quickly followed by Merry and Pippin, who come running out from behind columns from the opposite side of where Sam was hiding in the bushes.

MERRY
Oi! We're coming too! You'd have to send us home tied up in a sack to stop us.

PIPPIN
Anyway, you need people of intelligence on this sort of mission, quest,thing.

MERRY
Well, that rules you out, Pip.

ELROND
Nine companions. So be it. You shall be the fellowship of the ring.

PIPPIN
Great. Where are we going?

Even without any idea, the small hobbits have declared themselves a part of the fellowship. This scene concludes the first half of the film and showcases Frodo's inevitable decision to be thrust into an adventure that may cost him and his friend dearly.

This decade represents a growth that has not been seen in female portrayals since the 1970s. Female characters are not defined by gender here, but by ability. Just as the female lead characters are once again set toward a path of breaking away from established boundaries, male characters have begun the same forward steps. The largest evolution comes when the male lead is unable to do what he has to do without the help of others. There is no invisible hand that guides the male leads to fortuitous conclusions. Frodo has never fought, and now he must carry a ring through a brewing war. If he were alone, he would have failed his mission. With the help of others, he is able to pull through.

The same can be said of Jake. He is a paraplegic as a human, but his twin brother's death brings him the opportunity to go to Pandora. It is through this new Na'vi body that Jake once again receives the freedom of movement. In tandem with his lack of physical movement, it is made clear that Jake does not possess anywhere near the intelligence of his educated brother. This puts Jake on the periphery of the team, since most of those on intimate terms with the Na'vi are scientists. Jake accepts and acknowledges his inferior position, but he shows that he is not afraid to make mistakes, learn from them, and embraces learning from the people around him. This is a complex approach to a male lead character, as he has to learn and grow in order to be successful, even though his success is not without loss.

As females have gained in strength and relative stature, they have not gained in number. In ensemble films, they remain vastly outnumbered by male characters. In contrast, male characters are faring better as their numbers are strong and their portrayals are becoming more

complex. The gender divide is narrowing in the sense that it no longer has to be a man saving a woman by virtue of gender. This decade represents friends saving friends, regardless of gender. Overall, this decade is moving forward and once again breaking the established guidelines for gender portrayals.

3.7 The 2010s

The following section compares the most popular film from the 2010s, *Marvel's The Avengers*, with the most popular film that is also Oscar-nominated, *Inception*.

3.7.1 *Marvel's The Avengers*

This film is classified as an action and adventure film. It is an ensemble film that centers on a collection of unique individuals who are called upon to protect the Earth from being taken over by Loki, a Norse God and the brother of Thor. The Avengers are Captain America, the Black Widow, Hawk Eye, the Hulk, Iron Man, and Thor. Loki plans on taking over the human world by trading the Tesseract, a power cube, with the Chitauri, an alien race, in exchange for an army. As the Avengers assemble, they become divided, until finally banding together to fight against Loki and saving the world. Its primary male character is actually all of the male avengers because there is no true single male primary character here. This is a true male ensemble film. The primary female character is the sole female avenger, the Black Widow.

3.7.2 *Inception*

Inception is a dramatic sci-fi action film. It centers on the character of Dom Cobb, who specializes in retrieving information from the subconscious minds of his targets. He has been accused of murdering his wife, who in reality committed suicide, and, as a result, he cannot return to America or to his two kids. Cobb is offered the ability to return to his old life in exchange for performing a process called "inception," which involves the planting of an idea into

the subconscious mind of a person so deeply that the person will think that the idea is originating from within. He assembles a team who journeys into different layers of the minds of their targets. The primary female character is Ariadne. She is a college student who becomes the dream world architect for his new team.

3.7.3 2010s: Laying the Tracks for the Future

After stumbling in the 1980s and 1990s, gender portrayals continue to move forward in the two 2010-2012 films. What was begun again in the 2000s is continued with hopeful hints of where the future may take us. This decade films also serve as a reminder that even though the momentum continues forward, there are still many steps to be taken to improve and evolve gender portrayals in popular film.

Almost half of The Avengers scenes are shared by all six avengers. Just over a third of the scenes feature more than one, but not all six Avengers. Captain America has a solo scene without the other Avengers, as does the Black Widow. Only Hawk Eye has two scenes without the other Avengers, even though he is the least prominent member of the Avengers. Cobb is in nearly every scene of *Inception*. Ariadne shares most of her scenes with Cobb and is featured in over half of the scenes.

The extreme action orientation of The Avengers means there is little dialogue. Thus the film's messages are conveyed largely through nonverbal communication via characters' clothing and physical interactions. The sole female Avenger is a highly trained spy for SHIELD. She is one of two Avengers, the other being Hawk Eye, not reliant on supernatural power or technology for their skills. She is introduced in the middle of her being interrogated by Russians. She is tied up in a chair wearing a tight, short black dress that is low cut and shows much of her bare upper body. She wears black stockings without any shoes and her hair is red and shoulder length. She

appears first as being under the control of a group of three men. During the interrogation there is a phone call and the phone is handed to her. She is called off her current assignment because Barton, also known as Hawk Eye, has been compromised and she is asked to come in by Agent Phil Coulson. She tells him she is going to put him on hold and then proceeds to knock out every single Russian while still being tied to the chair until she breaks the chair literally on one of the Russians. After defeating the men in a matter of seconds, she picks up the phone and her black high heeled shoes and walks out while speaking with Phil Coulson.

These films' primary female characters have issues similar to their counterparts in the previous decade. Both Ariadne and the Black Widow represent the sole female member of an otherwise male ensemble in their respective films. The Black Widow is framed with both strength and beauty. While she can take care of herself, there is still an emphasis on her physicality in the beginning. By framing her attractiveness first, it is easier to showcase her strength later while retaining her femininity. Whereas in the 2000s, the female characters were represented physically as either too strong or not strong enough, with their physicality represented that, here it is presented together. This does represent a step forward, though the evolution is slow.

In *Inception*, Ariadne is not only one of the most intelligent characters in Cobb's group, she also represents the reality that Cobb has begun to lose touch with as he goes deeper into his own mind. This film centers not only on the outward action goal of completing the inception process, but also on Cobb's internal torment as he deals with the guilt of his wife's suicide. His inability to move past his guilt means she appears in the dreams, which are the locations of extraction and inception. This is set in contrast to the level headed and intelligent Ariadne, the sole female member of the team. She is a college student recommended to Cobb by Miles, his

old professor and the grandfather of his children, when Cobb needs a new architect. Cobb is known as an expert architect, and Ariadne is described as even better than Cobb before the audience even meets her. She is placed in high regard through this wording, as well as being the only team member aware of just how dangerous Mal is, and how unable Cobb is to control her appearance.

COBB
I wouldn't be standing here if I knew any other way. I need an architect who's as good as I was.

Miles contemplates for a brief moment.

MILES
I've got somebody better.

Ariadne's portrayal here is that of stability and reliability as well as intelligence and capability. In this film, even though the primary character remains male, she is the rational one while Cobb is the emotional one.

Cobb is shown as a tormented yet intelligent man and continues the evolution of the flawed hero. He is the leader of the team, which he assembled for the purposes of this particular job. His flaws lead to risky decisions that jeopardize the team. Ariadne goes under with Cobb and travels to his dreams that are actually memories, including ones involving his dead wife Mal. He spends a lot of time there, and Ariadne follows him to find out what tests he is doing like he claims. Cobb is clinging onto memories, unable to let go, and Ariadne points this out. It is after this that Cobb gets the news he has been waiting for, that it is time to go for the final job.

ARIADNE
Cobb, I'm coming with you.

COBB
I promised Miles, no.

ARIADNE
The team needs someone who understands what you're struggling with. And it doesn't have to be me but then you have to show Arthur what I just saw

COBB
Get us another seat on the plane

Ariadne convinces Cobb that she is necessary to counteract him and Mal for the safety of the team as a whole during this final job. Ariadne recognizes the need for a stabilizing influence as well as for someone who knows the full truth instead of the partial truths that Cobb tells most people. Ariadne is the one who keeps pulling Cobb through the emotional maze that he has created for himself. In the past, female characters were dependent upon male characters for decisions and guidance. This is no longer true, but while the gap for ability has narrowed, equal representation of male and female characters has not yet been fully achieved in ensemble films.

Inception shows Cobb as a complex character by illuminating both his outward actions as well as his internal struggle. His character has depth, but of the two, he is the most emotionally driven. Ariadne's story is less known, but she is Cobb's voice of reason. This still represents a leap forward in female portrayals. Ariadne is shown as taking charge of the situation, providing guidance to Cobb so that Mal will not destroy Cobb and therefore possibly the team while they are traveling through the layers required to perform inception. For all of his intelligence, Cobb's actions are questionable as he goes back and forth from selfish, to selfless action.

In The Avengers, the vanity often associated with female characters exists in the Iron Man. This makes it hard for the group to work together. But to succeed in their missions, they must put aside petty feelings so they can work together for positive outcomes. Even with superpowers and technology at their disposal, the Avengers are not nearly as strong when at odds with each other as they are when they pull together.

Overall, the trend from decade to decade up to this point has resulted in an overall evolution in gender portrayals, although there are also some reversals of such progress. While there is still a long way to go, it is encouraging to compare the portrayals of these 28 male and

female film characters that represent the 14 films selected for study from the 1950-2012 period. The momentum for both genders is currently moving forward. Only time will tell whether this momentum will be sustainable, or whether another decade of reversals are in our future.

Chapter four includes further discussion of the findings, as well as their implications, and the study's weaknesses.

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This thesis involved the qualitative content analysis of the gender portrayals of 14 male, and 14 female characters in a group of 14 top-grossing entertainment films released from 1950 to 2012. Overall, the films' male characters have not progressed as much as their female counterparts. From the 1950s on, the films' male characters have possessed the power to make many of their story's key decisions. However, some of these films' male characters were endowed with flaws made them more equal to their female counterparts, while still others were portrayed as needing to "learn the ropes" from female teachers before they forged ahead with their plans for the future.

The 1950s films portrayed their female leads as peripheral, one-dimensional characters, but have steadily gained ground on the male characters. Female characters went from dependence to independence, and by the 2000s, are fully capable of taking care of themselves. At this point, female characters have closed the gap that existed in the 1950s. However, there is still a way to go for the portrayals of both male and female characters to better represent their real-life counterparts.

Both female and male gender portrayals sorely lack the multi-dimensionality that exists in real-life (Mlawski, 2008). Showing characters that are not one-dimensional should help show those who watch films that identity is not and should not be stagnant, nor should it be dependent solely on one over-arching characteristic. In addition to that, female characters must still gain ground in evening out the gender make-up as shown in ensemble films. Overall, female portrayals have made great strides over the decades with minor hiccups along the way, while male portrayals have remained largely stagnant after the introduction of the flawed male lead.

Using Mlawski's Female Character Flowchart (2010), it is very simple to classify the 1950s female characters—Nefretiri and and Diana. Nefretiri is classified as both the crazy ex and the spoiled rich girl while Diana is the trophy. Both of these assessments fit their limited roles in their respective films. After the 1950s and the 1960s it gets harder to classify a film's female characters because they are becoming more complex. Moving into the 1970s, it is possible to see strength that has not been present before, both in intelligence as well as by not being a damsel in distress. Princess Leia is more than capable of helping herself and standing up for her cause. She is capable of carrying her own story, and this is what makes her a strong female character according to the flow chart. Princess Leia is the first example of what can be classified as a strong female character. In the 1980s, Gertie would be classified as the useless female for being the token female in the group. Lorraine would be a classic damsel in distress. This ease of classification also shows that the strength that came to the forefront in the 1970s has now taken a backseat to one-dimensional token female characters. Rose could be classified as the perfect wife archetype if the audience assumes a committed relationship between her and Jack. However, because she allows herself to be changed by him, the chart also allows for classification of the nice guy trophy and fickle woman due to her previous relationship with Cal. Arwen would be classified as an action girlfriend or as a noble squaw for being from a different culture than Aragorn. The multiple classifications have once again been introduced, but there is still a lack of a true strong female character here because neither can carry the story on their own. Continuing into the 2000s, Neytiri would be classified the same as Arwen as either the action girlfriend or noble squaw for the same reasons. Ariadne from *Inception* would represent the closest thing to a strong female character in the current era of films. It is unknown whether she could carry the film on her own, but she has the intelligence and capability to do so. The

Avenger's Black Widow, while physically strong, would be classified as a vanilla action girl. Her role is relegated to the background in a much larger sense than her male counterparts and she does not have a story of her own.

The male gender is portrayed with fewer nuances throughout the decades compared to their female counterparts. The 1950s is male-centric, with each story revolving around their respective leads, Moses and Marcellus. The power of choice and the control of fate lie solely within their decision not just for themselves but those around them as well. The 1960s continues this power, though the presentation of the male gender is lessened physically on-screen. Their power of choice remains unaltered. Georg and George are still the masters of fate in their respective worlds. Like the female gender, the gender roles for men go through rapid changes in the 1970s. Gone is the position of automatic power and high social standing that is evident in the 1950s and 1960s. The struggles of the 1970s male leads introduce a new component, the flawed hero. Performances become more nuanced, and each character must make his or her own decision and collectively no one's choices are superior to another. Luke Skywalker learns that the other characters, male or female, are more experienced and knowledgeable about everything than he is. That he is the central character and male, and yet he has to work for and learn what he needs to do, represents a leap forward. As with the female gender, this takes a step back in the 1980s though not quite as far back as the female characters. Marty has luck on his side, but he is not all knowing and depends on his friend Doc Brown to create a more functional balance. Doc Brown represents the creative intelligence that Marty lacks on a level that would enable him to do it all on his own. The 1990s continue the stagnation as there is a throwback to the 1950s and 1960s yet again with the male character whose life appears charmed to a point that a flaw, like Forrest's lack of measurable intelligence, does not hinder the character's ability to be

successful and achieve everything he sets out to do. It is not until the 2000s that the male gender roles once again begin to mimic the advances made in the 1970s. Both Frodo and Jake are flawed heroes that rely on their companions to learn, as they are both in situations that are unfamiliar to them. Conflict and complex characterization has begun to comeback now for the male primary characters. The 2010s continues this though the momentum is split. The Avengers collectively are stronger together and when considered as one, they do represent various aspects of a person including a variety of emotional registers. However, if considered apart then it will still largely be a case of men achieving greatness with little effort and no personal loss. This is in contrast with Cobb, from *Inception,* who is a complex character with multiple layers including deep flaws. These flaws go so deep that they become an actual danger on more than one occasion to members of his team. Cobb himself needs to be pulled back into reality by the level-headed Ariadne. Overall, the males go from privileged positions, both in power and in social standing to representing the everyday man complete with flaws. Though moments where solutions come out of nowhere still persist, it is possible to see a steadier manifestation of exploring the flawed male anti-hero lead as opposed to the traditional male hero.

In conclusion, females begin as one-dimensional functions of the male character culminating in the first strong female character in Princess Leia in the 1970s. After that, female characters return to being one or two-dimensional representations until the 2000s where more rounded female characters are becoming the norm again. This is a step up from the 1950s, but considering the time that has passed, especially after the leap in the 1970s, this stagnation does not bode well for female characters. It is not until the 2010s that the strong female character is somewhat re-introduced in Ariadne who serves as the voice of reason. However, as the voice of

reason characteristic is highlighted and it is questionable whether she can carry the story on her own, she can also be classified as the sweet nerd due to her intelligence.

The 1950s and the 1960s are characterized by male domination, both in number and in power. The 1970s are without a doubt the most progressive decade out of each decade researched. The flawed anti-hero coupled with strong female characters made for a progressive decade in filmmaking when it comes to characters and character development. This is largely reversed in the 1980s and the 1990s when males once again achieve with little effort and there is little evidence that there is ever a doubt that the male leads will achieve their goals, whatever they may be. The 2000s are the most progressive decade since the 1970s, though the jump is not quite as large. The 1980s and the 1990s kept elements of the 1970s, such as the flawed hero and necessity for the male lead to lean on characters of more experience, regardless of gender. This momentum continues as the 2010s delve further into male character complexity with Cobb in Inception. Gender roles of the primary male characters have overall evolved with the primary point of evolution being the introduction of multi-layered characters capable of complex emotion that more accurately mimic real-life, thus allowing film viewers to relate more strongly with them.

4.1 Discussion

Every day we are bombarded with media messages. Each individual's private worldview is shaped by those closest to them and today this includes the ubiquitous media world. There is power in hearing a message repeated, because once repeated enough that message can become a part of a person's perception of the world. Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory posits that people model their behaviors on what they see. Even though people can recognize that fictional characters are not real, people can still model their behavior based on fictional portrayals just as

well as by modeling their behavior after real-life people. Each has an equal chance of imprinting a behavior or a set of expectation on an individual watching it. The media has the power to shape our viewpoints on every conceivable subject. Film models a variety of behaviors and the popularity of a film can be viewed as society at large condoning whatever action is seen on screen. Whether the behavior is mimicked or not in real-life depends on more factors including the prevailing cultural opinions and level of consequences. Behaviors that are most likely to be mimicked are ones that have the least social consequences. Many factors combine together to create social expectations. These expectations, however unreal or fair they may be, influence how we think and act. Those who do not conform risk being labeled as outcasts and misfits because they dare go against the perceived status quo. This can collectively create a culture that relies on stereotypes to categorize people as opposed to judging an individual based on a variety of attributes.

Within the world of media, one of the most ubiquitous forms of entertainment is film. The most popular films provide an insight into what people feel is worth enjoying as a shared experience. The more people have seen a film the more possible connections there are out in the world. It is through connections between individuals that people feel validated and included in society. Sharing in the liking, or dislike, of a specific film allows those possible connections to come to fruition. This is precisely why studying popular culture, specifically popular films, is important.

Popular culture is momentary and ever changing, which makes it hard to pin down. However, the very nature of popular culture, the reason why it changes, is exactly why it should be studied. Even those who dislike popular culture are aware of it because it is inescapable. Film provides a way to peer into popular culture. Films provide a snapshot in time because they

illustrate not only what is popular, but also what is acceptable behavior within any given time period. However, it is difficult to understand trends when exploring decades of films to understand their similarities and differences. Whether the changes observed are for better or for worse depends upon the perceptions as shaped by the worldview of the author, though subjective differences may exist between scholars and people in general.

Building on the ideas of modeling put forth in social learning theory is the idea of forming a "self" or an individual's own set of unique personal characteristics. Social identity scholars, including Sheldon Stryker and George Herbert Mead, elaborate on the idea we perform the roles assigned to us by our society. Our own roles also dictate how we judge others, often making snap judgments with little information. Film, as part of the mass media influence, has the power to influence the creation of "self." Films model social behaviors, and a film's popularity indicates the social acceptability of such behaviors. Relying on gender generalizations enables a film to create the greatest possible identification. In doing so, a film also reduces the complexity of human behavior into stereotypes. By creating one-dimensional stereotypes, films introduce and perpetuate stereotypes that become widely accepted as partial truths due to the ubiquity of film in America.

I have tried to allow the films to speak as much as possible but it is inevitable that what I see and hear is colored by my European childhood and subsequent American experience. Neither gender is free of societal pressure to fit into pre-established boxes. It is important to study both male and female characters together to understand the interplay of gendered expectations. As complexity increases in both male and female character portrayals it is possible to see progress in overall gender portrayals.

The results here are but the beginning of deeper scholarship into the evolution of gender portrayals in popular film. They demonstrate a consistent climb for women toward equality on screen as well as evidence that women still have a way to go before reaching equal representation. Men have shown a steadier gender portrayal comparatively, but evidence suggests that after the introduction of the flawed hero the evolution of male portrayals has stagnated. Film's penchant for showing each character as one-dimensional instead of at least some of the multiple layers that exist in reality is a disservice to both male and female gender portrayals. Only a part of this can be attributed to the time constraints filmmakers face in their movement of their stories forward. It is hoped that gender portrayals in film will continue to evolve and that the gap in acceptable gender behavior will continue to diminish as the realization grows that both men and women are capable of the same actions and the same emotions on screen.

4.2 Limitations

A primary limitation of this thesis is the small number of films that have been studied. The limit of two films per decade had to be implemented due to time constraints. The hope is that this thesis will provide a foundation on which future research projects will be built. One of the ways to address this limitation for future researchers is to increase the number of films studied for each decade. This will allow for the possibility of more accurate conclusions, as two films per decade only enable this thesis to make inferences.

Another limitation of this thesis is that it did not address the studios and the behind-the-scenes personnel who create these films, such as the writers, directors, and producers. This aspect would provide another layer of information to this thesis because what is seen on screen is inextricably linked to what happens behind the scenes.

This thesis focused on gender portrayals in relation to the primary male character and female character only. This is a limitation because it excludes other potentially important characters from which to draw data. The focus in this thesis was also on the general impression of gender portrayals as a function of time. A more specific look into various aspects of gender as a function of time would similarly enhance its findings.

The hope is that this thesis has provided a concrete foundation on the topic of gender portrayals in popular films between 1950 and 2012. With a solid foundation, there is hope that future research will be able to build upon and expand the topics and conclusions introduced here.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Avni, S. (2005, August 11). Ten Hollywood movies that get women right. http://alternet.org. Retrieved on June 28th, 2013, from http://www.alternet.org/story/24026/ten_hollywood_movies_that_get_women_right

Bandura, A. (1965). "Influence of models' reinforcement contingencies on the acquisition of imitative responses." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 1 (6): 589-595.

_____, (1971). *Social Learning Theory*. New York, NY: General Learning Press.

Barner, M. R. (1999). Sex-role stereotyping in FCC mandated children's educational television. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, 43*(4), 551-564.

Behm-Morawitz, E., & Mastro, D. E. (2008). Mean girls? The influence of gender portrayals in teen movies on emerging adults' gender-based attitudes and beliefs. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly, 85*(1), 131-146.

Bleakley, A., Jamieson, P. E., & Romer, D. (2012). Trends of sexual and violent content by gender in top-grossing U.S. films, 1950-2006. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 51*(1), 73-79.

Brewer, H. (unknown). List of gender stereotypes. http://www.healthguidance.org. Retrieved on June 17th, 2013, from http://www.healthguidance.org/entry/15910/1/List-of-Gender-Stereotypes.html

Brooks, L. (2011). *Story Engineering*. Cincinnati, OH: Writer's Digest Books.

Brooks-Gunn, J. & Matthews, W. S. (1979). *He and She: How Children Develop Their Sex Role Identity*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Cohen, P. M. (2010). What have clothes got to do with it?: Romantic comedy and the female gaze. *Southwest Review, 95*(1/2), 78-88.

Collins, R. L. (2011). Content analysis of gender roles in media: Where are we now and where should we go? *Sex Roles, 64(3-4)*, 290-298.

Davidson, E. S., Yasuna, A., & Tower, A. (1979). The effects of television cartoon on sex-role stereotyping in young girls. *Child Development, 50*(2), 597-600.

Dermietzel, Will. (2013, Jan 8). The objectification and gender stereotyping of men and women in film and television. http://www.shadowlocked.com. Retrieved on June 17th, 2013, from http://www.shadowlocked.com/201301082901/features/the-objectification-and-gender-stereotyping-of-men-and-women-in-film-and-television.html

Dirks, T. (unknown). Film history by decade. http://www.filmsite.org. Retrieved on June 17th, 2013, from http://www.filmsite.org/filmh.html

Dundes, L. (2001). Disney's modern heroine Pocahontas: Revealing age-old gender stereotypes and role discontinuity under a façade of liberation. *The Social Science Journal, 38*(3), 353-365.

Elasmar, M., Hasegawa, K., & Brain. M. (1999). The portrayal of women in U.S. prime time television. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, 43*(1), 20-34.

England, D. E., Descartes, L., & Collier-Meek, M. A. (2011). Gender role portrayal and the Disney princesses. *Sex Roles, 64,* 555-567.

Filmandmedia12. Gender roles and stereotypes found in Disney films. http://www.filmandmedia12.wikispaces.com. Retrieved on June 17th, 2013, from http://filmandmedia12.wikispaces.com/Gender+Roles+and+Stereotypes+Found+in+Disney+Films

Friedman, C. (2012, October 25). Horror films wrongly extend male, female stereotypes, even in cases of sarcasm. http://www.dailynebraskan.com. Retrieved on June 28th, 2013, from http://www.dailynebraskan.com/opinion/article_907f81e6-1e53- 11e2-b333-001a4bcf6878.html

Frieze, I. H., Parsons, J. E., Johnson, P. B., Ruble, D. N., & Zellman, G. L. (1978). *Women and Sex Roles: A Social Psychological Perspective*. New York, NY: W. W. Norton and Company.

Furia, S. R., & Biebly, D. D. (2009). Bombshells on film: Women, military films, and hegemonic gender ideologies. *Popular Communication, 7*(4), 208-224.

Gibson, A. (2008, February). Why men should care about gender stereotypes. *The F Word*. Retrieved from http://www.thefword.org.uk/features/2008/02/men_stereotypes

Gilpatric, K. (2010). Violent female action characters in contemporary American cinema. *Sex Roles, 62(11-12)*, 734-746.

Goudreau, J. (2011). The 10 worst stereotypes about powerful women. http://www.forbes.com. Retrieved on June 17th, 2013, from http://www.forbes.com/sites/jennagoudreau/2011/10/24/worst-stereotypes-powerful-women-christine-lagarde-hillary-clinton/

Greenwood, D. N. (2007). Are female action heroes risky role models? Character identification, idealization, and viewer aggression. *Sex Roles, 57*(9-10), 725-732.

Guerilla Girls. (2003). *Bitches, Bimbos, and Ballbreakers: The Guerilla Girls' Illustrated Guide to Female Stereotypes*. New York, NY: Penguin Books.

Haeberle, E. J. (1983). *The Sex Atlas*. New York, NY: Continuum.

Hammer, T. R. (2010). A content analysis of women's career choices in film. *Journal of Creativity in Mental Health, 5*(3), 260-274.

Hedley, M. (2002). The geometry of gendered conflict in popular film: 1986-2000. *Sex Roles, 47*(5&6), 201-217.

Hedley, M. (2002). Gendered conflict resolution in popular film: Epiphanies of female deference. *Journal of American and Comparative Cultures, 25*(3-4), 363-374.

Hoffner, C. & Buchanan, M. (2005). Young adults' wishful identification with television characters: The role of perceived similarity and character attributes. *Media Psychology, 7*(4), 325-351.

Hoover, T. K. (2010). *The Good, the Bad, and the Beautiful: Motherhood, Occupational Prestige and the Roles of Women in Hollywood Films of the 1940s and 1950s*. Retrieved from WorldCat Dissertations (OCLC: 692410288).

Keegan, R. (2013, May 13). Where have all the women gone in movies? http://www.latimes.com. Retrieved on June 17th, 2013, from http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/movies/moviesnow/la-et-mn-women-film-20130513,0,2661695.story

King, N. (2008). Generic womanhood: Gendered depictions in cop action cinema. *Gender and Society, 22*(2), 238-260.

Kirsh, Steven J. (2010). Violent media part 2: Traditional screen media. In *Media and Youth: A Developmental Perspective* (pp. 213-232). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

Klos, D. M. (2012). The status of women in the U.S. media 2013. Women's Media Center.

Kolbenschlag, M. (1990). *Kiss Sleeping Beauty Good-Bye*. New York, NY: Harper Collins.

Lauzen, M. M., Dozier, D. M., & Horan, N. (2008). Constructing gender stereotypes through social roles in prime-time television. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, 52*(2), 200-214.

Levy, E. (1991). The American dream of family in film: From decline to a comeback. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies, 22*(2), 187-204.

Magoulick, M. (2006). Frustrating female heroism: Mixed messages in Xena, Nikita, and Buffy. *Journal of Popular Culture, 39*(5), 729-755.

Media Smarts. Common stereotypes of men in media. http://www.mediasmarts.ca. Retrieved on June 17th, 2013, from http://mediasmarts.ca/gender-representation/men-and-masculinity/common-stereotypes-men-media

Mendelson, S. (2013, April 18). How Hollywood markets to women by reinforcing gender stereotypes. http://www.forbes.com. Retrieved on June 17th, 2013, from http://www.forbes.com/sites/scottmendelson/2013/04/18/how-hollywood-markets-to-women-by-reinforcing-gender-stereotypes/

Mlawski, S. (2008, August 18). Why strong female characters are bad for women. [Web log post]. Retrieved from http://www.overthinkingit.com/2008/08/18/why-strong-female-characters-are-bad-for-women/

Mlawski, S. (2010, October 11). The female character flowchart [Web log post]. Retrieved from http://www.overthinkingit.com/2010/10/11/female-character-flowchart/

Neuendorf, K. A., Gore, T. D., Dalessandro, A., Janstova, P., & Snyder-Suhy, S. (2010). Shaken and stirred: A content analysis of women's portrayals in James Bond films. *Sex Roles, 62*(11-12), 747-761.

Oliver, M. B., Sargent, S. L., & Weaver III, J. B. (1998). The impact of sex and gender role self-perception on affective reactions to different types of film. *Sex Roles, 38*(1&2), 45-62.

Perry, M. (2013, June 22). Ticky tacky gender stereotypes in films. http://www.margaretperry.org. Retrieved on June 28th, 2013, from http://margaretperry.org/ticky-tacky-gender-stereotypes-in-films/

Powers, S. P., Rothman, D. J., & Rothman, S. (1993). Transformation of gender roles in Hollywood movies: 1946-1990. *Political Communication, 10*(3), 259-283.

Robinson, T., Callister, M., Magoffin, D., & Moore, J. (2007). The portrayal of older characters in Disney animated films. *Journal of Aging Studies, 21*(3), 203-213.

Royo-Vela, M., Aldas-Manzano, J., Küster, I., & Vila, N. (2008). Adaptation of marketing activities to cultural and social context: Gender role portrayals and sexism in Spanish commercials. *Sex Roles, 58*(5-6), 379-390.

Rudy, R. M., Popova, L., & Linz, D. G. (2010). The context of current content analysis of gender roles: An introduction to a special issue. *Sex Roles, 62(11-12)*, 705-720.

Sapolsky, B. S., Molitor, F., & Luque, S. (2003). Sex and violence in slasher films: Re-examining the assumptions. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly, 80*(1), 28-38.

Sharrett, C. (2009). Death of the strong, silent type: The achievement of "Brokeback Mountain". *Film International, 7*(1), 16-27.

Signorielli, N. & Kahlenberg, S. (2001). Television's world of work in the nineties. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, 45*(1), 4-22.

Sklar, R. (1994). *Movie-Made America: A Cultural History of American Movies*. New York, NY: Vintage Books.

Slater, P. (2008). Are boys being trained for obsolescence? *ReVision, 30*(1&2), 64-68.

Smith. J. (2013). Normalizing male dominance: Gender representation in 2012 films. http://www.griid.org. Retrieved on June 17th, 2013, from http://griid.org/2013/02/12/normalizing-male-dominance-gender-representation-in-2012-films/

Smith, S. L. & Choueiti, M. (2010). Gender disparity on screen and behind the camera in family films. Los Angeles, CA: Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media.

Smith, S. L., & Cook, C. A. (2008). Gender stereotypes: An analysis of popular films and TV. Los Angeles, CA: Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media.

Smith, S. L., Choueiti, M., Granados, A., & Erickson, S. (2008). Asymmetrical academy awards? A look at gender imbalance in best picture nominated films from 1977 to 2006. Unpublished data.

Smith, S. L., Granados, A., Choueiti, M., Erickson, S., & Noyes, A. (2010). Changing the status quo: Industry leaders' perceptions of gender in family films. Los Angeles, CA: Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media.

Smith, S. M., McIntosh, W. D., & Bazzini, D. G. (1999). Are the beautiful good in Hollywood? An invetigation of the beauty-and-goodness stereotype in film. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology, 21*(1), 69-80.

Smith, S.L., Pieper, K. M., Granados, A., & Choueiti, M. (2010). Assessing gender-related portrayals in top-grossing G-rated Films. *Sex Roles, 62*(11/12), 774-786.

Stankiewicz, Julie M. & Francine Rosselli. (2008). Women as sex objects and victims in print advertisements. *Sex Roles*, *58*(7-8), 579-589.

Stryker, S.. (2008). From Mead to a Structural Symbolic Interactionism and Beyond**.** *The Annual Review of Sociology, 34,* 15-31.

Tasker, Y. M. (1995). *Spectacular Bodies: Gender, Genre and the Action Cinema*. Retrieved from WorldCat Dissertations (OCLC: 557359217).

Taylor, L. D. & Setters, T. (2011). Watching aggressive, attractive, female protagonists shapes gender roles for women among male and female undergraduate viewers. *Sex Roles, 65*, 35-46.

Tiegs, T. J., Perrin, P. B., Kaly, P. W., & Heesacker, M. (2007). My place or yours? An inductive approach to sexuality and gender role conformity. *Sex Roles, 56*, 449-456.

Tilly, C. (1989). *Big Structures, Large Processes, Huge Comparisons*. New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation.

TT10. (2011, August 4). 10 gender stereotypes explained in the movies. http://totallytop10.com. Retrieved on June 28th, 2013, from http://www.totallytop10.com/entertainment/movies/gender-stereotypes-in-the- movies

Vasquez, L. (2002). *The Female Gaze in Narrative Cinema and Autobiographical Documentary Films*. Retrieved from WorldCat Dissertations (OCLC: 86107328).

Welsh, A. (2010). On the perils of living dangerously in the slasher horror film: Gender differences in the association between sexual activity and survival. *Sex Roles, 62(11-12)*, 762-773.

West, C. and Zimmerman D. H. (1987) "Doing Gender." *Gender and Society*, 1, 125-151.