

THE BECHDEL TEST

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Invented in 1985, Bechdel Test is simple and popular measure of feminism in films

1. HAS AT LEAST 1 WOMAN
2. WHO TALK TO EACH OTHER
3. ABOUT SOMETHING OTHER THAN A MAN



IMPORTANCE OF PROJECT

- Simple and convenient - test too good to be true?
- Widely used to measure a film's social importance, but test itself is not very human centered
- Off-screen vs On-screen representation

01

Research Questions

1. HOW ARE MOVIES PERFORMING BASED ON BECHDEL TEST, COMPARED TO OFF-SCREEN METRICS?
2. WHAT ARE SOME PREVALENT SHORTCOMINGS OF THE BECHDEL TEST?
3. WHAT ARE ADDITIONAL MATRICS/REVISIONS WE CAN TAKE TO BETTER MEASURE FEMINISM IN FILMS AND FILMMAKING?



METHODS AND APPROACH



01

PROPORTION OF MOVIES PASSING
BECHDEL TEST OVERTIME

02

BECHDEL TEST VS FEMALE/MALE CAST,
WRITERS, DIRECTORS, CREW

03

NEGATIVE/POSITIVE
CONTRADICTION
(FILMS THAT PASS/FAIL)

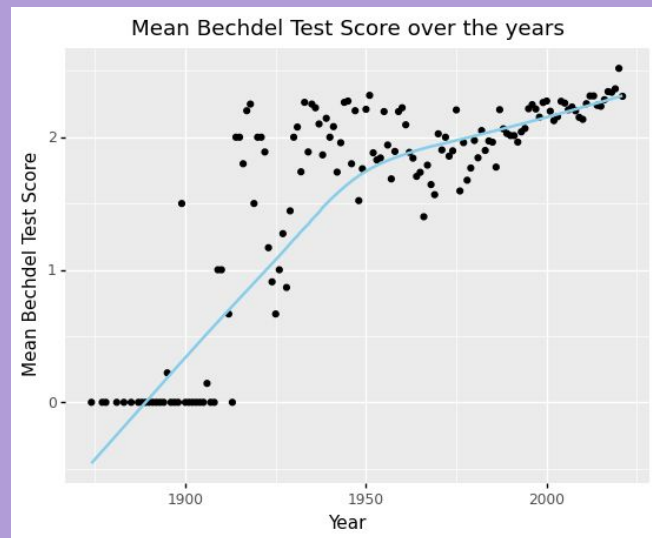
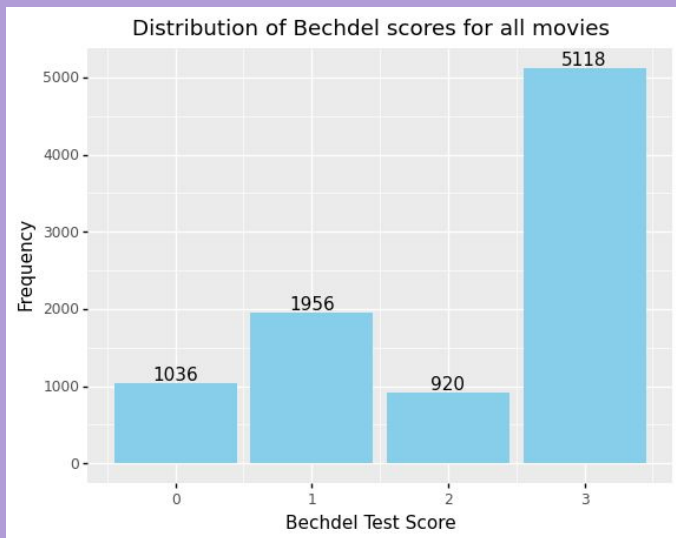


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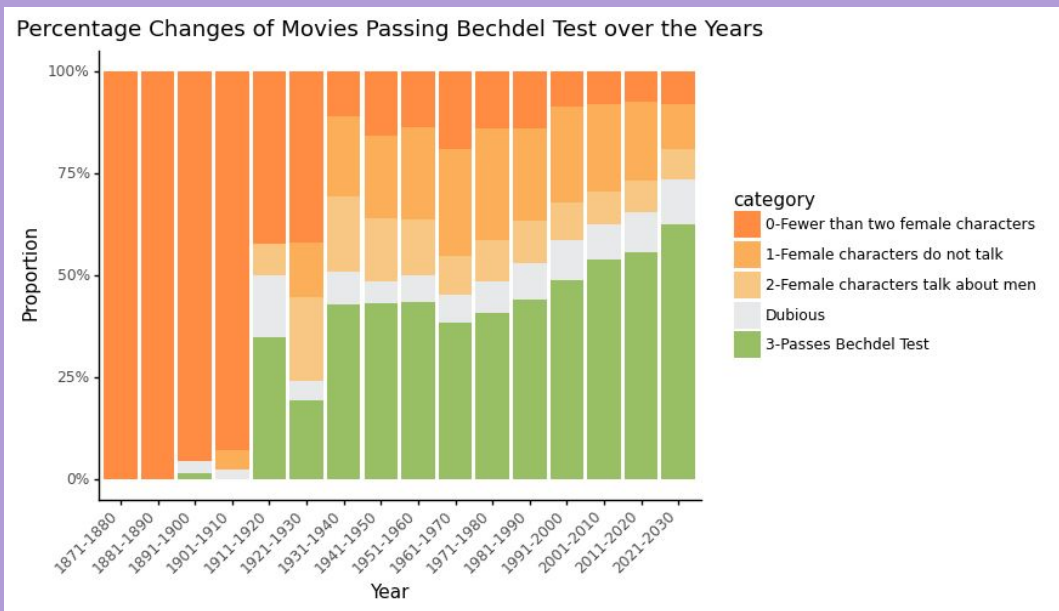
APPLYING OUR OWN TEST
TO FILMS

PROPORTION OF MOVIES PASSING OVERTIME

Data Source: Bechdel Test Movie List



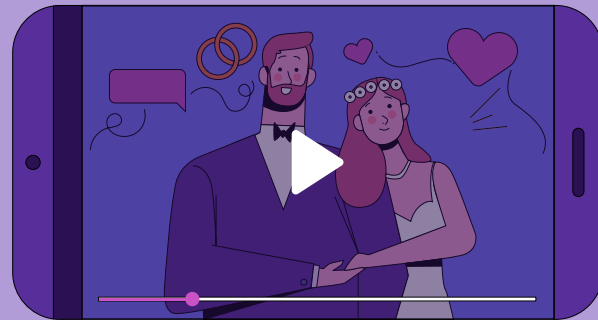
PROPORTION OF MOVIES PASSING OVERTIME



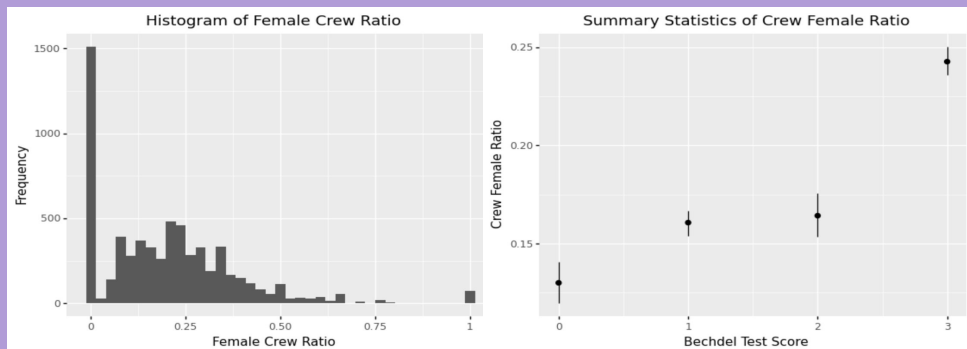
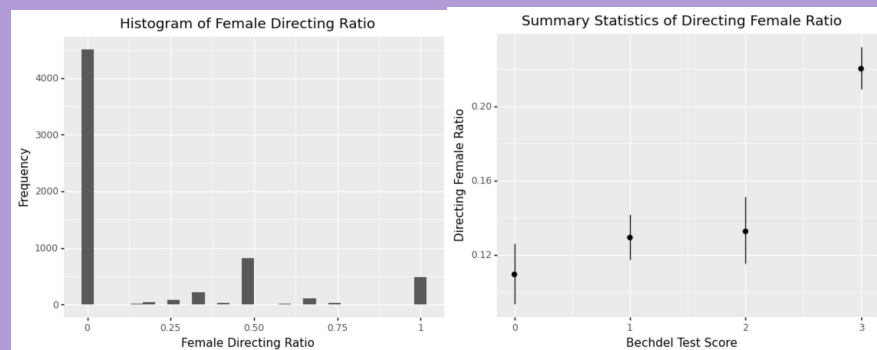
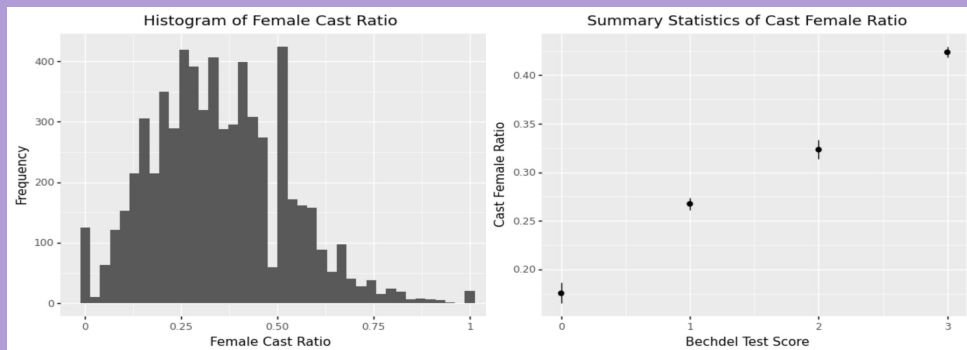
- Low growth rate of films passing: test still relevant!
- Majority of films still passing the bare minimum, but the test needs revision to further raise the standard

PROPORTION OF MOVIES PASSING BECHDEL TEST OVERTIME

- Low growth rate of films passing: test still relevant!
- Majority of films still passing today: test needs revision



BECHDEL TEST VS OFF-SCREEN MATRICS





BECHDEL TEST VS FEMALE/MALE CAST, WRITERS, DIRECTORS, CREW

- Below 25% for female writers, directors, crew with films passing Bechdel Test
- Importance of off-screen representation, which Bechdel Test fails to cover

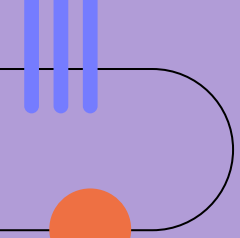
CONTRADICTIONS



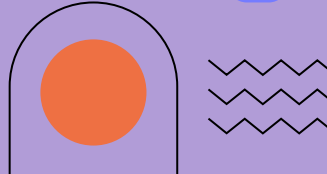
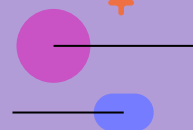

JURASSIC WORLD (P)



THE AVENGERS (F)



“The message that I got from it was that this was not really important because she had perfect hair, skin, and make-up and was hot and was probably earning a really good salary and that is success for a woman, right? Then her relationship with the dinosaur trainer was also appallingly sexist. When [things] hit the fan and the reckless behaviour of the company is exposed, she needs a man to save her.”



FOR MOVIES WITH CHARACTERS THAT HAVE ANY TECHNICAL OR PROFESSIONAL OCCUPATION:

Women are not represented among the professionals in the film—0

There is at least one woman with a technical or professional career—1

The woman solves, or is integral to solving, a technically complex problem—2

The woman solves a technically complex problem independent or despite of a man—3

CONTRADICTIONS



JURASSIC WORLD (P)



THE AVENGERS (F)

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, IMPLICATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

1. Is the Bechdel Test still useful? Yes, but we should not stop there.
2. More Tests are needed
3. Limitations of Our Tests:
 - a. Issue-specific tests are hard to scale
 - b. More nuanced tests like the ones we've suggested are more disputable
 - c. Many data points in off-screen representation are difficult to obtain

THANK YOU

