

Gender inequality in US film industry

Media Philosophy

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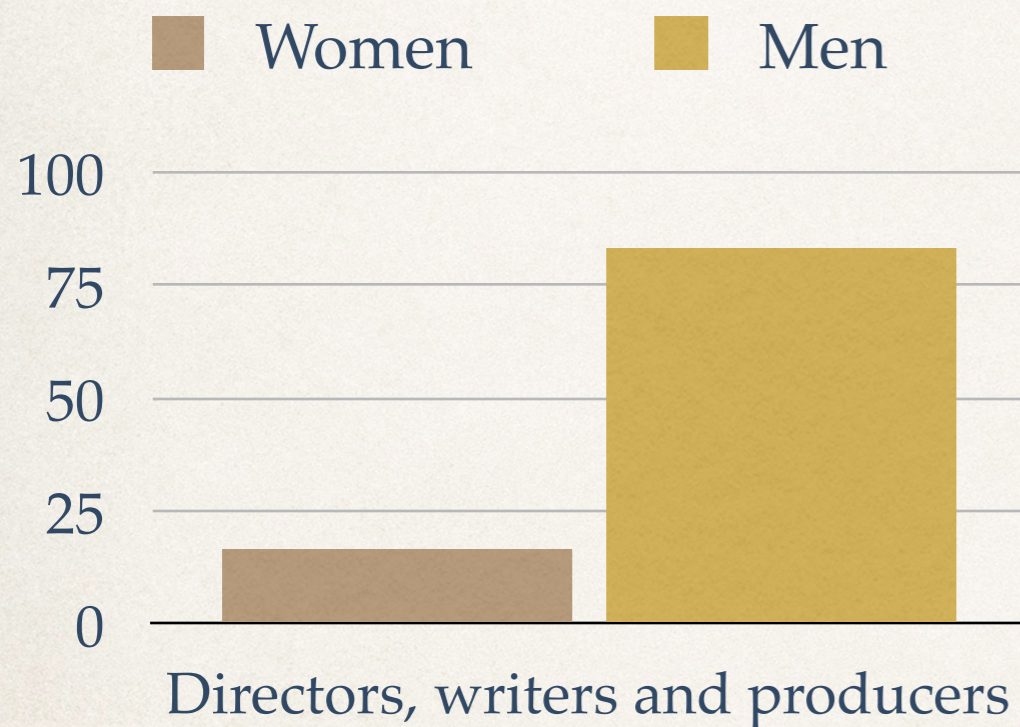
Gender inequality in US film industry

- Gender inequality behind the camera
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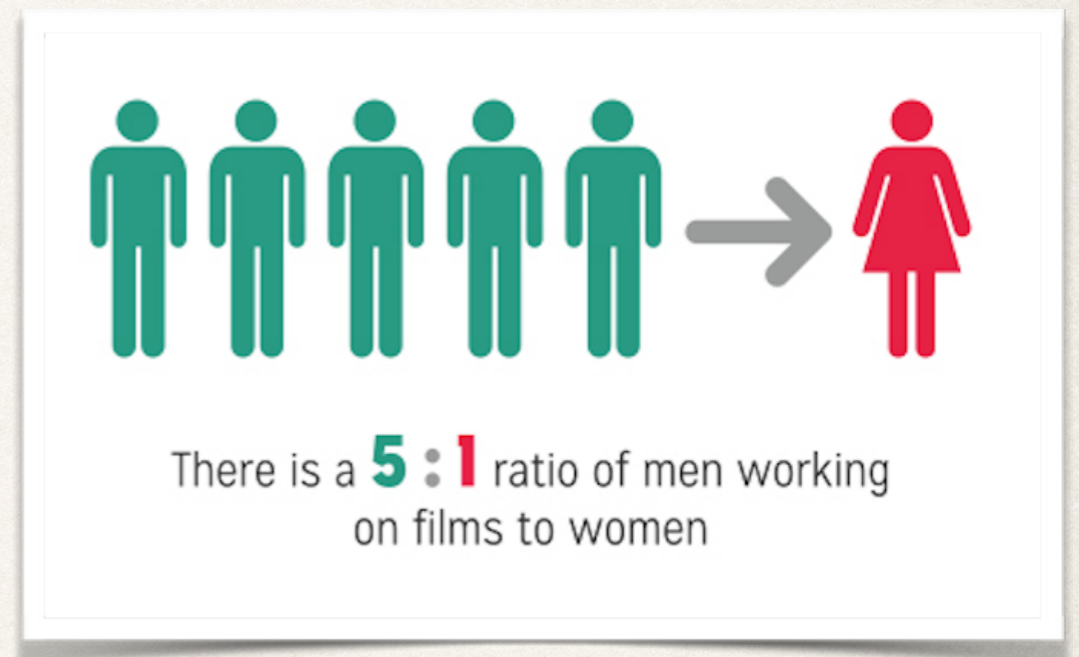
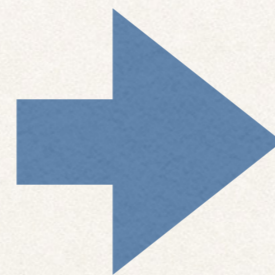
Gender inequality behind the camera

The prevalence of women

On the 100 top-grossing films of 2012



Behind-the-scenes positions by gender

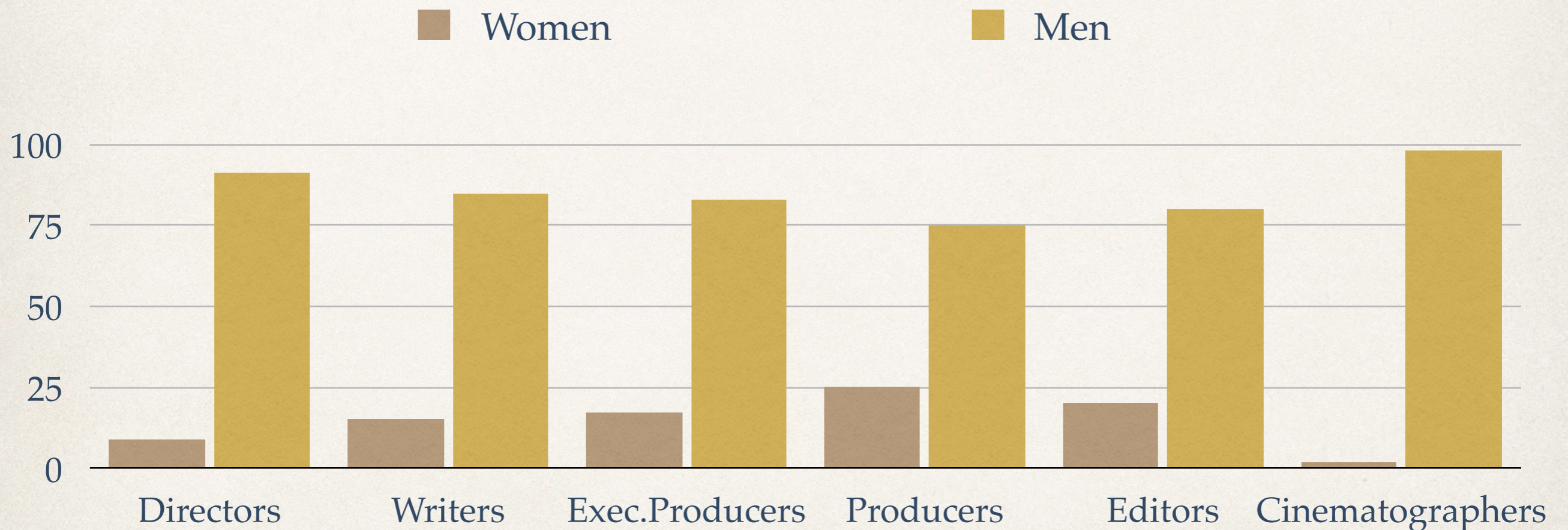


Women are underrepresented

Gender inequality behind the camera

The prevalence of women

On top 250 films of 2012
Behind-the-scenes positions by gender



Film industry is highly gendered

Gender inequality behind the camera

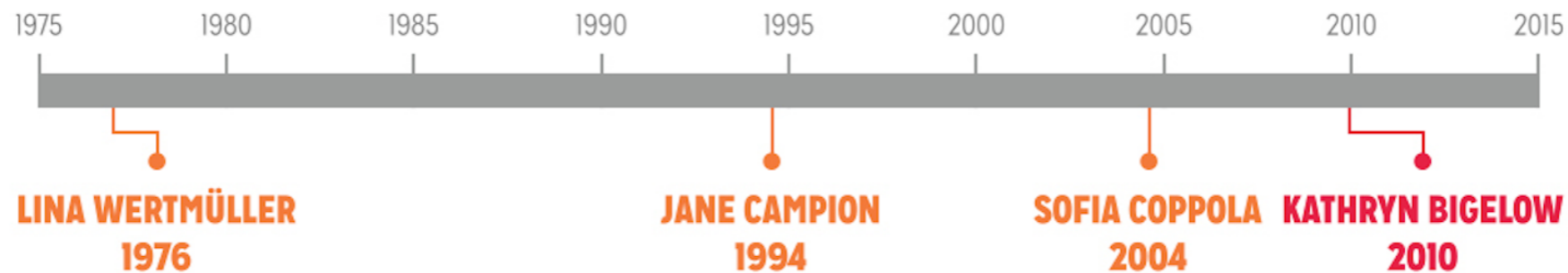
Career opportunity

Men tend to progress to decision-making levels and higher income → earlier

→ at higher rates

Gender inequality behind the camera Awards

IN ACADEMY AWARD HISTORY, FOUR FEMALE FILMMAKERS HAVE BEEN NOMINATED FOR BEST DIRECTOR, BUT ONLY BIGELOW HAS WON.



IN 2013, DURING THE 85TH ACADEMY AWARDS, ACROSS 19 CATEGORIES



THERE WERE NO FEMALE NOMINEES FOR DIRECTING, CINEMATOGRAPHY, FILM EDITING, WRITING (ORIGINAL SCREENPLAY), OR MUSIC (ORIGINAL SCORE).

Development of women's presence in film history

Women's golden age in silent film era

Early 20th century: many opportunities for women to work as directors, scenarists, editors and producers.

- Majority of editors: women who edited films with scissors
 - ↳ considered a woman's job like knitting or sewing
- Screenwriting seen as an anonymous job and acceptable activity for women
- Women also used in creative positions (directors and writers) to legitimate films as an entertainment that doesn't offend the dominant moral values.

Development of women's presence in film history

Women's golden age in silent film era

Directors



Alice
Guy-Blaché



Lois Weber

Screenwriters



Frances
Marion



Anita Loos

Development of women's presence in film history

From late 1920s on, decline and stagnation

- 1915-1930: emergence of the studio system
- 1927: advent of sound → women in majority pushed out of the industry.
- Late 1930s, less than 15% of screenwriters are women and mostly assigned to scripting women's films and writing dialogues for female characters.
- Late 1940s, Supreme Court ruling against anti-competitive practices of the studios → dismantling of the studio system and birth of independent production companies
- 1970s, women's movement and beginning of the blockbuster era
- Since then, Women behind the screen → flat evolution

Reasons

Why were women pushed out in the late 1920s

Economic reasons:

- 1915-1930, the film industry becomes a lucrative enterprise and is organized into the studio system. Its growing prestigious image attracts men, thus pushing women out.
- Great Depression: women are discouraged to take jobs from men, who have families to support

Sex segregation:

- Sex stereotypes used to define what jobs are appropriate for men or women

Reasons

Why has it remained a male dominated area since then?

Economic reasons:

→ Women's liberation movement in 1970s coincides with emergence of blockbuster era.

Sex segregation:

→ Strong societal beliefs on gender roles affects the finished products (films) but also the way they are produced and work is organized (culture of production)

Organizational structure of culture industries:

→ When somebody's work has to be assessed, it relies on arbitrary and subjective ideas, which can be influenced by stereotypes

Conclusion

- Gender inequality is still significant in pay and employment both on screen and behind the camera.
- It has an impact on the way women are depicted on screen. When at least one woman is involved in the directing or screenwriting of a film,
 - increase in females on screen
 - female characters less likely to be portrayed in sexually revealing attire
- However, women are present on the independent scene
Sundance Film Festival, Independent Spirit Awards, Tribeca Film Festival...
 - 16.9 % in independent films (2013)
 - 34.5 % in documentaries (2013)

Discussion

Why do you think there are such disparities between men and women in the film industry?

Do you think governments should implement some regulations to encourage film and television industries to hire more women?

Here, gender inequalities focus on the female perspective. What about inequality in areas dominated by females like make-up or costume? Or what about the tendency to portray men as strong or even violent in films? What do you think about it?

References

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