Action, Romance, or Science Fiction: Your Favorite Movie Genre May Affect Your Communication

Amy Capwell Burns

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This study evaluated nonverbal communication behaviors between opposite-sex characters to assess whether the top moneymaking films are portraying stereotypical sex differences in communication. A focus on genre similarities and differences was used for conclusions. The results of the study demonstrated that four of the variables assessed did reinforce the stereotypical behaviors observed in naturally occurring conversations and most of the nonverbal behaviors differed across genres. The final conclusion was that some genres do play a part in the perpetuation and reinforcement of stereotypical nonverbal behaviors.

Dr. Capwell Burns is an Assistant Professor of Communication at the University of Toledo. She researches interpersonal communication in the areas of film, organizations and the family unit. amy.capwellburns@utoledo.edu

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| Greenlaw: Tyne: Greenlaw: Tyne: | "Your guys are loading bait and groceries. You doin' a turn around?" "No rest for the weary." "There you go, flaunting your work ethic." "I don't have a work ethic. I just have work, if I want to catch up with you." | | | | |
|--|---|--|--|--|--|
| Greenlaw: | "I love to watch you study charts." | | | | |
| Tyne: | "Why?" | | | | |
| Greenlaw: | "Because you know them all by heart." | | | | |
| Tyne: | "What's so special about today that you're blowing smoke up my ass?" | | | | |
| Greenlaw: | "I thought I'd make a pass." | | | | |
| [They both laugh.] | | | | | |
| Greenlaw: | "No, you see, Captain, I'm looking for a guy to come home to Maine with me, buy a house and raise a few kids." | | | | |
| Tyne: | "And what does that guy and you do afterward?" | | | | |
| Greenlaw: | "Oh come on. I'm happy. I'm happy I'm fit to do this. I just don't see the romance in it." | | | | |
| Tyne: | "But you've got it, Captain Greenlaw. You do, believe me. I've seen them come and go, but the day I laid eyes on you I said to myself, 'She's gonna be a good one.' Can't be good unless you love it" | | | | |

The previous scene is from the movie *The Perfect Storm* (Levinson & Henderson & Petersen, 2000). The two characters are captains on two different sword boats. Captain Billy Tyne is male and Captain Linda Greenlaw is female. They have both just come in with their catches for the season. She has had a record catch and is praised by everyone for her crew's take. He has had one of the worst catches ever and is ridiculed by everyone for his shortcomings. Feeling competitive because of the comparison between him and Greenlaw, Tyne has decided to go back out again in one of the most dangerous areas and at one of the most dangerous times to prove that he is capable of making a large catch of fish. This scene follows his decision to make the second trip.

In the scene Greenlaw discusses the potential for a relationship and settling down. Tyne, feeling he must prove himself, approaches her as a competitor and focuses on the beauty of their career and success within it. Through their dialogue, she appears to be relationship-oriented and he appears to be career-oriented. His feelings of competitiveness toward her reflect a very masculine perspective (Bate, 1988; Gottman, 1994). And although Greenlaw's profession is stereotypically masculine, that of a swordfish captain, her focus on life beyond career, specifically lasting relationships, reflects a very feminine perspective (Bate, 1988; Gottman, 1994).

The previous scene is much like many scenes in popular movies today that depict women and men in culturally stereotypical ways. The male characters tend to be strong, independent, in control, and task-oriented. The female characters tend to be emotional and relationship-oriented, focused on love and family. The characters in these films appear to have very stereotypically gender related traits and approach their interpersonal relationships in very stereotypically sex-related ways (Bate, 1988; Burleson, et. al., 1996; Gottman, 1994). Although this is a very casual look at this particular film, one can still see how it reflects some of the gender differences in approaches to interpersonal relationships documented in research on real relationships. This real life research reveals that men's communication is task-oriented and demonstrates independence, assertiveness, power, competence, and efficiency. Men are stereotypically more concerned with solving problems, offering suggestions, and giving information (Bate, 1988; Burleson et al., 1996; Gottman, 1994; Kim & Bresnahan, 1996; Watson, et. al., 1995). In contrast, the research reveals that women's communication is relationship-oriented and focuses on asking questions, encouraging, connecting, supporting, empathizing, and establishing emotional closeness (Bate, 1988; Burleson et. al. 1996; Gottman, 1994; Ivey & Yaktus, 1996; Kim & Bresnahan, 1996).

This study used a narrative analysis to describe the communication between opposite-sex characters in films. Specifically, it evaluated nonverbal communication behaviors between opposite-sex characters to assess whether the top moneymaking films are portraying stereotypical gender differences in communication. In other words, do the male characters in the films use communication behaviors deemed masculine according to research in naturally occurring interaction and do the female characters in the films use communication behaviors deemed feminine according to research in naturally occurring interaction? This comparison was done to determine whether or not films represent and therefore help to reinforce and perpetuate gender differences in communication.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine whether or not the top moneymaking films seen by large numbers of people portray and perpetuate stereotypical gender differences in nonverbal communication, based on genre. The gender differences that exist in everyday interaction determine who receives and maintains power, and with power, status and control. Traditional beliefs in our culture view males as dominant and females as subordinate (Riesman, 1990). The characteristics of communication that are labeled masculine tend to demonstrate a power focus, characterized by assertion, control, and domination of others (Bate, 1988; Burleson et al., 1996; Campbell, 1993; Gottman, 1994; Johnson, 1994; Kim & Bresnahan, 1996; Watson et al., 1995). The characteristics that are labeled feminine tend to demonstrate a relational focus, characterized by cooperativeness, emotional connection, and inclusion (Bate, 1988; Burleson et al., 1996; Campbell, 1993; Gottman, 1994; Ivey & Yaktus, 1996; Johnson, 1996; Kim & Bresnahan, 1996). These female traits are often seen as less important. The fact that these gender differences exist and that those labeled masculine are seen as more powerful and controlling, giving more status to men, creates a large disadvantage for women in our culture. Women are subordinated by the lack of power and assertiveness displayed in their communication practices. Reinforcing and perpetuating these stereotypes in our culture continues to disadvantage women systematically based solely on their gender.

Rejecting dichotomous thinking by not defining one's communication as masculine or feminine could result in more successful communication for everyone

because this dichotomous thinking prevents people from learning how to communicate using both masculine and feminine types of communication. Our society contains many institutional structures that not only reinforce the binary opposition between man and woman, male and female, but also perpetuate it. This study investigated whether one such institutional structure, the Hollywood film industry, portrays communication stereotypes related to biological sex, which have the potential to perpetuate the differences in communication and, therefore, differences in importance and status. Portrayals of stereotypical male and female communication in films might reinforce and solidify those impressions and expectations of what it means to be male and female for the audiences viewing these films. The fact that different audiences see different genres of films inspired this assessment to include genre as one of the primary variables.

Rationale

Communication behavior portrayed in the media has the potential to influence viewers' beliefs about communication within a culture. Janis (1980) discussed the potential for media to reinforce viewers' beliefs, whether consciously or unconsciously, saying that some avenues of media provide models of social actions that viewers use to determine their own actions. Payne (2001) more specifically, suggested that media representations of men and women "contribute to the creation, maintenance, or change" of stereotypical social definitions of gender (p. 163). The assumption that portrayals in media are close representations of people and their actions provided the motivation for this study. Analyzing the fictional male-female communication that takes place in films was the first step in determining whether or not the portrayals of communication between the sexes are stereotypical, and therefore potentially reinforcing and perpetuating those differences in viewers' eyes. Taking it a step further and assessing those communication behaviors by separating the films into genres provided even more insight, depending on audience orientation.

A great deal of the research on gender differences in the media focuses on differences in images, traits, and characteristics of the men and women portrayed (Beckerman, 2001; Corliss, 2001; Davis, 1990; Hoerrner, 1996; Kang, 1997; Maio, 1991; Simonton, 1995; Tasker, 1998; Taylor, 2001). Not a lot of research analyzes the actual messages produced by the male and female characters. This study examined actual nonverbal messages exchanged by persons in the film. This was based on the communication research on gender differences in naturally occurring conversation that has documented existing gender differences. This research measured gender differences and similarities based on actual nonverbal communication in naturally occurring conversation. This study attempted the creation of a comparable evaluation of gender differences in nonverbal communication as represented in films.

Top moneymaking films were chosen for the study primarily because they are the ones most seen. Throughout history people have used media for entertainment, education, and information. Film is considered to be a medium that primarily entertains, but it may also play a part in education and information beyond the intended scope. hooks (1996) said that films assume a pedagogical role in the lives of their viewers and that filmmakers actually teach audiences lessons about actions and beliefs even if this is not their

intention. With this in mind, this study attempted to determine whether or not the genre of a film affected the portrayals of gender differences in nonverbal communication and therefore the perpetuation and reinforcement of those behaviors.

The films' genres were identified and the results for the films in each genre were compared to see if communication behaviors were portrayed differently across genres. One can only assume that a film in the action genre portrays different behaviors than a film in the comedy genre, especially if that comedy is a romantic one. The fact that films are often made using different target audiences suggests that they would do so in different ways. Also, whether the emphasis of the film is on people taking action and saving the day or people forming and maintaining relationships should have an impact on the nonverbal communication portrayed between characters.

Literature Review

There is very little research on actual nonverbal communication differences as portrayed in films. There is, however, a vast amount of research available on gender stereotypes in portrayals based on critical analyses. These demonstrate differences based on content, messages, and themes. Much of media research, especially that regarding films, demonstrates that how men and women are portrayed is at the root of the stereotypes and interpretations of male and female characters (Grant, 2001; Haskell, 1987; Kaplan, 1983; Kuhn, 1985; 1994; Maio, 1991; Mulvey, 1981, 1989; Payne, 2001; Tasker, 1998). The films portray stereotyped characters in storylines, men and women acting masculine and feminine respectively. Seiter (1986) argued that films must use these stereotypes because they have a descriptive or cognitive dimension to them that allows people in our society to understand textual aspects and cultural artifacts. According to Seiter, all stereotypes have ideological, evaluative dimensions that cause the audience to relate and then reinforce their perceptions of men and women leading to the reinforcement and perpetuation of these stereotypical portrayals.

Past critical studies in the area of gender representations demonstrate themes and portrayals that delineate masculine and feminine. Scholars noted that female characters are most often defined through and in relation to male characters (Kaplan, 1983; Kuhn, 1988; Mulvey, 1981, 1989). Empirical analyses have demonstrated that the media reinforce stereotypical images of men as tough, independent, aggressive, and in control at all times and women as dependent, polite, and beautiful (Davis, 1990; Hoerrner, 1996; Kang, 1997). Most films that are targeted at female audiences emphasize feelings, bonding, romance, and lots of conversation (Beckerman, 2001). For male characters it is a "save the day" type of attitude, but for women it is a "need to be understood" attitude (Beckerman, 2001, p. YT1). Past scholars have asserted that communication between men and women is like that of people from different cultures (Bate, 1988; Bruess & Pearson, 1996; Johnson, 1989). For the most part, these scholars see men and women as having the same general means of communication, but believe their experiences as male and female create different ways of interpreting general concepts, beliefs, behavioral expectations, and verbal and nonverbal symbols, which affects their communication behavior.

Nonverbal behavior is contextually and culturally bound and must be interpreted based on those factors. Culture, especially, plays an important role in the interpretation of communication behaviors. Because different cultures emphasize and encourage different interpretations and responses to the same situations, this particular study was restricted to nonverbal communication practices employed in the United States, more specifically by the dominant white majority in the United States. Nonverbal communication includes all of those factors in the communication process that are not the actual words. Nonverbal communication is communication without language. Nonverbal cues aid people in creating meaning in interactions (Berry & Zebrowitz-McArthur, 1988; Burgoon, 1994). They reinforce, replace, or contradict verbal communication to enhance the message being sent (Bate, 1988). Nonverbal communication is used for emotional expression, impression formation and identity management, deception, conversation management, and sending relational messages (Berry & Zebrowitz-McArthur, 1988; Burgoon, 1994). Burgoon (1994) described nonverbal communication as the "lubricant that keeps the conversation machine well-oiled" (p.268). Nonverbal communication is an important aspect of the communication process and must be considered if the entire message is to be interpreted and understood. This study considered the following aspects of nonverbal communication: smiling and eye contact, kinesics, proxemics, and paralanguage. The reason each of these were chosen for the analysis is because they are the areas of nonverbal communication in which research in naturally occurring conversation has indicated gender differences in communication.

Film Genre

An analysis of the films by genre attempted to determine if representations of nonverbal communication behaviors differed depending on the scope, purpose, and intended audience. This analysis was based on the theory that the films differ in communication depending on whom they are directed toward. This study relied on five genres: action adventure, comedy, drama, horror, and science fiction. Arguably there are other genres in the film industry, but these five tend to be the most prominent in the genre research and encompass all of the movies used for this study.

The Five Genres

The action adventure film contains formulas and components that include the concepts of right and wrong, good "guys" and bad "guys," physical action, fights, chases, explosions, state-of-the-art special effects, an emphasis on performance and athletic feats and stunts, and heroes overcoming obstacles and dangers to accomplish an important and moral mission (Cawelti, 1976; Neale, 2000; T. Sobchack, 1988; Troy, 1992). Some scholars believe the action adventure genre provides certain perks and rewards to their audiences, including a cathartic feeling caused by swift justice and a moral victory, sexual sensation caused by the ebb and flow of excitement that builds and finally is released at the end, stimulation and reward through action and effects, and inspiration through the heroes (Dyer, 1994; Tasker, 1998; Troy, 1992).

Comedy includes two types, the screwball/romantic comedy and the clown comedy (Gehring, 1988a, 1988b). The screwball comedy, which emerged around 1934, contained a battle of the sexes in which an eccentric, free-spirited, zany, and liberated

female pursued an unknowing, less assertive, easily frustrated male who was exposed and ridiculed (Gehring, 1988b, Harvey, 1987; Kaminsky, 1985; Schatz, 1981). What we now know as the romantic comedy developed out of the screwball comedy of the 30s and 40s (Shumway, 1995). A romantic comedy is a film focused on a romantic relationship, with characters overcoming problems by either submitting to or rejecting love, which portrays the struggle for supremacy and status between men and women (Gehring, 1988b; Henderson, 1986; Kaminsky, 1985; Mernit, 2000, Potter, 2002).

The second type of comedy, the clown comedy, contains a comic figure or figures around whom the storyline, often weak, revolves (Gehring, 1988a). Physical and visual comedy plays a large part in this type of comedy. According to Gehring, these films often contain "team" interactions. A single clown often uses another character, usually a very straight, focused individual to bounce his/her humor off. These are often seen in films containing duos, such as crime/cop comedies and road comedies.

Dramas focus on the plot and the script, focusing on the concern with situation and plot (Elsaesser, 1995; Williams, 1998). Drama allows viewers to feel sympathy and provides a therapeutic effect through the protagonists' overcoming powerful forces that make them victims (Lipkin, 1988; Williams, 1998). Drama is a serious genre that includes tragedy in some aspect, conveys moral value through emotion, and whose story is told through the dialogue that demonstrates and portrays relationships (Doane, 1998; Elsaesser, 1995; Lipkin, 1988, Williams, 1998).

Horror films are politically charged and contain nature versus materialism and rural versus urban themes that allow viewers to experience repressed political and social discontent (Kawin, 1995; Wood, 1988). Horror films are oriented to the youth market who attend them to see their peers terrified (Sanjek, 2000; Tudor, 2002).

Science fiction addresses the conscious rather than the unconscious, speculating on technology, gimmicks, and the perfectible future and relying on society's anxiety about technology and its growth and potential for destruction with the possibility of no future (Kaminsky, 1985; Kawin, 1995; Tarratt, 1995). One of the most common themes in science fiction films is that humans are their own worst enemy (Kaminsky, 1985; V. Sobchack, 1988). The fact that each genre has a different focus and purpose might change the way people communicate with each other. Action adventure films focus on activity, saving the day, and effects. Comedies and dramas focus on relationships and plots, although in different ways, with laughter and emotion respectively. And horror and science fiction films focus on fear, again in different ways, through fear of the unexpected and fear of the future respectively. Because the emphasis for each genre is on different aspects, one might assume the communication behavior would be different as well. The previous research prompted the following research questions:

- **RQ1** Are characters' nonverbal communication behaviors portrayed differently across genres?
- **RQ2** Is the orientation of the film (i.e., the genre it belongs to) more or less likely

to perpetuate and reinforce gender stereotyped nonverbal behaviors?

Methods

Narrative analysis is analysis of a story that focuses on how components are used. As in content analysis, after transcription, narratives may be coded according to categories deemed theoretically important by the researcher. This study employed narrative analysis to categorize nonverbal communication behaviors, using the information contained in the literature review, found in 25 top money making films. A list of potential films was acquired from the IMDb.com website (IMDb, n.d.). The website lists the top 10 highest grossing movies at the box office in the United States and the top 50 video rentals in the United States for each year. The two categories were used to compile a list of movies, released between 1996 and 2000, from which a random sample was drawn. This time was selected because it was a vital period for the film industry breaking the 100 hundred million dollar mark for movie budgets and when movie attendance began to improve from an all time low in the early nineties. All movies that appeared on both the top 10 highest grossing box office lists and the top 50 rental lists from each year were considered. A random sample of five movies was chosen from the years, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, and 2000. Those films that were eliminated from the study included animated movies because they do not have clear nonverbal behaviors between humans, all movies containing fewer than two adults (i.e., 18 years or older), and movies with only one sex of characters.

The films were put into one of five primary film genres. These five genres were determined based on the films included in the study. In other words, genres were determined by the sample of films and the genres they fit into based on definition given in the literature review. Some of the films fit into at least two of the genres identified for the study. For each film, the genre description that most described the plot and action in the films was designated as its primary genre. For movies that could have easily fit into more than one genre, secondary genres were also identified. The following table can be found in the appendix, table 1 identifies primary and secondary genres for each of the films in the study.

| | | Genre | | | | |
|-------------------------|-----------|-------|------|-------|---------|--|
| Films | Ac | С | D | ł | S | |
| | tion | omedy | rama | orror | cience | |
| | adventure | - | | | fiction | |
| The Perfect Storm | Р | | S | | | |
| What Women Want | | Р | | | | |
| Cast Away | S | | Р | | | |
| Meet the Parents | | Р | | | | |
| What Lies Beneath | | | S | F | | |
| The Mummy | S | | | F | | |
| Runaway Bride | | Р | | | | |
| The Matrix | S | | | | 1 | |
| The Sixth Sense | | | S | F | | |
| The Blair Witch Project | | | S | F | | |
| Rush Hour | Р | S | | | | |
| The Waterboy | | Р | | | | |
| Saving Private Ryan | Р | | S | | | |
| Patch Adams | | | Р | | | |
| There's Something | | Р | | | | |
| About Mary | | | | | | |
| Face/Off | Р | | S | | | |
| Liar Liar | | Р | | | | |
| Good Will Hunting | | | Р | | | |
| My Best Friend's | | Р | | | | |
| Wedding | | | | | | |
| Men In Black | S | S | | | I | |
| The Nutty Professor | | Р | | | | |
| The Birdcage | | Р | | | | |
| Ransom | | | Р | | | |
| Jerry Maguire | | S | Р | | | |
| Independence Day | S | | S | |] | |

Films Classified by Primary and Secondary Genre

Note: Primary genres are indicated by a P and secondary genres are indicated by an S.

Results/Discussion

To answer research question one, 10 genre pairs were compared. The nonverbal communication behaviors that differed considerably across genres included number of smiles, number of smiles reciprocated, duration of eye contact, posture, frequency of gestures, invasion of space, and pitch.

Genre differences

In the portrayal of nonverbal behaviors, action adventure films differed from dramas on the largest number of nonverbal communication behaviors. They were different for five of the communication behaviors: number of smiles, eye contact duration, posture, invasion, and pitch. That means only number of smiles reciprocated and number of gestures were not different between action films and dramas. Of the four films identified as having a primary genre of action adventure, three have a secondary genre of drama (e.g., *The Perfect Storm, Saving Private Ryan, Face/Off*). It is very interesting that three of the four films in the study that represent the action adventure genre would also represent the drama genre, but that the portrayal of communication behaviors in these films was different. Apparently, even though these films contain a dramatic story line, the emphasis on action and visual effects separates them from the true dramas. One can only assume that the main reason these two genres are so different is because the first, action adventure, relies on fights, chases, effects, violence, and an ebb and flow of visual display, excitement and movement (Dyer, 1994; Neale, 2000; T. Sobchack, 1988; Tasker, 1998) whereas drama relies on plot/story, psychological and emotional pull, and the story being told through dialogue rather than action (Doane, 1998; Elsaesser, 1995; Lipkin, 1988; Williams, 1998).

Comedies were very different from horror films for five of the communication behaviors as well: number of smiles, number of smiles reciprocated, eye contact, posture, and pitch. The difference in focus for these two genres seems like the most obvious reason for the differences in communication behaviors portrayed in each. Comedies focus on being fast paced with verbal and physical elements that keep the storyline going (Gehring, 1988a; Henderson, 1986; Schatz, 1981). Horror films focus on myths and tragedy based on fear of death and the unknown (Kaminsky, 1985; Kawin, 1995; Wood, 1988). Where comedies tend to be relationship oriented, horror films tend to be psychologically oriented (Kawin, 1995; Merritt 2000; Wood, 1988). This may be the most relevant difference. The relationship orientation of comedies may encourage a different type of communication behavior. An interesting note to add is that many of the newer horror films have added a comedic twist to the storyline. In this study, only *The Mummy* contained any comedy and it was underplayed. If horror films with a comedic twist had been included, the horror and comedy genres might not have been so different.

Representation of Nonverbal Behaviors in Genre

The answer to research question two is that the orientation of the film (i.e., the genre it belongs to) may impact the perpetuation and reinforcement of gender stereotyped nonverbal behaviors. In regard to number of smiles, comedies and dramas had the highest number of smiles per turn. It is somewhat surprising that dramas had as many smiles as comedies even though they are made to encourage deep emotion and sadness and comedies are made to encourage laughter and happiness. But it is less surprising if you look at the fact that comedies and dramas are both relationship driven (Doane, 1998; Gehring, 1988b; Merritt, 2000; Williams, 1998). Both genres rely on the relationships between the characters to drive the plot. Because of this, it makes sense that both would have the greatest number of smiles per turn included in the dialogue. People are making connections and relating to each other, smiling is a part of that.

In this study, comedies and dramas had the highest number of reciprocated smiles per turn. It makes sense that comedies and dramas had many reciprocated smiles because they each had the highest number of smiles. Reciprocated smiles do not exist without smiles, so they go together. The representation of smiles reciprocated in action films was not too different from the representation in any other genre, falling right in the middle with less than comedies and dramas and more than horror and science fiction films. This may be because they have elements in common with all the other genres. The action films in this study have secondary genres of drama (e.g., *The Perfect Storm, Saving Private Ryan, Face/Off*) and comedy (e.g., *Rush Hour*) so it makes sense that they were not incredibly different from those. And they are similar to horror and science fiction films in having an emphasis on conflict and survival. These elements may all play into action films being similar to all of the other genres in representation of reciprocated smiles.

Action films had the longest duration of eye contact per turn and horror films had the shortest duration of eye contact per turn. The fact that action films contain displays of power and intimidation may be why they had the longest duration of eye contact per turn. Those with power or desiring power use more eye contact when speaking and listening (Argyle & Ingham, 1972; Dovidio & Ellyson, 1982; Ellyson et al., 1980; Ellyson et al., 1981; Exline et al., 1975).

The nature of horror films probably explains the lack of eye contact in them. The fact that people are experiencing fear may play a part in not wanting to maintain eye contact for very long. Again, power may play into this since most people who fear others bestow upon them the power. So averting their eyes may have been a sign of subordination to whatever evil they were confronting.

The communication behavior that was portrayed most different across genre pairs was posture. The action and comedy genres were similar to each other in their low occurrence of closed body posture. And the drama and science fiction genres were similar to each other in their high occurrence of the closed posture. The other eight genre pairs demonstrated notable differences between them in the portrayal of this variable. The closed posture was presented less in horror films than dramas or science fiction films and more in horror films than action films and comedies. This means that the horror films were unique in their representation of closed posture. This may be because horror films use mythic presentations and focus on people's worst nightmares, where their fears of the unknown and unthinkable, come to life (Kaminsky, 1985; Kawin, 1995; Wood, 1988).

Science fiction films had the lowest number of gestures per turn. The reason science fiction films had the least amount of gestures per turn is not entirely clear. One possible reason for this may be the use of technology in science fiction films. These films use technology, and people's fear and anxiety regarding technology, to tell the story (Kawin, 1995; V. Sobchack, 1988; Tarratt, 1995). Their focus on the use of technology may have inhibited expression through hand and arm motions.

Action films had one of the greatest numbers of invasions of space per turn. The number of invasions in action films was greater than in comedies, dramas, and horror films, but not more than in science fiction films. The fact that action films had one of the greatest numbers of invasions of space per turn may again relate to the power issue. As noted with eye contact, action films contain fights, violence, and heroes (Browne et al. 1972; Dyer, 1994; Neale, 2000; T. Sobchack, 1988). Invading someone else's space can be a show of intimidation, which may have been used in these action films to win the

fight and save the day. The fact that all three of the science fiction films assessed in this study had action as their secondary genre (e.g., *The Matrix, Men in Black, Independence Day*) may be the reason these films, at least in this study, did not have significantly less instances of invasions of space.

The use of high pitch in comedies was greater than all other genres. The considerable amount of high pitch per turn used in comedies is probably due more to the actors than the plot lines. Actors like Jim Carey, Eddie Murphy, Robin Williams, Julie Roberts, and Cameron Diaz tended to be very animated in their acting. With the physical animation, often the pitch of their voices rose as well. Comedies contain high energy, demonstrated through verbal and physical antics (Gehring, 1988a; Kaminsky, 1985; Schatz, 1981). This energy may have played a part in the greater use of high pitches.

Summary

The representations of nonverbal communication behaviors did differ across genres. The genre the film belonged to played a part in the portrayal of most of the behaviors. There may be many different reasons for this, but the fact remains that the genre of a film an audience member is watching may either reinforce or break stereotypes for communication. The genre of the film may have an influence on our communication behaviors. So the representations provided in each genre will most affect those watching that particular genre. Since each genre is made with a specific type of audience in mind, people may be learning our communication behaviors based on the type of genre we enjoy watching. If movies are portraying stereotypical gender differences in nonverbal communication, then they are reinforcing and perpetuating them in a way that could be disadvantageous to the viewers. Society should try to eliminate the dichotomy that exists between men and women so that communication can be more successful for everyone. When the media or any other source perpetuates the dichotomy and reinforces it, it is hurting people by sustaining that division between men and women.

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