

2010 GRID  
FILM STUDY

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## 2010 GRID HOLLYWOOD MOVIE STUDY

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The American movie industry influences millions of people in the U.S. and abroad. The movie industry is wildly lucrative, and incredibly powerful. These movies have the ability to make people believe that what is on screen is normal. Also, movies usually have a product or idea to sell to the audience, and they have the capabilities to make people want and need these products and ideas. To understand what the corporate movie industry thinks to be normal life and what ideas or products are being sold, an in-depth study is necessary.

This study examined five distinct areas of movies, the areas are: the racial make-up of the cast, the amount of sexual objectification, the amount of gratuitous violence, the amount of product placement, and how the movie dealt with American foreign and domestic policy.

The study investigated 42 movies released on DVD in the first four months of 2010. The movies are:

2012	Post Grad
Armored	Sherlock Holmes
Amelia	Sorority Row
Astro Boy	Surrogates
A Serious Man	The Blind Side
Avatar	The Box
Bitch Slap	The Final Destination
Black Dynamite	The Hurt Locker
Cloudy With a Chance of Meatballs	The Informant!
Couples Retreat	The Invention of Lying
Crazy Heart	The Lovely Bones
Did You Hear About the Morgans?	The Men Who Stare at Goats
Everybody's Fine	The Princess and the Frog
Fantastic Mr. Fox	The Stepfather
Gamer	The Time Travelers Wife
Halloween II	The Twilight Saga: New Moon
Law Abiding Citizen	Tyler Perry's I Can do Bad All by Myself
Ninja Assassin	Up in the Air
Old Dogs	Where the Wild Things Are
Planet 51	Whip It!
Ponyo	Zombieland

## RACIAL AND GENDER MAKE-UP OF THE CAST

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This section of the study looked at who (what race) played what roles, and how the various races and genders were presented to the audience. This section also looked for examples of racism. Racism is any negative comment or portrayal of any minority race. Racism in movies is usually subtle and furthers the notion of white supremacy, with the hopes of normalizing the idea through constant repetition. Prejudices towards whites, though not as common, were also noted. Also, situations that portray physical handicaps in a negative light were considered racism.

The racism in Hollywood movies is not usually in the form of openly racist comments or actions, but is of a more subtle kind. The racism is built in and is not entirely noticed when viewing just one or two movies, but when a large group of movies is studied the racism is evident.

Of the 42 movies studied, 28 (66%) had a white male lead. 36 (85%) contained a white lead, male or female.

The following movies with an asterisk contained a non white lead, and the movies with a double asterisk contained a female lead.

2012	Post Grad **
A Serious Man	Sherlock Holmes
Amelia **	Sorority Row **
Armored*	Surrogates
Astro Boy	The Blind Side*
Avatar	The Box **
Bitch Slap **	The Final Destination
Black Dynamite*	The Hurt Locker
Cloudy With a Chance of Meatballs	The Informant!
Couples Retreat	The Invention of Lying
Crazy Heart	The Lovely Bones **
Did You Hear About the Morgans? **	The Men Who Stare at Goats
Everybody's Fine	The Princess and the Frog* **
Fantastic Mr. Fox	The Stepfather
Gamer	The Time Travelers Wife **
Halloween II **	The Twilight Saga: New Moon
Law Abiding Citizen	Tyler Perry's I Can do Bad All by Myself* **
Ninja Assassin*	Up in the Air
The Princess and the Frog*	Where the Wild Things Are
Old Dogs	Whip It! **
Planet 51	Zombieland
Ponyo**	

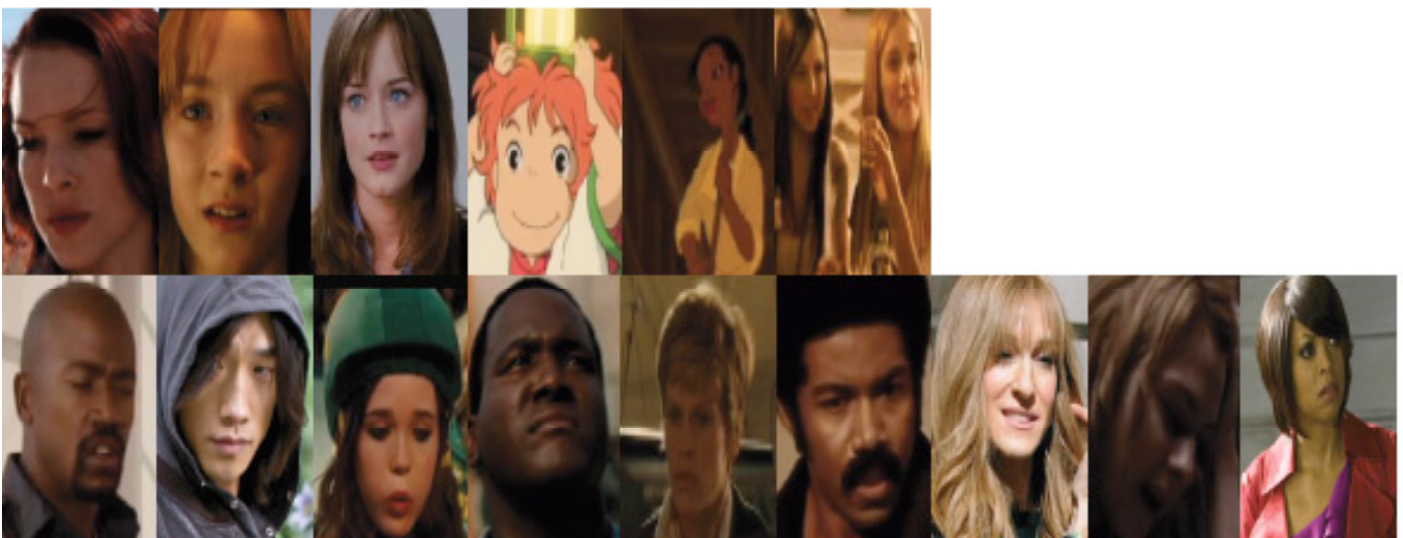
These movies are clearly weighted with white males, and do not paint an accurate picture of the make-up of American diversity, they do however paint an accurate description of the white-male dominated movie industry.

# White Male Leads



Versus

# Non-White Male Leads



## Examples and Highlights:

*The Men Who Stare at Goats*: the only movie studied which contained any Arab characters, and not surprisingly the characters were terrorists.

*I Can Do Bad all by Myself*: This movie contains almost entirely minority cast and crew. While this movie may have been intended to give minorities a better opportunity to be in a Hollywood production, it does nothing to break down the walls of division which so clearly stand in American media. As white dominated movies ostracize minorities, *I Can Do Bad all by Myself* ostracizes whites.



*New Moon* - Like the other films in the Twilight series, *New Moon* promotes racial stereotypes. The Native American characters in the film live in poverty. Quiet often the young male Native characters are seen with their shirts off, thus overemphasizing their physical nature. The Native characters are also prone to become angry and lose their tempers easily. This is in sharp contrast to the White vampires in the film, which are economically well off and with a calm demeanor.



*Surrogates* - In this film the African American police Chief is corrupt and the militant leader of the anti-surrogate community is Black. However, the anti-surrogate Black leader ends up being just a surrogate of a White inventor and is used for political purposes. This is in contrast to the hero, a White cop played by Bruce Willis.



This section of the study examined the movies looking for examples of sexism. Sexism can relate to remarks and situations that cast women in a negative light. The hyper-sexualization of women and their treatment as mere objects are the foremost examples of sexism. Although not as prevalent, sexism can be aimed at men, as they are often shown as egotistical and desiring the objectification of women. Comments and actions which further the traditional ideas of what a woman or a man should be were also considered sexism. The traditional idea of a woman is that she is: beautiful, caring, dependant, etc. The traditional idea for a man is that he is: strong, smart, independent, etc. Sexism also relates to negative comments about lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender individuals

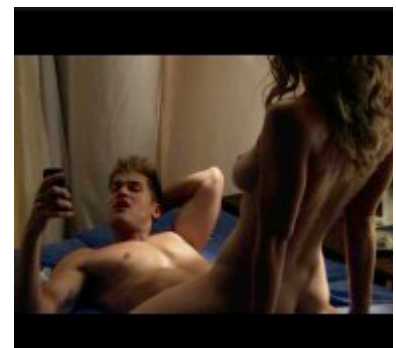
Of 42 movies studied, 10 (23%) contained scenes or situations which can be considered sexual objectification. All of this was the objectification of women.

The following movies with an asterisk contained scenes of sexual objectification:

2012	Post Grad
A Serious Man	Sherlock Holmes
Amelia	Sorority Row *
Armored	Surrogates *
Astro Boy	The Blind Side
Avatar	The Box
Bitch Slap*	The Final Destination*
Black Dynamite*	The Hurt Locker
Cloudy With a Chance of Meatballs	The Informant!
Couples Retreat *	The Invention of Lying
Crazy Heart	The Lovely Bones
Did You Hear About the Morgans?*	The Men Who Stare at Goats
Everybody's Fine	The Princess and the Frog
Fantastic Mr. Fox	The Stepfather
Gamer*	The Time Travelers Wife
Halloween II*	The Twilight Saga: New Moon
Law Abiding Citizen	Tyler Perry's I Can do Bad All by Myself
Ninja Assassin	Up in the Air*
Old Dogs	Where the Wild Things Are
Planet 51	Whip It!
Ponyo	Zombieland

### Examples and Highlights:

***The Final Destination:*** This movie portrays both males and females in a demeaning way. There are many scenes with sexualized content, including one scene showing the “hook-up” of two perfect strangers, (the scene does nothing to further the plot and is unnecessary.)

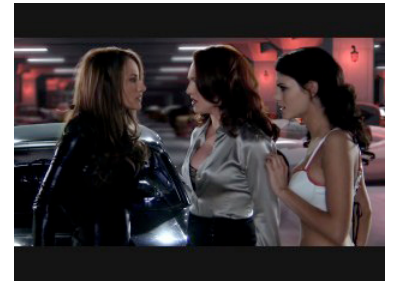


**Whip It** - In this film there are numerous examples of women playing non-stereotypical roles. Most of the women in the film are roller derby athletes and the main character (played by Ellen Page) demonstrates a great deal of self-confidence, determination and persistence, despite the personal risks she takes throughout the film. She is assertive with both her parents and holds her boyfriend accountable for his behavior.



**Avatar** - There are also strong women in the blockbuster movie Avatar. Sigourney Weaver's character is independent and confident throughout the film and the lead female character (Neytiri) is a confident, courageous and athletic character that is also very grounded in her culture and spirituality. She becomes the mentor to the lead male character Jake, played by Sam Worthington.

**Bitch Slap**: The entirety of this movie contains hyper-sexualization of women. The plot details the story of three prostitutes who have become involved with a murder. This movie is so over the top it is easy to see it as a parody, but it still contains a massive amount of sexual objectification.



**Sorority Row**: This movie paints quite a dim view of American sorority girls. All of the girls are incredibly promiscuous, including one who sells herself out to a doctor in exchange for prescriptions.



Note: the only movie of the 42 studied which had a GLBT individual in it was Everybody's Fine, where Drew Barrymore played a lesbian.

This section looked at the amount of violence in each movie. This section also looked at who was committing these acts of aggression. The excessive amount of violence in our society is in part normalized by the amount of violence present in mainstream movies.

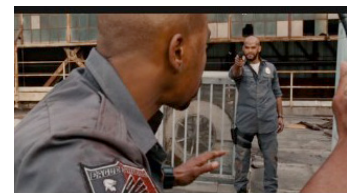
Of the 42 movies studied, 15 (35%) contained scenes of gratuitous violence. Of those 15 movies, only one contained violence committed by a female (Bitch Slap). Also, of the 15 violence containing movies, white males committed 73% of the violence.

The following movies with an asterisk contained gratuitous violence.

- |                                   |  |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| 2012                              | Post Grad                                |
| A Serious Man                     | Sherlock Holmes*                         |
| Amelia                            | Sorority Row*                            |
| Armored*                          | Surrogates*                              |
| Astro Boy                         | The Blind Side                           |
| Avatar*                           | The Box                                  |
| Bitch Slap*                       | The Final Destination*                   |
| Black Dynamite*                   | The Hurt Locker*                         |
| Cloudy With a Chance of Meatballs | The Informant!                           |
| Couples Retreat                   | The Invention of Lying                   |
| Crazy Heart                       | The Lovely Bones                         |
| Did You Hear About the Morgans?*  | The Men Who Stare at Goats               |
| Everybody's Fine                  | The Princess and the Frog                |
| Fantastic Mr. Fox                 | The Stepfather*                          |
| Gamer*                            | The Time Travelers Wife                  |
| Halloween II*                     | The Twilight Saga: New Moon              |
| Law Abiding Citizen*              | Tyler Perry's I Can do Bad All by Myself |
| Ninja Assassin*                   | Up in the Air                            |
| Old Dogs                          | Where the Wild Things Are                |
| Planet 51                         | Whip It!                                 |
| Ponyo                             | Zombieland*                              |

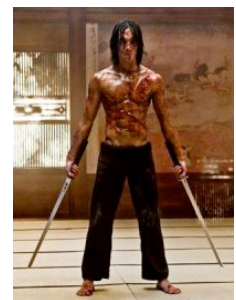
**Examples and Highlights:**

**Armored:** This movie tells the story of a group of armored truck drivers who decide to loot their own cars. The plot slowly gets more violent and culminates in a chaotic shootout.



**Gamer:** This movie can almost be seen as a parody of America's obsession with violent videogames and can easily be connected to the insensitivity our society has towards violence. In the movie gamers can control real live prison inmates and use them to fight and kill other individuals. While this movie points out flaws in American society, it is itself a component of the violence driven society we live in, because the violence is highlighted.

**Ninja Assassin** - This film from start to finish is filled with intense and graphic violence. The film has over 100 murders, some by decapitation.



Note: the lack of men in the sexual objectification category, and the lack of women in the violence category reinforce the idea of "normal" gender roles. Men are supposed to be strong and independent and women are supposed to be beautiful and dependent .



This section examined each movie looking for examples of product placement. Product placement is an advertisement subtly inserted into the movie. These placements are just like any other advertisement where the brand pays for a spot in the movie. These placements are quite common, and our culture of consumption is promoted and normalized by the ubiquity of these products in corporate movies.

Of the 42 movies studied 28 (66%) contained deliberate examples of product placement. The following movies with an asterisk contained product placement:

2012*	Post Grad*
A Serious Man	Sherlock Holmes
Amelia	Sorority Row *
Armored*	Surrogates *
Astro Boy	The Blind Side*
Avatar	The Box*
Bitch Slap	The Final Destination*
Black Dynamite*	The Hurt Locker
Cloudy With a Chance of Meatballs	The Informant!*
Couples Retreat *	The Invention of Lying*
Crazy Heart*	The Lovely Bones*
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Fantastic Mr. Fox	The Stepfather*
Gamer	The Time Travelers Wife *
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Law Abiding Citizen*	Tyler Perry's I Can do Bad All by Myself*
Ninja Assassin*	Up in the Air*
Old Dogs *	Where the Wild Things Are
Planet 51*	Whip It!*
Ponyo	Zombieland*

Some of these movies contained very few or very subtle examples of placement, while others contained very obvious examples. A few highlighted examples of products entering the plot and affecting the movie follow:

***Up In the Air***: this movie seemed to be almost a feature length commercial spot for American Airlines. George Clooney's character always flies with American Airlines.

***Zombieland (Watch Clip)***: In this movie, Woody Harrelson's character is obsessed with finding Twinkies and spends much time talking about Hostess products in general.

***Post Grad (Watch Clip)***: In this movie, Eskimo Pie's are said to balance "all that is wrong with the universe" and a lengthy promotion of the brand follows.

***Blind Side (Watch Clip)***: one of the leading male roles in this movie is the owner of a large amount of fast food places: Taco Bell, KFC, and Long John Silver's, the family talks about and eats these brands.

***Couples Retreat (Watch Clip)***: The product placement that took up more actual screen time than any other film during the study was the use of Guitar Hero in the film Couple's Retreat. Not only do people play the game for several minutes in a row, with parts of the video game are edited in to the film and one of the lead characters (Vince Vaughn) is a video game salesman who actually sells Guitar Hero.

This section investigated the promotion of American foreign and domestic policy. To understand how closely American corporations and American government are related it was necessary to document the normalization of American governmental policy through its use in American movies. Ideas like the American dream and the parise of war were noted.

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***Avatar:*** The plot of this movie places American backed corporations as the antagonist, and the native population of a foreign planet as the protagonist. The final scene ends with the defeat of the Americans and a victory for the natives and their planet. Avatar has grossed more box-office dollars than any other movie and is arguable one of the most popular movies of all time. This anti-American stance is quite surprising for such a wildly popular movie. Perhaps the American (and global) public is starting to have a shift in views towards American policy, or maybe the audiences were just wowed by the fancy 3-D and special effects.

***The Men who Stare at Goats:*** This movie is about a secret division of the American military which has began researching in mind control techniques. The movie makes a farce of the American military and its engagement in the war in Iraq.

***The Hurt Locker:*** This movie takes a very neutral stance about the life of a soldier in the American Military fighting in the war in Iraq. The movie has a documentary feel to it and casually shows the life of a soldier. The positives and negatives of army life are highlighted. The truth about being in combat and then returning home is shown, and the taxing nature of this is shown.

## CONCLUSION

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This report was created to highlight some of the shortcomings of the Main Stream film industry. The report is not meant to be definitive evidence, but only to point to some inherent flaws in the Hollywood movie industry. This report has shown that white-men dominate the lead roles in most movies; 24 out of the 42 movies studied contained a white male lead. The study also looked at gender representation; males dominated the violence in movies, and women dominated the sexual aspects of films. This reinforces the commonly accepted gender roles in our society; men are strong and independent, and women are sexual dependent objects. Another element the study focused on was the amount of product placement in movies, (66% contained deliberate product placement). This shows how clearly intertwined corporate America is with Hollywood movies. The study looked into American Foreign and Domestic Policy and found three examples of anti-war sentiment. Those examples are the most promising of the findings, and hopefully the anti-war movement will have a larger place in Hollywood in the years to come. This study has shown that our society is not properly represented by the Hollywood film industry. Our population is not half white men, nor do they commit 73% of the violence. Women are not sexual objects and are clearly capable of an independent life in which they are they lead role. Minorities are grossly underrepresented in all aspects of Hollywood movies, and this is not right, because they play a crucial and critical part in American society. The amount of product placement in these movies does accurately depict the amount of products we see daily, unfortunately this is not a bright finding. This study has found and shown that while these movies may provide a form of entertainment, they do not accurately portray the society they come from and are supposed to represent.