

The Portrayal of Women in Female-directed Bollywood Films

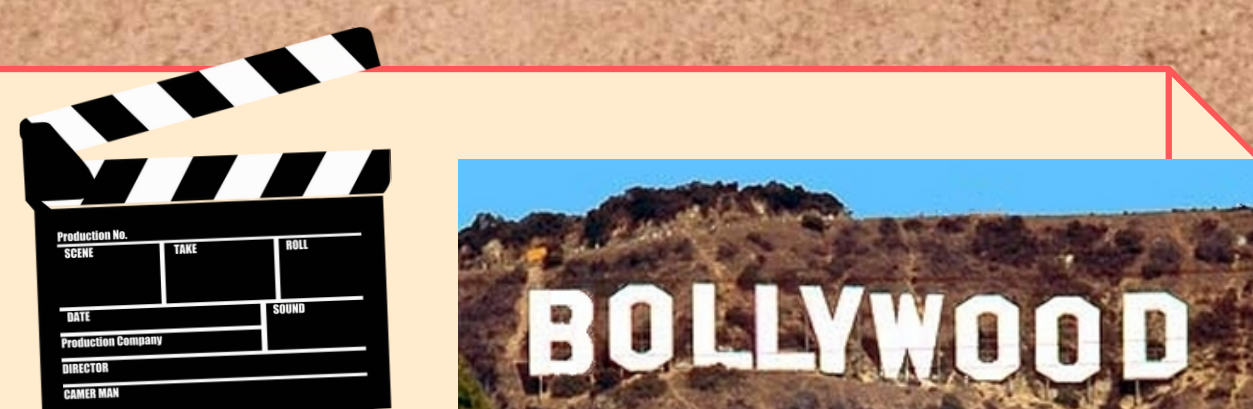


Brianna Morales, Alexandra Feng, Francesca Carravetta & Rebecca Peters



The Florida State University, Department of Religion

Background



Bollywood films are a popular form of entertainment in India. Producers and directors are recognized all over the world and their films reach places other than India. Our research project analyzes the portrayal of women characters in female-directed Bollywood films. We take into account how Indian cultural contexts differ when analyzing the roles of women. The Bollywood film industry is predominantly patriarchal, male-dominated, and oftentimes views women in society through the male gaze. Many female characters in Bollywood films were created to fit into these paradigmatic social norms. We collected data through watching a series of films and completing surveys analyzing the films. While our results are not finalized, we have noticed patterns depending on the time the film was produced and where the film takes place.

Bollywood Movie Trailer QR Codes



Bewoofiyaan (2014) *A Death in the Gunj* (2016) *Raazi* (2018)

Discussion



Comparing the results to our hypothesis, we can see that women directors affect the representation of women in films. As the films were more recently made, the number of women in the films increased, as well as their exposure of skin, clothing, hair designs, personality towards confrontational situations, and their willingness to go against the usual societal standards and norms. This is extremely significant because women now are becoming leaders by being directors and changing the ways women are perceived to act in a patriarchal society.

This research has allowed us to see that women need their independence and advocacy especially in films where women are presented as inferior to men. Qualitative data was collected through surveys and through objective questions. We are still in the preliminary stages so we do not have cohesive results at the moment. However, this research contributes to the conversation about women's need for independence.

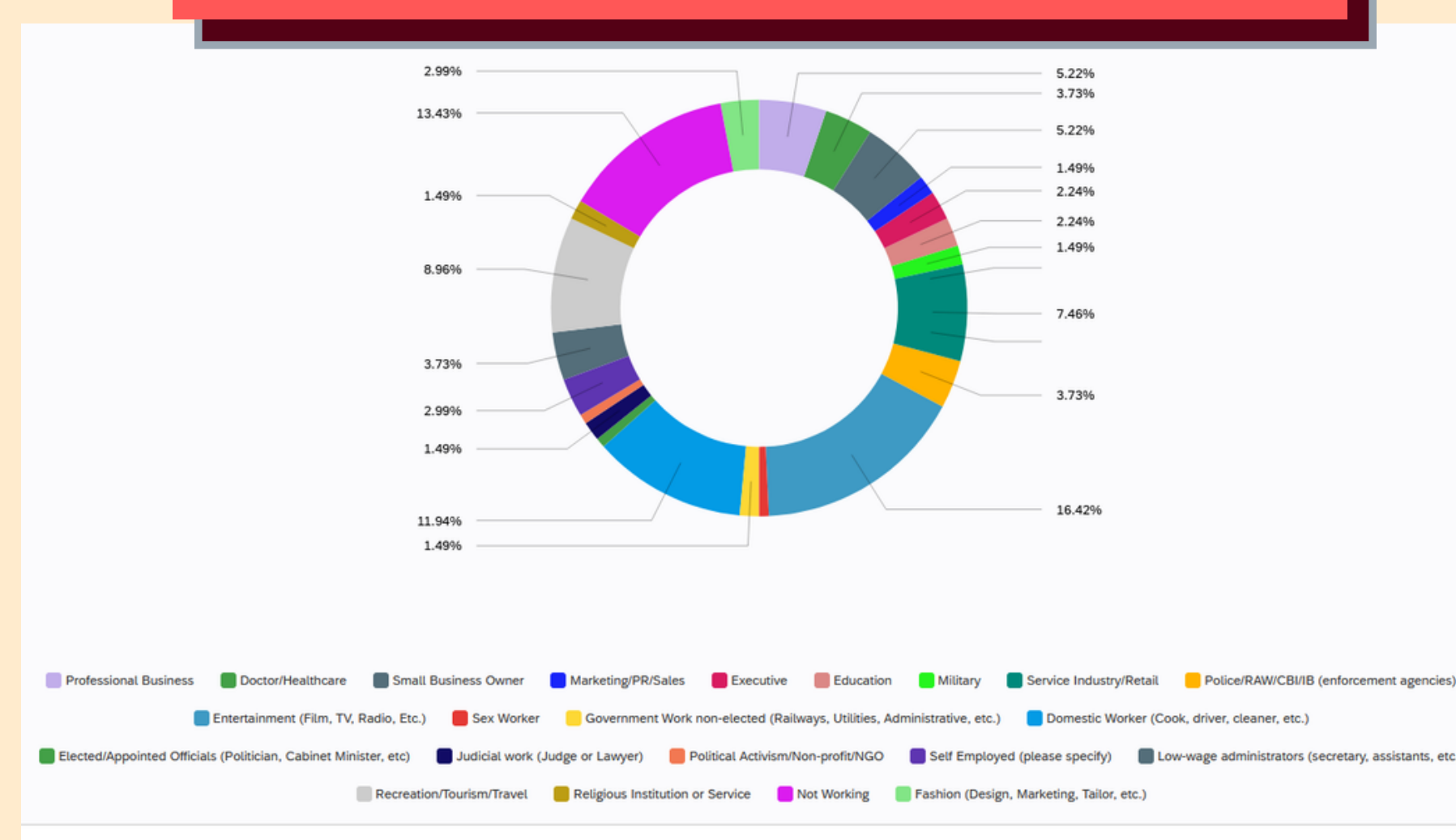
Methods



- We selected Hindi films directed by women.
- We watched and analysed these films.
- Used film coding to mark every time we saw specific qualities in the film (such as):
 - Women's attire
 - Women's accessories
 - Women's responses to social situations
 - Women's role in film
 - Women's relationships
- Collected all information in a Qualtrics survey.
- Compared survey results between researchers.
- Generated master list of survey results.

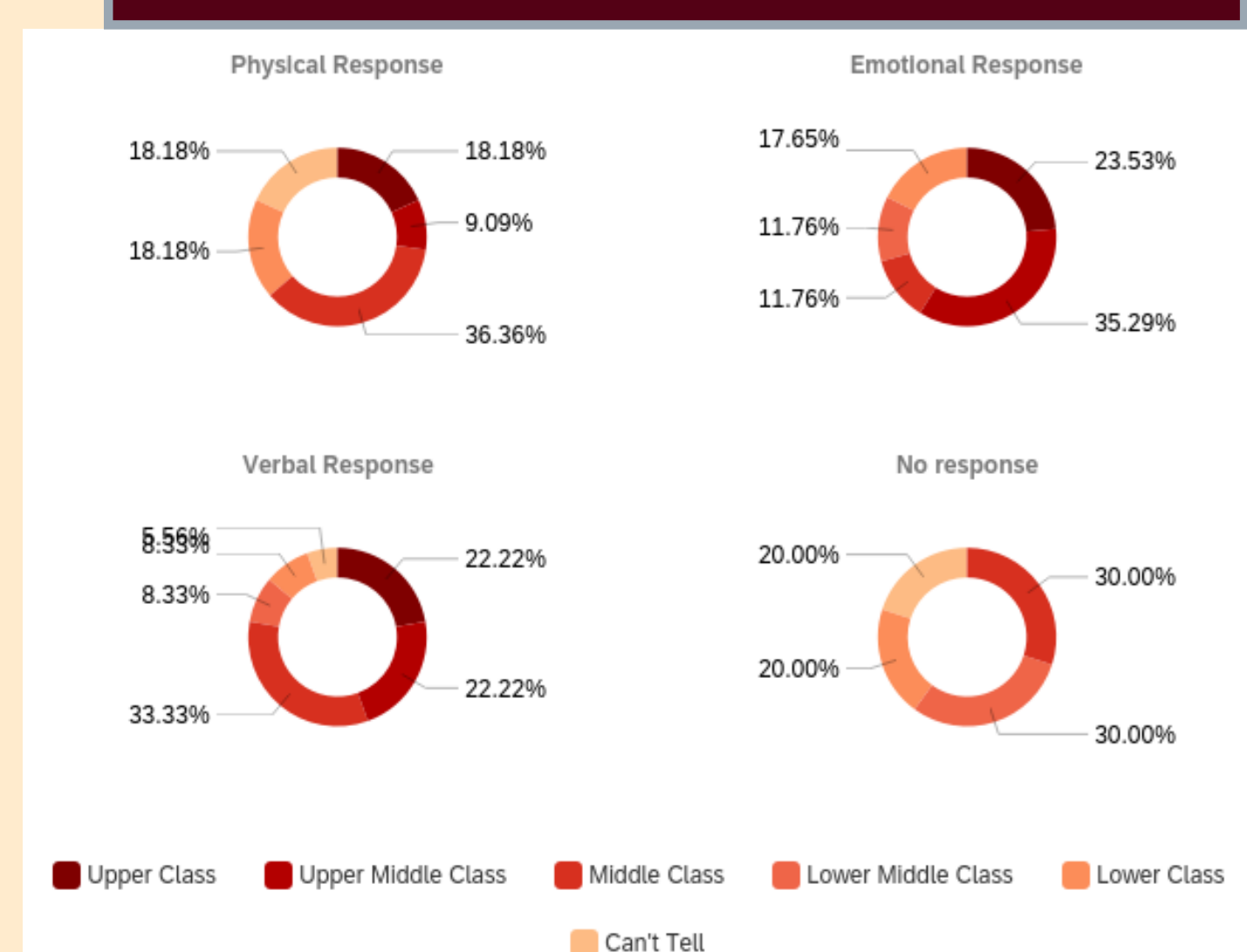
Preliminary Results

Breakdown of Occupation of Women Characters



There are a wide range of occupations of working women which goes against expectations of women as housewives.

Confrontation According to Social Class



The lower class are presented as being restricted in how they respond, and most do not respond. None show a verbal or emotional response, most show a physical response. The upper class always responds in all forms: physical, verbal, and emotional because they are privileged.



"Mimi," *A Death in the Gunj* (2016)



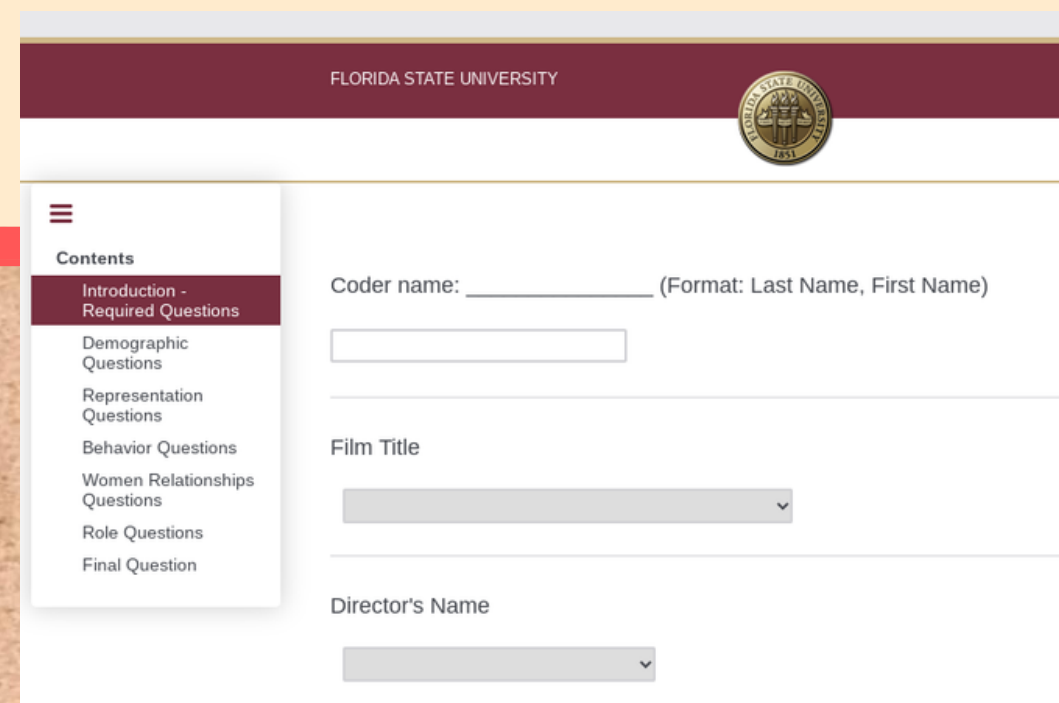
"Mayera," *Bewoofiyaan* (2014)



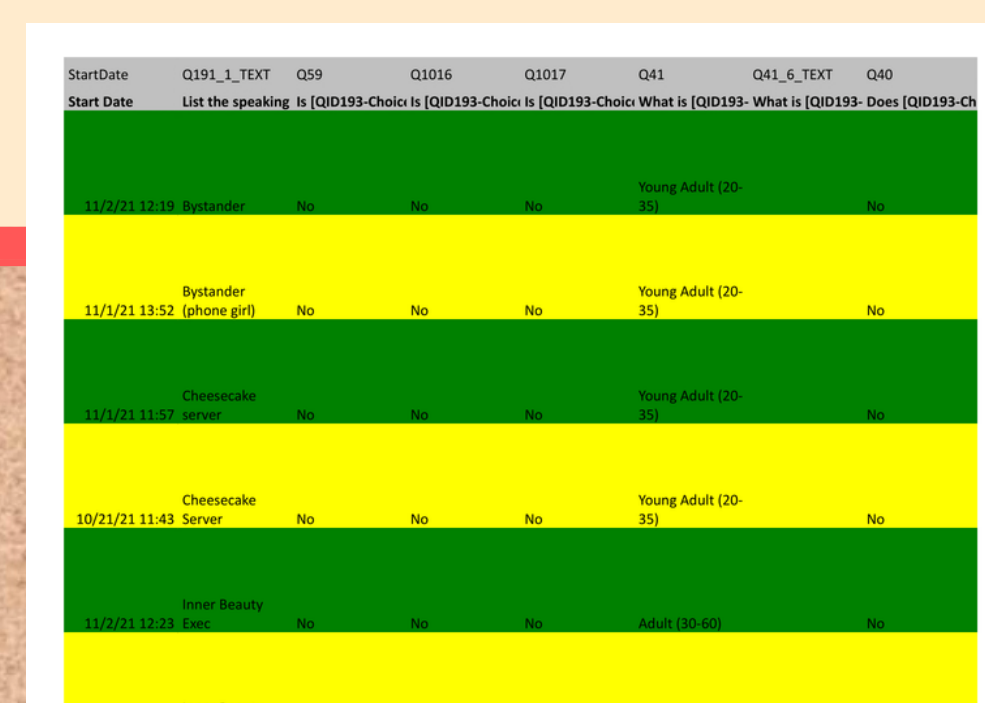
"Shmat," *Raazi* (2018)

References

- Alter, Stephen. *Fantasies of a Bollywood love thief: Inside the World of Indian Moviemaking*. Orlando, Flor: Harcourt, Inc., 2007.
- Bielby, Denise D. "Gender Inequality in Culture Industries: Women and Men Writers in Film and Television" *Sociologie du travail*, vol. 51, no. 2, 2009: 237–252. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/41931423.
- Dwyer, Rachel. "Bollywood's India: Hindi Cinema as a Guide to Modern India." *Asian Affairs*, vol. 41, no. 3, Nov. 2010: 381–398. EBSCOhost, doi:10.1080/03068374.2010.508231.
- Khan, Subuhi, and Laramie D Taylor. "Gender Policing in Mainstream Hindi Cinema: A Decade of Central Female Characters in Top-Grossing Bollywood Movies." *International Journal of Communication (Online)* (2018): 3641–3662. Print.



Qualtrics Survey



Survey Results