

# Portrayal of Women in Bollywood Films Directed by Women

Sean Graham, John Mikutel, Alexander Tomaselli, and Dr. Rebecca Peters

## Introduction

Bollywood films are an important part of India's culture and entertainment. Directors of this media are globally known and impact cultures around the world. We recognize that women are represented very little in Bollywood films compared to men. Our data was gathered by watching various Bollywood films from different time periods, in which surveys were completed to sort the data acquired from the films. This project investigates how women characters are portrayed in Bollywood films specifically directed by female filmmakers. In this project, we account for cultural differences among films when analyzing the roles of women. Many women often conformed to archetypal social standards; therefore, the compiled data is utilized to understand trends within Bollywood cinema.

With this understanding of Bollywood films, we hypothesize that younger female characters in Bollywood films will be portrayed more commonly in professional or high-status jobs than their elder counterparts. We anticipate this to reflect a trend toward modernity, accompanied by more variable relationships across social classes.

## Methods

1. Selecting a multitude of films by female directors
2. Watch the film and film code (a form of film analysis)
3. Utilizing film coding, we marked certain qualities on surveys including Occupation, Social class, Age, Women's relationships, and differences in benefits.
4. Compiling the information on Qualtrics surveys
5. Compared and discussed results of each researcher
6. Finalizing an agreed upon main survey list



Screenshot from *Tees Maar Khan*



Screenshot from *Superboys of Malegaon*



Screenshot from *Khandani Shafakhana*

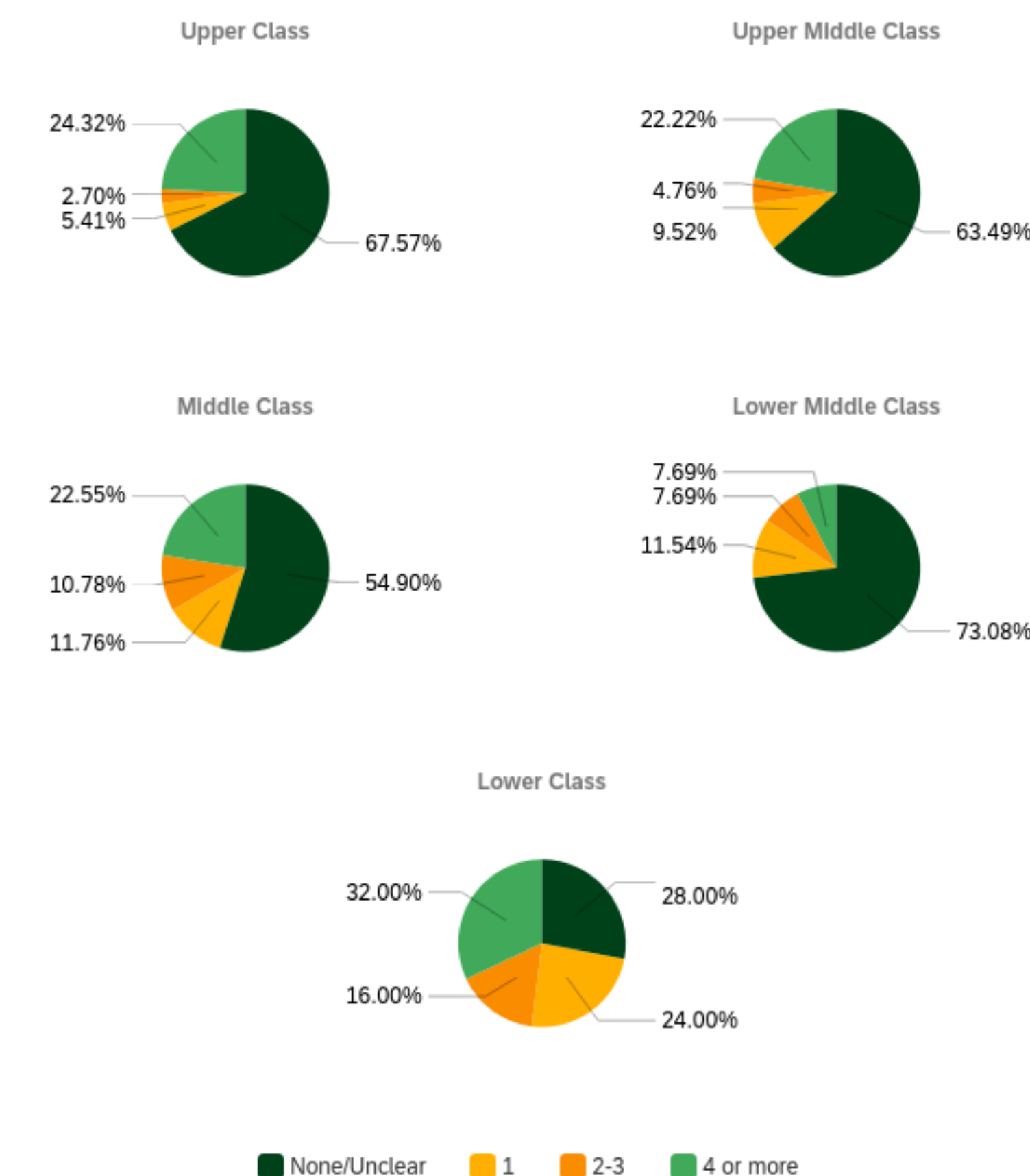
## Results

Number of Familial Relationships By Class

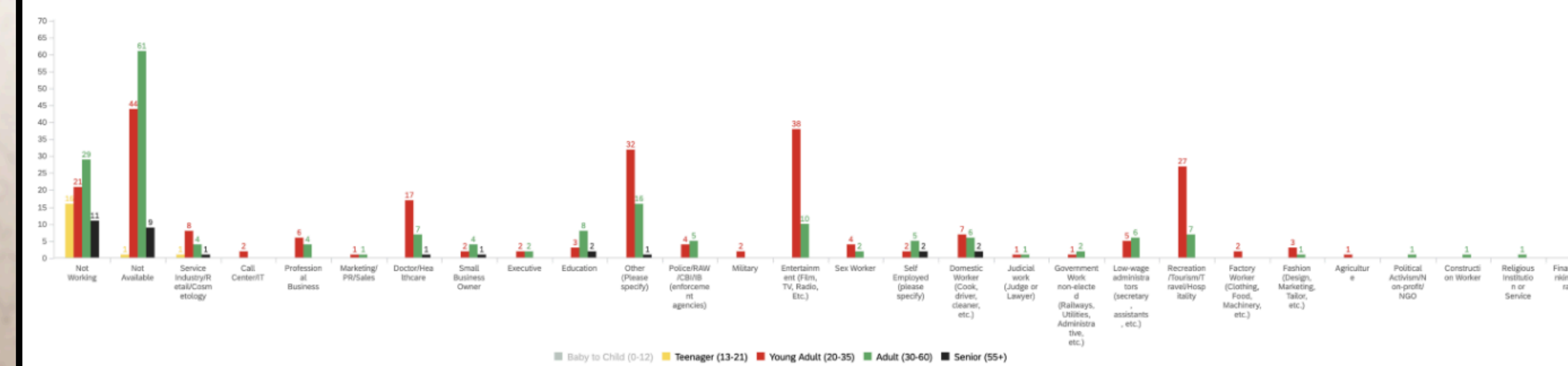


Graph 1: Female familial relationships correlated to social class, establishing a feminine hierarchy

Number of Colleagues/Employees/Employers By Class



Graph 2: Non-familial female relationships correlated to social class, establishing a feminine hierarchy in professions



Graph 3: Employment by Age of all female characters illustrating trends of professions absorbed by younger generations

## Discussion

Our graph data suggests a clear generational shift in the presentation of female characters in Bollywood cinema. Younger generations are shifting towards higher-frequency professional and high-status occupations, while their elder counterparts are more closely resembling non-working or familial roles. This supports our hypothesis that youth has become linked to modernity and professional identity across the realm of female archetypes.

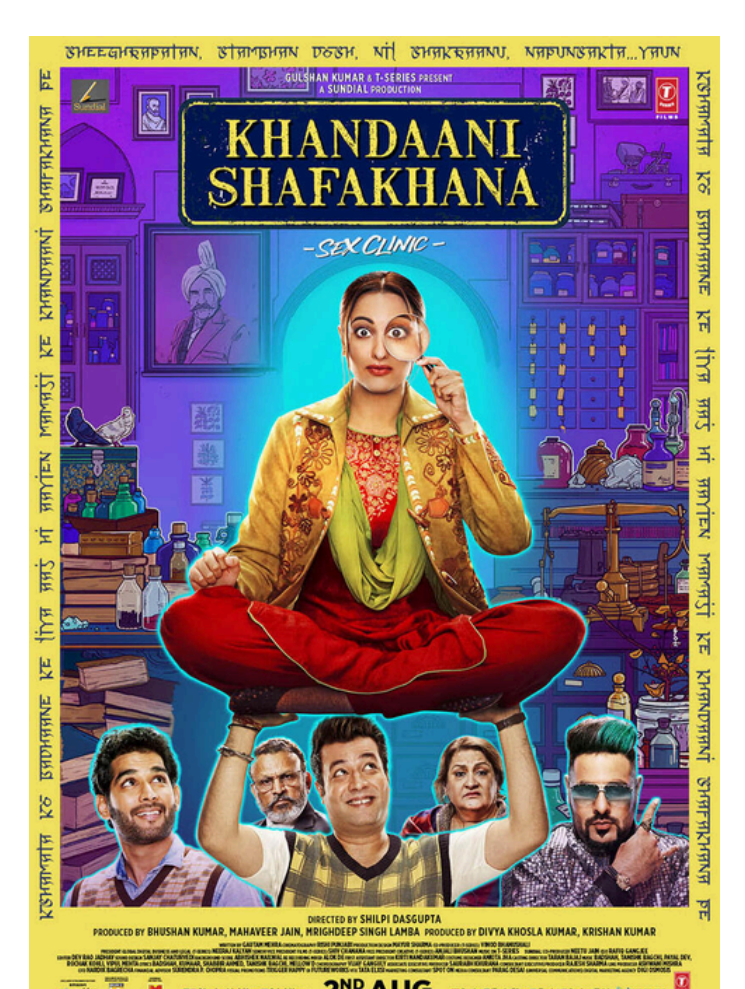
In the same breadth, class plays a predominant role in morphing such portrayals. Higher-class and upper-middle-class characters show a visible trend of professional networks as well as greater social interactions, whereas middle and lower-class trends emphasize familial relations much more. Overall, age and class influence how feminine constructs are emphasized, capitalizing on higher-class women as the most strongly represented group in trends.

Additionally, the frequency of family relationships is inversely proportional to social class. As class goes down, family relationships increase. Lower-class characters are more often portrayed as family-centered, creating a suggestion of identities pertaining to familial and domestic concerns. This pattern has an undertone that class shapes the family dynamics of female characterization.

## Future Research

- Survey male characters by female directors
- Survey female characters by male directors
- Survey male characters by male directors

## Surveyed Movies



## References

