

PIP Title: Lights, Camera, Oppression

PIP Research Question/Statement: AN investigation into the role of popular culture and filmic institutions in the diffusion of gender roles at the macro level of Indian society.

Extract Section: Log

Log

As someone who speaks both Telugu and English, I am a frequent consumer of both Tollywood and Hollywood films. With English movies regularly featuring progressive, nonconforming and unorthodox gender symbols, and Telugu films being devoid of such, the discordance in semiotic language regarding gender was extremely notable between industries. As an Australian with a westernised social cognition and worldview, the ideological asymmetry and incongruity I experienced through consuming India's traditionalist representations limited my access to, and development of, my bicultural and gendered social self. This experience in my micro world hence acted as the foundation of my PIP, as I intended to examine the nature and function of gendered popular culture portrayals in Indian society.

Secondary research for my PIP proved to be difficult as Tollywood generally has lesser reach than other Indian popular cultures, such as Bollywood (Hindi cinema), due to a smaller population of Telugu speakers in India. Hence, academic studies into Tollywood were insufficient, which warranted a reliance on research surrounding Bollywood to build a suitable foundation of knowledge. This necessitated a detailed content analysis of Telugu movies, as it would provide access to more relevant data and ensure the academic validity and integrity of my PIP. I analysed the top 10 highest grossing live action films since 2000 in both Telugu and English in order to study and compare the movies that have likely had the largest influence on their respective modern societies due to higher consumption and thus, higher rates of internalisation/identification.

However, my interpretations of the gendered themes were subjective, as my social cognition and environment largely differs from other consumers of the same films. In order to avoid such bias from invalidating my PIP findings, I designed and distributed questionnaires to other consumers of Telugu and English movies on social media platforms, where I surveyed them on their own experiences with the relative popular cultures so as to construct a more holistic and encompassing qualitative and quantitative

data set regarding my area of enquiry. The challenges that I encountered with this research method were that most responses were not written with great detail, and were generally less reliable as the anonymity of respondents led to several rushed or spam submissions. I overcame this issue by firstly deleting any clearly non-serious responses so as to increase the reliability of my data, and secondly holding a focus group so that the questionnaire wasn't the central qualitative informant of my PIP, which consequently made the triangulation of my sources more efficient. A shortcoming of the focus group was the language barrier with primarily Telugu-speaking participants, who had trouble articulating their thoughts in English. In order to make them more comfortable, I assured them that they could speak in Telugu, and when I compiled the data I translated the responses into English. However, as a consequence of my effort to be an ethical researcher, translations of ambiguous phrases may have been affected by bias.

Overall, I found the process of collating my findings and writing my PIP extremely enlightening; it taught me about the intersectional nature of gender discrimination on a macro scale, and about the process of examining contemporary manifestations of such in popular culture through primary research.