

The Victimization of Women in Film: Trends in Film Portrayal of the Victimization of
Women by Decade

Thesis by

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Abstract

A critical review of the literature related to the portrayal of women and the feminist film theory by researchers such as Andersen and Collins (2015), McDonald (2007), and Chaudhuri (2006), proposes that female character victimization is disparately high when compared to male character victimization. It further suggests that the rate of female character victimization is on the rise, that each new generation of filmmaker adds to the level and frequency of victimization that their female characters experience. To test this theory, it was hypothesized that female victimization in films changes over time and a mixed method study was used. The themes of victimization were observed in films across three decades (1950s, 1980s, and 2000s) and across the genres of action/adventure, comedy, family, horror, and romance. This study sampled $N=30$ films, with $n=10$ films from each decade and $n=2$ films per genre per decade. This sample size was supported by Brase and Brase (2011) who verified that 30 is the minimum sample size to accurately assess the normal distribution of a data set. The results suggested that changes in victimization themes did occur across the selected decades. Some of the theme variations included who was perpetrating the violence, why it was being perpetrated, and what form it took (physical, sexual, emotional, or verbal). Additional research is still needed to fully understand the trends in female character victimization in films.

The Victimization of Women in Film: Trends in Film Portrayal of the Victimization of
Women by Decade

All forms of media are guilty of portraying and normalizing the physical, sexual, and psychological abuse and victimization of women; however, the motion picture industry has the worst reputation for portraying violence against women (Flood & Pease, 2009). An overwhelming majority of movies illustrates some form of female oppression, victimization, abuse, or objectification. Even so-called family films often include elements of female victimization, abuse, and murder in their storylines. The following four films are examples of family films with elements of female victimization, abuse, and murder: (1) *Finding Nemo* (2003), the mother fish is killed by a barracuda; (2) *Aladdin* (1992), Jafar uses force and coercion to get physically intimate with Princess Jasmine, forcing her to kiss him and finally, to marry him; and (3) *Anne of Green Gables* (2002), Anne is psychologically taunted and tormented by the boys in her peer group. As the target audience for a film increases in age, the types and the severity of the victimization of female character escalate. For example, in the popular *Twilight* (2009) film series, the abusive relationship between Edward and Bella is romanticized, suggesting that when a woman truly loves a man, she is willing to risk her personal safety. This message is delivered by Edward's continuous *remorse* for Bella's physical injuries caused by her affiliation with him. Yet, like many women who are caught in an abusive relationship, Bella is blinded by love and refuses to leave the situation. What these examples illustrate is that films perpetuate both the commonality of the victimization of women, and perhaps even more problematically, the acceptance of violence against women.

As the prior examples illustrate, the film industry has a long history of using and victimizing female characters to promote the archetypical relationship between dominant males and submissive females (Stankiewicz & Rosselli, 2008). This victimization process portrays women as helpless creatures, mindless objects, and as perpetual children in adult bodies who are in need of male supervision and protection. In addition to portraying women as weak and submissive creatures, the media has also characterized females as toys, sex objects, and slaves for male characters (Stankiewicz & Rosselli, 2008). These portrayals both reflect actual abuse and victimization that is taking place in society and justify it as a social norm.

The purpose of this study is to identify trends in female victimization in film across three selected decades, 1950, 1980, and 2000. The content from films produced during these decades is analyzed using a feminist theory lens and Patricia Hill Collins' Matrix of Domination model (Anderson & Collins, 2015). This study has three primary objectives. The first objective is to establish if movies reflect or create trends in the victimization of women. This objective is important to achieve, because it determines what role moviemakers play in regards to violence against women trends. The second objective is to bring awareness to the way films normalize and justify female victimization. This objective is important, because it will start a dialogue about the negative impact that movies can have at perpetuating violence against women. The final objective of this study is to inspire filmmakers to more accurately portray female characters. This objective is the most idealistic, and it will hopefully encourage filmmakers to not only create more dynamic and challenging roles for actresses, but will also create storylines that empower women instead of victimizing them.

To guide this study, the following primary research question was posed, "How does the frequency and severity of female character victimization change over time in films?" To answer this question, 10 films from each of the identified decades were analyzed in regards to: (1) how are women victimized in films; (2) what common victimization themes are present in specific movie genres, such as horror, action/adventure, comedy, family, and romance; (3) what victimization themes were unique in specific genres, such as horror, action/adventure, comedy, family, and romance; and (4) how do victimization themes change over time and how do they stay the same? The information collected from answering these questions was then used to test the null hypotheses, "H1₀: The victimization of women portrayed in films is not increasing over time." The results from this study showed that while the severity of female victimization portrayed in films did not vary greatly over time, the victimization themes did.

History of the Movies

The earliest moving pictures appeared in make-shift theaters and tents at the end of the 19th century (Sklar, 2012). These films were very basic and generally depicted simple scenes, such as trains pulling into a station, people dancing, and simple human movements (Buhler, Neumeyer, & Deemer, 2010). However, in the hidden corners of society the first pornographic films also emerged early in motion picture history (Pennington, 2007). These films depicted women as sex objects, often showing *loose* women engaging in straight and lesbian sex scenes. Another common theme illustrated in these early motion pictures was women being raped by *exotic* men, pirates, and other scoundrels of society. These films were presented as fantasy films, or films that were removed from reality and represented sexual fantasies, more than films about sexual

violence (Fowkes, 2010). However, they still set the standard for how women would be viewed and treated in cinematic works, which was that of the sex object (Sklar, 2012).

As the technology for motion pictures advanced, more elaborate films were created, such as *Gone with the Wind*, *The Wizard of Oz*, and live action/animation hybrids like *Marry Poppins* (Dancyger, 2014). These films told stories and involved sweeping romantic themes. However, the main storyline that films explored was that of the sexual objectification of women (Dancyger, 2014). For example, the most famous scenes in *Gone with the Wind* is Rhett Butler carrying Scarlett O'Hara up the stair case to have sex with her against her will. Similarly, in *The Wizard of Oz*, the entire plot of the story is the victimization and objectification of a young girl in a strange land (Dancyger, 2014). Motion pictures' early history is full of examples like these that limit female roles to that of the sex object (Sklar, 2012).

During the Golden Age of Hollywood, women were finally given more roles in films. However, women were still portrayed as being only supportive players in the stories being told (Zollo, 2011). As such, they did not have well defined backstories, their choices were limited, and their value in the film was simply to enhance the well-being and happiness of the male characters with whom they shared the screen.

In the 1960s and the 1970s, the sexual revolution and changes in social standards created an explosion in the production of movies (Marwick, 2011). Many of the most popular films released during the 1960s and 1970s broke barriers related to the expression of female sexuality on the big screen. This meant that female nudity, female sexual exploitation, and sexual violence perpetuated against women became popular themes in movies of this era (Marwick, 2011). This point is proven by the top

moneymaking films of this era which include: *Psycho*, *Barberella*, and *One Million Years B.C.*, all of which depicted scenes of female nudity, sexual exploitation, and sexual violence (IMDb, 2015). Although the films of this era explored sexuality of both men and women more openly, women were still portrayed as sex objects and the victims of violence (Sklar, 2012).

Consistent with the trend of women being sexually exploited by society, films also began to explore the economic exploitation of women in the workforce. In films like *Norma Ray*, the battle women were fighting to enter the workplace and to access equal rights was also introduced to movie storylines (Franklin, 2005). While movies with the theme of female economic liberation were rare, they did give women their first chances to be leading characters and to establish value for themselves beyond just what they had to offer men.

From the 1980s forward, female characters became more developed and dynamic (Hanson, 2007). Women became popular leading characters, they adopted fiercer personalities, and they were allowed to have lives and backstories that were as well-developed as their male counterparts (Sklar, 2012). For example, in *Alien*, the hero of the story was a woman named Ripley. She was portrayed as being strong, intelligent, and a capable leader. Yet, despite her being a strong and intelligent leader, she is still shown in her underwear and abused by male characters in the film (Hanson, 2007).

The utilization of strong female leads became most prevalent in the horror genre (Hanson, 2007). However, despite these advancements in female character development, female characters were still more likely to be the victims of domestic and criminal violence, the target of a murderer or rapist, and likely to be viewed as sex objects than

male characters (Sklar, 2012). The trend of giving female characters more power only to victimize them more brutally in films demonstrates the film industry is reluctant to abandon the victimization of women as a ploy to garner high ratings. The film industry's reluctance to change how it portrays female characters either suggests that society's treatment of women have not fundamentally changed in over 100 years, or that movies are not reflecting society's views effectively.

Literature Review

This study utilizes two concepts frequently, domestic violence and sexual objectification. There are many definitions of these terms found in the literature. For the purposes of this study, however, domestic violence is defined as acts of verbal, emotional, sexual, and physical aggression that is perpetrated by one person against an intimate partner or family member and sexual objectification is defined as the valuation of a person purely for her physical appearance and sexual appeal (Sokoloff & Dupont, 2005; Zimmerman & Dahlberg, 2008). These terms play an important role in shaping the ways in which relationships and power hierarchies are shaped between male and female characters in the observed films.

Domestic violence is a social phenomenon that has plagued human society forever, and it continues to produce epidemic level impacts upon the well-being of women in the United States (Vagianos, 2014). To frame the severity of the impact that domestic violence has upon American society, 6,488 American soldiers were killed in Afghanistan and Iraq between 2001 and 2012, while 11,766 women were killed by their romantic partners during the same time period (Vagianos, 2014). This means that nearly twice as many women were killed as the result of domestic violence as soldiers killed in a

war. Moreover, 4,774,000 women are victimized each year by domestic violence, 25% of American women are victimized by domestic violence, and every nine seconds another woman is beaten (Vagianos, 2014). In addition, it is estimated that 38,028,000 women will experience some form of domestic violence in their lifetime (Vagianos, 2014).

The above statistics clearly indicate that domestic violence is a serious problem that needs to be addressed by American society; yet, filmmakers have a tendency of trivializing domestic violence to create humor, to add tension to a storyline, and to create opportunities for sexual domination (Mardorossian, 2014). It is this trivialization of domestic violence in film that normalizes it in society. Through film, male and female viewers are taught that this is how a woman is to be treated by society, and that any expectation of equality and tender handling is naïve, deviant, and a fantasy (Romito & Beltramini, 2011). The normalization of these behaviors by films such as *What's Love Got to do with It*, *Sleeping with the Enemy*, and *The Color Purple*, while presenting domestic violence in a realistic manner, set the standard that domestic violence against women is a social experience that should be expected and accepted, as there is little that can be done to stop it (Films with Domestic Violence Themes, 2015). Furthermore, films such as *The Flintstones*, *The Adam's Family*, and *Throw Mamma from the Train*, trivialize domestic violence by making it a punchline. This too normalizes domestic violence making it a non-issue that society can ignore.

One of the purposes of movies is to reflect society's values, problems, strengths, and weaknesses (Sklar, 2012). People expect films to reflect social realities and to provide models of society's norms, even when the story is fictionalized. Since society depends upon films to frame social norms, the way in which movie makers frame social

norms create commentaries that can be controversial (Sklar, 2012). One of the controversies that has emerged in regards to the movie genre is that films are creating and promoting inappropriate behaviors, rather than reflecting and commenting on them. If this is the case, then the rampant and gratuitous victimization of women in films is a serious threat to women's social well-being. This is why this study has the intent of determining if movies are a reflection of actual trends in the victimization of women in society. However, before this correlation study can take place, it is first necessary to gain an understanding of what trends in female character victimization have already been identified by other researchers.

One type of films that has a notorious reputation as victimizing women as a matter of formula is the horror genre, and specifically the slasher film sub-genre. In a 2010 content analysis, Welsh tested, the hypothesis that slasher films eroticize violence against women as a punishment for sexual promiscuity. Samples were taken from slasher/horror films produced between 1960 and 2009. The results of this study showed that a correlation existed between sexually promiscuous female characters and higher fatality rates, and between promiscuous female characters and longer, more brutal death scenes (Welsh, 2010). These findings indicated that slasher films are upholding the biased social value of female virginity before marriage, as well as bringing awareness to the correlation between sexual risk taking behaviors of young women and violent crimes.

Another genre that is notorious for objectifying women and using physical force to solicit sex from women is the action/adventure genre. Specifically, caper films such as James Bond movies portray women as objects and toys that have the sole purpose of entertaining and meeting male needs. Neuendorf, Gore, Dalessandro, Janstova, and

Snyder-Suhy (2010) conducted a content analysis of 20 James Bond films to determine how the construction of female character traits impacted the treatment of women by the male characters. Not surprisingly, the results showed that attractive and sexually active women were more prone to be used as a sex object, to be manipulated, and to be physically assaulted than unattractive women. Again, the correlation between sexually active unmarried women and harm against the woman was projected by this film series.

A more recent trend in film storylines is the development of female action characters. This trend is supposedly empowering women by giving them expanded roles in films; however, when the construction of the storylines for these *powerful* female characters is analyzed, the same problems remain intact (Gilpatric, 2010). Gilpatric (2010) conducted a content analysis of action films with female action characters. The content analysis noted that despite these characters' abilities to fight, to hold positions of power, and to be viewed as heroes, they were still portrayed as stereotypically female film characters. They were still submissive to their male counterpart, their value was still connected to the man with whom they were in a relationship, and they were still victimized and abused for their sexuality (Gilpatric, 2010). These findings are consistent with studies that uphold the view that films are preserving traditional views and biases against the value of women in society.

Surprisingly, films created primarily for female viewing audiences, namely romances and romantic comedies, commonly feature female victimization (McDonald, 2007). Specifically, the concept of usury is explored in this genre. A common theme is that a good woman is used by a married man for sex and then discarded at his leisure. This theme is seen in many popular films, including *Mogambo*, *The Holiday* and *Bridget*

Jane's Diary. In this genre, a woman's broken heart and emotional abuse is necessary to make her see the errors of her way, however, it is also used to normalize the belief that this emotional abuse is the woman's fault, because she chose to get involved with a married man (McDonald, 2007).

Comedies also tend to emotionally and physically victimize women. In this genre, slapstick comedy is the justification for physically victimizing women (Koury, 2010). What is different about the victimization of women in comedies, is that the victimization either is portrayed as not causing any harm or that the injuries sustained are not life threatening and okay to laugh at. For example, a wife may be pushed overboard by a frustrated husband only to surface later wet and covered in seaweed, but otherwise unharmed. What is important about slapstick violence against women is that it is not intended to be violence for violence sake, but rather an expression of repressed hostilities between the sexes (Koury, 2010).

Finally, female victimization in family films is often used to isolate a character or to create a co-dependency between characters (Hubka, Hovdestad, & Tonmyr, 2009). For example, in the Disney classic *Bambi*, Bambi's mother is shot and killed by a hunter. This creates the opportunity for him to develop a stronger relationship with his father. Similarly, in *Finding Nemo*, the mother is killed at the beginning of the film providing Marlin and Nemo the opportunity to have a closer relationship. While the sacrifice of female characters is a common theme in the family genre of films, it is not the only example. Female characters in family films are also faced with coming of age issues associated with sexual victimization and objectification. For example, in *Sixteen Candles*, the female lead is sexually objectified by her classmates and by her family, who comment

on her breast size and her attractiveness (Giroux, 2011). What these examples illustrate is that even family films physically victimize and sexually objectify female characters. This demonstrates the scope of acceptance that violence against women has achieved among filmmakers of every film genre.

There is no denying that movies objectify women by portraying them as sexual playthings for men, or by minimizing the roles they play in a story. It is also no denying that movies victimize female characters more often than male characters, making women more likely than men to be depicted as being beaten, controlled, raped, and mistreated. However, it is still not known if movies are reflecting social realities, meaning that women are being objectified and mistreated more than men, or if they are creating the perception that women are being victimized and objectified more often than men. To gain insight into this problem it is necessary to look at what the literature indicates about the prevalence of female victimization.

Feminist theory posits that one of the reasons women are victimized more than men is that they tend to occupy lower socioeconomic roles in society, and this is particularly true of minority women (Hayman, 2011). That is having lower socioeconomic status in society means that women have less power and reduced access to resources. Since these women have no real social power or the money to change, it is easy for men and society to justify their victimization. This social justification is based upon the philosophy of the survival of the fittest (Hirsch & Smith, 2014). The cinematic response is to portray this victimization both as it is and as an exercise in exaggeration (Hayman, 2011). For example, filmmakers may exaggerate the disadvantage a character has to make her more vulnerable to being taken advantage of by the film's villain or hero.

The horror genre reflects social trends in female victimization. In many horror films the real social problem of stalking is explored. Women in their teens and twenties are particularly vulnerable to be the victim of a stalker in real life, and they are similarly vulnerable to the same crime on the big screen (Buhi, Clayton, & Surrency (2009). Despite films and society recognizing the threat of stalking, women still feel that they will not be believed if they report being stalked (Buhi, Clayton, & Surrency, 2009). This is another reason why the victimization of women is so prevalent in real life, women's complaints are not taken seriously by the Department of Criminal Justice, which, while has females in high positions, still maintains a very patriarchal cultural view (Chesney, 2006; U.S. Department of Criminal Justice, 2015). In fact, despite equal employment opportunity policies, the women's liberation movement, and a few notable female leaders, such as Loretta Lynch, women are still dramatically underrepresented as employees of the criminal justice system, particularly in upper level and decision making positions (Neubauer & Fradell, 2014; U.S. Department of Criminal Justice, 2015).

Another theme that is used by films is the victimization of women because they are single, attractive, and sexually active. The film correlation is that single, sexually active women are much more likely to be victimized by a sexual predator or a killer than a virgin. In a study conducted by Austin, Roberts, Corliss, and Molnar (2008), this same correlation was studied using real life scenarios. The results revealed that risk factors for sexual victimization had less to do with the female's promiscuity, and more with her early life experience, such as being the victim of childhood sexual abuse and losing her virginity at an early age (usually due to rape). Osman (2014) examined risk factors associated with the victimization of women, finding that adolescent females and young

adult females who engaged in risk taking behavior, such as drinking, drug use, and socializing with risk taking males, did have higher risk rates for being sexually and physically victimized.

Feminist theory can be used to explain the manifestation of violence in movies is the feminist theory. According to feminist theory, violence is the consequence of a patriarchal society that values masculine traits, such as aggression, power, and fighting, over feminine traits, such as peace, nurturing, sharing, and creation (Schwartz, 2005). When applied to filmmaking, feminist theory suggests that violence in general and violence against women specifically is a manifestation of these disparities in gender-based values (Hirsch & Smith, 2014). Feminist film theory contends that violence against women in films is produced by the role that films play in perpetuating and portraying sexual myths about men and women (Chaudhuri, 2006). These myths include that women are submissive and subsequently archetypal victims, while men are dominant and subsequently archetypal heroes and villains (Chaudhuri, 2006). As a result, the social behaviors expressed in real life are magnified and often exaggerated in films to establish what society feels are important behaviors for each sex to display.

To evaluate the content of films, the framework offered by the feminist film theory is utilized. This framework focuses, not only on how patriarchal values manifest in society, but also upon how power in society is balanced (Spencer-Wood, 2010). To measure and analyze this power balance so that the reasons behind female victimization in films can be identified and understood, Patricia Hill Collins Matrix of Domination is recommended. Collins' theoretical model is based upon the macroeconomic Matrix of Domination, which illustrates the primary power infrastructure in a society and the

microeconomic concept of intersectionality which positions an individual within that matrix (Anderson & Collins, 2015). For example, the Matrix of Domination in the United States gives the most power to white, upper class males, and the least amount of power to minority, lower class females. The intersectionality that a person experiences is created by what power factors define their position in society (Anderson & Collins, 2015). For example, Ripley from *Alien* was a powerful female leader whose oppression was caused by the intersection between social power equity, which she had a lot of, and physical power inequity, which was defined as her being physically inferior to the alien. This intersectionality positioned Ripley to be victimized because she was physically weaker than the alien, however, it also positioned Ripley to overcome this weakness by using her intelligence. This shows that intersectionality not only defines a character's weaknesses, but also their strengths. When evaluating the data collected by this study, an intersectionality analysis will be used to explain why a female character was victimized.

The literature review clearly shows strong trends of female victimization in films from a variety of different movie genres. In many cases, the victimization involved sex crimes and violence. Although movies may sensationalize and eroticize the victimization of women, the risks to women that are being presented in films may resemble the victimization that is taking place in real life. The concern is whether films are promoting the perpetuation of violence against women, or if they are creating awareness of the victimization of women in society. The need to understand what role films are playing in the epidemic of violence against women in real life makes conducting this study critically important.

Methodology

Sample

This study seeks to identify trends in female character victimization portrayed in films sampled from three decades, the 1950s, the 1980s, and the 2000s. Movies were selected from a variety of genres and organized by decade. The genres that samples were taken from were horror, family, action/adventure, romance, and comedy. Samples were randomly selected from a large database of on-demand films owned by Amazon Instant Videos. This database allows viewers to search for films by genre. A random number generator will be used to determine the kth factor that will be used to select 2 films from each genre for each decade. The sample population for each decade will therefore be $n=10$, with a combined sample population of $N=30$ movie samples in total. This sample size was selected because it meets the minimum standard for testing for normal distribution, according to Brase and Brase (2011). In addition, this sample size allowed the three groups to be evenly distributed into three groups, one for each decade, and the subset of 10 was equally divisible into the 5 genres selected. Finally, this sample size was selected because it was a large sample without being overwhelming for the scope of the project, which was limited by the researcher's time and resources. The information that is collected was used to test the following null hypotheses:

H_{10} : The victimization of women portrayed in films is not increasing over time.

The independent variable was the decade under review and the dependent variable was the frequency of victimization of female characters in the films made in the identified decade.

Study Design

A mixed method study design will be used for this project. A mixed method study means that both qualitative and quantitative studies will be conducted (Brase & Brase, 2011). The quantitative portion of the study uses frequency to note the occurrences of victimization of female characters in the sampled films. The measures of victimization that were counted included sexual, emotional, verbal, and physical violence. Sexual victimization included such acts as rape, sexual intimidation, and threats of sexual abuse or rape. Emotional victimization included hurt feelings, emotional abuse, and feelings of psychological distress (fear, sadness, depression, and anxiety). Verbal victimization included such things as yelling at women (aggressively), demeaning a female character, and saying unkind things to female characters. Finally, physical victimization included a wide range of physical contact, including, pushing, pulling, battering, killing, and putting the character in physical jeopardy.

The qualitative portion of this study involved a content analysis of movies produced in the 1950s, the 1980s, and the 2000s. A content analysis involves the identification of themes found within the content of a film. These themes are then analyzed in terms of their frequency and implications (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The content analysis in this study began by randomly selecting ten films from each decade. The content of each film was then analyzed for themes relating to the victimization of women. Specifically, the content was reviewed for the number, type (physical, sexual, emotional, or verbal), and severity of the victimization of women. The contextual themes of victimization included physical, sexual, emotional, and verbal. The objective of this

part of the study was to identify what victimization themes were present and what lessons that the victimization taught the characters and the viewers of the films.

Data was collected to answer the primary research question: "How does the frequency and severity of female character victimization change over time in films?" It was also used to answer the supportive sub-questions associated with this project, which are:

- How are women victimized in films?
- What common victimization themes are present in specific movie genres, such as horror, action/adventure, comedy, family, and romance?
- What victimization themes are unique in specific genres, such as horror, action/adventure, comedy, family, and romance?
- How do victimization themes change over time and how do they stay the same?

Data

Thirty movies were randomly sampled from the Amazon Instant Video library. 10 films were selected from each of the selected decades, 1950, 1980, and 2000. Two films from five different genres were sampled. The following lists detail the movies sampled, their release date, and their genre.

Devil Girl from Mars 1954 (Horror)

The Blob 1958 (Horror)

Alice in Wonderland 1951 (Family)

20,000 Leagues Under the Sea 1954 (Family)

Fancy Pants 1950 (Comedy)

Will Success Spoil Rock Hunter? 1957 (Comedy)

African Screams 1950 (Action/Adventure)

Mogambo 1953 (Action/Adventure)

Three Guys Named Mike 1951 (Romance)

Summertime 1955 (Romance)

Tootsie 1982 (Romance)

Crossing Delancey 1988 (Romance)

Crocodile Dundee 1986 (Action/Adventure)

Back to the Future 1985 (Action/Adventure)

Poltergeist 1982 (Horror)

The Shining 1980 (Horror)

The Great Outdoors 1988 (Comedy)

One Crazy Summer 1980 (Comedy)

The Chipmunk Adventure 1987 (Family)

Flight of the Navigator 1986 (Family)

The Crocodile Hunter 2002 (Action/Adventure)

Gamer 2009 (Action/Adventure)

The Hangover 2009 (Comedy)

Return to Me 2000 (Comedy)

Transformers 2007 (Family)

Night at the Museum 2006 (Family)

The Cave 2005 (Horror)

Jurassic Park III 2001 (Horror)

The Holiday 2006 (Romance)

Bride & Prejudice 2005 (Romance)

Data Analysis

The data collected from the quantitative portion of this study involved frequencies. Specifically, it involved the number of instances of verbal, sexual, emotional, and physical victimization of female characters observed in films from specific decades and from specific genres. The data collected for the qualitative portion of this study involved themes related to the lessons learned from the victimization of female characters in the observed films.

The two data sets were analyzed in three parts. The first part of the data analysis involved the use of descriptive statistics to describe both the qualitative and the quantitative data sets. Frequencies, mean, and standard deviations were calculated for each type of victimization. The mean is the average score for a category and the standard deviation is the average level of variation that each score has in regards to how far each score was away from the mean. The mean and standard deviation were necessary calculations, because they are used in completing the t-test, which uses the formula:

$$t = \frac{(\bar{X}_1 - \bar{X}_2)}{\sigma_{\text{diff}}}$$

Figure 1 - SOURCE: www.miracosta.edu

The results were used to understand how the data was distributed and what trends were present. Trends in types of victimization were then compared between and within decades, as well as between and within genres.

The second part of the data analysis used a mean difference analysis, the t-test. A t-test compares means to determine if a statistically significant difference exists (Heiman, 2010). If the difference is significant between decades, then this supports the position that

the portrayal of female victimization in films changes over time. Conversely, if the means are not significantly different, then it cannot be concluded that victimization rates are changing over time. The t-test was used to evaluate if frequencies are increasing over time in general, as well as by film genre. The alpha level used was .05. The alpha level is the level of certainty that is desired. An alpha level of .05 means that there is a 95% chance that the results of the analysis did not occur because of chance (Heiman, 2010).

The final part of the data analysis was a content analysis of the qualitative data collected. This analysis utilized the grounded theory as the structure for the analysis. The grounded theory collects themes, categorizes them, and then interprets them to better understand and define an emerging phenomenon (Charmaz, 2014). This included identifying themes in the content, organizing and categorizing them, and inferring the meaning of the trends that were observed. Conclusions were drawn based upon frequency of identified themes and notations about what is missing from the themes, such as accountability and self-control.

Results

The objective of this study was to determine how films are portraying the victimization of women and to determine if this portrayal is changing over time. To accomplish this, a mixed method study was conducted. The study involved a quantitative study of the frequency of victimization of female characters in films, as well as a content analysis of the qualitative traits of the selected films. The following results were produced by this study.

Quantitative Results

1950s.

. In total, 109 instances of the victimization of female characters were observed in the 10 films selected from the 1950s. The mean instances of victimization were 10.9 with a standard deviation of 7.37. This information is summarized in Figure 2. This information is also found in Appendix B. Figure 3 provides a graphical summary of the table depicted in Figure 4. The information shows the ten films that were sampled from the 1950s film database, as well as how many instances of physical, emotional, sexual, and verbal victimization of female characters were observed in each film

Description	Statistics
Occurrences of Female character victimization	109
Mean occurrences per movie	10.9
Standard deviation	7.37

Figure 2 - Summary of 1950's Observations

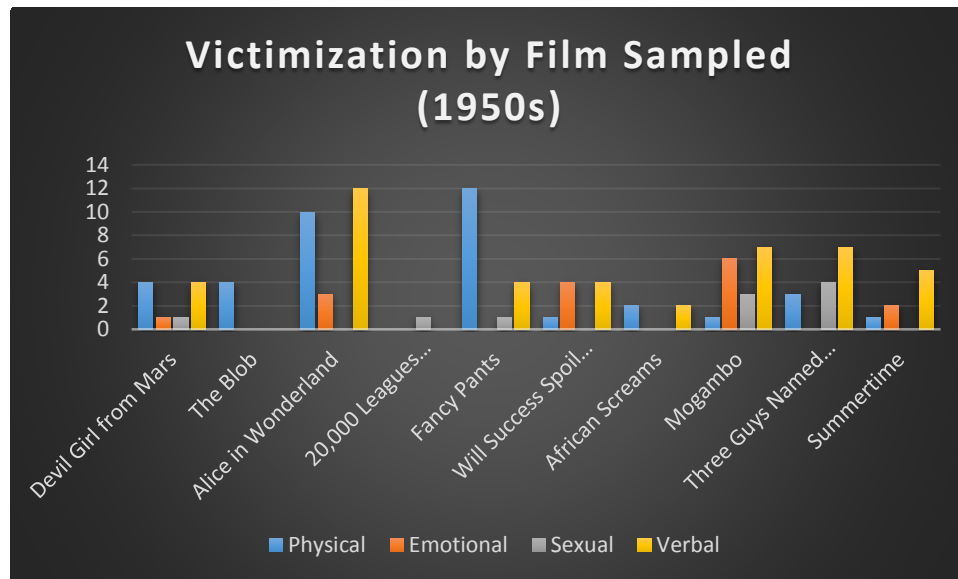


Figure 3 - Victimization by Film Sampled (1950s)

Movie	Year	Genre	Physical	Emotional	Sexual	Verbal
<i>Devil Girl from Mars</i>	1954	Horror	4	1	1	4
<i>The Blob</i>	1958	Horror	4	0	0	0
<i>Alice in Wonderland</i>	1951	Family	10	3	0	12
<i>20,000 Leagues Under the Sea</i>	1954	Family	0	0	1	0
<i>Fancy Pants</i>	1950	Comedy	12	0	1	4
<i>Will Success Spoil Rock Hunter?</i>	1957	Comedy	1	4	0	4
<i>African Screams</i>	1950	Action/Adventure	2	0	0	2
<i>Mogambo</i>	1953	Action/Adventure	1	6	3	7
<i>Three Guys Named Mike</i>	1951	Romance	3	0	4	7
<i>Summertime</i>	1955	Romance	1	2	0	5

Figure 4-Table of Raw Data 1950s

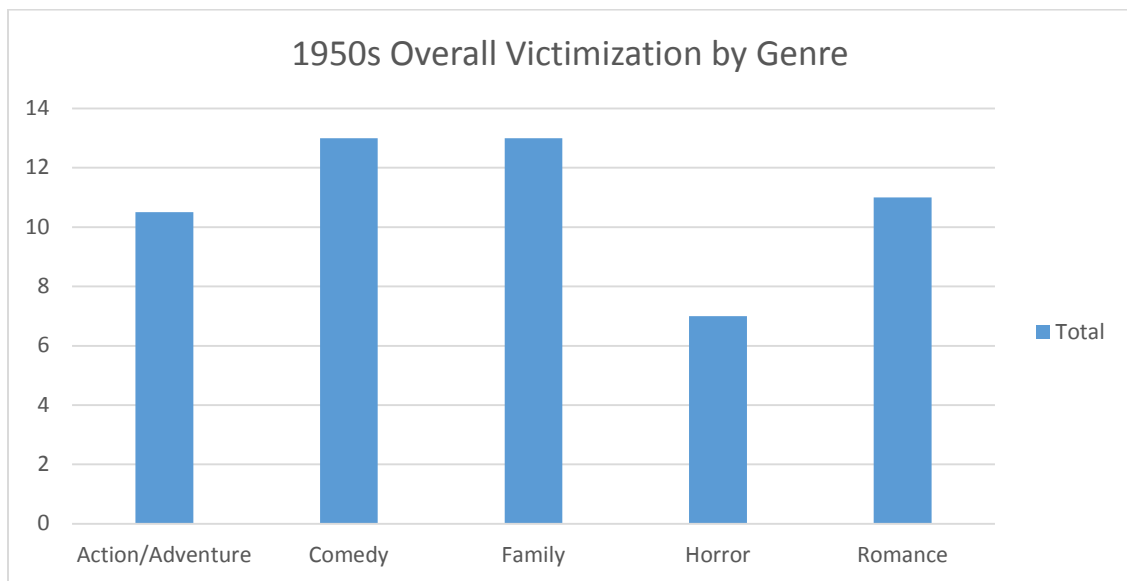


Figure 5 - 1950s Overall Victimization by Genre

Figure 5 illustrates the victimization of women in the sampled 1950s films. The results are broken down by genre. The results showed that family and comedy had an average of 13 instances of victimization each, romance had 11 instances, action/adventure had 10.5 instances, and horror had 7 instances of victimization. These results indicate that female victimization were normalized to such a high degree in the

1950s, that it was a common theme illustrated in entertainment designed for children and family.

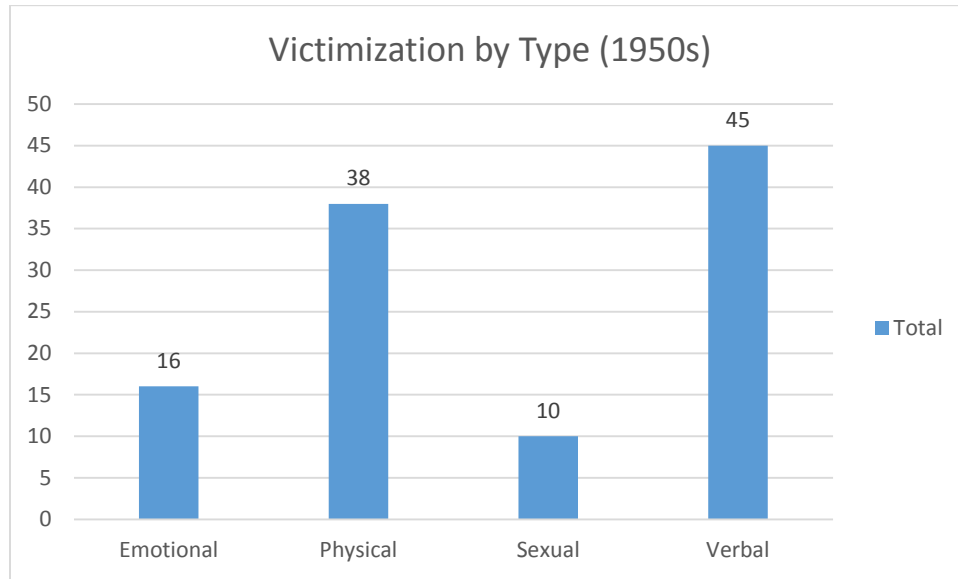


Figure 6 - Victimization by Type (1950s)

Figure 6 showed that most of the victimization that took place in the sampled 1950s films were verbal (45 instances), followed by physical (38 instances), then emotional (16), and finally, sexual (10 instances). This demonstrated that women were verbally victimized in 1950s films. Usually the verbal victimization included women being yelled at, being demeaned, and being called names, such as stupid.

1980s.

Description	Statistics
Occurrences of Female character victimization	214
Mean occurrences per movie	21.4
Standard deviation	9.42

Figure 7 - Data Summary 1980s

Figure 7 summarizes the data collected for the sampled films from the 1980s. In total, 214 instances of the victimization of female characters were observed in the movies

selected from the 1980s. The mean number of instances per film was 21.4, with a standard deviation of 9.42. This information is also found in Appendix C.

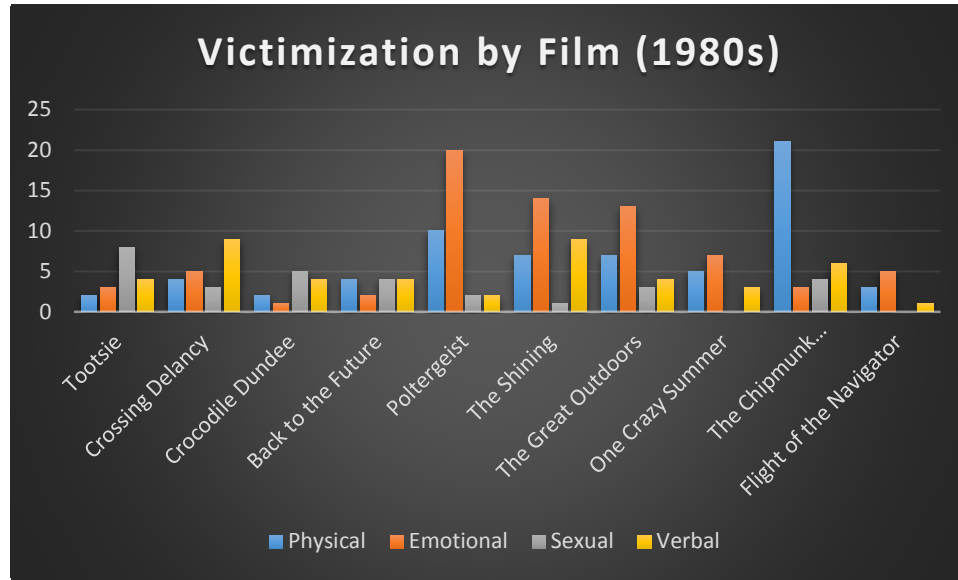


Figure 8 - Victimization by Films (1980s)

Movie	Year	Genre	Physical	Emotional	Sexual	Verbal
<i>Tootsie</i>	1982	Romance	2	3	8	4
<i>Crossing Delancy</i>	1988	Romance	4	5	3	9
<i>Crocodile Dundee</i>	1986	Action/Adventure	2	1	5	4
<i>Back to the Future</i>	1985	Action/Adventure	4	2	4	4
<i>Poltergeist</i>	1982	Horror	10	20	2	2
<i>The Shining</i>	1980	Horror	7	14	1	9
<i>The Great Outdoors</i>	1988	Comedy	7	13	3	4
<i>One Crazy Summer</i>	1980	Comedy	5	7	0	3
<i>The Chipmunk Adventure</i>	1987	Family	21	3	4	6
<i>Flight of the Navigator</i>	1986	Family	3	5	0	1

Figure 9- Table of Raw Data 1980s

Figures 8 and 9 provide the details relating to the data collected for the 1980s film sample. The information provides a list of films samples, their year of release, their

genre, and the number of observed occurrences of physical, emotional, sexual, and verbal victimization of female characters.

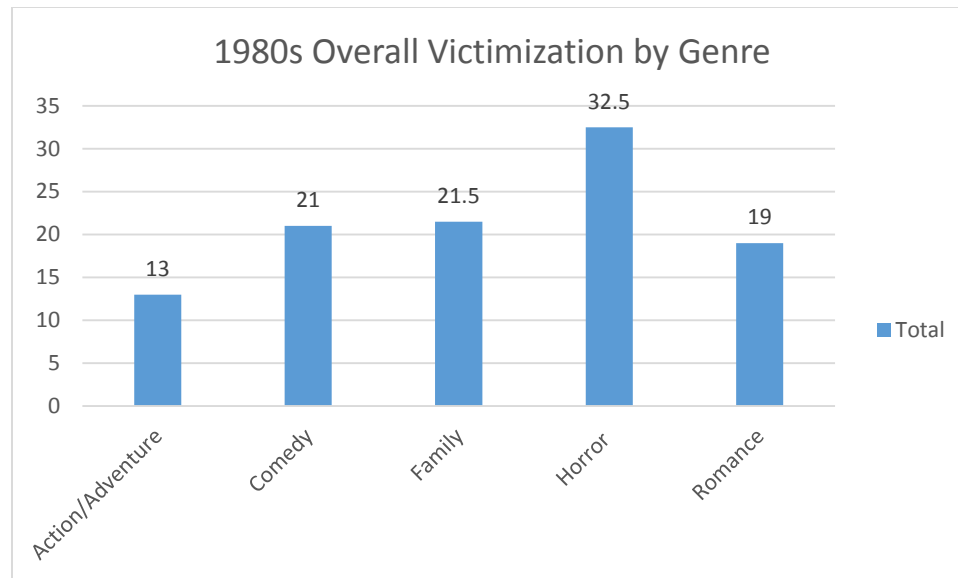


Figure 10 - 1980s Overall Victimization by Genre

Figure 10 shows the victimization of women in 1980s films broken down by genre. The results showed horror had an average of 32.5 instances of victimization, family had 21.5 instances, comedy had 21 instances, romance had 19 instances, and action/adventure had 13 instance female victimization per movie. These frequencies demonstrate a change in which genre showed the most female character victimization when compared to the 1950s results. In the 1980s, the horror genre invested in female exploitation in slasher films and other campy horror themes that featured scantily clad teenage girls (Trencansky, 2001). Since the film industry capitalized upon the popularity of this genre in the 1980s, it is not a surprise the female victimization rates were most prevalent in this genre.

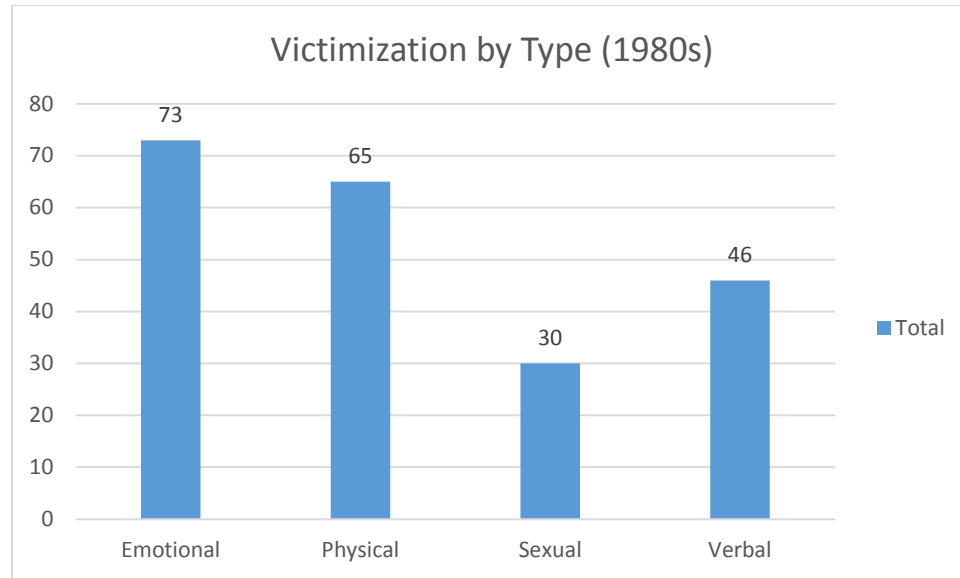


Figure 11 - Victimization by Type (1980s)

Figure 11 shows that emotional victimization was the most prevalent type of victimization in the 1980s films sampled, with a total of 73 observed instances, followed by physical victimization with 65 instances, verbal victimization with 46 instances, and sexual victimization with 30 observed instances.

2000s

Description	Statistics
Occurrences of Female character victimization	216
Mean occurrences per movie	21.6
Standard deviation	10.18

Figure 12 - Data summary 2000s

Figure 12 presents a summary of the data collected for the 2000s. In total, 216 observations were made of female character victimization in the 10 films sampled from the 2000s. The mean number of observations was 21.6 with a standard deviation of 10.18. This information is also found in Appendix D.

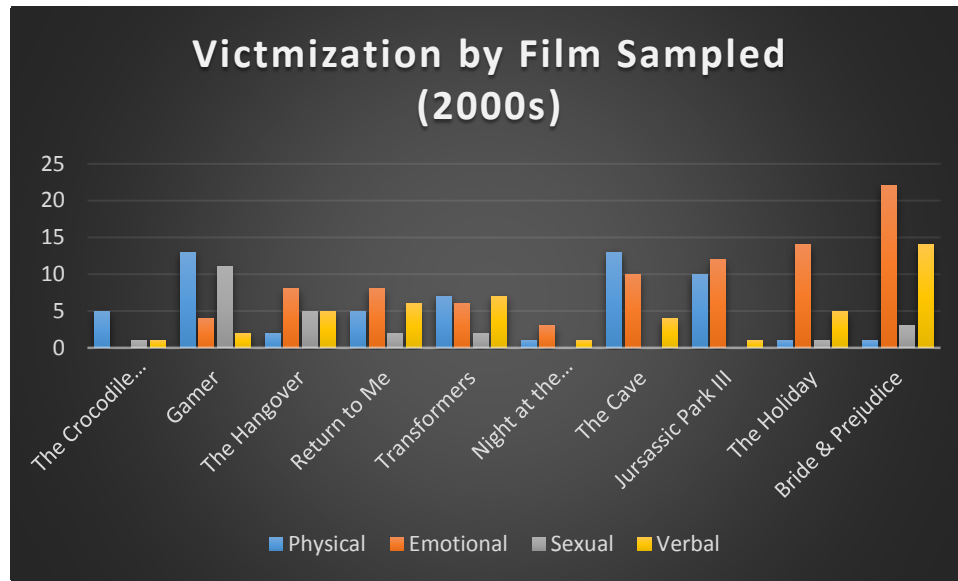


Figure 13- Victimization by Film Sampled (2000s)

Movie	Year	Genre	Physical	Emotional	Sexual	Verbal
<i>The Crocodile Hunter: Collision Course</i>	2002	Action/Adventure	5	0	1	1
<i>Gamer</i>	2009	Action/Adventure	13	4	11	2
<i>The Hangover</i>	2009	Comedy	2	8	5	5
<i>Return to Me</i>	2000	Comedy	5	8	2	6
<i>Transformers</i>	2007	Family	7	6	2	7
<i>Night at the Museum</i>	2006	Family	1	3	0	1
<i>The Cave</i>	2005	Horror	13	10	0	4
<i>Jurassic Park III</i>	2001	Horror	10	12	0	1
<i>The Holiday</i>	2006	Romance	1	14	1	5
<i>Bride & Prejudice</i>	2005	Romance	1	22	3	14

Figure 14- Table of Films 2000s

Figures 13 and 14 provide a detailed description of the data collected on the films sampled from the 2000s. This information includes the film titles, their year of release,

their genre, and the number of occurrences of physical, emotional, sexual, and verbal victimization of female characters.

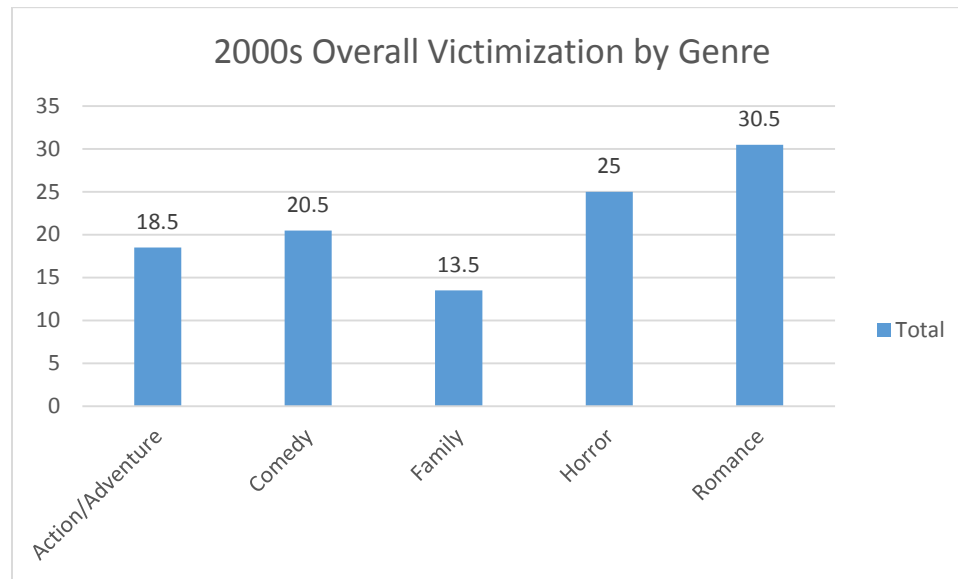


Figure 15 - 2000s Overall Victimization by Genre

Figure 15 illustrates the victimization of women in the 2000s films broken down by genre. The results showed that romances had the highest victimization rates with an average of 30.5 instances per movie, followed by horror with an average of 25 instances per movie, comedies with 20.5 instances, action/adventure with 18.5 instances, and family with 13.5 instances.

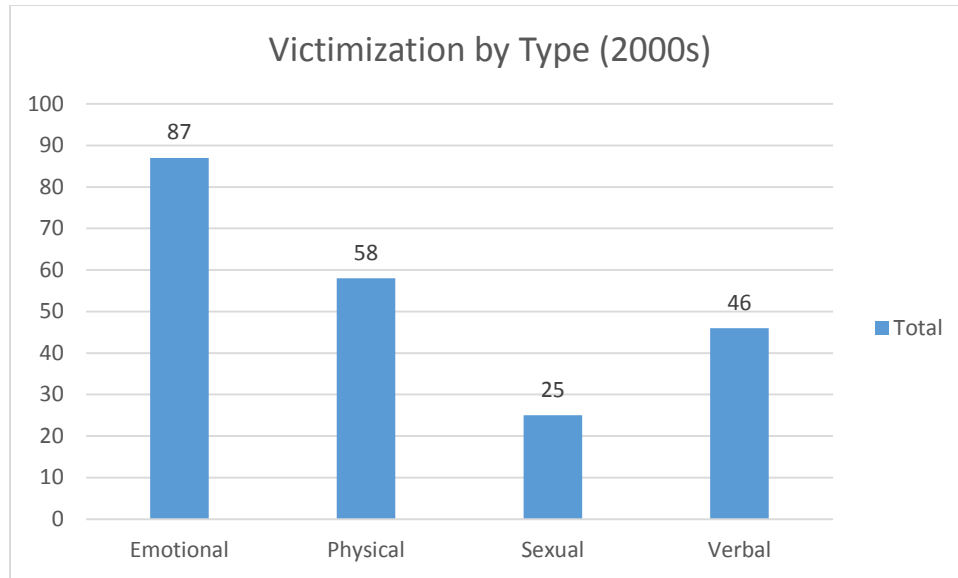


Figure 16 - Victimization by Type (2000s)

Figure 15 shows 87 instances of emotional victimization were observed, 58 instances of physical victimization, 46 instances of verbal victimization, and 25 instances of sexual victimization were observed while screening the sampled films from the 2000s.

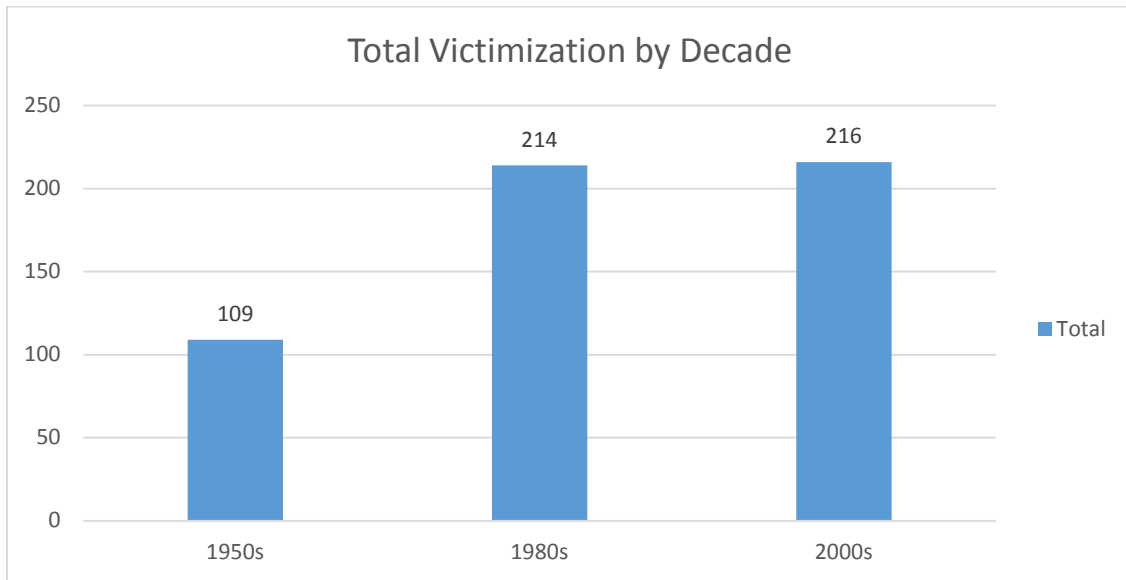


Figure 17- Total Victimization by Decade

Figure 17 compares the frequency of all victimizations observed in the samples across the three decades selected. The results showed the 1950s films had a total of 109

instances of female victimization; the 1980s had a total of 214 instances of female character victimization; and the 2000s had a total of 216 instances of female victimization. This comparison does show an increasing trend in the frequencies of victimization of female characters in films over time.

Movie	Year	Genre	Physical	Emotional	Sexual	Verbal
<i>African Screams</i>	1950	Action/Adventure	2	0	0	2
<i>Mogambo</i>	1953	Action/Adventure	1	6	3	7
<i>Crocodile Dundee</i>	1986	Action/Adventure	2	1	5	4
<i>Back to the Future</i>	1985	Action/Adventure	4	2	4	4
<i>The Crocodile Hunter: Collision Course</i>	2002	Action/Adventure	5	0	1	1
<i>Gamer</i>	2009	Action/Adventure	13	4	11	2

Figure 18 - Table of Movies Sampled (Action/Adventure)

Figure 18 provides a quick summary of the data collected for the Action/Adventure genre.

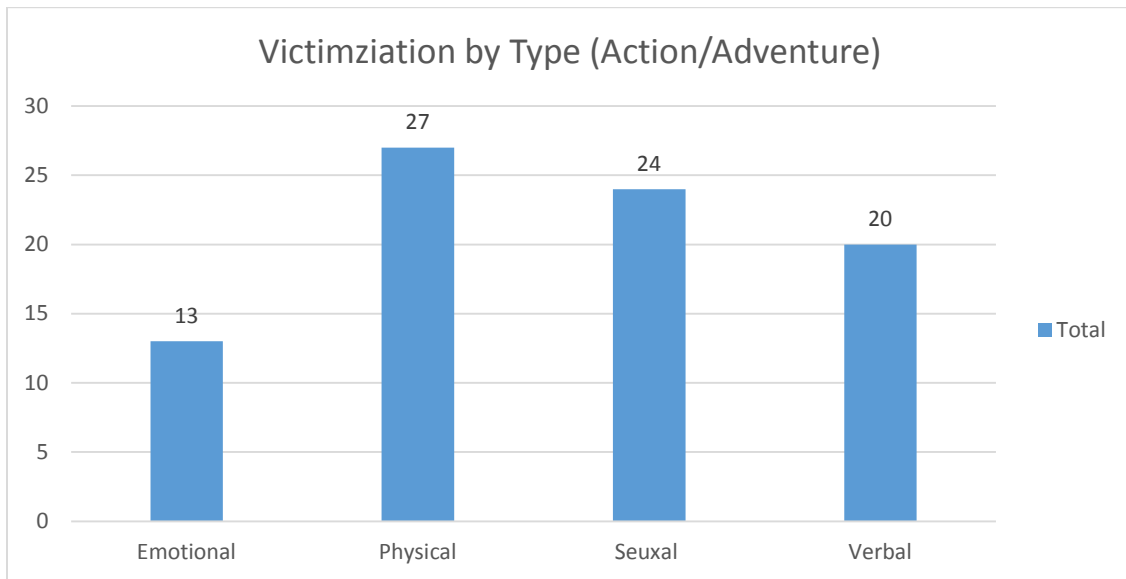


Figure 19 - Victimization by Type (Action/Adventure)

Figure 19 graphically illustrates the summary of the data for the action/adventure genre. When victimization by type was analyzed for the genre of action/adventure, 27 instances of physical, 24 instances of sexual, 20 instances of verbal, and 13 instances of emotional victimization were observed. This showed that in the action/adventure genre,

physical victimization is the most prevalent, followed closely by sexual victimization.

This trend makes sense, as action/adventure films usually target male audiences who are less interested in verbal and emotional interactions with female characters, and more interested in physical and sexual interactions with female characters (Eagly, 2013).

Movie	Year	Genre	Physical	Emotional	Sexual	Verbal
<i>Fancy Pants</i>	1950	Comedy	12	0	1	4
<i>Will Success Spoil Rock Hunter?</i>	1957	Comedy	1	4	0	4
<i>The Great Outdoors</i>	1988	Comedy	7	13	3	4
<i>One Crazy Summer</i>	1980	Comedy	5	7	0	3
<i>The Hangover</i>	2009	Comedy	2	8	5	5
<i>Return to Me</i>	2000	Comedy	5	8	2	6

Figure 20 - Table of Films Sampled (Comedy)

Figure 20 summarizes the data for the genre of comedy.

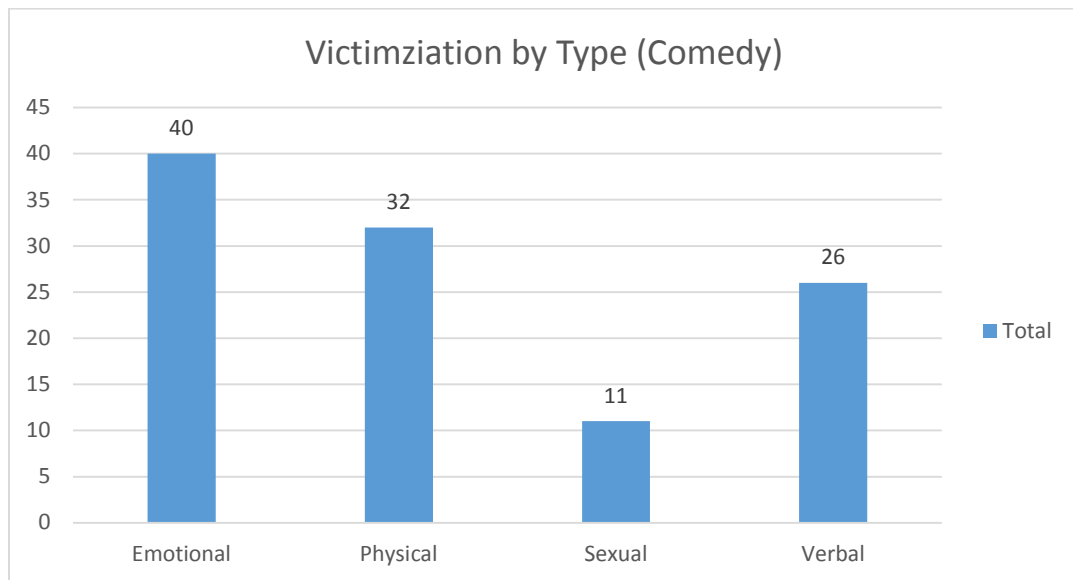


Figure 21 - Victimization by Type (Comedy)

Figure 21 illustrates the summaries of the data shown in Figure 20. When the victimization trends in comedy were observed, 40 instances of emotional victimization, 32 instances of physical victimization, 26 instances of verbal victimization, and 11 instances of sexual victimization were observed. These frequencies demonstrated that emotional victimization of female characters is most common in the comedy genre. The reason for this is likely that the emotional tension is needed to make the comedy elements pop (Eagly, 2013). The high prevalence of physical victimization, in the form of slapstick violence, is then used to reduce the emotional tension the main character is experiencing (Gunning, 2010).

Movie	Year	Genre	Physical	Emotional	Sexual	Verbal
<i>Alice in Wonderland</i>	1951	Family	10	3	0	12
<i>20,000 Leagues Under the Sea</i>	1954	Family	0	0	1	0
<i>The Chipmunk Adventure</i>	1987	Family	21	3	4	6
<i>Flight of the Navigator</i>	1986	Family	3	5	0	1
<i>Transformers</i>	2007	Family	7	6	2	7
<i>Night at the Museum</i>	2006	Family	1	3	0	1

Figure 22 - Table of Films Sampled (Family)

Figure 22 provides a summary of the data collected for the genre of family films.

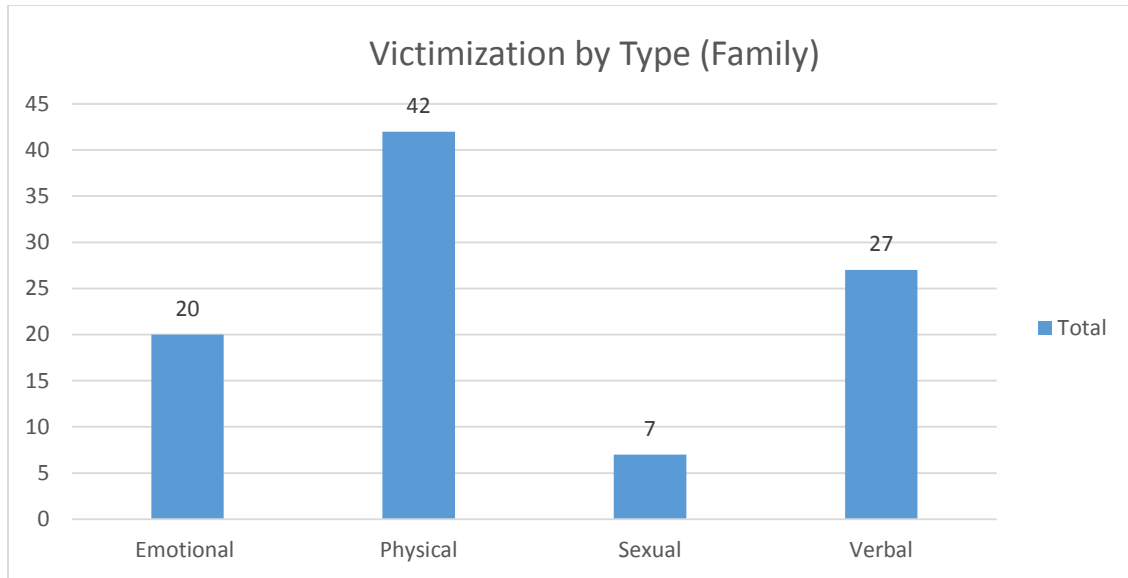


Figure 23 - Victimization by Type (Family)

Figure 23 shows the victimization trends in the family genre. These trends included 42 instances of physical victimization, 27 instances of verbal victimization, 20 instances of emotional victimization, and 7 instances of sexual victimization. What this demonstrated is that physical victimization is the most prevalent form of female victimization in this genre. The contextual analysis of the family films surveyed, which is described in a later section of this study, revealed that the physical manifestation of female victimization typically involved the murder of a mother figure or putting a female character in jeopardy to heighten the emotional tension and sense of adventure in these films.

Movie	Year	Genre	Physical	Emotional	Sexual	Verbal
<i>Devil Girl from Mars</i>	1954	Horror	4	1	1	4
<i>The Blob</i>	1958	Horror	4	0	0	0
<i>Poltergeist</i>	1982	Horror	10	20	2	2
<i>The Shining</i>	1980	Horror	7	14	1	9
<i>The Cave</i>	2005	Horror	13	10	0	4
<i>Jurassic Park III</i>	2001	Horror	10	12	0	1

Figure 24 - Table of Horror Films Sampled

Figure 24 summarizes the data collected for the genre of horror films. This information is then illustrated in Figure 25.

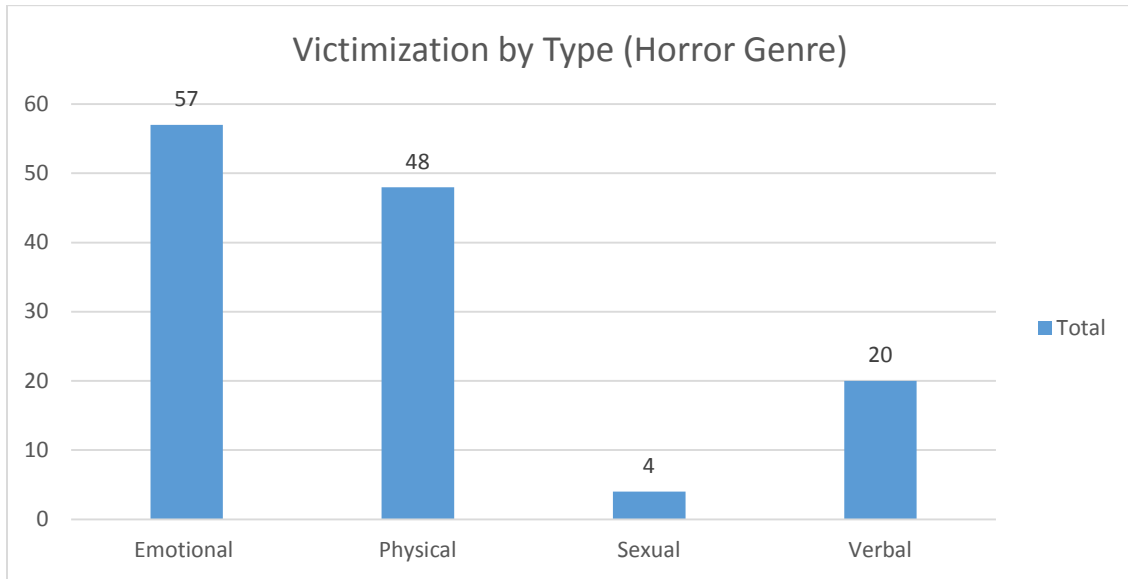


Figure 25- Victimization by Type (Horror)

Figure 25 is used to show the frequency of victimization female characters experienced in the horror films sampled. In total, 129 instances of victimization were observed in the horror genre. Within these observations, 57 were emotional, 48 were physical, 20 were verbal, and 4 were sexual. The raw data and statistical analysis of this data is found in Appendix E. The results from this analysis showed that emotional victimization is most prevalent in the horror genre. Based upon the results discussed in the content analysis of this study, the emotional victimization is used to create and sustain emotional distress in the film.

Movie	Year	Genre	Physical	Emotional	Sexual	Verbal
<i>Three Guys Named Mike</i>	1951	Romance	3	0	4	7
<i>Summertime</i>	1955	Romance	1	2	0	5
<i>Tootsie</i>	1982	Romance	2	3	8	4
<i>Crossing Delancy</i>	1988	Romance	4	5	3	9
<i>The Holiday</i>	2006	Romance	1	14	1	5
<i>Bride & Prejudice</i>	2005	Romance	1	22	3	14

Figure 26 - Table of Films Sampled (Romance)

Figure 26 provides a summary of the data collected for the romance genre. This data is then illustrated in Figure 27.

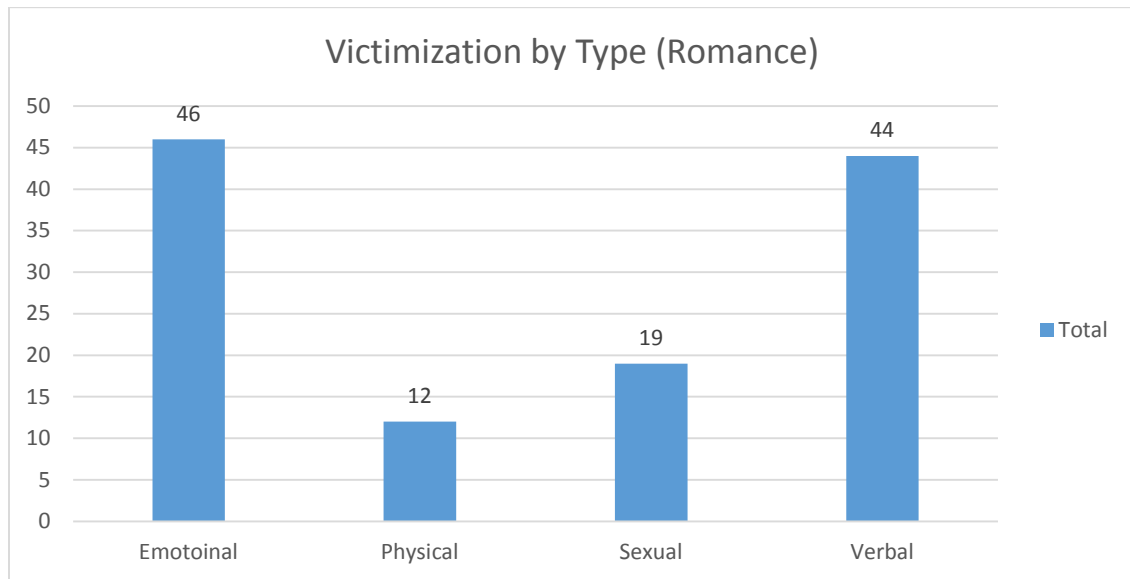


Figure 27 - Victimization by Type (Romance)

Figure 27 shows that when the films selected from the romance genre were analyzed for victimization trends of female characters, 46 instances of emotional, 44 instances of verbal, 19 instances of sexual, and 12 instances of physical victimization were observed. The raw data for this data set can be found in Appendix F. The prevalence of emotional and verbal victimization of female characters in romance films is logical, as romance films are designed for female viewers, and females are more interested in emotional and verbal communication, than they are in physical and sexual interactions (Eagly, 2013).

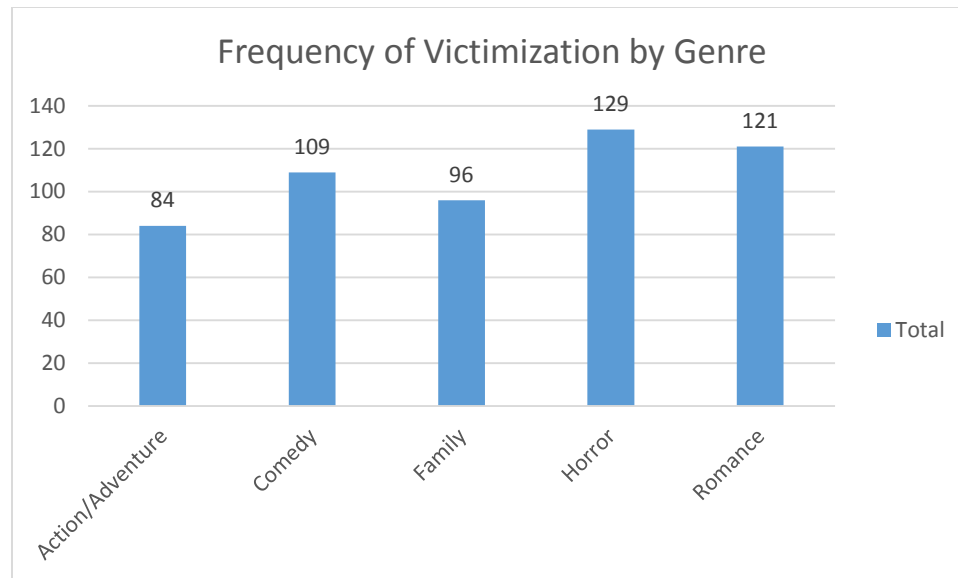


Figure 28- Frequency of Victimization by Genre

Figure 28 illustrates the frequency of victimization by genre. When the genres' total instances of victimization are compared, the number of instances of female character victimization by genre from highest to lowest frequency are (1) horror with 129 instances observed; (2) romances with 121 instances observed; (3) comedy with 109 instances observed; (4) family with 96 instances observed; and (5) action/adventure with 84 instances observed. These results indicate that female characters are victimized heavily in both genres designed for primarily male audiences (horror), as well as genres designed primarily for female audiences (romances).

Hypothesis Testing

The null hypothesis to be tested was "H₁₀: The victimization of women portrayed in films is not increasing over time." To test this null hypothesis, a mean difference analysis was conducted between the 1950s mean and the 1980s mean, between the 1950s mean and the 2000s mean, and between the 1980s mean and the 2000s mean.

1950s v. 1980s. The mean number of occurrences of female character victimization per 1950s film sampled was 10.9 with a standard deviation of 7.37. The mean number of occurrences of female character victimization per 1980s film sampled was 21.4 with a standard deviation of 9.42. When these values were entered into a one-tailed t-test program found at <http://www.graphpad.com>, the result was $t=2.78$ and $p=.00625$. Since $p < .05$ the means are viewed to be significantly different. The null hypothesis is rejected. The calculations for this analysis can be found in Appendix J.

1950s v. 2000s. The mean number of occurrences of female character victimization per 1950s film sampled was 10.9 with a standard deviation of 7.37. The mean number of occurrences of female character victimization per 2000s film sampled was 21.6 with a standard deviation of 10.18. When these values were entered into a one-tailed t-test program found at <http://www.graphpad.com>, the result was $t=2.6923$ and $p=.00745$. Since $p < .05$ the means are viewed as being significantly different. The null hypothesis is rejected. The calculations for this analysis can be found in Appendix J.

1980s v. 2000s. The mean number of occurrences of female character victimization per 1980s film sampled was 21.4 with a standard deviation of 9.42. The mean number of occurrences of female character victimization per 2000s film sampled was 21.6 with a standard deviation of 10.18. When these values were entered into a one-tailed t-test program found at <http://www.graphpad.com>, the result was $t=.0456$ and $p=.48$. Since $p > .05$ the results were not significant and the null hypothesis was not rejected. The calculations for this analysis can be found in Appendix J.

Contextual Analysis

1950s. The victimization of female characters in 1950s films illustrated a number of lessons for society to learn. The first lesson was the belief that the success of the human species was dependent upon females being subservient and remaining faithful to traditional Western sex roles. This point was made by demonizing powerful women, such as the alien woman in *Devil Girl from Mars*, which illustrated the fears that society had about feminism and the liberation of women. Another lesson theme that was observed in 1950s films was that women are the playthings of men. This theme was observed in *Devil Girl from Mars*, *Mogambo*, *Summertime*, *Three Guys Named Mike*, and *Will Success Spoil Rock Hunter?* In each of these films, women were victimized by men through the process of womanizing. In these films, women were expected to just accept the fact that men were going to have affairs, despite how that made the women feel. Another lesson that was taught by the victimization themes in the 1950s films was that physical aggression towards women by men indicates a high level of passion. It was the way in which love was made in the 1950s.

1980s. The lessons learned in the 1980s films, relating to the victimization of women suggested that the 1980s had a culture of sex and violence. This culture paired sex and violence, making them inseparable. This was seen in *Crocodile Dundee*, *The Shining*, and even in *The Chipmunk Adventure*. Another lesson theme that was observed in the 1980s was that mothers and grandmothers are constantly in a state of emotional distress, because they are worried about the well-being of their children and grandchildren. This is seen in *Poltergeist*, *Crossing Delancy*, and *Flight of the Navigator*. In each of these films, the mother/grandmother characters are kept in a state of worry

and/or panic through most of the film. The final theme related to the lessons learned by the victimization of female characters in the 1980s is that women are sex objects. This is seen in *Tootsie*, *Crossing Delancy*, *Crocodile Dundee*, and *Back to the Future*. In each of these films, women are not only viewed as sex objects, but they are viewed as being fair game for sexual assault and victimization as well.

2000s. In the films selected from the 2000s, sustained emotional distress remained a common trend. A new lesson trend, however, also emerged. This lesson was that love hurts. This is seen in *Bride and Prejudice*, *The Holiday*, *Jurassic Park III*, and *Return to Me*. In each of these films, women learned that to be in love meant to experience emotional pain. Another trend that was observed in the 2000s that was also observed in the 1980s and the 1950s was that sex and violence are inseparable. For example, in *Gamer*, the wife of the hero of the film is sexually and physically assaulted for the sexual gratification of viewers. This leads to another lesson trend observed in the 2000s films, which was that women were making money off of their victimization. This was seen in *Gamer* and in *Bride and Prejudice*. In these films, women were willing to be viewed as sex objects in exchange for financial and social gains.

Other Observations. In addition to the lesson themes already discussed, some other themes also emerged that were not *lessons*, but patterns in victimization. The first theme was that female characters often used physical and verbal aggression to establish or maintain status over other females. This was particularly true between mothers and daughters. For example, in *Fancy Pants*, the mother was constantly hitting, pulling, and pushing her daughter when the daughter stepped out of line. Another example was found in *Bride & Prejudice* in which the mother made rude remarks to her daughters when she

believed they were not behaving in a way that would benefit the family. Finally the various forms of aggression against female characters was not typically used as a means of abuse. Instead, it was often used to create tension between characters to demonstrate social struggles between men and women, to add excitement to the storyline, and to be humorous. The victimization of women that was observed in this study generally was mild to moderate, and most often not used as a form of abuse, but rather as a form of intensifying an interaction or establishing social status.

Discussion

The study examined how women were treated in various film genres across three decades of focus, the 1950s, the 1980s, and the 2000s. The film genres that were examined were action/adventure, comedy, family, horror, and romance. While variations were seen in the type and severity of the victimization of female characters, every film that was viewed had at least one instance of female character victimization.

Answering Research Questions

How are women victimized in films? The first research question asked, "How are women victimized in films?" Four categories of victimization were distinguished when collecting data: physical, emotional, sexual, and verbal. While the connotation of the concept *victimization* leads people to believe the instances of victimization were severe and caused physical harm, victimization is defined as treating someone unfairly or cruelly, or denying them something, such as a physical object, personal safety, or affection (Victimize, 2015). When victimization was observed in the selected films, the following instances were observed. Sexual victimization included such acts as rape, sexual intimidation, and threats of sexual abuse or rape. Emotional victimization included

hurt feelings, emotional abuse, and feelings of psychological distress (fear, sadness, depression, and anxiety). Verbal victimization included such things as yelling at women (aggressively), demeaning a female character, and saying unkind things to female characters. Finally, physical victimization included a wide range of physical contact, including, pushing, pulling, battering, killing, and putting the character in physical jeopardy.

What common victimization themes are present in specific movie genres, such as horror, action/adventure, comedy, family, and romance? While general themes were found across genres, each genre did have its own clusters of victimization types. For example, in action/adventure, female victimization was generally low, because women were largely absent from this genre of film. For example, in *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*, only two female characters were spotted in the entire film, two women who were the sexual interests of the hero of the tale. However, even though they were only on screen for a couple of minutes, they were still sexually victimized, by being treated as a sex object by the hero of the film. When the intersectionality of this genre's victimization theme is analyzed, the women are positioned with a cultural construct of a male dominated society, and their sexuality is both their way to access power and to be oppressed by men (Anderson & Collins, 2015). For example, the women in *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* use their sexuality to affiliate themselves with the hero of the story, while the hero sexually victimizes the women through the process of usury.

In the comedy genre, several victimization themes were identifiable. The first theme was slapstick comedy. Slapstick comedy is when a character falls down or is injured to produce a laugh (Gunning, 2010). When women are used in slapstick comedy

they are pushed down, they fall down, or they are slapped. What differentiates this type of physical victimization from the physical victimization seen in other genres, is that it does not really harm the female character. The intersectionality of this form of victimization is that the female characters are positioned at the intersection of the power struggle between the sexes and situational factors, such as being bent over or being in the wrong place at the right time, which allow the women to be victimized in a humorous way. Another theme of victimization in the comedy genre was that status aggression was very common between women. Status aggression position the victims in a social hierarchy found within the female population where the victim is a lower status than other women, usually because of age (Andersen & Collins, 2015). For example, in *Bride & Prejudice*, the mother criticizes the way her daughter is dressed indicating that the man the family has targeted for the oldest daughter to seduce and marry will not pay attention to her if the younger daughter's *mammies* (breasts) are so exposed.

Surprisingly, family films had higher counts of female character victimization than the action/adventure genre. This was surprising, because many of these films had female leads. The main way in which females in family films were victimized was status aggression. Again, the intersectionality of this situation opens the female character up for victimization by positioning her within a social hierarchy where she is of a lower status because of age or socioeconomic status (Andersen & Collins, 2015). Female characters were victimized with verbal, emotional, and physical aggression to keep them subservient. A good example of this is Alice in *Alice in Wonderland*. She is constantly be told how to act and being oppressed by the other characters in the tale. She is also physically threatened for not obeying the rules that Wonderland society has set for her.

Another way in which female characters are victimized in family films is sexually. In this situation, the sexual victimization is not rape or sexual assault, but rather the sexual objectification of the female characters. In this theme of victimization, the main matrix of domination is a male dominated society and the situational factors that leave the characters open for victimization are the story elements that define what the role of the female character is. For example, in *The Chipmunk Adventure*, the Chipettes go through a hurricane and end up wearing little more than their underwear. They are further objectified by the songs that they sing, which tend to have strong sexual connotations. Finally, the three female characters in this film are taken as sexual slaves by an Egyptian ruler. These examples of victimization are used to show that female characters need male characters to help them survive in an adventure situation, because without male protection they are vulnerable to sexual exploitation and victimization.

The romance genre has the second highest victimization rate among the genres studied. In romance films, sexual victimization and emotional victimization are the most commonly observed violations of women. The opportunity for violent sexual victimization is created by the intersectionality between a male dominated society and the inferior physical and social power that a woman has. For example, in *Tootsie*, all the female characters working on a soap opera are repeatedly sexually assaulted and intimidated by the male staff and actors on the show. Even Tootsie, who is a man pretending to be a woman, is put in a situation where a co-actor attempts to rape him, thinking he was a woman. Emotional victimization is the other form of victimization commonly found in the romance genre. The first form emotional victimization takes is men making love to the female characters, even though the men are married or involved

with other women. The intersectionality of this situation is the male dominated society and the belief that women are driven by their hearts, not their heads. Another way in which the women are emotionally victimized in romances is by depriving the women of their loves. This can be because of unrequited love, such as in the case of *The Holiday*, or because the man is not in the same social class as the woman, such as in the case of *Bride and Prejudice*. In this situation, the intersectionality is a male dominated society and women who are in love with men who do not love them back or men who are out of their social class.

Finally, the horror genre, not surprisingly, had the highest rate of female character victimization. In this genre, female character victimization was quite varied. One common way that female emotional victimization occurred in this genre of films was putting a woman's child or grandchild in jeopardy. The intersectionality of this form of victimization was the parent-child relationship and the mother's instincts to keep her child safe (Andersen & Collins, 2015). This was seen in *Poltergeist*, *The Devil Girl from Mars*, *Jurassic Park III*, and *The Shining*. Another common way that female characters were victimized in horror films was by placing them in a state of non-stop psychological distress. The intersectionality of this form of victimization was a horror storyline and situational factors that placed the individual in that setting, such as going on a camping trip, living in a haunted house, or playing with the supernatural. For example, in *The Shining*, the mother is located in a haunted hotel with an abusive husband who is possessed by the hotel's supernatural tenants. She is victimized because of her locality and the situational factors of her husband's susceptibility to being influenced by the spirits of the hotel.

What victimization themes are unique in specific genres, such as horror, action/adventure, comedy, family, and romance? When the data from the contextual analysis was reviewed, genres did not appear to monopolize the types of victimization that was being portrayed. Many cross-overs were found in each genre. This suggests it is not the method of victimization that is impacting how various genres use their female characters to send a message to the public, but rather the reason for the victimization. For example, in comedies, physical victimization is used to make the audience laugh and to reduce or create tension between characters. Conversely, in horror films, physical victimization of female characters is used to create terror and to disable a character so that she can be further victimized or saved by the hero of the film.

How do victimization themes change over time and how do they stay the same? The contextual analysis and the quantitative analysis of the study materials show that victimization themes do change over time. For example, in the 1950s, female characters were victimized as a way of fighting the perceived threats of feminism and female liberalization. The reason that this trend was observed in the 1950s was that World War II had reduced the population around the globe dramatically, and it was feared that if women remained in the workplace and attempted to act as men, then they would not want to have families and to be wives (Connell, 2011). Another unique trend found in the 1950s films was that female characters were beginning to step outside of traditional sex roles, which did put them into the same dangerous situations that male characters had been placed in earlier film eras. As a result, they were more likely to be physically and emotionally victimized because of the situations they were in, as opposed to being victimized because they were women.

In the 1980s, the battle between the sexes was heating up, as women were entering many domains that were once thought to be man's territory (Connell, 2011). As a result, women in the 1980s were gaining power and were changing their social images. One of the results of this increase in social power and power over their sexuality was that single professional women were viewed by men as sexual fair game. Since women of this era were more sexually active before marriage than in the 1950s, sexual and physical victimization was more apparent in the films selected from the 1980s. Society in the 1980s also was more violent and sexually aggressive than society in the 1950s (Connell, 2011). As a result, more instances of sex and violence were portrayed in the films of the 1980s, and many of these instances involved female characters who were just as powerful and sexually adventurous as their male counterparts. However, while the films of this era introduced a female experience that was more sexually and physically adventurous, some of the same concerns existed. For example, women were still mothers and nurturers. As a result, they could be victimized and controlled by their desires to keep their children safe. Finally, what emerged in this era was the desire to put and keep female characters in a heightened state of emotional distress through most of the film. This is seen across genres and throughout the 1980s.

In the 2000s, not a lot changed in regard to how female characters were victimized, when compared to the films of the 1980s. One difference was that technology was introduced that made it possible to victimize women through more media, but the types of victimization generally stayed the same, and include sustained emotional distress, status aggression, and adherence to the norms of a culture that was plagued with sex and violence.

How does the frequency and severity of female character victimization change over time in films? The main research question guiding this study was, "How does the frequency and severity of female character victimization change over time in films?" The answer to this question was produced by testing the null hypothesis, "H1₀: The victimization of women portrayed in films is not increasing over time." To test this hypothesis, three t-tests were conducted. The first t-test examined if a difference in victimization occurrences were present when the mean instances of female character victimization per 1950s film were compared to those of the mean instances of female character victimization per 1980s film. The result from this analysis was $p < .05$. This means that the null hypothesis was rejected, and the assumption that the victimization of women portrayed over time does increase. The second t-test examined if a difference in victimization occurrences was present when the mean instances of female character victimization per 1950s film was compared to those of the mean instances of female character victimization per 2000s film. The result from this analysis was $p < .05$, which again indicates that victimization rates do increase over time. However, the final t-test conducted was between the mean victimization rates for 1980s films and 2000s films. In this test, the result was not significant, because $p > .05$. As a result, the null hypothesis could not be rejected.

What can be concluded from these results is that it is not certain that female character victimization is increasing as time progresses. It is possible that the increase in observations from the 1950s to the 1980s and 2000s resulted from a significant social shift that took place in the 1950s. This shift was the sexual revolution, which changed social norms related to sex roles, sexuality, and women's place in society (Schaefer,

2014). Since similar paradigm shifts have not occurred since the 1980s, the frequency of female victimization in films is not significantly increasing as time progresses from the 1980s onward. This is contradictory to what the literature indicates, specifically Sklar (2012) and Welsh (2010), who both provided a model of evolution of filmmaking that would steadily exploit and victimize women to greater degrees with each passing generation.

Limitations of the Study

While a lot of work went into the design and execution of this study, three primary limitations were identified during the process of collecting and analyzing the data. The first limitation is that hundreds of thousands of films have been made over the last 100 plus years. A sample of 30 films, while exhaustive for a single researcher to process, is too small to identify and define trends in filmmaking accurately. As a result, the conclusions that were drawn by this study should only be viewed as preliminary results that need to be confirmed and further developed by later research.

The second limitation of this study was that it did not assess if the victimization being perpetrated against female characters was unique when compared to male victimization. The literature claimed that women are being disparately victimized by filmmakers (Sklar, 2012). However, the contextual analysis did not support this claim, showing that women were not victimized as much as the literature suggested. It would be beneficial to examine the origin of the belief that females are being victimized more than male characters in films, because the evidence appears to indicate otherwise.

The final limitation of this study was that only three decades of films were used to establish the victimization trends. This limits the accuracy of the conclusions drawn. It

would be beneficial to take samples from many consecutive decades and to then plot the mean differences to see if victimization is increasing, decreasing, staying the same, or acting in a non-linear or chaotic way.

Future Research

This study identified several new paths that future research can take. The first suggestion is to take a larger sample to study the victimization trends of female characters over the history of filmmaking. This will increase the accuracy of the trends observed and the conclusions drawn. The second suggestion for future research is to compare victimization rates between male and female characters. This would either verify or refute the modern perception that female characters are being victimized more frequently in films than male characters. The final suggestion is to take a genre specific look at the topic to better understand how specific genres victimize women in films.

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Appendix A: Data Collection Form

Movie	Year	Genre	Physical	Emotional	Sexual	Verbal	Lesson Learned

Appendix B: Data Collection Form 1950s

Movie	Year	Genre	Physical	Emotional	Sexual	Verbal
<i>Devil Girl from Mars</i>	1954	Horror	4	1	1	4
<i>The Blob</i>	1958	Horror	4	0	0	0
<i>Alice in Wonderland</i>	1951	Family	10	3	0	12
<i>20,000 Leagues Under the Sea</i>	1954	Family	0	0	1	0
<i>Fancy Pants</i>	1950	Comedy	12	0	1	4
<i>Will Success Spoil Rock Hunter?</i>	1957	Comedy	1	4	0	4
<i>African Screams</i>	1950	Action/Adventure	2	0	0	2
<i>Mogambo</i>	1953	Action/Adventure	1	6	3	7
<i>Three Guys Named Mike</i>	1951	Romance	3	0	4	7
<i>Summertime</i>	1955	Romance	1	2	0	5
			38	16	10	45
Mean			3.8	1.6	1	4.5
Standard Dev.			4.05	2.12	1.41	3.60

Appendix C: Data Collection Form 1980s

Movie	Year	Genre	Physical	Emotional	Sexual	Verbal
<i>Tootsie</i>	1982	Romance	2	3	8	4
<i>Crossing Delancy</i>	1988	Romance	4	5	3	9
<i>Crocodile Dundee</i>	1986	Action/Adventure	2	1	5	4
<i>Back to the Future</i>	1985	Action/Adventure	4	2	4	4
<i>Poltergeist</i>	1982	Horror	10	20	2	2
<i>The Shining</i>	1980	Horror	7	14	1	9
<i>The Great Outdoors</i>	1988	Comedy	7	13	3	4
<i>One Crazy Summer</i>	1980	Comedy	5	7	0	3
<i>The Chipmunk Adventure</i>	1987	Family	21	3	4	6
<i>Flight of the Navigator</i>	1986	Family	3	5	0	1
			65	73	30	46
		Mean	6.5	7.3	3	4.6
		SD	5.68	6.27	2.45	2.67

Appendix D: Data Collection Form 2000s

Movie	Year	Genre	Physical	Emotional	Sexual	Verbal
<i>The Crocodile Hunter: Collision Course</i>	2002	Action/Adventure	5	0	1	1
<i>Gamer</i>	2009	Action/Adventure	13	4	11	2
<i>The Hangover</i>	2009	Comedy	2	8	5	5
<i>Return to Me</i>	2000	Comedy	5	8	2	6
<i>Transformers</i>	2007	Family	7	6	2	7
<i>Night at the Museum</i>	2006	Family	1	3	0	1
<i>The Cave</i>	2005	Horror	13	10	0	4
<i>Jurassic Park III</i>	2001	Horror	10	12	0	1
<i>The Holiday</i>	2006	Romance	1	14	1	5
<i>Bride & Prejudice</i>	2005	Romance	1	22	3	14
			58	87	25	46
		Mean	5.8	8.7	2.5	4.6
		SD	4.80	6.29	3.37	3.98

Appendix E: Data Collection Form Horror

Movie	Year	Genre	Physical	Emotional	Sexual	Verbal
<i>Devil Girl from Mars</i>	1954	Horror	4	1	1	4
<i>The Blob</i>	1958	Horror	4	0	0	0
<i>Poltergeist</i>	1982	Horror	10	20	2	2
<i>The Shining</i>	1980	Horror	7	14	1	9
<i>The Cave</i>	2005	Horror	13	10	0	4
<i>Jurassic Park III</i>	2001	Horror	10	12	0	1
			48	57	4	20
Mean			8	9.5	0.666667	3.333333
SD			3.63318	7.739509	0.816497	3.204164

Appendix F: Data Collection Form Family

Movie	Year	Genre	Physical	Emotional	Sexual	Verbal
<i>Alice in Wonderland</i>	1951	Family	10	3	0	12
<i>20,000 Leagues Under the Sea</i>	1954	Family	0	0	1	0
<i>The Chipmunk Adventure</i>	1987	Family	21	3	4	6
<i>Flight of the Navigator</i>	1986	Family	3	5	0	1
<i>Transformers</i>	2007	Family	7	6	2	7
<i>Night at the Museum</i>	2006	Family	1	3	0	1
			42	20	7	27
		Mean	7	3.333333	1.166667	4.5
		SD	7.823043	2.065591	1.602082	4.679744

Appendix G: Data Collection Form Comedy

Movie	Year	Genre	Physical	Emotional	Sexual	Verbal
<i>Fancy Pants</i>	1950	Comedy	12	0	1	4
<i>Will Success Spoil Rock Hunter?</i>	1957	Comedy	1	4	0	4
<i>The Great Outdoors</i>	1988	Comedy	7	13	3	4
<i>One Crazy Summer</i>	1980	Comedy	5	7	0	3
<i>The Hangover</i>	2009	Comedy	2	8	5	5
<i>Return to Me</i>	2000	Comedy	5	8	2	6
			32	40	11	26
		Mean	5.33	6.67	1.83	4.33
		Sd	3.93	4.37	1.94	1.03

Appendix H: Data Collection Form Action/Adventure

Movie	Year	Genre	Physical	Emotional	Sexual	Verbal
<i>African Screams</i>	1950	Action/Adventure	2	0	0	2
<i>Mogambo</i>	1953	Action/Adventure	1	6	3	7
<i>Crocodile Dundee</i>	1986	Action/Adventure	2	1	5	4
<i>Back to the Future</i>	1985	Action/Adventure	4	2	4	4
<i>The Crocodile Hunter: Collision Course</i>	2002	Action/Adventure	5	0	1	1
<i>Gamer</i>	2009	Action/Adventure	13	4	11	2
			27	13	24	20
		Mean	4.50	2.17	4.00	3.33
		Sd	4.42	2.40	3.90	2.16

Appendix I: Data Collection Form Romance

Movie	Year	Genre	Physical	Emotional	Sexual	Verbal
<i>Three Guys Named Mike</i>	1951	Romance	3	0	4	7
<i>Summertime</i>	1955	Romance	1	2	0	5
<i>Tootsie</i>	1982	Romance	2	3	8	4
<i>Crossing Delancy</i>	1988	Romance	4	5	3	9
<i>The Holiday</i>	2006	Romance	1	14	1	5
<i>Bride & Prejudice</i>	2005	Romance	1	22	3	14
			12	46	19	44
		Mean	2.00	7.67	3.17	7.33
		Sd	1.26	8.55	2.79	3.72

Appendix J: t-test Calculations**1950s v. 1980s**

Unpaired *t* test results

P value and statistical significance:

The two-tailed P value equals 0.0125

By conventional criteria, this difference is considered to be statistically significant.

Confidence interval:

The mean of Group One minus Group Two equals -10.5000

95% confidence interval of this difference: From -18.4462 to -2.5538

Intermediate values used in calculations:

$t = 2.7761$

$df = 18$

standard error of difference = 3.782

1950s v. 2000s

Unpaired *t* test results

P value and statistical significance:

The two-tailed P value equals 0.0149

By conventional criteria, this difference is considered to be statistically significant.

Confidence interval:

The mean of Group One minus Group Two equals -10.7000

95% confidence interval of this difference: From -19.0497 to -2.3503

Intermediate values used in calculations:

$t = 2.6923$

$df = 18$

standard error of difference = 3.974

1980s v. 2000s

Unpaired *t* test results

P value and statistical significance:

The two-tailed P value equals 0.9641

By conventional criteria, this difference is considered to be not statistically significant.

Confidence interval:

The mean of Group One minus Group Two equals -0.2000

95% confidence interval of this difference: From -9.4146 to 9.0146

Intermediate values used in calculations:

$t = 0.0456$

$df = 18$

standard error of difference = 4.386