

SCOOBY-DOO AND WOMEN TOO:

An Analysis of Female Representation since 1969

When Scooby-Doo debuted in 1969, the Women's Rights Movement was gaining momentum.¹ The 1960s saw the publication of Betty Friedman's *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963, the passage of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and the founding of the National Organization for Women in 1966.² Changes in women's position and status in society did not stop there. The passage of Title IX in 1972, the publication of the "Fat Liberation Manifesto" in 1973, changes in the computer science industry in the 1980s, and an increased interest in embracing feminism and femininity in the early 2000s mark other important moments in this history. In effect, the art made from the 1960s and beyond shows a perception of women in this time period. More specifically, Scooby-Doo, airing nonconsecutively from 1969 to the present, reflected women's changing place in society.

The classic formula for Scooby-Doo involved Fred, Daphne, Velma, Shaggy, and Scooby-Doo (often referred to as "the gang") traveling around in their van, The Mystery Machine. The gang solved mysteries involving monsters that turned out to be villains in masks.³ In the half-century since *Scooby-Doo, Where Are You!* premiered, this format has changed in some iterations. For example, the writers introduced Scrappy-Doo in 1979, and Scooby-Doo faced real monsters throughout the 1980s.

¹ Christina, Tsoplakis. "Comparing and Contrasting the Women's Rights Movement from the 1960s and Today." *New Errands: The Undergraduate Journal of American Studies* 6, no. 1 (December 11, 2018): 1. <https://journals.psu.edu/ne/article/download/61055/60773>.

² Susan Ware, *Title IX: A Brief History with Documents* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2007), 3.

³ Jerry Beck, *The Hanna-Barbera Treasury*, San Rafael, CA: Insight Editions, 2007, 138.

Scooby-Doo, Where Are You! ran for twenty-five episodes across two seasons. This series established the character traits for the gang that future series either followed or defied. Fred Jones, the de facto leader of the gang, drove the van, and concocted overly elaborate traps to catch the villains. Shaggy and Scooby-Doo, the cowards of the group with an insatiable hunger, were both loyal and would run into danger if it meant saving a friend. Daphne, the fashionista, had a tendency to get into danger, earning her the nickname “Danger-Prone Daphne.” Velma was the most intelligent group member who often lost her glasses, leaving her mostly blind.

By 1969, women wearing pants became more common, but did not establish a new norm.⁴ That year, Rep. Charlotte T. Reid (R-Ill.) made history by being the first woman to wear pants on the floor of the United States House of Representatives. This shocking act shows the rising acceptance of women wearing trousers at that time.⁵ Despite the changing fashion trends, *Scooby-Doo, Where Are You!* did not feature any women in trousers. Rather, the women in *Scooby-Doo, Where Are You!* can be divided into two categories: matronly women who wear long skirts, and hip, young women in mini-skirts. Even the more counterculture, “borderline misfit” Velma wore the popular mini-skirt.⁶ This suggests a type of traditional femininity in these

⁴ Lydia Edwards, *How to Read a Dress: A Guide to Changing Fashion from the 16th to the 21st Century* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2021), 180-182.

⁵“Update: First Woman to Wear Pants on House Floor, Rep. Charlotte Reid,” *Washington Post*, June 27, 2023, accessed October 12, 2023, https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/reliable-source/post/update-first-woman-to-wear-pants-on-house-floor-rep-charlotte-reid/2011/12/21/gIQAVLD99O_blog.html.

⁶ Christopher Orr. 2020. “The Secret of Scooby-Doo’s Enduring Appeal.” *Atlantic* 325 (4): 76–78. <https://research-ebsco-com.ezproxy.montevallo.edu/linkprocessor/plink?id=bda18e45-199f-372f-8f58-cc21f683c114>.

characters, although with a youthful twist in the length of the skirts. In 1972 Cher guest-starred wearing green bell bottoms, marking the first time a woman wore pants in Scooby-Doo.⁷

The New Scooby-Doo Movies, despite its name, was the second series of Scooby-Doo that ran from 1972 to 1973. This series had one or more guest stars in every episode who assisted the gang in solving the mystery. These guest stars included Hanna-Barbera characters Josie and The Pussycats and Speed Buggy, comedians Johnathan Winters and Tim Conway, actors Don Adams and Dick Van Dyke, and singers Jerry Reed and Davy Jones.⁸ These episodes also had a longer run time than *Scooby-Doo, Where Are You!*, with episodes lasting longer than forty minutes, more than double the twenty minutes devoted to the previous episodes.

In 1969, the National Association to Aid Fat Americans (now known as the National Association to Advance Fat Acceptance) began in New York, while in California, a group of feminists formed the Fat Underground.⁹ In 1973, the Fat Underground published a “Fat Liberation Manifesto,” which enumerated seven points including, “WE are angry at mistreatment by commercial and sexist interests. These have exploited our bodies as objects of ridicule...”¹⁰ With frequent jokes made at fat characters’ expense, *The New Scooby-Doo Movies* used these

⁷ “The Secret of Shark Island,” October 28, 1972 (“The New Scooby-Doo Movies,” Hanna-Barbera, 1972-1973).

⁸ “The Haunted Showboat,” September 15, 1973; “The Weird Winds of Winona,” October 13, 1973; “The Frickert Fracas,” September 30, 1972; “The Spirit Spooked Sports Show,” September 29, 1973; “The Exterminator,” October 6, 1973; “The Haunted Carnival,” October 27, 1973; “The Phantom of the Country Music Hall,” December 9, 1972; “The Haunted Horseman of Haggleshorn Hall,” December 2, 1972 (“The New Scooby-Doo Movies,” Hanna-Barbera, 1972-1973).

⁹ “NAAFA’s Origin Story & Fat Activism History — Naafa,” *Naafa*, accessed October 21, 2023, <https://naafa.org/history>.

¹⁰ Judy Freespirit and Aldebaran, “Fat Liberation Manifesto,” Press release, last modified November 1973, <https://fatlibarchive.org/fat-liberation-manifesto-1973/>.

characters in the way these organizations advocated against. Singer Cass Elliot was the butt of many of these jokes with “thin air, Cass Elliot?” and “I knew I was heavy, but not that heavy” providing two examples; Moe, of The Three Stooges, also referred to fellow stooge Curly Joe as “the chubby lone eagle.”¹¹

The New Scooby-Doo Movies also introduced a new pattern of presenting female characters, most often Daphne and Velma, as incapable of performing the same tasks as male characters or as needing protection while doing said tasks. The characters sometimes stated this outright, as when Fred told Velma and Daphne “better stay here girls, it'll be safer,” when going to confront The Ghost of Bigfoot. Sometimes a female character was the one to claim women as incapable, as when Velma told Shaggy and Scooby, “a girl can't do it, and since you're the only men left, we accept your brave offer to volunteer.” At other times assigning gender-stereotypical roles required no discussion; in “The Loch Ness Mess” Fred, Shaggy, and Scooby had to stand guard after eliminating Shaggy’s uncle and the Harlem Globetrotters as options, but never considered Velma and Daphne.¹² This pattern continued into *The Scooby-Doo Show*; when the gang needed money, they made Scooby, a dog, work in construction rather than have a woman do the job.¹³

¹¹“The Haunted Candy Factory,” October 20, 1973; “The Ghost of the Red Baron,” November 18, 1972 (“The New Scooby-Doo Movies,” Hanna-Barbera, 1972-1973).

¹² “The Ghost of Bigfoot,” November 11, 1972; “The Phantom of the Country Music Hall,” “The Loch Ness Mess,” December 23, 1972 (“The New Scooby-Doo Movies,” Hanna-Barbera, 1972-1973).

¹³ “High Rise Hair Raiser,” September 11, 1976 (“The Scooby-Doo Show,” Hanna-Barbera, September 11, 1976-1978).

Women commonly held jobs in the 1970s, with half of the female civilian population being a part of the United States labor force for the first recorded time in 1979.¹⁴ Despite this increase, getting a job was not necessarily easy, safe, or acceptable for women, especially in fields like construction. Throughout the 1960s and early 1970s, many newspapers separated job listings by sex, frequently limiting women to pink-collar jobs and preventing women from gaining employment.¹⁵ The United States Supreme Court overturned this practice in 1973, but the struggle for employment did not end there.¹⁶ Women attempting to enter male-dominated workplaces often faced resistance. One example occurred when women gained the right to take the New York firefighter exam in 1977. When women passed the exam, the physical agility section underwent changes. Many female firefighters received hate mail and death threats, experienced sexual harassment and rape, and faced public protests against their hiring.¹⁷ Women presented a threat to traditional job monopolies and threatened men's ideas of masculinity connected to the maleness of their profession. In reference to construction workers, Joshua B. Freeman concludes that, "job satisfaction and craft pride contributed to the swaggering masculinity of the hardhats."¹⁸ This issue did not necessarily start in the workforce though;

¹⁴ "Women in the Labor Force, 1970–2009," *U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics*, last modified January 5, 2011, accessed October 24, 2023, https://www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2011/ted_20110105_data.htm.

¹⁵ Tsoplakis, 3.

¹⁶ *U.S. Reports: Pittsburgh Press Co. v. Human Rel. Comm'n*, 413 U.S. 376 (1973), The Library of Congress, 1973, accessed December 20, 2023, <https://www.loc.gov/item/usrep413376/>.

¹⁷ Nancy MacLean, "The Hidden History of Affirmative Action: Working Women's Struggles in the 1970s and the Gender of Class," *Feminist Studies* 25, no. 1 (January 1, 1999): 42, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3216670>.

¹⁸ Jared Freeman, "Hardhats: Construction Workers, Manliness, and the 1970 Pro-War Demonstrations," *Journal of Social History* 26, no. 4 (June 1, 1993): 725–744, <https://doi.org/10.1353/jsh/26.4.725>.

despite Title IX's passage in 1972, women still faced resistance when trying to get a technical or shop education. When a school barred a ninth grader from taking a shop class and learning how to use power tools in 1973, she wrote to the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. In 1976, HEW closed the case without anyone checking to see if women could take the class.¹⁹ Defining an end to this struggle is nearly impossible, with *The New York Times* running an article in 1992 entitled "Hard Times for Women in Construction" detailing inequalities in one male-dominated field and the Pew Research Center reporting uneven representation of women across STEM fields in 2019.²⁰ *The Scooby-Doo Show* highlighted some of the tensions of women in the workforce in the 1970s, from the boys failing to consider Daphne and Velma as viable employees when deciding to work in construction to the pink-collar fields that the female characters did work in: acting, singing, hotel management, office support/bookkeeping, and restaurateuring.²¹

¹⁹ Ware, *Title IX*, 72.

²⁰ "Hard Times for Women in Construction," *The New York Times*, September 29, 1992, accessed October 15, 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/1992/09/29/nyregion/hard-times-for-women-in-construction.html>; Reem Nadeem, "STEM Jobs See Uneven Progress in Increasing Gender, Racial and Ethnic Diversity," *Pew Research Center Science & Society*, last modified April 1, 2021, accessed October 24, 2023, <https://www.pewresearch.org/science/2021/04/01/stem-jobs-see-uneven-progress-in-increasing-gender-racial-and-ethnic-diversity/>.

²¹ "The Chiller Diller Movie Thriller," October 1, 1977; "Mamba Wamba and the Voodoo Hoodoo," November 6, 1976; "Vampire Bats and Scaredy Cats," September 17, 1977; "A Frightened Hound Meets Demons Underground," November 13, 1976; "A Highland Fling with a Monstrous Thing," October 14, 1978; "The Gruesome Game of the Gator Ghoul," September 25, 1976; "The Creepy Case of Old Iron Face," October 21, 1978 ("The Scooby-Doo Show," Hanna-Barbera, 1976-1978).

By the late 1970s, Scooby-Doo's ratings were in decline.²² In order to save the character, Hanna-Barbera introduced Scrappy-Doo to the small screens in 1979, and Fred, Daphne, and Velma became sidelined to give Scrappy more screen time. This initially improved ratings, contributing to the decision to cut Fred, Daphne, and Velma altogether in the second iteration of *Scooby-Doo and Scrappy-Doo*.²³

After four seasons without Fred and the girls, Daphne rejoined Shaggy, Scrappy, and Scooby, now as a reporter.²⁴ This format continued for two seasons (although Fred and Velma made guest appearances in some second-season episodes) with twelve-minute mysteries that aired in pairs. In this series, Daphne and Scrappy found most of the clues, while Shaggy and Scooby were their generally goofy, scared selves, although Scrappy was still a comedic character. This means the only consistently appearing female character was the only one to not be a comedic character.

The idea that women either are not funny or can not be funny is not unique to the 1980s, but beliefs around women and humor in Europe and the United States are not static. In 16th-century Europe, Juan Luis Vives encouraged women to be humorous in situations where their morals were not at risk—as laughter could imply being sexually loose—by having jokes and funny stories ready to cheer up their husbands when they were down. In the 17th century, men acknowledged that women were funny, but they worried that women would use their wit to make fun of them. However, as humor became a money maker in the 18th and 19th centuries,

²² Mark Evanier, "Scrappy Days," *News From ME - Mark Evanier's Blog About All Sorts of Stuff*, accessed October 17, 2023, <https://www.newsfromme.com/articles-such/scrappy-days/>.

²³ "Episode 17: Interview with Duane Poole," May 1, 2018, accessed October 17, 2023, <https://scoobydoocast.libsyn.com/apnsd-episode-17-interview-with-duane-poole-part-two>.

²⁴ "No Sharking Zone," September 10, 1983 ("The New Scooby-Doo Mysteries," Hanna-Barbera, 1983-1984).

men found the raunchy humor of the time to be unbecoming of women, kicking them out of the space.²⁵ In more contemporary times, the idea that women are not funny remains prevalent. In his *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious* (1905), Sigmund Freud argued that women are incapable of being funny because of physiological differences, including less complex psychological development.²⁶ Blind studies participants have typically rated men funnier than women, but these results are not caused by biological differences. Cultural and social differences in what makes people laugh and societal forces discourage women and girls from developing humor. Essentially, the idea that women are not funny becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.²⁷ But experts have noted the 1980s as a time when many female comedians gained popularity. With Nora Ephron, the Golden Girls, Roseanne Barr, and other real and fictitious humorous women, female comedians became more commonplace on sitcoms and emerged in the American comedy club scene.²⁸ However, an additional component of this belief is that, if there are funny women, men do not consider those women to be attractive. A 2007 opinion piece demonstrating this view with the statement, “Most of them, though, when you come to review the situation, are hefty or dykey or Jewish, or some combo of the three.”²⁹ When considering Daphne in the context of

²⁵ Joy Wiltenburg, *Laughing Histories: From the Renaissance Man to the Woman of Wit* (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2022), 73, 81-90.

²⁶ Sigmund Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious* (Redditch, England: Read Books Ltd, 1905).

²⁷ Gil Greengross, Paul J. Silvia, and Emily C. Nusbaum, “Sex Differences in Humor Production Ability: A Meta-Analysis,” *Journal of Research in Personality* 84 (February 2020), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrp.2019.103886>.

²⁸ “Makers: Women in Comedy,” *PBS*, accessed February 14, 2024, http://bento.cdn.pbs.org/hostedbento-prod/filer_public/Makers%202/Discussion%20Guides/MakersComedyDiscussionGuide.pdf.

²⁹ Christopher Hitchens, “Why Women Aren’t Funny,” *Vanity Fair*, January 1, 2007, accessed November 28, 2023, <https://www.vanityfair.com/culture/2007/01/hitchens200701>.

these beliefs, she was not written or drawn in a way that would cause her to be called fat, lesbian, or Jewish. This means she does not fit this narrow perspective of the type of woman who is funny.

A Pup Named Scooby-Doo brought the gang back together for a full series in 1988. This show featured the gang as children living with their parents and Scooby-Doo as a puppy living with the Rogerses (Shaggy and his family). The target audience was slightly younger, with the gang sometimes addressing the viewers directly with questions like, “Do you know who did it?” The writers changed Fred’s, Daphne’s, and Velma’s personalities in this series. Fred became a conspiracy theorist who habitually read the “National Exaggerator” and jumped to conclusions, which prevented him from being an effective mystery solver.³⁰ Daphne got a new catchphrase in this series, often saying, “there’s no such thing as ghosts,” (or whatever type of monster the gang happens to be facing in that episode). However, she was even more concerned with beauty and cleanliness than in previous series. Velma remained the brains of the group but, especially in early episodes, spoke very little. When she did speak, the rest of the gang responded, “Velma spoke!” or “Velma said jinkies! It must be a clue!”³¹ She had a motorized skateboard, as The Mystery Machine does not appear in this series, and a briefcase computer that she used to help solve the mysteries that The Scooby-Doo Detective Agency faces.

Velma’s briefcase computer aired as significant demographic changes occurred within the field of computer science.³² In the early days of computers, employers viewed programming as

³⁰ “Lights...Camera...Monster,” December 3, 1988 (“A Pup Named Scooby-Doo,” Hanna-Barbera, 1988-1991).

³¹ “A Bicycle Built for Boo!,” September 10, 1988 (“A Pup Named Scooby-Doo,” Hanna-Barbera, 1988-1991).

³² Nolan Jacobs, “How The 1980’s Pushed Women Out of Computer Science,” *Insight | by Balance Now*, last modified May 29, 2022, accessed October 27, 2023, <https://insight.balancenow.co/how-the-1980s-pushed-women-out-of-computer-science/>.

women's work similar to secretarial tasks or switchboard operating. Men saw Programming as being more "mechanical than intellectual." Early pioneers in this field include Ada Lovelace, the ENIAC girls, and Joan Clarke.³³ In 1968, *Cosmopolitan* released an article urging its female readers to become computer programmers. However, a shift had already begun in the field: male programmers formed professional organizations, created educational requirements, and discouraged the hiring of women. The industry began using tests, which continued to be used well into the 1980s, with the goal of making hiring more objective. Instead, these screenings made the hiring process more difficult for women as fraternities and other male-dominated networks often shared the answers. Personality quizzes looked for the same personality types as other, mostly male, white-collar professionals, while also trying to find more antisocial tendencies. Employers believed those personality types made good programmers. This unintentionally biased the talent pool. According to professor and researcher Nathan Ensmenger, these antisocial traits have become synonymous with the idea of computer programmers. This idea created a self-fulfilling prophecy of men going into computer science, as people self-select careers they believe will match their personalities.³⁴ As a result of these stereotypes, lazy hiring practices, and predatory schools targeting female students, women earned 35.7 percent of bachelor's degrees in computer science in 1986, but women have since received fewer degrees in the field.³⁵ Velma's computer made its first appearance two years later, but computer science was

³³ Nathan L. Ensmenger, *The Computer Boys Take Over: Computers, Programmers, and the Politics of Technical Expertise* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2012), 14; Deborah L. Butler, "Gender, Girls, and Computer Technology: What's the Status Now?," *The Clearing House: A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues and Ideas* 73, no. 4 (March 1, 2000): 225, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00098650009600957>.

³⁴ Ensmenger, 163-170, 73-80, 69-70, 78-79.

³⁵ Karen A. Frenkel, "Women and Computing," *Communications of the ACM* 33, no. 11 (November 1, 1990): 38, <https://doi.org/10.1145/92755.92756>.

no longer the female-dominated field of the 1960s. Velma would not be best described as “anti-social,” with a better term describing her in this iteration being “soft-spoken.” Velma used her computer in a more masculine way for the time, performing equations to solve mysteries, rather than in a more feminine, secretarial manner.

A longstanding misconception assumes that feminism means rejecting traditionally feminine interests or desires.³⁶ Writer and activist Julia Serano explained the importance for feminists to “empower femininity,” meaning recognizing that feminine traits and interests are human. She also encouraged women to empower women, including themselves, who exhibit those traits and interests. Serano noted the importance of understanding that someone can be feminine for themselves and not for the men around them.³⁷ Feminists had explored this idea in the early 2000s, but this perspective was not widely known, especially with younger women. Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richards detailed the questions they received from college students about how to be a feminist and enjoy feminine things in their 2004 essay.³⁸ This theory is now more well-known with pop press organizations writing pieces about combining femininity and feminism, but, as noted above, some still believe those ideals are mutually exclusive.³⁹

³⁶ Sophie Fujiwara, “Femininity, Not Feminism,” *The Stanford Review*, last modified November 9, 2023, accessed December 21, 2023, <https://stanfordreview.org/femininity-not-feminism/>.

³⁷ Julia M. Serano, *Putting the Feminine Back into Feminism* (Emeryville, CA: Seal Press, 2007), 319–344.

³⁸ Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richards, “Feminism and Femininity: Or How We Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Thong,” in *All About the Girl: Culture, Power, and Identity* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 59–67.

³⁹ Briar Clark, “Femininity vs Feminism: Why Should I Have to Choose?,” *Beauty Crew*, last modified July 14, 2021, accessed December 21, 2023, <https://www.beautycrew.com.au/femininity-feminism-opinion-piece>.

The next time Scooby-Doo aired was in 2002 with *What's New Scooby-Doo?*. This show remained close to the format established in *Scooby-Doo, Where are You!* characterizing the gang as older teenagers traveling in their van to solve mysteries involving criminals in monster masks. The gang is similar to the original incarnation, except for Daphne's newfound ability to defend herself from the monsters and her ability to "MacGyver" her way through locks with random items. Daphne still got grabbed by monsters, but she could slow one down by dropping snow on him with her blow dryer or fake a fashion emergency to deploy a parachute on an alien.⁴⁰ This is similar, albeit more child-friendly, to Daphne in *Scooby-Doo, The Movie* (2002), who, after deciding she no longer wants to be a damsel in distress, said, "I'm a black belt now. I've transformed my body into a dangerous weapon."⁴¹ However, unlike the movie, the gang accepted Daphne's increased survival abilities, always impressed with her ability to open a door with nothing but cuticle trimmers and a sandal strap or to create a hydroelectric fuel source from items found in her purse.⁴² While Daphne embraced her independence and femininity, Velma maintained her interest in technology and enjoyed hockey, two interests thought to be more masculine.⁴³ This highlights the importance of choice for women and suggests that women can be interested in different things and remain close friends.

⁴⁰ "Big Scare in the Big Easy," October 5, 2002; "There's No Creature Like Snow Creature," September 14, 2002; "Space Ape at the Cape," September 28, 2002 ("What's New, Scooby-Doo?," Warner Bros. Animation, 2002-2006).

⁴¹ *Scooby-Doo*, directed by Raja Gosnell (Mosaic Media Group, 2002).

⁴² "Mummy Scares Best," September 20, 2003; "The Fast and the Wormious," September 27, 2003 ("What's New, Scooby-Doo?" Warner Bros. Animation, 2003-2006).

⁴³ "Diamonds are a Ghoul's Best Friend" ("What's New, Scooby-Doo?," Warner Bros. Animation, March 3, 2005).

Shaggy and Scooby-Doo, Get a Clue! again reduced Fred's, Daphne's, and Velma's roles, including them in only two episodes. Rather than unmasking monsters, Shaggy and Scooby, now extremely rich, tried to save the world from Dr. Phineus Phibes. Phibes wanted the secret formula Shaggy's missing uncle created and hid in a Scooby snack recipe which gave the eater various powers until digested.⁴⁴

Across 26 episodes, nine female characters appeared, all of whom were white, with Daphne and Velma the only ones to appear in more than one episode. The other seven characters were scientist Dr. Von Puten, the villainous Misty Swiss and Cat Lady, and the four unnamed, attractive Nifties.⁴⁵ For a series that aired from 2006 to 2008, having that few female characters might seem unusual, but this aligned with other shows from that time. According to "Gender in Children's Television Worldwide," which analyzed popular programming from 24 countries in 2007, of the 26,342 characters analyzed, only one-third were female. Additionally, slightly less than three quarters of the characters had white/caucasian skin, and female characters were more likely to have blonde or red hair. This series had one woman with red hair, one woman with black hair, one woman whose hair is never seen, and five blondes, but the Nifties are identical octuplets. Most characters the researchers examined were not elderly or babies, with all the female characters in this show ranging between teenage and middle age.⁴⁶ Researchers also note

⁴⁴ "Shags to Riches," September 23, 2006; "Almost Ghosts," February 24, 2007 ("Shaggy and Scooby-Doo, Get a Clue!," Warner Bros. Animation, 2006-2008).

⁴⁵ High Society Scooby," October 7, 2006; "More Fondue For Scooby-Doo," September 30, 2006; "Operation Dog and Hippy Boy," May 5, 2007; "Inside Job," October 6, 2007 ("Shaggy and Scooby-Doo, Get a Clue!," Warner Bros. Animation, 2006-2008).

⁴⁶ Maya Götz et al., "Gender in Children's Television Worldwide," *TelevIZIon* (2008): 4-9, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/234143610_Gender_in_children%27s_television_worldwide_Results_from_a_media_analysis_in_24_countries.

the frequent use of the “blonde bitch” stereotype, as with the Nifties, who were vapid and screamed in the face of anyone they deemed ugly.

Similar to the “blond bitch” stereotype, is the “mean girl” or “catty woman” trope. This trope involves backstabbing, jealous, and often power-hungry women acting bitchy, mean, or catty to other women to try to get ahead or to gain the approval of men.⁴⁷ Despite being problematic and unrealistic, these ideas remain, appearing in various forms (with varying consequences for the mean girl) in films like *Heathers* (1988), *Mean Girls* (2004), and *High School Musical* (2006) and television shows like *Riverdale* (2017-2023).⁴⁸ Another consistent trend in television and movies is the portrayal, and often glorification, of unhealthy relationships. *Gossip Girl* (2007-2012), *Pretty Little Liars* (2010-2017), *Vampire Diaries* (2009-2017), and *Twilight* (2008) are some of the many examples of media glorifying toxic couples.⁴⁹ With many of these examples from the 2000s, a body of research appeared around that time exploring the impact of watching content with unhealthy relationships. One of these studies, conducted in

⁴⁷ Suzannah Weiss, “5 Reasons the Catty Woman Trope Has Got to Go, Because It’s Fueling the Patriarchy,” *Bustle*, last modified June 27, 2016, accessed December 21, 2023, <https://www.bustle.com/articles/169376-5-reasons-the-catty-woman-trope-has-got-to-go-because-its-fueling-the-patriarchy>.

⁴⁸ Aditi Murti, “Can We Move on? From the Mean Girl Trope as a Depiction of Hyper-Competitiveness between Women,” *The Swaddle*, last modified October 20, 2020, accessed December 21, 2023, <https://www.theswaddle.com/can-we-move-on-from-the-mean-girl-trope-as-a-depiction-of-hyper-competitiveness-between-women>.

⁴⁹ Gillian Steffey, “How the Media Glamorizes Toxic Relationships,” *Her Campus*, October 19, 2022, accessed January 25, 2024, <https://www.hercampus.com/school/cal-poly/how-the-media-glamorizes-toxic-relationships/>.

2010, found that the media, especially television, contributed to a warped understanding of what was acceptable in sexual and romantic relationships among adolescents and young adults.⁵⁰

In 2010, *Scooby-Doo! Mystery Incorporated* constituted the first Scooby-Doo series aimed at older children. The show had a TV-Y7 rating: horror film allusions, scarier monsters, more dangerous situations, and relationships between members of the gang.⁵¹ However, the relationships portrayed were not always healthy. Velma and Shaggy were dating in the series' first episode, but Shaggy hid this relationship for fear of Scooby's jealousy. When Scooby found out, Shaggy faced jealousy and pressure from both sides, eventually leading to the end of his relationship with Velma. While the two were dating, Velma tried to control Shaggy, making him snap a rubber band on his wrist whenever he said "like" and trying to change how he dressed.⁵²

Daphne and Fred's relationship was also marked by jealousy, miscommunication, and pressure. Even before they dated, Daphne could not accept that Fred would go to prom with a different girl or that he would receive tutoring from a girl. Daphne ignored Fred when he tried to explain his feelings for her. Daphne often tried to hint at her feelings, such as talking about wanting romantic gifts or sneaking into Fred's hotel room, but would not share her feelings directly and often became annoyed at Fred for not understanding her hints. When they dated, Fred became obsessive over Daphne, giving her a strict daily schedule. Fred ended his

⁵⁰ Tonoah Merritt, "How T.V. Promotes an Unrealistic Image of Romantic Relationships," *All Capstone Projects* (2010), <https://opus.govst.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1373&context=capstones>.

⁵¹ Emily Ashby, "Scooby-Doo! Mystery Incorporated TV Review," *Common Sense Media*, last modified October 17, 2023, accessed October 28, 2023, <https://www.common sense media.org/tv-reviews/scooby-doo-mystery-incorporated>.

⁵² "Beware the Beast from Below," April 5, 2010; "The Legend of Alice May," August 16, 2010; "In Fear of the Phantom," August 23, 2010; "Battle of the Humungonauts," September 6, 2010; "Howl of the Fright Hound," October 4, 2010; "The Song of Mystery," August 9, 2010 ("Scooby-Doo! Mystery Incorporated," Warner Bros. Animation, 2010-2013).

engagement to Daphne and withdrew from his friends after realizing his dad was not his “real father” instead of working through the turmoil as a couple or as a gang.⁵³ In these relationships, both Daphne and Velma display characteristics of the mean girl: being jealous, controlling, and desperately wanting approval. Daphne aimed her cattiness towards romantic competitors while Velma’s was mostly aimed at Scooby or Shaggy. These character traits, along with the boys’ lack of communication and controlling nature, contributed heavily to their relationship issues.

Additionally, two years after *Scooby-Doo! Mystery Incorporated*’s finale, *Scooby-Doo! Moon Monster Madness* released direct-to-video and included the female villain lying to the gang about Daphne’s test scores being the highest in order to pit Velma and Daphne against each other.⁵⁴

Be Cool, Scooby-Doo!, which aired from 2015 to 2018, returned to a more traditional format of Scooby-Doo with the mysteries generally self-contained in a single episode, no romantic relationships between members of the gang, and a more family-friendly attitude. The characters maintained their traits from the original show albeit exaggerated in some ways. However, *Be Cool, Scooby-Doo!* did not insist that its female characters be conventionally attractive. Daphne was not particularly interested in fashion and make-up, or even men, in this series. She wore a fake beard, did not understand how to wear kimonos, and purposefully wore her jacket backwards.⁵⁵ Velma experienced visible swelling, sneezing, and a runny nose when

⁵³ “The Legend of Alice May,” August 16, 2010; “The Song of Mystery,” August 9, 2010; “In Fear of the Phantom,” August 23, 2010; “Beware the Beast from Below,” April 5, 2010; “The Creeping Creatures,” July 19, 2010; “A Haunting in Crystal Cove,” July 5, 2011; “All Fear the Freak,” July 26, 2011 (“Scooby-Doo! Mystery Incorporated,” Warner Bros. Animation, 2010-2013).

⁵⁴ *Scooby-Doo! Moon Monster Madness*, directed by Paul McEvoy (Warner Bros. Animation, 2015).

⁵⁵ “Poodle Justice,” October 8, 2015; “The Curse of Kaniaku,” April 1, 2017 (“Be Cool, Scooby-Doo!,” Warner Bros. Animation, 2015-2018).

exposed to certain allergens, turned into an old cat lady in a Florida retirement community, and was generally a tactless know-it-all, even when being more personable was vital for solving the mystery.⁵⁶

Beginning in early 1990s America, “the share of women going into the traditional fields of teaching, nursing, social work, and clerical work declined, and more women were becoming doctors, lawyers, managers, and professors.”⁵⁷ *Be Cool Scooby-Doo!* reflected this pattern by having women work in video game design, espionage, sports, law, and government.⁵⁸ Nevertheless, viewers still see women in pink-collar roles like personal assistants, hospitality, and housekeeping.⁵⁹ Contributing to this variation in women’s professions is an increase in educational attainment since 1970. There is a strong correlation between increased education and increased employment prospects and earnings.⁶⁰ In 2014, slightly more than four out of every ten

⁵⁶ “Eating Crow,” March 23, 2016; “Night of the Upsetting Shorts,” November 5, 2017; “Vote Velma,” April 1, 2017 (“Be Cool, Scooby-Doo!,” Warner Bros. Animation, 2015-2018).

⁵⁷ Janet L. Yellen, “The History of Women’s Work and Wages and How It Has Created Success for Us All,” *Brookings*, last modified January 6, 2021, accessed November 3, 2023, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-history-of-womens-work-and-wages-and-how-it-has-created-success-for-us-all/>.

⁵⁸ “Protein Titans 2,” March 14, 2018; “Omelettes Are Forever,” March 9, 2018; “Be Cold, Scooby-Doo!,” March 5, 2016; “The People vs. Fred Jones,” June 20, 2017; “El Bandito,” April 2, 2016 (“Be Cool, Scooby-Doo!,” Warner Bros. Animation, 2015-2018).

⁵⁹ “Me, Myself, and A.I.,” October 22, 2015; “Naughty or Ice,” March 11, 2018; “Scrooge Doo,” November 30, 2017 (“Be Cool, Scooby-Doo!,” Warner Bros. Animation, 2015-2018).

⁶⁰ Dennis Vilorio, “Education Matters,” *U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics*, last modified March 2016, accessed February 16, 2024, <https://www.bls.gov/careeroutlook/2016/data-on-display/education-matters.htm>.

women had a bachelor's degree or higher while only around one out of ten had those degrees in 1970.⁶¹

Another series that reflected this pattern was *Scooby-Doo and Guess Who?*. This series mirrored the format of *The New Scooby-Doo Movies*, with guest stars who joined the gang to help solve (or be responsible for) the mystery. This series ran 52 episodes compared to *The New Scooby-Doo Movies*' 24, which allowed more opportunity for increased diversity in the roles that women play and the identities of female guest stars. For example, *Scooby-Doo and Guess Who?* had female athletes as guests: boxer Laila Ali, figure skater Tara Lipinski, and snowboarder Chloe Kim.⁶² These female athletes also reflect the effects of Title IX since the airing of *The New Scooby-Doo Movies* and the enactment of that legislation in 1972.⁶³ Additionally, Wonder Woman guest stars, making her the first female superhero to appear in a Scooby-Doo series (Black Canary appeared in a supporting role the previous year in *Scooby-Doo! & Batman: The Brave and the Bold*).⁶⁴

Since the 1960s, people identifying outside of the gender binary or not as their birth sex has become more socially acceptable. The term genderqueer emerged in the 1990s, and people began using terms referring to non-binary gender identities in the early 2000s. Despite this

⁶¹ "Women in the Labor Force: A Databook," *U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics*, last modified April 2017, accessed February 9, 2024, <https://www.bls.gov/opub/reports/womens-databook/2016/home.htm>.

⁶² "The Crown Jewel of Boxing!," October 1, 2020; "Scooby on Ice!," October 1, 2020; "Caveman of the Half-Pipe!," October 1, 2020 ("Scooby-Doo and Guess Who?," Warner Bros. Animation, 2019-2021)

⁶³ Ware, *Title IX*, 3.

⁶⁴ "The Scooby of a Thousand Faces!," August 1, 2019 ("Scooby-Doo and Guess Who?," Warner Bros. Animation, 2019-2021); *Scooby-Doo! & Batman: The Brave and the Bold*, directed by Jake Castorena (Warner Bros. Animation, 2018).

expanded vocabulary and legal advances in recognition of non-binary identities, non-binary and genderqueer people still struggle with visibility.⁶⁵ *Scooby-Doo and Guess Who?* had singer/songwriter Halsey (Ashley Nicolette Frangipane) as a guest star.⁶⁶ They were the first character to use she/her and they/them pronouns, although she did not announce her pronouns until March 2021, about a year after the episode aired. Additionally, Halsey has not publicly labeled their gender identity, only sharing “I thought pregnancy would give me very strong, binary feelings about ‘womanhood,’ but truly, it has leveled my perception of gender entirely.”⁶⁷

As of January 2024, *Velma* had one season consisting of ten episodes. This series was the Mindy Kaling lead, adult-oriented, Velma-focused version of Scooby-Doo that did not feature Scooby.⁶⁸ The show followed Velma, now Indian-American, trying to navigate high school and find a killer targeting the hottest, most popular girls in school. She struggled with hallucinations every time she tried to solve a mystery (which she has had since the disappearance of her mother).⁶⁹ Fred was no longer the de facto leader of the gang, but a privileged, juvenile, and popular white boy with a micropenis he wanted to hide. Daphne was the beautiful adopted child

⁶⁵ Surya Monro, “Non-Binary and Genderqueer: An Overview of the Field,” *International Journal of Transgenderism* 20, no. 2–3 (January 21, 2019): 126–131, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15532739.2018.1538841>. The United Kingdom Civil Service’s adopted a non-binary identity option in 2017.

⁶⁶ “The New York Underground!,” July 2, 2020 (“Scooby-Doo and Guess Who?,” Warner Bros. Animation, 2019-2021).

⁶⁷ Stephen Daw, “Halsey Explains Recent Change to Pronouns That Feel ‘Most Authentic’ For Her,” *Billboard*, March 23, 2021, accessed December 20, 2023, <https://www.billboard.com/culture/pride/halsey-explains-change-pronouns-9544728/>.

⁶⁸ Saarthak Johri, “The Mindy Kaling Mystery: Unmasking the Murderer of Charlie Grandy’s ‘Velma,’” *The Michigan Daily*, last modified June 27, 2023, accessed December 21, 2023, <https://www.michigandaily.com/arts/the-mindy-kaling-mystery-unmasking-the-murderer-of-charlie-grandys-velma/>.

⁶⁹ “Velma,” January 12, 2023 (“Velma,” Charles Grandy Productions, 2023).

of two police officers, and she sold drugs to fund hiring a private investigator to find her parents.⁷⁰ She was the best friend turned enemy turned maybe-lover to Velma. Norville, who no longer used the nickname Shaggy, was Velma's best friend with obvious feelings for her that she did not reciprocate. This series did not feature people dressing as monsters and consisted of one mystery throughout the entire first season.

In some ways, *Velma* both perpetuated and criticized social problems tackled by the show. Because the killer targeted popular, attractive girls, the show discussed slut-shaming and what it means to be "hot." Slut shaming is a form of discrimination against those who violate traditional gender norms, most often women, which has serious psychological implications.⁷¹ Despite these implications, there is limited literature on the topic, and any publication of serious research occurred relatively recently.⁷² The sluts/hot girls were typically slender or curvy, popular, and feminine, with long hair and an impeccable sense of style. Velma, the "ugly" character was hairy, clunkily dressed, and heavier. This dichotomy led to conflict between the characters (sometimes literally fighting) and led to Velma getting called out for her un-feminist views on womanhood.⁷³ After she tried to make a group of hot girls ugly to protect them, Olive, one of the hot girls, said,

⁷⁰ "The Candy Man," January 12, 2023 ("Velma," Charles Grandy Productions, 2023).

⁷¹ Paola Miano and Chiara Urone, "What the Hell Are You Doing? A PRISMA Systematic Review of Psychosocial Precursors of Slut-Shaming in Adolescents and Young Adults," *Psychology and Sexuality* (May 17, 2023): 1–17, <https://doi.org/10.1080/19419899.2023.2213736>.

⁷² Margot Goblet and Fabienne Glowacz, "Slut Shaming in Adolescence: A Violence against Girls and Its Impact on Their Health," *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 18, no. 12 (June 21, 2021): 6657, <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18126657>.

⁷³ "Velma Kai" January 19, 2023 ("Velma," Charles Grandy Productions, 2023).

This wasn't an exercise in deprogramming, it's an exercise in slut-shaming. No woman should ever have to change who she is or how she dresses to not be murdered... I know, Velma, just like I know I love looking hot. You think every girl deep down is like you, but you're wrong. In fact, your definition of womanhood is even more restrictive than ours.⁷⁴

Olive pointed out Velma's implicit biases and acknowledged the slut shaming the entire town has perpetuated. However, this did not stop the town from continuing to slut-shame and victim blame the hot girls. Velma continued to slut-shame others; in one instance, she accused all strippers of having daddy-issues.⁷⁵

The show approached body-positivity in a similar way, ultimately not reflecting the ideals of the movement. This movement originated in the Fat Acceptance Movement, but with the popularity of the internet in the early 2000s, the movement became more widespread among many body types.⁷⁶ *Velma* seemed to be unaccepting of all body types; when characters seem more accepting, that progress was lost quickly and the conflict continued. From jokes about Fred (a prepubescent teenager) and his micropenis to comments about Velma's "hairy gorilla arms" and weight seemingly no one and no feature could escape criticism about their appearance with no lessons learned for the audience or the characters.⁷⁷ As one reviewer stated, "But sometimes

⁷⁴ "Velma Makes a List," January 19, 2023 ("Velma," Charles Grandy Productions, 2023).

⁷⁵ "The Sins of the Fathers and Some of the Mothers," January 26, 2023 ("Velma," Charles Grandy Productions, 2023); Adrienne Santos-Longhurst, "Yes, 'Daddy Issues' Are a Real Thing — Here's How to Deal," *Healthline*, last modified July 21, 2022, accessed February 14, 2024, <https://www.healthline.com/health/what-are-daddy-issues#why-its-gendered>. While daddy issues, which is not a recognized medical term, can appear in people of any gender identity, it is often used to dehumanize a woman's needs or to slut-shame women.

⁷⁶ "What Is the History of Body Positivity?," *BBC*, accessed December 21, 2023, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/z2w7dp3>.

⁷⁷ Kristi Roe-Owen, "The Brutal Backlash Behind HBO Max's *Velma* Explained," *Looper*, last modified January 26, 2023, accessed February 14, 2024, <https://www.looper.com/1179629/the-brutal-backlash-behind-hbo-maxs-velma-explained/>; Sakeina Syed, "On 'Velma,' Mindy Kaling, and Whether Brown Girls Can Ever Like Ourselves On TV," *Teen Vogue*, January 23, 2023, accessed February 14, 2024,

the show's gags are just rooted in plain old hipster fatphobia. The joke, supposedly, is that calling someone fat is a terrible thing to say, but the show still expects us to laugh at the use of "fat" as an insult."⁷⁸

In Scooby-Doo media, some themes emerged multiple times. Women's bodies were under scrutiny both in the 1970s and in 2023, at the same time movements explored body positivity. *The Scooby-Doo Show* and *Be Cool, Scooby-Doo!* reflected real-life changes with women's roles in the workforce, while *A Pup Named Scooby-Doo* aired at a time of change for women in the computer industry. Feminine fashion ideals influenced the female character's design in *Scooby-Doo, Where are You?* while beliefs about female humor affected Daphne in the 1980s. *What's New, Scooby-Doo?* depicted Daphne as feminine and self-sufficient only four years before *Scooby-Doo! Mystery Incorporated* leaned into the mean girl trope and unhealthy relationships. In the 1980s and with *Shaggy and Scooby-Doo Get A Clue!*, the series eliminated female characters almost entirely.

For the more than fifty years Scooby-Doo has been on the air, societal norms and beliefs concerning women have evolved. This is reflected in the shows, in the sense that ideas that would have been in the public consciousness during each period are visible in the episodes. Scooby-Doo serves as a point of reference for how those who worked on the show, and by extrapolation, American society viewed women, just as all art is a reflection of life.

<https://www.teenvogue.com/story/velma-mindy-kaling-whether-brown-girls-can-ever-like-ourselves-on-tv-op-ed>.

⁷⁸ Julia Glassman, "'Velma' Delivers Raunchy, Forgettable Fun," *The Mary Sue*, last modified January 11, 2023, accessed February 14, 2024, <https://www.themarysue.com/velma-review-mindy-kaling-hbo/>.

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