

Collectif:
A Space
Dedicated
TO THE
Advancement
OF Women
and Girls

THE CENTER FOR
THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN AT
MOUNT SAINT MARY'S UNIVERSITY



Mount Saint Mary's University
LOS ANGELES

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Letter from the Director



Last year was a watershed for women in the United States. Women staged the largest single-day protest in U.S. history; the Fearless Girl statue arrived on Wall Street in New York City; *Wonder Woman* became the highest-grossing superhero origin film of all time; and the long-simmering #MeToo movement went global. In a year full of change makers and silence breakers, women everywhere were inspired to use their voices, ask hard questions and demand more from their companies and government.

These are the same actions we've worked to inspire over the past seven years here in our home state through our annual Report on the Status of Women and Girls in California.™ Mount Saint Mary's University is founded on the belief that women are capable of greatness, and as the only women's university in Los Angeles we insist that women and girls advocate for gender parity, equitable opportunity and women's leadership. These ideals are woven into our fabric. It's why we create resources, publish research and convene leaders to address stubborn gender inequities.

The results we share annually through our Report also fuel the programming and public conversations on gender inequities and women's education that we offer through our Center for the Advancement of Women. They also push our faculty and staff to create innovative programs that call out injustices, seek solutions to inequities and give women the tools of empowerment. A new resource we've created this year is the *Collectif*, an online anthology of original faculty, student and partner research that further explore the data and themes related to its companion Report.

In this debut collection of writings related to women in the workforce, authors examine issues that women confront in a myriad of contexts, from Hollywood to the field of engineering. We explore how specific groups of women are faring as they seek higher education opportunities, or as they reenter civilian life after incarceration. A common thread woven through these *Collectif* pieces is the struggle to carve out pathways of progress for women no matter the context. For women in both the engineering and entertainment fields, for instance, unconscious bias has been a roadblock to normalizing the presence of women in those areas. For first-generation college students pursuing advanced degrees, the issue is often a lack of relatable role models in their field. Other, more tangible roadblocks, like health, may impede women's success as they transition out of prisons and into civilian life. Obstacles manifest in various ways, but this collection of distinguished scholars all grapple with the question of how we can collectively improve women's lives.

The *Collectif* is a realization of the Center's goal to connect scholars with resources to generate original research. We hope this collection of timely writings informs you, and also inspires you to consider solutions to some of the persistent gender inequities of our time. Please know that we are here as a resource for our community in Los Angeles and beyond, providing tools and networks to empower women and girls in your communities. I hope you will join us in our mission to support the next generations of unstoppable women.

Warmly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'E Archer'.

Emerald Archer, PhD
Director, Center for the Advancement of Women

COLLECTIF

Women in Hollywood:
The Ongoing
Fight for Equality

Caroline Heldman, PhD,
and Nicole Haggard, PhD

**THE CENTER FOR
THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN AT
MOUNT SAINT MARY'S UNIVERSITY**

Introduction

The purpose of this report is to investigate why progress for women in Hollywood has been so slow despite gender justice advocates pushing for reform both inside and outside the industry for more than half a century. We begin this report by addressing the question of why gender equity matters. This is followed by an assessment of women’s status in key decision-making roles in film and television. In the third section, we address two major obstacles to women’s advancement in the industry: gender discrimination and sexual harassment. We conclude with a discussion of what we can do to effectively reform the industry. After a half-century of research and activism, Hollywood is ripe for reform. Today, activists are addressing gender discrimination, gender and race disparities in representation, training a new generation of female leaders and leaders of color in the industry, and harnessing consumer pressure to demand change in the industry.

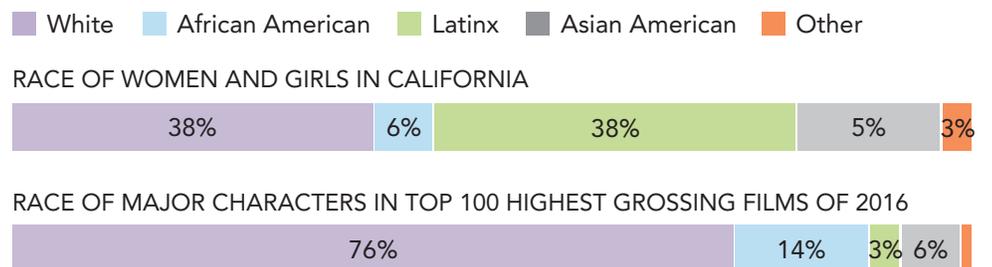
Why It Matters

As 2017 came to a close, Salma Hayek published a penetrating op-ed in the *New York Times* asking, “Why do so many of us, as female artists, have to go to war to tell our stories when we have so much to offer? Why do we have to fight tooth and nail to maintain our dignity?”¹ For decades, researchers have been studying the impact of workforce parity on the content of our media, and now, this watershed moment full of first-hand revelations has delivered an additional level of depth by adding the impact of gender discrimination and sexual harassment to our analysis of on-screen representation. Hayek’s piece, “Harvey Weinstein is My Monster Too,” unravels the thread of this “socially accepted vice” as it moves through her own personal violation onto the big screen. When Weinstein demands that Hayek lose the unsexy unibrow and limp and callously manipulates her into performing a nude, full-frontal lesbian sex scene, the voyeuristic camera also hypersexualizes our collective memory of the powerful feminist icon Frida Khalo.² These abuses degrade not only the women struggling to pursue their passion and livelihood, they enter the world of cinematic imagination where objectification thrives and sexist behavior is normalized.

Normalizing Unconscious Bias

What we see on screen impacts the world around us, and yet, Hollywood continues to present a distorted version of reality. Women constitute 51% of the population in the U.S., but male characters dominate both screen time and speaking time of our top-grossing films. Over the last decade, the ratio of male to female screen time has remained 2.3-to-1, while women make up an average of 30.4% of the speaking characters (this figure peaked at 32.8% in 2009).³ Of the limited roles available, white women fare drastically better than women of color,⁴ further adding to the skewed vision of the world on the big screen (Figure 1).⁴

FIGURE 1: 2016 RACE OF WOMEN AND GIRLS IN CALIFORNIA AND 2016 RACE OF FEMALE CHARACTERS



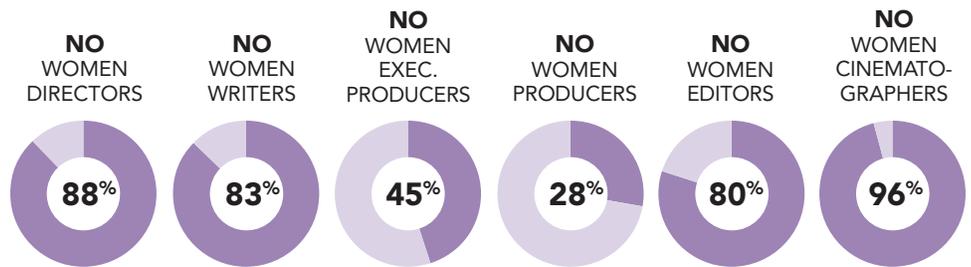
Source: Center for the Study of Women in Television and Film, San Diego State University 2018.

When they are present, female characters are sexualized more often than male characters. This hypersexualization onscreen correlates with Hollywood’s sexual harassment epidemic behind the scenes. One-in-four (25.6%) women versus 9.2% of men were shown with some nudity in the top 100 films of 2016.⁵ One in three (34.3%) female characters are shown in sexy attire compared to less than

one in ten (7.6%) male characters.⁶ These blatant imbalances in representation are present across factors including leadership, occupation, life goals, age, marital status and more.

Studies have repeatedly shown that including more women behind the scenes increases the visibility and quality of female characters onscreen.⁷ For example, films with exclusively male directors and/or writers portrayed protagonist characters as females 18% of the time, whereas projects with at least one woman director and/or writer featured 57% female protagonists.⁸ And yet, as Figure 2 highlights, women remain strikingly absent from key roles in Hollywood.⁹ bell hooks reminds us that: “From slavery on, white supremacists have recognized that control over images is central to the maintenance of any system of racial domination.”¹⁰ Likewise, Hollywood’s white-male-dominated control over images has been instrumental to the maintenance of intersectional gender discrimination.

FIGURE 2: NO WOMEN IN KEY FILMMAKING ROLES IN TOP 250 FILMS OF 2017



30% of films had no or one woman in the above roles

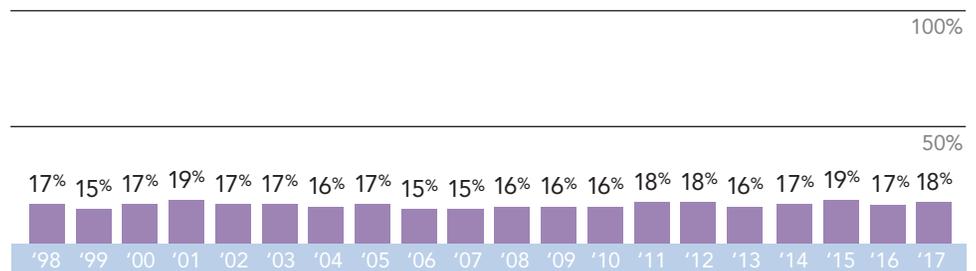
The Status of Women in Film and Television

Two decades of research is now available on gender discrepancies in film and television. In this section, we examine the size and persistence of discrepancies in cast and crew, and in awards.

Women in Film

Women have mostly been missing behind the scenes since the inception of Hollywood. Today, among the 100 top-grossing U.S. films, women hold only 17% of influential positions — directors, writers, producers, executive producers, editors and cinematographers. As Figure 3 shows, women have made almost no progress on this front in two decades.¹¹

FIGURE 3: PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN IN KEY POSITIONS IN THE TOP 100 GROSSING FILMS BY YEAR



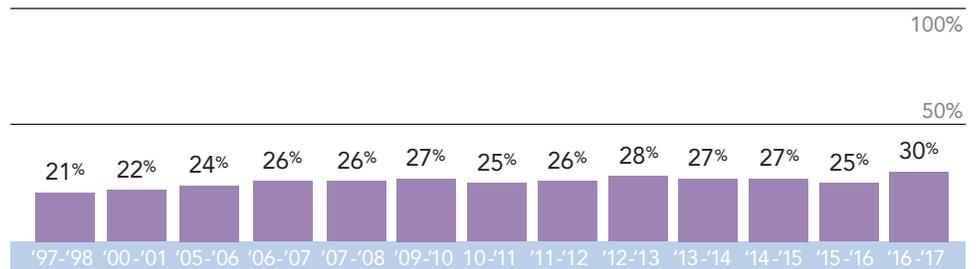
The situation for women is especially bleak when it comes to director positions. In the past decade, only 4.4% of the top-grossing films were directed by women, which means studios hired approximately 24 male directors for every female director.¹² Also, the career paths for male and female directors look different in ways that reflect gender bias. A typical male director will work in that role starting in his 20s and through his 80s, but the typical female director works from her 30s through her 60s.¹³ In other words, female directors get a later start in the industry and have shorter careers than male directors.

The situation for women of color in the director's chair is even bleaker. A study of the past decade finds that only three directors were African American women, three were Asian American women, and one was a Latinx woman.¹⁴ This means that women of color are virtually absent as directors of top-grossing films in entertainment media.

Women in Television

Women are also underrepresented in television, although the figures are not as dire as film. In 2016 women held one in four (26%) key storytelling roles in television (i.e., creators, directors, writers, producers, executive producers, editors and directors of photography).¹⁵ As Figure 4 shows, women's progress behind the scenes in television has stalled in the past decade.¹⁶

FIGURE 4: PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN IN KEY POSITIONS IN PRIMETIME TV BY YEAR



Women's underrepresentation is especially stark when it comes to showrunners, a position that holds incredible power to shape the creative direction of television shows. Overall, women constituted just 11% of showrunners in the 2016-17 season.¹⁷ The situation for women of color in television is even worse. Only 2% of the showrunners in the 2016-17 season were women of color.¹⁸

The status of women in film and television is bad, and it has not improved much in the five decades that women have been demanding change in the industry. In the following section, we examine gender discrimination and sexual harassment as the leading causes of women's persistent erasure behind the scenes in entertainment media.

Awards

Given women's anemic numbers in film and television, it is not surprising that few women are nominated for or win major industry awards. For the Academy Awards, some categories break out women and men (e.g., best actor/actress and best supporting actor/actress), but women fare poorly in gender-neutral categories. According to a study from the Women's Media Center, 80% of nominees in non-acting categories, such as director and original screenplay, did not include a single female nominee from 2005 to 2016.¹⁹ In 2018, Natalie Portman made headlines for calling out the gender disparity in the best director category at the Golden Globes. In announcing the best director winner, she opened with "Here are the *all-male* nominees for Best Director."²⁰ Only seven women have been nominated for best director by the Golden Globes in 75 years, and only one woman has won (Barbra Streisand for *Yentl* in 1984).²¹

Gender Discrimination

The first barrier to women's progress in entertainment media is gender discrimination, defined as prejudice based on a person's sex or gender. In thinking about why there are so few women in entertainment media, it is useful to think about supply-side or "pipeline" factors that result in a smaller pool of qualified applicants, and demand-side factors such as bias and discrimination that set up a preference for male candidates. The supply-side explanation does not fully explain the lack of women in key positions in entertainment media. Women make up half of film school graduates today, up from one-third of graduates a decade

Obstacles to Women's Advancement in the Industry

ago, but they are not hired at the same rate as male graduates.²² This indicates that demand-side explanations are more potent, namely, gender discrimination.

Gender discrimination violates the Civil Rights Act of 1964 that prohibits employment discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex or national origin.²³ In the first year after the law was implemented, one in three complaints involved gender discrimination.²⁴ Gender discrimination comes in many different forms such as bias in hiring, promotion, compensation, mentoring and other professional opportunities. In recent decades, the entertainment industry has implemented gender and race diversity programs to increase the hiring numbers of women and people of color, but with little effect for women.²⁵

Women in Hollywood have been working for gender-equitable workplace practices for more than half a century. They have filed at least four federal Civil Rights Act complaints over the years, but with little success. The first federal complaint for discrimination in Hollywood was filed in 1969. It prompted several days of hearings in Los Angeles by the Equal Opportunity Employment Commission (EEOC) that found the industry was engaging in race and gender discrimination, but the EEOC did not establish mechanisms to hold Hollywood accountable so the discrimination continued. A second complaint was filed in 1978, and a third in 1984, and the EEOC again found race and gender discrimination. In both cases, no action was taken to ensure Hollywood compliance with fair hiring practices. A fourth complaint was filed by the American Civil Liberties Union of Southern California in May of 2015 pertaining to gender discrimination against female directors that led to an investigation. The EEOC is in negotiations with six major studios to address systemic sex discrimination, but it remains to be seen whether this latest effort to enforce the Civil Rights Act will be successful.²⁶

Women in Hollywood have also been fighting for equal pay for decades. A handful of high-profile female actors have won pay equity battles in recent years, for example, Ellen Pompeo on *Grey's Anatomy*, Emmy Rossum on *Shameless*, Gillian Anderson on the 2016 reboot of *The X-Files*, Charlize Theron for the *Snow White and the Huntsman* sequel, and Robin Wright on *House of Cards*.²⁷ The wage gap is intersectional in that women of color are paid even less than white women in Hollywood.²⁸ In 2017, actors Jessica Chastain and Octavia Spencer publicized their strategy for increasing pay for women of color. Chastain, a white woman, packaged her salary negotiations together with Spencer's, an African American woman, and this increased Spencer's salary five times over.²⁹

Despite years of equal pay efforts, a massive wage gap persists in Hollywood. In 2017, the highest paid male actor (Mark Wahlberg) made \$40 million more than the highest paid female actor (Emma Stone), and top ten male actors made three times what the top ten female actors made.³⁰ After working for a decade as a co-host of *E! News's Daily Pop* program, Catt Sadler resigned upon discovering she was making only half the salary of her male co-host.³¹ Jennifer Lawrence penned a piece titled "Why Do I Make Less than my Male Co-Stars?" in which she described the systemic bias against equal pay in Hollywood.³² Lawrence laid out sexism as a cause and also how women are less forceful negotiators because they want to be liked and avoid being labeled "spoiled." Gender bias is at play in terms of what women feel comfortable negotiating and what they are accorded by (mostly male) executives.

Societal roles and values assigned to the work of women and men are the engine that drives gender discrimination in the workplace. Decades of academic research finds that women across industries experience subtle gender discrimination in terms of being ignored in group settings and being evaluated less favorably for the same performance.³³ In experiments where resumes are identical except for female and male names at the top, male candidates are seen as far more competent and worthy of a higher starting salary.³⁴ Female applicants were also less likely to be rated as deserving of mentorship and less likely to be hired.³⁵

These biases are the result of deep-seated beliefs that men and their work are simply more valuable than women and their work. Similar biases are found for people of color compared to white people,³⁶ which means that women of color face compounded gender and race bias in the workplace.

Gender discrimination is more accepted in the entertainment industry than in many other industries because of its emphasis on creative freedom. The problem with this focus is that both men and women are biased in their perceptions of who is creative. According to research from Cornell University professor Devon Proudfoot, women and men see men as more creative than women.³⁷ Both women and men assign more value to objects when they are told they are created by men, but this bias is not based in reality. For example, when symphony orchestras switched from auditions in which the selectors saw the gender of the performer to a process in which the performer's identity was hidden, the hiring of female musicians increased 25%.³⁸ Women who work in Hollywood or want to work in Hollywood are seen as less creative, the skillset that the industry values most.

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment, which was established as a form of sex discrimination in the 1980s,³⁹ is another major obstacle for women's progress in entertainment media. The EEOC defines sexual harassment as unwanted sexual advances and other verbal or physical harassment that is sexual in nature. Legal standards for what constitutes sexual harassment vary from state to state. The EEOC reports that approximately 42% of women and 15% of men experience sexual harassment in the workplace.

Sexual harassment is nothing new. Enslaved women and "free" domestic workers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were routinely subjected to sexual harassment and violence from their owners/bosses, and women faced the same behavior when they moved en masse into the U.S. workforce in the twentieth century.⁴⁰ Feminist reformers of the 1960s and 1970s successfully passed a series of laws to recognize sexual harassment as a form of sex discrimination, and to hold employers accountable for enabling this form of gender bias in the workplace. The primary law governing sexual harassment in the workplace is the 1964 Civil Rights Act that applies to employers with fifteen or more employees.

Starting in 1980, the EEOC began to actively enforce the Civil Rights Act clause that unwanted sexual advances are a type of sexual harassment, but sexual harassment was still a relatively unaddressed phenomenon in 1991 when Anita Hill testified before the U.S. Senate during the confirmation process of Supreme Court nominee Clarence Thomas. Thomas was confirmed 52-48, and it was later revealed that another woman was ready to testify during the Senate hearings with similar allegations, but she was not allowed to.⁴¹ Hundreds of lawsuits and federal investigations have further defined the nuances of sexual harassment law in the U.S. since the Hill-Thomas hearings.

Sexual harassment has been a fact of life for women in various occupations, but especially so in the entertainment industry. Early female actors endured frequent abuse, some of which has come to light only in recent years, including Shirley Temple, Judy Garland and Marilyn Monroe.⁴² Some abuse from this time period was even noted publicly when it occurred. In 1945, Maureen O'Hara went public with allegations of sexual harassment from producers and directors (see Figure 5).⁴³ At least one press outlet at the time defined the sexual harassment O'Hara experienced as "love."

Back in the 1960s, leading lady Tippi Hedren alleged that famed director Alfred Hitchcock sexually assaulted her many times while they were working on the 1963 film *The Birds*.⁴⁴ She revisited these allegations in a 2017 tweet in which she stated that "Hitch said he would ruin my career" if Hedren refused his sexual advances (see Figure 6).

The longstanding casting couch culture in Hollywood was blown wide open in the fall of 2017 when more than 100 women went public with allegations against

Figure 5:
Press Coverage
of Maureen
O'Hara Defying
Sexual Harassers



Im watching all the coverage on Weinstein. This is nothing new, nor is it limited to the entertainment industry. I dealt with sexual harassment all the time, during my modeling and film career. Hitchcock wasn't the first. However, I wasn't going to take it anymore, so I simply walked away and didnt look back. Hitch said he would ruin my career and I told him to do what he had to do. It has taken 50 years, but it is about time that women started standing up for themselves as they appear to be doing in the Weinstein case. Good for them!



Figure 6:
Tippi Hedren
Tweet About
Alfred Hitchcock's
Sexual Violence

well-known producer Harvey Weinstein.⁴⁵ Since the Weinstein allegations broke, dozens of prominent men in Hollywood and media have lost work based on reports of sexual harassment or assault, including actor Kevin Spacey, director James Toback, comedian Louis C.K., producer David Guilloid, producer/director Brett Ratner, actor Tom Sizemore, actor Jeffrey Tambor, and many others.

The tidal wave of sexual violence allegations against men in entertainment, media, politics and other industries culminated in the #MeToo movement. Anti-sexual violence activist Tarana Burke named the #MeToo campaign in 1997, and actor Alyssa Milano popularized this hashtag on social media two decades later. To date, more than 1.7 million people in 85 countries have used the #MeToo hashtag on social media.⁴⁶ But the #MeToo movement did not appear out of thin air in 2017. The groundwork for the movement was laid in 2013 when sexual assault survivors on college campuses put the topic on the national agenda by strategically filing dozens of federal complaints against schools across the country. In 2015, the national discussion enveloped Hollywood when 35 women who allege sexual violence from famed comedian Bill Cosby appeared on the cover of *New York Magazine*.

In 2016, the movement against sexual violence spread to the world of cable news when host Gretchen Carlson successfully fought to have Fox News head Roger Ailes removed for sexual harassment. Within six months, popular Fox News hosts Bill O'Reilly and Eric Bolling would both be removed amidst multiple allegations of sexual misconduct. On Oct. 5, 2017, the national conversation turned a corner when the *New York Times* reported on the sexual violence of Harvey Weinstein. Within days, a slew of high-profile celebrities came forward to report their experiences, including Angelina Jolie, Lupita Nyong'o, Gwyneth Paltrow and Ashley Judd. The celebrity status of these survivors likely inspired more Americans to believe other women as they came forward.

If sexual harassment has been the norm in every industry since women have been working in them, and if sexual harassment has been rampant in Hollywood since the start, why is it now getting the attention it deserves? Social media, which emerged in the mid-2000s, is one primary reason why allegations of sexual harassment and violence are being taken more seriously today than in the past. The sheer volume of stories about sexual harassment and violence demonstrates the scope of the problem and encourages Americans to believe the victims/survivors.

Another factor in Weinstein being the breaking point (after 130 years of organized activism against sexual harassment/violence) may be the fact that the more high-profile survivors are beautiful, mostly white celebrities.⁴⁷ As actor and rape survivor Gabrielle Union told a reporter, "I think the floodgates have opened for white women. I don't think it's a coincidence whose pain has been taken seriously. Whose pain we have showed historically and continued to show. Whose pain is tolerable and whose pain is intolerable. And whose pain needs to be addressed now."⁴⁸ Indeed, celebrities of color like Lupita Nyong'o and Aurora Perrinea who came forward to report sexual misconduct did not receive the same reaction to their experiences.⁴⁹ The #MeToo movement in Hollywood is an unmitigated success in terms of raising awareness about the issues and demanding accountability from the industry, but at the same time, it reinforces the idea that the voices of certain survivors are simply not as important or worthy of concern.

In response to the #MeToo Hollywood moment, Kathleen Kennedy, head of Lucasfilm, teamed up with Maria Eitel, chair of the Nike Foundation, attorney Nina Shaw and venture capitalist Freeda Kapor Klein to form the Commission on Sexual Harassment and Advancing Equality in the Workplace.⁵⁰ The purpose of this commission is to create and implement a comprehensive strategy to get Hollywood to create fairer, safer spaces, and it is chaired by anti-sexual harassment pioneer Anita Hill. Various other efforts have also been launched by existing non-profit organizations. For example, Women in Film launched a help

line to offer legal support and other guidance to people experiencing sexual harassment and violence in Hollywood⁵¹ and 20th Century Fox tech executive Claire Schmidt left the industry to develop an online tool for reporting sexual harassment and gender bias in the entertainment industry.⁵² Shonda Rhimes, Reese Witherspoon, and hundreds of other prominent women in the entertainment industry launched the #TimesUp campaign that includes a legal defense fund, legislative initiatives, and a push for gender parity in hiring practices.⁵³ Only time will tell if the watershed #MeToo movement will bring about the change in the industry that advocates have been advocating for for half a century.

Looking Forward

Throughout 2017, a study of 3,011 individuals working in key positions on the 250 top-domestic grossing films reveals that women filled 18% of these jobs, while men filled 82%.⁵⁴ Given over five decades of research and activism with the needle not moving, the question remains: When will the representation and status of women in Hollywood finally change — and how do we get there?

Parity in the Workforce

In the face of daily sexual harassment scandals, studios and industry agencies such as Creative Artists Agency, International Creative Management, etc., have recently taken the “50-50 by 2020” pledge; yet what will hold them accountable for reaching this goal? Industry improvement in gender equity and inclusion is untenable if the only thing offered in response is patterned lip service.

In contrast, female-led organizations such as the Women’s Media Action Coalition (WeMAC) and Take The Lead’s initiative, “50 Women Can Change the World in Media and Entertainment,” are executing multi-pronged approaches to achieving intersectional gender parity in the workforce. WeMAC has seven task forces committed to lobbying, litigating, continued research, funding projects and accessing tax credits. Take The Lead is aiming for gender parity in film and television by 2025. They are conducting a leadership and movement-building program to create a network of women with tools for navigating the industry that will serve as a model for closing the gender leadership gap. There are also executives who are dedicating themselves to actively closing the gender gap by only hiring female filmmakers on their projects. For example, Ava DuVernay hired only female directors for the first two seasons of *Queen Sugar*, a successful television series she created for the Oprah Winfrey Network.⁵⁵

Shifting Representation

In order to shift the status of women in Hollywood there must also be strategies for altering the representation and presence of women on screen. For example, the production studio Wise Entertainment combines extensive research on power dynamics and social hierarchies with rich storytelling, ensuring that the content they develop accurately represents the communities and social issues portrayed. The Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media at Mount Saint Mary’s University uses its groundbreaking research to lobby major movie studios for greater gender inclusion in their content. The Institute’s namesake, Geena Davis, encourages media makers to be specific at the script level writing parity into background scenes and suggests changing male characters to females to help erase inherent gender bias. The Media, Diversity & Social Change Initiative at USC Annenberg advocates for the #JustAddFive campaign, contending that if screenwriters simply added five female speaking characters to top films we could reach onscreen gender parity in four years.⁵⁶

Next Generation

Film schools can also have an active role in closing both the employment and representation disparities in Hollywood as they train the next generation of media makers. Yet unlike other professionalized studies, such as law school or medical school-related majors, there are no competitive standards for moving students into Hollywood, and thus the industry remains dominated by white men. There is also no curriculum standard that mandates the inclusion of the

profound research surrounding onscreen representation. [USC Annenberg's Inclusion Initiative](#) and [Mount Saint Mary's Film and Social Justice](#) program are examples of higher education programs and initiatives giving students the tools to practically apply this data to the creation of media content. Without these changes, film schools remain complicit in the proliferation of workplace discrimination and stereotypical representation, and fail to prepare women and men for responsibly creating equitable media content.

Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti announced the City's partnership with industry leaders through the Evolve Entertainment Fund (EEF) that seeks to close the employment gaps maintained by these film school inadequacies and industry bias. The fund will offer paid internships and more to people normally overlooked in hiring: women, people of color, and low-income Angelenos.⁵⁷

Audience

Audience members also have power. Viewers can use their consumer dollars to support particular films on opening weekends and can vote with their remote by purposefully watching television shows or streaming content that advance equality in Hollywood and then leaving positive reviews. Sites such as [grademymovie.com](#) and [Common Sense Media](#) provide ratings for media content so consumers can use their buying power to reward films and television programs that are more inclusive. For example, [grademymovie.com](#) awards grades for race and gender to the top films on opening weekend so moviegoers can choose films with gender and race equitable casts and crews.

Conclusion

After a half-century of research and activism, Hollywood is prime for reform. The fight for equality requires that we actively close the gender employment gap and eliminate the culture of sexual harassment. Gender discrimination impacts not only the women attempting to work in the industry but also every audience member who consumes the resultant biased representation of women on screen. Current progress shows that the combination of academics, artists and activists working in alignment offers a promising solution for achieving equality on and off screen.

Endnotes

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COLLECTIF

Feminist Theory
and the Culture
of Scientific Practice:
Making Sense
of my Experiences
as a Female Engineer

Carol Johnston, PhD

**THE CENTER FOR
THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN AT
MOUNT SAINT MARY'S UNIVERSITY**

Introduction

In 1976, 42 students entered a chemical engineering program at the University of California at Davis. I was one of 13 women among those 42 students. In my first few years out of college, I would often hear of my female peers leaving the profession; only knowing of two women who remained in the field after ten years. Data show it is not unique to my class that a higher percentage of women and ethnic minority scientists and engineers leave the field within five years. For example, Frehill reports that within three years of graduation, 71% of men and 61% of women who earned a bachelor's degree in engineering were still in engineering jobs.¹ For chemical engineering majors graduating between 1985 and 1989, 45% of men remained in the chemical engineering workforce, compared to 35% of women. This exodus has led me to wonder why so many qualified women in science choose to leave the field or never seriously consider the field at all.

For me, the decision to leave the profession was partially due to conflicts between engineering and family, but also due to my desire to encourage more young women to pursue science studies, a passion that evolved from connections made through my involvement with the Southern California section of the American Institute of Chemical Engineers. As a young female engineer on the board of our local section, I was often asked to give guest lectures and presentations at high schools. Recognizing my value as a role model, I returned to school to become credentialed as a high school teacher of science and math, and later received a doctorate in science education. However, I found that it was still very difficult to convince my promising female students to consider science majors for college.

As an author and editor for the Report on the Status of Women and Girls in California™ since its 2012 inception, I have noted that the number of women and girls entering the science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields in California has remained a small percentage, particularly as one looks at advanced degrees in the physical sciences and engineering. Reports on the Status of Women and Girls in California show that little progress has been made since I enrolled in a bachelor's of science in engineering program.² While women are now more likely to obtain a bachelor's degree than men, they are still far less likely to major in STEM fields. In 2013, less than 2% of women across the United States who earned bachelor's degrees majored in engineering. In addition, less than 2% of women earning a degree majored in mathematics, statistics and computer sciences; less than 1% of women earning a bachelor's degree majored in computer sciences. The number of women further decreases when we examine advanced degrees. Less than half of all professional and doctoral degrees are held by women. This is particularly true in the STEM fields. For example, the ratio of men to women earning doctoral degrees in mathematics is nearly 3 to 1 when measured by the percentage of those earning bachelor's degrees continuing to a doctorate.³

Before one can suggest any modifications or solutions, we must first understand the obstacles and limitations women face as they attempt to enter, and advance, in the STEM fields. One obstacle is the underrepresentation of female professors in many STEM majors who may serve as mentors and role models. For example, in 1995, Ginorio reported that half of the physics doctoral programs in the United States had no female faculty members.⁴ While efforts have been made to improve these numbers, the number of female physics professors at the associate level and beyond remains at less than 18%.⁵ This continues to negatively impact female students, as implicit biases held by faculty influence gender dynamics in the classroom.⁶ Feder encourages universities to ensure that female faculty at the upper levels also serve on committees to increase their power on editorial boards and with hiring decisions in order to address inequities in the field, such as salary, awarding of grants, laboratory space and promotions.⁷ I have often reflected

on my decision to leave engineering and the outside influences that led to doing so. The encouragement I received about my science abilities contributed to my decision to enter engineering, and female role models were powerful influences in my early career. However, I did not have female professors or women role models while I was in college, and I wonder whether this absence contributed toward my doubts and frequent feelings of being an outsider in the field.

While many believe that the strides made in the past decades have opened STEM fields to women and other underrepresented groups, little has changed in the culture of scientific practice. Thus, a sense of belonging still has a large effect on whether women will enter and stay in these fields. My experiences in an earlier generation still resonate with the experiences of many women entering these fields today. In exploring how the culture of scientific practice, along with the hegemonic view of science in our society that privileges the value system associated with the scientific revolutionary period of sixteenth and seventeenth century Europe, I seek to challenge the practices that marginalize women's experiences and change the image of who can be a scientist. Framing the work of scientists through a feminist viewpoint, one that asks how the inclusion of women affects scientific practices, goals and outcomes may help to empower future science leaders. In my work as a science educator, I continue to challenge myself and future teachers to consider how their teaching styles and representations of science impact the choices of the women and other underrepresented group members who enter STEM fields. Thus, this paper will frame my own experiences in engineering with findings in the literature regarding role models, societal perceptions of science, and the hegemonic structure of STEM education and practice.

Lack of role models for women

The lack of role models and encouragement for women continues as a major obstacle for success.⁸ In math, science and engineering courses, the student who believes that she is alone in the struggle to understand a new concept is likely to become discouraged and quit. This lack of role models for women is even more critical in view of the stereotype of a scientist as a male genius. Feminist studies, which aim to contextualize women's experiences and explore how normative gendered assumptions have led to inequities, have challenged these hierarchical ways of knowing about the world. Hughes further discusses the hierarchies of knowledge, describing how as a student of science she was awarded the privileges of being perceived as smarter, and therefore, better than her peers in the humanities.⁹ As an engineering student, I also felt pride in studying a major that led others to perceive me as "smart," but also felt like a fraud in that I did not view myself in the same way.

A common perception on the UC Davis campus was that the chemical engineering major held the highest status, and was considered to be the most comprehensive and the most difficult. Thus, even within the engineering community, I received a degree of respect simply by virtue of my major. Similarly, of the pure sciences, many view physics as the most fundamental science, requiring a more advanced level of mathematics and the highest levels of intelligence. With these intimidating views of engineering and physics, women have read the societal signals that it is okay not to know science if you are female.¹⁰

While I was an undergraduate student, my mother reinforced this thinking by consoling me when I called to tell her of my struggles in class. "Girls don't need to know that much math," she would tell me. "It doesn't matter if you fail." Many of my male classmates would comment that I should just get married and not worry about grades. I also noticed that many of my male classmates had spent their entire lives knowing that they wanted to be scientists. They were competent at working on engines and electronic devices.

They exhibited confidence in their abilities to do lab work and usually took control during group assignments. Perhaps they, too, had heard the societal voices that women do not need to excel in STEM disciplines. While I had grown up with chemistry sets and microscopes and loved spending hours on “research” and explorations, I never really considered myself a scientist.

In talking with many female friends and acquaintances that had successfully entered STEM careers, I found that most believed that a strong influence on their success came from a family member who was a scientist. Chinn discusses this influence in describing a young woman in her study that chose a STEM degree after learning of a role model’s career: “Meeting her godmother, an engineer, was a revelation,” the young woman said.¹¹ It struck her that a girl could, indeed, succeed and confirmed for her that she wanted to be an engineer. Several of my female friends told tales about struggling in courses, and noted that their perseverance was possible largely due to hearing family members’ assurances that they, too, had struggled and overcome to reach their own positions.

In my own experience, I benefitted from having role models at key times, but also dealt with the negative perceptions of society that limited my science identity. As a high school junior, I wanted to enter the medical profession and was considering training as an x-ray technician. My male chemistry teacher, however, felt that with my abilities and interest in the sciences, I should broaden my goals and consider going to a four-year university. One morning when I showed up for class, he informed me that I would be joining the school’s guidance counselor and a small group of female students for a trip to a “Women in Engineering Day” at the local state university. The opportunity enabled me to hear several women talk about how they had overcome obstacles to become engineers. I was intrigued by the jobs that they described. After that, I decided that I would, indeed, pursue an engineering degree.

Role model effects include exposure to potential careers, much like my experience in attending the Women in Engineering conference as a high school student. Bleemer found that the simple arrival of a female physician in the hometown of twentieth century California college students increased the likelihood that a woman would choose a STEM major by 5%.¹² During my university years, I met my mentor, Mary, through my involvement with the American Institute of Chemical Engineers. Mary, about ten years my senior, was a practicing engineer at the engineering/construction company where I would later work. She was actively involved in programs similar to the one that had sparked my initial interest in engineering. Mary, the sole female member of her class at Penn State, was a pioneer for women engineers in many ways. Overcoming many prejudices against her during her schooling did not prepare her for the continued need to prove herself as she pursued her career. When she took her first job in engineering, she was given the title of “secretary” despite her work as an engineer because her peers could not reconcile the job title of engineer with her being a woman. In addition, because she did not receive her deserved title, she was not paid at the same salary scale as her male counterparts. Years later, when women in engineering had become more accepted, she met even more resistance as she tried to convince her employer to increase her salary to reflect her experience as an engineer. When they refused, she found employment elsewhere. Although her new position was considered entry-level despite her more than ten years of experience, she was earning twice the salary of her previous position. As my mentor, Mary’s stories of perseverance helped me through difficult times and guided me early in my career.

Recognizing this need for role models, many outreach programs strive to put successful students in positions to share their experiences with younger children. As a graduate student, I was the coordinator for one such outreach

program, known as the Physics Circus, that took a performance involving physics demonstrations to local schools. The program was sponsored by the physics department and was staffed primarily by female volunteer faculty and graduate students. While this had many advantages in terms of showing students who physicists are, I wonder if we were truly getting the message to the children that women can be great scientists and engineers. It can sometimes be difficult for science educators to be seen as scientists by their students, who may be more conditioned to view women as teachers or professors. It is part of the science and education communities' responsibility to broaden students' visions of what women can achieve.

Societal perception of science

Negative stereotypes about the abilities of women in science can be debilitating to performance and may further explain persistent gender gaps.¹³ Haussler and his colleagues found that in physics, for example, women responded positively when the associations to their own experiences or life situations were obvious.¹⁴ Exploring interest in learning physics with motivational factors ranging from a "pure physics" interest to an interest in the social impact of physics, Haussler's study points to gender differences. They found that a majority of women were more interested in the social impact of physics, such as medical applications, while men were motivated when physics was presented as a pure science, or as being highly technical.

Communication styles, too, vary among cultural subgroups, and may also contribute to feelings of belonging. Since science has been dominated by European male culture, members of certain subgroups may feel ill-at-ease. These differences in communication styles may also lead to different ways of participating in scientific meetings, which can be critical to career advancement.¹⁵ Differences in communication styles may have also contributed to the perception of women STEM students that they did not receive enough feedback or affirmation from their science professors.¹⁶ Competitive styles may also disenchant certain subgroups. Students may feel alienated by the culture of the science classroom and find it irrelevant to their everyday life experiences.¹⁷ In my engineering work experiences, I was often told to not speak during meetings, but to voice my questions to my supervisors afterwards. It was many years before I rediscovered that I had a voice.

Part of my own frustration with the field of engineering is related to science as being value-free. While science is said to be objective, I sometimes struggled to see how I could be a caring citizen, concerned with peace and environmental harmony in the world, and yet work in a field that did not appear to prioritize those values. I became frustrated when I tried to be innovative in my designs and include new technologies that I believed would result in less environmental impact from the industrial facilities I was designing — only to be told to simply follow the plans that had been designed 20 years earlier that had been used "successfully." Although these frustrations may not be limited to women, I felt much less conflicted in my years as a professor. I was more comfortable in believing that what I was doing was having a positive effect on society.

In my tenure as an engineer, I received persistent messages, both implicitly and explicitly, that women should not be engineers. Although my mentor had paved the way for me to find success, I often dealt with the fact that my experiences would be different as a woman. One project, designing an oil refinery to be built in Kuwait, was especially interesting. I was given a male administrative assistant, the only one at the time in this company of over 2,000 employees. He was to dictate all of my results to the client, who was not to know that I was female. I recall one day when one of the senior members of our project team came down to my floor and found me in a discussion with my assistant. The team member, assuming that I was the assistant, walked

past the young man and handed me a pile of papers to photocopy. Before I could explain his mistake, my boss stormed out of his office and screamed that I was the talented engineer for whom he was looking. I was thankful, at least, to have an immediate supervisor who believed that a woman could do the work. However, even he became very disappointed when I showed him my engagement ring. He responded with his expectation that I would soon have other priorities and would not remain in engineering. Unfortunately, he seemed to take me less seriously after that.

One wonders how far women have come since the writings of Kant that appear in *Changing the Educational Landscape: Philosophy, Women, and Curriculum*:

“A woman who has a head full of Greek...or carries on fundamental controversies about mechanics ...might as well even have a beard.” Therefore, Kant’s point was that, insofar as women did master these subjects, we would not be women; we would be men.¹⁸

In many ways, I felt pressured to be less feminine in order to achieve success, and even wondered if being a female engineer was compatible with being married. I often struggled with the dichotomy of my femininity and my work identity. While in my youth I argued that women were equal to men, I came to understand that ignoring what makes women feminine forces them to forfeit the ability to make unique contributions to science from a feminist perspective. Duran discusses from a philosophical viewpoint the literature related to feminist science.¹⁹ Her writings about Fuller describe the “post hoc tinkering that frequently occurs in theoretical accounts of science, many of which are designed to heighten the notion that science is a more rational, or in some sense purer, endeavor than it actually is.”²⁰ She also discusses the implications of a singular scientific method, which tends to privilege the physical sciences over the biological due to the differences in methodological approach, and the work of Thomas Kuhn. Citing the work of Evelyn Fox Keller about the research of Barbara McClintock, Duran identifies how the use of alternate methodologies interfered with McClintock’s ability to gain consensus within the scientific community. McClintock, trained in the positivist tradition, which views scientific work as purely objective, used methods that were outside of the scientific method. She used intuition and developed an empathetic relationship with the corn plants in her study. Yet her work produced some very revolutionary and important knowledge in the field of genetics.

Women are often socialized out of science due to the view of women portrayed in science. Women are also socialized out of science due to conflicting societal messages about what is expected from women.²¹ Girls learn that to be feminine is to be “intuitive and rational.” Later comes the conflicting message telling her that to be a scientist, she must think objectively and linearly, traits our society labels as “masculine.”²² These messages have also led to occupations becoming gendered, or segregated by sex. Hochschild described the roles of gender and society’s stereotypical roles for men and women, positing that the gender revolution would be viewed as incomplete until males moved into historically female roles at the same rate of females entering male roles.²³ Friedman builds on this argument by noting that popular culture focuses on teaching women to “lean in” and be more like men in order to achieve success in “male occupations,” while campaigns continue to exploit the stereotypes that women are nurturers and men are strong.²⁴ For example, men are encouraged to enter nursing programs with slogans such as, “Are You Man Enough to be a Nurse?” Financial incentives continue to negatively influence parity in movements within gendered professions. For example, nurses generally have lower salaries than physicians in the medical profession.

Past efforts to include more women in science have emphasized improving visuospatial skills, assertiveness training, competitive sports and other mechanisms to help women enter the culture of the white male scientist rather than allowing for adaptations to the culture of science that would make it more female-friendly.²⁵ Barton argues that reform initiatives in science education need to use the personal experiences of women to help them grasp science more readily and to make it more interesting.²⁶ In her community college chemistry course, Barton modified her lessons to give value to the ways in which women experienced science. She describes how the hegemonic view of science in our society tends to marginalize women's experiences. Similarly, Martin describes that women tend to choose fields that are at risk of being downgraded in academic standing and resources.²⁷

Hegemonic system (the gatekeepers)

Even for women who achieve academic success and attain a scientific degree, in some ways, their battle for standing and acceptance in their field of choice is just beginning.²⁸ The culture of science and science teaching has historically been dominated by the culture of the white male, and that culture aims to tell us what does, and does not, count as science.²⁹ Scientists use models, metaphors, procedures, technologies and other ideas from older European traditions in defining what we know as science.³⁰ When metaphors and pedagogies are only understood by a few, they lose their value. This is true in the scientific community, where the use of metaphors has been dominated by male culture and warfare, thus potentially alienating women.³¹ For example, "Nature is Machine" is only valuable to people familiar with mechanical devices.³² Other discourses used in teaching STEM continue to reinforce existing power structures and do not promote equity in STEM fields.³³

Another example presented by Martin shows how these teaching descriptions can be demeaning to women. There is a metaphor used in immunology where the feminized, primitive phagocytes kill by engulfing and eating the enemy, whereas the masculinized T cells kill by penetrating or injecting. While both are often killed in the process, the T cells are given heroic deaths — imagery as David taking on a Goliath (the tumor cell). Calabrese-Barton further argues that the language of science can result in the silencing of women's voices within STEM classrooms.³⁴ Citing issues with the naming conventions of a distillation apparatus related to male and female parts, Calabrese-Barton discusses how the constructs of positionality and feminist liberation education can bring light to the need for scientific language to consider how certain conventions might marginalize groups.

This industry hegemony is kept in place by both the reluctance of outsiders to break the traditional images and by those in positions of power acting as gatekeepers of the status quo. Malcom gives an example of this oppression in her review of a book by Margaret Rossiter that includes a letter from Robert Millikan urging Duke University scientists not to hire a female candidate they were considering because doing so would negatively impact the department's prestige.³⁵

Beginning with education in the sciences, competition and teaching styles that do not stress the relevance of the subjects taught tend to marginalize female students. Mayberry suggests that this competitive style of teaching deters many women, stating that "competitive classroom culture appears to facilitate individual achievement for white men, but acts as a significant deterrent to women's achievement."³⁶ As I began to more critically examine my own teaching practices, contemplating if my use of competition in the classroom counteracted my efforts to be a role model as a female engineer, I wondered if this informed my difficulties in getting my female students to consider science majors in college. After much thought, I tried to present a view of science that included more collaboration and minimized competition. This was a realistic representation of science given my experience in the field.

Competition was present amongst various groups; however, there was also much collaboration and sharing of ideas with outside groups.

Self-esteem issues for women, which may be related to the atmosphere of competition, also contribute to difficulty in finding academic and career success in the sciences. Martin argues that educational equality must go beyond identical education for all:

“Educational equality between the sexes is still far from having been realized,” the [Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development] report says, I fear that as long as women’s education is designed on the one hand to develop traits genderized in favor of males and on the other to ignore gender differences related to learning, this finding will continue to hold true. In the name of identical educational treatment, girls and women will experience difficulties and suffer hardships our male counterparts will never know. But if identical treatment is untenable — if, indeed, it gives us the illusion of gender neutrality — when in fact it intensifies the problems of becoming an educated women.³⁷

Chandler and Parsons further discussed many self-esteem issues for women.³⁸ Several girls in the study expressed the opinion that they were not good at math because they had to work at it, and they often asked for help. The girls pointed out that although they got A’s in math, they had to work hard to get those grades. The authors also believed that girls were often unable to see the relevance of science and, therefore, did not find it enjoyable to study. Self-esteem issues may explain some of Ginorio’s findings that women with college GPAs similar to those of their male peers tended to more negatively evaluate their intelligence, even after college.³⁹ Self-confidence declined drastically during the first year of college and for most did not improve back to the level of the students prior to beginning their college studies.

This decline of self-esteem actually begins even earlier. Middle school is a time when many girls begin forming a negative view of science and math, and start drifting away from elective courses in those disciplines. In a survey of girls and boys ages 9-15, the dramatic effect of self-esteem for girls is evident. Bailey states that “... during adolescence, both boys and girls experience a significant loss of self-esteem in a variety of areas. However, the loss is much more drastic and long lasting in girls than in boys.”⁴⁰ The study suggested that there is a complex relationship between self-esteem and choices that students make regarding their future careers.

Conclusion

We must address the lack of role models, the societal images of scientists and engineers, and the hegemonic system of scientific practice in order for women to feel more accepted in the STEM communities. The challenges to removing obstacles for women in science involve providing more role models for women in science, changing the image of who is considered scientist material and what counts as science. The histories of science that have excluded many of the contributions of female scientists need to be rewritten to help modify the image of a scientist that society tells us about. It must be understood that it is not true that science is purely objective and value-free.

I am hopeful. Feminist theories have broadened my view of what counts as science. I am better able to understand the conflicts that I lived with as I navigated the male-dominated world of engineering. I hope that these lessons will enable me to motivate science teachers into presenting science in more inclusive ways. Eventually, our society may begin more fully to embrace women as scientists. Instead of forcing women to assimilate and take on a masculine orientation to science, the field can make room for new perspectives and insights from women in STEM disciplines. Female scientists can become the heroines for young women who aspire to be STEM professionals.

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Health and Reentry:
Preliminary Findings of
a Qualitative Study
on the Health of
Post-Incarcerated Women
in Southern California

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**THE CENTER FOR
THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN AT
MOUNT SAINT MARY'S UNIVERSITY**

Introduction

The United States maintains the largest prison population, the highest rates of incarceration, and the highest percentage of female prisoners in the industrialized world.¹ Indeed, women constitute one of the fastest-growing prison populations in the U.S., with the number of incarcerated women increasing 700% between 1980 and 2014 (from 15,117 to 215,378).² On top of these numbers, approximately 10 million people enter jails each year, including about 1 million women.³ California reports the third-highest population of female inmates in the country, though a lower-than-average rate of female incarceration (4.4% vs. 7.3% nationally).⁴ With more than 75% of jail inmates leaving prison within a year,⁵ and with an additional 600,000 state and federal prisoners returning home each year (of which women comprise between 7–25% annually),⁶ many thousands of formerly incarcerated women (releasees) reenter American society every day.

Reentering society from jail or prison is a difficult and often unsuccessful process, with approximately two-thirds of releasees rearrested within three years (this is known as recidivism).⁷ Health may make this transition even more difficult, particularly for women. The vast majority of releasees (80% of male prisoners; 90% of female prisoners) report chronic health conditions upon release.⁸ Women with physical health problems upon release were more likely to commit crimes than women without physical health problems, and both men and women with health problems were more likely to violate parole and be reincarcerated.⁹ Releasees, both women and men, with co-occurring mental illness and substance abuse have higher rates of recidivism.¹⁰ Men and women with drug problems who were rearrested reported that their struggle with addiction was the primary cause of their recidivism.¹¹

The emerging evidence suggests that health problems may make rearrest more likely, or at least make reentry more difficult.¹² It follows then that interventions addressing the health needs of releasees may reduce rates of recidivism and reincarceration.¹³ Evidence from the substance abuse field confirm this, as at least some evidence suggests that counseling, addiction therapy, and therapeutic community programs do, in fact, reduce recidivism.¹⁴ Effective health interventions may play an important role in reducing recidivism, particularly among women, and may become an important tool in reducing mass incarceration in America.

Understanding the role of health in the reentry process and designing interventions to address these needs may help improve reentry success rates. But given the disproportionately greater number of male prisoners at local, state and federal levels, prison health systems and reentry processes have paid less attention to the needs of female prisoners and releasees.¹⁵ Women releasees report very different health challenges upon reentry than their male counterparts, however: two-thirds of returning women report chronic physical conditions (as opposed to one-half of men); one-third of returning women report mental health problems (as opposed to 15% of men); and about 66% of both women and men report substance abuse problems upon release.¹⁶ Moreover, the most comprehensive studies of women's post-release health needs insufficiently explore their reentry experience: while it can take releasees between two to three and a half years to become reincarcerated, the best studies of women's health only track health needs for one year post-release,¹⁷ while studies with longer timelines focus on a much smaller cohort of diseases or illnesses (HIV, substance abuse, mental illness).¹⁸ To assess the more extended impact of health on reentry and recidivism among female releasees, and to design programs that address these needs in ways that make sustained reentry more likely, the field needs qualitative and quantitative research into the long-term health needs of female releasees.

This article reports the preliminary findings of the Mount Saint Mary's University (MSMU) Healthy Reentry Working Group's (hereinafter referred to as "The Working Group") work on the long-term health needs of formerly incarcerated women in Southern California. MSMU's Working Group is investigating the way that characteristics of various demographic subgroups, health and community services, health and corrections policies, social health determinants, and local contextual factors affect how successfully formerly incarcerated individuals with health needs transition back into civil society. The ongoing mixed methods project involves combining quantitative analysis of social service, corrections, census and health data with qualitative research among individuals and focus groups comprising policymakers, health providers, community service workers, the formerly incarcerated and other affected community members. The Health Reentry Working Group aims to develop and contribute to best practices that enhance the health of formerly incarcerated individuals as they transition to civil society in the United States. MSMU's Working Group is made up of faculty researchers and Health Policy and Management graduate students, and has been generously supported by Mount Saint Mary's University program development grants, MSMU's Center for the Advancement of Women, and Title V funds.

Methods

This article reports the preliminary findings of the Mount Saint Mary's Working Group's work on the health needs of formerly incarcerated women in Southern California. This study provides a preliminary overview of the qualitative research project the Working Group is presently conducting with community service workers and formerly incarcerated women who have recently transitioned, or who are presently transitioning, from incarceration to civilian life. The ongoing qualitative research methods include documentary analysis, individual interviews and focus groups among care providers, present clients and former clients of reentry organizations in Los Angeles County.

Setting. The Mount Saint Mary's Working Group is conducting all study activities with homeless and reentry service providers, along with associated health providers, in Southern California (San Luis Obispo, Los Angeles, Orange, and Ventura Counties). In this paper, we focus on qualitative evaluation of care provided by key reentry organizations meeting the reentry needs of formerly incarcerated women.¹⁹ The preliminary findings explored in this paper are drawing from a convenience sample of staff and voluntary participants of our participating organizations (that is, a sample of people at those institutions willing to talk with us), as well as the extant literature on the health needs of formerly incarcerated women reentering civil society.

Data collection. The Working Group is deploying three qualitative methods in its overarching analysis along with its one quantitative analysis (described in detail in a forthcoming article): (1) document analysis of policies, protocols, training materials, and deidentified client communications with service providers; (2) semi-structured interviews with organizational leaders, care team members and clients (present and past) at reentry organizations, and (3) focus group interviews with organizational leaders, care team members and clients (present and past) at reentry organizations.²⁰ Triangulating qualitative methods in this way strengthens data quality by revealing greater complexity and understanding than could be achieved by one method alone.²¹ Mixed-method triangulation is particularly useful for understanding sequential dimensions of effective teamwork in the complex environment of delivering primary care.²²

With respect to document analysis, the group is compiling and analyzing numerous materials that describe policies and procedures affecting the reentry

process, which provides an evidence base for best-practice interventions, and documents from local organizations relevant to or descriptive of the health issues and reentry experiences of female releasees. Where possible, we are digitally recording or photocopying documents and transforming them into text using Optical Character Recognition software (or recreated through transcribed notes) and then analyzing them along with other qualitative data.²³ We used some of the analysis from the initial materials to develop the interview and focus group guides for organizational leaders, care team members, health providers, and formerly incarcerated clients described below.

Based on preliminary document analysis, we are conducting semi-structured interviews with care team members and focus groups with care team members and clients at several reentry support organizations that address the needs of women (that is, we combine pre-determined sets of qualitative and quantitative questions with the freedom to ask open-ended questions relevant to the topic or discussion). Our interview and focus group questions are probing staff and clients' understanding of the reentry experience and processes, and the health challenges clients experience throughout, as well as the care drop-offs, delays in care, collateral consequences, and multi-level factors that may account for recidivism risks. Interviews and focus groups last 45-60 minutes, over one or two sessions, and we audio-record and transcribe them. Participants receive a \$15 honorarium.

Data analysis. We collated and conducted thematic analysis on qualitative data using NVivo 11.0 (QSR International, Melbourne AUS). Through iterative coding and interpretation, the project team is using NVivo software to code actual quotes, expressions, and concepts against participant characteristics, organization documents and location codes to identify themes and relationships.²⁴ The team is then analyzing the codes and themes to develop theories and an evidence base for the health-related issues women releasees experience.

Findings and Discussion

Below, we note some general preliminary findings from reviewed documents and key informants thus far. In the adjoining discussion portion, we offer greater details, data and comparisons to existing literature. While researchers generally separate "findings" and "discussions" in academic papers, we have co-located them in this paper for ease of reading.

Mental and physical health needs are substantive and often unaddressed

Findings. Our preliminary documentary and qualitative research indicates that female releasees have a number of mental and physical health problems during the reentry process. Some of these are long-standing and some of them developed during jail/prison, but all of them are difficult to manage upon release. Women lack insurance and either do not know, or struggle to understand, their eligibility for state programs, and often forego care owing to cost, a lack of transportation, or a lack of a regular source of care. Our preliminary work suggests that mental health and depression are key issues for returning women, while dental care, women's health, heart disease, diabetes management, asthma, and stress/insomnia are also key factors.

Discussion. Our preliminary findings seem to be consistent with the limited literature exploring health needs of returning female prisoners. One study found that women report different and more health needs (mental and physical) than men.²⁵ Another study found that 95% of women reported at least one physical symptom and an average of three symptoms, post-release.²⁶ Indeed, the presence of a physical illness among female releasees makes them more

likely than male releasees to use illicit substances (39% vs. 28%), to engage in criminal behavior (53% vs. 38%), and to be re-incarcerated within one year (23% vs. 17%).²⁷ The fact that female releasees have different health-related reentry experiences than male releasees suggests that organizations addressing female reentry may need to provide greater attention to health concerns than a similar service provider more accustomed to serving men. For those services providing care to female reentry populations, designing creative ways to provide mobile or accessible primary care and service navigation will be beneficial.

Logistic barriers to stability and care

Findings. Female releasees struggle with obtaining stable housing, training, employment and transportation in the weeks and months post-release, limiting access to care and insurance, and heightening stress and vulnerabilities that could lead to negative health outcomes. In California, the safety net is more robust than in other states, so local resources made health insurance more available to female releasees than in some other states, but female releasees nonetheless experienced reduced access to care, particularly mental health providers.

Discussion. The literature on access to care, particularly insurance, is mixed with respect to post-incarceration females. One study of the post-release population in Los Angeles County did not find statistically significant differences in insurance levels when compared to those without a history of incarceration, but the sample is small and the study may not have had enough participants to fully test this question, and California has established a series of programs to address the otherwise uninsured population.²⁸ In a multi-state study comparing post-incarceration insurance rates, women with a history of incarceration reported high rates of being uninsured in their first year post-release.²⁹ This latter study may also be affected by selection bias, as it reports findings from Texas, the state with the highest uninsured rate in the country. Additionally, the changes brought by the Affordable Care Act may have changed these trends, though even here, recent policy alterations by the Trump Administration may reduce the access female releasees have to health insurance.³⁰

Regardless, most studies of post-incarcerated women report that female releasees face barriers to medical and dental care regardless of their insurance status, when compared to women without a history of incarceration, and cost frequently is a barrier to timely care.³¹ Some of these barriers may be the effect of poverty and minority status, but nonetheless suggest that reentry programs must work to improve access to care for female releasees.

Depression, stress, and mental illness

Findings. Many female releasees struggle with stress and depression during their transition back to civil society. In both cases these experiences are not new, as prison itself is a very stressful place and depression and self-stigma are not uncommon. Our preliminary work suggests the experience of stress and depression are different, however, owing to the different and new stresses faced by women trying to navigate their lives after incarceration. For women with a longer history of incarceration and reincarceration, and those with past histories of abuse and addiction, these stressors and pressures feel even greater.

Discussion. Our preliminary data reflects other research on post-incarcerated women. Studies indicate that female releasees are more likely to report mental illness after release than while incarcerated (45.1% vs. 34.9%), they report higher rates than released men of depression (56.4% vs. 29.7%), post-traumatic stress (70.8% vs. 40.6%) and even undiagnosed mental illness (25.7% vs. 22.1%).³² Comprehensive mental health services must therefore be a key part of the reentry process for women to be successful in civilian life.

Addiction and substance use is a difficult and sustained problem

Findings. Our research suggests that substance abuse is a difficult challenge for female releasees. The reentry process does provide some women with motivation to remain clean — either for purposes of parole, conditions of housing eligibility or in an effort to avoid returning to jail — but this is not true for all women. Access to addiction services can be limited.

Discussion. As mentioned, our preliminary work suggests that substance abuse is a difficult challenge for female releasees. This is broadly reflected in the literature. Addiction is not only a problem in its own right, but it renders women vulnerable to recidivism. Substance abuse makes women less likely than those not using substances to be employed at three months (30% vs. 32%) and 10 months (25% vs. 53%) post-release.³³ Since unemployment and substance use are both strongly associated with recidivism, reentry programs focusing on women must provide strong services in both addiction therapy and job training.

Female releasees have a long history of trauma

Findings. Trauma — physical, psychological, and sexual — is common in the background stories of these women. Some chose to find protective halfway houses and temporary residences (the services associated with our study sample) owing to the fact they did not want to return to a context where that abuse might continue. Many participants considered these past experiences related to their present mental and physical health challenges.

Discussion. Our work thus far similarly reflects findings in the broader literature about female releasees and trauma. Studies show that most incarcerated women were the victims of trauma and abuse at the hands of strangers, friends and family prior to their incarceration.³⁴ Research from women in California prisons suggests that, unfortunately, women of all races report previous trauma in almost equal rates.³⁵ Regardless of race, approximately 90% of incarcerated women with drug dependency report histories of childhood trauma (one or more experiences).³⁶ Mental health services provided for reentry populations will need to take this longer life course into consideration when designing programs aimed at preventing recidivism. While responding to these childhood traumas will require cultural competence and ethnoculturally targeted interventions, the need for care appears to be relatively ubiquitous among this population and, perhaps, important to effective reentry.

Experiences in jail/prison often exacerbate these traumas

Findings. For some women, the traumas they had experienced prior to incarceration were only exacerbated in prison. Some women experienced violence — physical and even sexual — while incarcerated, while others found that the time in jail did not provide them access to mental healthcare that might have helped them address their previous traumas. To the extent that trauma continued or went untreated, women reentering civil society felt mental health issues to be an important and unaddressed need.

Discussion. Our findings align with some work in the literature that suggests incarceration can magnify previously-experienced trauma. The most obvious way is through re-victimization while incarcerated. Two studies with small sample sizes suggest anywhere from 6 to 19% of incarcerated women report sexual victimization while in prison,³⁷ but other studies suggest it may be as high as 25%.³⁸ 45% of women reporting such victimization indicated it involved prison staff.³⁹ Exacerbated trauma is not limited to actual experiences of victimization, however, as the literature also suggests that procedures common to incarceration – forced searches, strip searches, minimal privacy, isolating experiences, and power differentials with male authorities – often recapitulate

a buse experiences for previously victimized women.⁴⁰ In all of these cases, our findings and the extant literature suggest that services addressing formerly incarcerated women will need to address the mental health needs of victimized women. These needs, it is clear, are unlikely to be adequately addressed or resolved within 12 months of release.

Senior women are an often-overlooked population who face further complications

Findings. An important finding in our initial research was the small but growing population of senior women leaving prison. Defining “senior” is difficult, because American society at large tends to put that number at age 65 and over, but prison populations tend to view senior women as those who are 50 or 55 and older, or those who have received a “life in prison” sentence, even if they receive parole or are released in their 50s. These women, our studies show, face considerably different challenges than their younger counterparts, and also find themselves facing different health insurance and employment challenges than younger releasees. They also report longer periods where mental health issues require attention.

Discussion. Our findings about the growing problems experienced by senior women leaving prison aligns with findings in the larger literature.⁴¹ Studies indicate that prisons and reentry programs are ill-equipped to deal with the long-term poor health and mental health needs of “lifers” and other senior women, especially those trying to deal with terminal illnesses, later-stage cancer or other debilitating chronic diseases. That said, our preliminary work found less of a focus on the needs of families than appears in the literature. Studies suggest that about 75% of incarcerated women are mothers, which means that, upon reentry, they will be responsible for not only their own health needs, but also the health needs of their children.⁴² In many cases these children may be eligible for Medicaid or Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP), but reentry programs that focus on women should include education on how to navigate the social services available to their kids.

Conclusion

This paper provides a preliminary report on the qualitative research being undertaken by MSMU’s Working Group. Our findings suggest that health is intimately related to successful reentry, both because the presence of mental and physical illnesses create risk for reincarceration, and also because barriers to good health reduce the quality of life for returning women and their families. Our Working Group is engaged in a study that considers the health needs of women up to five years post-incarceration, which is longer than any study in the field. Since most releasees reenter the corrections system within three years post-release, examining the long-term health needs of these women transitioning to civil society may provide insight into interventions that provide longer-term successful reentry. Long-term, the Working Group plans to work with reentry, homeless, and social services organizations to develop, implement, and evaluate evidence-based best practices to improve the health of releasees, reduce the rates of recidivism among these women, and improve the quality of life for them, their families, and their communities.

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COLLECTIF

A Profile in
Student Research:
A Study of the Impact
of Mentoring Relationships
for the Advancement of
Latina Graduate Students

Mariana Porras
(PRIMARY)

Michelle Melendres, EdD
(FACULTY ADVISOR)

**THE CENTER FOR
THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN AT
MOUNT SAINT MARY'S UNIVERSITY**

Introduction

Among the writings highlighted in this inaugural edition of Mount Saint Mary's *Collectif* is this profile of student research conducted through the University's Honors Program. This paper highlights research in progress by Mariana Porras '18, who is studying the impact of mentoring relationships for Latina graduate students in their advancement to graduate education and professional careers. Michelle Melendres, EdD, director of Mount Saint Mary's Honors Program, is assisting Porras in her research.

As Honors Scholars at Mount Saint Mary's University, students are intellectually challenged as they participate in robust curricular and co-curricular opportunities. The Honors Program allows its scholars to deepen their love of learning as they develop close relationships with faculty and peers who share similar interests and aptitudes. By completing a combination of Honors courses, Honors seminars, a collective cohort-driven Honors capstone project, individualized and original Honors theses, and other optional community, global and leadership experiences, students graduate as unstoppable Mount Honors Scholars. In addition to enhancing students' academic abilities, unstoppable Mount Honors Scholars also have opportunities to develop their research and analytical skills, leadership potential, and professional conference engagement.

This spring, Porras and her fellow Honors Scholars completing their Honors theses will present their papers at the year's University Academic Symposium, as well as the Western Regional Honors Council Conference to be held this year at Chapman University.

Research question

How have mentoring relationships impacted Latina graduate students with their advancement in graduate education and professional careers?

Research design

This research project highlights a portion of a larger study that will be conducted as part of the requirements for students to complete an Honors thesis in Mount Saint Mary's University's Honors Program.

This research study will be designed as a qualitative study, which aims to provide insight to advancing women who traditionally do not have advancement models given their first-generation status. Such an approach promotes exploration of participants' experiences, giving detailed meaning to individuals' lived experiences. While current research suggests that this population of students more frequently encounter obstacles, this new study aims to expand on existing literature related to the challenges encountered by first-generation graduate students and explores the importance of their mentoring relationships with educational professionals. These mentors play an important role in a student's academic journey, as they provide the support and tools necessary for academic success.

Upon Institutional Review Board approval, the aim of this study is to use data obtained through comprehensive qualitative research methods via surveys and possible follow-up interviews about Latina graduate experiences and the role of mentoring relationships in their pursuit of higher education.

First-generation graduate students

In the 2016 report released by the Council of Graduate Schools, the majority of first-time graduate students were women (58% at the master's level and 51% at the doctoral level). With an increased number of first-generation college students attending postbaccalaureate education, few studies have examined graduate students' first-year experiences. Most research analyzing college students' first-year experiences typically focuses on undergraduate students rather than graduate students.¹ In addition, women who are first-generation, low-income and underrepresented as graduate students encounter high rates of attrition in graduate education.² The current population in the United States is over 326 million³ and of the 2.9 million postbaccalaureate students (male and female) in fall 2014, some 1.7 million were white; 366,000 were black; 230,000 were Hispanic; and 191,000 were Asian.⁴ Such attrition in graduate education necessitates an understanding of the challenges faced by graduate students, particularly by first-year students of historically underrepresented backgrounds.

First-generation college students can be defined as those for whom neither parent has earned a bachelor's degree.⁵ As a growing population, first-generation college students may face challenges related to navigating and successfully completing postbaccalaureate education.⁶ Such unique challenges include difficulties with living between two worlds (academic and home), family perspective on education and cultural gender status.⁷

As first-generation college students navigate between the worlds of academia and home, they often face complexities when the two worlds clash. According to a participant in one study, she had to switch back and forth between her role at home and in a professional setting. She states: "Your role is almost like you need to cook and clean and do your woman duties, whatever it is, what is expected of you, and then when you go into the professional arena, you have to wear a different mask."⁸

Little research is published on Latina experiences with mentoring relationships.⁹ As a result of their status, first-generation Latina students are the first in their family to pursue higher education and thus lack academic role and mentoring models. Latinas have the lowest percentage of graduate degrees compared to all women of other non-Hispanic racial groups; in a 2012 report from Excellence in Education only 7% of all master's degrees earned were awarded to Latinas.¹⁰ In 2013, the National Center for Education Statistics released the Digest of Education Statistics which stated that 4% of Latinas completed a master's degree compared to nearly 5% of black, 11% of white and 22% of Asian women.¹¹ With lower academic attainment, Latinas remain underrepresented in professions that require specialized and extensive educational preparation.

Mentors are important to Latina students as they rely on mentors to provide tools and strategies for achieving academic success. Mentors allow for students to obtain opportunities that foster growth and confidence.¹² Studies demonstrate that mentoring promotes the advancement of women in the workforce.¹³ For example, as cited in a study by Tharenou, mentoring relationships for women have been found to be significantly more beneficial for the promotion of their employment than they are for men.¹⁴

As Latina students build these mentoring relationships they are able to learn and develop the necessary skills to advance in the fieldwork of their choice; this is particularly true if mentored by a professor in the same field.

Anticipated findings and hypothesis

Based on previous literature findings, mentoring allows for students to receive academic guidance and support toward developing clear professional identities. The findings of this new study will aim to close the gap of literature on the lack of mentors for first-generation graduate students by highlighting the importance of mentoring relationships, and showing how these relationships improve the experiences of first-generation graduate students and prepare them for success in post-graduate careers. Because previous literature supports the idea that mentoring relationships create a pathway toward the completion of graduate education, it is presumed that the findings for this study will also show that mentors play a positive role in assisting first-generation graduate students to demystify graduate studies. In addition to this it is hypothesized that mentors provide underrepresented students with opportunities and tools for upward mobility.

As part of this thesis, participants will be female, first-generation graduate students who are currently enrolled in or have graduated (within 5 years) from graduate school in the United States. Participants will be asked questions relating to culture, first generation status and mentor relationships in hopes to yield findings that indicate that mentor relationships at the graduate level prepare, motivate and promote career advancement among Latina graduate students.

Student biography

Mariana Porras '18 is a senior at Mount Saint Mary's University who is pursuing a bachelor's degree in sociology. Upon graduation, she plans to pursue a master's degree in social work, and plans to work towards becoming a licensed clinical social worker (LCSW). As an LCSW, Mariana hopes to advocate for individuals in the field of healthcare and preserve the dignity and worth of the population she serves. Porras is actively involved at Mount Saint Mary's Chalon Campus as an Honors Scholar, a research assistant for Dr. Melendres, an associate for the Office of Admissions, president of the Sociology, Social Work and Gerontology Association, and member of the Institute for Student Academic Enrichment program. Off campus, Mariana is a student intern at Huntington Hospital Senior Care Network where she assists older adults and adults with disabilities, and their families, obtain medical resources.

Personal reflection

While working on my Honors thesis, I have learned how to execute a research study through the understanding of the Institutional Review Board process, the application of research theories and the application of research writing. This experience has been rewarding as I have had support from my own mentor, Dr. Melendres. It is through her guidance and encouragement that I, as a first-generation college student myself, have been able to partake in such rigorous academic opportunities.

Faculty biography

Michelle Melendres, EdD, is an assistant professor in the Department of Sociology, coordinator of the Social Work and Gerontology programs, and director of the Honors Program at Mount Saint Mary's University. She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Gerontology and Medical Sociology from Mount Saint Mary's, a Master of Science degree in Social Work from Columbia University, and a doctoral degree in Education from the University of California, Los Angeles.

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COLLECTIF

'Take The Lead'
Paves the Way
for Gender Parity
in Leadership

Amber Nelson, Take The Lead
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Program Director

**THE CENTER FOR
THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN AT
MOUNT SAINT MARY'S UNIVERSITY**

As any community organizer knows, building lasting societal change starts with identifying a strong core of committed individuals, equipping them with the tools and education they need to impact change and supporting them as they connect to the wider world and transform their communities. Groups and individuals committed to social justice and a more equitable world have followed this template for generations. Now, Take The Lead, a nonpartisan, nonprofit women's leadership organization, is paving the way for a movement of movements across the country that will create gender parity in leadership across all sectors and at all levels.

Here in Los Angeles, Take The Lead recently launched a leadership training program, 50 Women Can Change the World in Media and Entertainment. Why? Because media and entertainment define American culture with the stories they tell — or don't tell. Changing the storytellers changes everything.

Presenting sponsor and founding partner Nancy O'Reilly, PsyD, president of Women Connect4Good, recognized the potential dramatic impact a program like this could have not just on the 50 participants, but on the entire country. She stepped forward to provide seed funding for this endeavor, along with HBO and CBS. In addition, Mount Saint Mary's University has delivered exceptional partnership in providing a venue, research expertise and numerous other benefits to the cohort.

Led by Leadership Ambassadors Tabby Biddle and Elisa Parker, this program convenes women from multiple media and entertainment niches including film, television and radio. Many independent creatives have enrolled, as well as those employed at companies such as CBS, NBC Los Angeles, NPR, Amazon Studios and Netflix, as well as the founders of companies including Global Girl Media, Picture Motion and The XX Project.

Participants for the Los Angeles cohort were recruited through a process in which women could nominate a colleague or themselves. Members of the program's advisory committee — featuring powerful industry leaders such as Margie Moreno of YouTube; Diana Means of Warner Bros. Home Entertainment, Alliance of Women Filmmakers and The L.A. Women's International Film Festival; and Monique Coleman, an actress, advocate and U.N. Foundation Girl Up Champion — activated their networks to generate more than 100 nominations for the program and also helped select the final candidates to ensure diversity across race, industry, age and professional roles.

Take The Lead's 50 Women Can programs develop, prepare, inspire and propel women into realizing big, bold intentions that change the world. Each program is customized for a specific sector to bring together 50 women who exhibit dedication and commitment to leadership in their industry. Together, the women work through Take The Lead's innovative leadership training and form intractable bonds with their cohort that support their leadership growth long after the two-to-four-month program ends.

The core curriculum is based on the groundbreaking work of feminist icon and Take The Lead co-founder and president, Gloria Feldt. As Feldt notes in her best-selling book, *No Excuses: 9 Ways Women Can Change the Way We Think About Power*, American women have more rights, access and education than ever before but remain stuck at about 20% of leadership positions.

What's holding them back? Feldt believes the answer is an ambivalent relationship with power. Take The Lead's curriculum changes the power paradigm for participants, teaches Feldt's "9 Leadership Power Tools" and provides a proven strategic leadership action plan that helps women leap from learning to intention to execution of their leadership goals.

In addition to programs dedicated to a variety of sectors across the country, Take The Lead also delivers leadership training to corporations, nonprofits and professional groups; presents a monthly online program featuring Feldt in conversation with other women of influence; delivers a weekly award-winning newsletter; provides a digital mentoring platform; and offers leadership coaching for individuals and teams. For more information about Take The Lead, visit taketheleadwomen.com.

COLLECTIF

Partner Spotlight:
Mayor Eric Garcetti
& The City
of Los Angeles

L.A. Mayor's Office

**THE CENTER FOR
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Equality for women and girls in America did not come with the right to vote in 1920, nor was it perfected when President Obama signed the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act nearly 90 years later. Equality is an ongoing struggle, and facts are clear: the gender wage gap persists; women are dramatically underrepresented in leadership positions in both the public and private sectors; and the headlines in recent months have been dominated by a sickening cascade of stories about sexual harassment and abuse in several industries.

When Eric Garcetti was first elected mayor of Los Angeles in 2013, he made a commitment to confront these injustices by making gender equity an organizing force of his administration. The first step: partnering with Mount Saint Mary's University and the L.A. City Commission on the Status of Women to collect data on women and girls in Los Angeles.

The results of the study were revelatory: of all City government employees, only 28% were women; and Latinas, despite making up nearly half of all women in Los Angeles, were the most underrepresented group in City leadership as a whole.

Mayor Garcetti took swift action, becoming the first mayor of L.A. to issue an executive directive on gender equity. The directive called on every department to collect more comprehensive data about how they serve women and girls, so that the City could document inequality wherever it exists, set tangible goals for improvement, and track progress and success.

That sense of urgency took hold quickly. Within six months, the Garcetti administration reached gender parity in its board and commission appointments for the first time in L.A. history. Women are now 53% of the commissioners in important decision-making matters — and for the first time since L.A.'s founding, there are no all-male boards or commissions.

Today, all 36 City departments have gender equity plans and liaisons — and the Mayor holds each department accountable for making plans and meeting goals. They issue updates quarterly, provide reports annually, and are responsible for turning the Garcetti administration's gender-equity values into policies and results.

That work has resulted in a citywide effort to recruit women for positions in underrepresented fields. Four years ago, the Los Angeles Fire Department had only 89 female firefighters — making up less than 3% of the department. After an extensive advertising campaign directed at hiring women and expanded supportive resources for female candidates, the department received 731 applications from women. That represents a 40% increase in the number of female applicants from the previous year. In January 2018, a new female recruit became the first woman in LAFD history to complete the academy at the top of her class.

The aim of this work is not diversity for diversity's sake. When women are given the opportunity to compete fairly for any job that they want — and when decision-makers reflect the face of the city they represent — there is an inevitable shift in how government delivers services to its constituents.

For example, with a woman serving as the first female senior technology advisor in L.A.'s history, the City has refocused its efforts to expand access to

free science, technology, art and engineering education for girls. Meanwhile, the woman who leads the City's Economic and Workforce Development Department, which creates jobs for our most vulnerable residents, is focused on providing career options for women who require childcare while they're working 9-5.

But we need to do more. Over the past four years, the First Lady of Los Angeles, Amy Elaine Wakeland, has gathered with hundreds of Angelenos to discuss the challenges facing women who are homeless and those who served time in the criminal justice system. More than 85% of incarcerated women are survivors of domestic violence or sexual abuse. They need services that directly address these traumas if they are to successfully reenter their communities when they are released from prison. Among homeless women, more than 90% survived physical or sexual violence — and for most of them, the abuse began when they were children.

The First Lady worked with the administration, along with advocates for women and philanthropists, to expand L.A.'s Domestic Abuse Response Team program. These teams, which had been available in just 10 of LAPD's divisions, now operate in all 21. Through this program, victims gain access to shelters and to the social and legal services they need to leave their abusers. The City established a similar Sexual Assault Response Team program to address the unique needs of victims of sexual violence — helping survivors get access to medical care, counseling and legal help, which increases the likelihood that their assault will be successfully prosecuted.

Since these efforts began, the Mayor's office has committed to more than doubling the city's investment in shelter services for domestic violence and human trafficking survivors, from \$2.3 million to \$5 million. Two of the City's newest shelters will be dedicated exclusively to serving trafficking survivors — another first in Los Angeles.

Local leadership in this work is more important now than ever. The City of Los Angeles must continue setting an example for America, because every time government elevates and empowers women, we make the world a better place for the next generation of all Angelenos — girls and boys.

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The Center for the Advancement of Women at Mount Saint Mary's University

About the Center for the Advancement of Women

The Center for the Advancement of Women at Mount Saint Mary's University is a hub for gender equity research, advocacy and leadership development. Its vision is to find solutions to persistent gender inequities and work with partners to eradicate those inequities in our lifetime. That goal includes eliminating obstacles that women face in the workplace, in their communities, in the media and beyond to make a positive difference in the lives of women and girls in California and our nation. The Center also creates public programming, research guides and training opportunities to engage more partners in its work. **MSMU.EDU/CAW**



Mount Saint Mary's is the only women's university in Los Angeles and one of the most diverse in the nation. The University is known nationally for its research on gender equality, its innovative health and science programs, and its commitment to community service. As a leading liberal arts institution, the University provides year round, flexible and online programs at the undergraduate and graduate level. Weekend, evening and graduate programs are offered to both women and men. Mount alums are engaged, active global citizens who use their knowledge and skills to better themselves, their communities and the world. **MSMU.EDU**

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