

It's a Man's (Celluloid) World: On-Screen Representations of Female Characters in the Top 100 Films of 2013

by Martha M. Lauzen, Ph.D.

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Female characters remained dramatically under-represented as protagonists, major characters, and speaking (major and minor) characters in the top grossing films of 2013.

Females comprised 15% of protagonists, 29% of major characters, and 30% of all speaking characters.

Only 13% of the top 100 films featured equal numbers of major female and male characters, or more major female characters than male characters.

Female characters were younger than their male counterparts and were more likely than males to have an identifiable marital status. Further, female characters were less likely than males to have clearly identifiable goals or be portrayed as leaders of any kind.

The following summary reports the findings of a content analysis of over 2,300 characters appearing in the top grossing films of 2013. The report compares these most recent figures with findings from 2011 and 2002. Overall, this report considers the

representation of approximately 7,000 characters in 300 films.

The findings are divided into three major sections. The first section reports the percentages of female and male characters in the top grossing films. The second section reports various demographic traits of characters, including age, race, marital status, and occupational status. The third section reports on the goals and leadership positions held by characters.

Findings/Percentages of Female and Male Characters

- Only 15% of all clearly identifiable *protagonists* were female (up 4 percentage points from 2011, down one percentage point from 2002), 71% are male, and 14% are male/female ensembles (see Figure 1).
- Females comprised 29% of *major characters*, down 4 percentage points from 2011, but up 2 percentage points from 2002.
- Females accounted for 30% of all *speaking characters* (includes major and minor characters) in 2013, down 3 percentage points from 2011, but up 2 percentage points from 2002.

Figure 1.

Historical Comparison of Percentages of Female and Male Characters as Protagonists



Findings/Demographic Characteristics

- Female characters remain younger than their male counterparts. The majority of female characters were in their 20s (26%) and 30s (28%). The majority of male characters were in their 30s (27%) and 40s (31%).

- Males 40 and over accounted for 55% of all male characters. Females 40 and over comprised 30% of all female characters.

- 73% of all female characters were Caucasian, followed by African American (14%), Latina (5%), Asian (3%), other worldly (3%), and other (2%). Moviegoers were as likely to see an other-worldly female as they

were to see an Asian female character.

- In 2013, the percentage of African-American females rebounded to 14% from 8% in 2011. For comparison, African-American females accounted for 15% of all female characters in 2002.

- The percentage of Latina characters remained the same (5%) in 2013 as in 2011. This represents an increase of 1 percentage point since 2002 when Latinas accounted for 4% of female characters.

- The percentage of Asian females decreased 2 percentage points, from 5% in 2011 to 3% in 2013. Asians also accounted for 3% of all females in 2002.

- Female characters were more likely than male characters to have an identifiable marital status. 46% of female characters but 58% of male characters had an unknown marital status.

- A higher proportion of male than female characters had an identifiable occupational status. 78% of male characters but only 60% of female characters had an identifiable job/occupation.

- When occupational status was known, female characters were most likely to hold blue collar positions (37%), followed by white collar positions (28%), out-of-workforce positions such as students (19%), and professional positions (9%).

- A substantially larger portion of male than female characters were seen in their work setting actually working (61% vs. 40%).

Findings/Goals and Leadership

- Overall, 75% of speaking characters had an identifiable goal. Of those characters, a larger proportion of male characters had an identifiable goal (79%) than female characters (67%).

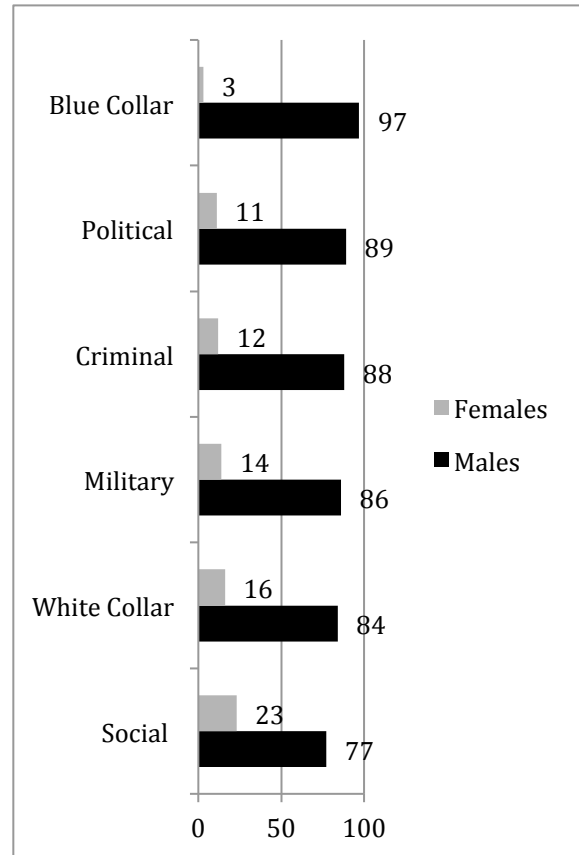
- Male characters were much more likely to have work-related goals than personal life-related goals (75% vs. 25%). In contrast, the goals of female characters were split more evenly between work-related and personal life-related goals (48% vs. 52%).

- Overall, 17% of characters were leaders. Of those characters, a larger proportion of male characters (21%) than female characters (8%) were portrayed as leaders.

- Broken down by type of leader, males comprised 97% of blue-collar leaders, 89% of political leaders, 88% of criminal leaders, 86% of military leaders, 84% of white-collar leaders, and 77% of social leaders (see Figure 2).

Figure 2.

Comparison of Percentages of Female and Male Characters as Leaders



Report compiled by Dr. Martha M. Lauzen, Executive Director, Center for the Study of Women in Television and Film, San Diego State University, San Diego, CA 92182, lauzen@mail.sdsu.edu