

WOMEN'S MEDIA CENTER



The Status of Women in the U.S. Media 2012

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The Women's Media Center — founded by Jane Fonda, Robin Morgan, and Gloria Steinem — has the goal of making women visible and powerful in media.

Media influence is one of the most powerful economic and cultural forces today. By deciding who gets to talk, what shapes the debate, who writes, and what is important enough to report, media shape our understanding of who we are and what we can be.

The problem is that we are only rarely using half of our talent and usually hearing half of the story.

This report shines a light on the status of women in media and underscores the crucial need to hold media accountable for an equal voice and equal participation.

Executive Summary

This report summarizes the recent available statistical data on women who determine the content of news, literature, and television and film entertainment, as well as on how women are depicted on entertainment television and film. Data were compiled from several leading sources of statistical and analytic data on women in the media, and from recent research articles on media gender inequity. The report is intended to provide a broad overview of the status of women in the U.S. media at the beginning of 2012. Results indicate that, over the past decade, women consistently have been underrepresented in news and entertainment media, with little change in proportions over time. When films and television do depict female characters, they often reflect gender stereotypes. Women in films, particularly young women, are far more likely than men to be hypersexualized.

Research has shown that underrepresentation and negative depictions in media have broad societal effects. How women are represented in media affects gender equity in general. It is important to determine the causes of underrepresentation and stereotypical depiction and to develop practical approaches to improving the status quo. Current data suggest this will include:

- Determining why women's representation in news media occupations is inverse to the proportion of women with journalism and mass communication degrees
- Assessing media responsibility for the proportion of women newsmakers and news experts
- Studying the potential role of media in affecting gender equity among newsmakers and news experts
- Assessing reasons for gender inequity in literary publications
- Developing practical approaches to increasing the proportion of positive female television and film characters and woman-centric stories.

Accomplishing this will require key stakeholders such as women's advocacy groups, media organizations representing all media platforms, and college and university journalism departments to identify media gender equity as a priority and to develop clear and practical plans for achieving it.

Introduction and Methods

This report summarizes the most recent available statistical data on:

- Representation of women in media occupations associated with determining content of news
- Representation of women in media occupations associated with determining content of television and film entertainment
- Gender equity in literature reviews
- How women are depicted on entertainment television and film.

A brief discussion of the implications of gender inequity in media follows the data summaries. Data were compiled from several leading sources of statistical and analytic data on women in the media, and from recent research articles on media gender inequity. The report is intended to provide a broad overview of the status of women in the U.S. media at the beginning of 2012.

Results

This section presents data on gender equity in news and entertainment media. Data include proportions of women in positions that determine content as well as women who are news-makers, literary contributors, or in speaking roles on television or film.

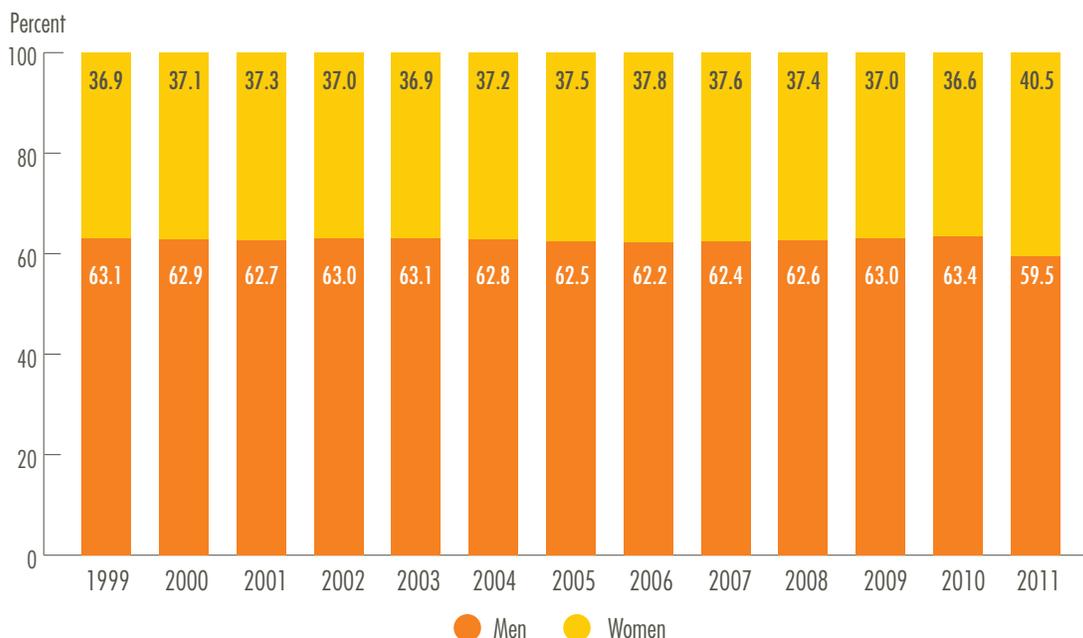
Women in the News Media

This section summarizes the representation of women in key positions in newspaper, television, and radio news.

Newspapers

According to the American Society of News Editors (ASNE) Newsroom Census, women represented roughly 37 percent of newsroom employees between 1999 and 2010. According to this survey, in 2011 women represented 40.5 percent of newspaper newsroom employees. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that women comprised 36.9 percent of newspaper reporters, photographers, copy and layout editors, and supervisors in 2011. Figure 1 shows gender representation in newsrooms since 2011, according to the ASNE Newsroom Census.

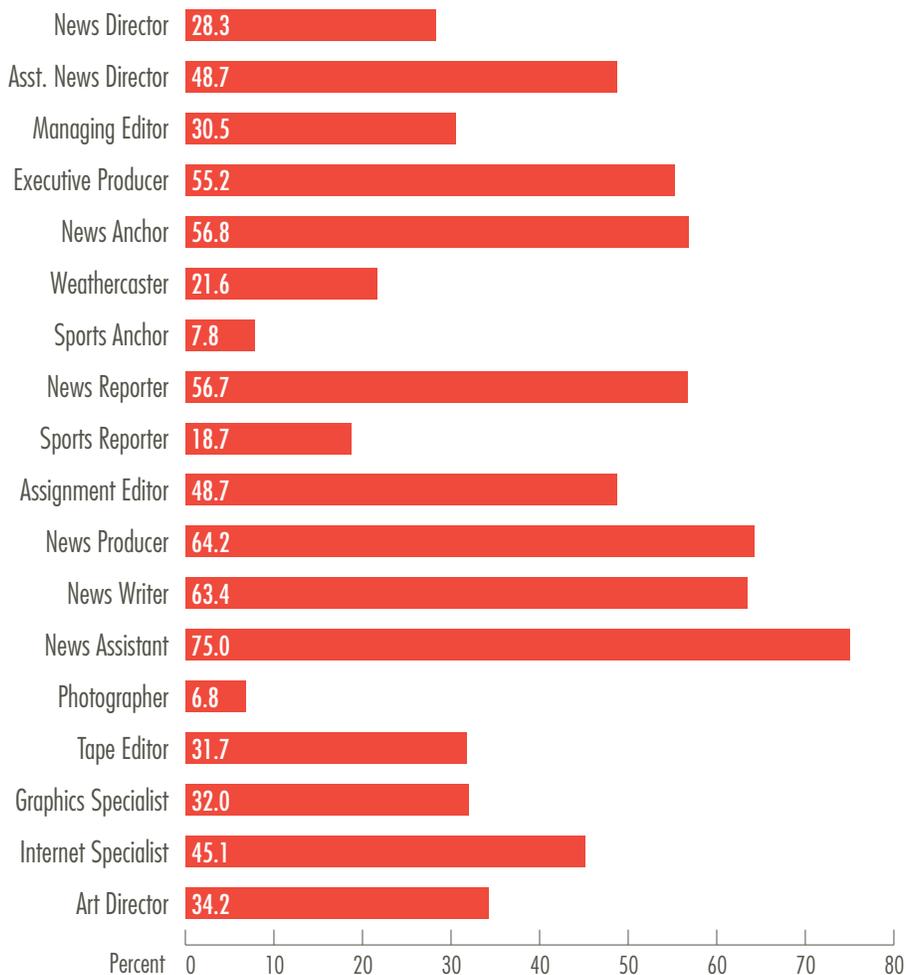
Figure 1. Gender Representation in Newspaper Newsrooms, 1999-2011



Television

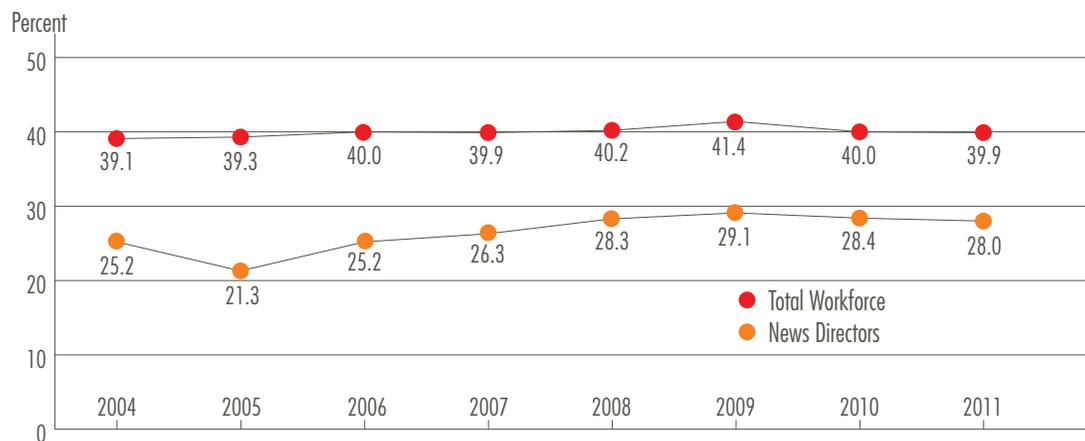
According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, women made up 40 percent of the total television news force and 28.4 percent of television news directors in 2011. Figure 2 shows the percentages of women in key television news positions, according to the Radio Television Digital News Association's (RTDNA) 2008 *Women and Minorities Survey*.

Figure 2. Percentage of women in television news positions, 2008



While women are the minority for 10 of 18 positions, they represent about half of assistant news directors and assignment editors, and the majority for six key positions, including executive producers, producers, news reporters, writers, anchors, and assistants. Women are most underrepresented among news photographers, sports anchors, and sports reporters. As shown in Figure 3, according to the RTDNA, women consistently comprised 40.2 percent of the total local television news force in between 2004 and 2011. Proportions of women news directors during this time ranged between roughly 21 and 29 percent.

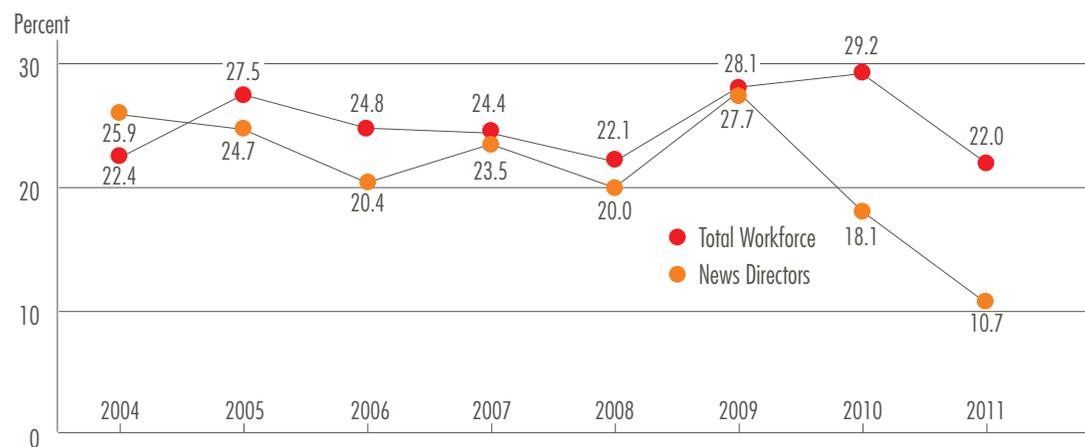
Figure 3. Women in the local television news force, 2004-2011



Radio

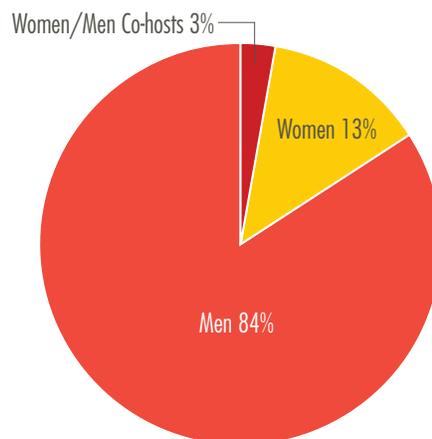
According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, women comprised 29.2 percent of the total radio news workforce, 18.1 percent of radio news directors, and 18.3 percent of radio general managers in 2011. The RTDNA reports that women represented 22.0 percent of the local radio news force in 2011. Women comprised 10.7 percent of radio news directors, a steep decrease reflecting roughly one-half to one-third of the proportions reported between 2004 and 2010.

Figure 4. Women in the local radio news force, 2004-2011



The 2011 "Heavy Hundred" "most important radio talk show hosts in America" selected by the editors of *Talkers* magazine with input from industry leaders included only 13 solo women hosts and three women who co-host shows with men. In 2010, National Public Radio (NPR), with a woman chief executive officer and a woman heading its news department, featured woman hosts for three of its five top-rated shows. Overall, about half of NPR hosts and reporters are women.

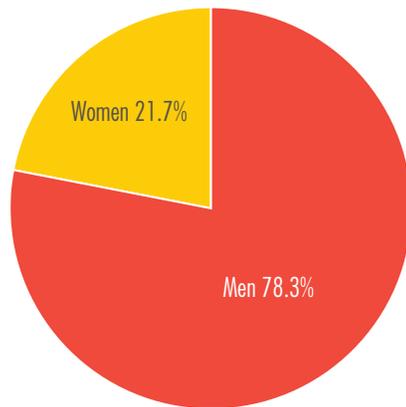
Figure 5. Gender Representation in the *Talkers* "Heavy Hundred" List



Newsmakers

Studies of newsmakers' gender show women are less likely than men to be the subjects of news stories. The *Media and Gender Monitor* (2011) reported that, globally, 24 percent of news stories are about women. This proportion has been increasing. In 2000, women were the focus of 18 percent of news stories; in 2005 the percentage had increased to 21. In stories about politics and government, women were the focus of 12 percent of stories in 2000, increasing to 14 percent in 2005, and 19 percent in 2010. According to the Global Media Monitoring Project, women represent 23 percent of newsmakers on the 84 news Web sites they monitor (Macharia, O'Connor & Ndangam, 2010). In 2010, NPR reported that only 26 percent of its news sources were women (Shepard, 2010). American

Figure 6. Gender representation on Sunday morning television news shows, 2011



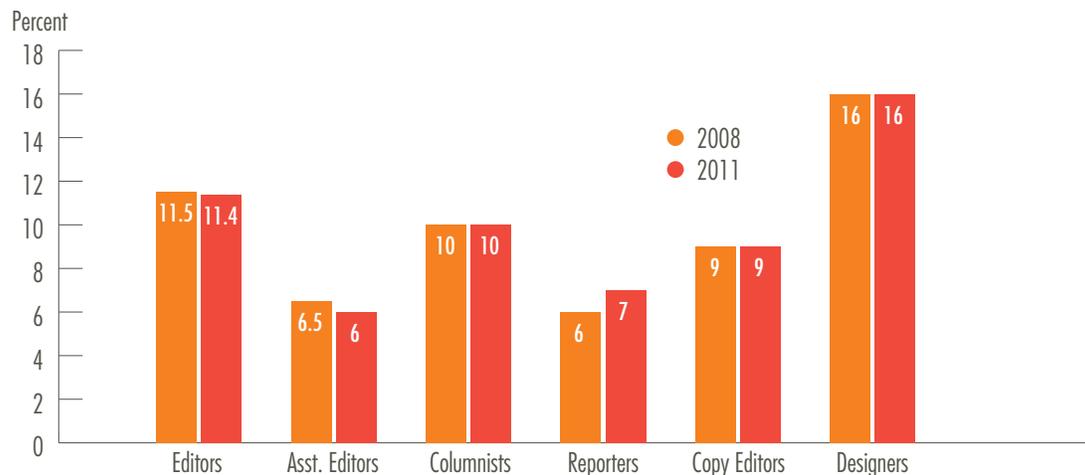
University School of Public Affairs Women and Politics Institute monitors the gender of guests on Sunday morning news talk shows airing on NBC, CBS, ABC, CNN, and Fox News. As shown in Figure 6, in 2011, women represented just over one-fifth (21.7%) of guests. This is a decrease from 24.5 percent in 2010. Lovley (2010) reported that 13.5 percent of appearances by U.S. representatives and senators on Sunday morning television news talk shows were women. Women comprised 16.8% of the 112th U.S. Congress. News producers interviewed for the article said women lawmakers often reject requests for interviews. The 2010 NPR Ombudsman stated, "Admittedly, the relative lack of female voices reflects

the broader world. The fact remains that even in the fifth decade after the feminist revolution, men are still largely in charge in government at all levels, in corporations and nearly all other aspects of society. That means, by default, there are going to be more male than female news sources."

Women in Sports News

According to studies conducted by Lapchick et al. in 2008 and 2011 for the Associated Press Sports Editors (ASPE) women are a small minority in key sports news occupations, with virtually no change over three years.

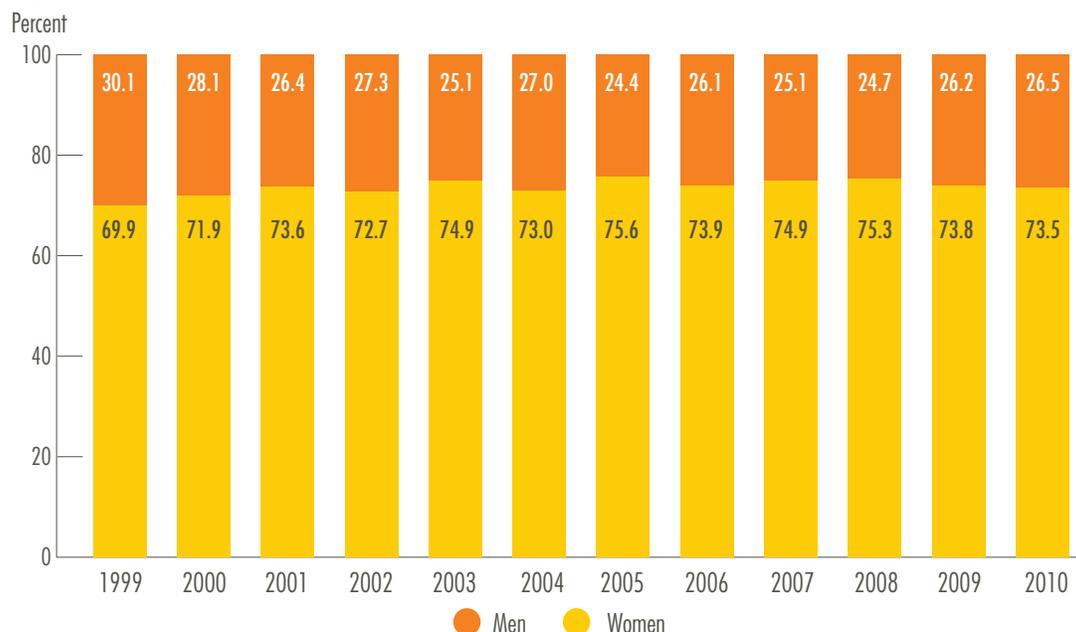
Figure 7. Representation of Women in Key Sports News Occupations



Women Journalism and Mass Communication Graduates

While women represent less than half of several key media occupations, for over a decade women they have outnumbered men by two or three to one among journalism and mass communication graduates. Figure 7 shows the proportions of men and women graduates since 1999, according to the 2010 Annual Survey of Journalism and Mass Communication Graduates (Becker et al., 2010).

Figure 8. Gender Representation Among Journalism and Mass Communication Graduates



Women journalism and mass communication graduates have consistently had slightly higher (2-6%) full-time employment rates than their male counterparts. Becker et al. (2010) attribute this to women being more likely to specialize in advertising and public relations, which offer more full-time jobs than other occupations in the field.

Reviews of Literature by Women

Over the past year, the press has paid increasing attention to gender equity in book reviews. Weiner (2012) reported that men had written 62 percent of books reviewed by *The New York Times* between July 2008 and August 2010. In 2011, 59.1 percent of fiction reviewed in *The New York Times* was written by men. Williamson (2012) reports that 70 percent of books reviewed on NPR in the fall of 2011 were written by men. A follow-up analysis by Franklin (2011) showed that the proportion of reviews was close to the proportion of publications. A review of 13 publishing house's 2010 catalogs showed that 55 percent of books published were written by men.

King (2010) found that women were the minority among reviewers and authors reviewed in 13 literary journals. Romm (2011) conducted a "rough count" of literary magazine editors and concluded, "...for now the gatekeepers of literary culture- at least at magazines- are still primarily male." Page (2011) interviewed editors of four journals regarding this topic. All reported being concerned, and invested in gender equity. John Freeman, editor of *Granta* magazine, said he worries about "these gender imbalances a lot," adding, "While numbers and graphs like this are helpful," he said, "conspiracy theories are not, because we have to ask a deeper question, which is how gendered are our notions of storytelling?"

Women in Film and Television

This section describes representation of women in behind-the-scenes occupations that determine content of film and television entertainment, and how women are depicted in these media.

Behind-the-scenes in film

In 2011 Lauzen, director of the San Diego State University Center for the Study of Women in Television and Film, found, through her Celluloid Ceiling project, that women comprised 18 percent of people in key behind-the-scenes occupations working on the top 250 domestic grossing films. Lauzen defines key roles as: directors, writers, executive producers, producers, editors, and cinematographers. Figures 9 and 10 show the proportions of women in key “behind-the-scenes” roles between 1998 and 2011.

Figure 9: Gender representation in key behind-the-scenes roles, 1998, 2005, 2009, 2010, 2011

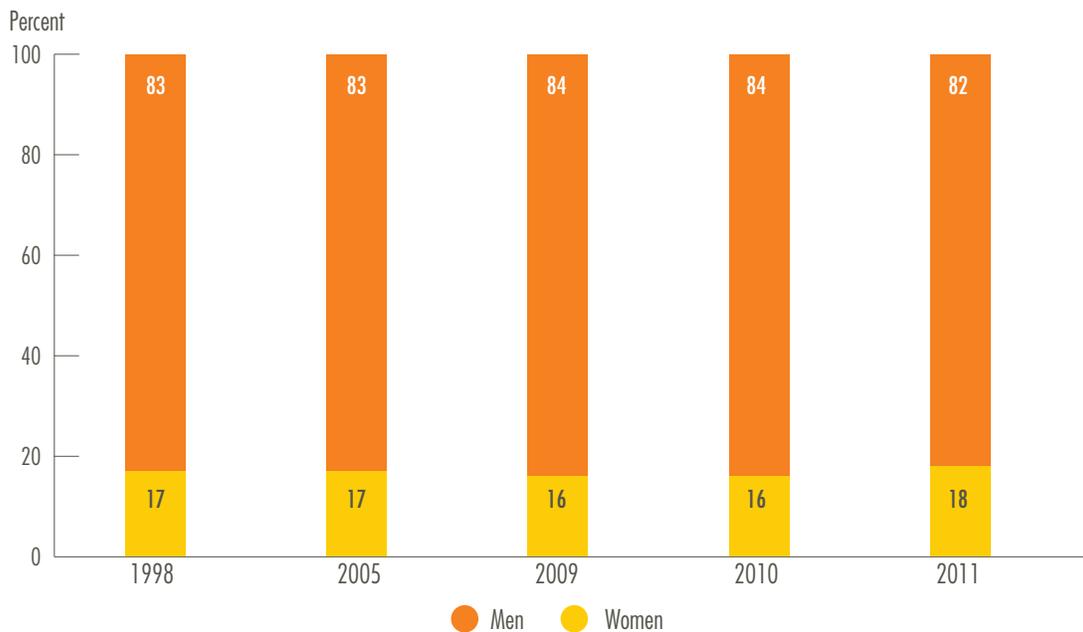
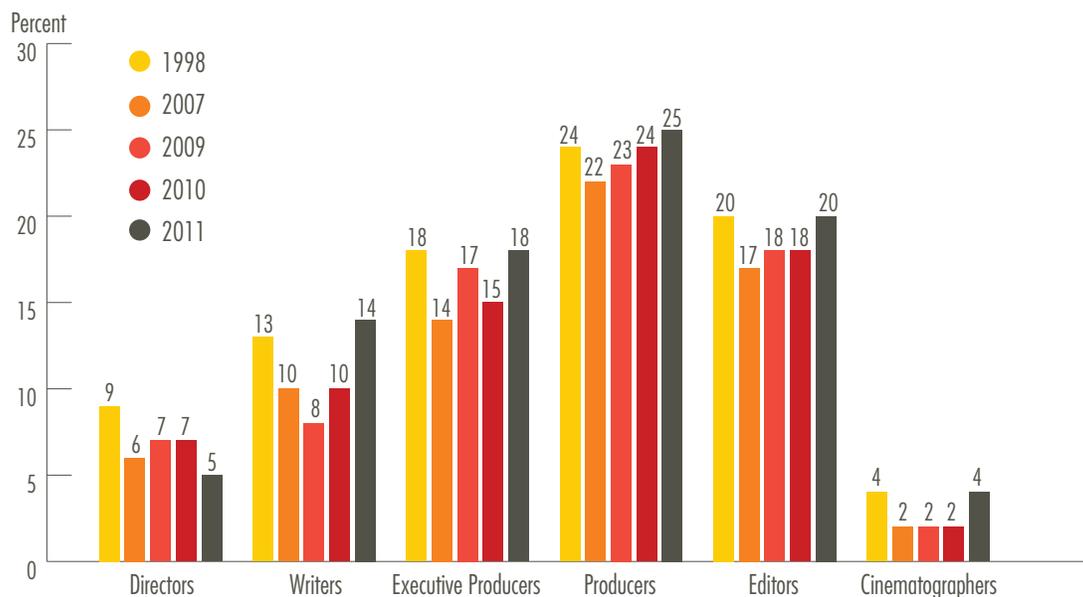


Figure 10: Gender representation in top-grossing 250 films by occupation



Women comprised 5 percent of movie directors in 2011 (Lauzen 2012). This is a decrease from 7% in 2009 and 2010 (Lauzen 2010) and 9 percent in 1998 (Silverstein, 2012).

Women were most likely to work in the romantic comedy, documentary, and romantic drama genres. They were least likely to work in the horror, action, and comedy genres (Lauzen 2010).

Lauzen (2008) found that films with at least one woman in a key behind-the-scenes role yield comparable box office grosses to films with comparable budgets and only men in these roles.

In 2011 Jennifer Yuh Nelson set the record for the top-grossing film directed by a woman with Kung-Fu Panda 2, which made \$637.6 million worldwide (Susman, 2011).

Behind-the-scenes in television

Figures 11 and 12 shows women’s representation in key behind-the-scenes roles in entertainment television (Lauzen, 2011a). In 2010-2011 women comprised 25 percent of all professionals in these roles. This is a slight decline from 27 percent in the 2009-2010 season and up from 21 percent in 1997-1998. Key roles include: creators, executive producers, producers, writers, directors, editors, and directors of photography. The Directors Guild of America reports that only 12 percent of episodic television directors in the 2010-2011 season were women, a slight decrease from 13 percent in 2009-2010. Only 15 percent of episodic directors newly hired in 2009 and 2010 were women. According to the Guild’s September 14, 2011 press release, “At the urging of the Guild, several production companies established diversity programs designed to increase the number of women and minority directors and give them exposure to executive producers and others who hire. However, those diversity programs have borne disappointing results.”

Figure 11. Gender representation in key behind-the-scenes entertainment television roles, 2010-11 season

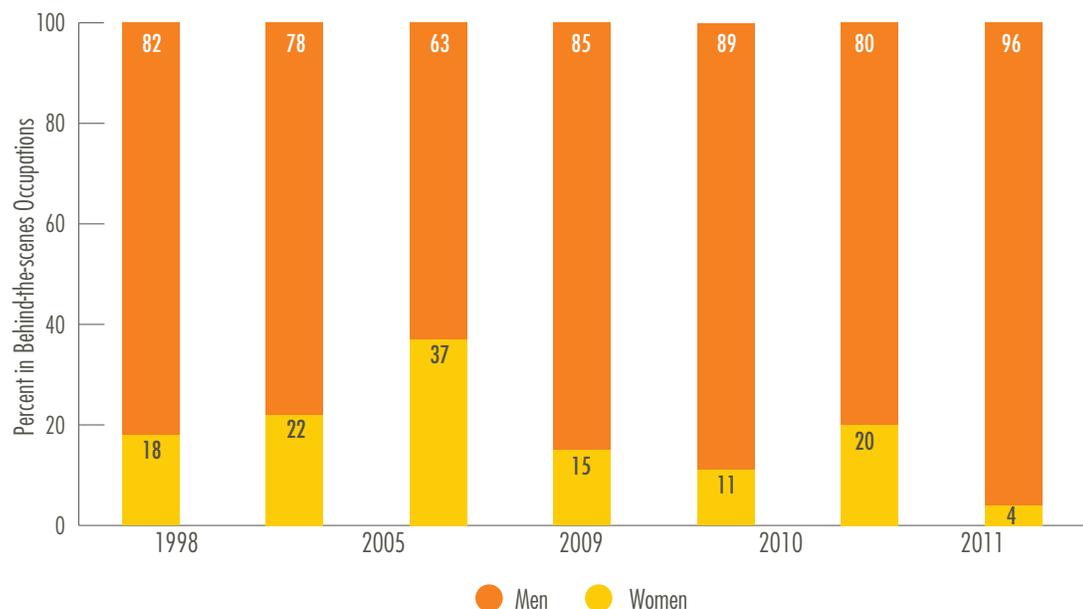
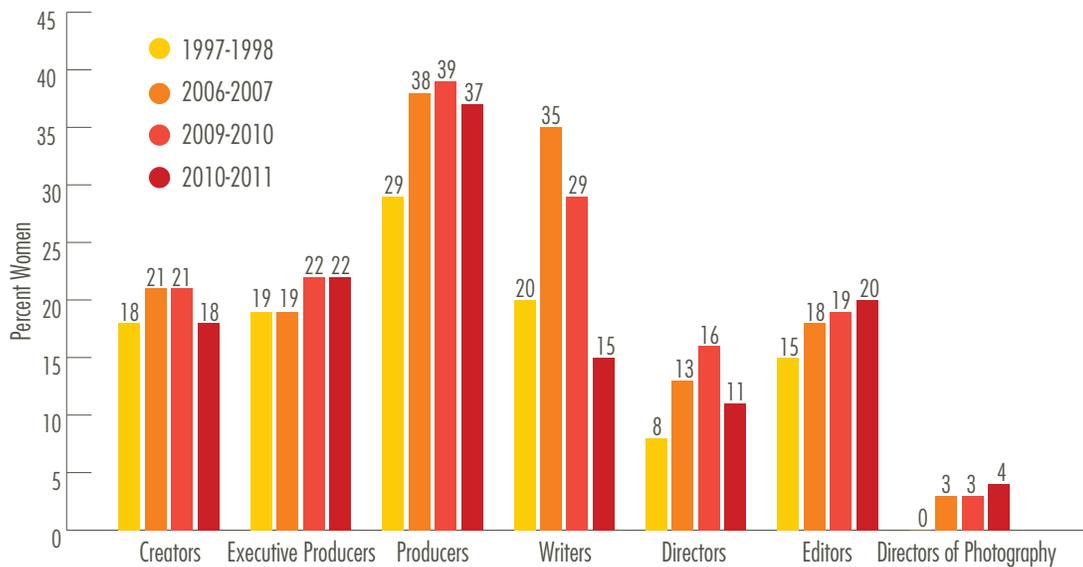


Figure 12: Percentages of women in key behind-the-scenes occupations in television entertainment, 1997-2011, by occupation



Female characters in television

In the 2010-2011 season, females accounted for 41 percent of all fictional television characters. This represents a decline of 2 percentage points from the 2007-2008 season, when female characters accounted for an historical high of 43 percent of fictional television characters (Lauzen, 2011b). Female characters were typically younger than male counterparts, white, and more likely to have an undefined employment status. Shows with at least one woman writer or creator have a slightly higher percentage of female characters (44 percent) than shows with only male writers and creators (40 percent) (Lauzen, 2011b).

Female characters in film

Smith, Choueti & Gall (2012) assessed gender equality in the 100 top-grossing films of 2007, 2008, and 2009. They found that women represented only one-third of speaking characters across all three years (29.9%, 32.8%, and 32.8%, respectively). Only about one in six (16.8%) films depicted "gender balance" (women in 45-54.9% of speaking roles). In 2007, only 11.9 percent of films depicted gender balance, increasing to 15.0 percent in 2008. When at least one woman is involved in directing or writing, there are more female speaking characters on-screen.

In many cases women film characters were "hyper-sexualized." In all three years, female characters were more likely than males to wear sexy clothing, more likely to be depicted partially nude, and to be referred to as attractive. In 2009 25.8 percent of females versus 4.7 percent of males in these films were shown in sexy attire; 23.6 percent of females versus 7.4 percent of males were shown partially nude; 10.9 percent of females versus 2.5 percent of males were referred to as attractive. Proportions of females shown in sexy attire have changed little since 2007 (27.0%; 2008=25.7). Proportions of female characters shown partially nude also have changed little- 21.8 percent in 2007; 23.7 percent in 2008. Referrals to female characters as attractive have gradually declined from 18.5 percent in 2007 to 15.1 percent in 2008 and 10.9 percent in 2009. Girls and women between the ages of 13 and 20 are more likely than others to be referred to as attractive (21.5% versus 13.8% of 21-30 year-olds and 3.9% of 40-64 year-olds). Lauzen and

Dozier (2005) found that women characters in both film and television are not typically portrayed in leadership roles and are less likely than male characters to achieve their goals.

Lauzen (2011a) reported that three of the 10 top-grossing films of 2010, and 19 of the 100 top-grossing films were “woman-centric.” She reported that 2 of the top 10 and 18 of the top 100 highest grossing films of 2009 were “woman-centric.” While some industry leaders say male protagonists generate more profit, Lauzen (2008) demonstrated that films featuring female protagonists are as profitable as films featuring male protagonists, when controlling for budget. Films with larger budgets generate larger grosses regardless of the protagonist’s sex. Historically, films with male protagonists have had larger budgets. Smith, Choueti & Gall (2012) report that women purchased more than half of movie tickets in 2009.

Discussion and Implications

While there is good news, such as the recent success of “Kung Fu Panda 2” and women representing the majority in several television news occupations, over the last decade, women have consistently been underrepresented in occupations that determine the content of news and entertainment media, with little change in proportions over time. Women also have been underrepresented in screen roles. When films and television do depict female characters, they often reflect gender stereotypes. Women in films, particularly young women, are far more likely than men to be hypersexualized.

We have known for years, based on many social science studies, that underrepresentation and negative depictions in media have broad societal effects. Trepte (2006) summarized several results as demonstrating, “[M]edia entertainment functions as a source of information on groups and their legitimate status (p. 266).” Media images can confirm or change stereotypes (Reid, Giles & Abrams, 2004). How women are represented in media affects gender equity in general. It is important, then, to determine the causes of underrepresentation and stereotypical depiction and to develop practical approaches to improving the status quo. Current data suggest this will include:

- Determining why women’s representation in news media occupations is inverse to the proportion of women with journalism and mass communication degrees
- Assessing media responsibility for the proportion of women newsmakers
- Studying the potential role of media in affecting gender equity among newsmakers
- Assessing reasons for gender inequity in literary publications
- Developing practical approaches to increasing the proportion of positive female television and film characters and woman-centric stories
- Understanding why currently existing that aim to increase gender equity have produced few measurable results to-date.

Accomplishing this will require key stakeholders such as women’s advocacy groups, media professional organizations, and college and university journalism departments to identify media gender equity as a priority and to develop clear and practical plans for achieving it.

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