Portrayal of Mothers in Top-Grossing Live Action Family Films:

Intensive neoliberal mothering ideals from 2011 to 2016

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Abstract

The research undertaken was a media content analysis of 34 mother characters in 23 top grossing live action family films between the years 2011 and 2016. The analysis focused on three ideologies of mothers and motherhood: 1) traditional mothering 2) intensive mothering, and 3) the portrayal of the "yummy mummy". Two dominant societal narratives linked to the expectations of modern motherhood were also measured: 1) postfeminism, and 2) neoliberalism. Two new versions of the Bechdel test, the "Mother Bechdel Test Version A" and the "Mother Bechdel Test Version B," were created to assess the representation and multi-faceted development of mother characters in family film. Results indicated that top-grossing live action family films emphasized and romanticized traditional views of mothering, mother characters subscribed to the modern demands of intensive mothering, and further adhered to "yummy mummy" standards. The films evidenced neoliberal ideals and the postfeminist notion that sexism is a non-issue. White, heterosexual motherhood was overwhelmingly portrayed, and multi-faceted representations of on-screen motherhood were dismal. While overall mother characters did not play an important role in the film, fathers enacted the role of hero in approximately 54% of the films assessed. Across the 23 films analyzed, approximately 19% of people involved in the production, direction, or writing were female. The findings suggest that popular family films contain socially constructed ideologies of motherhood which glamorize both traditional and modern ideas of "good mothers" who are dependent on men.

Keywords: intensive mothering, motherhood, film, content analysis, neoliberalism

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Love to my son, Finley. Last, I am forever indebted to my parents, Sharon and Bob, for always being supportive and loving. Especially to my mother for always being willing to pick up Finley from school and feed him sushi while I was deep in research and writing mode.

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In 2014, Hollywood celebrity Angelina Jolie starred in Walt Disney Picture's Maleficent,

the highest grossing family film of the past decade. Malificent, a retelling of the classic fairy tale

Sleeping Beauty, was praised in its departure from typical gender role depictions (Justice, 2014).

In *Malificent*, the story's "Happily Ever After," which is to occur after an evil spell is broken,

was not realized by the delivery of Prince Charming's "True Love's Kiss," as per Disney's 1959

version of the tale. Instead, Maleficent herself, depicted as both villain and hero, bestowed

"True Love's Kiss" upon the princess as an expression of maternal love and devotion.

According to Martin and Kazyak (2009), this twist on the tale substitutes the glorification of

heterosexual romance with society's idealization of motherhood and feminine nurturing, and

reinforces the message that motherhood is (or should be) the ultimate fulfillment in life for

women. In an interview with People Magazine (2014) about her role in the film, Angelina Jolie

embodied the societal construction of the maternal archetype, which dictates the consummation

of limitless love and self-sacrifice, through her own experience with mothering: "…you

completely live for someone else. I find that the most extraordinary thing. Your life is handed

over to someone else. From that moment on, they come first in every choice you make. It's the

most wonderful thing. I love being a mom, and I love our family." Jolie's statement resonates

with modern expectations and beliefs about motherhood (e.g., prescriptions for mothers that they

hold high levels of personal agency, maintain hyper-attentiveness to their children, and engage in

self-sacrifice as they "put family first").

Films, and their respective characters, may have a significant influence on viewers.

Thus, examinations of how mothers are characterized in films are crucial to understanding the

messages and perpetuation of myths about motherhood. Further, the images of motherhood that

appear in popular top-grossing films (e.g., a married, loving mother who effectively runs the

household, or a divorced, lonely mother who is anxious for male companionship) are an

expression of what is considered socially acceptable (Carter & Steiner, 2004), particularly since

these films are designed to maximize mass appeal for profit.

The focus of this thesis is on the portrayals of motherhood in an oft-neglected cinematic

genre referred to as "family" films. Prior to reviewing the literature on the importance of film

for viewers, particularly those targeting "families," and highlighting the relative omission of

empirical study on motherhood within family films, a brief review of issues pertinent to

contemporary motherhood is provided. This review is followed by an introduction to three

phenomena referred to as the intensive mothering ideal, new momism, and the neoliberal

orientation to new momism. These three phenomena are reviewed in an effort to theoretically

frame the potential portrayals of mothers within the family film genre and conceptually link the

present study's research questions and accompanying hypotheses.

Evolutionary Pendulums of Motherhood

Motherhood encompasses the dynamic, and always-evolving, social practices of

nurturing and caring for dependent children; this role is universally given to women and

"entwined with notions of femininity" (Arendall, 2000, p. 1192). Through this lens, women

fulfill the role of nurturer, in which they are innately suited to meet the basic needs of children,

nourishment and protection. Mothers are universally positioned as naturally inclined to the

warmth and affection that characterize their care and devotion for their children (Vandenberg-

Daves, 2014).

Cultural shifts in the expectations of mothers, and ideas about good parenting practices, have occurred over time. Throughout the 17th and early 18th centuries, Western cultures perceived children to be inherently sinful and in need of parental discipline (Kinser, 2010; Vandenberg-Daves, 2014). Late 18th century and 19th century ideals of motherhood changed amidst enlightenment-era notions in which children were viewed as innocents (i.e., "tabula rasa," or blank slates) in need of guidance and molding (Vandenberg-Daves, 2014, p. 11). Indeed, during this time, women were charged with *Republican Motherhood* in which they were responsible for "…the values of their sons, who were likely to have a direct impact on the nation's success" (Woloch, 1994, p. 90).

Through the first wave of feminism, motherhood continued to be idealized as the most fulfilling and essential of all women's duties (Kinser, 2010). In the fight for the right to education, early American feminists proposed that advancing education would better enable a woman to later educate her children (Kinser, 2010). This idealization of motherhood was first challenged during the second wave of feminism (early 1960s until approximately 1975), with radical feminist writers challenging patriarchy, and critiquing the unfair binding of women to the role of mother (Snitow, 1992). For example, Betty Friedan's (1963) "The Feminine Mystique" challenged the notion of a woman's fulfillment through, and dependence on, men and the family unit. The 1970s brought different feminist perspectives on motherhood, with writers like Adrienne Rich emphasizing the role of society's systemic structures that perpetuate the oppression of women (Kinser, 2010). The second wave feminist movement afforded many women with the right to education, legal protection from discrimination, and (some) changes in the traditional view of family life; thus, an increasing number of mothers, in the 1970s and 1980s, were engaging in paid work outside the home (Hochschild, 1989). During this period,

through personal interviews with working parents and natural observation of families, Hochschild (1989) revealed that working mothers were experiencing stress and tension due to a "second shift," which involved duties of child-rearing and maintaining their home on top of their workplace duties, a second shift of responsibilities that was not undertaken by fathers. Essentialist views of gender, which denote women, but not men, as innately designed for the role of parenting, have been blamed by feminists, such as Bem (1993), for empowering and maintaining male privileges and hindering social and cultural changes that advocate equality between men and women. The ideology of moral motherhood, in Western societies, persists today and has, in fact, expanded to accommodate the expansion in identities occupied by mothers in modern society (Vandenberg-Daves, 2014). Further, the traditional conception of mothers as warm and affectionate, thus unable to exercise the stern authority necessary to parenting in Puritan times (Vandenberg-Daves, 2014), has been found to persist in modern workplaces. Cuddy, Fiske, and Glick (2004) found that working mothers are rated as significantly higher in warmth and significantly lower in competence, as compared to their childless counterparts.

Today, mothers continue to experience oppression due to the persistence of dominant, societal narratives demanding they take primary responsibility for child rearing and maintenance of the home. In 2013, 51% of Americans reported that children are better off if a mother is home and does not engage in paid work, whereas only 8% of respondents believed the same about a father (Wang, Parker, & Taylor, 2013). In 2010, Canadian women self-reported spending an average of 50.1 hours per week on unpaid child care, more than double the 24.4 hours that was self-reported by men (Milan, Keown, & Urquijo, 2013). Despite an increase in provision for the family, with labour force participation of mothers increasing 60% since the 1960s in the United States (Bianchi 2011) and 40% since the 1960s in Canada (Canada Labour Congress, 2015),

strong gender differences in parenting roles endure with negative consequences, and little

mitigation provided, for mothers. Recently, McCutcheon and Morrison (2016) found that

significantly higher levels of work-family conflict exist among Canadian psychology faculty

members who are mothers. These mothers reported engaging in ten hours more childcare per

week than fathers who were also psychology faculty members (McCutcheon & Morrison, 2016).

Striking differences in the nature of childcare between genders of parents also has been revealed.

Musick, Meier, and Flood (2016) analyzed time diary data along with data from 12,163

participants who completed the American Time Use Survey (2010, 2012, and 2013). They found

that mothers are more likely to multi-task (i.e., cooking and cleaning while with their children),

handle school and health appointments, and arrange for extra-curricular activities and transportation;

on the other hand, fathers tend to engage in leisure activities (i.e., watching television or sporting

events with their children) and socialize with their children free of extraneous responsibilities (Musick

et al., 2016). These differences are associated with reports of less happiness, more stress, and

greater fatigue in time spent with children for mothers, as compared to fathers (Musick et al.,

2016).   Further, contemporary postfeminist narratives act to deny the need for feminism,

including the need to challenge gender disparities in parenting, work-family policies, and career

advancement (Kirby & Krone, 2002). While mothers of the past (e.g., television's "Leave it to

Beaver-type" idealized 1950s housewives) were literally bound to their home and family,

mothers today are bound by strict narratives that demand high levels of personal agency

according to intensive mothering ideals and neoliberal narratives that prescribe a modern, "do-it-

all"-version of the traditionally self-sacrificing mother.

Intensive Mothering Ideal

Today, mothers face a dilemma in embracing their lives and pursuing opportunities and choices that they were historically denied, while being pressured into the traditional gender-based family-life role that promotes, and actively polices, motherhood. Mothers are viewed as vital to the physical and emotional development of children, yet they are simultaneously rejected, scrutinized, and vilified (Åström, 2015). Postfeminist and neoliberal narratives have strongly influenced the prescriptions that dictate the ideal, modern, version of a "good mother," while the societal image of a "bad mother" prevails, such that a mother is often scorned for emotional, developmental, or economic adversities (Seidel, 2013).

The hegemonic ideal of motherhood, at least in North American culture, worships mothers who fulfill their role in keeping the home and raising children; employment, or any aspiration that violates these hegemonic prescriptions for women, is viewed as being in conflict with motherhood (Blair-Loy, 2003). In modern Western societies, mothers are expected to adhere to what is referred to as the "intensive mothering" ideal, in which mothers who are all-caring and self-sacrificing are put on a pedestal (Hays, 1996). The ideology of intensive mothering demands that mothers are solely responsible for their children, and must lavish copious amounts of time, energy, and money on them (Hays, 1996). Liss et al. (2013) developed the Intensive Parenting Attitudes Questionnaire (IPAQ) as a quantitative measure of intensive mothering. The IPAQ was developed via exploratory factor analysis of 56 items tapping the dimensions of the intensive mothering ideal, $N = 315$, yielding a five factor solution (Liss et al., 2013). Confirmatory factor analysis of 25 variables, $N = 280$, demonstrated a good fit. The five subscales which express the ideals of intensive mothering, identified by Liss et al. (2013), are: 1) Essentialism (i.e., women are inherently better at parenting than men); 2) Fulfillment (i.e., children should provide ultimate fulfillment in life); 3) Stimulation (i.e., children should be

cognitively stimulated by parents, through engagement with a variety of activities and opportunities"); 4) Challenging (i.e., mothering is difficult); and 5) Child-Centered (i.e., the needs of a child always come first). These subscales appeared to possess evidence of subscale construct validity (e.g., differences emerged for mothers when compared to non-mothers, which suggests the IPAQ evinced known-groups validity). As well, research suggests that stronger endorsement of intensive parenting beliefs may negatively affect mothers and families. Rizzo, Schiffrin, and Liss (2013) employed the IPAQ in a survey of 181 middle-class, American mothers with children ages five and under. Results indicated that the mothers surveyed overwhelmingly endorsed intensive mothering beliefs, rating above midpoint scores on the Fulfillment, Stimulation, Challenging, and Child-centered subscales (Rizzo, Schiffrin, & Liss, 2013). Further, those mothers who scored higher on the IPAQ were significantly more likely to report higher scores on depression and stress inventories, and decrements in life satisfaction. Henderson, Harmon, and Newman (2015) revealed that, even in cases where mothers report that they do not support societal narratives about intensive mothering, an intense societal pressure persists which requires mothers to climb an insurmountable pedestal of perfection in multiple facets of public and private life. For example, mothers are expected to act as nutritional and educational experts for their child(ren), provide limitless resources to ensure the happiness of their child(ren), and further have time for self-care. The pressure to achieve the standards of intensive mothering is exacerbated by increasing media coverage of celebrity mothers, along with increased use of social media, which perpetuates positive, effortless, imagery of mothers who are to be perceived as being accomplished in all realms of their lives (Chae, 2015; Douglas & Michaels, 2004).

New Momism: A Contemporary Variation on the Intensive Mothering Ideal

Douglas and Michaels (2004) proposed that a new variation of intensive motherhood has developed over the last 30 years. These researchers coined the term "new momism," wherein mothers are expected to adhere to the tenets of intensive motherhood and employ professional-level-type skills to best nurture their children (that of a therapist, pediatrician, consumer-products safety instructor, and teacher), all the while striving to achieve and maintain their best self (i.e., a mother who is healthy, fit, and most certainly fashionable; Douglas & Michaels, 2004). According to Douglas and Michaels' contentions surrounding new momism, promotion of the new momism edict is key to the circulation and construction of a postfeminist ideology (i.e., an ideology that dictates that sexism is no longer an issue in society; see Cochrane, 2013). Specifically, the authors assert that "postfeminism means that you can now work outside the home even in jobs previously restricted to men, go to graduate school, pump iron, and pump your own gas, as long as you remain fashion-conscious, slim, nurturing, deferential to men, and become a doting selfless mother" (Douglas & Michaels, 2004, p. 14). The preponderance of these standards has placed mothers into a "no-win" situation. As such, they are strongly pressured to be mothers, and to mother intensively, while simultaneously expected to act as productive citizens and contribute to the capitalist economy when adhering to celebrity-mom-type appearance standards. According to Douglas and Michaels, the impossible-to-meet ideology of new momism is "a set of ideals, norms, and practices, most frequently and powerfully represented in the media, that seem on the surface to celebrate motherhood, but which in reality promulgate standards of perfection that are beyond your reach" (2004, p. 5).

New Momism and Connection to Neoliberalism

Douglas and Michaels' (2004) new momism is enmeshed within a neoliberal values framework. Neoliberalism, itself, is a long-dominant ideology found within Western societies that emphasizes the importance of free individual enterprise, strong private property rights, and free markets and trade as a means of enhancing the lives of persons and nations (Harvey, 2005). Neoliberalism can be understood as a belief system centred on the notion that external obstacles to economic and personal success are non-existent, and sole responsibility and authority are to be placed on individuals (Harvey, 2005). Rose (1996) argued that neoliberalism further denies the influence of class, race, and gender; individuals are instead posited as self-governing, with failures or successes framed through the lens of choice and free-will. Importantly, in relation to the present study, the influence of motherhood also is denied through a neoliberal lens. Specifically, mothers are viewed as individually responsible for the navigation, balance, and mastery over the alleged plethora of choices and opportunities available to them in contemporary society. Douglas and Michaels (2004) critique society's adoption of new momism ideology for its failure to acknowledge that prevalent stigmatization of, and prejudice and discrimination towards, mothers robs them of their agency and autonomy. McRobbie (2013) argues that the neoliberal hegemony permeates Western culture, and is perpetuated via media images of the "middle-class mother who is slim and youthful in appearance" (p. 1). Neoliberalist societies now dictate that it is not enough for a mother to maintain a home and raise healthy, happy children; now, a "good mother" must physically embody "successful" living, marking her status and value in society by the fact that she contributes to the economy and is not a burden, and maintains her health and youthful appearance.

The importance that is placed on women achieving a healthy youthful appearance while simultaneously mothering has generated a specific media "physicality" for mothers. Currently,

popular media celebrates what are referred to as "yummy mummies" (i.e., mothers who demonstrate discipline in physical exercise and diet and who simultaneously seem to possess copious amounts of calm and perfection when mothering their children; Jette, 2006). Hallstein (2011) proposed that the policing of women's bodies, to maintain fitness and youth that emulates physical shapes before motherhood, in effect masculinizes women's reproductive bodies. This masculinization may be an emulation of patriarchal power, combined with class-elitism-based power, in which the privileging of time and resources required to attain physical fitness is achieved (Hallstein, 2011). This modern standard is a dramatic shift from historical views of mothers as matronly. The "yummy mummy" ideal is central to new momism ideology in which "sexy" moms embody postfeminist discourses by positioning mothers as freely choosing agents and productive members of society (Hallstein, 2011). Cunningham (2002) argued that the "yummy mummy" syndrome has implications for the work lives of women. For instance, the modern "yummy mummy" standard of physical fitness has become an expectation of the workplace, symbolic of a mother who has her "priorities straight" and indicative of a woman who is less likely to disrupt work schedules due to lack of agency in her family life. Moreover, looking like a "yummy mummy" is to be in possession of "a body that is divested of maternity…more of a working body—a body more capable of and available for work" (Cunningham, 2002, para. 44). Bodies that do not signal motherhood are viewed as more capable and productive; but, mothers must grapple with this precarious balance, as mothers depicted as overly sexy or sexually active tend to be rendered "bad" (Valdivia, 1998). Indeed, Kenner (2006) contends that modern media representations of motherhood that are the most sexual and alluring are also the same representations that are the most dysfunctional.

Reviews of the literature also reveal additional ideology and dimensions that serve to polarize mothers. By creating hierarchies amongst women, certain "types" of women become valued, while the value of other "types" depreciates. Outlined below are the foremost polarizing characterizations of mothers, many of which are found in mainstream media representations of women and motherhood.

"Mother" Dichotomies

Contemporary conceptualizations of mothers are delineated along several key dimensions. The principle grounds upon which mothers appear to be divided are: "stay-at-home" versus "working;" "good" versus "bad;" "single mother" versus the "stable-married;" and "racialized" (i.e., mothers often depicted as lower-income and challenged when providing the basics for children and themselves such as housing) versus "non-racialized" (i.e., "white" in skin tone and financially solvent).

Working Mothers vs Stay-at-Home Mothers

For the stay-at-home versus working mother dichotomy, women are depicted as either: 1) primarily caregivers devoted to maintaining their family and raising their children, or 2) invested in paid work, and advancing their own education or career aspirations (Arendell, 2000). Since the ideology of intensive mothering requires mothers to be fully present in the lives of their children (both young and old), a mother who works outside of the home is expected to organize her responsibilities around the needs of her dependents (Chase & Rogers, 2001). Research indicates that working mothers are generally evaluated differently than stay-at-home mothers. Working mothers are typically penalized for their purported lack of commitment to home and family; yet, and somewhat paradoxically, they are rewarded for their agency. Odenweller and Rittenour (2017), through an online study involving 499 participants (Mid-Atlantic, American

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mothers and nonmothers; predominantly Caucasian and heterosexual), identified that working moms were most commonly stereotyped as being: busy, determined, hardworking, multitasking, and tired, while stay-at-home moms were most commonly stereotyped as being: caregivers, caring, family-oriented, involved in children's lives, and loving. Though stay-at-home mothers are perceived to be significantly warmer than working moms, they were also rated as less competent (Odenweller & Rittenour, 2017). Further research indicates that career women who delay becoming mothers, or prefer not to have children, are often disliked and referred to as cold and selfish (Cuddy, Fiske, & Glick, 2004), traits that counter gender norms and the intensive mothering ideal.

Such attitudes toward working and stay-at-home mothers are prevalent in media narratives. Ezzedeen's (2015) recent thematic analysis of 165 portrayals of "career women" within 137 Hollywood films revealed that, although women were depicted as working in a variety of fields, they were overwhelmingly characterized by negative stereotypes. The negative stereotypes of working mothers included trait ascriptions that are rather paradoxical to modern expectations of mothers, such as being emotionally unstable, mean, lacking in empathy, struggling to balance work and family, and engaged in incompetent parenting (Ezzedeen, 2015). These findings extend the notion that mothers who do not adhere to the extensive demands set by the intensive parenting ideal, demands that do not consider cultural and/or structural barriers, are perceived to have failed in their role as mothers.

Good Mothers vs Bad Mothers

Media also may play a crucial role in the glamorization of motherhood as the ultimate path to fulfillment for women. Specifically, Kinnick (2009) posits that media narratives typically cast motherhood in moral terms, thereby juxtaposing the "good mother" with the "bad

mother." A "bad mother" motif is decidedly classed, characterized as working, and particularly lower-income, or may be someone who does not conform to traditional gender roles of behaviour, ambition, or sexual orientation (Kinnick, 2009). Synonymous with new momism and neoliberal ideological values, Harris (2004) argues that mothers who are "can-dos," or those who are deemed to be successful economic and/or societal contributors, have their successes attributed to their personal commitment to make good choices and possess ambition. Consequently, mothers who are "at-risk," often from lower socioeconomic and minority group statuses, are deemed "bad mothers;" these "bad mothers" are blamed for their poor choices, laziness, and incompetent family practices while unequal distribution of opportunity remains unacknowledged (Harris, 2004).

Single Mothers vs The Stable-Married

An additional category of mother is the "single" one. Researchers demonstrate that society holds negative perceptions of single mothers and stigmatizes this group of parents for their failure to conform to the idealized, male-headed, nuclear family (Rhodes & Johnson, 2000). Haire and McGeorge (2012) revealed that single mothers are predominantly assumed to be parenting as a result of bad judgement, accidental pregnancy, or failure to maintain a relationship. Common stereotypes serve to further vilify single mothers; specifically, they are viewed as neglectful, irresponsible, immature, stressed out, depressed, bad decision-makers, promiscuous, hopeless, and insecure (Haire & McGeorge, 2012). In a study involving 1,351 participants who were randomly assigned to either a female or male evaluative target, DeJean, McGeorge, and Carlson (2012) found that single mothers were rated as "less secure, less fortunate, less responsible, less satisfied with life, less moral, less reputable, less of a good parent, and less economically advantaged" when compared to the ratings of the single father

target, despite the sole manipulation of names and pronouns within the vignettes. Conversely, single fathers are generally viewed positively in that they have risen to the challenge of parenting by choice (Haire & McGeorge, 2012).

Though Westernized societies have experienced an increase in the number of single-parent families (i.e., from 9% of Canadian families in 1976 to 20% of Canadian families in 2014; Statistics Canada, 2015a), negative perceptions of single motherhood endure. In 2011, 69% of Americans reported feeling that an increase in single mothers is bad for society, and 61% say that a child needs both a mother and father to grow up happily (Heimlich, 2011). As single mothers are generally viewed as less valuable, the promotion of negative stereotypes about single mothers in popular film arguably augments their oppression and a loss of power in society (Amato, 2000). Previous analysis of single mothers in Hollywood films has revealed that single mothers are characterized negatively and are often depicted as finding solace in a male romantic interest in their effort to complete the traditional, heteronormative, nuclear family ideal (Valdivia, 1998).

Racialized Mothers vs Non-Racialized Mothers

Mothers who belong to racial minority groups likely experience even greater challenges in recognizing the intensive mothering ideal, an ideal that is built upon privileged, White culture (Liss et al., 2013). Studies reveal that all mothers, regardless of race, are aware of and feel pressure to conform to intensive mothering standards (Hays, 1996; McCormack, 2005). Yet, mothers of colour are viewed more harshly than White mothers. Indeed, Solinger (1994) found that "Black" single mothers were rated as significantly less "redeemable" compared to "White" single mothers. The prevailing ideology of intensive mothering is not conducive to the constraints placed on mothers who face proportionally more discrimination and systemic

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barriers. The allocation of "bad mothers" to racial minority families further supports and justifies existing social disparities.

Transmission of Messages, Myths, and Miracles of Motherhood

According to many researchers (e.g., Bandura 2002; Dal Cin et al., 2007; Herrett-Skjellum & Allen 1996), popular media are exceptionally powerful due to their ability to influence audience perceptions, and because they have, at their very core, the capacity to reinforce and modify attitudes about groups of people and their roles in society. At present, the medium of film has undeniable mainstream societal reach. For instance, taking Canada and the United States together, the box office revenue for the film industry in 2016 was 11.4 billion US dollars (Dergarabedian, 2017). Moreover, Internet video is a growing global phenomenon that provides unlimited access to content; for example, *Netflix,* a popular online streaming service worth US13.6 billion (Netflix, 2017b), boasts over 50 million subscribers in the United States and over 98 million subscribers worldwide (Netflix, 2017a). In 2016, *Netflix* usage accounted for more than a 35% share of Internet traffic (Huddleston, 2016).

Within the medium of film exists the popular cinematic genre entitled "family." The family film genre has been immensely successful from both box-office and populist perspectives, and has given rise to many cultural classics such as The Sound of Music and Annie. Though family films were first developed in the 1930s as a means of reaching a broad audience base, few academic studies have examined the content found within this genre (Brown, 2013). Further, there have been no studies, to date, that have specifically examined the portrayal of mothers

within family films. The limited research that does exist about the family film genre will be reviewed briefly.

Gender Hegemony in Family Film

Films traditionally typify women as emotional and dependent on other characters, while men tend to be portrayed as enterprising and ambitious (Bussey & Bandura, 1999). According to Connell (1995), the family film genre possesses a strong gender hegemony, in which femininity is subordinated to hegemonic masculinity and other masculinities (Connell, 1995). Smith, Pieper, Granados, and Choueiti (2010) further revealed that within 122 G (General), PG (Parental Guidance Suggested), and PG-13 (Parents Strongly Cautioned) films, released between 2006 and 2009, only 29.2% of all speaking characters were female. Since approximately half of the population, across the world, is female, this finding denotes a vast underrepresentation of woman-based content and social reality more generally (Central Intelligence Agency, 2013). Researchers also have identified significant differences in the portrayal of women, as compared to men, within the genre. For instance, depictions of female protagonists within Disney's traditional fairy tale storylines have been found to depict either passive, morally pure, princesses that are desirous for, and dependent on, heterosexual love (Justice, 2014), or selfless godmothers and wicked old witches (Henneberg, 2010). Towbin, Haddock, Zimmerman, Lund, and Tanner (2003) examined 26 top-grossing, animated Disney films released between 1937 and 2000; they demonstrated that these films emphasize a woman's appearance (over intellect), helplessness, and domestic nature. Outside the realm of Disney research, Smith and Granados (2009) analyzed G-rated films and television series and found that women are more likely to be characterized as emotional and nurturing (i.e., suited for motherhood). The authors also found that women were less likely to be shown engaging in paid work when compared to men (Smith

& Granados, 2009), a misleading characterization given that women make up 47.3% of the

Canadian workforce (Statistics Canada, 2017) and 46.8% of the United States workforce (Bureau

of Labor Statistics, 2017). While sexist portrayals of women in family film have been examined,

common cultural conceptions about women have not been investigated in relation to different

behaviours and statuses enacted by female characters on film such as married motherhood or

single motherhood.

Current Study

Over the last thirty years, media representations of mothers in general have drastically

increased in number (Prothero, 2006). Media dictate the value of motherhood and critique

mothers on their physical presentation and ability to caretake according to an ideal standard.

Mothers who are not perceived as following the societal norm of intensive parenting, including

the demonstration of success in family life, work life, and physical shape, are often shamed and,

consequently, experience feelings of guilt and anxiety (Harp & Bachmann, 2008; Gilbert, 2008).

Indeed, Prothero (2006) deemed the media responsible for provoking fear and anxiety in

mothers, as evidenced by the pervasive use of language containing "dread, fear, fret, guilt and

worry" (p. 4). Given the importance of media in Western cultures, along with increasing access

to family film, an examination of how mothers are being portrayed within this genre is vital.

Investigating the portrayal of mothers in family films may elucidate what modern myths about

motherhood are being perpetuated, and what myths are being challenged within the genre. The

scarcity of current research on the representation of mothers in popular film and prevalence of

intense standards of mothering within popular culture served as catalysts for the following four

research questions: 1) Are traditional conceptions of motherhood found in popular film?; 2) Are

modern, intensive mothering ideologies found in popular family film?; 3) Are postfeminist and

neoliberal narratives accompanying portrayals of intensive mothering in popular family film?; and 4) Will mothers in popular family films align with the "yummy mummy" standards of new momism ideology?

Hypotheses

Based on a review of the literature, four hypotheses on representations of mothers in top-grossing family films were generated.

Hypothesis 1. Traditional conceptions of "good mothers," those who are nurturing, warm and loving, and moral, will be evidenced in portrayals of mother characters in live action family films.

Hypothesis 2. Portrayals of mother characters in live action family film will adhere to intensive mothering ideals.

Hypothesis 3. Family films will evidence: 1) postfeminist narratives, in which sexism is denied, and 2) neoliberal narratives, placing sole responsibility for successes or failure on individual persons while denying systemic factors.

Hypothesis 4. Family films will contain "yummy mummy" portrayals; mother characters will be presented as highly attractive and fashionable.

Method

Units of Analysis

The hypotheses were addressed using three levels of analysis: 1) the characterization of the mothers; 2) the characterization of motherhood, including the context in which the mother appears; and 3) the demographic profile of the mothers featured in each top-grossing family film.

Selection of Films

Only live-action films were included in the analysis given that live depictions have been found to be more realistic and convincing to an audience (Artz, 2013). Further, Bandura (2002) suggests that the content of live-action films may have greater influence on human behaviour than other types of film (e.g., animated). Top-grossing live-action family-films covering a six-year span (i.e., from 2011-2016) were selected from annually published top-100 lists using the Internet Movie Database (IMDb) website. A six year time span was chosen to best establish a relevant, contemporary snapshot of portrayals of mothers in family films. To ensure the accurate selection of films classified as top-grossing, box office revenue information was verified across both online publications for Wikipedia and Forbes, respectively. Further, only films with "family" listed in genre descriptions on IMDb, and those rated G or PG by the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) were included. Films that feature a mother as a character within the film were identified by reading the plot synopsis provided by IMDb for each film. Finally, the director(s), producer(s), screenwriter(s), or writer(s), along with their respective gender were documented for each film. On the basis of this process, a systematic search was conducted within IMDb, and it appeared that 23 films (3.38% of the sampling frame) fit the inclusion criteria (e.g., appropriate rating, top-grossing, mother as character, and non-animated). The list of films can be found in Table 1.

Content Analysis

Neuendorf (2017) defined media content analysis as a summarizing, quantitative analysis of message characteristics. Content analysis is suitable for the examination of portrayals of mothers in top-grossing, family films, because this process enables consideration of a wide range of constructs and variables, as would be the case regarding intensive mothering and new

momism traits. As content analysis allows for the measurement of many variables, this approach is able to reveal the context in which the messages are being presented (Neuendorf, 2017). However, because a strict quantitative approach to content analysis may fail to capture the meaningfulness of the messages being explored, Newbold, Boyd-Barrett, and Van Den Bulck (2002) advocate for a mixed-method approach, in which quantitative content analysis is supplemented with qualitative approaches which may draw on semiotics, or how meaning is created and communicated. Qualitative data, including character and contextual narratives, were collected to further reveal the meaning of the messages being transmitted about mothers in family film.

Systematic Approach

The current study was conducted in accordance with Neuendorf's (2011) six recommendations when taking a formal systematic approach to media content analysis: 1) Establish theoretical and conceptual backing; 2) Plan the scope of the investigation (i.e., focus on message content or combine message data with data about the message source and/or receiver); 3) Review past research and development of measures; 4) Define the population of messages to be analyzed; 5) The content analyst must immerse themselves in the message pool (i.e., thoroughly examine the pool of messages which constitute the defined population; and 6) The content analyst must decide on whether human coding and/or computer coding is appropriate. Neuendorf's (2011) first recommendation was observed, in the current study, through meticulous establishment of a theoretical framework and empirically-established concepts about traditional and contemporary views of mothers. Neuendorf's (2011) second recommendation was satisfied through careful planning of the data collection for the current study. In addition to quantification of the qualities of messages within family films, qualitative information based on film narratives

was collected to further validate conclusions drawn. Neuendorf's (2011) third recommendation was observed through a review of past research, which helped to guide the development of the content analysis measures. For instance, by using past research, such as Towbin et al.'s (2008) study of gender and sex images in Disney animated films and Gilpatric's (2010) examination of violent female action characters in American cinema, codebooks were created for data collection purposes. Conforming with Neuendorf's (2011) fourth recommendation, the validity of the current research was enhanced because the messages to be examined, and relevance of these messages in family film, were clearly delineated before data collection transpired. The current study was designed to specifically examine and analyze family films' messages about mothers, or other women who care for and nurture dependent children, including non-biological mothers. For Neuendorf's (2011) fifth recommendation, she stated that the "analyst should take a practical approach and seek additional clues from a thorough examination of the pool of messages constituting the defined population" (p. 280). Therefore, the researcher ensured content validity by fully engaging with each film to ensure all variables pertinent to the research hypotheses were recognized (i.e., experience *narrative presence*, or presence in a narrative world due to comprehension processes and perspective taking, which help to maintain focus on elements of a story; Busselle & Bilandzic, 2009). Finally, as per the sixth recommendation, it was decided that human coding was appropriate for the current study to ensure the identification and interpretation of the most complete context of portrayals of mothers within the films being analyzed, avoiding potentially narrow incomplete interpretations inherent to computer coding (Neuendorf, 2011). The reliability of analysis is important to ensure that the content is being examined consistently across time and other conditions (Neuendorf, 2009). Intercoder reliability was established by comparing 10% of the ratings across two independent coders in order to validate the coding

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scheme and confirm that more than one individual can utilize the codebooks employed in this study (Neuendorf, 2017).

Codebook Variables

   Codebook #1.   Three codebooks were developed for the purposes of the study. A separate codebook was completed for each mother character. The first codebook was designed to measure traditional and intensive mothering ideology in popular family films. To respond to the current study's first hypothesis, which states that traditional portrayals of mothers will be found in family film, variables appearing within the first codebook were assessed. To respond to the current study's second hypothesis, which states that intensive mothering ideals will dominate portrayals of mothers in family film, variables that also appeared within the first codebook were assessed. Mother characters who demonstrated differences in their characterization (i.e., differential treatment of step-children and biological children) were rated according to their overall portrayal as an individual and not according to the portrayal of specific interpersonal interactions.

   Traditional Conceptions of Mothers.   The traditional portrayal of mother characters in each film was assessed with three items: the extent to which the mother character was nurturing, the extent to which the mother character was warm and affectionate, and the extent to which the ideology of moral motherhood, in which women are viewed as innately suited to the role of guiding and molding values in their children (Vandenberg-Daves, 2014), was portrayed. These items were assessed using a 6-point Likert-type response format. Scores could range from 3 to 18, with higher scores denoting great traditional portrayals of mothers in the films assessed. For the current study, this scale was found to be highly reliable (α = .93, 95% CI = .87 - .97). In

addition, quotes and examples from the film were collected for each item as a means of illustrating how each film's script reflects traditional conceptions of motherhood.

Intensive parenting ideology. Film content was analyzed for adherence to variables from Liss et al.'s (2013) quantitative conception of intensive mothering. Sixteen questions from Liss et al.'s (2013) Intensive Parenting Attitudes Questionnaire (four items were derived from the Essentialism subscale, three items derived from the Fulfillment subscale, three items derived from the Stimulation subscale, four items derived from the Challenging subscale, and two items derived from the Child-Centered subscale) were deemed suitable for inference from film narratives and context, and were included in the first codebook. These items were rated on agreement with an intensive parenting conception of mothers in each film using a 6-point Likert-type response format. Scores could range on the Essentialism subscale from 4-24 (highly reliable, $\alpha = .90$, 95% CI = .82 - .95), on the Fulfillment subscale from 3-18 (highly reliable, $\alpha = .95$, 95% CI = .89 - .98, on the Stimulation subscale from 3-18 (highly reliable, $\alpha = .91$, 95% CI = .81 - .96), on the Challenging subscale from 4-24 (unacceptable reliability, $\alpha = .29$, 95% CI = -.43 - .70; therefore, items are assessed separately), and on the Child-Centred subscale from 2-12 (good reliability, $r_s = .80$, p < .01). Higher scores mean greater representation of the respective subscales. In addition, quotes and examples from each film were collected as a means of illustrating how the film's script reflects intensive parenting ideology.

Codebook #2. The second codebook was designed to assess the presence of postfeminist and neoliberal narratives, and the portrayal of "yummy mummies" in popular family films. To respond to the current study's third hypothesis, which states that postfeminist and neoliberal narratives will be found in family film, variables appearing within the second codebook were assessed. To respond to the current study's fourth hypothesis, which states mothers in family

film will adhere to "yummy mummy" standards, variables that also appeared within the second codebook were assessed.

Postfeminist and neoliberal narratives. Two items were created to assess postfeminist narratives: mothers are portrayed as equally capable as fathers, and the existence of sexism in society is denied or ignored in the film. Both items were rated using a 6-point Likert-type response format; thus, scores could range from 2-12, with higher scores indicating the presence of greater postfeminist narratives (unacceptable reliability, $r_s = .37$, p = .12; therefore, items were assessed separately). Neoliberal narratives were explored through two items: 1) mothers are posited as personally responsible for successes or failures, and 2) the agency/autonomy of mothers is a given while the existence of external obstacles is not acknowledged. These two items were also rated using a 6-point Likert-type response format; thus, scores could range from 2-12, with higher scores indicating the presence of greater neoliberal narratives (unacceptable reliability, $r_s = .39$, p = .08; therefore, items were assessed separately). In addition, quotes and examples from each film were collected for each item as a means of illustrating how the film's script reflects postfeminist and neoliberal ideologies.

"Yummy mummy" portrayals. Analysis of contemporary conceptions of good mothering were further examined through Douglas and Michaels' (2004) new momism ideal which dictates "yummy mummy" standards, in which a mother embodies her competency through physical fitness and sexual appeal. The extent to which the mother character conforms to "yummy mummy" standards was assessed using a 6-point Likert-type response format, with higher scores denoting greater "yummy mummyism."

Codebook #3. The third codebook was designed to inform the foundational analyses, which served to illuminate the characterological profile of mothers that appear in live action family films, and the broader context in which mothers appear in the family film genre.

Age. Age was estimated based on the portrayal of each mother character, and not in accordance with the chronological age of the actress (McIntosh, Bazzini, Smith, & Wayne, 1998). Ages were designated according to decade (i.e. mothers 20 - 29 years of age, 30 - 39 years, 40 - 49 years of age, 50 – 59 years of age, or 60 – 69 years of age). No instances occurred in which the age of a mother was explicitly stated within the film.

Race. The race of each mother character was categorized as either: Caucasian, Black, Aboriginal, Asian, American Indian, or Latina.

Occupation of mother. The occupation of a mother character was noted in cases where explicitly evident or stated within a film. Mothers were further coded as either working or stay-at-home.

Relationship status. The relationship status of each mother character was recorded as either: married, single and not dating, single and dating, single with live-in partner, divorced, widowed, unknown, or remarried.

Parental status. The parental status of each mother character was recorded as either: biological mother, step-mother (with or without her own biological children), mother who adopted, foster mother, or other.

Age of children. The age category of children parented by mothers in each film were indicated as: baby, toddler, grade-schooler, teen, young adult, or adult.

Representations of mothers. Mothers were rated as being central, peripheral, or nearly absent in each film, and the importance of each mother character to a film's storyline was rated

using a 6-point Likert-type response format, with higher scores indicative of greater importance

Quotes and examples from the films were collected to illustrate mothers' relation to their

children's fathers and other men in the film.[1] Films also were indicated as set in contemporary

or historical times.

  Mother versions of the Bechdel Test. Alternate versions of the Bechdel Test[2] have been

proposed as a means of assessing different aspects of representation and diversity of characters in

film. For example, the racial Bechdel Test passes when there are two named characters of colour

in a film who talk to each other about something other than a white person, and the Mako Mori

test (named after the female protagonist in the film Pacific Rim) passes if there is at least one

female character in a film who gets her own story arc which does not support the story of a man

(Affriol, 2016). For the current study, a Mother version of the Bechdel Test was developed and

employed as a means of establishing whether women were underrepresented and underdeveloped

as characters, specifically mother characters, in live action family films. Specifically, three

questions comprise version A of the Mother Bechdel test and were used in the present study.

They were: 1) Do at least two women in the film have names? 2) Do these women talk to one

another? 3) Do these women talk about something other than children? If the answer to all three

questions is "yes," then a film is deemed to have passed the Mother Version A Bechdel Test.

One question comprises a Version B of the Mother test to determine if a less constrained model

would pass: 1) Do mother characters in the film talk to any adult about anything other than

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[1] Films in which the father, or any other male character, played the role of "hero" were noted
here.
[2] Given an apparent underappreciation of women in the media, cartoonist Alison Bechdel (1986)
proposed a litmus test to establish if media representations contained well-rounded and complete
depictions of women that are not male-dependent.

children? If the answer to this question is "yes," then a film is deemed to have passed the Mother Version B Bechdel Test.

Results

The Results section is compartmentalized into the following sections: Foundational and Primary Analyses. The former, entitled *Foundational Analyses*, provides an overview of the films assessed, interrater reliability between coders and correlational analyses, and a characterological profile of the mothers depicted in the top-grossing family films between 2011 and 2016. As well, within this section, evidence of the importance of the mother characters to the film's storyline, their job status, relationship status, and relationship with male characters is underscored. Finally, the Foundational Analyses section details an adaptation of the Bechdel test for "women" characters in film; here, we refer to this as the "Mother Version A and B of the Bechdel Test," which was designed to illuminate the development of "mother" characters in recent family films. All of the study's Hypotheses (1-4) and their outcome appear in the section following the Foundational Analyses entitled *Primary Analyses.*

Foundational Analyses

Table 1 outlines the 23 live-action, top-grossing family films (2011-2016) used in the analyses. These films comprise 65.71% of live-action, top-grossing family films identified for this period. The remaining 34.29% of live-action, top-grossing films identified for this period were those films with mothers notably absent or deceased. Across the 23 films analyzed, only 18.9% of people involved in the production, direction, and writing were female. For five films, no women were involved in the production, direction, or writing. These films were: Pete's Dragon (2016), Paddington (2014), Dolphin Tale 2 (2014), Earth to Echo (2014), and The Odd Life of Timothy Green (2012). Only two films, Alice Through the Looking Glass (2016) and

Spy Kids: All the Time in the World (2011), were equal in proportions of involvement (50% men and 50% women). Essentially, none of the films involved a majority of women in their production, direction, and writing. Films with a higher percentage of involvement by women in the making of the film were significantly more likely to include mother characters that were depicted as working ($M = 22.64$, $SD = 16.94$), compared to those who were depicted as not working ($M = 12.25$, $SD = 10.61$); $t(31.23) = -2.19$, $p = 0.036$, $d = .73$.

Interrater reliability. Interrater reliability was assessed by comparing 13% of the ratings across two independent coders: one being the student and one being the student's supervisor. To assess interrater reliability, evaluations of three (Heaven is For Real [2014], Parental Guidance [2012], and Dolphin Tail [2011]) of the 23 films were compared. Of the three films analyzed, there were four mother characters depicted (one in Heaven is For Real [2014]; two in Parental Guidance [2012], and one in Dolphin Tail [2011]), and a total of 41 variables assessed per film. Ellis and Morrison's (2005) approach for assessing interrater reliability per mother character in each film was employed. As there were four mother characters and 41 variables per character, a total of 164 variables were assessed. As per Ellis and Morrison's (2005) recommendation, percentage agreement was calculated firstly for each mother character. Results indicated that there was 95.12% agreement between the two raters for the 41 variables coded in the film Heaven is For Real [2014]; 85.37% agreement between the two raters for the 41 variables coded for the first mother character in the film Parental Guidance [2012]; 87.80% agreement between the two raters for the 41 variables coded for the second mother character in the film Parental Guidance [2012]; and 82.93% agreement between the two raters for the film Dolphin Tail [2011]. In all, the average percentage of agreement across all mother characters to which codes were ascribed by the two coders was 87.81%. Importantly, the

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12.19% lack of agreement was comprised of 1-point differences (e.g., where one coder awarded a 6, and the other coder awarded a 5) approximately 82% of the time, where these 1-point "differences" all fell on the "agreement" side of the Likert-type scales used in the present study. The remainder (approximately 18.18%) was comprised of 2-point differences that also fell on the "agreement" side of the Likert-type scales in question (i.e., there were four instances where one coder awarded a 6 and the other coder awarded a 4). These differences were then discussed, and evidence from the verbatim quotes entered in the database served as reference points in which to understand and resolve the disagreements.

Convergent Validity. The relationships amongst the key variables of interest were assessed. Correlation amongst measures were conducted to establish *convergent validity* (how closely each measure or variable is related to other measures and other variables of theoretically-related constructs; Morrison et al., 2017). Tests of convergent validity serve to establish relationships between variables (Neuendorf, 2017), and those that may be interconnected as a larger part of testing for construct validity. Testing for convergent validity was important in the present study because if evidence was found in support of this form of validity, if would demonstrate that ideologies of motherhood, and larger societal narratives (i.e., postfeminism and neoliberalism), are inseparably encompassed in portrayals of mothers in family films. The convergent validity of measures of traditional and intensive mothering was supported, as evidenced by positive correlations between traditional conceptions of mothers and the following components of Intensive Mothering Ideology: Essentialist views ($r = .831$), fulfillment from mothering ($r = .914$), stimulation ($r = .643$), and child-centeredness ($r = .510$). Traditional conceptions of mothers also correlated with a single item assessing parenting being a demanding

job ($r = .769$). For a more detailed breakdown of scale and item correlations between measures of beliefs about motherhood, please refer to Table 4.

Correlations, as presented in Table 5, demonstrate that the portrayal of mothers as equally competent economic contributors, compared to fathers, is positively correlated with the image of a mother's successes and failures stemming from the responsibility and choices made by mothers ($r = .488$). Also, the portrayal of mothers as equally competent economic contributors, as compared to fathers, was found to be positively correlated with portrayals of a mother's given agency and autonomy ($r = .519$). Sexism as a non-issue was found to correlate with portrayals of agency and autonomy of mothers and the denial or ignoring of external obstacles ($r = .534$).

What is the characterological profile of mothers in live action family films? In examining the top-grossing family films, a total of 34 mother characters were analyzed and submitted to coding as laid out in the codebooks. The vast majority featured only one mother character, but seven of the 23 films (30.4%) contained more than one character who could be classified as a mother. Approximately equal proportions of mother characters in live action family films were nearly absent from the film's storyline (38.2%), or central[3] to the film's storyline (35.3%), with smaller proportions emerging as peripheral (26.5%). Table 2 outlines the characterological profile of these mother characters.

The mother characters in popular live action family films were predominately portrayed as being 30 – 39 years old or 40 – 49 years old. The vast majority of all mother characters were White, with only one Black mother and one Latina mother[4] being featured. Half of all mother

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[3] Mother characters were considered central in cases where they were portrayed during more than half of a film's duration.

[4] Actress Jessica Alba played the mother character Marissa Wilson in the film Spy Kids: All the Time in the World (2011). The actress is half-Latina, and her character is related to the Cortez

characters were presented within the context of a traditional, nuclear family dynamic (i.e., wife,

husband, and their biological children). Nearly three-quarters of mother characters were

depicted as the biological mother of their children, with smaller proportions being step-mothers

(11.7%). More than half of the mother characters were married, and no sexual minority mother

characters were evident in the films.

Importance of mother characters. A one-sample t-test determined that, overall, mother

characters in the family film genre are not depicted as playing an important role in the film. The

mean importance score of a mother character ($M = 4.09$, $SD = 2.05$) was not significantly higher

than the midpoint score (midpoint $= 3.5$, scale range $= 1$-6); $t(33) = 1.673$, $p = .104$, $d = .29$.

Working status of mother characters. A majority of the mother characters were stay-at-

home and not working (44.1%); a smaller proportion were working outside their home (32.4%)

or their work status was not evident (20.6%). Mother characters that scored higher in the

neoliberal item that posited the agency and autonomy of mothers as a given, while external

obstacles are ignored or denied, were significantly more likely to be depicted as working ($M =$

5.70, $SD = 6.75$), as compared to not working ($M = 4.54$, $SD = 1.61$); $t(16.92) = -2.34$, $p = 0.032$,

$d = .24$. No statistically significant associations between the status of mothers as working or not,

and all other measures of mothering ideology, postfeminist or neoliberal ideals, or characteristics

of mothers were found (all ps $> .05$). Further, no statistically significant associations were found

between working status (working or stay-at-home) and whether a mother character was or was

not in a romantic relationship ($\chi2$ $(1, N = 34) = 1.756$, $p = .185$, *Cramer's V* $= 0.227$).

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children from previous films in the *Spy Kids* series, but she potentially passes as a White woman
in the film.

Mother characteristics and setting of the film. More than two-thirds of the films analyzed were presented in a contemporary setting. An independent samples t-test indicated that mothers were more likely to score significantly higher in traditional portrayals, as measured by summed scores on the nurturing, warm/affectionate, and moral items, within films set in contemporary times ($M = 16.89$, $SD = 2.08$), as compared to films with a historical setting ($M = 10.50$, $SD = 6.30$); $t(7.65) = 2.81$, $p = .024$, $d = 1.36$. An independent samples t-test indicated that scores on the item that measured the postfeminist belief that mothers are equally capable, as compared to fathers, of contributing to the capitalist economy (scale range = 1-6) were higher in films with a contemporary setting ($M = 3.44$, $SD = 2.45$), as compared to films with an historical setting ($M = 1.00$, $SD = .00$); $t(15.00) = 3.98$, $p = .001$, $d = 1.41$. No statistically significant associations between setting and all other measures of mothering ideology, and postfeminist and neoliberal ideals were found (all ps > .05). A chi-square test was used to see if there was an association between setting and whether a mother was portrayed as partnered or single. A significant association was observed $\chi2$ (1, $N = 34$) = 4.443, $p = .035$, *Cramer's V* = 0.361. Of the films categorized as contemporary, 73.9% were partnered and 26.1% were single. For those films categorised as historical, the proportions were 36.4% (partnered) and 63.3% (single). No statistically significant associations were found between categorization in setting and categorization as a step parent ($\chi2$ (1, $N = 34$) = 1.72, $p = .18$, *Cramer's V* = 0.22) or as nuclear family units ($\chi2$ (1, $N = 34$) = 1.21, $p = .27$, *Cramer's V* = 0.19).

    Characterization of mothers with and without male partners in family films. To test whether "good" traditional portrayals of mothers would be dependent on partnership status with a man, an independent samples t-test was conducted. It was found that the more traditional a mother character was, the more likely it was that she was portrayed as partnered with a man ($M =$

17.06, $SD = 2.11$), as compared to those who were single ($M = 12.00$, $SD = 5.93$); $t(11.76) = 2.71$, $p = 0.019$, $d = 1.14$. Further, scores for the measure which assessed the extent to which mothers provide their children with stimulation was higher for those mothers who were presented as partnered ($M = 16.55$, $SD = 1.86$), as compared to those who were single ($M = 11.11$, $SD = 5.78$); $t(9.37) = 2.71$, $p = 0.023$, $d = 1.27$. The belief that good moms are child-centered was also stronger in films when mothers were presented as partnered ($M = 10.92$, $SD = 1.73$), as compared to those who were single ($M = 8.63$, $SD = 2.50$); $t(18) = 2.43$, $p = 0.026$, $d = 1.06$. Similarly, the new momism ideal of a "yummy mummy" was found to be more prevalent when mothers were presented as partnered ($M = 5.50$, $SD = .67$), as compared to single ($M = 4.27$, $SD = 1.35$); $t(12.55) = 2.85$, $p = 0.014$, $d = 1.15$. No statistically significant associations between partner status and all other measures of mothering ideology, and postfeminist and neoliberal ideals were found (all ps $> .05$).

Step-mothers in family film. Traditional conceptions of mothering were significantly higher for characters portrayed as biological mothers ($M = 15.75$, $SD = 3.84$), compared to those who were portrayed as step-mothers ($M = 9.00$, $SD = 7.94$); $t(25) = -2.56$, $p = 0.017$, $d = 1.08$. The four-item measure of Essentialism, as per the intensive mothering ideology, was found to be significantly greater in characters who were portrayed as biological mothers ($M = 19.80$, $SD = 5.25$) as compared to those who were portrayed as step-mothers ($M = 11.33$, $SD = 9.45$); $t(22) = -2.38$, $p = 0.026$, $d = 1.11$. The portrayal of good mothers as those who were widely skilled, an item from the intensive mothering ideal, was greater in characters portrayed as step-mothers ($M = 6.00$, $SD = .00$), as compared to those portrayed as biological mothers ($M = 4.53$, $SD = 1.01$); $t(16) = 6.02$, $p < .001$, $d = 2.06$. Within the postfeminism ideology variable group, the contextualized portrayal of sexism as a non-issue in society was higher for characters who were

portrayed as step-mothers (M = 6.00, SD = .00), as compared to those who were portrayed as biological mothers (M = 4.71, SD = 1.90); $t(16)$ = 2.81, p = .012, d = .96. Further, within the neoliberal ideology variable group, the conceptualization in family films of the mother's agency and autonomy as a given (while external obstacles are denied or ignored) was higher in characters portrayed as step-mothers (M = 6.00, SD = .00), as compared to those who were portrayed as biological mothers (M = 4.71, SD = 1.90); $t(16)$ = 2.814, p = .012, d = .96.

Relationships between mother characters and male characters. No interactions with other men were present for 17.65% of the mother characters across all of the 23 films analyzed. Approximately 20.6% of mothers were portrayed as passively following the orders of, or unable/unwilling to speak up against the actions of, men in the films. For example, the mother character Helen Kingsleigh, also a widow, in the film Alice Through the Looking Glass (2016) is pushed into signing legal agreements by men who are eager to profit from her late husband's business. The mother character Tyva Hightopp, also in the film Alice Through the Looking Glass (2016), pleads unsuccessfully with her husband to stop belittling their son. As well, the pixies in the film Maleficent (2014) unwittingly follow the orders of the king to raise his daughter. Further, the mother characters, Sonja Burpo, in Heaven is for Real (2014) and Mary Brown in the film Paddington (2014) are shown to be unhappy with their husband's style of parenting but both do not often voice protest. The mother character, Elizabeth Parsons, plays a small role in the film Journey 2: The Mysterious Island (2012), but she follows completely the parenting advice of her new husband.

Approximately 26.5% of mother characters were depicted as having some level of conflict with men in the film. For example, Grace in the film Pete's Dragon (2016) has a rivalry with men who work in logging, and she actively opposes their attempts to capture a dragon.

Maleficent, in the film Maleficent (2014), is a mother figure who declares war against a kingdom and army of men after having her wings cut off by her love, a man named Stefan who becomes king. The mother character, Betty, in the film Earth to Echo (2014) is depicted as emotionally disturbed due to her divorce; her son, Munch, expresses his concern about the high number of men who have lied to his mother.

Approximately 20.6% of mother characters were portrayed as engaged in narratives that had sexual connotations, or behaviour that had sexual connotations, with men with whom they were in a relationship. For example, the mother characters Christy Beam, in the film Miracles from Heaven (2016), Cindy in the film Monster Trucks (2016), Pamela Winscott in the film Max (2015), and Mary Brown in the film Paddington (2014) all engage in intimate behaviors with their intimate partners such as kissing and caressing. Approximately 14.7% of mothers were portrayed as engaged in flirtatious narrative or behaviour with men with whom they were not in a relationship. For example, Gale Coopers in the film Goosebumps (2015) gains a romantic interest in the workplace when she begins working as Vice-Principal in a high school. Also, Miss Colleen Hannigan in the film Annie (2014) is depicted as desperate for romantic relationships with men. When a male inspector visits her foster home, she jumps at the opportunity:

> Colleen: Well, hello there. / Inspector: Are you Colleen Hannigan?/ Colleen: My maiden
> name. But I'm not married to it, if you know what I mean. / Inspector: No. / Colleen:
> Come on in…/Inspector: Uh, should we start here in the bathroom? / Colleen: Why, Mr.
> Inspector, how forward you are…. Oh, your arms are so strong

The mother character, Amanda, in the film Mr. Popper's Penguins (2011) is very friendly with her ex-husband, Mr. Popper; she leaves her business partner and boyfriend with hardly any hesitation and rekindles her relationship with him in the film's "happy ending."

Within approximately 56.5% of the films, fathers played the hero role, ultimately resolving a conflict or saving other characters in some way. For example, the step-father in the film Monster Trucks (2016) rescues his step-son, Tripp, who is being pursued by the film's villains. When Tripp realizes that his step-father, Rick is there to save him, he says: "Tripp: I cannot believe you're here. I'm actually really happy to see you. / Rick: Hey, I told you I wasn't going anywhere." Also, the prince and his men in the film Cinderella (2015) rescue Ella from her wicked step-family. The King's Captain approaches Ella's step-mother and exclaims: "You are requested and required to present yourself to your king. I forbid you to do this! And I forbid you to forbid her! Who are you to stop an officer of the king? Are you an empress? A saint? A deity?" The father character in the film Max (2015) comes to the rescue when his son, Justin, finds himself in conflict with men illegally dealing weapons. The father character in the film Heaven is for Real (2014) actively believes and seeks to understand his son's experience with visiting heaven, while the mother character is sceptical. The father in the film, Paddington (2014) ultimately inspires his wife's illustration of a hero character for a novel that she is illustrating when he saves his family from the film's villain. The step-father character in the film Journey 2: The Mysterious Island (2012) is successful in helping his step-son, Sean, to locate his lost grandfather on a remote island, actively imparting advice and protecting his step-son's life, and the lives of others, along the way.

Of the 8.8% of mother characters in the films who were portrayed as manipulating men in some way, all were step-mothers. For example, the step-mother character Lady Tremaine in the

film Cinderella (2015) is characterized as a "gold-digger," unperturbed by her husband's demise, and solely interested in material goods and status. The step-mother character, Clementianna, in the film Mirror Mirror (2012) traps her husband, transforming him into a beast in a magical realm. The step-mother character Marissa Wilson in the film Spy Kids: All the Time in the World (2011) lies to her husband; he believes her to be an interior designer but she works as a spy.

Version A of the Mother Bechdel test. A vast majority of films (94.1%) failed the Version A Mother Bechdel Test. Only two films contained narratives between two women that did not involve children (The Odd Life of Timothy Green [2012], and Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day [2014]).

Version B of the Mother Bechdel test. Just over half (58.8%) of films analyzed passed Version B of the Mother Bechdel Test. Fourteen films did not contain narratives between a mother and any adult (of any gender) outside of the realm of children. Still, within those films that passed Version B of the Mother Bechdel Test, many of those interactions involve interactions with men in which the mothers are still enacting a parenting role. For instance, the mother character Christy Beam in the film Miracles From Heaven (2016) demands that her husband get dressed and ready for church. Also, the mother character Mary Brown in the film Paddington (2014) has a discussion with a man who runs a hat shop but this occurs in the context of her instinct to nurture Paddington, the bear, and help him to locate his family.

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Primary Analyses

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Hypothesis 1

Are mothers depicted as traditional? The majority of mothers portrayed within the 23 films conformed to traditional conceptions of good mothering. The mean score for traditional

conceptions of mothers ($M = 15.00$, $SD = 4.75$) was found to be significantly higher than the midpoint score (midpoint = 10.5, scale range = 3-18); $t(26) = 4.93$, $p < .001$, $d = .95$ These mothers behaved in ways that are nurturing; they nourish, encourage, and protect their children. For example, the mother character Susan Heffley in the film Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Rodrick Rules (2011) makes a phone call to check in on her teenage son, Rodrick:

> Susan: Rodrick, it's Mom. Is everything okay? It took a long time for you to answer. /
>
> Rodrick: Yeah, everything's fine. I was just washing dishes. / Susan: Okay, honey. Well,
>
> I just wanted to check in and say I love you, and I'm sorry I was so harsh earlier.

Mrs. Jefferson, or Rowley's mom, in the film Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Dog Days (2012), is another example of a mother who is very warm and loving. During a family vacation, she engages her family in a game that leaves Rowley's best friend, Greg, shocked and embarrassed: "Who wants to play I love you because?... I'll start. I love you because you're silly and you make me laugh." Kelly Cooper, in the film Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day (2014), encourages her daughter, Emily: "You are fearless. You're willing to show the world who you really are. That's amazing." Similarly, Mary Brown, in the film Paddington (2014), encourages her son, Jonathan, who displays interest in becoming an astronaut: "You can be whatever you want, love."

Mothers also demonstrated a protective nature. Marissa, a step-mother character in the film Spy Kids: All the Time in the World (2011), gives her step-daughter, Rebecca, a family heirloom:

> My mother said it would always protect me, even in my darkest hour. What I think she
>
> meant by that was, I would always have her love and support… It's something that's very
>
> special to me and my family and I want you to have it.

These mothers displayed high levels of warmth and physical affection towards their children. For example, the mother character, Cindy, in Monster Trucks (2016) is depicted as beaming in admiration of her teenage son, Tripp, and caresses his arm at the beginning of the film. Christy Beam, the mother character in Miracles from Heaven (2016), tucks her daughter into bed: "I love you, Anna… Sleep tight, ladybug." Mothers also complied with traditional conceptions of motherhood that dictate mothers must impart values onto their children. Pamela Winscott, a mother character in the film Max (2015), gently scolds her son Justin: "You can't hide the words in your mind from God by switching out a couple letters in your mouth." Likewise, the mother, Lorraine, in the film Dolphin Tale 2 (2014) imparts life advice when urging her teenage son, Sawyer, to consider a scholarship offer: "Honey, sometimes in life we just have to make a decision."

In all, support was found for traditional conceptions of motherhood. Mothers were in popular family films were portrayed as nurturing, warm and loving, and imparted values onto their children.

Hypothesis 2

Is there evidence of intensive mothering? The mean score for the essentialist measure of intensive mothering beliefs ($M = 18.75$, $SD = 6.32$) was found to be significantly higher than the midpoint score (midpoint = 14, scale range = 4-24); $t(23) = 3.68$, $p = .001$, $d = .75$. Representations of mothers emulated essentialist portrayals in which the mothers were posited as having a natural predisposition to care for children, while fathers were not naturally inclined to parenting. The film Spy Kids: All the Time in the World (2011) depicts a father, Wilbur, who is career-focused, spends little time with his three children, and is oblivious to the goings-on in his family. Wilbur is quick to give up his parenting role as he confronts his new wife, Marissa, after

realizing that she is an undercover spy: *"Where are the kids? / Marissa: They're under protective surveillance at the OSS. / Wilbur: They're probably safer there anyway. I mean, their own dad can't protect them. Just tell them I love them."* In fact, the mother characters were predominantly shown to be the more competent parent, as compared to fathers. For instance, in both films analyzed from the Diary of a Wimpy Kid series, Rodrick Rules (2011) and Dog Days (2012), the father, Frank, is a very passive parent; he disgruntledly follows his wife's directions in parenting their children. Further, the film Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day (2014) emphasizes that the father, Ben Cooper, occupies an unnatural position because he cares for his infant child while his wife engages in paid work. A friend of Ben Cooper indicates that a new word is required to describe his role:

> Friend: I think that it's so cool when a guy can step up to be a full-time fommy. / Ben: A what? / Friend: A father-mommy. / Ben: Okay. Yeah, I guess I'm sort of a fommy by default. I was in aerospace, and I got transitioned out of my job.

The mean score for the fulfillment measure of intensive mothering beliefs ($M = 16.00$, $SD = 4.67$) was found to be significantly higher than the midpoint score (midpoint = 10.5, scale range = 3-18); $t(20) = 5.40$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.18$. This belief was evident in that the majority of the films' "happy endings" consisted of scenes which emphasize the enjoyment of family and satisfaction that a mother figure derives from the health and happiness of her children. At the end of the film Alice Through the Looking Glass (2016), the mother character, Helen Kingsleigh, puts aside societal norms to help her daughter, Alice, realize her aspirations; consequently, the mother-daughter pair rejoice and the film ends with them joyfully embracing. Similarly, *Pete's Dragon* (2016) centers on Grace's adoption of a young boy, Pete, and the film culminates with their union as a complete family unit. The mother character Lorraine Nelson in

the film *Dolphin Tale* (2011), illustrates the joy and satisfaction that a mother experiences through her child: *"I am seeing something that a mother, a teacher... dreams of seeing: A turned-on kid. He is so engaged, and it's not with a Game Boy. It's with something that is alive and beautiful and real."*

The mean score for the stimulation measure of intensive mothering beliefs ($M = 14.10$, $SD = 4.85$) was found to be significantly higher than midpoint score (midpoint = 10.5, scale range = 3-18); $t(19) = 3.32$, $p = .004$, $d = .74$. A greater number of the mothers depicted in the films were portrayed as successfully providing their children with intellectually stimulating activities to best guide their development. In the film, Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Dog Days (2012), the mother character, Susan, is depicted enthusiastically organizing and running a summer book club for her son, Greg, and his friends. She stated: "Let's share the books you brought. I'm not so sure these qualify as literature. How about I get some real books? Classics. Something to stimulate your minds. I'll be right back!" The mother character, Alice, in Parental Guidance (2012), is dedicated to fostering skills in her children though their extra-curricular lessons (their father, Phil is portrayed as much less invested). Alice, the mother, says:

Alice: Oh. Saturday is Harper's audition. / Phil: Yeah, but it's at night. We'll fly back early. We'll make it. / Alice: Also, Turner has speech therapy. I have to buy Harper a dress for the audition. We're supposed to take the kids to the symphony...

The four items which assess the challenging factor of intensive mothering ideology were evaluated separately, as they demonstrated low scale score reliability when combined as a measure. The mean score for the item measuring the intensive mothering belief that parenting is the most demanding job in the world ($M = 5.70$, $SD = .979$) was found to be significantly higher than the midpoint score (midpoint = 3.5, scale range = 1-6); $t(19) = 10.05$, $p < .001$, $d = 2.25$.

For example, the mother character, Sonja Burpo, in the film Heaven is For Real (2014), is anxious about finances and her husband, Todd, emphasizes the gravity of her role as a parent: "Sonja: I'm going to have to get a job… / Todd: But you can't work any harder than you are. We need you here." Similarly, the onerous role of the guardian figure Maleficent's role in the film Maleficent (2014) was illustrated when the child she is watching over, Aurora, confronts her: "Fairy Godmother! You've been watching over me my whole life. I've always known you were close by. Your shadow! It's been following me ever since I was small. Wherever I went, your shadow was always with me."

The mean score for the item measuring the intensive mothering belief that mothers are unable to get a break ($M = 5.89$, $SD = .459$) was found to be significantly higher than midpoint score (midpoint = 3.5, scale range = 1-6); $t(18) = 22.75$, $p < .001$, $d = 5.20$. The most extreme example exists in the film Spy Kids: All the Time in the World (2011), when new mother Marissa Wilson carries her infant daughter in a baby carrier while battling villains in her role as a spy fighting to save the world. Marissa resorts to using dirty diapers as a weapon to fight villains when her hiding location is compromised by the diaper's smell. In the movie Parental Guidance (2012), Phil pleads with his wife to join him on a business/pleasure trip: *"Honey, we haven't had a vacation since Barker was born. That's five years…. this conversation is the longest we've been alone in months."*

The mean score for the item measuring the intensive mothering belief that parenting is exhausting ($M = 5.95$, $SD = .229$) was found to be significantly higher than the midpoint score (midpoint = 3.5, scale range = 1-6); $t(18) = 46.50$, $p < .001$, $d = 10.69$. In the film Dolphin Tale (2011), the mother character Lorraine Nelson is wearied while helping her son, Sawyer, to manage his schooling: "You're making me a nag." The mother character, Kelly Cooper, in the

film Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day (2014), finds herself tired and frantic during a scene in which she is late for work; while driving to first drop off her children at school, she finds herself stuck in traffic and starts to yell: *"Excuse me, sir, in the ironic Mini Cooper! You're gonna have to put down the latte… and move or I am gonna come and do it for you!"*

The mean score for the item measuring the intensive mothering belief that parents must possess a wide range of skills ($M = 4.68$, $SD = 1.057$) was found to be significantly higher than the midpoint score (midpoint = 3.5, scale range = 1-6); $t(18) = 4.88$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.11$. Widely-skilled mothers in the film were well-developed characters who were depicted as competently managing their children, work, and relationships. For instance, in the film Pete's Dragon (2016), Grace is an accomplished forest ranger and she stands up to men who work as loggers in preserving both the environment, and her adopted son, Pete. Although Lady Tremaine, in the film Cinderella (2015) is a villain, she is widely skilled in that she manages the house and land and works to maintain a high status in society for her and her daughters. The mother character, Alice, in Parental Guidance (2012) illustrates an example of her expert-level, informed approach to nurturing the development of her children:

> …there's a way that we talk to our kids. Where you would say 'no', we would say 'consider the consequences'. Where you would say 'don't', we would say 'maybe we should try this'. Or where you would say 'quit your whining you're giving me a headache', we would say 'use your words'. See that way the child sees that he has value, he has worth, he's heard.

The mean score for the child-centered subscale of intensive mothering beliefs ($M = 10.00$, $SD = 2.32$) was found to be significantly higher than midpoint score (midpoint = 7, scale

range = 2-12); $t(19) = 5.79$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.29$. The majority of the mother characters in the films always put their children's needs ahead of their own and keep their children at their center of attention. The mother character, Christy Beam, in the film Miracles from Heaven (2016), emphasizes that the well-being of her daughter, Anna, is more important than her own well-being: "I can handle her thinkin' that this is your fault or my fault, but no one can say that this is Anna's fault!" The film Alice Through the Looking Glass (2016) illustrates child-centeredness through an argument that the mother character, Helen Kingsleigh, experiences with her daughter, Alice: "Alice: How could you sell our shares? / Helen: Everything I do is for you, Alice. So you can make a decent start in life."

In all, support was found for all measured intensive mothering ideals: women are essentially suited to motherhood, women are fulfilled by motherhood, mothers must stimulate their children, parenting is demanding, mothers are unable to get a break, motherhood is exhausting, mothers must possess a wide range of skills, and mothers must be child-centered.

Hypothesis 3

Is there evidence of postfeminist and neoliberal narratives? The mean score for the item that measured whether mothers were viewed as being equally capable to fathers, insofar as being productive citizens who contribute to the capitalist economy ($M = 3.05$, $SD = 2.415$) was not significantly higher than the midpoint score (midpoint = 3.5, scale range = 1-6); $t(18) = -.81$, $p = .430$, $d = .19$). Less than half of mother characters in live action family film were portrayed as engaging in paid work outside of the home (47.06%). Approximately 35.3% of mother characters were depicted as economically dependent on a male character (i.e., Susan Heffley in the Diary of a Wimpy Kid series of films [2011/2012], Sonja Burpo in the film Heaven is for Real [2014], and Pamela Winscott in the film *Max* [2015]). The work status of approximately

17.7% of mother characters who were peripheral or nearly absent in the film could not be deduced (i.e., Mrs. Jefferson in the film Diary of a Wimpy Kid series, Rodrick Rules [2011], and Betty in the film *Earth to Echo* [2014]). Further, many of the working mothers were depicted as experiencing workplace struggles due to their role as a parent. For example, the mother character, Kelly Cooper, in the film Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day (2014), is portrayed as overburdened by her demanding career at a publishing company which interferes with her role as a mother who is raising four children (and vice-versa), regardless of her husband's temporary stay-at-home status due to his job loss. Similarly, the mother character Cindy Green in the film The Odd Life of Timothy Green (2012), experiences tension in her job when she becomes a parent (i.e., her boss is unimpressed to find a jelly stain on her shirt), and ultimately loses her job after her son, Timothy, has an encounter with her boss.

The mean score for the second item measuring the postfeminist idea that sexism is a non-issue ($M = 4.84$, $SD = 1.83$) was found to be significantly higher than the midpoint score (midpoint = 3.5, scale range = 1-6); $t(18) = 3.19$, $p = .005$, $d = .73$). A majority of the films did not depict instances of overt prejudice or overt discrimination towards women.

The mean score for the item measuring the neoliberal idea that successes and failures lie in the responsibility and choices made by mothers ($M = 5.04$, $SD = 1.40$) was found to be significantly higher than the midpoint score (midpoint = 3.5, scale range = 1-6); $t(22) = 5.297$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.10$). Mothers in family films were sometimes very manipulative through their choices, such as Lady Tremaine in the film Cinderella (2015) who strategically marries a man with wealth, who is also often absent from the home and is consequently successful in providing for her biological daughters. Other mother characters were portrayed as attentively making decisions to help successfully guide the fate of their children throughout their life, such as

Maleficent in the film Maleficent (2014) who uses magical power to ensure Aurora's nourishment and safety, and ultimately saves her from harm. The mother character Lorraine Nelson in the Dolphin Tale series of films (2011/2014) was portrayed as a "good mother" because she successfully makes a very important decision which determines the fate of her son, Sawyer. She decides that it is best for her son to volunteer at an aquarium, which he had been secretly attending over summer school, and she goes out of her way to argue with his teacher and meet with the aquarium staff to make this happen. Lorraine's decision is life-changing for her son who finds his self-confidence and purpose in life through working with the staff to save a dolphin. Further, the mother character Mary Brown in the film Paddington (2014) shows empathy towards Paddington bear in the metro station; her decisions to help him find his family guide the direction of the film, which ultimately improves relationships within her family.

The mean score for the item measuring the neoliberal idea that agency and autonomy in mothers is a given and external obstacles are denied or ignored ($M = 4.52$, $SD = 2.04$) was found to be significantly higher than the midpoint score (midpoint = 3.5, scale range = 1-6); $t(20) = 2.30$, $p = .032$, $d = .50$). An exemplar of this ideal was enacted through the mother character Marissa Wilson in the film Spy Kids: All the Time in the World (2011), who works to fight villains with her infant daughter strapped into a baby carrier on her chest (the infant is content throughout the movie). Her ability to work her dangerous job with a baby exaggerates the notion that mothers who do leave work to take care of their children do so by choice and not necessity. In fact, she does not suffer at all through the obstacles that parents face in reality, such as lack of support, including childcare accommodations. Marissa is able to leave child-care duties to her spy agency's robot dog, without expressing an ounce of concern for her infant's well-being, while she finishes her job in which she saves the world.

In all, support was found for the postfeminist idea that sexism is a non-issue in our society, the neoliberal idea that the successes and failures of mothers lie in their responsibilities and choices, and the neoliberal idea that agency and autonomy are a given and external obstacles are denied, but not the postfeminist idea that mothers are equally capable, as compared to fathers, of contributing to the economy.

Hypothesis 4

Is there evidence of the modern "yummy mummy" ideal? The mean score measuring the extent to which a mother character adhered to "yummy mummy" standards ($M = 5.09$, $SD = 1.100$ was found to be significantly higher than the midpoint score (midpoint = 3.5, scale range = 1-6); $t(32) = 8.307$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.44$). Mother characters who conformed to "yummy mummies" were portrayed as highly attractive and conformed to neoliberal societal standards of fashion. An exemplar of this ideal is the mother character, Amanda, in the film Mr. Popper's Penguins (2011) who is depicted as healthy, fit, well-rested, and well-dressed, with flawless make-up and hair. This supports Douglas and Michaels' (2004) conception of a modern version of intensive mothering that demands "yummy mummy" standards of physical appearance as a reflection of the competency of a modern mother.

Discussion

The current study employed a mixed methods analysis of 34 mother characters appearing in 23 top-grossing live action family films from 2011-2016. In accordance with the results of the study, it appears that the lives of on-screen mothers do not reflect the lives of present-day mothers in Western societies. The films overwhelmingly portray White, heterosexual motherhood, vastly underrepresenting Western populations such as Canada (where 20% of the total population is comprised of visible minority persons; Statistics Canada, 2016) and the United

States (where 36% of the total population is comprised of visible minority persons; United States Census, 2012). Further, while less than one-third of on-screen mothers were depicted as engaged in paid work, nearly three-quarters of Canadian mothers are working (Statistics Canada, 2015b) and two-thirds of mothers in the United States (64.4 percent) are earning more than a quarter of all family income (Glynn, 2016). This underrepresentation is consistent with Smith and Granados' (2009) analysis of G-rated films in which "women" characters were less likely to be depicted as working.

This study revealed that popular family films glamorize mothers who depend on men. Results indicated that mother characters who are set in contemporary times were more likely to conform to traditional conceptions of mothers, and be depicted as in a relationship with a man. Partnered mothers were more likely to conform to loving, doting, traditional versions of motherhood but were less likely to contribute to the economy. Further, partnered mothers are idealized via their physical appearance; higher ratings on the "yummy mummy" scale indicate that partnered mothers are presented as significantly more desirable than single moms.

Further, versions of a Bechdel Test designed to examine the development of "mother" characters in popular family films reveal that the representation and potential multi-faceted development of mother characters is dismal. Approximately 94% of the films analyzed did not pass Version A of the Mother Bechdel test; therefore, women are not being portrayed as "having a life" or a personality that extends beyond the lives of their children in family films. As Version B of the Mother Bechdel Test did pass for approximately 59% of the films analyzed (where the litmus was a conversation with an adult of any gender, that amounted to conversations with a single male), it is obvious that it is only through interactions with men that mothers are able to engage outside of the parenting realm. And, even so, the context of this interaction is often

indicative of their motherhood (e.g., women engaged in conversations around the caretaking of their husbands). Affording women more dominant roles in film may be vital to depictions of mother characters who are less restricted as instruments of child-rearing, as it could reflect a more meaningful personage with which a wider range of audience members are able to empathize.

The underdevelopment, and unimportance, of mother characters in family film is further evident in the removal of more than one-third of top-grossing live-action family films from analysis due to the noted absence or implied death of a mother character. Åström (2015) viewed this phenomenon as reflective of society's undervaluing of women who mother, through which the superior capability and dominance of men is asserted via a heroic act in which they ensure a positive fate for the children left behind. As an example, the film Hugo (2011) features an orphan boy caught stealing by a male shopkeeper who, in the end, saves and adopts the boy.

The current study further found the family film genre to romanticize the traditional notion of women's power lying in their ability to love and care for their children. The on-screen traits of mother characters served to bind and prescribe them to their role as a mother, with no focus on other realms of their life outside of family. These results suggest a persistence of Western society's idealization of a conception of mothering, characterized by Fass (2016, p.37) as a "…*'natural'* maternal affection that emerged predominantly in the middle 19th Century as the key ingredient for child nurture." An example of a character who conforms to a traditional conception of a "good mother" was Susan Heffley, from the film series Diary of a Wimpy Kid (2012/2011). She is a doting mother who brings her son cereal while he plays video games, cleans up after him, and manages his relationship with his father. In contrast, a mother character who fits the mould of a "bad mother" (i.e., one who does not meet the ideal; Harris, 2004) is

Colleen Hannigan, foster mother in the film Annie (2014). "Ms. Hannigan" is portrayed as an addict, who is found passed out on her couch amidst a messy apartment, inattentive to the children under her care. These finding lend strong support for Hypothesis 1.

Modern, intensive mothering beliefs were further found to dominate popular images of mothers in the family film genre. Mother characters were idealized, apart from men, in that they were depicted as the more competent parent, necessary to the health and happiness of their families. While fathers were depicted as incompetent or less competent in meeting the needs of their children outside of the provider role, they were most often afforded the role of hero. This finding is accordant with Towbin et al.'s (2008) study of gender and sex images in Disney animated films in which the authors revealed a trend of strong and heroic depictions of men. Mother characters in the current study tend to be granted superiority strictly in the domain of parenthood, and expertise in other areas tends to be denied. This restriction does not detract from the depiction of mothers as experiencing fulfillment through their role. Indeed, the majority of the films in this study clearly celebrated the role of mothers as distinctively vital to raising families in "happy" households. This series of findings lends support to Hypothesis 2.

Lending support to Hypothesis 3 is the finding that the family film genre did not depict the existence of overt prejudice or discrimination towards mothers, a measure of postfeminism ideology (i.e., that prejudice and discrimination and/or more globally, sexism, no longer exist). For example, although the mother character Gale Coopers in the film Goosebumps (2015), was recently widowed and moved herself and her son to a different town, she is not depicted as experiencing, or feeling, challenges and struggles in her motherhood. Results indicated that mother characters were not portrayed in accordance with the postfeminist ideal that mothers are equally capable, as compared to fathers, in their ability to contribute to the capitalist economy.

Yet, mother characters in family films set in contemporary times were more likely to be portrayed as capable contributors, reflective of postfeminism, a contemporary ideology. Hypothesis 3 was further supported because neoliberal narratives were found to predominate the family films analyzed. Such narratives place the onus on mothers to guarantee the successful rearing of their children, and further declare that barriers (e.g., the high cost of providing resources, such as quality education and nutrition, for children, while mothers face discrimination in hiring and promotion and are subject to wage penalties; Kricheli-Katz, 2012), which may prevent successful mothering, do not exist in our society.

The current study also examined Douglas and Michaels' (2004) "yummy mummy" phenomenon, central to their new momism version of intensive mothering. Images that emulated the "yummy mummy" ideal of motherhood permeated the family films analyzed in this study, which leant support to Hypothesis 4. The image of a "yummy mummy" works to infuse the notion of considerable economic privilege for mothers deemed "good" or "desirable," and this image is embodied when a perfectly fit, thin, stylish, and desirable middle-class, White woman appears on-screen (Jermyn, 2008). Accordingly, a majority of mother characters in the current study were middle-class, and glorified for their access to resources that allowed them to present themselves as beautiful, along with their ability to provide for their children. For example, the mother character, Alice, in the film Parental Guidance is White, upper-class, married, and child-centered; she presents a flawless appearance throughout the film (minus one scene in which she appears a tad haggard), is successful in her career (she is a web maven with ESPN), and keeps a gorgeous home, equipped with the latest technologies which her husband works to develop. This finding satisfies Kinnick's (2009) "good mother" motif, in which the idealization of motherhood is classed.

Limitations and Future Directions

Several limitations to the current study must be addressed. First, while theoretical frameworks were used to support development of the current research, alternate ideologies do exist. For example, ecofeminist views about motherhood as a feminine universal (Stearney, 2009) may inform different, valuable perspectives of the ways in which family films portray mothers and other media portrayals of mothers. Also, it is unknown if representations of mothers and motherhood in family film mirror trends in other genres. Moreover, while the development of the family film genre is rooted in maximizing mass appeal, other genres that are designed to target audience groups may adhere to different stereotypes. In addition, the interplay amongst the myriad factors involved in depictions of mothers in film is problematic in that it is difficult to judge the positive or negative intention of the depiction of certain characteristics (e.g., the incredible resourcefulness of the wicked step-mothers). Finally, while it was demonstrated that restrictive myths about mothers and motherhood are found in family films that reach a large audience base, causal inferences cannot be attributed to the results of this study.

Anderson and Daniels (2016) examined 2000 Hollywood films from the 1980s to the 2010s and found male characters dominated the dialogue for approximately 76% of films, with a female majority dialogue existing within approximately 8.6% of films. It would be valuable to further explore the amount of mother-centered dialogue in film, as compared to male dialogue or the dialogue of female characters who are not parents. Employment of new research techniques, such as software developed by Shri Narayanan (University of South California), measuring screen-time based on gender, may inform future research; specifically, measuring the screen time of mother characters, and comparing this time to screen time of other characters would be a

critical advance. Narayanan used the software to examine 300 live-action top-grossing films and found that female characters occupied only 36% total screen time (Reynolds, 2017). Last, as racialized mothers were practically absent across all top-grossing family films searched and, in particular those assessed in the present study, research that explores the portrayal of mothers of colour in the media would be especially valuable.

The current study also revealed that mother characters were defined by their status in relation to men (i.e., traditional, "good mothers" were more likely to have a male partner). The relationships between the nature of the portrayal of mother characters and the nature of portrayals of the men to whom they are attached may be meaningful and warrant future consideration. Finally, the persons involved in the making of the films analyzed for this study were predominantly male. It may be possible that the lived experiences of females are able to translate into more realistic versions of mothering, inclusive of good and bad interactions with children. Further studies that examine media content made directly by women may be able to reveal the significance of a male-dominated film industry and representations of mothers, or other motifs occupied by women in the media.

Conclusion

In summary, the results of this study demonstrate that top-grossing, live-action family films idolize heteronormative conceptions of White motherhood. These films emphasize traditional views of mothers in contemporary times, while further glorifying intensive mothering ideals that prescribe the modern demands of intensive mothering (e.g., full responsibility for a child's development and the intensity by which this mandated objective is upheld). Family films idealize intensive mothering through portrayals of mother characters that are naturally suited to the parenting role (biological mothers only) and experiencing ultimate fulfillment through their

children. As well, motherhood is portrayed as extremely demanding; "good mothers" in family

films are portrayed as those who self-sacrifice and work to stimulate the development of their

children, wherein systemic structures and norms that perpetuate inequalities experienced by

mothers are largely ignored. Across all live-action family films assessed, the mothers depicted

overwhelmingly subscribe to "yummy mummy" neoliberal standards of beauty. While mothers

in family film are generally depicted as unimportant in comparison to other characters, men

dominate the role of hero. Mother characters who are depicted as being in relationships with

men are put on a pedestal, all the while step-mothers are villainized; this parallels Henneberg's

(2010) finding that Disney movies contrast "wicked witches" with heteronormative depictions of

women.

     In all, since the family film industry in Western societies is hugely popular and marketed

to a mass audience, these portrayals of mothers hold powerful social meanings. In reality,

mothers who strive to conform to these socially constructed ideologies of motherhood may find

themselves unable to exercise the choice and autonomy that they are promised through

postfeminist and neoliberal societal narratives. As an illustration, real-life mother, and PepsiCo

CEO, Indra Nooyi once stated:

> I don't think women can have it all. I just don't think so. We pretend we *have* it all. We
>
> pretend we *can* have it all… every day you have to make a decision about whether you
>
> are going to be a wife or a mother, in fact many times during the day you have to make
>
> those decisions. And you have to co-opt a lot of people to help you… But if you ask our
>
> daughters, I'm not sure they will say that I've been a good mom (Friedersdorf, 2014).

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Table 1

List of top-grossing family films (2011-2016) that contain portrayals of mothers by year of film production. Movie personnel involved in the making of the film. An asterisk signifies the person is a woman.

	Year	Movie Title	Gross (US$)	Rating	Producer(s)	Director(s)	Screenwriter(s)	Writer(s)
1	2016	Alice Through the Looking Glass	77.04M	PG	Joe Roth, Suzanne Todd*, Jennifer Todd*, Tim Burton	James Bobin		Linda Woolverton*
2	2016	Pete's Dragon	76.20M	PG	James Whitaker	David Lowery	David Lowery, Toby Halbrooks	Book by Malcolm Mamorstein
3	2016	Miracles from Heaven	61.69M	PG	DeVon Franklin, T.D. Jakes, Joe Roth	Patricia Riggen*		Randy Brown, Book by Christy Beam*
4	2016	Monster Trucks	33.04M	PG	Mary Parent*, Denis L. Stewart	Chris Wedge	Derek Connolly	Matthew Robinson, Jonathan Aibel, Glenn Berger
5	2015	Cinderella	201.15M	PG	Simon Kinberg, Allison Shearmur*, David Barron	Kenneth Branagh	Chris Weitz	Based on Cinderella's Cendrill on by Charles Perrault
6	2015	Goosebumps	80.02M	PG	Deborah Forte*, Neal H. Moritz	Rob Letterman	Darren Lemke	Scott Alexander, Larry Karaszewski, Based on Goosebumps by R. L. Stine
7	2015	Max (I)	42.65M	PG	Karen Rosenfelt*	Boaz Yakin	Sheldon Lettich, Boaz Yakin	
8	2014	Maleficent	241.41M	PG	Joe Roth	Robert Stromberg	Linda Woolverton*	Based on Disney's Sleeping Beauty La Belle au bois dormant by Charles Perrault
9	2014	Heaven is for Real	91.44M	PG	Joe Roth, T. D. Jakes	Randall Wallace	Randall Wallace, Christopher Parker	Book by Todd Burpo and Lynn Vincent*
10	2014	Annie	85.91M	PG	James Lassiter, Will Gluck, Jada Pinkett Smith*, Will Smith, Caleb Pinkett, Shawn "Jay Z" Carter, Jay Brown, Tyran Smith	Will Gluck	Will Gluck, Aline Brosh McKenna*	Based on musical by Charles Strouse, Martin Charnin, Thomas Meehan and book by Harold Gray

11	2014	Paddington	76.14M	PG	David Heyman	Paul King	Paul King	Paul King, Hamish McColl
12	2014	Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day (2014)	66.95M	PG	Shawn Levy, Dan Levine, Lisa Henson*	Miguel Arteta	Rob Lieber	Based on book by Judith Viorst*
13	2014	Dolphin Tale 2	42.02M	PG	Robert Engelman, Broderick Johnson, Andrew Kosove	Charles Martin Smith		Charles Martin Smith
14	2014	Earth to Echo	38.92M	PG	Ryan Kavanaugh, Andrew Panay	Dave Green	Henry Gayden	Henry Gayden, Andrew Panay
15	2012	Journey 2: The Mysterious Island	103.86M	PG	Beau Flynn, Tripp Vinson, Charlotte Huggins*	Brad Peyton	Brian Gunn, Mark Gunn	Richard Outten, Brian Gunn, Mark Gunn
16	2012	Parental Guidance	77.26M	PG	Billy Crystal, Peter Chernin, Dylan Clark	Andy Fickman		Lisa Addario*, Joe Syracuse
17	2012	Mirror Mirror (I)	64.93M	PG	Ryan Kavanaugh, Bernie Goldmann, Brett Ratner, Kevin Misher	Tarsem Singh	Marc Klein, Jason Keller	Melisa Wallack*
18	2012	Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Dog Days	49.00M	PG	Nina Jacobson*, Brad Simpson	David Bowers	Wallace Wolodarsky, Maya Forbes*	Based on the Books "Dog Days" and "The Last Straw" by Jeff Kinney
19	2012	The Odd Life of Timothy Green	51.85M	PG	Scott Sanders, James Whitaker, Ahmet Zappa	Peter Hedges	Peter Hedges	Ahmet Zappa
20	2011	Dolphin Tale	72.28M	PG	Richard Ingber, Broderick Johnson, Andrew Kosove	Charles Martin Smith		Karen Janszen*, Noam Dromi
21	2011	Mr. Popper's Penguins	68.22M	PG	John Davis	Mark Waters	Sean Anders, John Morris, Jared Stern	Based on Book by Richard Atwater and Florence Atwater*
22	2011	Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Rodrick Rules	52.69M	PG	Nina Jacobson*, Brad Simpson, Ethan Smith	David Bowers	Jeff Judah, Gabe Sachs	Based on Book by Jeff Kinney
23	2011	Spy Kids: All the Time in the World	38.54M	PG	Robert Rodriguez, Elizabeth Avellán*	Robert Rodriguez		Robert Rodriguez

Table 2

Characterological Profile of mothers in live action family films

Variable	n	%
Age		
20 – 29 years old	2	5.9
30 – 39 years old	12	35.3
40 – 49 years old	18	52.9
50 – 50 years old	0	0
60 – 69 years old	1	2.9
Race		
White	32	94.1
Black	1	2.9
Asian	0	0
American Indian	0	0
Latina	1	2.9
Work status		
Working	15	44.1
Stay-at-home	11	32.4
Unknown	7	20.6
Retired	1	2.9
Relationship Status		
Single, not dating	4	11.8
Single, dating (or has partner)	2	5.9
Married	19	55.9
Divorced	2	5.9
Widowed	4	11.8
Remarried	2	5.9
Parental Status		
Biological Mother	25	73.5
Step-mother	4	11.7
Mother who adopted	2	5.9
Foster mother	2	5.9
Number of Children		
1	17	50
2	9	26.5
3	5	14.7
4	1	2.9
5	1	2.9
Presence in Storyline		
Central	12	35.3
Peripheral	9	26.5
Nearly absent	13	38.2
Setting of film		
Contemporary	23	67.6
Historical	11	32.4

Table 3

Scale Reliabilities (Cronbach's alphas) and 95% Confidence Intervals

Measure	α	Lower Bound 95% CI	Upper Bound 95% CI
Traditional	.930	.87	.97
Essentialism	.902	.82	.95
Fulfillment	.951	.89	.98
Stimulation	.908	.81	.96
Challenging	.291	-.43	.70
Child-centered	.816	.54	.93
Postfeminism	.572	-.11	.84
Neoliberalism	.460	-.33	.78

Table 4

Correlations

	Traditional Motherhood (3-item measure)	Essentialism (Intensive Mothering Ideology; 4-item measure)	Fulfillment (Intensive Mothering Ideology; 3-item measure)	Stimulation (Intensive Mothering Ideology; 3-item measure)	Demanding (Intensive Mothering Ideology)	Mothers never get a break (Intensive Mothering Ideology)	Parenting is exhausting (Intensive Mothering Ideology)	Mothers must be widely skilled (Intensive Mothering Ideology)	Child-Centeredness (Intensive Mothering Ideology; 2-item measure)	Yummy Mummy portrayal (new momism Ideology)
Traditional Motherhood	1	.831**	.944**	.643**	.769**	.109	-.134	-.017	.510*	.439*
Essentialism	-	1	.884**	.647**	.739**	-.172	.294	.153	.595**	.395
Fulfillment	-	-	1	.561*	.785**	-.025	-.089	-.130	.574*	.336
Stimulation	-	-	-	1	.782**	.122	.122	.252	.439	.508*
Demanding	-	-	-	-	1	-.056	-.056	.157	.580*	.195
Mothers never get a break	-	-	-	-	-	1	-.056	.157	.246	.052
Parenting is exhausting	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	.386	-.088	.052
Mothers must be widely skilled	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	.296	.337
Child-centeredness	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	.621**
Yummy Mummy portrayal	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1

Note: ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$.

Table 5

Correlations

	Mothers are just as capable as fathers in being productive citizens (postfeminist ideology)	Sexism is a non-issue (postfeminist ideology)	Successes and failures in motherhood lie in the responsibility and choices of mothers (neoliberal ideology)	Agency and autonomy of mothers is a given, while external obstacles are ignored or denied (neoliberal ideology)
Mothers are just as capable as fathers in being productive citizens	1	.416	**.488***	**.519***
Sexism is a non-issue		1	.394	**.534***
Successes and failures in motherhood lie in the responsibility and choices of mothers			1	.322
Agency and autonomy of mothers is a given, while external obstacles are ignored or denied				1

Note: ** *p* < 0.01, * *p* < 0.05.

Table 6

Correlations

	Mothers are just as capable as fathers in being productive citizens (postfeminist ideology)	Sexism is a non-issue (postfeminist ideology)	Successes and failures in motherhood lie in the responsibility and choices of mothers (neoliberal ideology)	Agency and autonomy of mothers is a given, while external obstacles are ignored or denied (neoliberal ideology)
Traditional Motherhood	.232	-.091	.323	.005
Essentialism	.298	-.075	.006	-.264
Fulfillment	.233	-.264	.090	-.277
Stimulation	.223	-.066	.224	.081
Demanding	.273	-.225	.277	-.169
Mothers never get a break	-.322	-.176	-.124	-.169
Parenting is exhausting	.109	.232	-.124	-.050
Mothers must be widely skilled	**.569***	.185	.389	-.117
Child-centeredness	-.062	-.215	-.244	**-.464***
Yummy Mummy portrayal	.180	-.006	.121	-.142

Note: ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$.

Figure 1. Percentage of Men vs Women Involved in the Production, Direction, and Writing of

Top-Grossing Live-Action Family Films: 2011-2016.

Codebook #1:

H1: Are Mothers Depicted in Traditional Ways?

a) Mothers are nurturing
1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (slightly disagree), 4 (slightly agree), 5 (agree), 6 (strongly agree)

b) Mothers are warm and loving
1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (slightly disagree), 4 (slightly agree), 5 (agree), 6 (strongly agree)

c) Mothers are moral, and transmit values to their child(ren)
1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (slightly disagree), 4 (slightly agree), 5 (agree), 6 (strongly agree)

H2: Do Depictions of Mothers Align with Intensive Mothering Ideals?

Essentialist factor of intensive mothering ideology.

a) Women positioned as innately suited for parenting role
1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (slightly disagree), 4 (slightly agree), 5 (agree), 6 (strongly agree)

b) Mothers are better parents than fathers
1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (slightly disagree), 4 (slightly agree), 5 (agree), 6 (strongly agree)

c) Children need their mother more than their father
1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (slightly disagree), 4 (slightly agree), 5 (agree), 6 (strongly agree)

d) Mothers are ultimately responsible for children
1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (slightly disagree), 4 (slightly agree), 5 (agree), 6 (strongly agree)

Fulfillment factor of intensive mothering ideology.

a) Being a mother is the greatest possible joy in life
1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (slightly disagree), 4 (slightly agree), 5 (agree), 6 (strongly agree)

b) Mothering is rewarding
1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (slightly disagree), 4 (slightly agree), 5 (agree), 6 (strongly agree)

c) Motherhood brings satisfaction
1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (slightly disagree), 4 (slightly agree), 5 (agree), 6 (strongly agree)

Stimulation factor of intensive mothering ideology.

a) Good mothers provide the best educational opportunities
1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (slightly disagree), 4 (slightly agree), 5 (agree), 6 (strongly agree)

b) Mothers guide children's engagement with classes, lessons and activities
1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (slightly disagree), 4 (slightly agree), 5 (agree), 6 (strongly agree)

c) Mother has regular, engaging interaction with children
1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (slightly disagree), 4 (slightly agree), 5 (agree), 6 (strongly agree)

Challenging factor of intensive mothering ideology.

a) Being a parent is the most demanding job in the world
1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (slightly disagree), 4 (slightly agree), 5 (agree), 6 (strongly agree)

b) Mothers never get a break
1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (slightly disagree), 4 (slightly agree), 5 (agree), 6 (strongly agree)

c) Parenting is exhausting
1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (slightly disagree), 4 (slightly agree), 5 (agree), 6 (strongly agree)

d) Mothers must be widely skilled
1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (slightly disagree), 4 (slightly agree), 5 (agree), 6 (strongly agree)

Child-centered factor of intensive mothering ideology.

a) Children's needs come first
1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (slightly disagree), 4 (slightly agree), 5 (agree), 6 (strongly agree)

b) Children are always the mother's center of attention
1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (slightly disagree), 4 (slightly agree), 5 (agree), 6 (strongly agree)

Codebook #2

H3: Are Postfeminist and Neoliberal Narratives Found in the Films?

Postfeminist narratives.

a) Mothers are just as capable as fathers in being productive citizens who contribute to the capitalist economy
1(strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (slightly disagree), 4 (slightly agree), 5 (agree), 6 (strongly agree)

b) Sexism is a non-issue
1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (slightly disagree), 4 (slightly agree), 5 (agree), 6 (strongly agree)

Neoliberal narratives.

a) Successes and failures in motherhood lie in the responsibility and choices made by mothers
1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (slightly disagree), 4 (slightly agree), 5 (agree), 6 (strongly agree)

b) Agency and autonomy of mothers is a given and external obstacles (i.e., prejudice or systemic barriers) are denied or ignored
1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (slightly disagree), 4 (slightly agree), 5 (agree), 6 (strongly agree)

H4: Are Images of "Yummy Mummies" Found in the Films?

a) Adhere to "yummy mummy" standards via physical fitness and fashionable clothing/make-up that highlights attractive features and shows off their access to resources.
1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (slightly disagree), 4 (slightly agree), 5 (agree), 6 (strongly agree)

Codebook #3

Characterological Profile of Mothers in the Films

Representation of mothers.

a) Age range of mother(s) in film
20 - 29 years old, 30 -39 years old, 40 -49 years old, 50 – 59 years old, or 60 – 69 years old

b) Race of mother(s) in film
White, Black, Asian, American Indian, or Latina

c) Occupation of mother(s) characters in film
Mothers are: Working or Stay-at-Home

d) Mothers are: single (dating, not dating, live-in partner), married, divorced, widowed, remarried

e) Mothers depicted in a: nuclear family, or nonnuclear family.

f) Mothers are: biological mother, step-mother (with or without her own biological children), mother who adopted, foster mother, or other.

f) Age of children: Child 1: _____
                        Child 2: _____
                        Child 3: _____

g) Mother character is central, peripheral, or nearly absent to the storyline

h) Importance of the mother character (i.e., involved with solving a major problem being presented, or plays the role of hero)
1 (very unimportant), 2 (unimportant), 3 (slightly unimportant), 4 (slightly important), 5 (important), 6 (very important)

i) Relation to father and other men in the film (examples and quotes from the film)

j) Setting of the film: Contemporary or historical

Mother versions of the Bechdel Test

a) Does this movie pass version A of the Mother Bechdel test (answer "yes" to all three questions)?

At least two women in the film have names (yes or no)
These women talk to one another (yes or no)
They talk to each other about something other than children (yes or no)

b) Does this movie pass version B of the Mother Bechdel Test (answer yes to one question)?

Do mother characters in the film talk to any adult about anything other than children? (yes or no)