

The Glass Ceiling in Hollywood Movies: Exploring the Gender Disparities in Portrayals of Public Relations Roles

Ayesha Zahid*

Ghulam Maaz Jan[†]

Muhammad Akram Abdul Rehman[‡]

Pages: 79 – 92

DOI: 10.31703/gsr.2023(VIII-II).10

URL: [http://dx.doi.org/10.31703/gsr.2023\(VIII-II\).10](http://dx.doi.org/10.31703/gsr.2023(VIII-II).10)

Abstract: *This study examines the gender disparities in the portrayal of women in Hollywood films having the theme of Public Relations. The research aims to analyze the representation of women in PR roles especially the technical positions, their roles and responsibilities in the campaigns, and their depiction as being family-oriented or not. The study design utilizes a descriptive methodology and employs a semantic analysis using the purposive sampling technique. The sample includes the movie "Don't Look Up (2021)," chosen as it is the top IMDb ranking Hollywood film with a focus on the PR campaign. Data is collected on technical roles, primary or secondary positions, and family orientation of the female characters. The findings reveal significant gender disparities, with women often limited to secondary roles and unequal representation compared to men in the PR roles having less family orientation. The study emphasizes the need to challenge gender stereotypes in the film industry.*

Key Words: Gender, Hollywood film, Public Relations, Semantic analysis, Technical roles

Introduction

This research paper examines Hollywood films on the depiction of female professionals working in the field of Public Relations. It focuses on the significance of women to the film's main plot and if they are presented in nontechnical, secondary roles having family orientation or not. It is widely acknowledged across various industries that media play a significant role in shaping public perceptions of a profession (Hill, 2009). Miller (1999) says that films have the potential to give details on the public relations profession and roles for those who have no direct understanding of this field. Since public relations is not a profession that people encounter regularly, its depictions in popular culture often serve as the sole point of reference for many.

Women in Public Relations field

A continuing inquiry into the role of women in the field of PR was influenced by the identification of the "Velvet

Ghetto of Affirmative Action" by Business Week in 1978, to describe the phenomenon of women being predominantly employed in secondary and nontechnical roles. (IABC, 1984; Grunig & Grunig, 1995.)

Because many women are working in the field of PR, the face of PR is considered to be female as per Adoory, 2005. Donato, 1991 points out that this is not mainly because women are considered technical or management experts but because they are considered emotional labour who can assist in relationship building (p. 139). Grunig has pointed out the need for women to balance the family and professional life and that is why they can fit completely in either of the two roles (Grunig, et al., 2001). These stereotypes are further reinforced by the film industry rather than being questioned.

Statement of Problem

Public Relation is an emerging field in the world. Both men and women have different roles in the industry

* Senior Lecturer, Media Studies Department, Bahria University, Islamabad, Pakistan.

† Lecturer, Media Studies Department, Bahria University, Islamabad, Pakistan.

‡ Senior Lecturer, Media Studies Department, Bahria University, Islamabad, Pakistan.

but these roles are largely affected by how they are depicted in the mass media. Hollywood films play a significant role in forwarding these ideals to the society. It has been noted that whenever women are portrayed in communication or Public Relations roles in Hollywood films, gender disparities are prevalent by reinforcing stereotypical representations of women in terms of their roles, responsibilities, and limited representation. This media portrayal can impact industry standards, generating gender biases and impacting the perception of women in the industry. It is therefore imperative to conduct a thorough examination of Hollywood movies and discover any gender disparities. This study aims to conduct a semantic analysis of a top-rated movie as per IMDb that revolves around the Public Relations campaign, *Don't Look Up*. Through this qualitative analysis, we aim to contribute to scholarship in the field of gender and public relations in the film industry.

Research Objectives

- RO1:** To examine the representation of women in technical roles within the Public Relations characters in Hollywood movies and identify any gender disparities in their portrayal.
- RO2:** To analyze the roles and responsibilities assigned to women within Public Relations in Hollywood movies and assess the extent to which women are depicted in secondary rather than primary roles.
- RO3:** To investigate the depiction of women in Public Relations roles in Hollywood movies and determine whether they are more likely to be portrayed as single and independent, as opposed to family oriented.

Research Questions

- RQ1:** How women are represented in technical roles within the Public Relations roles in Hollywood movies, and if there are any observed gender disparities?
- RQ2:** What roles and responsibilities are assigned to the women in the Public Relations roles in Hollywood films, and if women are depicted as primarily secondary to the plot?
- RQ3:** How are women in the PR roles depicted when it comes to the family orientation in Hollywood movies?

The study contributes to the field of public relations and gender roles within the industry. The findings of this study can provide valuable insights to scholars, practitioners, and industry leaders, to identify and address any gender biases that may exist.

Literature Review

The representation of gender disparities in the movies has been an important topic of discussion for a long time but little attention has been paid to how women are portrayed in the public relations (PR) industry, which is frequently thought to be dominated by women. The purpose of this literature review is to examine the existing research on gender disparities in Hollywood movies and the concept of the glass ceiling in the entertainment industry, with a focus on the PR field.

The invisible barrier that prevents women from reaching the highest levels of leadership and career success is referred to as the "glass ceiling." A study conducted by the Annenberg Inclusion Initiative at the University of Southern California found that only 4.8% of the top 100 grossing films of 2019 were directed by women. Additionally, ladies held just 21% of a key in background jobs, like makers and journalists. This absence of portrayal has been credited to the presence of the unreasonable impediment, which restricts ladies' admittance to open doors for progression. Research has shown that ladies in PR jobs are frequently depicted as sex articles or uncivilized, sustaining negative generalizations and restricting their portrayal in influential places. For instance, a study conducted in 2009 by Horne and Boyd found that female PR actors were frequently portrayed as "dumb blondes" or sexual objects.

Additionally, research has demonstrated that male counterparts frequently dominate PR roles in Hollywood films. A study by Kim and Willis (2007) found that male characters in PR roles were given more screen time and more significant roles than their female counterparts. Current Studies on Gender Disparities in Hollywood Film: Gender disparities in Hollywood movies have been the subject of numerous studies, with a focus on how women are portrayed in various roles. For instance, Lauzen et al.'s study (2019) found that female characters in the main 100 earning movies of 2018 were bound to be more youthful than their male partners and less inclined to be depicted as pioneers or stand firm on footholds of force. In a similar vein, Smith et al. (2019) found that

while female characters were more likely to be portrayed in sexualized roles, male characters in movies were more likely to engage in violent behaviour and hold positions of power.

In addition, research has demonstrated that gender disparities extend beyond how characters in Hollywood films are depicted. For example, a concentrate by Choueiti et al. (Women were found to be underrepresented in key roles behind the scenes like directors, writers, and producers (2019)). In a similar vein, a study conducted in 2019 by Madeline Di Nonno and Stacy L. Smith found that women of colour were underrepresented in all roles behind the scenes, accounting for only 4.3% of all directors. A concentrate by O'Brien and Lee (2018) utilized semantic examination to look at the depiction of orientation in the main 100 netting movies of 2016. According to the study, male characters were more likely to hold positions of power and be portrayed as leaders, while female characters were more likely to be portrayed in domestic roles like wives and mothers. Additionally, the study found that female characters were more likely than their male counterparts to be sexualized and objectified. Semantic analysis was used in another study by Eichner and Johnson (2016) to look at how gender was portrayed in movie scripts from 1970 to 2013. While the gendered language in movie scripts has decreased over time, the study found that women are still underrepresented in leadership positions.

There is a need for a more specific analysis of the PR roles, despite the fact that there is some research on gender disparities in Hollywood films, including the representation of women in various professions. For instance, a concentrate by Smith et al. (From 2007 to 2018, 1,200 popular films were examined for their representations of gender, race/ethnicity, LGBTQ, and disability. Another study by Eichner and Johnson (2016) looked at how Hollywood movies portrayed women in various roles to examine gender equality on the silver screen. Although they do not specifically address the PR roles, these studies provide a comprehensive understanding of gender representation in media industries. Similarly, Lauzen, Davis, and Smith (2019) additionally analyzed the work of ladies in the background in the main 100, 250, and 500 movies of 2018. These studies shed light on gender inequality in the workplace, but they do not specifically address how movies portray PR roles. As a result, the lack of research on how movies portray PR roles and gender disparities is the gap in the literature

that this study aims to fill. To fill this gap, a more specific analysis is required, despite the fact that the existing literature provides important context and background information. The lack of studies that have utilized semantic analysis to examine gender disparities in portrayals of public relations roles. This study aims to fill this gap by using semantic analysis to examine the portrayal of gender disparities in public relations roles in movies.

Methodology

Research Design

The researcher has used the Descriptive method. The study employs semantic analysis using the nonrandom technique of purposive sampling.

Population

Hollywood films have Public Relations Campaigns.

Sampling technique

Nonrandom, Purposive (to choose top movies on Public Relations topics from contemporary times)

Sample

The movie "Don't Look Up (2021)" with a 7.2 ranking has been chosen as it is among the top 10 movies in the IMDb ranking in the Public Relations category of contemporary times. Prominence has been given to the movies with plots around PR roles, as compared to the movies that were ranked higher but had less part touching the Public Relations area. For example, in the movie, "The Martian" (2015), the PR team's goal is to promote the agency's image and garner public support for the rescue mission to save Watney. However, the PR part is overshadowed by NASA's mission. The chosen movie focuses on PR as the main theme and is a satirical comedy that focuses on the public relations campaign crisis communication surrounding a comet heading towards Earth.

Unit of Analysis

Female characters

1. Brie (BR) is a news anchor who interviews Kate and Mindy on national television.
2. Kate Dibiasky (KA), played by Jennifer Lawrence, is an astronomer who becomes a reluctant media spokesperson for the government.

3. President Orlean(PR), played by Meryl Streep, is the President of the United States and is advised by Brie on how to handle the crisis.
4. Noble-winning scientist Doctor(NO)
5. June(Dr Mindy's Wife)(JU)
6. Riley (The Singer)(RI)

Variables

Data has been collected on the following variables:

- Gender
- Technical role
- Primary or secondary role
- Family orientation.

Coding

The coding scheme has been developed based on the research questions and objectives.

The study's limitations include the narrow focus on Hollywood movies.

Data Analysis

Kate

Symbols

Lack of concern for her appearance is symbolized through her clothing choices in approximately 4 scenes. Emotional and irrational nature through her actions and dialogue in approximately 8 scenes while her relationship with Dr. Mindy is symbolic of the tension between emotion and rationality in approximately 5 scenes.

Language and Speaking

Kate's emotional and irrational nature is reflected in her dialogue and expressions in approximately 8 scenes. Her use of profanity and casual language is seen in approximately 3 scenes. Her lack of concern for her family is highlighted through her dialogue in approximately 2 scenes.

Synchronic vs. Diachronic

Kate's character is portrayed differently in individual scenes, with Dr Mindy often taking the lead in approximately 6 scenes. She is shown through her emotional reactions and being sidelined from the campaign in approximately 3 scenes.

Metonymy and Metaphor

Kate's use of profanity and casual language is a metonym for her rejection of societal norms in approximately 3 scenes. Her emotional behaviour is shown through her body language in approximately 2 scenes. Her lack of concern for societal norms is reflected in her interactions with the President's son in approximately 1 scene.

Codes

The visual codes used to depict Kate's lack of concern for her appearance reflect her rejection of societal norms in approximately 4 scenes. The cultural codes used to portray her as emotional, and irrational reflect cultural stereotypes about women in approximately 8 scenes. Her rejection of societal norms is also seen in approximately 2 scenes through her disconnection from her family.

Brie

There are approximately 3 scenes where Brie's tendency to prioritize her affairs and drinking over her family is shown, 1 scene where she asks her male colleague about her appearance, and approximately 6 scenes where her heavy makeup and appearance are highlighted. The description also mentions approximately 10 scenes where Brie's dialogue focus on her sexual and physical attributes rather than her professional skills.

President Orlean

Symbols

President Orlean's high heels can be seen as a symbol of beauty standards for women in leadership roles, emphasizing her femininity and beauty. Her well-coordinated outfits and makeup is seen as a symbol of asserting her authority.

Language and Speaking

President Orlean speaks in a charismatic but not-so-intelligent manner in approximately 7 scenes, using her language skills to convince others to follow her agenda.

Synchronic vs. Diachronic

President Orlean's heavy reliance on the male tycoon's influence on her campaign can be seen as a synchronic representation of gender-based biases and the need

for women in power to rely on their male counterparts.

Metonymy and Metaphor

President Orlean's character can be seen as a metonymy for modern-day politics, where leaders prioritize their public image and marketing over the actual issues at hand.

Codes

President Orlean's character represents the societal expectations of beauty standards and gender roles for women in powerful positions, shown through her appearance and reliance on male influence.

June

Symbols

June's character in the movie represents traditional gender roles and domesticity, which is shown through her clothing, hairstyle, and demeanour in approximately 10 scenes.

Language and Speaking

June's character is portrayed as weak and dependent, which is reflected in her passive and unassertive language and speaking style in approximately 5 scenes.

Table 1

Semantic Analysis of *Don't Look Up* (2021)

Semantic Analysis of <i>Don't Look Up</i> (2021)						
	Symbols	Language and speaking	Synchronic vs. Diachronic	Metonymy and Metaphor	Visual Codes	
Brie	3	11	2	6	8	
Kate Dibiasky	18	13	9	6	14	
President Orlean,	7	4	2	3	7	
Noble-winning scientist Doctor	1	0	0	1	1	
June (Dr Mindy's Wife)	10	5	0	1	10	
Riley (The Singer)	3	3	1	3	4	
Total	42	36	14	20	44	

Data Description for *Don't Look Up* (2021)

Female Representation in Technical Roles

More women are shown in nontechnical roles as opposed to the men e.g. Kate is shown as PhD candidate while the female scientist who briefs the

Synchronic vs. Diachronic

The synchronic analysis of June's character focuses on her portrayal in individual scenes, while the diachronic analysis would consider her character development over the course of the movie. However, June does not have a significant character arc.

Metonymy and Metaphor

June's character can be seen as a metaphor for the limitations and constraints of traditional gender roles. Her throwing the medicine bottles at her cheating husband can be interpreted as a metonymy for her frustration and overly emotional nature, but also as the one who was taking care of her husband's day-to-day needs.

Visual Codes

Visual codes such as her clothing, hair, and makeup serve to emphasize her traditional housewife image in approximately 10 scenes.

Riley

She appears in 3-4 scenes in a non-technical role, being secondary to the plot and is symbolized as unaware of the technicalities around her through her language and tattoos.

team on the comet is shown as technical but all other women are shown in soft and nontechnical roles e.g. journalists Brie is although in the technical role but her character is so much sexualized that she is not seen as a technical character.

Figure 1

Female Representation in Technical Roles

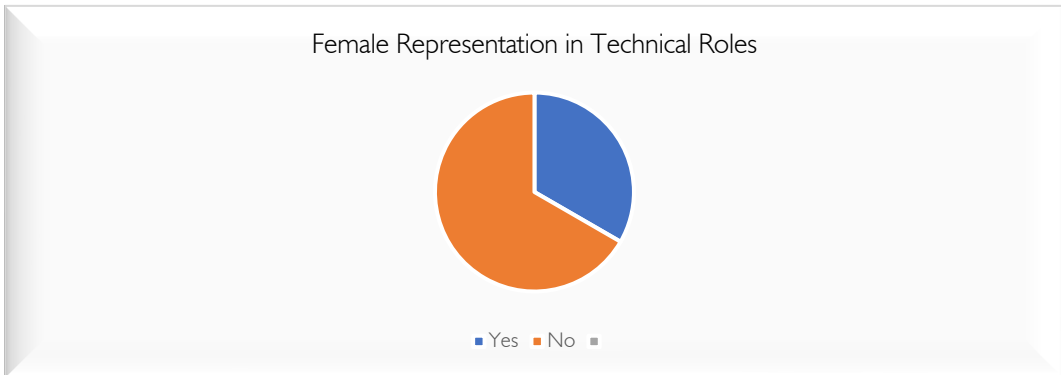


Table 2

Female Representation in Technical Roles

Female Representation in Technical Roles	YES	NO	Gender Neutral
Brie		2	
Kate Dibiasky	1		
President Orlean		2	
Noble-winning scientist Doctor	1		
June (Dr Mindy's Wife)		2	
Riley (The Singer)		2	

Gender Disparities in Technical Roles

When the mission is about to launch, the announcement chair is given to Dr Mindy and in all

such scenes Kate is seen behind him rather than being the main person heading such talks.

Figure 2

Gender Disparities in Technical Roles

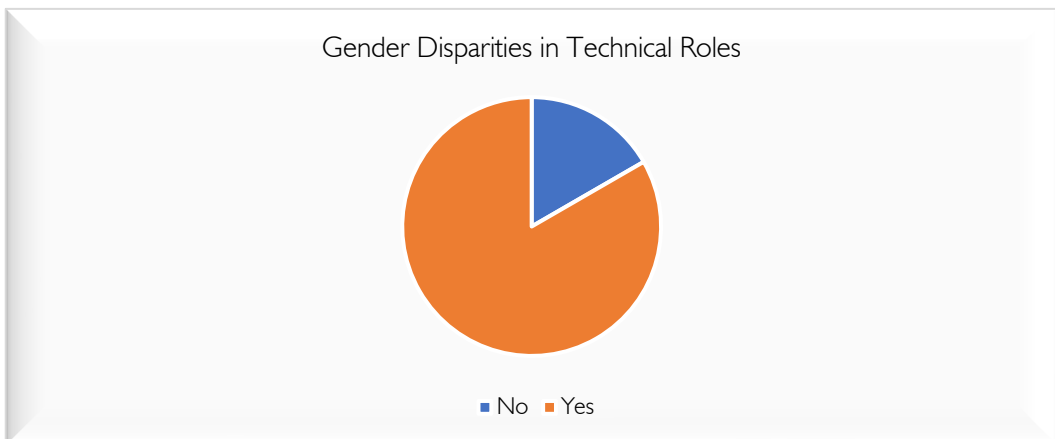


Table 3

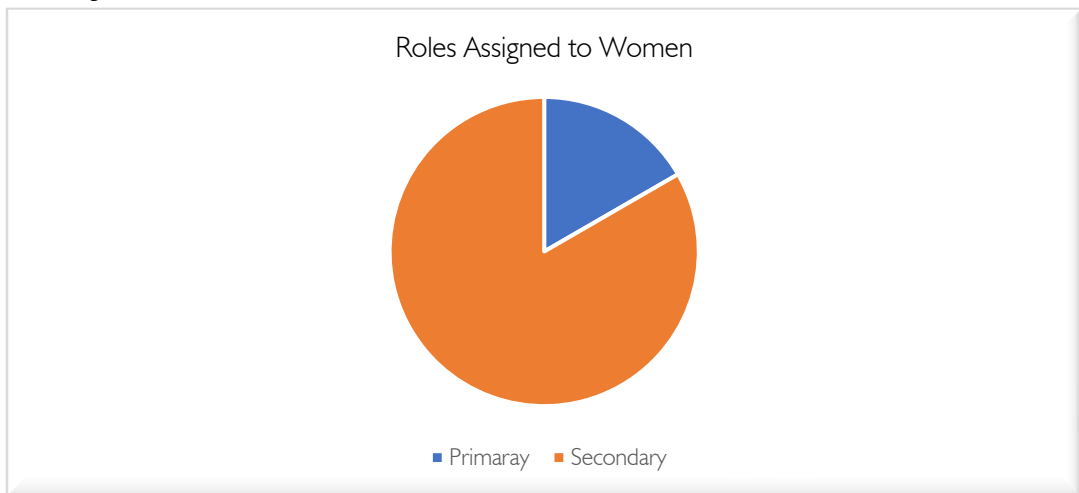
Gender Disparities in Technical Roles

Gender Disparities in Technical Roles	Yes	No
Brie		
Kate Dibiasky		
President Orlean,		
Noble-winning scientist Doctor		
June(Dr Mindy's Wife)		

Roles Assigned to Women

Figure 3

Roles Assigned to Women



Responsibilities Assigned to Women

Noble prize-winning scientist Doctor explains that the comet can be broken down into smaller ones, as she speaks her male counterpart is shown smelling her which has no relation with the plot of the story.

Table 4

Roles Assigned to Women

Roles Assigned to Women	Primary	Secondary
Brie		2
Kate Dibiasky		2
President Orlean,		
Noble prize-winning scientist Doctor		2
June(Dr Mindy's Wife)		2
Riley (The Singer)		2

Figure 1

Responsibilities Assigned to Women

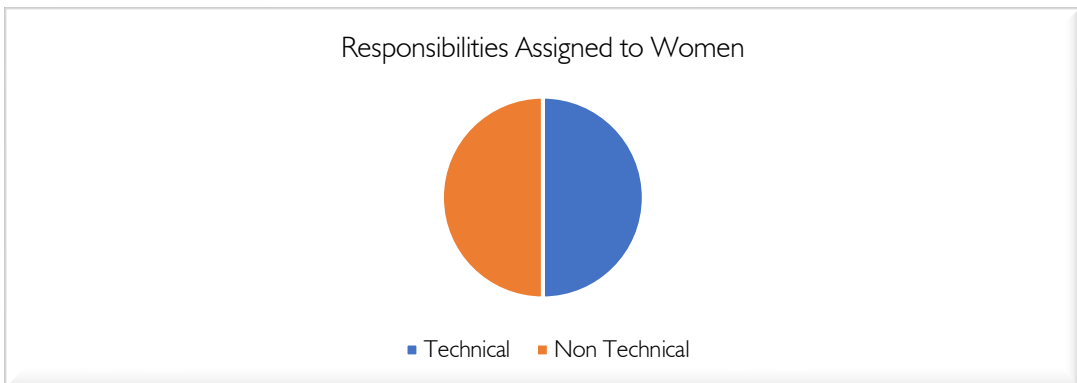


Table 5

Responsibilities Assigned to Women

Responsibilities Assigned to Women	Technical	Non-technical
Brie		2
Kate Dibiasky	1	
President Orlean,	1	
Noble-winning scientist Doctor	1	
June (Dr Mindy's Wife)		2
Riley (The Singer)		2

Portrayal of Women in Public Relations

At 41:00, during the talk show, Kate is shown as emotional and illogical while her male supervisor is shown as composed. Dr Mindy appears in the interview again but Kate is nowhere to be seen because she is considered emotional. Also, Brie is seen inviting Dr Mendy in an erotic way. Later in the scene, she is shown having a sensual relationship with him. This was not the requirement of the film's plot in any

way. Later it is established that she has had many relationships in the past. She is also divorced twice and brags about her sexual relationship with two formal presidents. The latter is the only thing to be picked up by Dr Mindy that they discuss. Riley is seen singing for a public event of the PR campaign, during her performance, social media messages with sexist connotations like "I am horny and alone..." are showcased.

Figure 2

Portrayal of Women in Public Relations

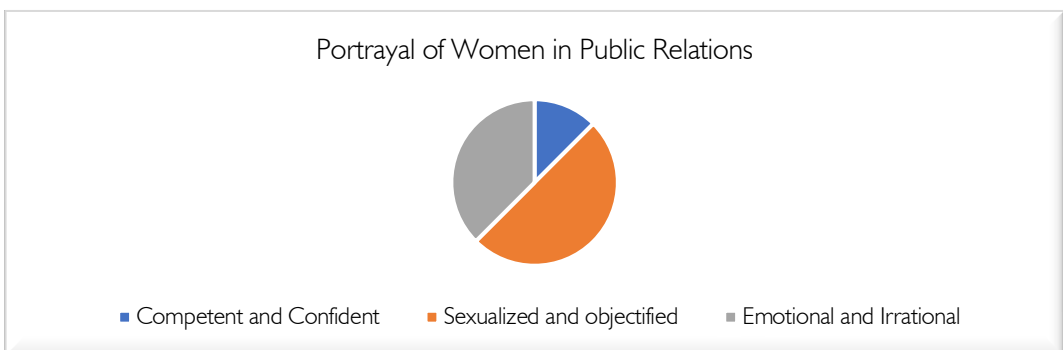


Table 6

Portrayal of Women in Public Relations

Portrayal of Women in Public Relations	Competent and Confident	Sexualized and Objectified	Emotional and Irrational
Brie		2	
Kate Dibiasky			3
President Orlean,		2	
Noble-winning scientist Doctor	1	2	
June(Dr Mindy's Wife)			3
Riley (The Singer)		2	3

Family Orientations

The film showcases Kate as having a boyfriend and she is depicted as least interested in meeting her mother. Prioritizing her work over family, the contrast has been shown when Kate and Dr Mindy are both talking to their families in the same scene. Kate is more interested to talk about her professional situation while Dr Mindy is shown as family oriented when he discusses the issues of his family. Kate is shown having a sensual relationship with a shoplifter boy after her

breakup. She is seen out of the main plot and in a romantic relationship as the film evolves. Brie, who is the journalist, is shown flirting with Dr Mindy rather than focusing on the interview as compared to his male counterpart. Riley's story of breakup is in the news and she has this onscreen patch-up with her boyfriend. President Orlean has a son but she is seen as totally disconnected from him and flies away without him just when the comet is about to hit the earth.

Figure 6

Family Orientations

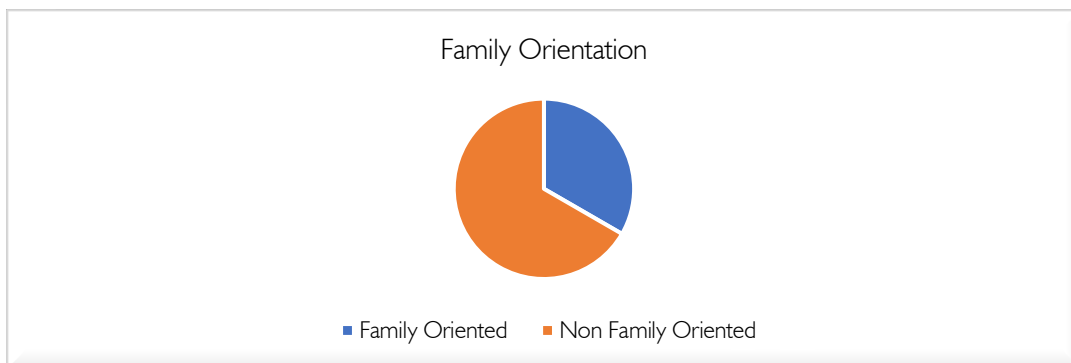


Table 7

Family Orientations

Family Orientations	Family-oriented	Non-family-oriented
Brie		2
Kate Dibiasky		2
President Orlean		2
Noble-winning scientist Doctor		2
June (Dr Mindy's Wife)	1	
Riley (The Singer)	1	

Findings

Kate

Symbols

Kate is portrayed as emotionally invested in her work and not so much in her family life, which is symbolized through her different choices like not being bothered about her parent's refusal to meet her. Symbolic of the tension between emotional and rational thinking is Kate's relationship with Dr Mindy. Dr Mindy represents the rational while Kate often represents the emotional side.

Language and Speaking

Kate is often portrayed as emotional and sometimes unreasonable, which is instance, she is shown lousy and yelling during the talk show when the President denies the existence of the comet.reflected in her dialogues and nonverbal expressions. For

Synchronic vs. Diachronic

A synchronic analysis of Kate's character might examine how she is portrayed in individual scenes or shots as compared to Dr Mindy. Like him taking the stage during the Just Look Up campaign and her in the background. Diachronic analysis might consider how her character develops over the course of the movie. At the start, Kate is shown as a doctoral candidate who was the first to sense the threat of the comet. Conversely, due to her emotional nature, she is sidelined from everything later on.

Metonymy and Metaphor

There are several instances of metonymy and metaphor in the film that relate to Kate's character. Her relationship with Dr Mindy could be seen as a metaphor for the tension between emotion and wisdom. Her use of profanity and casual language is also seen as a metonym for her lack of concern for societal norms. Moreover, her emotional behaviour is contrasted with the male characters in the film who do not pay much attention to small details, such as being charged for snacks in the White House.

Codes

The visual codes used to depict Kate's lack of concern for her appearance reflect her refusal of norms. The cultural codes used to portray her as emotional and irrational could be seen as reflecting cultural stereotypes about women.

Brie

Symbols

Brie's appearance, particularly her heavy makeup, symbolizes her focus on her outward appearance rather than her professional abilities. Her tendency to prioritize her affairs and drinking over her family also symbolizes her lack of commitment to traditional societal values.

Language and Speaking

Brie's dialogue and verbal communication in the movie often highlight her sexual and physical attributes rather than her intelligence or professional skills. In the scene where she asks her male colleague about her appearance, it shows how she may use her sexuality to manipulate or gain attention. This reinforces gender stereotypes that women are valued more for their physical appearance than their intellect or abilities.

Synchronic vs. Diachronic

When having an affair with Dr Mindy she is shown as least bothered about family life and is shown as a home wrecker. It is also showcased that Dr Mindy's family matter while Brie has no concern for her or his family. A diachronic analysis considers how her character's actions contribute to the overall themes of the movie, such as the importance of expertise in a world driven by sensationalism.

Metonymy and Metaphor

Brie's promiscuity and lack of commitment to the family may be seen as a metonymy to showcase a larger societal trend among women in the Media and Public Relations of valuing individual pleasure and instant gratification over traditional values like commitment and family. Additionally, her heavy makeup and focus on appearance may be seen as a metaphor for the superficiality and shallowness of modern media.

Codes

In semiotics, codes are systems of signs used to convey meaning. In "Don't Look Up," Brie's character embodies codes associated with the negative aspects of modern media, such as sensationalism, superficiality, and a lack of commitment to traditional values. These codes are reinforced through her

dialogue, actions, and appearance, camera angles and music.

President Orleans

Her character is rich with symbolism, reflecting the beauty standards and gender roles that women in leadership roles regularly face. Her appearance is severely emphasized, and her dependence on a male figure highlights the gender-based prejudices and power dynamics that exist in society.

Her character's language and speaking skills showcase the charisma and power of modern-day political leaders who are more concerned with public image and marketing than technicalities. The synchronic and diachronic analyses of President Orleans's character reflect the modern-day political climate, where leaders rank their public image and PR over the actual issues. Her erotic affair with a senator can be seen as a metaphor for the typical connotation given to women's roles.

The use of codes in her character highlights the multifaceted societal expectations and biases that women in leadership roles face. Her getup serves as a visual code that emphasizes her femininity and beauty, while her campaign "Don't Look Up" serves as a cultural code that highlights her lack of wisdom.

Nobel Prize-winning scientist

The character of the female scientist can be analyzed through various semantic codes. As a symbol, her scientific precision represents her expertise, but her secondary role and brief appearance indicate a gender bias. Her technical language showcases her intelligence, but her male counterpart's inappropriate behaviour towards her during her presentation is distracting and objectifying. A synchronic analysis focuses on her immediate role in the film, while a diachronic analysis considers how her character fits into the larger context of women in science in popular culture.

The metaphor of Peter smelling her signifies male attraction, but it also sexualizes her as an object. The codes associated with her character include scientific jargon and data, but the inappropriate behaviour towards her can also be seen as a code for gender bias and objectification in the workplace. Overall, her character represents the complexities and biases that women face in male-dominated fields.

June

Symbols

There are several symbols associated with June's character in the movie. As a housewife, she represents traditional gender roles and domesticity. Her weakness and dependence on her husband suggest a lack of agency and power in her own life.

Language and Speaking

June does not speak very much in the movie, and when she does, it is often in a submissive or apologetic tone. This reinforces her image as a weak and dependent character. Her interactions with her husband and others are often passive and unassertive.

Synchronic vs. Diachronic

The synchronic analysis of June's character might focus on her portrayal in individual scenes. Another comparison can be seen in June's and Brie's clothing and makeup, establishing that housewives are not well dressed while professional women are wicked having much makeup on. For diachronic analysis, June does not have a significant character arc, her portrayal remains consistent as a dependent housewife.

Metonymy and Metaphor

June's character can be seen as a metaphor for the limitations and constraints of traditional gender roles. Her throwing the medicine bottles at the cheating husband is the metonymy for not only her frustration and overly emotional but also as the one who was taking care of her husband's day-to-day needs.

Codes

Visual codes such as her clothing, hair, and makeup reinforce her image as a traditional housewife. The use of music and lighting in scenes featuring her also serves to emphasize her passive and dependent nature.

Riley

Symbols

Riley is portrayed as a singer and has a shooting star tattoo on her back, which becomes a metaphor for her lack of knowledge about the comet campaign she is promoting.

Language and Speaking

Riley speaks assertively about her musical performances, but she is shown as submissive in regard to her romantic relationship and lacks knowledge about the PR campaign which is highlighted through her uncertain speech.

Synchronic vs. Diachronic

Her portrayal in individual scenes, highlights her lack of knowledge and her relegation to a secondary role. She does not have a significant character arc.

Metonymy and Metaphor

Riley's shooting star tattoo becomes a metaphor for her lack of knowledge. Her boyfriend's influence on her becomes a metonymy for the perceived idea that men hold more importance while women are just dependent in the relationship.

Codes

Visual codes like her clothing and makeup reinforce her image as a performer, and that women are more focused on their relationships. The objectification and sexualization of her character through social media comments highlight the prevalent issue of harassment and objectification of women in the communication or PR industry.

Discussion and Conclusion

The study aimed to explore gender disparities in the portrayal of PR roles in Hollywood movies. To achieve this, the study investigated three objectives, which were to examine the representation of women in technical roles, analyze the roles and responsibilities assigned to women, and investigate the depiction of women in terms of family orientation. The researcher analyzed the film using semantic analysis to examine the portrayal of gender disparities in the PR roles in the film industry.

The present study aims to fill the gap in the literature on gender disparities depicted in Hollywood films in the portrayal of women working in the area of PR in any way.

The film *Don't Look Up* had male protagonists. In a few scenes, the camera faced men even when the women were speaking. This aligns with the previous studies that promulgate that women are underrepresented in key behind-the-scenes roles in

the film industry (Choueiti et al., 2019). The film reviewed both had a serious plot but the women behind the PR campaigns in the movies were sexualized and objectified compared to male characters. This again aligns with the previous studies by Horne and Boyd (2009) who found that female PR actors were often portrayed as "dumb blondes" or sexual objects, contributing to negative stereotypes and limiting their representation in influential positions. Moreover, a study by Kim and Willis in 2007 supported one of the other findings of the present study that male characters in PR roles were given more screen time and significant roles as compared to their females.

The analysis of gender disparities in PR roles aligns with the concept of the glass ceiling, which refers to the unseen barrier that prevents women from reaching the highest levels of management or strategic positions. The present study also found that women were mostly shown as living alone and had no families as compared to the men. The male characters were not only enjoying the position of power but also having families to go back to. Also, it was depicted that women who were either siding with men in their PR Campaigns or were working as media persons were used physically by men and that they prioritized their families. This again is supported by the Annenberg Inclusion Initiative study (2019) that brought to light the grave state of women in film highlighting the need for increased representation in all industries, including PR and media.

The analysis demonstrated that women in technical PR roles are often portrayed through cultural stereotypes, such as irrationality and superficiality. In contrast, their male counterparts are depicted as more composed, rational, and dominant. The findings of this study are consistent with previous research that found gender disparities in Hollywood films, particularly in terms of how female characters are portrayed (Madeline Di Nonno and Stacy L. Smith, 2019). Negative stereotypes restrict the portrayal of women in influential places. Kim and Willis's (2009) study found that male counterparts often dominate PR roles in Hollywood films, even when female characters are the main protagonists. The same has been observed in the film *Don't Look Up* where Kate was the key person behind the comet detection and Campaign *Don't Look Up* but the plot portrays her as the secondary character and Dr Mindy as the primary one. The representation of women in technical PR roles in Hollywood films is

often limited to negative stereotypes and sexual objectification, contributing to the "glass ceiling" effect.

In conclusion, the study highlights the need for diversity and representation of women while depicting professional characters as it impacts the real-life scenarios of the industry. Addressing the issue of societal issues surrounding gender inequality and the underrepresentation of women in leadership roles requires a concerted effort from all sectors of society to challenge gender stereotypes and promote greater diversity and representation in all industries. To summarize:

RQ1: Women are hardly depicted in technical roles such as managers, and PR heads in Hollywood films. Women in technical roles were mostly showcased through the gender codes example emotional, sensitive, or sexualized and objectified.

RQ2: Women were often assigned tasks that were not central to the plot or were used as support characters to enhance the male lead character development.

RQ3: Women in technical roles were often not depicted as family-oriented while men were portrayed as being more career-driven and concerned for their family life.

Conclusion

Overall, the study's findings show that there are significant gender disparities in the representation of women in technical roles within the Public Relations roles depicted in Hollywood films. Women are often limited to secondary roles and are not given equal representation compared to men in the same profession. Furthermore, gender stereotypes are often disseminated through the codes which can have negative implications for the way society views women in the workplace. Consequently, it is indispensable to challenge these stereotypes and promote gender equality in the depiction of women in technical roles within the Public Relations characters in the film industry.

References

- Berger, A. A. (1982). *Media Analysis Techniques*. In SAGE Publications, Inc. eBooks. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781071872420>
- Choueiti, M., Smith, S. L., & Pieper, K. (2019). Inclusion in the Director's Chair? Gender, Race & Age of Film Directors across 1,200 Top Films from 2007 to 2018. Annenberg Inclusion Initiative. https://annenberg.usc.edu/sites/default/files/2017/04/06/MDSCI_Inclusion%20_in_the_Directors_Chair.pdf
- Di Nonno, M., & Smith, S. L. (2019). Inclusion in the Director's Chair? Gender, Race, & Age of Film Directors across 1,000 Films from 2007-2018. Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media.
- Home, C. R., & Boyd, D. (2009). Portrayals of public relations practitioners in popular film: 1991-2005. *Public Relations Review*, 35(3), 277-282.
- Kim, E., & Willis, E. (2007). "She's a publicist. You know what that means." Hollywood films' representation of women in public relations. *Public Relations Review*, 33(1), 99-101.
- Aldoory, L. (2005). A (Re)Conceived Feminist Paradigm for Public Relations: A Case for Substantial Improvement. *Journal of Communication*, 55(4), 668-684. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2005.tb03016.x>
- Donato, K. (1990). Keepers of the corporate image: Women in public relations. In B. Reskin & P. Roos (Eds.), *Job queues, gender queues, explaining women's inroads into male occupations*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Grunig, L. A., Toth, E. L., & Hon, L. C. (2000). Feminist Values in Public Relations. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 12(1), 49-68. https://doi.org/10.1207/s1532754xjpr1201_4
- Hill, M. (2009). Army recruitment brochure contains subliminal 'HANCOCK' message' War on you: breaking alternative news, November 30. Retrieved April 14, 2010, from <http://waronyou.com/topics/army-recruitmentbrochure-contains-subliminal-hancockmessage/>.
- IABC. (1984). *The Velvet Ghetto*. Sites.psu.edu. <https://sites.psu.edu/leadership/2012/12/01/the-velvet-ghetto/>
- Lauzen, M. M., Dozier, D. M., & Horan, N. (2019). The celluloid ceiling: Behind-the-scenes Employment of Women on the Top 100, 250, and 500 Films of 2018. Center for the Study of Women in Television and Film.
- Miller, K. S. (1999). Public Relations in Film and Fiction: 1930 to 1995. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 11(1), 3-28. https://doi.org/10.1207/s1532754xjpr1101_01
- Smith, S. L., Pieper, K. M., Granados, A., Choueiti, M., & Nilsen, A. V. (2019). Gender & film: Behind-the-scenes employment, on-screen representation, and audiences. Annenberg Inclusion Initiative.
- Eichner, S., & Johnson, S. L. (2016). Hollywood divided: Gender equality on the silver screen. *Sociological Forum*, 31(4), 881-902.
- Lauzen, M. M., Davis, K., & Smith, S. L. (2019). The celluloid ceiling: Behind-the-scenes Employment of Women on the Top 100, 250, and 500 Films of 2018. Center for the Study of Women in Television and Film, San Diego State University. https://womenintvfilm.sdsu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/2018_Celluloid_Ceiling_Report.pdf
- Nikunen, K., & Paasonen, S. (2018). *Sexual representations and gender in the digital age: Between empowerment and objectification*. Routledge.
- O'Brien, D. T., & Lee, J. H. (2018). Portrayals of Gender in the Top 100 grossing films of 2016. *Sex Roles*, 78(11-12), 757-771.
- Public Relations Society of America (PRSA). (2019). Diversity and inclusion strategic plan. <https://www.prsa.org/article/prsa-releases-diversity-inclusion-strategic-plan>
- Ridgeway, C. L. (2013). Why Status Matters for Inequality. *American Sociological Review*, 79(1), 1-16. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0003122413515997>
- Smith, S., Choueiti, M., Pieper, K., Yao, K., Case, A., & Choi, A. (2019). *Inequality in 1,200 Popular Films: Examining Portrayals of Gender, Race/Ethnicity, LGBTQ & Disability from 2007 to 2018*. <https://assets.uscannenberg.org/docs/aii-inequality-report-2019-09-03.pdf>