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“Bond Girls,” Shaken and Stirred: A Content Analysis of James Bond Films

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Abstract

Since 1962, film audiences have enjoyed the adventures of James Bond; female characters have always been pivotal to the narratives. A quantitative content analysis of Bond films assesses how female characters have been portrayed over time. This study adds to the body of communication research on the content and effects of female media images by analyzing a specific series of films that, public criticism maintains, stereotypes women.

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Introduction

For the past five decades, film audiences have been treated to the adventures of James Bond. Every few years, a new Bond film will surface and, as Gilligan (2005) notes, the media frenzy that surrounds these occurrences has become as predictable as the films themselves. The fictional British spy James Bond, 007, was initially created for Ian Fleming’s espionage novels, which experienced peak popularity in the 1950s. The Ian Fleming novels, and the films to follow, appeared on the scene during a time of heightened sociopolitical awareness and Cold War tensions (Mulvihill, 2001a; 2001b). Espionage, innovative gadgets, alcoholic beverages, fast cars, a demonic villain and a plethora of attractive women were instrumental in molding the “Bond formula” that eventually matriculated from print to celluloid (Brosnan, 1972; Dodds, 2005; Pfeiffer & Worrall, 2000).

The first big-screen appearance of Bond came in 1962 with the release of *Dr No*. The early Bond films, produced on an annual basis, were well received in England but were not overwhelmingly welcomed by the American viewing public (Rubin, 2003; Spotswood, 1998). Actor Sean Connery was the first to portray the 007 character and appeared in six official James Bond films over a period of nine years. Roger Moore replaced Connery in the early 1970s. Initially many audience members were hesitant to accept Moore in the widely famous role. A James Bond film without Sean Connery was a ridiculous notion. However, in time, Moore won over many fans who accepted his rather comic alteration to the 007 character. In the 1980s audience members were introduced to Timothy Dalton who, after two films, was replaced with Pierce Brosnan (d’Abo & Cork, 2003; Pfeiffer & Worrall, 2000) (see Table 1). There are now twenty-one Bond films, including the 2007 release starring newcomer Daniel Craig in the

remake of *Casino Royale*. Baimbridge (1997) would predict that Craig’s appearance will result in a boost of audience interest. Baimbridge, applying economic models to the Bond series of films, found that audience loyalties decline after four appearances by a given Bond actor.

Table 1 about here

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). It appears as if Bond fans never tire of the venerable 007 character and anxiously await the return of their favorite hero. This durable affection for James Bond, regardless of the actor currently positioned in the character, transcends the appreciation for espionage and illustrates the films’ appeal as a cultural mainstay (Bond is forever, 2002). Little did Ian Fleming know that in penning those indelible words “My name is Bond. . . James Bond” that he was creating a fictional character that would have such an enduring impact on popular culture.

The ongoing appeal of the fantasy world represented in these films relies heavily on the attractive female counterparts to the Bond character (Jenkins, 2005; Murray, 1988). The prominent female roles are pivotal to the story line and overall tone of the films. Every Bond film has multiple “Bond Girls” 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, 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) 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 the preproduction stage of each new release (d’Abo & Cork, 2003).

Western culture has dictated (arguably via a social cognitive framework explanation) that the leading character, James Bond, should promote stereotypical, sexist male attitudes, especially when interacting with women. 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(s) in these widely popular idiographic films has always been a vital component of the story line regardless of the era from which it emerged (Dodds, 2003). From a hegemonic standpoint, these often deleterious portrayals have had to change at least minimally to allow for modern ideologies. Throughout the years, images of Bond female characters have been dichotomously crafted as both independent and vulnerable, in search of a male protagonist. The Bond girl has always had her own unique individualistic characteristics and a strong persona. Even so, by the end of the film, Bond typically rescues her from some perilous situation involving a diabolical male villain.

The Bond series has become so entrenched in Western popular culture that the form of the films’ diegesis has become highly predictable and dependable, thus proving useful in studies of audience response to narrative moving images. Indeed, Magliano, Dijkstra and Zwaan (1996) utilized the Bond film *Moonraker* as the primary stimulus in two studies of audience predictive inferences, finding that both visual and discourse cues resulted in particular predictions of

outcomes, with the great majority accurate. They noted that the Bond movie was used for the experiments due to its status as a “richly situated story” that could support predictive inferences. Additionally, Bond films have been used as stimuli in studies of brain function (Bartels & Zeki, 2004; 2005; Keyser et al., 2004), due to the dynamic nature of the content, and its rich use of color, faces, human bodies, and language (Bartels & Zeki, 2004).

Rationale for Study

The stereotyping of female images in the media has been one of the most-studied areas of content analysis of the media (Neuendorf, 2002). Although rarely examined by empirical scholarship, women’s images in *film* have provided a massive body of stereotyped portrayals over many decades (Haskell, 1987). There is a need for more systematic content analytic studies of this important medium.

Many media scholars would agree that some strides have been made in how women are portrayed in film. Nevertheless, female stereotypes are still perpetuated through this medium (Harris, 2004). Seger (2007) suggests that certain stereotypes are projected more subtly, but they are still there. Female leading characters must still be brighter, smarter, funnier and more attractive than their male counterparts.

Studies of the content of films 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. In other words, social learning (or, later introduced as cognitive learning theory) suggests that individuals will observe, imitate, and learn from others 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. The main premise behind social learning theory is that it includes various methods of analyzing a person’s behaviors. These methods 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 are likely to serve as the raw material for cognitive and behavioral effects. Kilbourne (1995) has proposed that the idealized portrayal of female beauty perpetuated through the media is an individual who is statuesque, very thin, small hiped, 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 & Shaw, 1994), lower self-esteem (Wilcox & Laird, 2000), anger and depression (Pinhas, Toner, Ali, Garfinkel, & Stuckless, 1999), increased self-consciousness (Kalodner, 1997), and symptoms of eating disorders (Harrison, 2001; Harrison & Cantor, 1997). Harrison, Taylor, and Marske (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 & Burggraf, 2000).

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).

Social cognitive theory in the context of film studies suggests that individuals may imitate various prescribed behaviors they view perpetuated on film, especially if these portrayals are believed to provide positive reinforcement. 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. James Bond’s tendencies to aggress 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. In addition, 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.

At the same time, a concern over the linking of sexuality and aggressive tendencies has been evidenced in the critical literature, with no quantitative analyses to answer this concern. Little attention has been paid to the task of *profiling* the characteristics of female models that engage in promiscuous sexual behavior, or those who demonstrate aggressive tendencies, and to the potential impact of one type of behavior on the other. 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.

The goal of this 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 “Bond girls” have evolved over time, and across the various Bond incarnations (i.e., the different actors playing Bond). Several others probe the potential interrelationships among physical characteristics, sexual activity, and violent behaviors for female characters in Bond films.

Research Questions

- 1A. Have the representations of physical characteristics of females portrayed in Bond films changed over time?
- 1B. Is there a difference in the representations of physical characteristics of female characters with respect to the actor portraying Bond?
- 2A. Has the sexual activity of female characters portrayed in Bond films changed over time?
- 2B. Is there a difference in the amount of sexual activity of female characters with respect to the actor portraying Bond?
- 3A. Has the amount and level of violence against female characters portrayed in Bond films changed over time?
- 3B. Is there a difference in the amount and level of violence against female characters with respect to the actor portraying Bond?
- 4A. Is the amount of sexual activity engaged in by a female character predicted by her physical characteristics, role prominence, and aggressive predispositions?

- 4B. Is the amount of aggression aimed at a female character predicted by her physical characteristics, role prominence, sexual activity, and aggressive predispositions?
- 4C. Are a female character’s end-of-film consequences (i.e., mortality) predicted by her physical characteristics, role prominence, sexual activity, and aggressive predispositions?

Method

Content Analysis

Content analysis can be defined as a form of analysis used to identify, enumerate, and analyze the occurrence of specific messages and message characteristics embedded in relevant text (Frey, Botan, & Kreps, 2000). Neuendorf (2002) provided a more comprehensive definition, stating “content analysis is a summarizing, quantitative analysis of messages that relies on the scientific method (including attention to objectivity-intersubjectivity, a priori design, reliability, validity, generalizability, replicability, and hypothesis testing) and is not limited as to the types of variables that may be measured or the context in which the messages are created or presented” (p. 10). The research described here utilized human coding, applied to a census of the 20 extant James Bond films.

Concepts. The concepts investigated in this project were (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 was 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 in more than one scene for at least 5 seconds. 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 more

than 5 seconds in at least two scenes. In addition, only females that appeared to be over the age of 16 were coded (i.e., no children).

Codebook and Coding form. A thirteen page codebook was developed to define the following measured variables for each female character:

Demographic, physical, and role characteristics—For each female character, it was assessed whether her *role* constituted a minor, medium, or major part in the Bond film; whether her character was a “*good*” person, “*bad*” person, or one that changed from one to the other during the film; her *chronological age* estimated in years; her *race* (Caucasian, African/African-American, Asian, Native-American, Arab, Other); whether she had an evident *Hispanic identity*; her mode of speaking or *accent* (U.S., European, Asian, Other); her *hair color* (five categories), *hair length* (four levels), and *hair style* (three types); her *body size* (using the nine-point Thompson and Gray (1995) scheme); the level of attractiveness of her *physical appearance* (three levels); and the end-of-film *consequences* for her character (i.e., alive and continues on with Bond, presumed alive but not with Bond, presumed dead, and explicitly shown to be dead).

Sexual activity—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.

Aggressive behavior involving women—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 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, it was indicated whether she (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.

All variables listed above were more fully defined, with accompanying coding rules, in the codebook. Copies of the codebook and its counterpart coding form are available from the authors.

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. The Bond film not part of the final collection, *Never Say Never Again*, was selected for the 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 (Krippendorff, 2004) of 97%. After this first reliability 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. PRAM is a Windows-based application designed to simplify the calculation of intercoder reliability coefficients when more than two coders are used (<http://www.geocities.com/skymegsoftware/pram.html>). PRAM calculates a variety of intercoder reliability coefficients, including those used here: Cohen’s kappa for multiple coders (Fleiss, 1971), simple percent agreement, and Lin’s concordance correlation coefficient (Lin, 1989).

Using the recommendations of Banerjee, Capozzoli, McSweeney, and Sinha (1999) for Cohen’s kappa (i.e., below .40 = unacceptable; .40 to .75 = fair to good agreement beyond chance), and rules of thumb for Lin’s concordance correlation (a test for statistical significance; Lin, 1989), most of the measured variables achieved an acceptable level of reliability. As shown in Table 2, the only variable not meeting the relevant criterion is “Good/Bad.” Given that variable’s generally acceptable percent agreement figure of 71% (Frey, Botan, & Kreps, 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.

Table 2 about here

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% medium, and 17.4% 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, 2.1% were Hispanic, 3.1% were coded as “Other,” and 2.6% were not codable for ethnicity. About a quarter of the female characters (26.2%) had a US 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.

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% straight, 51.3% wavy/curly, 2.6% Afro, with 13.3% uncodable for hair style.

Body size was measured using the Thompson and Gray (1995) body image scale. 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 35.4% extremely attractive, 56.4% attractive/average, 7.2% below average/extremely unattractive, and 1% unable to be coded for physical appearance.

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.

Mild sexual contact with Bond was found to occur from zero to nine instances ($M = .54$, $SD = 1.25$); 73.3% had no mild sexual contact with Bond. Strong sexual contact with Bond ranged from zero to two instances per female character ($M = .32$, $SD = .63$); 76.4% had no 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 ($M = .11$, $SD = .39$), with 91% of all Bond women and 68% of major female characters having no sexual contact with men other than Bond. In total, 66% of all female characters engaged in no 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 ($M = .08$, $SD = .34$); 93.8% had no mild harm from Bond. Strong harm from Bond was coded as occurring from zero to four instances ($M = .05$, $SD = .36$); 97.4% experienced no strong harm from Bond.

Harm from sources other than Bond ranged from zero to 25 instances (total, pooling mild and strong), although the mean occurrence was fairly low ($M = .48$, $SD = 2.01$). Eighty-one percent of female characters experienced no harm from non-Bond characters. Fully 75% of all female characters experienced no harm from any character (Bond or other).

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

Female characters’ deadly aggression on Bond was coded 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 sexual contact.

Results for the final consequences for female characters at the end of the film were: 10.3% alive with Bond, 69.2% presumed alive without Bond, 5.6% presumed dead, 12.3% explicitly shown to be dead, .5% “other,” and 2.1% unable to determine consequences at the end of the film.

Research Questions

Research Questions 1A and 1B asked whether the representations of physical appearance of females portrayed in Bond films had changed over time, and with the corresponding change in the actor playing James Bond. Using the year of release of each Bond film as the independent variable, several correlational analyses were conducted to address this question with regard to variables measured at the interval or ratio level. Neither chronological age ($r = .13$) nor body size ($r = .005$) was significantly correlated with year of release. Nonwhite status was negatively related ($r = -.13$), but not significantly so.

Using the actor playing Bond as a surrogate for the era of the film’s release for analyses of categorical variables, we found no significant relationships (i.e., using chi-square analyses) between Bond actor and the following physical characteristics of the Bond women: Race, hair style, and whether the female character was good or bad.

The role of the character (minor/medium/major) was found to be related to which actor played Bond; the proportion of major roles seemed to increase over time, with Sean Connery’s

films showing the lowest percentage (11%) and Pierce Brosnan’s the highest (32%; chi-square=15.5, $df=8$, $p = .05$).

It was found that the female character’s accent was significantly related to the Bond actor (chi-square =19.1, $df = 8$, $p = .014$) such that films starring Roger Moore were more likely to include women speaking with a U.S. accent (47%) than were the films of other Bond actors (23% across the other four). Hair color was significantly related to Bond actor (chi-square = 28.1, $df = 16$, $p = .03$); the findings were complex, but seemed to indicate that blondes predominated in the Timothy Dalton era (50% of the female characters), and dark brown/black hair was featured in the Sean Connery installations (48%). Hair length also varied significantly between the films of the various Bond actors, with films starring Pierce Brosnan featuring the greatest proportion of women with short hair (48%), and Sean Connery the smallest proportion (15%; chi-square=24.8, $df=12$, $p= .016$). Finally, physical attractiveness was significantly related to Bond actor (chi-square=15.5, $df=8$, $p = .05$), with an unusually large number of highly attractive women (75%) appearing in the films starring Timothy Dalton. However, for none of these variables (i.e., accent, hair color, hair length, and physical attractiveness) was there found a discernible over-time trend.

Research Question 2A 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 2B asked if there was a difference in the amount of sexual activity of female characters with respect to the actor portraying Bond. The results of an ANOVA

comparing mean amount of sexual activity across the five Bonds did not reveal a significant difference ($F = 1.4$, $df = 4, 190$, $p = .24$).

Research Question 3A 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 done to women.

The next Research Question, 3B, asked if there was a difference in aggressive behavior toward women between films of the five different Bond actors. Results of ANOVA analyses showed no significant differences across the Bonds (for harm, $F(4, 190) = 1.50$, $p = .20$; for target of weapons, $F(4, 190) = 1.25$, $p = .29$).

For the testing of Research Questions 4A, 4B, and 4C, a number of dummy predictor variables were created: Role was dummied as major role/other (i.e., medium and minor were pooled), race was dummied as non-white/white, hair color was dummied as blonde/non-blonde, wearing of glasses as ever/never, accent as U.S./other, hair length as two dummies—long hair/other and short hair/other (with medium-length the holdout), hair style as straight hair/other, physical appearance as two dummies—extremely attractive/other and extremely unattractive/other (with attractive as the holdout), attempt to kill Bond was dummied as yes/no, weapon use was dummied as yes/no, and whether the female was considered “good” at the end of the film was dummied as good/not good.

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 the female’s mortality status at the end of the film (i.e., dead or alive). For each of the four multivariate analyses, a forced-entry hierarchical model was used:

- a) Year of release was used as a control;
- b) Physical characteristics included in the second block were: Age, body size (1-9 scale), non-white, U.S. accent, blonde hair, glasses, long hair, short hair, straight hair, extreme attractiveness, extreme unattractiveness;
- c) Major role was entered as the third block;
- d) Total sexual activity constituted the fourth block (when not the dependent variable);
- e) 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 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 year of release was a positive predictor (β in = .15, $p=.038$; inc. $R^2 = .02$, $p=.038$), the set of physical characteristic indicators was significant (inc. $R^2 = .22$, $p<.001$), major role status was a positive predictor (β in = .56, $p<.001$; inc. $R^2 = .25$,

$p < .001$), and the set of three aggressive indicators was significant (inc. $R^2 = .05$, $p = .001$). The full model was highly significant at $R^2 = .54$, adjusted $R^2 = .50$, $F(16,169) = 12.34$, $p < .001$.

Table 3 about here

The final β s revealed significant unique contributions of extreme attractiveness ($\beta = .13$, $p = .038$), nonwhite status ($\beta = -.13$, $p = .03$), 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 later 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.

Tables 4 & 5 about here

Table 4 shows that year of the film’s release (block 1) was not significantly related to the female character being the target of weapons. But, each of the four subsequent blocks was statistically significant. The set of physical characteristic indicators was significant (inc. $R^2 =$

.18, $p < .001$), major role status was a positive predictor (β in = .51, $p < .001$; inc. $R^2 = .20$, $p < .001$), total sexual activity was a significant positive predictor (β in = .24, $p = .003$; inc. $R^2 = .03$, $p = .003$), and the set of three indicators of aggression was also significant (inc. $R^2 = .19$, $p < .001$). 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, her (higher) level of sexual activity, and her use of weapons.

Table 5 indicates that year of the film’s release (block 1) was a significant positive predictor of total harm to the female character, with β in = .15, $p = .046$; inc. $R^2 = .02$, $p = .046$. The physical characteristics block was non-significant. Major role status was a positive predictor (β in = .41, $p < .001$; inc. $R^2 = .13$, $p < .001$). Neither of the final two blocks—for 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) 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 blocks (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.

Table 6 about here

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)=0.15, $p < .001$), with age (Exp(B)=1.07, $p = .077$) and body type (Exp(B)=0.50, $p = .078$) 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

Examining the variety of results addressing the nine research questions, we identified a number of interesting patterns. First, a number of intriguing 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 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.

However, these trends are substantively rather minimal, and eclipsed, perhaps, by over-time consistencies in female attractiveness, slender body type (an overall average of less than three on a 1-9 scale), youth (an average just under 30 years of age), a tendency to be morally “good,” and a striking diversity with regard to race, accent, hair color, hair style, and hair length. And, although sexual activity and physical harm have increased over time, they have always been a significant 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 franchise (Bond is forever, 2002; Gilligan, 2005), while the consistency of portrayals also bodes for greater potential viewer effects (Bandura, 1986). As noted by Magliano, Dijkstra and Zwaan (1996), such a narrative form is highly predictable, resulting in rewards for viewers who are comfortable with the familiar outcomes.

Some differences were found with regard to the actor playing Bond, but these differences seemed to be largely superficial, i.e., cosmetic shifts in hair color, hair length, or attractiveness, that did not correspond to a discernible over-time trend. It may be that producers have tried to give Bond girls a particular “look” that distinctively identifies a given type with a certain Bond actor.

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 assumed lesbians have sex with Bond. It is worth noting that across all the Bond films, there was not a single instance of sexual activity between married partners; this hegemonic message of non-marital sex is also potential fodder for a very specific audience impact.

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 reinforces the stereotype of male resentment aimed at the sexually provocative female model. It is thought that the sexual power of the provocative female is defused by male-to-female aggression.

In the prediction of victimization of Bond women, it seemed 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 Bond girl—death—seems to accrue from promiscuity (often with Bond) and daring to threaten the ultimate iconic masculine hero, James Bond.

Although certainly displaying a sophisticated brand of “macho,” 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.

Framed within the existing theory and literature on female images in the media, this study provides further evidence of the sexualization, marginalization, and disposability of women.

Limitations and Future Directions

The limitations of this study included: (a) the relatively large number of coders (eight) proved a particular challenge to reliability, although, ultimately, with repeated training and codebook revision, most variables did achieve an acceptable level of reliability, and (b) the measurement of a number of 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., eye color, originally a coded variable, had to be dropped due to the inability of coders to see this attribute clearly on all types of video monitors).

The study proved to be a fully explicated and carefully constructed examination of role portrayals and sexual/aggressive behaviors among Bond women. But, the ultimate goal of deciphering audience impacts cannot be achieved with the content analytic data of this study. Although clearly motivated by the spectre of social learning impacts on loyal Bond fans, this study cannot directly infer such outcomes. Future effects studies using Bond films as stimuli may illuminate the effect that such consistent and unique images may have on viewers.

Conclusion

This study describes specific characteristics and representations of females portrayed in James Bond films. Our goal was to add to the body of communication 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. 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 girls. The collective body of Bond films, with its great popularity over time among a wide range of audience types, stands to serve as an important source of social cognitive learning about appropriate role behaviors for women—still stereotyped, with persistent allusions to violence and sex (and their linking), and with unrealistic standards of female beauty.

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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 |

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)

** - $p < .01$

Table 3
Prediction of Sexual Activity by Bond Women

| | r | Beta in | Final Beta | 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 R² = .54
 Adjusted R² = .50
 F(16,169) = 12.34
 p < .001

* p < .05
 ** p < .01

Table 4
Prediction of Being a Target of Weapons among Bond Women

| | r | Beta in | Final Beta | 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 R² = .62
 Adjusted R² = .58
 F(17,168) = 15.87
 p < .001

* p < .05
 ** p < .01

Table 5
Prediction of Harm to Bond Women

| | r | Beta in | Final Beta | 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 R² = .25
 Adjusted R² = .17
 F(17, 168) = 3.23
 p < .001

* p < .05
 ** p < .01

Table 6
Prediction of Mortality (Death) of Bond Women (Logistic Regression)

| | r | Exp(B) in | Final Exp(B) | Block Chi-square | -2LL | Cox & Snell R ² | Nagelkerke R ² | Hosmer & Lemeshow Chi-sq Test |
|------------------------|--------|-----------|--------------|------------------|----------|----------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Block 1 | | | | 0.08 | 167.53 | .00 | .00 | 11.99 |
| Year | .04 | 1.01 | 0.98 | | | | | |
| Block 2 | | | | 7.42 | 160.11 | .04 | .07 | 16.27* |
| Age | .01 | 1.04 | 1.07 | | | | | |
| Body size | -.09 | 0.65 | 0.50 | | | | | |
| U.S. accent | -.04 | 1.05 | 0.99 | | | | | |
| Blond | -.05 | 0.64 | 1.06 | | | | | |
| Glasses | .07 | 3.13 | 3.96 | | | | | |
| Long hair | .03 | 1.34 | 0.72 | | | | | |
| Short hair | .05 | 0.82 | 0.69 | | | | | |
| Straight hair | .04 | 1.55 | 1.32 | | | | | |
| Non-white | -.02 | 0.94 | 1.41 | | | | | |
| Extremely attractive | .07 | 1.31 | 0.80 | | | | | |
| Extremely unattractive | -.03 | 0.73 | 0.34 | | | | | |
| Block 3 | | | | 1.41 | 158.70 | .05 | .08 | 13.95 |
| Major role | .10 | 1.89 | 0.29 | | | | | |
| 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** | 0.15** | 0.15** | | | | | |
| Attempts to kill Bond | .28** | 11.84* | 11.84* | | | | | |
| Weapon use | .24** | 1.13 | 1.13 | | | | | |

* p < .05

** p < .01

NOTE: Each -2LL was tested via the chi-square.