

Shaken and Stirred: A Content Analysis of Women's Portrayals in James Bond Films

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Abstract A quantitative content analysis of 20 James Bond films assessed portrayals of 195 female characters. Key findings include a trend of more sexual activity and greater harm to females over time, but few significant across-time differences in demographic characteristics of Bond women. Sexual activity is predicted by race, attractiveness, size of role, and aggressive behaviors. Being a target of weapons is predicted by size of role, sexual activity, and weapon use, while being harmed is predicted principally by role. End-of-film mortality is predicted by sexual activity, ethical status (good vs. bad), and attempting to kill Bond. This identification of a link between sexuality and violent behavior is noted as a contribution to the media and sex roles literatures.

Keywords Sex roles · Body image · Film · James Bond · Content analysis

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Introduction

For the past five decades, film audiences have been treated to the adventures of James Bond, with great media fanfare accompanying each new release (Gilligan 2005). The fictional British spy 007 was initially created in Ian Fleming's espionage novels, which experienced peak popularity in the 1950s. The novels, and the films to follow, appeared on the scene during a time of heightened sociopolitical awareness and Cold War tensions (Mulvihill 2001a, b). Espionage, innovative gadgets, alcoholic beverages, fast cars, a demonic villain and a plethora of attractive women were instrumental in molding the "Bond formula" that matriculated from print to celluloid (Brosnan 1972; Dodds 2005; Pfeiffer and Worrall 2000). And, the uber-masculine persona of James Bond himself has been a predictable element for the Bond franchise's worldwide audience (Carpenter 2002). The influence of the Bond phenomenon has reached across decades and international boundaries, making James Bond one of the planet's most widely recognized fictional characters (Lindner 2003).

The ongoing appeal of the fantasy world represented in the Bond films relies heavily on attractive female counterparts to the Bond character (Jenkins 2005; Murray 1988). Prominent female roles are pivotal to the story line and overall tone of the films. Every Bond film has multiple female characters who variously tempt, distract, and assist James in his latest mission. Typically, at least one "Bond girl" is particularly striking—a woman with an adventurous nature, cunning attributes, strong potential for romantic entanglement with Bond, and a sense of self-assurance whose name (Pussy Galore, Honey Ryder, or Holly Goodhead, for example) is as provocative as the character she portrays (Ladenson 2001; Rubin 2003). d'Abo and Cork (2003) have noted that there have been Bond films without a notorious villain or dazzling

innovative gadgets, but there has never been a Bond film without a “Bond girl.” In fact, it is the worldwide casting of the Bond female roles that garners the most attention by the media during each film’s preproduction stage (d’Abo and Cork 2003).

The Bond phenomenon has attracted the attention of scholars who have examined such diverse aspects as the narrative structure of Fleming’s series of books (Eco 1979), the economic performance of the film franchise (Baimbridge 1997), the ethical contradictions of Bond as both sexual predator and gentleman (Arp and Decker 2006; Taliaferro and LeGall 2006), and the sexual ambiguity of Bond women (Ladenson 2001). The Bond series has become entrenched in Western popular culture with the films’ diegetic form so highly predictable and dependable that it has proved useful in studies of moving image audience response. In fact, studies of viewers’ ability to predict narrative outcomes (Magliano et al. 1996) and even studies of brain function (Bartels and Zeki 2004, 2005; Keysers et al. 2004) have utilized Bond films as stimuli, due to their “richly situated” stories and the visually dynamic nature of their content, respectively.

Rationale for Study and Literature Review

The stereotyping of female images in the media has been one of the most-studied areas for content analysts (Neuendorf 2002). Although rarely examined by empirical scholarship, women’s images in *film* have provided a massive collection of stereotyped portrayals over many decades (Bazzini et al. 1997; Eschholz et al. 2002; Haskell 1987). There is a need to add systematic content analyses to the study of this important medium.

Recent research in the area of female portrayals continues to investigate and critique a wide range of messages and possible impacts across multiple media. Contemporary studies have looked at women and gender roles within such forms as reality television (Brancato 2007; Graham-Bertolini 2004; M. Harris 2004a), TV drama (Cuklanz and Moorti 2006; Merskin 2007; Nathanson et al. 2002), horror films (Sapolsky et al. 2003), educational and informational programming (Calvert et al. 2003), and soap operas (Jackson 2006). Recent content studies have examined women’s portrayals in world media, including content from Portugal, Spain, Bulgaria, and Saudi Arabia, for example (Ibroscheva 2007; Nassif and Gunter 2008; Neto and Santos 2004; Royo-Vela et al. 2008). Overall, studies have found that women continue to be portrayed in stereotypically negative ways (R. J. Harris 2004b; Seger 2007). One exception might be Baker and Raney (2007), who noted the presence of female superheroes in children’s animated programming (although these models did exhibit traditionally masculine behavior).

Other studies have considered portrayals of specific female populations defined by race (e.g., Brown Givens and Monahan 2005; Merskin 2007; Nathanson et al. 2002; Taylor and Stern 1997) and by occupation (e.g., Daily and Dalton 2000; Kim et al. 2006). These studies found that specific cultural gender stereotypes, such as the African American woman as “mammy” and the Latina woman as “hot,” continue to abound in the media. While prevailing societal norms reflect a distancing between contemporary women and the stereotypical female characters perpetuated in past decades by the media, the portrayal of women on TV and in film continues to espouse unrealistic images (Davis 1990; R. J. Harris 2004b).

Studies of the content of film and other mass media are often motivated by a concern over the effects such content may have on viewers (Neuendorf 2002). Bandura (1971, 1977) argued for a social learning framework to explain human behavior in terms of continuous reciprocal interactions between cognitive, behavioral, and environmental influences. Social cognitive theory (Bandura 1986) suggests that individuals will observe, imitate, and learn from others, including fictional others (e.g., characters in film or on television), in a way to provide a monitoring system for their own behaviors, attitudes and values. Bandura’s assumptions suggest that individuals will look to others as a way to reinforce their own perceived accomplishments, behavioral patterns, or inadequacies. Several targets of examination include cognition (individual thought processes), social factors (how one conducts oneself around others), and the environment (how one’s immediate surroundings affect one’s behaviors). Each factor occurs simultaneously and the various factors affect one another (Bandura 1986).

Thus, consistent imagery of women in the media is likely to serve as the raw material for cognitive and behavioral effects. Kilbourne (1995) has proposed one such constancy in the idealized portrayal of female beauty perpetuated through the media as an individual who is statuesque, very thin, small hipped, and extremely attractive. It is interesting to note that these characteristics are found in less than 5% of the adult female population. Studies have found exposure to such idealized thin models to be related to a host of outcomes for females—body dissatisfaction (Stice and Shaw 1994), lower self-esteem (Wilcox and Laird 2000), greater self-objectification (Harper and Tiggemann 2008), anger and depression (Pinhas et al. 1999), increased self-consciousness (Kalodner 1997), and symptoms of eating disorders (Harrison 2001; Harrison and Cantor 1997). Harrison et al. (2006) have identified a relationship between exposure to thin models and actual eating behaviors. Compounding this, content analyses have found that female images have become increasingly thin in recent decades (Fouts and Burggraf 2000; Silverstein et al. 1986) and that audiences judge larger female characters differently (e.g., as less professional; Barriga et al. 2009).

Other studies of women's images in the media have identified an increase in the sexualization of female models, with females far more likely to be shown as sexual beings than are males (as in Carpenter and Edison's 2005 examination of 40 years of magazine advertising). In a comprehensive analysis of television commercials, Stern and Mastro (2004) replicated long-established findings with regard to women's roles—females are severely underrepresented, they are substantially younger than their male counterparts, and they are portrayed as successful only when thin, attractive, and sexualized (e.g., with provocative dress).

In their study of soap operas, Stern et al. (2007) found that a woman's success is often measured in relation to her male counterpart's wealth and social positioning. Female sexual stereotypes are also abundant in these narratives and are used to reflect women as being either passive victims (e.g., of rape, incest, etc.) or socially deviant/hyper-sexual (e.g., prostitutes) (Stern et al. 2007). Additionally, Merskin (2007) has found the depiction of women as hyper-sexual to cross ethnic lines in content such as the television show *Desperate Housewives*.

Further, women's stereotypes tend to be age-linked (Lauzen and Dozier 2005a, b). Older women in U.S. films from the 1940s through the 1980s have been found to be underrepresented, and more negatively portrayed than their younger counterparts—as significantly less attractive, intelligent, good, and romantically active (Bazzini et al. 1997). Older female characters in contemporary U.S. films remain dramatically underrepresented when compared with males (by approximately the oft-reported 3:1 ratio) and much less likely than males characters to exhibit leadership and occupational power (Lauzen and Dozier 2005a).

Other relevant research in the area of representations of women in the media considers portrayals of women from a critical, feminist perspective (e.g., Dow and Condit 2005). Of particular interest for the current study are questions related to the sexual objectification of women in the media. Attwood (2004) points out that readings of modern sexual representations must be put into social and cultural context. Modern objectification of women's bodies can be read as a representation of female sexual freedom and power as well as from a more traditional feminist reading of objectification as a form of violence against women. Additionally, Attwood points out that the lines between fashion, high art, and pornography as well as public and private space are continually blurred in modern consumer societies. Thornham (2007) found the presentation of common themes, such as friendship and romance, as examples of modern feminism within the popular cable program, *Sex and the City*, and the film, *In the Cut*.

While violence in the media has been heavily examined, the victimization of women in narrative media has been the focus of a limited body of research (Wilson et al. 1997, 1998), with mixed findings. Signorielli (2003) indicates a

consistent finding that women on American TV are more likely to be hurt than to hurt others. Additionally, some studies have found women to be less likely to be victimized than men (Signorielli 2003; Smith et al. 1998). In a national study of violence on TV, Smith et al. (1998) found that only one in ten violent perpetrators is female. Studies of music videos have generally found women to be less frequently the victims of violence than men (Smith and Boyson 2002), although their victimization tends to be highlighted with production techniques that provide emphasis (Kalis and Neuendorf 1989). And, a study of the 50 most popular U.S. films of 1996 found sex unrelated to offending or victimization, while degree of masculinity was positively related (Eschholz and Bufkin 2001).

Effects related to the media representations of women have been identified. Recent studies include those that identify cognitive and affective impacts of viewing female models in the media. For example, utilizing a social cognitive theoretic perspective, Behm-Morawitz and Mastro (2008) found exposure to teen movies could lead to negative stereotypes and attitudes of gender roles and female friendships among high school students. Other research indicates that as a consequence of viewing generalized female characters, albeit in a fantasy setting, women continue to negatively evaluate their lives against media images (Herrett-Skjellum and Allen 1996; Stern et al. 2007).

Research has also identified differential effects by sex of media personae. For example, Gordon et al. (2003) found negative political ads directed toward opponents did not hurt the image of female political candidates. Additional research has pinpointed differential effects by sex of the viewer. Haridakis (2006) found that men and women respond to violent television differently. Glascock (2005) found differences between men and women's affinity and arousal toward particular pornographic content. These varied approaches to media effects demonstrate the importance of continued study in the area of portrayals of women in the media. In order to further understand how images of women in the media impact viewers, it makes sense to empirically document the images themselves.

Further, a concern over the linking of sexuality and aggression has been evidenced in the scholarly literature, specifically the possibility of an interaction effect whereby media sex and violence combined is more impactful than either sex or violence alone (Linz and Donnerstein 1994). The Bond series of films seems a perfect fit to examine such linkages, with its longitudinal history of sex and aggression involving women. The combination of these factors may in fact constitute a formula that is integral to the Bond series' long-term success, and thereby an important element in our popular cultural tapestry.

Bryant and Miron (2006) maintain that the most physically arousing media messages are those that include both sex and violence, rather than one or the other alone (p. 442). The excitation-transfer framework has offered an

explanation for this spillover in the possibility that viewers may be unable to unambiguously attribute their own arousal to violent or sexual stimuli (Oliver et al. 2007; Zillmann 1998). Another line of research has argued for a particularly relevant desensitizing media effect. Researchers have suggested that viewers who are exposed to media content that contains sexual and violent acts against females within close proximity may experience reduced feelings of empathy or concern for the victimization of females in other circumstances (Linz et al. 1989; Linz et al. 1984; Mullin and Linz 1995; Oliver 1994). Sapolsky et al. (2003) have noted, “Exposure to scenes of explicit violence juxtaposed with sexual images is believed to blunt males’ emotional reactions to film violence and lead males to be less disturbed by scenes of extreme violence and degradation directed at women” (p. 28). Additionally, it has been found that pornography that degrades women conditions men to become aroused by the degradation in addition to the sexually explicit content (Glascok 2005). Though most of the studies on the connection between sex and violence have focused on horror and pornography genres, effects may hold true for other content such as Bond films.

Social cognitive theory (Bandura 1986) in the context of film studies suggests that individuals may imitate various prescribed behaviors they view perpetuated on film, especially if these portrayals are consistent and believed to provide positive reinforcement, and that such portrayals may also lead to altered perceptions and expectations for real world activities. For example, Brown Givens and Monahan (2005) identified an experimentally induced stereotyping effect for subjects shown race- and gender-stereotyped filmic content. Such effects may also accrue from exposure to the distinctive and repetitive images found in the Bond franchise films (Heath and Bryant 2000; Tan 1985). James Bond’s tendencies to aggress on women do not appear to deter or abate his final conquest or the positive rewards he receives presented at the end of the film (Brabazon 1999; Dodds 2003). Bond “*girls*,” a now pejorative term in itself, often play independent, highly intelligent roles as heroes, villains, other agents, or professionals. However, as autonomous as these characters are initially depicted, they are often identified as an adjunct to Bond (the male protagonist), or in terms of their relationship to other male characters. Correspondingly, many female characters in the 007 films are framed as objects of sex or violence, or considered easily dispensable (Jenkins 2005; Murray 1988). These messages may impact the viewing audience by presenting a limited view of the role of women in the world of international diplomacy, and in world culture generally (Shrum 2002).

The above studies demonstrate the potential relevance of documenting media images of women in light of how these images may impact viewers as proposed by Bandura’s social cognitive theory. The goal of the current research is to

quantify specific characteristics of the portrayal of both the leading and peripheral female characters in a specific film series, the James Bond franchise. We are guided by a set of research questions derived from both scholarly literature and concerns made salient by themes in popular literature. Several research questions examine whether representations of the women of the world of Bond have evolved over time. Several others probe the potential interrelationships among physical characteristics, sexual activity, and violent behaviors for female characters in Bond films.

Research Questions

Based on the literature that identifies stereotypical portrayals of women in the media, including film, and notably including the research lines that note an increasing emphasis on slim, highly attractive female models, the following research question is forwarded:

RQ1. Have the representations of physical characteristics of females portrayed in Bond films changed over time?

Following the research that has identified female portrayals in the media as highly sexualized and that has examined the prevalence of women as victims of aggressive actions, we pose the following:

RQ2. Has the sexual activity of female characters portrayed in Bond films changed over time?

RQ3. Has the amount and level of violence against female characters portrayed in Bond films changed over time?

Derived from the research concerning the linking of sexual and aggressive behaviors in the media, we ask:

RQ4A. Is the amount of sexual activity engaged in by a female character predicted by her physical characteristics, role prominence, and aggressive predispositions?

RQ4B. Is the amount of aggression aimed at a female character predicted by her physical characteristics, role prominence, sexual activity, and aggressive predispositions?

RQ4C. Is a female character’s end-of-film mortality predicted by her physical characteristics, role prominence, sexual activity, and aggressive predispositions?

Method

Content Analysis

This content analysis follows from the definition provided by Neuendorf (2002)—“content analysis is a summarizing, quantitative analysis of messages that relies on the scientific method” (p. 10). The research described here utilizes

human coding, applied to a census of the 20 James Bond films released through 2005.

Concepts

The main concepts investigated in this project are (a) diversity among women in terms of demographics, physical characteristics, and role portrayals, (b) sexual activity, and (c) aggressive behavior involving women.

Unit of Data Collection

The unit is each female character depicted in a Bond film who speaks in the film to any other character, or who does not speak but is introduced by another character, or who does not speak but is shown for at least five seconds in each of two or more scenes. The coder must be able to both hear the female character and see that character's mouth moving as she speaks, or must hear her name when she is introduced, or must be able to see her for at least five seconds in each of two or more scenes. In addition, only females that appear to be over the age of 16 are to be coded (i.e., no children were coded, due to their infrequency of occurrence and low relevance to the key concepts of sex and violence).

Codebook and Coding Form

A 13-page codebook was developed to define the following measured variables for each female character.

Each female character was assessed regarding a number of demographic, physical, and role characteristics. Our set of variables combines well-established descriptive indicators such as role, age, sex, race, and variables that address our particular need to quantify aspects of the physical appearance of Bond women, such as body size, attractiveness, hair color, length and style. Each female character was assessed regarding (a) her *role* as a minor, medium, or major part in the Bond film; (b) her character as a “good” person (i.e., a protagonist, that is, one whose behaviors forward the goals of Bond), “bad” person, (i.e., antagonist, that is, one whose behaviors are at odds with Bond), or one who changes from one to the other during the film; (c) her *chronological age* estimated in years; (d) her *race* (Caucasian, African/African-American, Asian, Native-American, Arab, Other); (e) whether she had an evident *Hispanic identity*; (f) her mode of speaking or *accent* (U.S., European, Asian, Other); (g) her *hair color* (blonde, red, brown, black, grey/white); (h) her *hair length* (short, medium (shoulder length), long, very long (below waist)); (i) her *hair style* (straight, wavy/curly, afro); (j) her *body size* (using the nine-point Thompson and Gray (1995) scheme); (k) the level of attractiveness of her *physical appearance* (extremely attractive, attractive/average, below average/extremely unattractive); and (l) the end-of-film mortality

or *consequences* for her character (four categories—alive and continues on with Bond, presumed alive but not with Bond, presumed dead, and explicitly shown to be dead).

A set of variables measured the amount of sexual activity in which each female character was involved. Coders were asked to count the number of instances of *mild sexual contact* (including kissing while standing or sitting) and *strong sexual contact* (implied sexual intercourse or other direct sexual contact) with three types of partners: Bond, non-Bond protagonists, and non-Bond antagonists.

Several sets of variables measured the level of aggressive behavior associated with each female character. First, analogous to the sexual activity measures described above, coders were asked to count the number of instances of *mild physical harm* (in which the female is hurt but not maimed or killed) and *strong physical harm* (which has a high probability of resulting in severe harm or death) experienced by a female character due to the actions of five types of assailants: Bond, non-Bond male protagonists, male antagonists, female protagonists, and female antagonists. Second, use of a number of *weapons by* and *against* each female was assessed: Gun, blunt object weapon, sharp object weapon, poison, explosives, animal(s) as weapon, and hand-to-hand combat. For each measure of weaponry *by* the female, coders indicated if the character (a) displayed the weapon but did not use it, or (b) used the weapon. Finally, a single measure tapped whether the female *attempted to kill Bond*, and if so, whether the attempt was proximate to sexual activity with Bond.

Training

The team of coders consisted of eight graduate students enrolled in a course on content analysis. The coders were thoroughly trained on the codebook, and adjustments were made in the coding scheme before final coding commenced. Final training was executed with a thematically related (but not technically “Bond”) film, the 1967 version of *Casino Royale*.

Sample

As noted earlier, a census of all 20 James Bond films (with the exception of *Never Say Never Again*, due to its status as a remake) was utilized for the study. Table 1 provides a list of all the films, their release dates, and the actors portraying James Bond.

Reliability

Never Say Never Again was used for the first intercoder reliability test. A total of 13 female characters were identified. One coder failed to identify two female characters that all other coders deemed “codable,” resulting in a unitizing reliability of 97%. After this first reliability

Table 1 James Bond films included in sample.

Film ID	Film title	Year of film	Actor portraying Bond
1	<i>Dr No</i>	1962	Sean Connery
2	<i>From Russia With Love</i>	1963	Sean Connery
3	<i>Goldfinger</i>	1964	Sean Connery
4	<i>Thunderball</i>	1965	Sean Connery
5	<i>You Only Live Twice</i>	1967	Sean Connery
6	<i>On Her Majesty's Secret Service</i>	1969	George Lazenby
7	<i>Diamonds Are Forever</i>	1971	Sean Connery
8	<i>Live and Let Die</i>	1973	Roger Moore
9	<i>The Man With the Golden Gun</i>	1974	Roger Moore
10	<i>The Spy Who Loved Me</i>	1977	Roger Moore
11	<i>Moonraker</i>	1979	Roger Moore
12	<i>For Your Eyes Only</i>	1981	Roger Moore
13	<i>Octopussy</i>	1983	Roger Moore
14	<i>A View to a Kill</i>	1985	Roger Moore
15	<i>The Living Daylights</i>	1987	Timothy Dalton
16	<i>License to Kill</i>	1989	Timothy Dalton
17	<i>GoldenEye</i>	1995	Pierce Brosnan
18	<i>Tomorrow Never Dies</i>	1997	Pierce Brosnan
19	<i>The World is Not Enough</i>	1999	Pierce Brosnan
20	<i>Die Another Day</i>	2002	Pierce Brosnan

test, it was found that several variables did not achieve an acceptable level. Additional coder training was conducted and some recoding to a smaller number of coding categories (for the variables of hair color, hair style, and physical appearance) was done. A second reliability test using a full Bond film from the final collection (*Octopussy*; with 11 codable females) was executed.

In order to calculate appropriate intercoder reliability coefficients, the computer program PRAM was utilized (<http://www.geocities.com/skymegsoftware/pram.html>). PRAM is a Windows-based application designed to simplify the calculation of intercoder reliability coefficients when more than two coders are used (Neuendorf 2002). PRAM calculates a variety of intercoder reliability coefficients, including those used here: Kappa for multiple coders (Fleiss 1971), simple percent agreement, and Lin's concordance correlation coefficient (Lin 1989).

Using the recommendations of Banerjee et al. (1999) for kappa (i.e., below .40=unacceptable; .40 to .75=fair to good agreement beyond chance), and tests of statistical significance for Lin's concordance correlation (Lin 1989), most of the measured variables achieved an acceptable level of reliability. As shown in Table 2, the only variable not meeting the criterion is "Good/Bad." Given that variable's generally acceptable percent agreement figure of 71% (Frey et al. 2000), and its centrality to the foci of the study, analyses including this variable have been retained. However, results pertaining to this variable ought to be viewed with caution. It is suspected that the low reliability on this variable is due to

ambiguity regarding female characters with minor and/or medium roles.

Results

Descriptives

A total of 195 female characters were coded in the 20 James Bond films. The role of the female characters was coded in 52.3% of cases as minor, 30.3% as medium, and 17.4% as major. The characters' ages ranged from 16 to 70 years ($M=29.73$, $SD=8.71$). The majority of the female characters (72.3%) were Caucasian, 7.2% were Black, 8.2% were Asian, 4.1% were Arab, 2.6% were American Indian, 3.1% were coded as "Other," and 2.6% were not codable for ethnicity due to ambiguity of specific features among minor characters; 2.1% were coded as Hispanic. About a quarter of the female characters (26.2%) had a U.S. accent, 43.1% a European accent, 4.6% an Asian accent, 3.6% a Middle Eastern accent, 1.5% a Hispanic accent, 3.6% an "other" accent, and 17.4% were unable to be coded for accent due to non-speaking or minimal speaking roles.

Hair color results found the female characters to be 27.2% blonde, 8.7% red-headed, 18.5% brown-haired, 39.5% black-haired, 3.6% gray/white-haired, and 2.6% unable to be coded for hair color. Hair length was coded as 21.5% short, 44.6% medium, 14.9% long, 2.6% very long, and 16.4% unable to code for hair length. Hair style was found to be 32.8%

Table 2 Intercoder reliabilities.

Variable	Multiple coder kappa	% Agreement	Lin's concordance (avg.)
Role	.66*	81	
Good/Bad	.33	71	
Race	.62*	89	
Hispanic identity	.47*	86	
Accent	.44*	70	
Hair color (5-cat)	.65*	76	
Hair Length	.58*	63	
Hair Style (3-cat)	.50*	76	
Physical Appearance (3-cat)	.48*	76	
Chronological Age (years)			.89**
Body Size (1–9)			.47**
Sexual Activity		79–100	.75**
Harm		88–100	.56**
Use of Weapons		88–100	.80**
Victim of Weapons		82–100	.78**
Kill Bond	.53*	88	
Consequences	.65*	80	

*Meets criterion of .40 recommended by Banerjee et al. (1999)

** $p < .01$

straight, 51.3% wavy/curly, 2.6% Afro, with 13.3% uncodable for hair style. Uncodable hair characteristics were largely due to factors such as headwear, camera angle or lighting.

Body size (Thompson and Gray 1995) scores ranged on a nine-point pictorially based scale from 1 (extremely thin) to 9 (extremely obese) ($M = 2.78$, $SD = .876$). Physical appearance was coded as extremely attractive for 35.4% of female characters, attractive/average for 56.4%, below average/extremely unattractive for 7.2%, with 1% unable to be coded for physical appearance due to lighting and performer blocking.

Seven percent of the female characters were coded as initially “good” but turned “bad” by the end of the film, 8.7% were initially bad and turned good, 14.4% were bad throughout the film, 55.9% were good throughout the film, and 17.4% were unable to be coded as either a good or bad character. As previously noted, characters with minor and/or medium roles were not always fully contextualized so as to allow such an assessment.

Mild sexual contact with Bond was found to occur from zero to nine instances ($M = .54$, $SD = 1.25$); 26.7% of female characters had mild sexual contact with Bond. Strong sexual contact with Bond ranged from zero to two instances per female character ($M = .32$, $SD = .63$); 23.6% had strong sexual contact with Bond. However, among major female characters only ($n = 34$), fully 88% engaged in some type of sexual activity with Bond (73% of major female characters experienced mild sexual contact with Bond, while 79% engaged in strong sexual contact).

Sexual activity of any type with non-Bond characters was minimal, with a maximum of two instances per female

character ($M = .11$, $SD = .39$), and only 9% of all females and 32% of major female characters having sexual contact with men other than Bond. In total, 34% of all female characters engaged in sexual activity with any character (Bond or other). However, 91% of major female characters engaged in some type of sexual activity.

Mild harm from Bond was found to occur from zero to two instances per female character ($M = .08$, $SD = .34$); 6.4% experienced mild harm from Bond. Strong harm from Bond was coded as occurring from zero to four instances ($M = .05$, $SD = .36$); 2.6% experienced strong harm from Bond.

Harm from sources other than Bond ranged from zero to 25 instances per female character (total, pooling mild and strong), although the mean occurrence was fairly low ($M = .48$, $SD = 2.01$). Nineteen percent of female characters experienced harm from non-Bond characters; 25% experienced harm from some character (Bond or other).

Pooling across all types of weaponry, it was found that 25% of female characters were targeted by at least one type of weapon, with a range from zero to seven weapon types per female character ($M = .65$, $SD = 1.45$).

Female characters' deadly aggression on Bond was identified as follows: 92.3% made no attempt to kill Bond, 1% attempted to kill Bond before sexual contact, 1% attempted to kill Bond during sexual contact, .5% attempted to kill Bond after sexual contact, and 4.6% attempted to kill Bond but had no proximate sexual contact with Bond.

Figures for end-of-film mortality for female characters were: 10.3% were alive and with Bond, 69.2% were presumed alive without Bond, 5.6% were presumed dead,

12.3% were explicitly shown to be dead, and 2.6% for whom coders were unable to determine consequences at the end of the film due to lack of information.

For subsequent analyses, a number of dummy predictor variables were created: (a) Role was dummied as major role/other (i.e., medium and minor were pooled); (b) race was dummied as non-white/white; (c) hair color was dummied as blonde/non-blonde; (d) wearing of glasses as ever/never; (e) accent as U.S./other; (f) hair length was represented by two dummies—long hair/other and short hair/other (with medium-length the holdout); (g) hair style as straight hair/other; (h) physical appearance was coded as two dummies—extremely attractive/other and extremely unattractive/other (with attractive as the holdout); (i) attempt to kill Bond as yes/no; (j) weapon use as yes/no; (k) and whether the female was considered “good” at the end of the film as good/not good. In order to maintain parsimony, the simplified dummy variables were used due to a lack of variation for the original, more specific distinctions of the above variables.

Research Questions

Research Question 1 asked whether the representations of physical appearance of females portrayed in Bond films had changed over time. Using the year of release of each Bond film as a measure of passing time, correlational analyses were conducted. Four descriptive characteristics were found to increase significantly over time: Major role ($r=.18$, $p=.01$), short hair ($r=.23$, $p=.001$), straight hair ($r=.17$, $p=.02$), and extreme attractiveness ($r=.16$, $p=.03$). Women shown in major roles increased from 12% of female characters in the 1960s to 32% in films released in 1990 or later. Short-haired women increased from 13% to 46% and straight-haired women from 30% to 57% for the same periods. Extremely attractive women made up 32% of the female characters in Bond films of the 1960s, and 43% of the females in the 90s and beyond. No other characteristic—age, body size, U.S. accent, blond hair, glasses, long hair, extreme unattractiveness, or nonwhite status—was significantly related to the film’s release year, although both age ($r=.13$) and nonwhite status ($r=-.13$) were near-significant ($p=.06$).

Research Question 2 queried whether the amount of sexual activity of female characters had changed over time in Bond films. In pooling the total amount of sexual activity (both “mild” and “strong,” with various partners), a significant correlation was found between total sexual activity and the year of release of the film— $r=.15$, $p=.03$. That is, the later the release of the film, the more sexually active the female characters.

Research Question 3 looked at the issue of whether the amount of aggressive behavior surrounding the female characters had changed over time. Using a summed total of

amount of harm experienced by the female (across “mild” and “strong” and with various instigators), and also pooling the number of instances in which the female was the target of a weapon, it was found that harm was significantly related to year of the film’s release, but target of weapons was not. In the case of harm, the relationship was positive ($r=.15$, $p=.04$), indicating that later Bond films showed more harm to women.

For the testing of Research Questions 4A, 4B, and 4C, a series of multiple regressions was conducted for the prediction of total sexual activity, total amount of harm, and total frequency of the female being the target of weapon use. A logistic regression analysis was conducted for the prediction of female end-of-film mortality status. For each of the four multivariate analyses, a forced-entry hierarchical model was used. With year of release entered first as a control, a typical hierarchy was followed wherein a block of background variables (i.e., physical characteristics) preceded an ascriptive variable (i.e., major role or not), and behavioral variables (sexual activities and aggressive predispositions) were entered via the final blocks, expressing the logical flow from demography to assigned role(s) to behaviors. The hierarchy was:

- Year of release constituted the first block;
- Physical characteristics included in the second block were: Age, body size (1–9 scale), non-white, accent (U.S.), hair color (blonde), wearing glasses, hair length (long; short), hair style (straight), attractiveness (extreme attractiveness; extreme unattractiveness);
- Major role was entered as the third block;
- Total sexual activity constituted the fourth block (when not the dependent variable);
- Three indicators of the character’s aggressive predispositions comprised the final block: Whether the character was “good” at the end of the film, whether she tried to kill Bond, and whether she used weapons at any time in the film.

Multicollinearity diagnostics were consulted, and using criteria for tolerances and condition indexes set out by Hair et al. (1998), it was determined that there were no serious violations of assumptions for any of the regression equations.

Table 3 shows the results of the hierarchical multiple regression testing RQ 4A, which asked whether the level of sexual activity of a female character was predicted by her physical characteristics, role prominence, and aggressive predispositions. Each of the four blocks was statistically significant, indicating that the control block of year of release was a positive predictor (β at enter (standardized regression coefficient at that block’s entry)=.15, $p=.038$; R^2 ch.=.02, $p=.038$), the set of physical characteristic

Table 3 Prediction of sexual activity by female characters in Bond films.

	<i>r</i>	β at enter	Final β	R^2 change
Block 1				.02*
Year	.15*	.15*	.06	
Block 2				.22**
Age	-.11	.01	-.05	
Body size	-.19**	-.08	-.05	
U.S. accent	.18*	.16*	.07	
Blond	-.02	-.16*	-.07	
Glasses	-.03	.03	-.04	
Long hair	.13	.04	.02	
Short hair	-.07	-.05	-.08	
Straight hair	.12	.07	-.05	
Non-white	-.14	-.15*	-.13*	
Extremely attractive	.39**	.35**	.13*	
Extremely unattractive	-.14*	-.03	-.04	
Block 3				.25**
Major role	.63**	.56**	.46**	
Block 4				.05**
Good at end of film	.14*	.02	.02	
Attempts to kill Bond	.06	-.20**	-.20**	
Weapon use	.51**	.28**	.28**	

Total $R^2 = .54$ Adjusted $R^2 = .50$ $F(16,169) = 12.34$ $p < .001$ * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

indicators was significant (R^2 ch. = .22, $p < .001$), major role status was a positive predictor (β at enter = .56, $p < .001$; R^2 ch. = .25, $p < .001$), and the set of three aggressive indicators was significant (R^2 ch. = .05, $p = .001$). The full model was

highly significant at $R^2 = .54$, adjusted $R^2 = .50$, $F(16,169) = 12.34$, $p < .001$.

The final β s revealed significant unique contributions of extreme attractiveness ($\beta = .13$, $p = .038$), nonwhite status

Table 4 Prediction of being a target of weapons among female characters in Bond films.

	<i>r</i>	β at enter	Final β	R^2 change
Block 1				.02
Year	.13	.13	.02	
Block 2				.18**
Age	-.10	.02	-.02	
Body size	-.15*	-.06	.01	
U.S. accent	.11	.13	.03	
Blond	-.04	-.08	.04	
Glasses	.07	.14	.06	
Long hair	.15*	.05	-.01	
Short hair	-.04	-.02	-.07	
Straight hair	.24**	.22**	.07	
Non-white	.03	.05	.08	
Extremely attractive	.31**	.30**	.07	
Extremely unattractive	-.11	-.02	-.02	
Block 3				.20**
Major role	.58**	.51**	.13	
Block 4				.03**
Sexual Activity	.53**	.24**	.10	
Block 5				.19**
Good at the end of film	.13	.06	.06	
Attempts to kill Bond	.27**	-.05	-.05	
Weapon use	.74**	.59**	.59**	

Total $R^2 = .62$ Adjusted $R^2 = .58$ $F(17,168) = 15.87$ $p < .001$ * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

Table 5 Prediction of harm to female characters in Bond films.

	<i>r</i>	β at enter	Final β	R^2 change
Block 1				.02*
Year	.15*	.15*	.11	
Block 2				.07
Age	-.05	.00	-.03	
Body size	-.04	.05	.07	
U.S. accent	.06	.06	-.00	
Blond	-.08	-.10	-.04	
Glasses	-.00	.02	-.04	
Long hair	.05	-.02	-.06	
Short hair	-.04	-.06	-.09	
Straight hair	.09	.07	-.03	
Non-white	.09	.09	.12	
Extremely attractive	.20**	.21*	.06	
Extremely unattractive	-.06	-.05	-.04	
Block 3				.13**
Major role	.43**	.41**	.28**	
Block 4				.00
Sexual Activity	.33**	.08	.00	
Block 5				.02
Good at end of film	.09	.06	.06	
Attempts to kill Bond	.16*	.01	.01	
Weapon use	.38**	.18	.18	

Total $R^2 = .25$ Adjusted $R^2 = .17$ $F(17, 168) = 3.23$ $p < .001$ * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

($\beta = -.13$, $p = .03$), major role ($\beta = .46$, $p < .001$), attempting to kill Bond ($\beta = -.20$, $p = .002$), and use of weapons by the female characters ($\beta = .28$, $p < .001$). Thus, we see that sexual behavior by women in Bond films was significantly predicted by a more recent year of release for the film, the female's extreme physical attractiveness, her status as white, her major role in the film, her *not* attempting to kill Bond, and her use of weapons.

Tables 4 and 5 display the results for RQ 4B, which asked whether the amount of aggression aimed at a female character was predicted by her physical characteristics, role prominence, sexual activity, and aggressive predispositions. Table 4 indicates the results for the prediction of being a target of weapons, and Table 5 shows the results for the prediction of total amount of harm to each female character.

Table 4 shows that the female character as a target of weapons was not significantly related to the year of the film's release (block 1). But, each of the four subsequent blocks was statistically significant. The set of physical characteristic indicators was significant (R^2 ch. = .18, $p < .001$), major role status was a positive predictor (β at enter = .51, $p < .001$; R^2 ch. = .20, $p < .001$), total sexual activity was a significant positive predictor (β at enter = .24, $p = .003$; R^2 ch. = .03, $p = .003$), and the set of three indicators of aggression was also significant (R^2 ch. = .19, $p < .001$). The full model was highly significant at $R^2 = .62$, adjusted $R^2 = .58$, $F(17, 168) = 15.87$, $p < .001$.

The final β s revealed a significant unique contribution of weapon use ($\beta = .59$, $p < .001$), with major role near-significant ($\beta = .13$, $p = .069$). Thus, we see that a Bond female's being the target of weapons was significantly predicted by her physical characteristics across the board (with no particular characteristic achieving significance as a partial, or unique, predictor), her major role status, a greater level of sexual activity, and her use of weapons.

Table 5 indicates that the control of year of the film's release (block 1) was a significant positive predictor of total harm to the female character, with β at enter = .15, $p = .046$; R^2 ch. = .02, $p = .046$. The physical characteristics block was non-significant. Major role status was a positive predictor (β at enter = .41, $p < .001$; R^2 ch. = .13, $p < .001$). Neither of the final two blocks—total sexual activity and the set of three aggressiveness indicators—contributed to the prediction at a statistically significant level. Still, the full model was highly significant at $R^2 = .25$, adjusted $R^2 = .17$, $F(17, 168) = 3.23$, $p < .001$.

The final β s revealed a significant unique contribution of major role ($\beta = .28$, $p = .007$), with weapon use near-significant ($\beta = .18$, $p = .065$). So, we see that harm to Bond females was significantly predicted by a later year of release for the film and the female's major role status.

Table 6 displays the results of the logistic regression testing RQ 4C, which asked whether a female character's end-of-film mortality consequences (i.e., dead or alive)

Table 6 Prediction of mortality (death) of female characters in Bond films via logistic regression.

	<i>r</i>	Exp(B) at enter	Final Exp (B)	Block Chi-square	–2LL	Cox & Snell <i>R</i> ²	Nagelkerke <i>R</i> ²	Hosmer & Lemeshow Chi-sq test
Block 1				.08	167.53	.00	.00	11.99
Year	.04	1.01	.98					
Block 2				7.42	160.11	.04	.07	16.27*
Age	.01	1.04	1.07					
Body size	–.09	.65	.50					
U.S. accent	–.04	1.05	.99					
Blond	–.05	.64	1.06					
Glasses	.07	3.13	3.96					
Long hair	.03	1.34	.72					
Short hair	.05	.82	.69					
Straight hair	.04	1.55	1.32					
Non-white	–.02	.94	1.41					
Extremely attractive	.07	1.31	.80					
Extremely unattractive	–.03	.73	.34					
Block 3				1.41	158.70	.05	.08	13.95
Major role	.10	1.89	.29					
Block 4				4.98*	153.72	.07	.12	5.25
Sexual Activity	.18*	1.35*	1.61*					
Block 5				30.62**	123.10**	.21	.36	3.78
Good at end of film	–.30**	.15**	.15**					
Attempts to kill Bond	.28**	11.84*	11.84*					
Weapon use	.24**	1.13	1.13					

Each–2LL was tested via chi-square.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

were predicted by her physical characteristics, role prominence, sexual activity, and aggressive predispositions. The model did not achieve statistical significance until the final block, in which the character's aggressive predisposition indicators were entered as a block of predictors, bringing the total model to $-2LL=123.10$ (chi-square=44.5, $p < .001$), Cox & Snell $R^2=.21$, and Nagelkerke $R^2=.36$. Both of the last two blocks—total sexual activity and aggressive predispositions—were significant (chi-square=4.98, $p=.026$ for the former, chi-square=30.62, $p < .001$ for the latter). No other blocks were significant, indicating weak or null impacts of year of release, physical characteristics, and role prominence.

The final Exp(B) statistics revealed a significant unique contribution of total sexual activity (Exp(B)=1.61, $p=.012$), attempting to kill Bond (Exp(B)=11.84, $p=.015$), and being good at the end of the film (Exp(B)=.15, $p < .001$), with age (Exp(B)=1.07, $p=.077$) and body type (Exp(B)=.50, $p=.078$) near significant. Thus, it may be seen that greater sexual activity, attempting to kill Bond, and being older were positively related to female character death within a Bond film, while being good and having a larger body size were predictive of survival.

Discussion

The results addressing the six research questions reveal a number of interesting patterns. First, a number of over-time trends were discovered: As the years have passed, the number of major female roles has expanded, and female characters became more sexually active, changed their hair to a more androgynous style (over time, more likely to have short rather than long hair), and were more likely to be the recipients of physical harm. This reveals a slight trend away from the limited female roles of the fifties and the attendant feminization and glamorization of females, and toward a more autonomous and active participation, consistent with observations in popular sources (e.g., d'Abo et al. 2002).

However, these trends are substantively rather minimal, and perhaps eclipsed by over-time consistencies. The women of Bond are eternally attractive (over a third judged as extremely attractive; only 7% as less than average). Their typically slender body type (an overall average of less than three on a 1–9 scale) is unchanged over time; their unrealistic thinness dovetails with the concerns of Kilbourne (1995) and findings of body type stereotyping by Harrison (2001). Their consistent youth (an average of just under

30 years of age) confirms the underrepresentation of mature women found by other researchers of film in general (e.g., Lauzen and Dozier 2005a). And even from the early Bond movies, there is a striking diversity with regard to race, accent, and hair color, style, and length. Finally, although sexual activity and physical harm have increased over time, they have always been a notable part of the Bond world.

Thus, there is a certain timelessness to the world of Bond, a diegesis of constancy and predictability that has changed little over the lifespan of the Bond series. This predictability feeds into the success of genres and of film series such as the Bond films (“Bond is forever,” 2002; Gilligan 2005), while the consistency of portrayals also bodes for greater potential viewer effects (Bandura 1986). As noted by Magliano et al. (1996), such a narrative form is highly predictable, resulting in rewards for viewers who are comfortable with the familiar outcomes.

Motivated by perennial popular interest in the selection of leading ladies, i.e., “Bond girls,” additional analyses were conducted focusing on these cases. Using guidelines for selection suggested in scholarly and popular sources (d’Abo et al. 2002; Ladenson 2001; www.jamesbondwiki.com), 29 of the 195 female characters were tagged as “Bond girls,” that is those who are viable romantic partners with James Bond and provide a focal point for narrative intrigue. Of these, 26 were coded as major characters, and 3 were medium. This near isomorphism of the “Bond girl” designation with major role status was born out by findings that indicated no significant deviations from the findings already reported for the variable of “major role.”

One of the most striking findings of this content analysis resides in the fact that despite societal progression of feminist ideology, the women of Bond continue to be portrayed in a rather limited and sex-stereotyped manner. As a result, seasoned Bond fans and new viewers alike are exposed to homogenous portrayals of women within old or new Bond films. Repeated exposure to these consistent images may affect viewers (Bandura and Walters 1963; Heath and Bryant 2000). From a social cognitive perspective, viewers may internalize the sex-typed portrayals of the Bond ideology.

Importantly, this study queried the role of sexuality and aggressive activity surrounding Bond women, examining factors that predict such behaviors. With regard to sexual behaviors, it was found that a majority of female characters engaged in some sexual activity, particularly those in major roles. And, the great majority of sexual behaviors involved Bond himself. Indeed, as Ladenson (2001) has noted, even presumed lesbians have sex with Bond. Sexual activity was minimally predicted by some physical characteristics of the females (e.g., race, attractiveness), but a much stronger prediction was established for the aggression-related behaviors of weapon use and attempting to kill James Bond. This linkage

between sexuality and aggression opens the door to the elevation of effects posited by media scholars (e.g., Bryant and Miron 2006).

In the prediction of victimization of Bond women, it seems that they were, by and large, aggressed upon for identifiable and purposive reasons, such as using a weapon (related to the woman being targeted by weapons) or trying to kill Bond (related to the death of the female character). The ultimate penalty for a woman in a Bond film—death—seems to accrue from promiscuity (often with Bond) and daring to threaten the ultimate iconic masculine hero, James Bond.

Framed within social cognitive theory and existing literature on female images which suggests continued exposure to stereotypical media images can impact viewers, this study provides further evidence of the continued sexualization, marginalization, and disposability of women within Bond films. The importance of these findings lies in the empirically verifiable demonstration of long-held generalizations and assumptions. Displaying a sophisticated brand of “machismo,” the Bond films glorify the androcentric and sometimes chauvinistic persona of Bond. Young, attractive, slender women are numerous and somewhat disposable (Jenkins 2005), with nearly 20% presumed dead by the end of the film. Further, the clear empirical linking of sex and violence for women of the Bond films raises a question of enhanced effects due to high generalized arousal levels by viewers (Bryant and Miron 2006; Linz and Donnerstein 1994).

Challenges and Limitations

The relatively large number of coders (eight) proved a particular challenge to the training process and the ultimate assurance of reliability. However, consistent with the work of Kunkel et al. (1999) and Wilson et al. (1998), the large coder team proved not to be prohibitive. In the present study, with repeated training sessions and codebook revision, nearly all variables did achieve a minimally acceptable level of reliability. However, the measurement of certain variables entailed particular challenges due to the artificiality of the “world of Bond” (e.g., the casting of a debatably Black actress as an Asian, with eye makeup to approximate the look of an Asian woman) or technical limitations in image quality (e.g., a measure of eye color had to be dropped due to the inability of coders to see this attribute clearly on all video monitors).

Conclusion

The Bond phenomenon continues its popularity in spite of the deluge of competing male-action hero films. In fact, the James Bond franchise is perhaps one of the most successful film series in cinematic history (“Bond is forever,” 2002;

Giammarco 1998). As noted by Brosnan (1972), Bond films provide an escape from everyday life – a guilty pleasure that exemplifies the trappings of wealth and power (“Bond is forever,” 2002, p. 3). In many contemporary action-suspense films, the focus is upon males and their violent tendencies and their need for superiority over one another. However, Brabazon (1999) has noted that the aggressive nature toward the female character in the widely popular Bond films has always been a vital component of the story line regardless of the era from which it emerged (Dodds 2003).

Western society’s patriarchal, individualistic culture is demonstrated in Bond films. For example, the lead character, James Bond, promotes stereotypical, sex-typed male attitudes, especially when interacting with women. In the Bond world, Bond single-handedly takes on any “bad guy,” saves the world and always gets the girl. Bond accomplishes these feats by the power of his wit and more importantly through violence. Bandura (1986) pointed out that people can learn behaviors by vicarious observation of others, including media characters. Witnessing rewarded behaviors can lead to the increased likelihood of modeling that behavior by the observer. Therefore, the prevalence of consistently positive outcomes for Bond, linked with aggressive behavior towards women, could increase the likelihood of the modeling of similar behaviors by viewers.

Although this study examined a large set of fully explicated variables, the ultimate goal of deciphering audience impacts cannot be achieved with content analytic data alone. Future effects studies using Bond films as stimuli may illuminate the effect that such consistent and unique images may have on viewers.

This study describes specific characteristics and representations of females portrayed in James Bond films. Our goal was to add to the body of communication and sex roles research by (a) examining film portrayals, a body of media content that is often overlooked by content analysts but holds great potential for media effects due to its pervasive and enduring presence in Western culture (Neuendorf 2002), and by (b) analyzing a *specific* film series that is often criticized for negative depictions of women (Arp and Decker 2006; Brabazon 1999; Brosnan 1972; Lindner 2003; Taliaferro and LeGall 2006). A relatively predictable diegesis was identified for this ever-popular, vivid, action-laden series of films, one that includes consistent women’s images and a linking of sexual behaviors with aggressive outcomes, including the mortality of Bond women. The collective body of Bond films, with its great popularity over decades among a wide range of audience types, stands to serve as an important source of social cognitive outcomes regarding appropriate role behaviors for women—still stereotyped, with persistent allusions to violence and sex (and their linkage), and with unrealistic standards of female beauty.

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