

Discussion #3: Film and Female Sexualized Content

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With the development of the movie industry, more and more excellent movies are being produced. Watching movies has also become one of the common forms of entertainment, so it is easy for people to be exposed to messages with specific meanings. The movie industry often depicts women in a sexualized way, and this depiction can have a huge negative impact on women. These movies reinforce stereotypes about women and undermine women as citizens.

I watched the trailer for *The Suicide Squad*, a movie about a group of top criminals who are summoned to join a task force called the "Suicide Squad" to fight against alien creatures and keep the world safe. These criminals are all unique and each one of them is a capable fighter. There are a lot of mature elements in this trailer, violence, sex, etc. My focus is on the characterization of Harleen Quinn from *Suicide Squad*, who is the main female protagonist in the squad. In the trailer, she is dressed in a revealing outfit of fishnet stockings and super short shorts, which contrasts with the conservative dress of the other characters. In just three minutes of the trailer, there are four obvious scenes with sexual overtones. Examples include Harleen Quinn licking a cage, and her walking and fighting in her super short pants. I have watched the full movie and in re-watching the trailer, my feeling about Harleen Quinn is that she is a capable, sexy, crazy woman. I am also affected by female characters in movies because they are both extremely well endowed and capable at the same time. It's starting to make me think that sexiness and competence are related, that they're more competent because they're beautiful, and yet competence has practically nothing to do with sex at all. Aside from this movie, many movies are biased against women, showing them on screen in revealing clothing as accessories to men. Hornaday states in his article that since the beginning of movies, women have been reduced to hyper-sexualized objects, almost as an unconscious law that is constantly followed (Hornaday, 2022). This law suggests that the male is the subject, and the female is marginalized as an object to be consumed. The beautiful

young girls on the screen and their behavior subconsciously influence the way women are viewed, and women are seen as an object rather than whole people (Foster, 2023).

All these contents undoubtedly reflect the fact that the audience for these movies is the male consumer, and the male perspective seems to have become widely dominant in all kinds of media. The pornographic content represents the devaluation of women's role in media (Lynch, 2023). The revealing clothing and sexualized action on screen reinforce the stereotypes associated with women. Pennell and Behm-Morawitz argue that "women in U.S. action films are often exploited, using only their sexuality as the focus of their characters" (Pennell & Behm-Morawitz, 2015). Women are often portrayed as overly sexualized, with full breasts and hips, and extremely thin waists. This can cause women to begin to look at themselves, even though these characterizations often reflect extreme situations. Men also begin to think that women are supposed to be objects of male pleasure, subordinate beings. These recurring elements degrade the status and rights of women in society, as they are often treated like objects.

This content also has a huge impact on children, who are increasingly exposed to overly sexualized content, which can be toxic for children. Children tend to unconsciously mimic what they see, and this content can have an impact on their cognition. It has been found that sexualizing girls may lead to impaired cognition and a range of mental health problems (Jensen, 2010). Society needs to deliver content to children to help them come to a positive perception of sexuality. That is why media literacy is very important for adolescents; it is a preventive way to help adolescents filter these messages. It is believed that schools are a good space for information literacy to help children to differentiate content through education (Leyn, et al., 2022). Parents need to be able to accompany their children in navigating the content they watch before they have developed full awareness, even if it blocks sexualized content.

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