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Double Jeopardy in Hollywood: Age and Gender in the Careers of Film Actors, 1926–1999

Anne E. Lincoln^{1,3} and Michael Patrick Allen²

There have been few studies of the concept of “double jeopardy” as it pertains to the effects of gender and aging on occupational outcomes. This research examines the utility of this concept in the field of film acting, traditionally a gender-integrated occupation. The results confirm significant negative effects of being female and being older on the number of film roles received by actors and their average star presence. Moreover, the gendered effects of aging on the career opportunities of actors have diminished somewhat over time with respect to number of film roles but not with respect to star presence.

KEY WORDS: gender; age; career; film; actor.

INTRODUCTION

Sociologists have explored ascriptive inequality in terms of life–outcome disparities, but explanations of these outcomes and the mechanisms that produce them have been limited (Reskin, 2003). The effects of such ascriptive characteristics as gender and race on occupational outcomes have been well documented. However, the effects of other ascriptive characteristics, such as age, on these same outcomes remain largely unexplored (Riley, 1987). One of the most important theoretical questions raised by the research on ascriptive inequality involves the concept of “double jeopardy.” Specifically, this concept asserts that devalued ascriptive characteristics may interact with one another with respect to certain outcomes: for example, the effects of gender and race interact in such a way that

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African-American women earn less than one would expect from the combined direct effects of gender and race (Collins, 1990; King, 1988). By extension, this concept implies that other ascriptive characteristics, such as gender and age, may interact with one another with respect to similar outcomes. For example, it has been argued that older women experience double jeopardy to the extent that their health is worse than would be predicted by the combined direct effects of gender and age (Chappell and Havens, 1980).

One occupation in which the issue of double jeopardy has been raised in terms of the effects of gender and age on career outcomes is film acting. This is ironic since film acting was one of the first high-income, high-status occupations in the United States to achieve high levels of gender integration, due largely to the narrative demands for heterosexual romantic relationships in most films (Bordwell *et al.*, 1985). Indeed, film acting was one of the few elite occupations in which women were often paid as much as men. For example, 5 of the 10 highest paid film stars in 1938 were women (Rosten, 1941:342). Despite these indications of early gender equality in film acting, some evidence suggests that gender inequalities currently exist in the profession that are inextricably bound up with the issue of aging. Celebrated female stars, such as Meryl Streep, have complained that their careers in film are shorter than those of their female predecessors and that they are paid much less than men (Dutka, 1990). These claims are bolstered by recent research conducted by the Screen Actors Guild (1999) which found that, at all levels of acting, women appear as lead characters in fewer films than men and earn half as much as their male counterparts. Other research has found additional gender and age disparities in two measures of professional achievement in the field—receipt of Academy Awards (Gilberg and Hines, 2000; Levy, 1990a; Markson and Taylor, 1993) and appearances in the Quigley *Motion Picture Herald* poll of “Top Money-Making Stars” (Levy, 1990b).

Although the findings of these studies are suggestive, these researchers have not explicitly examined the concept of double jeopardy within film acting. Indeed, an analysis of the careers of film actors provides a unique opportunity to investigate the concept of double jeopardy by disentangling the direct and interactive effects of gender discrimination and age discrimination on career outcomes. Given the public nature of film acting, the available archival data permit a longitudinal analysis of actors’ careers over relatively long periods of time. Moreover, these data permit us to compare the careers of actors over several decades. Consequently, we can obtain a rare longitudinal perspective on the direct and interactive effects of gender and age on the careers of film stars at different points in the history of the American film industry.

A great deal of research has focused on inequality in the workplace, but hardly any has focused on the joint effects of gender and age discrimination on the careers of those in elite professions. Indeed, there have been very few longitudinal studies of changes in ascriptive inequality in specific professions. The study of an individual profession, such as film acting, allows a detailed investigation of the gendered aspects of aging on different occupational outcomes. Although acting is a highly specialized occupation, such an analysis might have implications for the differential effects of aging on the careers of women and men in any number of elite professions that require a public presentation of self, such as lawyers, television journalists, business executives, public officials, and entertainers of all kinds. Ultimately, the results may suggest career trends in other occupations, regardless of their visibility (Morrow *et al.*, 1990). Last but not least, some understanding of the gendered effects of aging in film acting is important because film actors serve as important role models (Herzog and Gaines, 1991; Stacey, 1991), especially with respect to the appropriateness of certain gender roles (Dyer, 1998; Signorielli, 1989; Wexman, 1993). As Bielby and Bielby (1996:267) observe, "Mass culture industries are sites where symbolic representations of gender are literally produced, and they provide new challenges to the way we understand gender inequality in organizations."

THEORETICAL ISSUES AND HISTORICAL CONTEXTS

Sociological investigations of inequality on the basis of ascribed characteristics have proceeded in relative isolation from each other. This isolation stems from an assumption that the causes of ascriptive inequality differ for each attribute (Reskin, 2003). For example, the explanation for racial discrimination is often assumed to be different from the explanation for discrimination on the basis of gender. The resulting "balkanization" of theories has hampered stratification research to the extent that the effects of different ascriptive characteristics are studied in a sort of "social vacuum" to the detriment of a broader theory of stratification. The sociologies of aging and gender have not been immune to this segmentation (Moen, 2001). As a result, mainstream sociological theory has generally ignored the gendered nature of the process of aging (Arber and Ginn, 1991). This theoretical gap persists despite increasing evidence in recent empirical research on gender in the sociology of aging (McMullin, 1995; Riley, 1987) that the effects of aging are not homogeneous with respect to gender. However, the theoretical complexity of combining these two attributes may be the reason that no joint conceptual framework has been developed (Levy, 1988).

One attempt to account theoretically for the interactive effects of multiple ascriptive characteristics is the notion of “double jeopardy,” a concept first introduced to describe the combined effects of sexism and racism on the experiences of black women (King, 1988). Scholars have since hypothesized a more general formulation in which gender and other social characteristics such as race and social class operate simultaneously in a nonadditive manner to affect various life outcomes. When these characteristics are devalued, the proposition asserts that joint effects of two or more of the characteristics are more deleterious than the sum of their separate effects. To this end, it has been argued that the interactive effects of gender and age represent a form of double jeopardy (Chappell and Havens, 1980) that puts older women at a greater disadvantage than their male counterparts in all aspects of life, ranging from psychological problems to economic difficulties. Thus far, however, double jeopardy has remained a largely untested theoretical concept. Most empirical studies have been cross-sectional, and the few longitudinal studies have yielded inconsistent empirical evidence (Ferraro and Farmer, 1996; Markridge *et al.*, 1984).

If the concept of double jeopardy is valid, it would be particularly important with regard to the position of men and women in the economic system. However, very few longitudinal studies have examined the differential effects of aging on the careers of men and women (Warren *et al.*, 2002), especially within a single occupation. Because of the public nature of their careers, film actors are an ideal population to study empirically the intersection of gender and age in an elite occupation. Additionally, many studies ignore gender differences in labor force participation or assume that the careers of men are continuous, while those of women are more sporadic due to family requirements (Lorence and Mortimer, 1989). In the acting profession, however, neither women nor men have continuous careers in the traditional sense. Acting careers consist of a series of separate film projects. The concept of a sex-differentiated labor market, in which women have qualitatively different career patterns than men (Simpson *et al.*, 1982), is simply not applicable to actors. Moreover, unlike most other occupations, film acting has historically been highly gender-integrated. Finally, archival information permits a longitudinal examination of the effects of gender and aging on actors' careers as well as a historical comparison of the ways the effects of these variables have changed over the past several decades in response to developments in the film industry and in American society.

The careers of actors have undoubtedly been affected by historical changes in the organization of production within the film industry. The most significant change has been the decline of the “studio system,” which was the dominant mode of film production from the late 1920s until the early 1950s. Under this system, the major studios were vertically integrated, controlling

the production, the distribution, and, to a large extent, the exhibition of films (Bordwell *et al.*, 1985). Given the industrial logic of this system, both male and female stars were typically placed under long-term contracts. As a result, the studios had an incentive to invest in the careers of their stars. Indeed, studios often produced specific films, known in the industry as “star vehicles,” for each of their major stars on a regular basis. Not surprisingly, then, women comprised 50 percent of the top ten box office draws from 1932 to 1938, as reported by exhibitors in the Top Ten Poll of Money-Making Stars (Quigley Publications, 1994). While women starred in all film genres in the 1930s and 1940s, they were typically cast in serious dramas and even more prominently in musicals and romantic melodramas. So-called “women’s films,” which portrayed strong heroines involved in melodramatic situations, were also popular in the 1930s and 1940s (Balio, 1993). Conversely, men were typically cast in Westerns and adventure films (Schatz, 1997).

The careers of both male and female stars were adversely affected by the decline of the studio system after the paramount decision by the Supreme Court in 1948, which forced the major studios to divest themselves of their theaters. This event, coupled with the rise in competition for audiences from television, led the studios to cancel their long-term contracts with stars. Beginning in the 1950s, almost all of the major talent involved in the production of films was contracted for single projects (Faulkner and Anderson, 1987). Studios no longer developed films for specific female stars. At the same time, there was a shift in the types of films being produced in Hollywood. The careers of female stars may have been adversely affected by changes in the audience and consequent changes in the popularity of different film genres. Musicals have declined in popularity in recent decades, and “women’s films” virtually disappeared in the 1950s. During the 1970s, roles for women all but vanished with the arrival of the “buddy film,” which focused on “macho exploits and homoerotic bonds” (Quart and Auster, 2002:109). Since the 1970s, adventure films have become the most popular film genre (Levy, 1989). These films typically have few, if any, significant parts for women. For example, one of the first highly successful adventure films of this period, *Jaws* (1975), starred three men.

Recent studies of character portrayals in film and television have demonstrated that male actors are more prevalent than female actors, especially in leading roles (Bazzini *et al.*, 1997; Screen Actors Guild, 2002). One explanation of this pattern is that producers believe that a film with a female star is unlikely to earn enough money to recoup its costs (Bielby and Bielby, 1996). Similarly, studies of ageism in television have found that television actors have become younger in the last two decades (Davis, 1980; Gerbner, 1998). Research conducted by the Screen Actors Guild (1999) suggests a double jeopardy effect for female actors, who experience aging differently

from male actors during the course of their careers. For example, although 43 percent of Americans are over the age of 40 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000), women over age 40 received only 24 percent of all female roles cast in television and film, while men over age 40 received 37 percent of all male roles. The Screen Actors Guild (2002) also noted that obtaining roles in feature films posed an even greater challenge for female actors over the age of 40. Clearly, the demand for actors diminishes as they age, especially if they are women. In fact, the term "older" is now popularly being used to describe male actors over the age of 40 and female actors over the age of 30 (Michaelson, 1993). Thus, the interaction between age and sex may result in a "double standard about aging that denounces women with special severity" (Sontag, 1979:464). Indeed, empirical research suggests that gender and age discrimination in the film and television industries extends even to screenwriters (Bielby and Bielby, 1992, 1993, 1996; Falk and Falk, 1997).

Some evidence also suggests that even the most successful film stars are not immune to this double jeopardy effect. One source of systematic historical information is the Top Ten Poll of Money-Making Stars conducted every year by the *Motion Picture Herald* (Quigley Publications, 1994). The results of this poll of theater owners indicate that women have significantly shorter periods as top draws on box office charts than do men (Levy, 1989). While 26 men have had more than 5 years of commercial popularity as measured by this poll, only five women have achieved that distinction (Levy, 1990b). Disparities also exist in the peer recognition afforded by the Academy Awards. Women are nominated for and win Oscars at a significantly younger age than men (Gilberg and Hines, 2000; Markson and Taylor, 1993). In fact, youth was the most powerful criterion for women who won the Best Actress award, while middle age was the best predictor for male Best Actor winners (Markson and Taylor, 1993). It appears that a sort of "revolving door" for young female actors has developed, to the detriment of older female actors (Jacobs, 1989). This pattern is not entirely new. In his comparison of the major film stars of the 1940s with those of the 1930s, Schatz (1997:363) notes that "the ranks of top stars would be predominantly male, and female stars would tend to be considerably younger than their male counterparts."

On the basis of these theoretical and empirical observations, this research expects to find a pattern of "double jeopardy" for female actors in the Hollywood film industry in comparison to male actors. This theoretical model is consistent with the findings of Bielby and Bielby (1992) with respect to the effects of "cumulative disadvantage" within the film and television industries. Both models assert that interactive effects between gender and age systematically disadvantage older women. In general, we expect that women will appear in fewer films than men and have fewer leading

roles than men. We also expect that the disparity between male and female actors will become more pronounced as a result of the differential effects of aging. Moreover, because of the decline of the studio system and shifts in the popularity of certain film genres, this disadvantage has probably become even more pronounced overtime. In short, we anticipate that the process of cumulative disadvantage has become marked in recent years, resulting in more “durable” careers for male actors than for female actors (Levy, 1990b).

SAMPLE AND DATA

In order to assess these theoretical issues, this research examines in detail the careers of a large sample of leading actors in Hollywood films over a period of more than seven decades. A sample of 318 stars (168 men and 150 women) was compiled from a number of film reference publications, including *Screen World*, the *Motion Picture Guide* (Nash and Ross, 1999), the Internet Movie Database (<http://www.imdb.com>), the American Film Institute list entitled “400 Greatest Actors,” and two comprehensive directories of film actors (Shipman, 1989; Truitt, 1983). These actors appeared in a total of 14,922 film roles between 1926 and 1999, an average of 46.9 films over the course of their careers.

Because they are more popular and more prominent than other actors, stars may be expected to have the greatest influence upon film audiences. For the purposes of this research, actors were considered to be stars if they were billed as one of the top two “leads” in at least six major films. Of the 318 actors in our sample, 73 percent qualified as “stars” in the first 5 years of their careers. More lenient criteria would have included many less popular and less influential actors. However, this sample purposely focuses on the careers of stars who, by virtue of their celebrity, enjoyed greater rewards and autonomy than most actors. At the same time, we must note that not all of the actors in this sample had long careers. Indeed, 14 of the 318 stars had careers that spanned less than 15 years.

This research focuses on those stars who appeared primarily in major films, also called A-list films within the industry, that involve “top talent” in all facets of production. These films involve the talents of the most accomplished actors, writers, and directors in the industry. In the 1930s, major film studios also produced a large number of B-list films that played in theaters after A-list films in double features. These films were usually shorter than A-list features, had much smaller budgets, and featured less accomplished and celebrated talent. Today, the equivalent of a B-list film is the “straight-to-video” film, which never achieves a major theatrical release. Therefore, actors who appeared primarily in B-list films, such as Gene Autry and Tom Mix,

were excluded from this study. In addition, because this research examines only leading actors, well-known supporting actors like Walter Brennan and Agnes Moorehead were similarly excluded from the analysis.

The careers of many stars of silent films were truncated because they were not able to make a successful transition to sound films. Indeed, the introduction of sound is a major turning point in the history of film production. The first "talkie," *The Jazz Singer*, was released in 1927, and within 2 years every major American studio had converted to sound. Consequently, this analysis focuses only on the careers of stars whose careers began after 1925, just before the advent of the sound era. Furthermore, in order to study their careers until they reached the age of 40, we had to limit the analysis to those stars whose careers covered a span of at least 25 years. Thus, actors like Marilyn Monroe and James Dean, who died prematurely, are excluded from the analysis. Correspondingly, actors whose first films were released after 1975 were not included in the analysis. In addition, this research is limited to actors who starred primarily in American films; thus, it excludes actors who starred mainly in foreign films, such as Catherine Deneuve and Alec Guinness. However, foreign actors who appeared predominantly in American films, such as Anthony Hopkins and Sean Connery, are included.

We compiled data on each film role in which each actor appeared during the first 25 years of his or her careers, including ranking in the credits. Thus we were able to trace the career trajectories of these actors, both in terms of the number of film roles in which they appeared and their star billing in those roles at each point in their careers. For the purposes of this analysis, the careers of actors are assumed to begin with their first credited role in a film. The number of films in which an actor appears over a period of time must be interpreted with some caution. Certainly, popular actors are likely to make more films than other actors. However, the opportunities are affected by the number of films released each year. Stars who began their careers in the 1930s appeared in more films than contemporary stars simply because the film industry produced more films then than it produces today. Moreover, the number of film appearances per year does not tell us whether an actor had a leading or supporting role in any given film. The relative ranking of actors in the credits of a film is an important measure of their overall market power and their importance in a given film. First billing typically goes to the most popular actor, who characteristically plays the lead role in that film. However, because star billing is ordinal, it is difficult to summarize the importance of an actor over several films.

To address this problem, we used the ordinal data on the film credit rankings to create an interval measure of the "star presence" of each actor in each film. This transformation was achieved using the "inverse-rank" function. We can measure the "star presence" of an actor in a film by obtaining the

inverse of their ordinal rank in the credits for that film as follows:

$$p_i = \frac{1}{r_i}$$

where r_i is the rank of the actor among the acting credits for a film i and p_i is the star presence of that actor in that film. The rationale for employing the “inverse-rank” function to transform ordinal data on star billing into interval data on star presence is indirect. The relationship between rank and magnitude has been observed in a number of different empirical contexts. For example, when scientists are ranked in terms of the number of citations to their work, the second-ranked scientist typically receives one-half of the citations received by the first-ranked scientist, and the third-ranked scientist usually receives one-third of the citations received by the first-ranked scientist. This relationship between magnitude and rank order, which was proposed independently by Pareto and Zipf (Price, 1976), has also been found to describe the distributions of cities, words, incomes, and firms. Separate analyses, which are not presented for sake of brevity, indicate that star presence scores of major stars in 1938 were positively correlated with their incomes and with the number of articles published about them in general-interest periodicals.

In the context of this research, the application of the power function provides a simple and meaningful transformation of star ranking into star presence in a given film. An advantage of this measure is that star presence can be averaged over a number of roles. An actor who appeared in two films might get second billing in one and third billing in the other in the same year. Using the power rule, we can transform these ordinal rank data into the following interval data:

$$p_1 = \frac{1}{2} = 0.500 \quad \text{and} \quad p_2 = \frac{1}{3} = 0.333$$

These star presence scores can then be averaged: an actor who received second billing in one film and third billing in another in the same year would have an average star presence of 0.417 for that year. If that same actor had received top billing in both films, his or her average star presence for that year would have been 1.00. The value of this measure ranges from a theoretical minimum that approaches 0 to a maximum of 1. The average star presence measure also has the advantage of being mathematically independent of the number of film roles received by an actor.

We can demonstrate the utility of these two measures of the career trajectory of a film star by a simple example. Figure 1 presents a graph of the first 10 years of the career of Bette Davis, from 1931 to 1940, in terms of both the number of film roles she received each year and her average star

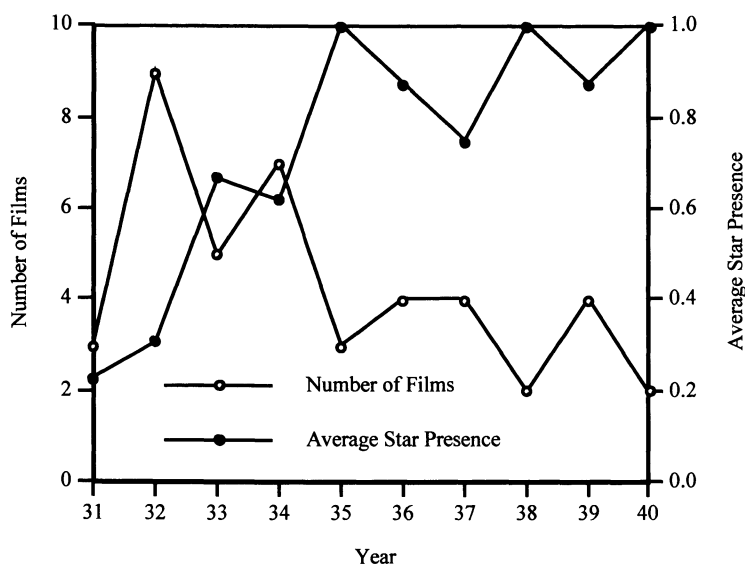


Fig. 1. Number of films and average star presence of Bette Davis, 1931–1940.

presence each year. In 1931, she appeared in three films and was billed third, fifth, and seventh, resulting in an average star presence score of 0.225 for that year. In contrast, of the four films she appeared in during 1939, she was ranked first in three and second in one, resulting in an average star presence score of 0.875 for that year. A comparison of these two measures gives two different views of a career. In the first 5 years of her career, Bette Davis appeared in an average of 5.4 films per year, but her average star presence score was 0.563. In the next 5 years of her career, she appeared in an average of only 3.2 films per year but her average star presence score was 0.900 out of a possible 1.0. Although beginning to appear in fewer films, Bette Davis was becoming a bigger star.

No study has examined virtually the entire careers of actors in this manner. The only comparable research is a study conducted by Levy (1989) of the 10 most popular stars each year as identified by the Motion Picture Herald Poll of exhibitors. However, because only 129 stars have been identified by this poll in its 65-year history, Levy was not able to draw many conclusions regarding the combined effects of gender and age on the careers of film stars in general. Similarly, other research has examined the age at which actors achieve certain honors, such as receiving an Academy Award nomination (Gilberg and Hines, 2000; Levy, 1990a; Markson and Taylor, 1993). Consequently, these studies focus only on the peer recognition or commercial success that some actors achieve at some point and do not consider their

entire careers. However, these studies suggest that measures of achievement may be important in analyzing the careers of film stars.

The present analysis examines the effect of several independent variables on the number of film roles and star presence accorded actors during their careers. To test assertions of double jeopardy, the gender and age of the actors are certainly the primary predictors. In order to avoid introducing a bias into the age variable, in the case of child stars, the analysis includes only the film roles they received after they turned 16. In addition, findings from the studies of professional achievement of actors mentioned above prompted the tabulation of the cumulative number of Academy Award nominations, if any, that actors had received at each point in their careers. We should also note that, until relatively recently, very few stars have been members of racial or ethnic minority groups. Consequently, no such comparisons are possible in this analysis.

RESULTS

The theory being proposed argues that age has a differential effect on the careers of male and female stars. However, a cursory examination of the data reveals that their careers were also affected by historical trends in the film industry. The number of feature films produced by the American film industry declined steeply during World War II. Moreover, after the advent of television and the divestiture of theaters by the major studios following the Paramount decision in 1948, the film industry never regained its former production levels, which diminished the careers of film actors. In the time period from 1926 to 1942, the film stars in the sample received an average of 2.97 film roles each year, but between 1943 and 1999 they received only 1.22 film roles each year. The correlation between a dummy variable representing the post-1942 time period and the number of film roles received by stars each year is -0.418 . Consequently, the following analyses include two dummy variables, one representing female actors and another representing the post-1942 time period. This research employs multivariate statistical techniques to disentangle the effects of age, gender, and time period on the careers of actors. Specifically, the pooled time-series data can be analyzed using generalized least-squares regression techniques (Kmenta, 1986). This technique corrects for the serial correlation between the errors of prediction overtime, a common problem in regression analyses of time-series data.

The results of three regression models for number of film roles each year are presented in Table I. Model 1 examines the main effects of age, gender, time period, and the cumulative number of Academy Award nominations on the number of film roles received by an actor each year. As expected,

Table I. Generalized Least-Squares Analysis of the Effects of Age, Gender, Time Period, and Oscar Nominations on Number of Film Roles

Independent variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Age	-0.0370*** (0.0023)	-0.0577*** (0.0058)	-0.0548*** (0.0069)
Gender (female = 1)	-0.7216*** (0.0654)	0.1389 (0.1526)	0.9672 (0.3519)
Oscar nominations	0.0846*** (0.0175)	0.0849*** (0.0173)	0.0853*** (0.0173)
Time period (post-1942 = 1)	-1.3904*** (0.0508)	-2.9434*** (0.2018)	-2.8379*** (0.2472)
Gender × age		-0.0334*** (0.0041)	-0.0414*** (0.0115)
Gender × Time period		0.7374*** (0.1071)	0.4800 (0.3629)
Age × Time period		0.0388*** (0.0055)	0.0357*** (0.0069)
Gender × Age × Time period			0.0086 (0.0115)
Constant	4.3037*** (0.0908)	5.0937*** (0.2030)	4.9985*** (0.2399)
R^2	0.377	0.405	0.404
ρ	0.143	0.137	0.136
N	7950	7950	7950

*** $p < 0.001$.

age, being female, and the post-1942 time period have significant negative effects on that number. Conversely, the cumulative number of Academy Award nominations received by an actor has a positive effect on the number of film roles received. Model 2 examines the main effects of these same variables, as well as the interaction effects between age, gender, and time period on the number of film roles received by stars. The effects of all three interactions between age, gender, and time period on the number of film roles are significant, but only the interaction between gender and age is in the expected direction. Model 3 examines the main effects of these variables, their two-way interactions, and the three-way interaction between age, gender, and time period on the number of film roles received by each star. The three-way interaction term is not statistically significant.

We can use these same techniques to disentangle the effects of the individual characteristics of actors on their average star presence each year. The results of three models are presented in Table II. As before, Model 1 examines the main effects of age, gender, time period, and the cumulative number of Academy Award nominations on the average star presence of an actor. As expected, age, being female, and the post-1942 time period have significant negative effects on the average star presence of an actor each year, while the cumulative number of Academy Award nominations received has a positive effect on the performer's average star presence. Model 2 examines the main effects of these same variables, as well as the interaction effects between age, gender, and time period on average star presence. The effects of all three interactions between age, gender, and time period on average star presence are significant and negative. Model 3 examines the main effects of these variables, their two-way interaction effects, and the three-way

Table II. Generalized Least-Squares Analysis of the Effects of Age, Gender, Time Period, and Oscar Nominations on Average Star Presence

Independent variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Age	−0.0035*** (0.0006)	0.0151*** (0.0016)	0.0119*** (0.0019)
Gender (female = 1)	−0.1632*** (0.0164)	0.4001*** (0.0418)	0.1297 (0.0973)
Oscar nominations	0.0554*** (0.0047)	0.0628*** (0.0047)	0.0622*** (0.0047)
Time period (post-1942 = 1)	−0.0881*** (0.0141)	0.4090*** (0.0561)	0.2871*** (0.0687)
Gender × Age		−0.0129*** (0.0011)	−0.0037 (0.0032)
Gender × Time period		−0.1041*** (0.0296)	0.1933 (0.1010)
Age × Time period		−0.0143*** (0.0015)	−0.0107*** (0.0019)
Gender × Age × Time period			−0.0099** (0.0032)
Constant	0.6845*** (0.0247)	0.0112 (0.0560)	0.1197 (0.0662)
R ²	0.283	0.224	0.231
ρ	0.108	0.110	0.111
N	7950	7950	7950

** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

interaction between age, gender, and time period on average star presence. As expected, the interaction effect of age, gender, and time period on average star presence is significant and negative.

In general, a comparison of the multivariate statistical analyses presented in Tables I and II reveals both similarities and differences in the effects of age, gender, and time period on the number of film roles received by an actor and on the average star presence of an actor. Being female, being older, and working in the post-1942 time period clearly have significant, negative main effects on the careers of actors. Moreover, Model 2 shows a significant interaction effect between gender and age with respect to both number of films and average star presence. This initially suggests that older female actors are subjected to the “double jeopardy” effects of age and gender and disadvantaged, both in terms of number of film roles and in terms of average star presence, compared to older male actors. However, differences between the tables in the three-way interaction effect of age, gender, and time period point to a more complex relationship. This variable is either not significant, with regard to number of film roles, or negative and significant, with regard to average star presence. This finding warrants more careful scrutiny.

Clearly, the results of the regression models presented in Tables I and II are very difficult to interpret due to the inclusion of several interaction terms. It is difficult to trace the effects of each of the independent variables on the dependent variable because the interpretation of the constituent variables changes with the inclusion of each additional interaction term. For example, age has a main effect on the number of film roles and star presence of an actor, but it also has interaction effects on these variables resulting from its first-order interactions with both gender and time period separately and

its second-order interaction with gender and time period conjointly. As a result, the coefficients of the interaction variables estimate conditional relationships. It is entirely possible for the main effects of the independent variables on a dependent variable to be nonsignificant at this level. Therefore, the total effect of age on the number of film roles received by an actor must be calculated from the additive effects of four variables.

Perhaps the best way to simplify the interpretation of these models is to graph the expected values of the dependent variables derived from these multivariate statistical models for the different values of the independent variables. The resulting graphs illustrate the cumulative effects of age for both male and female stars on each dependent variable during the period from 1926 to 1942 and the period from 1943 to 1999. Figure 2 graphs the relationship between age and the number of film roles received each year by male and female actors for both time periods. Stars in the period between 1926 and 1942 obviously received more film roles when they were younger than they did in the period between 1943 and 1999. This is attributable to the fact that the American film industry produced more films each year prior to 1943 than it did afterward. Note also that the number of film roles that actors received declined as they aged in both time periods and that this decline is

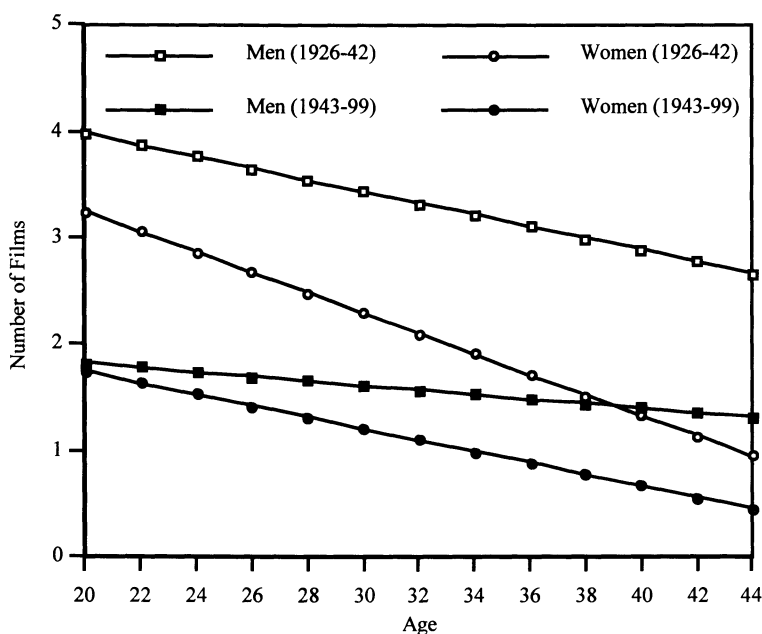


Fig. 2. Expected number of films by men and women stars with one Academy Award nomination by age and time period.

much more precipitous for female stars than it is for male stars in both time periods. In terms of the number of film roles received each year, female stars in the time period from 1926 to 1942 were at a substantial disadvantage in comparison to male stars when they were young, and this disparity increased dramatically as they grew older. Conversely, during the time period from 1943 to 1999, female stars were not especially disadvantaged in comparison to male stars when they were young, but they became progressively more disadvantaged as they aged.

A similar graph of the relationship between age and average star presence for both male and female stars during both time periods is presented in Fig. 3. The gender differences between actors, in terms of their average star presence, are relatively small when they are young in both time periods. Recall that average star presence is not necessarily related to the number of film roles received each year. During the time period between 1926 and 1942, the difference between male and female stars in terms of their average star presence remained relatively small as they aged. Female stars lost their small advantage over male stars, but the average star presence of both sexes increased as they grew older. In contrast, the relationship between age and average star presence is much different for stars in the period from 1943 to

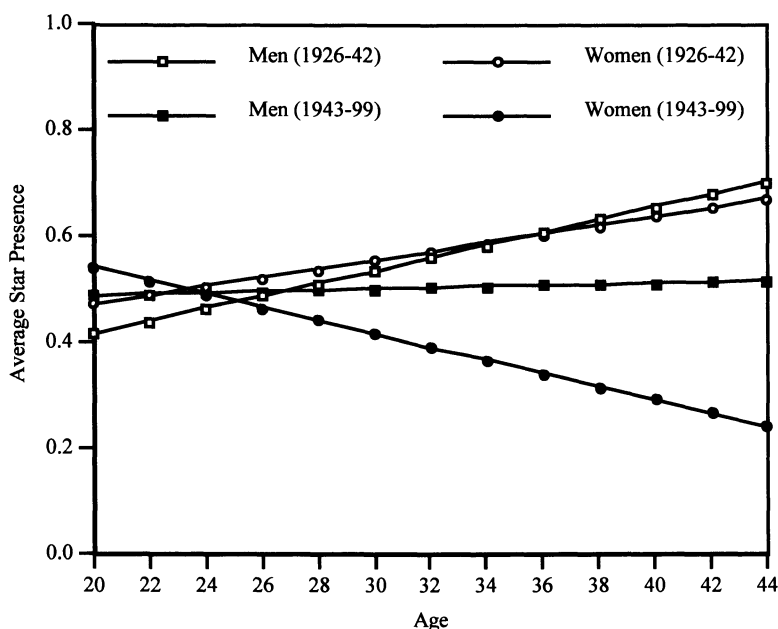


Fig. 3. Expected star presence for men and women stars with one Academy Award nomination by age and time period.

1999. Once again, female stars had a small advantage over male stars when they were young, but they became increasingly disadvantaged as they aged. Male stars were able to maintain their average star presence as they grew older, while the average star presence of women declined precipitously.

CONCLUSIONS

This research has examined the theoretical utility and empirical validity of the concept of “double jeopardy” with respect to gender and age as it pertains to the careers of film actors. In many respects, this occupation is ideally suited for such an analysis because of the wealth of detailed longitudinal data on the careers of a relatively large number of actors over the past several decades. At the same time, our analysis reveals the inherent complexity of any analysis of this issue. The concept of “double jeopardy” implies that significant interaction effects exist between gender and age with respect to occupational outcomes in addition to their main effects. This analysis reveals that actors receive fewer film roles and have less star presence as they grow older. It also reveals that women receive fewer roles and have less star presence than men. These differences persist even after controlling for the cumulative number of Academy Award nominations they have received at each point in their careers. We also find consistent empirical evidence of a “double jeopardy” effect inasmuch as the disparity between men and women with respect to film roles and star presence increases with age. However, the effects of this double jeopardy have apparently diminished somewhat since 1943 with respect to number of film roles, even though they have remained relatively constant with respect to average star presence.

In general, these results lend some credence to the concerns raised by female stars like Meryl Streep, albeit with some qualifications. Despite the relatively stable career trajectories experienced by most contemporary stars, aging clearly has a gendered impact upon their careers. Female stars appear in significantly fewer films and have a lower average star presence than male stars. Moreover, women are subject to “double jeopardy” inasmuch as the disparities in the number of film roles and the average star presence of male and female stars increase as they age. However, it does appear that the “double jeopardy” effects of age and gender on the number of film roles received by an actor have become less pronounced in recent decades. Conversely, the “double jeopardy” effects of age and gender on the average star presence of actors have not changed appreciably overtime. Altogether, these results suggest a relatively stable pattern over the past several decades in which female stars have more modest careers than their male counterparts and that this gap increases as they age.

These results also suggest a number of alternative explanations for these observed differences in the careers of male and female film stars. One is that these differences reflect the preferences of film producers. Another is that film producers are simply acting in accordance with their beliefs about the composition and preferences of film audiences. Although the film industry did not conduct systematic research on its audience until 1945, the implicit assumption of producers prior to that time was that the composition of the film audience mirrored the composition of the population. However, with the introduction of audience research, producers discovered that, largely as the result of the growth of television, the film audience was much younger than the population. Many producers still hold this belief despite recent research indicating that the film audience has become older in recent years. Specifically, the share of the film audience between ages 16 and 24 dropped from roughly 50% in 1968 to 33% in 1989 (Krämer, 1999:99). It has since dropped to 29% (Motion Picture Association, 2002:6). Moreover, contrary to the conventional wisdom of most producers, men and women attend films in roughly the same numbers and have done so consistently for decades. Consequently, the differences in the careers of male and female actors cannot be attributed to the gender composition of the film audience.

Why, then, do female performers age differently than male stars? Attractiveness, particularly to a male audience, may be one reason. Levy (1989) found that one-quarter of the popular female stars identified in the Motion Picture Herald Poll were models prior to beginning their acting careers, whereas none of the men had been models. Further, in his assessment, "the vast majority of women could be described as attractive, often extremely beautiful; by contrast, about half the male stars have not been handsome by any convention" (Levy, 1990b:250). These findings provide support for the assertion by Sontag (1979:473) that "a woman's fortunes depend, far more than a man's, on being at least 'acceptable' looking."

The importance placed on the physical appearance of women is hardly limited to film acting. For example, researchers (e.g., Deutsch *et al.*, 1986) have found that, although the perceived attractiveness of both men and women decreases with age, evaluations of the femininity of women decrease, while evaluations of the masculinity of men are unaffected by age. More generally, researchers (Kite *et al.*, 1991) have discovered that older women are rated as less feminine than younger women. Thus, despite evidence that men and women undergo similar psychological experiences as they age (Gove *et al.*, 1989), the physical processes of aging may affect them differently. These processes have implications for the careers of both men and women, given that attractiveness has been found to positively affect the promotion decisions of personnel professionals (Morrow *et al.*, 1990). Thus, there is every reason to believe that the effects of declining youth on the

career opportunities of women may not be restricted to the acting profession. Women in professions that require a public presentation of self, such as law (Saporta and Halpern, 2002) or business, may suffer these effects to some extent. Indeed, the negative interaction effect of being a woman and being older is consistent with the concept of a “glass ceiling” with respect to managerial promotions (Maume, 1999).

These findings also have implications that go far beyond the differences between the careers of men and women in a high-status and high-income occupation. As noted at the outset, stars exert a pervasive influence on society as cultural role models. The very fact that most of the characters in films are men rather than women amounts to an “explicit devaluation of female talent on screen” (Bielby and Bielby, 1996:251) and an implicit cultural devaluation of women. This cultural devaluation of women is reinforced by the fact that they do not receive star billing as often as men. In short, films tell audiences that men are more important, in all kinds of contexts, than women. In addition, stars provide audiences with idealized images of masculinity and femininity. The problem, of course, is that men are allowed to age in film, and women are not. Male stars in their sixties are routinely cast as leads, even in physically demanding roles. Conversely, female stars are rarely cast as leads after they enter their forties. One consequence of this discrimination against older women is that male stars are often paired romantically with younger, often much younger, female stars. Unfortunately, the differential representation of men and women in film and television probably contributes to the cultural devaluation of older women in American society.

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