

Increasingly Violent but Still Sexy: A Decade of Central Female Characters in Top-Grossing Hollywood and Bollywood Film Promotional Material

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This study examines the depiction of central female characters (CFCs) in promotional film posters and trailers from top-grossing Hollywood and Bollywood films from 2004 to 2013, focusing on gender stereotypes, sexualization, and aggression. Whereas Bollywood characters tended to be more sexualized, more fit, and less prominent, Hollywood characters appeared more frequently but were increasingly unrealistic. Typically occupying the role of attractive love interests, CFCs tended to display more aggressive behavior over time. Attractive, aggressive CFCs may reinforce and challenge gender role expectations, promoting the “superwoman” ideal. Findings are discussed in terms of objectification, globalization, cultivation, and social cognitive theory.

Keywords: media effects, content analysis, gender roles, sexualization, aggression

Science fiction adventure film *The Hunger Games: Catching Fire* (Jacobson, Kilik, & Lawrence, 2013) was the top-grossing Hollywood film in 2013. The film features 16-year-old female protagonist Katniss Everdeen as the winner of the annual death sport called the Hunger Games and the leader of a nascent rebellion. The question remains whether this character is representative of evolving portrayals of women in film. Research has suggested that exposure to media messages featuring an attractive, aggressive female protagonist may both challenge and reinforce gender stereotypes and contribute to aggressive tendencies through wishful identification (Greenwood, 2007; Taylor & Setters, 2011). In addition, some researchers have claimed that the reported increase in delinquent behavior among American adolescent girls may be attributable to “glorified portrayals of girls and women in movies and on television as increasingly violent but still sexy” (Goodkind, Wallace, Shook, Bachman, & O’Malley, 2009, p. 893).

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One medium in which such portrayals can be observed are movies, which can both reflect and influence cultural norms and values (Bleakley, Jamieson, & Romer, 2012). Films might be expected to differ, however, according to cultural context and offer insight into global mediascapes. Such differences would be expected when comparing the two largest film-producing systems in the world: the U.S. mass-market film industry, or Hollywood, and the Indian mass-market Hindi-language film industry, or Bollywood (Thussu, 2008). Although the term *Bollywood* is used here to refer to the Hindi film industry, we acknowledge that the term is controversial in its origin and history.

Mass media has been identified as a source of sexual socialization for adolescents and young adults in North America and Europe (e.g., Bleakley, Hennessy, Fishbein, & Jordan, 2011; Kahlor & Morrison, 2007). Bollywood films, in particular, are considered to be one of the primary sources of socialization for Indian adolescents (Verma & Saraswathi, 2002), likely a result of their popularity and extensive film consumption in India that cuts across all demographics (Thussu, 2008). Thus, it is plausible that sex and gender-related beliefs and attitudes among adolescents and young adults in India also could be influenced by mass media. Systematic analyses of depictions of women in films from these two industries, however, are rare. Several critical studies suggest that depictions of women in Bollywood films are problematic and mirror cultural expectations pertaining to gender norms held by Indians (e.g., Chudasama et al., 2013; Manohar & Kline, 2014). Further research into such depictions and how they might differ as a result of cultural context is warranted.

Movie trailers are among the most important factors influencing viewers' selection of movies, and they provide useful information about movies to consumers (DeSilva, 1998). Trailers are carefully crafted productions that are typically brief (about 30 seconds to 3 minutes) and designed to capture an audience's attention and encourage viewer selection (Oliver & Kalyanaraman, 2006). Film promotional materials reach wider audiences than films, and they influence viewer selection. Building on existing content analytical studies on the depiction of women in film, the present study examines the depiction of central female characters (CFCs) in promotional materials (i.e., movie trailers and posters) from top-grossing U.S. and Hindi films from 2004 to 2013, focusing on gender stereotypes, sexualization, and aggressive behavior. Although we examine the nature of the content itself rather than its influence on the audience, cultivation effects and social cognitive theory serve as the theoretical framework because they shape audience understandings and perceptions.

Literature Review

The Portrayal of Women in Media Content

Prominence

Women have traditionally been underrepresented (Bleakley et al., 2012; Collins, 2011; Neuendorf, Gore, Dalessandro, Janstova, & Snyder-Suhy, 2010) and stereotypically represented (Gilpatrick, 2010) in films. The average number of CFCs in top-grossing U.S. movies from 1950 to 2006 has remained relatively stable, with significantly fewer female than male characters despite trends indicating that women have increasing political, cultural, and social influence (Howden & Meyer, 2011). When present,

women may or may not play prominent roles. Although women are on-screen less often than men, when they do appear, they are more likely to be involved in sexual behavior and, increasingly, violence (Bleakley et al., 2012).

Nature of Portrayal

Besides frequency of depiction, Collins (2011) underscores the need to examine the nature of portrayals of women in media as well. Studies have found that the portrayal of women in media, including film, tends to conform to a narrow range of gender stereotypes. Women in media are consistently sexualized and often depicted in traditional roles (e.g., domestic, relationship partner, and sexual gatekeeper) where they occupy positions in which they are subordinate to men (e.g., Das, 2011; Gilpatric, 2010). They are also depicted as being thin (e.g., Greenberg, Eastin, Hofschire, Lachlan, & Brownell, 2003; Stern & Mastro, 2004) and sexualized (e.g., Oliver, Banjo, & Kim, 2003). This is true for television (e.g., Greenberg et al., 2003), movies (e.g., Oliver et al., 2003), music videos (e.g., Sherman & Dominick, 1986), and advertisements (e.g., Stern & Mastro, 2004).

In addition to this narrow range of gender stereotypes, a critical-cultural evaluation of women in film suggests that narrative structure depends on the passive role of women and the active role of men. Mulvey (1975) asserted that, from a feminist perspective, women are on display as erotic objects for both the characters within the narrative and the audience. Moreover, the male protagonist controls events, forwards the story, and is depicted as the representative of power within this traditional narrative. This power is partly derived from possessing the erotic gaze directed at the female figure (Mulvey, 1975). Further, in an examination of the role of women in film, Haskell (1987) described the depiction of female characters as overtly sexual or innately weak, or both; women in film exist primarily as a prop to develop the story line or enhance the value of male characters. Thus, Haskell (1987) called for more detailed female characters with lives that exist outside of the supporting role they play for men.

Aggressive Behavior

Violence may be one potentially counterstereotypical pattern of the depiction of women. Violence is stereotypically associated with masculinity, assertiveness, and strength (Morrison & Halton, 2009). Violent female action characters in American films, however, violate few gender stereotypes. Most assist the male action hero as a sidekick and play his love interest (Gilpatric, 2010). Women continue to be depicted in stereotypical and traditional roles in the media of other countries as well, including India, for example (Das, 2011). In movies, women are increasingly depicted engaging in aggression or violence (Bleakley et al., 2012). This aggression is more likely to be verbal than physical (Coyne & Archer, 2004), though physical aggression is increasingly common (Bleakley et al., 2012). Even more often, women are depicted engaging in sexual behavior. In one analysis of top-grossing movies, female characters were twice as likely as male characters to be depicted engaging in sexual behavior (Bleakley et al., 2012).

Emergence of the Attractive, Aggressive Central Female Character

Recently, films have combined these traits in the form of attractive, aggressive CFCs (AACFCs). These CFCs are usually portrayed with stereotypically masculine traits of aggression and assertiveness while conforming to stereotypical notions of female beauty (Taylor & Setters, 2011). The combination of these features promotes problematic gender role expectations among viewers (Taylor & Setters, 2011). Specifically, watching AACFCs causes viewers to increase their endorsement of a "superwoman ideal" (see Hart & Kenny, 1997) for all women, to expect women to excel in both stereotypically masculine and stereotypically feminine domains. Identification with these CFCs has also been found to result in greater aggressive tendencies among young women viewers (Greenwood, 2007). Further, media scholars express concern over the linking of sexuality and aggression (Bryant & Miron, 2006), asserting that the combination of both elements has the potential for particularly enhanced, and noxious, effects for viewers due to exposure to highly physically arousing media content (Linz & Donnerstein 1994). In addition to exposure to potentially highly arousing content, media effects are also more pronounced when visual and/or verbal depictions relating to sex are perceived as realistic (Taylor, 2005), whereas realistic, versus fictional, depictions of violence are more influential (Atkin, 1983).

Because gender identity is, in part, constructed through social representation (Jhally, 2009), the representations of women in media can shape how women view themselves. Objectification theory asserts that girls and women are typically socialized to internalize an observer's perspective when viewing themselves (Frederickson & Roberts, 1997). This notion also encompasses the feminist critique of objectification, in which women become defined as an object for the other and subjectivity is denied (Jhally, 2009). Critics of representations of contemporary patriarchy and feminism call for the rejection of traditional notions of beauty and sexualization, arguing that such messages arise from the institutional context within which such media are produced (Jhally, 2009). However, maintaining these stereotypically feminine aspects of gender in tandem with the promotion of stereotypically masculine characteristics and behaviors for women, such as aggression, can be problematic.

The Portrayal of Women in Hindi Films

In the last three decades, India has produced more films than any other country, dominating the domestic market in India (Thussu, 2008). Bollywood, India's Hindi-language film industry, is the world's largest film industry in terms of production and viewership (Thussu, 2008). Despite the immense popularity of Bollywood films, few studies have systematically examined depictions of gender, sexuality, or violence in these films. Some of the limited work on these films indicates that women are depicted as sex objects (Derné, 1999), occupy traditionally domestic roles (Manohar & Kline, 2014), are depicted in positions that are subordinate to men (Dasgupta, 1996), and are often victims of sexual harassment and sexual violence (Manohar & Kline, 2014; Ramasubramanian & Oliver, 2003). Sexual depictions in Indian films are particularly salient to Indian viewers because sexuality is rarely discussed outside of the cinematic context (Derné, 1999). This content is problematic; an analysis of nine feature Hindi films from the late 1990s revealed that 60% of sexual scenes contained sexual violence. The victim was generally the "heroine," and the perpetrator, the film's "hero" (Ramasubramanian & Oliver, 2003). This is consistent with traditional notions of gender in India that emphasize women being submissive and men being

aggressive in social relationships. Consistent with research on female characters in U.S. action films (Gilpatric, 2010), the hero and heroine were generally romantically involved, suggesting that aggression toward women is normative behavior in romantic relationships (Ramasubramanian & Oliver, 2003). More recently, a content analysis of sexual assault scenes in 24 Hindi films from 2000 to 2012 indicated that perpetrators were often killed by their victims or the victim's family, suggesting a portrayal of women seeking justice through violence (Manohar & Kline, 2014).

The depiction of women as sex objects occupying traditional roles yet coupled with aggressive behavior is a cause for concern given existing research on the potentially harmful effects of such depictions on young Western female viewers (e.g., Greenwood, 2007; Taylor & Setters, 2011). Despite the paucity of research on the effects of exposure to Hindi film content on young Indian viewers' gender-related attitudes and gender role expectations, research suggests that these depictions typically reflect Indian cultural beliefs and expectations (Manohar & Kline, 2014). Survey research indicates that most Indian working women feel restricted by traditional gender role expectations and social stereotypes (Naqvi, 2011). Findings from a survey of Indian undergraduates also reflect gender inequalities in attitudes and beliefs about rape and rape myths among the majority of the sample (Chudasama et al., 2013). Traditional gender stereotypes still hold sway in Indian society with widespread gender-based biases and practices (Naqvi, 2011).

A Westernized–Globalized Cultural Character

Gendered messages in Bollywood films may be changing, however. Considering the centrality of film within global media movements, Schaefer and Karan (2011) have argued that globalization forces will influence discourses produced within cinematic public spheres, with such influence apparent in Hindi cinema. This cultural globalization began in the 1990s with the easing of foreign exchange restrictions and deregulation of India's media landscape, allowing Hollywood to gain 10% of the market share in India (Thussu, 2008). This coincided with the rapid diffusion of satellite, cable television, videocassette, and DVD distribution by the end of the century, shaping the production of Hindi films (Schaefer & Karan, 2011); soon, Hollywood films began to compete with local Hindi films (Thussu, 2008). To attract the largest possible audiences, movies were infused with globalized messages for global audiences—particularly young viewers infatuated with Western lifestyles (e.g., Gokulsing & Dissanayake, 2004). For example, sexual content increased. Although sexuality was viewed as a sign of Westernization (Prasad, 1998), directors pushed for more presentations of sexuality on-screen beginning in the 1980s and accelerating after economic liberalization (Schaefer & Karan, 2011). Comparing contemporary depictions of women in top-grossing Hollywood and Bollywood films may offer insight into transnational cultural patterns and ideologies related to gender role expectations and attitudes.

Theoretical Perspectives on Media Effects

Multiple studies demonstrate that repeated exposure to gender imbalance and sexual and aggressive depictions of women may affect gender-related attitudes and beliefs (Greenwood, 2007; Taylor & Setters, 2011) in addition to normative beliefs about peers' sexual activity and violent behavior (Bleakley et al., 2011). To understand how media depictions of women as both sexual and aggressive can

influence and normalize particular gender role expectations, both the cultivation perspective and social cognitive theory are examined.

Cultivation theory asserts that media exposure cultivates beliefs and ideals about reality that reflect those in the media, contributing to a distorted perception of the world (Gerbner, 1998). Long-term exposure to media can result in cumulative effects at the cultural level (Gerbner, 1998). Although the cultivation framework has been applied to violence, it is examined here in terms of violence and gender roles. Cultivation suggests that repeated exposure to such media messages may contribute to a distorted view of the roles women should occupy and societal expectations for their appearance and behavior. Further, the depiction of women as sexualized, violent, and marginalized across different media may add to other media messages about women and cultivate a reality in which such characterizations are normative and condoned. While cultivation theory offers insight into the adoption and normalization of ideologies relating to gender role expectations by way of exposure to mass media, social cognitive theory can explain how exposure to such content can influence attitudes and behaviors in the real world through observational learning (Bandura, 2009).

Social cognitive theory suggests that media provide models of behavior from which viewers can learn (Bandura, 2009). Repeated exposure to such models fosters learning through the acquisition of cognitive schemas and scripts reflective of media content, which can then produce the imitation of depicted behaviors and shifts in norms of acceptable behavior (Bandura, 2009). For example, both short-term and long-term media influences on counter-normative behavior have been attributed to repeated media depictions of the behavior (e.g., Jamieson & Romer, 2011). Media depictions of CFCs, particularly those who are both aggressive and stereotypically attractive, warrant scrutiny because of their potential to shape and contribute to viewers' notions of stereotypes about women, gender role expectations, and sexual and aggressive behavior.

Film Promotional Materials as a Medium

Movie trailers and posters are part of the broader, modern approach to film marketing, which has been characterized as a "saturation strategy" (King, 2002). The saturation strategy involves using multiple media to make awareness of a film essentially unavoidable. Trailers themselves, whether for film or television content, are nevertheless influential; audiences infer information about the film's content and appeal from even brief trailers (Eastman & Bolls, 2000).

The presence of sexual and violent content likely has a complex effect on audience perceptions of the advertised film, and of intentions to see it. In part, such content changes expectations of the film experience, leading audiences to anticipate greater suspense and humor, though not necessarily more sex or violence (Oliver, Kalyanaraman, Mahood, & Ramasubramanian, 2007). Such favorable outcomes may contribute to the prevalence of sex in movie trailers; one content analysis found such content in nearly half of all movie trailers analyzed, including in nearly half of trailers for movies rated PG-13 (Oliver & Kalyanaraman, 2006). It is worth noting that many film scholars consider trailers to be a film medium in and of themselves; as Kernan (2004) notes, "trailers are a cinema" (p. 4; emphasis in the original).

The goal of the present study is to examine whether the cinematic depictions of women across both film industries' promotional materials present a collectively harmful message about how women are expected to behave, appear, and be treated.

Research Questions

This study uses a sample of promotional material in top-grossing Bollywood and Hollywood films from 2004 through 2013 to examine trends in the depiction of CFCs, focusing on sexualization and aggression. Given the literature on the stereotypical and sexualized depiction of women in the media, particularly in film, the following research questions are presented:

RQ1: How do the depictions of CFCs differ across top-grossing U.S. and Hindi film promotional materials, if at all?

RQ2: Do CFCs in top-grossing U.S. and Hindi film promotional materials depict gender stereotypes?

Based on research findings that show the number of female characters has increased over time despite a small increase in CFCs, the following question is posed:

RQ3: Are CFCs in top-grossing U.S. and Hindi film promotional materials featured more prominently over time?

In addition, the following questions are based on research that examines the emergence of the AACFC and the types of aggression that female characters typically show.

RQ4: Do changes in the rate of AACFCs in top-grossing Hindi film promotional material follow similar changes in the rate of AACFCs in top-grossing U.S. film promotional materials?

Finally, given the literature on aggression toward female leads by male leads in Hindi films, the following question is posed:

RQ5: Are CFCs victims of physical acts of aggression by male protagonists in top-grossing Hindi film promotional materials?

Method

Sample

CFCs who appeared in promotional material from top-grossing movies were analyzed. Films for the U.S. sample were identified using Box Office Mojo (<http://www.boxofficemojo.com>), a website that systematically tracks box office revenues and is a subsidiary of the Internet Movie Database (IMDb) website (<http://www.imdb.com>). The sample of Hindi films was identified using Box Office India (<http://www.boxofficeindia.com>), which tracks box office revenues for Bollywood movies. The top 10 domestic grossing films each year for 10 years from 2004 to 2013 were selected for each country. These years were chosen as the sample time frame to extend the literature on cinematic depictions of women and examine contemporary portrayals of women in Hindi films.

The three units of analysis for each film included featured CFCs and the promotional poster and trailer depicting the CFCs. A CFC was defined as a female human character central to the plot and likely to have an impact on the audience (see Bleakley et al., 2012); CFCs were identified using plot summaries and cast overviews on IMDb.com (see Gilpatric, 2010), a popular database that contains information about media programs. Only the first three CFCs deemed to be central to the plot were included (see Gilpatric, 2010). Furthermore, IMDb entries typically feature promotional material including posters and trailers. The featured poster and the first trailer listed for each film were coded. Movies without posters or those lacking discernible CFCs were excluded. When the trailer did not have English subtitles, only trailers uploaded at YouTube by movie production companies were coded.

Coded Variables

Realism, Role, and Prominence

Realism was coded as *real*, *part-real*, and *unreal* based on whether CFCs portrayed or lacked human qualities; part-real characters were those that were human but engaged in unrealistic behavior (Gilpatric, 2010). Moreover, to examine a CFC's relation to a central male character (CMC), romantic involvement (i.e., playing the role of love interest) with the CMC (Gilpatric, 2010) was coded as *none*, *CMC*, or *other*. See Figure 1 for an example of a Bollywood film poster featuring a CFC as the love interest of the CMC.

Three variables were created to assess the prominence of the CFC: focal point of the poster (the sole focus, shared focus with the CMC, not the focus), whether the CFC was seen (visible but never audible) and/or heard in the trailer (has dialogue and/or narrates), and the amount of time the CFC was featured in the trailer. Focal point was defined as being placed near the center and in the foreground of the poster. Screen time was measured both absolutely in seconds and as a proportion of the entire trailer. See Figure 2 for an example of a Bollywood film poster that does not feature any CFCs.

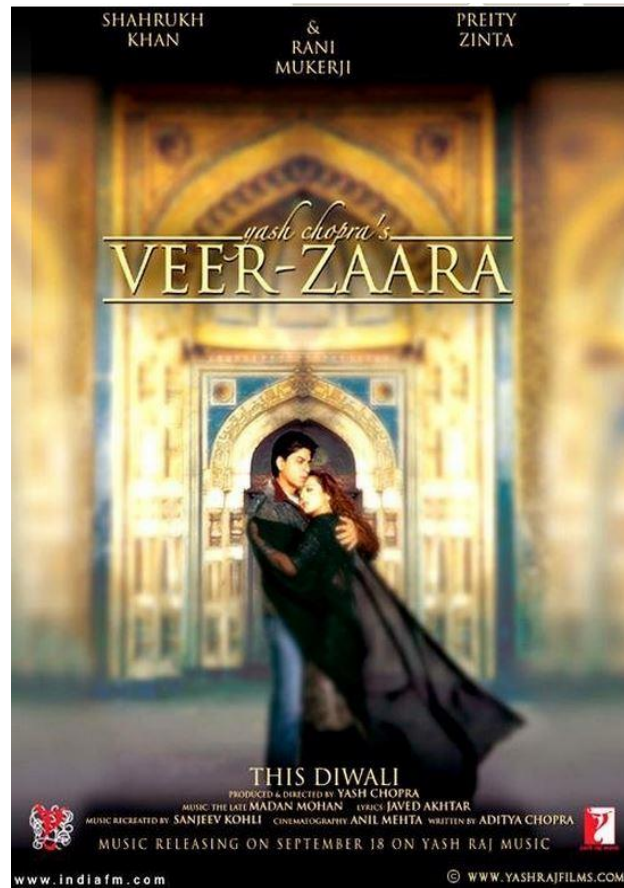


Figure 1. Bollywood film poster for Veer Zaara (2004) from IMDb.com featuring a CFC as the love interest of the CMC.

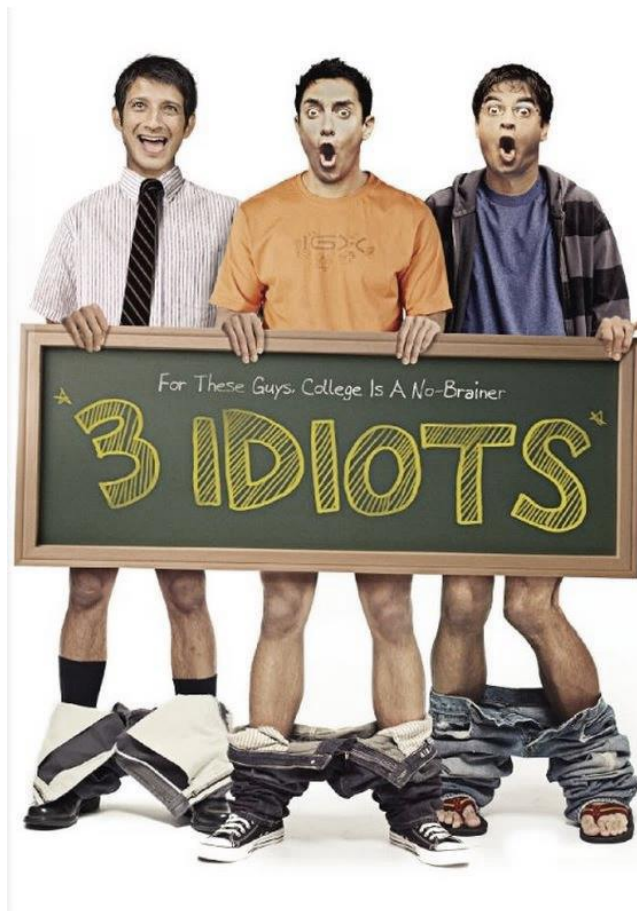


Figure 2. Bollywood film poster for Three Idiots (2009) from IMDb.com with no CFCs featured.

Attractiveness

Level of attractiveness and body type were used to code for CFCs' attractiveness (Neuendorf et al., 2010; Signorielli, McLeod, & Healy, 1994). Attractiveness was defined as the apparent physical attractiveness of the CFC (not the actress) as depicted on the poster; as in previous studies, coders were asked to rely on the commercial context in assessing level of attractiveness (Signorielli et al., 1994). This was coded as *below average/extremely unattractive* (set up as the object of ridicule or disgust), *average/attractive*, and *extremely attractive* (set up as the object of desire) (Neuendorf et al., 2010). These three categories were later collapsed into *unattractive* and *attractive* (average or extremely attractive) to simplify analyses and improve reliability. Body type included *not visible*, *out of shape* (poor posture, flabby), or *fit* (fit, slim, or muscular) (Neuendorf et al., 2010).

Sexualization

To examine the extent to which CFCs were depicted in a sexually suggestive manner or engaged in sexual behavior, we analyzed sexual suggestiveness (Coltrane & Messineo, 2000), explicitness of attire (Soley & Reid, 1988), exposure of body parts (Oliver et al., 2003), and sexual behavior (Ramasubramanian & Oliver, 2003). Sexual suggestiveness was defined as whether CFCs were depicted as sexually provocative (e.g., alluring gaze or behavior) and coded as a binary variable (Coltrane & Messineo, 2000). Attire was coded as *demure* (e.g., fully clothed without sexual suggestiveness, nontransparent traditional sari attire that reveals little beyond the midriff), *suggestive* (e.g., miniskirts, tight clothing), partially clad (e.g., lingerie, transparent clothing), or *nude* to reflect increasing levels of explicit attire (Soley & Reid, 1988). Exposure of the chest, legs, midriff, and/or back was coded as a binary variable, and an additional variable was created to reflect exposure of at least one of these body parts (Oliver et al., 2003). Sexual behavior in trailers was coded as a binary variable and defined as the depiction of CFCs engaging in sexual activities (e.g., having sex, kissing, engaging in sexual talk, or shown as a sexual object of other characters' gazes) (Ramasubramanian & Oliver, 2003). See Figure 3 for an example of a provocatively dressed CFC featured in the background of a Bollywood film poster.

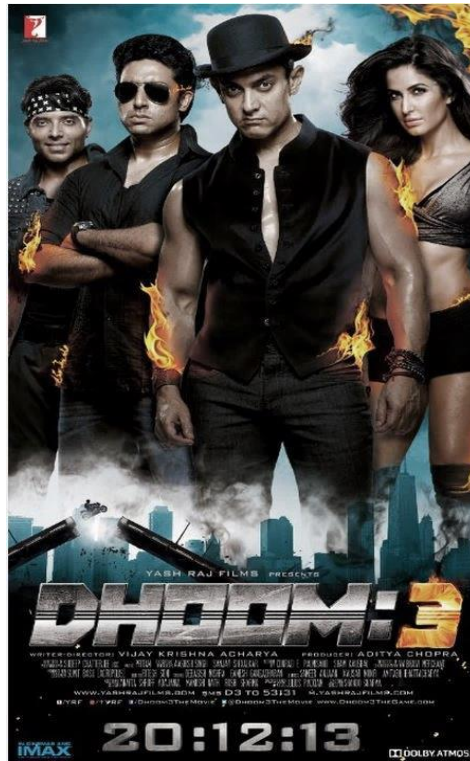


Figure 3. Bollywood film poster for Dhoon:3 (2013) from IMDb.com featuring several CMCs and a provocatively dressed CFC in the background.

Aggression

Aggressive behaviors enacted by CFCs toward other characters were classified into three categories and treated as separate binary variables: *relational/indirect/social*, *verbal* (e.g., yelling and insulting), and *physical* aggression (see Coyne & Archer, 2004). Indirect aggression involves acts in which the aggressor remains anonymous, and relational/social aggression occurs in different types of relationships and social groups and can be either overt or covert (e.g., social exclusion, malicious humor; Coyne & Archer, 2004). In addition, physically aggressive behavior enacted by CFCs toward CMCs was coded as either present or not present to determine whether female characters were victims of physically aggressive behavior by male characters. Physical acts of aggression were defined as behavior in which the aggressor makes or attempts to make some physical contact with the intention of causing injury, harm, or death; the definition excludes natural disasters, accidents, objects not attributed to a character, and expected physical acts by sport games that are not intended to seriously injure (Bushman, Jamieson, Weitz, & Romer, 2013).

Finally, an AACFC was defined as a CFC coded as either average/attractive or extremely attractive who engaged in at least one type of aggressive behavior. See Figure 4 for an example of a Hollywood film poster depicting a CFC in an aggressive pose with a weapon.



Figure 4. Hollywood film poster for The Hunger Games: Catching Fire (2013) from IMDb.com featuring a CFC in the foreground in an aggressive pose with a weapon.

Genre and Year of Release

The film genres were coded from corresponding IMDb entries. Each genre was coded as a separate binary variable. Genres included romance, comedy, drama, mystery, sci-fi/fantasy, and violent (i.e., action, adventure, crime, horror, thriller, war, and western; e.g., Oliver & Kalyanaraman, 2006). See Figures 5 and 6 for examples of promotional posters for top-grossing Hollywood films depicting fantasy and cartoon CFCs, respectively. The year of release for each top-grossing film was also coded as a continuous variable and used as a measure of time (Bleakley et al., 2012).



Figure 5. Hollywood film poster for Avatar (2009) from IMDb.com depicting a fantasy CFC in the background.

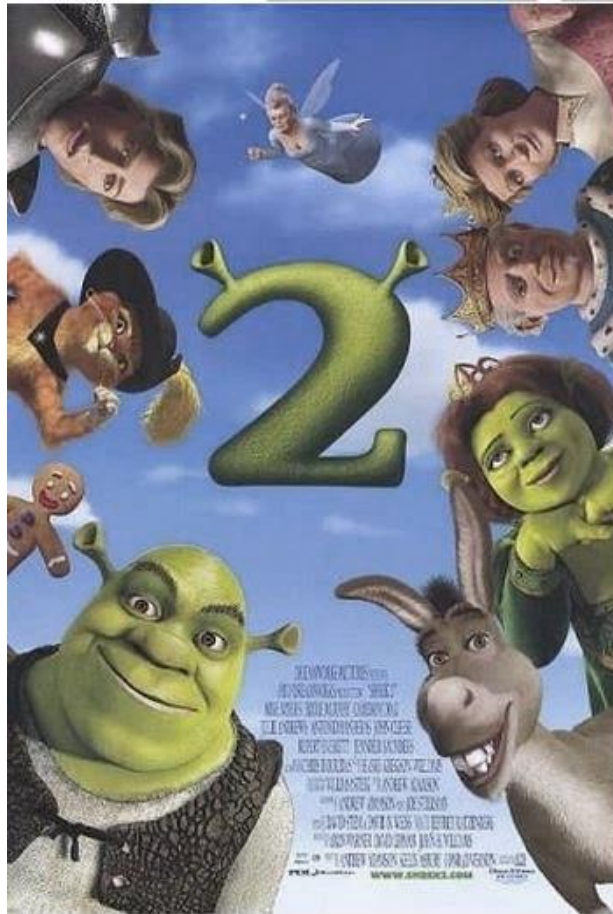


Figure 6. Hollywood film poster for Shrek 2 (2004) from IMDb.com featuring multiple characters including a cartoon CFC.

Coding Reliability

A codebook with detailed guidelines and examples was developed by the first author and used by two coders. Of the CFCs from both samples, 15% ($n = 34$) were coded independently to establish intercoder reliability. Due to the mostly categorical nature of the data, Cohen's κ (Cohen, 1960) was employed using ReCal2 software (Freelon, 2010). Cohen's κ was between 0.71 and 1.0, surpassing the 0.70 threshold generally considered to be a good indicator of reliability in exploratory research (see Neuendorf, 2002). See Table 1 for a list of reliability coefficients. Variables with Cohen's κ below 0.70 were removed from the analyses. These included demographic variables in which little information was found on IMDb, particularly for Bollywood films, and could not be used for comparison of U.S. and Hindi samples. The analysis included descriptive, χ^2 , and correlational statistics.

Table 1. Intercoder Reliability.

Variables	Specific categories (if applicable)	Cohen's κ
Realism of character		0.94
Body type		1.00
Attractiveness		1.00
Sexualization		
	Sexually suggestive pose	0.88
	Explicitness of attire	0.76
	Exposure of body parts	0.94
	Sexual behavior	0.80
	Love interest of CMC	0.90
Prominence		
	Focal point	0.88
	Seen or seen and heard	1.00
Aggressive behavior		
	Relational/indirect/social	0.71
	Verbal	0.76
	Physical	0.94
	At least one type of aggression	0.88
	Physical aggression by CMC	1.00

Results

Of the 200 top-grossing U.S. and Hindi films' promotional materials that were collected in the sample from 2004 to 2013, 6 Hindi and 13 U.S. films' promotional materials were removed from the analyses because they lacked female characters central to the plot. This resulted in a total of 227 CFCs coded from 87 U.S. and 94 Hindi films' promotional material ($N = 181$). There were a total of 85 AACFCs, with 45 from the U.S. sample and 40 from Hindi sample. Most of the films from which promotional materials were drawn in both industries featured at least one CFC among the movies' main characters. The final sample consisted of 182 trailers and 131 posters from both the U.S. and Hindi film sample—specifically, 98 trailers and 59 posters from U.S. films and 84 trailers and 72 posters from Hindi films. Even in films that have a CFC, she is often not depicted in the posters. RQ1 addressed the characteristics of CFCs in promotional material. Descriptive statistics, correlation, and χ^2 analyses were conducted to examine the differences in the depictions of CFCs across the promotional material of top-grossing U.S. and Hindi films (see Table 2).

Table 2. Characteristics of CFCs Across U.S. and Hindi Film Promotional Material.

Variables	U.S. <i>n</i> (%)	Hindi <i>n</i> (%)	Total <i>n</i> (%)	χ^2 ^a
Prominence				
Not focal point	40 (67.8)	29 (40.3)	69 (52.7)	10.66**
Shares focal point	15 (25.4)	38 (42.8)	53 (40.5)	(<i>df</i> = 2)
Sole focal point	4 (6.8)	5 (6.9)	9 (6.9)	
Seen only	19 (19.4)	56 (77.8)	75 (41.2)	41.732***
Seen and heard	79 (80.6)	28 (33.9)	107 (58.8)	
Body type				13.10*
Out of shape	3 (5.1)	0	3 (2.3)	(<i>df</i> = 2)
Fit	34 (57.6)	58 (80.6)	92 (70.2)	
Body not visible	22 (37.3)	15 (20.8)	37 (28.2)	
Attractiveness				
Unattractive	2 (3.4)	0	2 (1.5)	
Attractive	57 (96.6)	72 (100.0)	129 (97.7)	
Sexualization				
Sexually suggestive pose	25 (42.4)	59 (81.9)	84 (64.1)	22.39***
Demure attire	27 (45.8)	18 (25.0)	45 (34.3)	
Suggestive attire	19 (32.2)	34 (47.2)	53 (40.5)	
Partially clad attire	1 (1.7)	7 (9.7)	8 (6.1)	
Nude	12 (20.3)	0	12 (9.2)	
Exposure of body parts	17 (28.8)	41 (56.9)	58 (44.3)	10.40***
Sexual behavior	31 (31.6)	71 (84.5)	102 (56.0)	53.85***
Realism of character ^b				67.54***
Real	61 (54.5)	115 (100.0)	176 (77.5)	(<i>df</i> = 2)
Part real	23 (20.5)	0	23 (10.1)	
Unreal	28 (25.0)	0	28 (12.3)	
Aggressive behavior				
Relational/indirect/social	30 (30.6)	19 (22.6)	49 (26.9)	
Verbal	13 (13.2)	20 (23.8)	33 (18.1)	
Physical	25 (25.5)	30 (35.7)	55 (30.2)	
At least one type of aggression	45 (45.9)	40 (47.6)	85 (46.7)	
Physical aggression by male protagonist	5 (5.1)	11 (13.1)	16 (8.8)	
Relation to male protagonist				53.01***
Love interest of male protagonist ^b	59 (52.7)	108 (93.9)	167 (73.6)	

^a Degree of freedom for all χ^2 tests = 1 unless otherwise noted.

^b Realism of character and love interest was coded for all 227 female protagonists.

* $p \leq .05$. ** $p \leq .01$. *** $p \leq .001$.

Realism was treated as an ordinal variable such that an increase implied less realistic characters. When comparing CFCs from top-grossing films' promotional material, U.S. films' promotional material had significantly fewer realistic characters compared with Hindi films, in which all the CFCs were realistic characters. To analyze the realism of CFCs in U.S. films' promotional material over time, the year of release for each top-grossing film was used as a measure of time in correlational analyses. The results of a Spearman's rank correlation coefficient test indicated that time was significantly correlated with the depiction of realistic CFCs in top-grossing U.S. trailers only, $r_s(112) = .19, p < .05$, suggesting that CFCs in popular U.S. films' promotional material are becoming more unrealistic. This pattern is supported by previous research and highlights the increasing presence of supernatural and superhero characters in top-grossing films (Gilpatric, 2010).

RQ2 asked whether CFCs exhibited gender stereotypes. To assess gender stereotypes, the physical appearance of CFCs, indicators of sexual suggestiveness and sexual behavior, and whether CFCs were involved with CFCs romantically were analyzed. Although romantic involvement with another CFC was coded for, only heterosexual relationships were found across both Hindi and U.S. samples. CFCs from Hindi posters were significantly more likely to be fit compared with CFCs in U.S. posters. Moreover, 37.3% of CFCs' bodies in the U.S. sample and 20.8% of CFCs in the Hindi sample were not visible (i.e., covered by another character, object, or text). CFCs featured in the total sample (both Hindi and U.S.) were predominantly attractive. Correlational analyses were not significant, suggesting that the physical characteristics of CFCs have not systematically changed over the past decade.

Sexualized portrayals of CFCs on posters and trailers were also analyzed to address RQ2. Sexualized portrayals were assessed by examining whether CFCs were depicted on posters in a sexually suggestive manner, with more explicit attire, and exposing at least one of the four major body parts (chest, midriff, back, legs). Whether CFCs engaged in sexual behavior was also assessed in trailers. Chi-square analyses indicated that CFCs from Hindi posters were significantly more likely than CFCs from U.S. posters to be depicted in a sexually suggestive pose. With regard to attire, over half of the CFCs in Hindi promotional material wore either suggestive attire or were partially clad, whereas CFCs in U.S. promotional material featured more variety in their explicitness of attire, spanning the spectrum from demure to suggestive to nude. Despite featuring nude CFCs, the U.S. sample had significantly fewer CFCs exposing at least one major part of their body compared with the Hindi sample. Finally, Hindi trailers were significantly more likely than U.S. trailers to portray CFCs engaged in sexual behavior. In sum, CFCs from top-grossing Hindi film promotional material were more likely to be depicted in a sexually suggestive manner, exposing a major body part, and engaging in sexual behavior. CFCs from top-grossing U.S. film promotional material were characterized by more variety in their level of explicit attire, with less than half depicted in a sexually suggestive manner, being less likely to expose a major body part, and with less than a third engaging in sexual behavior.

CFCs' romantic involvement with CMCs was also analyzed as an indicator of whether CFCs enacted gender stereotypes (RQ2). CFCs in Hindi trailers were significantly more likely than CFCs in U.S. trailers to be romantically involved with CMCs. Although analyses revealed a significant difference, most of the CFCs across the entire sample served as the love interest of CMCs in top-grossing films over the last 10 years. In terms of gender stereotypes, correlational analyses examining these relationships over time

were nonsignificant; these findings reveal a lack of systematic change in the stereotypical depiction of CFCs in terms of their physical characteristics, sexualized depictions, and relation to CMCs—particularly for CFCs featured in Hindi film promotional materials. In light of these findings, correlational analyses were conducted to examine the prevalence of CFCs among romantic film genres since women are depicted primarily as the love interests of CMCs in the top-grossing Hindi sample. In the U.S. sample only, year of release is significantly negatively correlated with the appearance of CFCs in romance genres, $r(112) = -.25, p = .008$, and significantly positively correlated with their prevalence in the sci-fi and/or fantasy film genre, $r(112) = .32, p = .001$. Moreover, χ^2 analysis demonstrated that U.S. romance films are significantly less likely to be classified as sci-fi/fantasy films, $\chi^2(1, N = 112) = 4.51, p < .05$, suggesting that the two genres co-occur less than expected by chance. In contrast, 48% of CFCs in Hindi films were featured in romance films compared with 3% featured in sci-fi/fantasy films. These findings indicate that, over time, U.S. film CFCs appear in more sci-fi and fantasy films and fewer romance films.

RQ3 asked whether CFCs in Bollywood and Hollywood films were featured more prominently in promotional material during the sample time period. Chi-square analyses revealed that CFCs in the Hindi sample were significantly less likely than CFCs in the U.S. sample to be both seen and heard. Across both samples, only 6.9% of CFCs were likely to be featured as the sole focal point of the poster. These findings indicate that CFCs in Hindi films were not prominently featured in trailers, and CFCs in both U.S. and Hindi films are less likely to be the sole focal point in posters. Screen time was assessed by measuring the number of seconds CFCs appeared on-screen in trailers. Results indicate that the year of release is significantly correlated with the proportion of screen time occupied by CFCs in U.S. trailers, $r(98) = .28, p = .004, M = 13.73, SD = 16.48$; there is no significant correlation in Hindi trailers, $M = 17.14, SD = 18.72$. Results suggest that CFCs in U.S. trailers appear more frequently over the duration of the sample time period with no systematic change for CFCs in Hindi trailers.

RQ4 and RQ5 focused on the presence of aggressive behavior, AACFCs, and physically aggressive behavior by CMCs toward CFCs. The frequency of the three types of aggressive behavior was not significantly different across U.S. and Hindi trailers. As shown in Table 2, almost half of the CFCs from both Hindi and U.S. trailers engaged in at least one type of aggression. The lack of a significant difference suggests that top-grossing Bollywood and Hollywood films' promotional materials feature a similar number of AACFCs. Also, there was no significant correlation between the presence of AACFCs and year of release, suggesting that the presence of AACFCs has not changed systematically over time. In terms of physically aggressive behavior, year of film release was found to be significantly correlated with the depiction of physically aggressive behavior by CFCs, $r(182) = .20, p = .006$ in both Hindi and U.S. trailers. Further analyses revealed that year of release is significantly correlated with physical aggression in Hindi trailers, $r(84) = .22, p = .047$, and marginally significant in U.S. trailers, $r(98) = .197, p = .052$. These findings suggest that CFCs are engaged in more physically aggressive behavior over time, particularly in Hindi trailers. Finally, Hindi trailers had more instances of physically aggressive behavior by CMCs toward CFCs compared with U.S. trailers.

Discussion

The current study examines the depictions of women in central roles in top-grossing U.S. and Hindi film promotional materials from 2004 to 2013. The results of this analysis reveal several key similarities and differences between the promotional materials for U.S. and Hindi films. An analysis of genre reveals that CFCs in top U.S. films' promotional materials are increasingly in science fiction and fantasy films' promotional materials, whereas their presence in romantic films' promotional materials is waning. This likely reflects a general increase in the popularity of fantasy films, but it is noteworthy that these genres, traditionally dominated by males, feature CFCs. Further research into the role of genre and the perceived realism of CFCs in potential effects of media on gender stereotypes may offer more insight.

Although most films' promotional material featured CFCs, fewer films depicted these characters on film posters, especially for Bollywood films. Women in major roles in Hindi films were featured less prominently and characterized by more sexualization and stereotypical characteristics in promotional materials than were CFCs in U.S. films. Furthermore, women in top-grossing U.S. films were more likely to be both seen and heard in film trailers and appear less physically fit. These findings might initially suggest that CFCs in popular Bollywood films are reinforcing traditional gender norms compared with CFCs in popular Hollywood films; however, many stereotypes uniformly applied. Most women in both film samples were attractive, romantically linked to the CMC, and not the sole focal point of film posters. These depictions have remained largely unchanged over the last 10 years despite evolving depictions of women observed in other content analyses (e.g., Neuendorf et al., 2010).

The focus on women's attractive and fit bodies and body parts, sexually suggestive poses and explicit attire, largely being seen and not heard, and engagement in sexual behavior in popular Bollywood films' promotional material suggests that women in these films' promotional material are sexually objectified. It is possible that showing women engaging in mostly sexual behavior may contribute to the formation or activation of sexual scripts that influence norms of expected and acceptable behavior for women held by men and women according to empirical studies (see Bandura, 2009). The portrayal of women as increasingly violent but still sexualized, attractive, physically fit, and in secondary roles to male characters, particularly in Hindi films' promotional material, may reinforce gender stereotypes even as it seems to challenge them (Taylor & Setters, 2011), contributing to the likelihood of developing disordered eating behavior (Hart & Kenny, 1997). Moreover, results also revealed several instances of physically aggressive behavior by CMCs toward CFCs, supporting previous research on violence toward women in Hindi films (Ramasubramanian & Oliver, 2003). Although only 8% of the total sample of CFCs were victims of violent behavior by men in promotional trailers, instances of such behavior in the actual films may influence norms of behavior toward women in both the United States and India. Although this study cannot draw conclusions about the occurrence of the aforementioned effects because of the nature of the analysis, such potential media effects have been supported by empirical studies.

The highly sexualized and stereotypical depiction of Indian women in popular Hindi films' promotional material, coupled with the increase in physically aggressive behavior over time, echoes prior research examining India's increasingly global entertainment industry. Rampal (2007) has argued that, initially, the Bollywood film industry captivated Indians globally with extravagant family-oriented musical

dramas; however, the globalization of Western media and its influence on India's film industry has contributed to a Hollywood-inspired shift in film style. For U.S. films competing with Bollywood films for an international audience, there is a remarkable similarity in their promotional materials when it comes to aggression. Social critics in India, however, are concerned that Western cultural influences in Bollywood films threaten India's traditional values and cultural identity (Rampal, 2007). Bollywood now faces a dilemma in maintaining the economic viability of the industry while protecting and fostering traditional values (Rampal, 2007).

This study is not without limitations. Top-grossing Bollywood and Hollywood films' promotional material from 2004 to 2013 were chosen to represent popular films and contemporary depictions of CFCs. Although looking at previous decades leading up to this time period would be revealing, the Bollywood film industry is relatively new as a global film industry. For this reason, a 30-year comparison may provide some insight into the evolving depiction of women in each film industry separately but may be misleading when comparing the two. In addition, the sample was limited to movie posters and film trailers. Though promotional materials such as film trailers are influential in movie selection (Oliver et al., 2003), analysis of the content of the actual films would provide a more complete picture of the portrayal of women in cinema. Future research could also benefit from using multiple crowd-sourced and official websites in addition to IMDb.com for more comprehensive information on films.

The reality of media content fragmentation should also be considered when assessing the impact of mainstream media on audiences. The increase in overall content and growing popularity of content aggregators (e.g., Netflix and Hulu) facilitate the distribution and consumption of content that is geared toward personal preferences (Webster & Ksiazek, 2012). Viewers' tendencies to select and consume media that meet their needs (i.e., selective exposure) has the potential to transform the mass audience into segmented groups of viewers (Webster & Ksiazek, 2012). Moreover, distinguishing between sex talk and sexual behavior may be important to understanding these films' influence given research demonstrating that sexual talk is more likely to influence sexual attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors (Taylor, 2005). Finally, this study examined media content and can therefore only suggest the potential impact of depictions of women on viewers. Experimentation and survey research are needed to demonstrate the actual effects and draw conclusions about the relationship between the observed depictions and viewers' gender role expectations and stereotypes.

Future research in this area would benefit from more careful analysis linking aggression and sex. Potential avenues for future studies include examining representations of sexual violence in contemporary films, building on previous studies, and determining whether CFCs are victims or perpetrators of aggression toward CMCs rather than examining female characters as only potential victims. This study also provides a platform for future empirical research examining exposure to and/or selective consumption of such content and its relationship to gender role expectations and various types of sexism (hostile, benevolent, etc.) among other related perceptions and evaluations. Because the films from which the promotional materials were drawn in this sample were among the top-grossing films from renowned Hollywood and Bollywood film industries, the depiction of women in these films and their promotional materials are subject to wide exposure and a large global influence. Despite differences in the depiction of women in Hollywood and Bollywood film promotional material, the findings of this study suggest an

increase in physically aggressive behavior by CFCs. Further empirical research is needed to determine whether women's roles in cinema have shifted from playing the part of victims to taking on the role of perpetrators; whether women are, in fact, taking charge or power is equated with violence; and whether violence is constructed as sexy and the implications of such depictions for global audiences.

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