

# The Equality Test: Egalitarian Gender Representation in Film

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Assuming a constructionist approach to media representation, equality of gender representation within media texts could contribute to the construction of an egalitarian society. The Equality Test (TET) can be used to assess the narrative importance of male and female characters within a film, generating a score for each gender and an overall disparity figure that reveals the extent to which a film portrays gender equality or inequality. TET has been applied to a case study sample with the conclusion that although minor variations in user responses to TET's questions will mean slightly inconsistent results across users, that in most cases TET is still likely to provide a clear indication of whether a text is biased towards male or female importance and a measure of the extent. As TET gives a numerical equality score, it could be used to produce quantitative data on whether individual texts or groupings (by year, production company, genre, etc.) represent males and females as equal or not and therefore whether they are contributing to the construction of cultural equality or inequality.

Keywords: gender; film; film studies; representation; constructionist; constructivist; feminist; feminism

## Introduction

The analysis of representation is long established in academic circles, including the study of meaning in film. The audio-visual medium is understood to be a representational system that encodes messages that are in turn decoded by the viewer. The mimetic approach focuses on how this meaning reflects reality; the intentional approach how meaning is created by its authors; and the constructionist approach, how meaning is constructed through filmic language and interpreted by the viewer (Hall, 2013).

The meanings created in film are part of the construction of culture (shared meanings) and identity (meanings about the self or groups). Therefore, representation is often studied in relation to a particular category such as a racial, gender or sexuality label, in order to discuss the meanings that are being created and circulated about particular groups and, consequently, constructing identity within a culture, in terms of both “self” and “other”.

Assuming the constructionist approach, egalitarian representation within the media could be a vital part of the construction of an egalitarian society. If the meanings projected by texts are that certain groups are more or less important, those meanings influence both individual identities and cultural ideology and therefore have a wider impact on attitudes, power, structures; everything that involves human thought, behaviour and action.

If an egalitarian society is an aspiration, it follows that equality within media representation would also be desirable, and therefore that it is important to explore the ways in which a text can be said to represent groups equally. Initially to explore the level to which equality or inequality currently exists within texts and ultimately to encourage positive change in future productions.

This paper focuses on measuring equality of gender representation, using the binary gender labels “male” and “female” that are currently the predominant gender identities. As neither males nor females could be said to be a minority group quantitatively, anything less than equal representation reveals constructed rather than reflective inequality within a text, highlighting whether it projects a message of equality or inequality to people within the receiving culture, and therefore contributes to the construction of either an equal or unequal society.

The paper proposes a method of measuring equality of gender representation within a text: The Equality Test (TET). The test measures the narrative importance of male and female characters, providing a quantitative measure of the level of equality. TET will be introduced and then evaluated through application to case study examples in order to determine whether it is an effective and sufficient measure of a text's equality of representation.

### **The Equality Test**

The Equality Test (TET) is based on the idea that in order to test equality of representation, the importance of male and female characters within a narrative must be compared. TET gives male and female characters scores based on their narrative importance. Each gender receives a final score and the disparity between the male and female totals reveals the depth of gender equality or inequality within a narrative.

The focus on narrative importance is in contrast to representation discourse that focuses on the details of the portrayal of gender. Analysing portrayal encourages bias, as people are likely to make value judgments on whether a character's behaviour, appearance, dialogue and so on promotes a "positive" or "negative" representation of gender. For example, many people are impressed by "strong female characters" as a challenge to the traditional damsel-in-distress, however many "strong female characters", such as Mallory Kane in *Haywire* (2011), are arguably pseudo-masculine characters, suggesting that equality for a woman means developing traditionally masculine traits. This leads to questions such as, does egalitarian representation mean men and women are to be portrayed as the same, or different but equal? If different, then

does this then contribute to gender stereotyping rather than challenging it?

Whilst asking these questions and analysing portrayal can be extremely revelatory, interesting and useful, it is not the purpose of TET. TET doesn't ask whether the user sees the portrayal as positive or negative. Instead, it focuses solely on the narrative importance of male and female characters.

An important character is one who the story is about; one who drives the direction of the narrative; one whose actions provoke change; one who grows, learns and develops; one with whom the audience is asked to relate to and care about. If a character is important within a narrative, the constructed meaning is that their story, their emotions, their actions, their dialogue, are valuable. Gender is a part of that meaning construction – if one gender or another is put into important or unimportant roles within a film, the constructed meaning is that one gender is more valuable or important than the other. In one film, this may be inconsequential; when this is repeated, the meanings are reinforced and more likely to influence culture on a wider scale.

The avoidance of focusing on positive or negative portrayal serves an additional function. By focusing on narrative importance alone, TET allows for films to portray role model traits and / or to reveal inequality within society. Whilst positive role models are important, it is also important to reveal society's issues and inequalities. Using TET, a film that promotes gender equality through the portrayal of role model qualities (for example by having a heroic female protagonist) would score the same as one that promotes equality through revealing oppression (for example a victimised female protagonist). As the protagonist, the most important character within the narrative, the victim and hero protagonists would receive the same score.

Using a scoring system rather than a qualitative analysis has benefits and drawbacks. A subjective, in-depth analysis of the narrative importance of characters of different genders would be interesting and relevant, however this would be at the expense of generating a clear and easily comparable measure of a text's equality or inequality.

TET aims to produce quantitative data that could be used to directly compare films or to produce statistics demonstrating the gender equality or inequality of specific genres, production years, production companies or any other category of the test user's choice. Therefore, TET categories have been designed to have a balance between analysis of character's narrative importance, for which users will be at least partially subjective, and with a level of simplicity that encourages (although by no means guarantees), the likelihood of uniformity of response across TET users. It also allows for users to score films more quickly than a full analysis and therefore to generate statistics about a greater quantity of films.

Table 1. The Equality Test (TET):

<b>The Equality Test</b>				
<b>Category</b>		<b>Points Per Character</b>	<b>Male Characters</b>	<b>Female Characters</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Named Characters</b>	1		
<b>2</b>	<b>Protagonist</b>	10		
<b>3</b>	<b>Deuteragonist</b>	8		

4	<b>Tritagonist</b>	6		
5	<b>Antagonist</b>	6		
<b>TOTALS</b>				
<b>DISPARITY</b>				<b>MALE / FEMALE</b>

The first section, “Named Characters”, is the most objective. Users must identify and tally the gender of all named characters. Every male character scores one point in the “Male Characters” column; every female scores one point in the “Female Characters” column.

The purpose of this section is somewhat self-explanatory – it asks how visible males and females are within the film. The focus is on named characters for two reasons. One is that it allows counting based on a cast list rather than having to watch the film and count the males and females on screen (which would be arduous and impractical). Two is that named characters are more likely to have some level of significance or purpose and therefore by counting named characters, an idea is formed about the meaning being created about the purposefulness and relevance of males and females within a text.

Whilst it would be ideal to determine the importance level of every character within the narrative in order to get a full and detailed picture, this would be complicated, time-consuming and largely subjective. Whilst the limitations of giving every named character the same score (at this stage) are acknowledged, the fact that both male and female characters are being judged using the same method means that if there is a stark difference between genders, the numbers

will still reveal this.

That said, counting the named characters is not in itself a sufficient measure, which is where sections 2 to 5 come in. In these sections, users identify what are usually the four most important characters in a narrative and give these characters a higher score. The score goes into either the male or female character columns, depending on the respective character's gender.

Section 2 asks users to identify the text's protagonist; the most important character in the majority of narratives. The audience are invited to see the world through the protagonist's eyes, relate to their experiences and experience their journey. Christopher Vogler, basing his narrative theories on the work of Joseph Campbell and Carl Jung, says the function of the protagonist (or "Hero" as calls them) goes further than superficial identification – the journey of the Hero in a story mimics the journey of the ego in finding its identity and "stories invite us to invest part of our personal identity in the Hero for the duration of the [story] experience" (Vogler, 2007, p. 30).

Due to the importance of the protagonist in both narrative function and audience identification on a superficial and deeper psychological level, in section 2, this character achieves the highest score in The Equality Test: ten.

In section 3, the deuteragonist, is given a score of eight as they are often a character of almost equal importance to the protagonist – be it the sidekick, the best friend, the love interest. This character is often a major part of the relationship and character arcs, as well as being an important character in their own right, usually with their own arc. Often, it is even quite challenging to differentiate between a protagonist and deuteragonist without a thorough analysis; again highlighting their importance.

In section 4, the tritagonist scores 6. As the second most important character, the deuteragonist scores two points less than the protagonist; as the third most important character, the deuteragonist scores two points less than the deuteragonist. As is probably self-evident, the intention here is to score on a sliding scale based on the narrative importance of the character role.

It would be possible to continue here and score all characters in terms of their narrative importance, however the further down the level of importance, the greater the difficulty in objectively identifying the order in which to organise the characters. Although stopping at the tritagonist is limiting, it does not invalidate TET – both genders have equal opportunity to score as both are judged on just the most important character roles in sections 2 to 4.

In section 5, the antagonist is identified and scored. As the audience predominantly relate to the protagonist, it can be argued that the importance of other characters is directly linked to their relationship with the protagonist (McKee, 1999). The antagonist's role is to cause conflict through opposition to the protagonist and in addition, conflict is a key ingredient in all stories and the catalyst for the story's plot and the protagonist's development.

Due to the antagonist's importance, it could be argued that they should score eight rather than six, however six was decided upon for two reasons. As the deuteragonist is often almost indistinguishable from the protagonist (or at least the role of protagonist and deuteragonist can be disputed), the conclusion was made that the deuteragonist should score more highly than the antagonist. In addition, although the antagonist's function is important, they often have less screen time than the protagonist and deuteragonist and in some cases, the antagonist can even be a function (such as a natural disaster) rather than a



character, and even as a character, they are often less well-developed than the protagonist and their main allies.

After completing section 5, the final scores for each gender are totalled, but during development, TET included a further three sections under the subheading “Depth of Characterisation” and as this is an important part of equality or representation that has been left out of TET, it seems pertinent to explore the reasons behind its exclusion.

Table 2. Depth of Characterisation, Removed From TET:

<b>Depth of Characterisation</b>				
For characters 2, 3, 4 and 5 above, give a score of 0 or 3, depending on whether or not the character exhibits the following:				
6	<b>Humanising Traits</b>	3		
7	<b>Admirable Qualities or Strength of Character</b>	3		
8	<b>Character Arc</b>	3		

The initial reasoning behind including this section was that it would focus on the features of a well-developed character. The categories are based partially on Karl Iglesias’s three ways that audiences identify with characters – feeling sorry for them, recognising their humanising qualities and vicariously experiencing their admirable traits (Iglesias, 2011). The first, feeling sorry for them, has been omitted as vulnerability is mostly covered by “Humanising Traits”. The second, “Admirable Qualities” has had “Strength of Character” added to it. This is

because some traits may be admirable within the diegesis but not in real life - for example, violent acts may not be seen as admirable by the user of TET in real life, but may be admired within, for example, an action or gangster film.

Whilst depth of characterisation is a valid and useful consideration, there are three reasons that it was removed from the final version of TET. The main reason is that it requires a high level of understanding of character and narrative theory, which makes TET less accessible to users. The second reason is that a uniformity of response across users is highly unlikely due to the question's subjective nature and the need to analyse the film and characters in order to generate a response.

The third reason, is that on initial application of the removed sections, it was found that the vast majority of characters who can be considered to be protagonists, deuteragonists and tritagonists are by definition well-developed, meaning that in the majority of cases, these characters scored in categories 6, 7 and 8. This was less true of antagonists, but only slightly. Therefore, whilst not exactly a redundant question to ask, section three was complicated and open to interpretation and yet did not add much of significance to the results. Therefore, the section was removed.

In summary, the final – or current – version of TET (Table 1) considers the visibility of both genders and an extent of their importance. Each gender receives a score and the disparity between the scores measures the film's quality of gender representation. This allows films to be easily compared using quantitative data.

## **Application and evaluation**

Of course, not all films will fit neatly into the boxes suggested by TET. Whilst the protagonist is usually the most important character, this is not always the case – sometimes, the protagonist may be used as a vehicle to present a more important character to the audience. In ensemble films, there may not be a clear protagonist and it would certainly be challenging to choose the top three in the correct order for sections 2 to 4 and for users to select the same characters consistently. Whilst some antagonists may be deserving of their score of six, in others, they may be important enough to be labelled as deuteragonist as well as antagonist.

Whilst one size doesn't fit all, in order to compare films easily, there needs to be a comparable criterion across texts and therefore TET has been designed with the conventions of contemporary mainstream cinema in mind. Named characters are more likely to have some level of significance than unnamed ones and therefore they score a point each. Protagonists are likely to be the most important characters; therefore, they score ten. There will likely be a clear deuteragonist and a fairly clear tritagonist, who are important enough (by their definition) to receive a higher score than the remaining named characters – eight and six respectively. And there will likely be an antagonist, who is important, but less so than the protagonist and deuteragonist, receiving a score of six. It is expected that most mainstream, contemporary films will be fairly easy to score according to these criteria.

Where films do deviate, it could be argued that the results will still be valid, as it is unlikely that they will deviate to the extent to make a film that portrays gender equally seem unequal, or unequally as equal. For example, where the most important character is not the protagonist, they will likely be the

deuteragonist and receive only two points less. If the antagonist is as important as the deuteragonist, they only score two points less than the deuteragonist in any case. If a film only scores with a gender disparity of two points, it is doing very well in terms of equal representation; the deviation of two points according to the differences between these hypothetical examples and the “standard” suggested by TET, will barely impact on the result.

Ensemble casts can cause bigger problems. Usually, it is possible to identify a protagonist, but the deuteragonist and tritagonist are less simple. If the choice is between a male and female character for both sections 3 and 4 and the user selects characters of the same gender for both, then potentially the overall disparity will suggest a higher level of inequality than actually exists within the text. In cases such as this, it would be ideal if users actually put more than one character into a section in order to correctly score the film, however suggesting this as a consistent option is likely to cause increased differentiation of response between users and complicates TET overall as in ensemble films, this would mean rating a much higher number of characters.

Exploring case study examples illuminates on some of these issues. The case study texts have been intentionally chosen in order to represent four gender representation “positions”. *Cloudburst* (2011) is a film about two women; *Sherlock Holmes* (2009) is a film about two men; *Captain America: Civil War* (2016) is an ensemble multi-gender but male-dominated cast; and *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* (2015) is another ensemble multi-gender cast with a “strong female protagonist”.

As the sample is actively biased, it is not intended to be reflective of cinema on the whole – it is TET on trial here, not the films themselves.

*Sherlock Holmes* scores 38 for male representation and 9 for female, with a male-biased disparity of 29.

Table 3. TET applied to *Sherlock Holmes*:

<b>The Equality Test</b>				
<b>Category</b>		<b>Points Per Character</b>	<b>Male Characters</b>	<b>Female Characters</b>
1	<b>Named Characters</b>	1	14	3
2	<b>Protagonist</b>	10	Sherlock Holmes	
3	<b>Deuteragonist</b>	8	John Watson	
4	<b>Tritagonist</b>	6		Irene Adler
5	<b>Antagonist</b>	6	Lord Blackwood	
<b>TOTALS</b>			38	9
<b>DISPARITY</b>			<b>29</b>	<b>MALE</b>

*Star Wars: The Force Awakens* scores 52 for males and 24 for females, with a male-biased disparity of 28.

Table 4. TET applied to Star Wars: The Force Awakens:

The Equality Test				
Category		Points Per Character	Male Characters	Female Characters
1	Named Characters	1	32	14
2	Protagonist	10		Rey
3	Deuteragonist	8	Finn	
4	Tritagonist	6	Han Solo	
5	Antagonist	6	Kylo Ren	
<b>TOTALS</b>			52	24
<b>DISPARITY</b>			<b>28</b>	<b>MALE</b>

*Captain America: Civil War* has a score of 47 for males and 7 for females, with a male-biased disparity of 40.

Table 5. TET applied to Captain America: Civil War:

The Equality Test				
Category		Points Per Character	Male Characters	Female Characters

1	<b>Named Characters</b>	1	17	7
2	<b>Protagonist</b>	10	Steve Rogers	
3	<b>Deuteragonist</b>	8	Tony Stark	
4	<b>Tritagonist</b>	6	Bucky Barnes	
5	<b>Antagonist</b>	6	Zemo	
<b>TOTALS</b>			47	7
<b>DISPARITY</b>			<b>40</b>	<b>MALE</b>

*Cloudburst* scores 11 for males and 29 for females, with a female-biased disparity of 18.

Table 6. TET applied to *Cloudburst*:

<b>The Equality Test</b>				
<b>Category</b>		<b>Points Per Character</b>	<b>Male Characters</b>	<b>Female Characters</b>
1	<b>Named Characters</b>	1	5	5
2	<b>Protagonist</b>	10		Stella

3	<b>Deuteragonist</b>	8		Dotty
4	<b>Tritagonist</b>	6	Prentice	
5	<b>Antagonist</b>	6		Molly
<b>TOTALS</b>			11	29
<b>DISPARITY</b>			<b>18</b>	<b>FEMALE</b>

Looking just at section 1 “Named Characters”, it is immediately clear that the three mainstream action films (*Sherlock Holmes*, *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* and *Captain America: Civil War*) are dominated by male characters, with scores of 14 male to 3 female, 32 to 14 and 17 to 7, respectively. The niche-market film about an elderly lesbian couple, *Cloudburst*, on the other hand, scored even – 5 to 5.

The male-bias in the three mainstream films is excessive – all three have less than a third of the named characters as female. Interestingly, *Cloudburst*, which is noticeably female-dominated on viewing, having a female protagonist, deuteragonist and antagonist, actually has an equal number of named male and female characters.

The numerical data seems to be an effective way of highlighting any quantitative gender disparities. Whilst quantitative data can be limiting, visibility is a relevant consideration for representation analysis, as to be invisible is to be marginalised, unimportant and unrepresented. Additionally, as previously discussed, named characters are more likely (although not guaranteed) to have at least some narrative significance.



Moving onto sections 2 to 5, the protagonist, deuteragonist, tritagonist and antagonist must now be identified. At this juncture, it would be possible to divert into an exploration of the meaning of roles and how the characters listed in Tables 3 to 6 above were identified, however that is the subject for a full book and would take us beyond the scope of the paper. Instead, research has been conducted into whether or not the answers to sections 2 to 5 would be consistent across users of TET.

The sample is made up of university lecturers and students (media), selected as they are the most likely potential users of TET with their knowledge of and interest in media theory (although admittedly limited to just one university and therefore not representative of academics on the whole). The individuals were asked independently to identify which characters they would put into sections 2, 3, 4 and 5. Respondents answered the question only regarding films they had actually seen. (*As Cloudburst (2011)* is on the reading list for the students' scriptwriting module, even this less well-known film was able to gain a significant response).

Table 7. Differentiation of Response to TET sections 2 to 5:

Film	Number of respondents who selected the same protagonist (P), deuteragonist (D), tritagonist (T) and antagonist (A) as in Tables 3, 4, 5 and 6 (above), respectively.				Respondents' alternative responses.			
	P	D	T	A	P	D	T	A
<i>Sherlock Holmes (2009)</i>	10	10	10	9				Moriarty /
<i>Star Wars: The Force</i>	8	8	7	7			BB8 /	Hux /

<i>Awakens</i> (2015)								
<i>Captain America: Civil War</i> (2016)	8	6	6	6		Bucky //	Falcon / Tony Stark /	Tony Stark //
<i>Cloudburst</i> (2011)	12	12	12	12				

In the case of *Cloudburst*, all users responded with the same answers. *Sherlock Holmes* was close, as nine of ten users chose Lord Blackwood as the antagonist, matching the answer in Table 3. One user chose Moriarty – technically, this is also correct; the narrative is more focused on Blackwood’s villainy, but Moriarty is a second antagonist, working behind the scenes. In any case, there is no difference in scoring, as both antagonists are male.

These films were likely simpler for users to apply TET to, as they are mainly focused on the relationship (friendship or romantic) between two characters; the protagonist and deuteragonist. Both films have an easily identifiable third character of the opposite gender and a clear antagonist (or two in the case of *Sherlock Holmes*), meaning that the application of TET’s sections 2 to 5 is fairly straightforward, resulting in a high level of consistency across users.

In the case of *Captain America: Civil War* and *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*, determining the answers was more complicated, likely because both are ensemble cast films, leading to a lower level of consistency across TET users.

*Captain America: Civil War* was the most complicated. The antagonist is usually fairly straightforward to identify, as evidenced by the research in Table 7, however in the case of *Captain America: Civil War*, it was not. The film is

about a superhero team who divide on the issue of registering their superpowers with the government. By definition, the antagonist is the character who opposes the protagonist, and so it could be argued that Tony Stark – the deuteragonist in Table 5 – is also the antagonist. Although he is a close friend of the protagonist, he opposes him in the film's main conflicts. Two respondents picked this up, although most identified the same antagonist as in Table 5 – Zemo. Zemo was the more stereotypical “bad guy” as he was placed in opposition to both sides of the superhero civil war.

Two users put Table 5's tritagonist Bucky Barnes as the deuteragonist. One of them had Table 5's deuteragonist Tony Stark as the tritagonist; another had him as the antagonist and instead had Sam Wilson (Falcon) as the tritagonist. This shows that a complex ensemble film can cause much confusion. Interestingly though, not even one of these deviations causes any change to the score, because the film is so male dominated that all the chosen characters were male in any case.

In the case of *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*, users consistently identified the protagonist and deuteragonist, but there were minor deviations in the identification of the tritagonist and antagonist. The tritagonist deviation is of little (rather than no) consequence – as a droid, the character BB8 could be said to have no gender, meaning that the male score would be reduced by six and there would be a male-biased disparity of 22 instead of 28 – hardly significant. In the case of the antagonist, both the one from Table 4 and the user's variation in Table 7 are male, meaning that as with the *Sherlock Holmes* and *Captain America: Civil War* deviations, there is no change to the score.

In order to achieve greater uniformity of response across users, the

“tritagonist” section could possibly be removed. However, this would also reduce the accuracy of TET – in the case of *Sherlock Holmes* and *Cloudburst*, the tritagonist is of the opposite gender to the protagonist and deuteragonist. Without acknowledging this, the results will be scored with an even greater gender bias than actually exists within the film.

In the case of the ensemble films, stopping at tritagonist may not really be sufficient. In *Captain America: Civil War*, by focusing on the three most important characters – Steve Rogers, Tony Stark and Bucky Barnes – the remaining superhero team are not included (except as named characters scoring one point in the section 1, alongside bit parts). This means that important female characters Natasha Romanoff and Wanda Maximoff are not considered. However, in this film, the issue is of little consequence because if those two female characters were considered, so too would all the male characters of equal or similar importance be (Sam Wilson, James Rhodes, Clint Barton, T’Challa, Vision, Scott Lang, and Peter Parker), and the disparity score would still be heavily male-biased.

So, TET fails to be one-hundred percent accurate due to users’ inability to consistently identify the “correct” character for sections 2, 3, 4 and 5 (if indeed there is a “correct” character). However, there is a fairly high level of consistency across user of TET and that the results are still, if not scientifically perfect, still at least valid in that they provide a comparable indication of the level of gender bias within films. The fact that there is not egalitarian or equal gender representation in these films is, at least, indisputably clear, illustrating that TET is able to assess representation equality to some level. In addition, uniformity across users is not necessarily required, as commentary on representation is

rarely one-hundred per cent objective; subjectivity is expected and arguably necessary in all areas of gender representation analysis other than character counting, as analysis involves interpretation.

As the results are still useful, it is possible to use the disparity scores to draw comparisons between films. In the case of the four case study examples, it can be concluded that *Captain America: Civil War* is the least equal of the films in terms of gender representation, with a male-biased disparity of 40; next are *Sherlock Holmes* with 29 and *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* with 28, both male-biased. The most equal film is *Cloudburst*, which nonetheless has a fairly strong female-biased disparity of 18.

As well as self-evident numerical comparisons, the data can be used to springboard qualitative discussion; as a brief example, the fact that the three action films are male-biased is no surprise, however what's interesting is that these films are fairly typical of mainstream cinema and on viewing do not stand out from the crowd as being particularly male-biased compared to other contemporary films. *Star Wars* in particular has attracted much attention for having a female lead and both *Captain America* and *Sherlock Holmes* feature "strong female characters", yet the evidence clearly shows these films excessively represent male importance and limited female importance. If a larger scale application of TET reflected the same, it would evidence that male-bias is a convention of contemporary mainstream cinema.

In contrast, *Cloudburst* stands out for being extremely female-biased on viewing, due to the deviation from the male-bias conventional norm, yet although TET's disparity score reflects this, its female-biased disparity is still lower than the male-biased disparity of the action films. This suggests that due

to audience overexposure to male-bias in cinema, a lower-level of female bias is disproportionately noticeable on viewing.

## **Conclusions**

The principle behind TET is that equality of representation is an ideal to aspire to as part of the construction of an egalitarian culture and that by having a fairly simple and easily measurable method of assessing a film's level of equality, it is easy to judge films according to egalitarian ideals. The hope is that by raising awareness of inequality of representation and what can easily be done to remedy it, the film industry will eventually improve their equality of representation and with it their impact on cultural meanings.

There are already many existing ways to discuss and evaluate representation, including the exposure of inequality. TET adds to the range of tools that may be used. By focusing on the narrative importance of characters, the intention is to measure on one of the most relevant aspects of representation – whether male and female characters are equally important and valued within a narrative – whilst simultaneously simplifying the assessment to remove excessively subjective and user-biased value-judgments from consideration.

The research in Table 7 shows that although there is some subjective interpretation required in order to identify the role of characters in sections 4 and 5 of TET in particular, variation across users is minimal. When applied to the case study examples, the impact of minor variations between users was fairly inconsequential; it did not even remotely lead to a contrasting conclusion about whether the film was biased towards male or female importance. In every use of TET (Tables 3 to 6), and even taking into account alternative responses

(Table 7 and analysis), a clear indication of gender bias was identified and evidenced for each of the case study films.

This shows that even though TET cannot be said to be 100% accurate in a purely scientific sense, it clearly does measure gender bias to an extent, at least giving an indication of whether a film is biased towards representing males or females as more important – and to what degree this may be the case. The scoring provides a numerical measure of the level of equality, meaning that films can be easily compared with either a quantitative comparison such as a chart or table of statistics, or combined with a more qualitative analysis for in-depth study.

The next stage would be to apply TET to a wider range of films. This could be a cross-sectional study focusing on a specific area such as the top films of a specific year, a certain production company, a specific genre, or any category of interest. Another use of TET could be a longitudinal study, for example to explore whether there is any change in the aforementioned categories over a specific period of time such as consecutive years or across decades.

In summary, TET is a way of providing an easily measurable and comparable score that gauges how close a text comes to the ideal of egalitarian gender representation. It can be used to assess individual films or to compare films of any chosen category or grouping. The scoring system allows users to generate quantitative data for a simple and clear measure, making films easily comparable. The quantitative data can be used in and of itself, or to spark a more in-depth qualitative discussion into the extent to which a text or texts have represented males and females to be of equal importance.

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