

Inclusion in the Director's Chair? Gender, Race, & Age of Film Directors Across 1,000 Films From 2007 to 2016

Dr. Stacy L. Smith, Dr. Katherine Pieper, & Marc Choueiti
Media, Diversity, & Social Change Initiative
USC Annenberg

The purpose of this study was to assess the gender, race, and age of film directors across top *fictional* movies. We examined these attributes of directors across the 100 top movies each year from 2007 to 2016. In addition to overall figures, the number of unique individuals working as directors across the years evaluated was calculated. Looking specifically at female, Black, and Asian directors, an analysis of film genre and agency representation was conducted. For films by Black and Asian directors, the race of the top-billed performers was assessed. The report concludes with a section offering targeted solutions for change.

Key Findings

Prevalence of Female Directors. A total of 1,114 directors were evaluated for gender, with 96% ($n=1,069$) male and 4% ($n=45$) female. This translates into a ratio of 23.8 male directors for every one female director. The **percentage** of female directors in 2016 (4.2%, $n=5$) does not differ from the overall point statistic sample wide nor does it deviate by 5% from the percentage of female directors in 2007 (2.7%, $n=3$). ***Thus, there has been no meaningful change in the prevalence of female directors across the top films from 2007 to 2016.***

Across the 10-year sample and 45 directing jobs, only three female directors were Black and three were Asian. ***Clearly, Hollywood's perception of women directors is that of a white female.***

The average age of male (46.2 years) and female (47.4 years) directors at the time of a film's theatrical release did not differ. However, female directors of top-grossing movies work from their 30s to their 60s. In contrast, male directors work across seven decades—from their 20s to their 80s. ***The span of females' careers is limited whereas for males it appears to be limitless.***

Females most often helmed dramas (40.9%), followed by comedies (29.6%) and animated features (11.4%). Females rarely directed movies that were science fiction/fantasy (6.8%), action (4.6%), or thrillers (4.6%). Only one woman directed a horror film (2.3%). ***Females rarely direct in lucrative genres such as action or thriller, but overwhelmingly work on drama or comedy films. Males, in contrast, work across all genres.***

Overall, 612 unique or individual directors worked across the 1,000 movies evaluated. Only 5.7% ($n=35$) of these directors were women and 94.3% ($n=577$) were men. ***This calculates into a gender ratio of 16.5 male helmers to every one female helmer.***

More than half of directors (56.2%) only worked on a single top-grossing film in the years evaluated. ***Females were far more likely than males to make only one fictional movie, however.*** 80% of women made only one movie in the years studied, while 54.8% of men worked only once.

Over 45% of the male directors in the sample made two or more films across the 10-year time frame. This is true for 20% of the female helmers in the sample. Male directors made as many as 14 films between 2007 and 2016, while the cap for female directors was 4. The top-performing male director was Tyler Perry, whereas the top-performing female director was Anne Fletcher.

In Hollywood, female directors are usually “one and done.” There is a 29% difference in the percentage of women of color who made just one top-grossing film between 2007 and 2016 (83.3%) and the percentage of non-Black and non-Asian males who made only 1 movie (54.3%).

The majority of female directors (97.1%) have agency representation. 42.4% of female directors are currently represented by Creative Artists Agency (CAA), 24.2% by William Morris Endeavor Entertainment (WME), and 24.2% by United Talent Agency (UTA). ***While women have allies in the entertainment industry, they still rarely work behind the camera in film.***

Prevalence of Black Directors. A total of 1,114 directors between 2007 and 2016 were assessed for race, with 5.1% Black ($n=57$). Of these 57 helmers, 54 were male (94.7%) and 3 were female (5.3%). ***Similar to our findings with female helmers, there has been no change in the percentage or number of Black directors over time.***

Over three-quarters (78.6%) of the films by Black directors featured one or two top-billed actors who were Black. Only 21.4% of the films featured two top-billed actors who were not Black. ***Black directors most often work on films that feature Black actors as the top-billed cast, which may limit the opportunities they have to work in Hollywood.***

Most films by Black directors were dramas (41.1%), followed by comedies (37.5%). A handful of films (10.7%) were action movies, and few Black directors worked on science fiction/fantasy films (3.6%), thrillers (3.6%) or horror movies (1.8%). Only one animated film had a Black director.

Removing repeat credits, a total of 27 Black directors (4.4%) out of 612 individuals helmed at least one top-grossing movie between 2007 and 2016.

Black directors are less likely to work repeatedly than directors who are not Black. Two-thirds of Black directors (66.7%) only worked once across the decade evaluated, which is 11% higher than directors that are not Black. ***None of the Black female directors in this sample directed two or more top-grossing fictional films across the 10 years examined.***

Of the 27 unique Black directors, 88.9% had current representation. Over one-third (36%) were represented by CAA, while WME and UTA each represented 24% of the Black directors in this sample.

Prevalence of Asian Directors. Only 34 Asian directors (3%) worked across the 1,000 top films from 2007 to 2016, with 91.2% male ($n=31$) and 8.8% female ($n=3$). ***Consistent with female and Black helmers, there has been no change in the percentage of Asian directors from 2007 to 2016.***

Asian directors were most likely to helm animated (27.3%) and horror films (24.2%). Five Asian filmmakers created movies in the action arena (15.2%), five in the science fiction/fantasy realm (15.2%), and four in dramatic movies (12.1%). Only 1 Asian director helmed a thriller (3%) or a comedy (3%).

Nearly one-fifth (19.2%) of the movies helmed by Asian directors featured one or two top-billed actors who were Asian. Over three-quarters (80.8%) of the films by an Asian director featured two top-billed actors who were not Asian. ***In contrast to Black directors, Asian directors' opportunities do not seem to be linked to their racial heritage.***

Looking at unique or individual Asian directors, the 34 credits were held by a total of 17 different helmers, which is 2.8% of the 612 unique directors overall. The majority of Asian directors only worked on one film (58.8%), similar to directors who are not Asian (56.1%). Only one of the two Asian female directors worked on more than one film across the last 10 years.

64.7% of Asian directors currently have an agent. Over half (54.6%) were represented by agents at WME, while 27.3% had an agent at CAA.

Film Distribution Analysis: 2007-2016. The company with the highest number of female-directed films over the last 10 years is Warner Bros. 20th Century Fox, Sony, and Universal each released seven female-directed movies in the past decade. Lionsgate and Paramount released the fewest movies with female directors, with only three each. ***Across the 10-year time frame, none of the companies examined in this report have released at least one movie per year with a female director that appeared in the sample of top-grossing fare.***

In terms of Black directors, Lionsgate outperforms the other distributors with a total of 16 movies. Sony released nine films with a Black director across the same time period. Disney did not distribute one movie by a Black director in the last decade that appeared in our sample of 1,000 top films.

Among Asian-directed films, Universal was the leader with 10 movies distributed in the last 10 years. Lionsgate released just one movie helmed by an Asian director, while Sony and Warner Bros. distributed two films each by Asian directors.

Inclusion in the Director's Chair? Gender, Race, & Age of Film Directors Across 1,000 Films From 2007 to 2016

The purpose of this study was to assess the gender, race, and age of film directors across top *fictional* movies. The Media, Diversity & Social Change Initiative at USC Annenberg has been conducting research on gender and race behind the camera for over a decade. Relying on this rich archive, we have catalogued the prevalence of women and people of color working as directors across the 100 top films each year from 2007 to 2016.¹ To be as intersectional as possible, this year we added age to our analysis.

Our aim is to raise the level of scholarship regarding behind the camera employment in film. Research can no longer focus solely on gender. By doing so, the findings mask and perpetuate the erasure of women of color working on the most financially lucrative motion pictures. Given this void empirically, we believe that our intersectional look at directors—and the subsequent reports on writers and composers—is necessary to ensure inclusion and equity behind the camera in Hollywood. As we have stated before, we also believe that our work complements other research teams (*Ralph J. Bunche Center for African American Studies*, UCLA; *Center for the Study of Ethnicity and Race*, Columbia University) examining the participation of content creators from an intersectional perspective.

Below, the report is comprised of four main sections. We start by focusing on director gender and employment patterns across the 1,000 top movies from 2007 to 2016. Then, we turn our attention to other data (i.e., short films, independent movies, TV directors) that illuminates the pipeline or career trajectory of female helmers in the fictional film space. The next section builds on this work by examining the prevalence of Black and Asian directors over the same time span (2007-2016). The fourth section examines distribution, looking at director diversity across seven major distributors over the last decade. We conclude the report with a section offering targeted solutions for change.

Gender of Film Directors

Prevalence of Female Directors. As shown in Table 1, a total of 1,114 directors were evaluated for gender.² Of those, 96% ($n=1,069$) were male and 4% ($n=45$) were female. The ***percentage*** of female directors in 2016 (4.2%, $n=5$) does not differ from the overall point statistic sample wide nor does it deviate by 5% from the percentage of female directors in 2007 (2.7%, $n=3$). ***Thus, there has been no meaningful change in the prevalence of female directors across the top films from 2007 to 2016.***

Table 1 also illuminates the ***number*** of female directors that worked per year. 2008 was the top performing year, with 9 women directors attached across the 100 top movies. Only 2 females were attached to the 100 top films of 2013 and 2014. ***The numeric highs and lows are further evidence that the activism and press attention over the last few years***

have not moved the needle at all towards inclusive hiring practices on Hollywood's most popular films.

Table 1
Director Gender of Fictional Films by Year

Year	Males	Females	Total
2007	97.3% (n=109)	2.7% (n=3)	112
2008	92% (n=103)	8% (n=9)	112
2009	96.4% (n=107)	3.6% (n=4)	111
2010	97.2% (n=106)	2.8% (n=3)	109
2011	96.3% (n=104)	3.7% (n=4)	108
2012	95.9% (n=116)	4.1% (n=5)	121
2013	98.1% (n=105)	1.9% (n=2)	107
2014	98.1% (n=105)	1.9% (n=2)	107
2015	92.5% (n=99)	7.5% (n=8)	107
2016	95.8% (n=115)	4.2% (n=5)	120
Overall	96% (n=1,069)	4% (n=45)	1,114

These patterns are important. But, they fail to provide us with the range of directing opportunities available to male and female directors. We investigated opportunities in three ways. First, the age of directors was evaluated. Second, we examined individual or “unique” directors hired across the 1,000 top movies from 2007 to 2016. Third, film genre was assessed in each of the years studied.

Overall, the average age of male and female directors at the time of a film’s theatrical release did not differ. Male directors had an average age of 46.2 years, while for female directors it was 47.4 years.³ However, examining the dispersion of the data revealed an interesting trend. Female directors of top-grossing movies work across just four decades—from their 30s to their 60s. In contrast, male directors work across seven decades—from their 20s to their 80s. The data presented in Table 2 demonstrate that females’ appearance in the ranks of top-grossing directors is curtailed by how old they are. Males, on the other hand, work as top-grossing directors throughout their lives.

Another indicator of opportunity is the number of unique directors working throughout the years studied. Because directors may be attached to multiple films across the time frame sampled, we wanted to examine how often specific individuals get an opportunity behind the camera.

A full 612 directors worked across the 1,000 movies evaluated. Only 5.7% (n=35) of these directors were women and 94.3% (n=577) were men. ***This calculates into a gender ratio of 16.5 male helmers to every one female helmer.*** Across the 10-year sample, it is important to note that only three of the female directors were Black (i.e., *Ava DuVernay*,

Gina Prince-Bythewood, Sanaa Hamri), and two were Asian (i.e., Jennifer Yuh Nelson, Loveleen Tandan). Though ethnicity was not evaluated in this report, there was only one Latina (i.e., Patricia Riggen).

Table 2
Director Gender by Age

Age	Males	Females	Overall
20s	0.8% (n=8)	0	0.7% (n=8)
30s	24.3% (n=257)	15.9% (n=7)	24% (n=264)
40s	44.1% (n=467)	50% (n=22)	44.4% (n=489)
50s	21.7% (n=230)	18.2% (n=8)	21.6% (n=238)
60s	6.5% (n=69)	15.9% (n=7)	6.9% (n=76)
70s	2% (n=21)	0	1.9% (n=21)
80s	0.6% (n=6)	0	0.5% (n=6)
Total	100% (n=1058)	100% (n=44)	100% (n=1102)

Note: The age of 12 individuals could not be confirmed.

Table 3 summarizes the number and percentage of directing opportunities by gender. A few patterns are worth noting. First, over half of directors (56.2%) only worked on a single top-grossing film in the years evaluated. ***Females were far more likely than males to make only one fictional movie, however.*** Eighty percent of women made only one movie in the years studied, while 54.8% of men worked only once. Second, over 45% of the male directors in the sample made two or more films across the 10-year time frame. This is true for one-fifth (20%) of the female helmers in the sample. Finally, 4% of the male directors made between 5 and 14 movies. Not one female director worked that frequently in the years evaluated.

Table 3
Number of Films by Director Gender

No. of Films	Male Directors		Female Directors		Total	
	# of Directors	%	# of Directors	%	# of Directors	%
1	316	54.8%	28	80%	344	56.2%
2	129	22.4%	5	14.3%	134	21.9%
3	78	13.5%	1	2.9%	79	12.9%
4	31	5.4%	1	2.9%	32	5.2%
≥ 5	23	4%	0	0	23	3.8%

Note: Percentages were calculated within gender. For males, the range from 5 to 14 was collapsed for presentational purposes.

Table 4 illuminates the top film directors by gender. *The top performing director was Tyler Perry with 14 movies. This director has worked on over three times as many films as Anne Fletcher, the top performing female director.* It is also worth noting that all of the top film directors were White, save one.

Table 4
Top Directors of Fictional Films by Year

Top Males	# of Films	Top Females	# of Films
Tyler Perry	14	Anne Fletcher	4
Clint Eastwood	8	Lana Wachowski	3
Steven Spielberg	7		

Analyzing the genre of films reveals differences in the opportunities given to male and female directors. For this analysis, genre was assessed at the film level. Female-directed films were those that had at least one female director attached.⁴ Table 5 illuminates three notable findings. First, males appear to have opportunities across all genres. Second, females were most likely to work in the genres of drama or comedy. As these two categories represent the greatest proportion of films made over the last decade, it is surprising that so few women overall have been hired for these jobs. Only 4.8% of all comedies and 9.6% of dramas were helmed by women from 2007 to 2016. Third, females have very few opportunities to direct across the remaining genres. The purview of female directors appears to skew closely to those films that “match” stereotypically feminine genres.

Table 5
Director Gender by Film Genre

Genre	Male Directed	Female Directed
Action	16.7% (n=160)	4.6% (n=2)
Comedy	27.1% (n=259)	29.6% (n=13)
Drama	17.8% (n=170)	40.9% (n=18)
Horror	8.8% (n=84)	2.3% (n=1)
Sci-Fi/Fantasy	12.7% (n=121)	6.8% (n=3)
Animation	9.6% (n=92)	11.4% (n=5)
Thriller	7.3% (n=70)	4.6% (n=2)
Total	100% (n=956)	100% (n=44)

Note: 9 films with male and female directors were included in the female-directed column.

To further examine the career prospects of the individual female directors, we assessed whether they were represented *currently* by an agent (no, yes) and which agencies.⁵ Of the 35 unique females, 34 are still living. Of those 34 women, 97.1% (n=33) have agency representation. As shown in Table 6, 42.4% (n=14) of female directors are currently represented by Creative Artists Agency (CAA) with 24.2% (n=8) by William Morris Endeavor Entertainment (WME) and 24.2% (n=8) represented by United Talent Agency (UTA). *Thus, nearly all of the female directors who have directed top films over the last decade are represented by three of the top talent agencies.*

Table 6
Female Directors with Representation by Agency

Agency	Percentage
Creative Artists Agency (CAA)	42.4% (n=14)
William Morris Endeavor Entertainment (WME)	24.2% (n=8)
United Talent Agency (UTA)	24.2% (n=8)
ICM Partners (ICM)	3% (n=1)
Verve Talent and Literary Agency	3% (n=1)
PBJ Management	3% (n=1)
Overall	100% (n=33)

The historical and present exclusion of female directors from the ranks of top-grossing filmmakers can be explained by prevailing industry beliefs. Our previous research demonstrates that industry gatekeepers view the work and aspirations of female directors in ways that limit their opportunities. Based on interviews with dozens of industry leaders (spanning agents, managers, executives, sales agents, and those familiar with film sales), there are three key explanations that prevent women from achieving careers that are equivalent to men.

The first reason is a view of the film marketplace that is gendered. Industry leaders assign the work of female directors to little-valued subsets of the market. This includes beliefs that women make small, independent films. Other gatekeepers indicated that women directors' prior work falls into genres that are not lucrative, or offer little evidence that women can achieve the scope or scale of larger-budget content. Female directors and their work seem to hold little value—while in contrast male directors, stories, and audiences are seen as profit centers.⁶ The genre findings above speak to the fact that very few women directors—if any—have been attached to large scale action or tent-pole films in the last decade.

Alongside these beliefs, the implicit views of industry decision-makers are also influenced by gender. When industry leaders *think director, they think male*.⁷ When asked about the attributes of successful directors, industry leaders invoke more masculine-leaning language to describe helmers of fictional films. However, when asked about documentary directors, the attributes of filmmakers are evenly split between feminine and masculine descriptors.⁸ And indeed, examining the percentage of female documentary directors across 12 years of the Sundance Film Festival reveals that 35.3% of these helmers were women. Clearly, the perception of directing as a masculine activity in the fictional arena contributes to the consistent employment of male directors and the exclusion of female directors.

A third explanation for the lack of female directors at the top of the employment ranks is a perception that the talent pool of women is small. Industry leaders mentioned that there are few women available or with the necessary experience to direct top-grossing fare. In fact, when asked to name females who appear on consideration lists, gatekeepers provided few women. The average number of names was three, while the most frequent response or mode was zero.⁹ The perception that there are few women in the talent pool appears to perpetuate hiring practices that are skewed. The next section challenges the belief in the lack of females available to work by examining the pipeline for women directors.

Pipeline for Female Directors. What is the size of the talent pool of female directors? To answer this question, we examined three sources of data: short films, independent narrative features, and first time directing statistics from the Directors Guild of America (DGA). Film school data is not discussed, as we are not aware of any published empirical

data on gender of film directors in *production* programs in the U.S. Most of the research presented here has been gathered by our team at the Media, Diversity, & Social Change Initiative at USC Annenberg with funding from LUNAFEST, Women in Film Los Angeles, and Sundance Institute.¹⁰ The TV findings were pulled from reports on the DGA website.¹¹

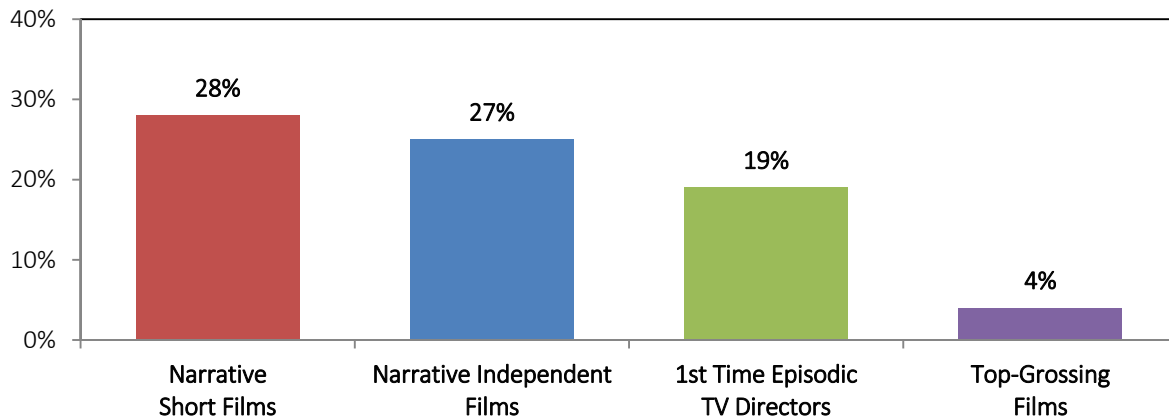
Short films are an important indicator as they may be a filmmaker's first attempt at audiovisual storytelling. Looking at the 10 top festivals worldwide from 2010 to 2014, only 28% ($n=423$) of all narrative short film directors were female.¹² ***Across the years evaluated, there was no change in the percentage of female filmmakers over time.***

Turning to independent fare, we examined the frequency of women directors in the U.S. Dramatic Competition program at Sundance Film Festival (SFF) from 2007 to 2016.¹³ Narrative competition was assessed because it is a platform that typically showcases directors who have helmed up to three motion pictures.

Just over a quarter (27.3%) of all directors ($n=165$) were women across the 10-year time frame examined, a ratio of 2.7 male directors to every one female director. The number of female directors in 2016 (29.4%) was higher than in 2007 (18.8%). While this is a 10.6% difference, numerically only two additional female directors were observed in comparing these two years. It is important to note that the number of female directors at SFF between 2007 and 2016 ($n=45$) is equivalent to the number of female directors of top-grossing films during the same time frame. However, only 16 films were screened in U.S. Dramatic Competition each year at Sundance, a far cry from the 100 top-grossing films each year analyzed above. Not only do women fare better overall, but there is greater racial/ethnic diversity among this group of female directors. Among women, Asian females (13.3%) were most prevalent at Sundance, followed by Middle Eastern females (8.9%), Black or African American females (6.7%), and women from other racial/ethnic backgrounds (2.2%).

Examining TV, the DGA reports on gender of first time episodic directors.¹⁴ According to their latest report, 81.1% of initial directing jobs between 2009 and 2015 were helmed by men and 18.9% by women. Further, the number and percentage of first directing jobs jumped for females from 2009 (12%, $n=12$) to 2015 (23%, $n=35$). However, the majority of initial directing opportunities over that time span (72%) went to individuals from other above- or below-the-line roles (e.g., acting, writing, producing, camera, editing), while 28% of opportunities went to individuals with a directing background. Women comprise 14.3% of the DGA directors and 23% of its membership as a whole (e.g., UPM, AD, Production Associates).¹⁵

Figure 1
Percentage of Female Directors by Media Platform



Putting all these findings together can illuminate the pipeline for female directors. As shown in Figure 1, women experience a “fiscal cliff” or precipitous drop off as they attempt to navigate a gendered marketplace in film and television. As mentioned earlier, gendered beliefs and perceptions seem to drive exclusionary hiring practices that prevent women from being considered or given the opportunity to direct large budget cinematic fare. The figure also illuminates that for males, directing opportunities appear to increase with the prestige of media platform.

Race of Film Directors

Each year, we report on director race (Black, Asian) across the 100 top films. Below, the prevalence of Black and Asian directors is assessed overall and in terms of unique individuals. Additionally, we present findings on genre of films directed by Black and Asian filmmakers, race of top-billed actors, and agency representation.

Prevalence of Black Directors. A total of 1,114 directors were assessed for race, with 5.1% Black ($n=57$). This overall percentage is well below U.S. Census, which illuminates that 13.3% of the population is African American or Black.¹⁶ Of these 57 helmers, 54 were male (94.7%) and 3 were female (5.3%).

The percentage and number of Black directors by year is shown in Table 7. Very little deviation appears across the sample. The top-performing year was 2007, where 7.1% of all directors were Black. A low was observed in 2011 as only 2 Black directors were attached to the 100 top movies. *Similar to our findings with female helmers, there has been no change in the percentage or number of Black directors over time.*

Table 7
Black Directors Across 100 Top Films by Year

Year	'07	'08	'09	'10	'11	'12	'13	'14	'15	'16	Total
Black Males	7.1% (n=8)	4.5% (n=5)	6.3% (n=7)	4.6% (n=5)	1.8% (n=2)	5% (n=6)	6.5% (n=7)	3.7% (n=4)	3.7% (n=4)	5% (n=6)	4.8% (n=54)
Black Females	0	1.8% (n=2)	0	0	0	0	0	<1% (n=1)	0	0	.3% (n=3)
Total Directors	112	112	111	109	108	121	107	107	107	120	1,114

The genre of films helmed by Black directors also was assessed. As there was one directing team present in the sample, a total of 56 movies were evaluated. Most films were dramas (41.1%, $n=23$), followed by comedies (37.5%, $n=21$). A handful of films (10.7%, $n=6$) were action movies, and few Black directors worked on science fiction/fantasy films (3.6%, $n=2$), thrillers (3.6%, $n=2$) or horror movies (1.8%, $n=1$). Only one animated film had a Black director. Much like female directors, the work of Black filmmakers appears to fall narrowly within genres that are not perceived by industry leaders as lucrative.

In addition to genre, the top-billed cast for each film ($n=56$) with a Black director was evaluated.¹⁷ This was done to ascertain whether Black directors typically helmed movies or stories that were driven by a Black actor or cast. The two top-billed actors were identified using DVD jacket covers and online credits. Then, the race of each actor was assessed. Over three-quarters (78.6%, $n=44$) of the films by Black directors featured one or two top-billed actors who were Black and 21.4% ($n=12$) of the films featured two top-billed actors who were not Black. ***From this analysis, it is clear that the vast majority of directing opportunities given to Black helmers are closely tied to the race of the actor in a prominent role.***

Now, we turn our attention to how many unique or individual directors account for these top directing jobs. ***Removing repeat credits, a total of 27 Black directors (4.4%) out of 612 individuals helmed one or more films between 2007 and 2016.*** As noted earlier, the most frequently employed helmer is *Tyler Perry* (14 films), followed by *Antoine Fuqua* (6 films), *Tim Story* (5 films), and *Malcolm D. Lee* (4 films). Several directors were attached to two movies across the time frame sampled: *David E. Talbert*, *Denzel Washington*, *F. Gary Gray*, *George Tillman Jr.*, and *Lee Daniels*. The remaining 18 directors ($n=66.7%$) only worked once across the decade evaluated, which is 11% higher than directors that are not Black. None of the Black female directors in this sample directed two or more top-grossing fictional films across the 10 years examined. The number, percentage, and range of films directed by Black and non Black directors is illuminated in Table 8.

Table 8
Number of Films by Black & Non Black Directors

No. of Films	Non Black Directors		Black Directors		Total	
	# of Directors	%	# of Directors	%	# of Directors	%
1	326	55.7%	18	66.7%	344	56.2%
2	129	22%	5	18.5%	134	21.9%
3	79	13.5%	0	0	79	12.9%
4	31	5.3%	1	3.7%	32	5.2%
≥ 5	20	3.4%	3	11.1%	23	3.8%

Note: Percentages were calculated within racial grouping. For both Black and non Black directors, the range from 5 to 14 films was collapsed for presentational purposes.

We also assessed whether each individual Black director was represented by an agent. Of the 27 unique directors, 88.9% ($n=24$) had current representation. Over one-third (36%, $n=9$) were represented by CAA, while WME and UTA each represented 24% ($n=6$) of the Black directors in this sample. Three remaining agencies counted the final three Black directors among their clients. Paradigm, ICM, and Verve each represented 1 of the top-grossing Black directors of the last decade.

Prevalence of Asian Directors. Only 34 Asian directors (3%) worked across the 1,000 top films from 2007 to 2016, with 91.2% male ($n=31$) and 8.8% female ($n=3$). This overall point statistic is below Census, which estimates that 5.6% of the U.S. population is Asian.¹⁸ Minimal deviation appears year to year (see Table 9), with 2014 featuring a ten year low with no Asian directors working across the 100 top films and 2015 and 2013 showing a ten year high with 6 Asian directors. ***Consistent with female and Black helmers, there has been no change in the percentage of Asian directors from 2007 to 2016.***

Table 9
Asian Directors Across 100 Top Films by Year

Year	'07	'08	'09	'10	'11	'12	'13	'14	'15	'16	Total
Asian Males	2.7% ($n=3$)	1.8% ($n=2$)	<1% ($n=1$)	3.7% ($n=4$)	2.8% ($n=3$)	1.6% ($n=2$)	5.6% ($n=6$)	0	5.6% ($n=6$)	3.3% ($n=4$)	2.8% ($n=31$)
Asian Females	0	<1% ($n=1$)	0	0	<1% ($n=1$)	0	0	0	0	<1% ($n=1$)	.3% ($n=3$)
Total Directors	112	112	111	109	108	121	107	107	107	120	1,114

Genre was also assessed for movies made by Asian directors. Taking into account one directing team, 33 films were evaluated for genre. Asian directors were most likely to work on animated (27.3%, $n=9$) and horror films (24.2%, $n=8$). Asian filmmakers also

created movies in the action arena (15.2%, $n=5$) and science fiction/fantasy realm (15.2%, $n=5$), as well as dramatic movies (12.1%, $n=4$). Only 1 Asian director helmed a thriller (3%) or a comedy (3%). **Unlike Black or female directors, Asian directors can be found working in genres that are viewed by Hollywood as marketplace mainstays— animation, horror, and action.**

The race of the two top-billed actors in 26 films by Asian directors was analyzed as well. Nearly one-fifth (19.2%, $n=5$) of the movies helmed by Asian directors featured one or two actors who were Asian. Over three-quarters (80.8%, $n=21$) of the films by an Asian director featured two actors who were not Asian. **For Asian directors, we see the inverse of what occurs with Black directors. Opportunity for Asian directors of top movies is not linked to the race of prominent on-screen cast.**

Looking at unique or individual Asian directors, the 34 credits were held by a total of 17 different helmers, which is 2.8% of the 612 unique directors overall. Only two women worked across the 10 year time frame, *Jennifer Yuh Nelson* (i.e., *Kung Fu Panda 2*, *Kung Fu Panda 3*) and *Loveleen Tandan* (i.e., *Slumdog Millionaire*). As shown in Table 10, the majority of Asian directors only worked on one film (58.8%). The top performing director was *James Wan* (5 films) followed by *Justin Lin* (4 films), *M. Night Shyamalan* (4 films), *Jon M. Chu* (4 films) and *Pierre Coffin* (3 films).

Table 10
Number of Films by Asian & Non Asian Directors

No. of Films	Non Asian Directors		Asian Directors		Total	
	# of Directors	%	# of Directors	%	# of Directors	%
1	334	56.1%	10	58.8%	344	56.2%
2	132	22.2%	2	11.8%	134	21.9%
3	78	13.1%	1	5.9%	79	12.9%
4	29	4.9%	3	17.6%	32	5.2%
≥ 5	22	3.7%	1	5.9%	23	3.8%

Note: Percentages were calculated within racial grouping. For both Asian and non Asian directors, the range from 5 to 14 films was collapsed for presentational purposes.

Agency representation was assessed for every Asian director. Overall, 64.7% ($n=11$) currently had an agent. Of the six Asian directors who did not have a representative, five worked on animated features. Over half (54.6%, $n=6$) were represented by agents at WME, while 27.3% ($n=3$) had an agent at CAA. UTA (9.1%) and Paradigm (9.1%) each represented one Asian director. **It is clear that the major talent agencies count among their clients the top-grossing Asian directors over the last decade.**

Examining the racial diversity of directors reveals that Black and Asian helmers are vastly outnumbered and have fewer opportunities to work than their non-Black or non-Asian counterparts. Female directors who are Black and/or Asian, in particular, are rarely seen behind the camera. In terms of genre, Black directors' films are typically in the dramatic or comedic categories. Asian directors do not face such limitations, and work primarily in animation and horror, along with action. Black and Asian directors are also well-represented by the top agencies in Hollywood—nearly all of the Black directors and roughly two-thirds of Asian directors had an agent.

Film Distributors: 2007-2016

The companies responsible for distributing movies by female, Black, and/or Asian directors were also assessed. We were curious about the breakdown of directing opportunities among the major studios whose films routinely appear in the 100 top films each year. We examined the domestic theatrical distributor for each film released by a female, Black, or Asian director across the 10-year time frame, out of a total of 1,000 movies (100 fictional films per year).¹⁹ Three films by Black female directors and three films by Asian female directors were included in both the female director and Black or Asian director categories. Thus, totaling the films across distributor would count these movies twice and is not prudent. The results will be discussed in terms of the companies with the highest and lowest number of directors in each category.

Table 11
Number of Films by Female, Black, & Asian Directors by Major Distributor

Distributor	Total # of Films Distributed	Female Directed	Black Directed	Asian Directed
20 th Century Fox	137	7	6	5
Paramount Pictures	108	3	5	5
Sony Pictures	155	7	9	2
Universal Pictures	152	7	7	10
Walt Disney Studios	101	5	0	4
Warner Bros. Pictures	174	10	5	2
Lionsgate	86	3	16	1
Other	87	2	8	4
Overall	1,000	44	56	33

Note: Information on film distributor came from BoxOfficeMojo.com. "Other" represents companies that are now-defunct, no longer release films, or released fewer than 5 movies across all three director categories. Films released by specialty divisions or studio labels were counted at the parent company level.

Beginning with female directors, the company with the highest number of female-directed films over the last 10 years is Warner Bros. 20th Century Fox, Sony, and Universal

each released seven female-directed movies in the past decade. Lionsgate and Paramount released the fewest movies with female directors, with only three each. ***Across the 10-year time frame, none of the companies examined here have released at least one movie per year with a female director that appeared in the sample of top-grossing fare.***

In terms of Black directors, Lionsgate outperforms the other distributors with a total of 16 movies. This is due to their release of 14 movies directed by *Tyler Perry*. Sony released nine films with a Black director across the same time period. Disney did not distribute a single movie by a Black director in the last decade that appeared in our sample of 1,000 top films.

Among Asian-directed films, Universal was the leader with 10 movies distributed in the last 10 years. Lionsgate released just one movie helmed by an Asian director, while Sony and Warner Bros. distributed two films each by Asian directors. On the whole, few Asian directors have worked at any of the major distributors over the last decade.

Conclusion

The purpose of this report was to evaluate the gender, race, and age of film directors working on the highest grossing fictional films across the last decade. In addition to enumerating the percentage of directors from different groups, additional analyses were undertaken. This included assessing the number of unique individuals working behind the camera, the genre of films made, the agency representation of directors, and for Black and Asian directors, the racial background of top-billed cast. Finally, the distribution of films directed by female, Black, and Asian directors was analyzed. Four major conclusions emerged.

Female filmmakers face a limited scope of career opportunities. A mere 4% of directors across the last decade were female, a percentage which has not changed over time. In terms of unique directors, only 35 female directors (vs. 577 male directors) worked on a top-grossing movie between 2007 and 2016. Additionally, female directors' work is limited by their age, while males do not face a similar restriction. Male directors work throughout seven decades of their adult lives—their 20s through their 80s. Female directors' time in the top-grossing ranks is condensed to only four decades—their 30s through their 60s.

This disparity translates into more chances for male directors to work behind the camera. Male directors worked on as many as 14 films in the time frame sampled while the range for women was between 1 and 4 movies. However, most female directors in the sample (80%) made just one film, compared to 54.8% of male directors. Female directors are also confined in terms of genre. Females were most likely to make dramas or comedies, while males worked across the span of genres and in what are perceived to be lucrative arenas (i.e., action, sci-fi/fantasy).

The lack of change in the directing landscape comes on the heels of recent and robust activism—which must continue, albeit more strategically and with the help of outside groups. Our previous research suggests that behind-the-camera representation is important for reasons beyond just employment equity. Based on patterns observed in short films and independent narrative features, our research shows that female directors tell stories with more female characters, more characters from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups, more women over age 40, and they hire more women working in other notable behind-the-scenes positions.²⁰ The lack of diverse roles in front of the camera is a clear outcome of the dearth of different perspectives behind the scenes.

The pipeline for female directors showcases the slippery career slope women face in film.

Using data on short films, independent movies, and television directors, we map the career pipeline that runs from the start of a career to the most successful movies domestically. Doing so reveals that women comprise 25-30% of the initial directing pool. At Sundance Film Festival in U.S. Dramatic Competition, 27.3% of directors were female over the last 10 years. Yet, very few women make it to the ranks of top-grossing filmmakers. At every stage of their careers, the obstacles women face create cracks and leaks in this fragile pipeline.

While women are virtually shut out of the most lucrative and highest-performing films, they do have allies. Nearly all of the female directors of top-grossing films over the last several decades are represented by three of the most powerful talent agencies in Hollywood—CAA, WME, and UTA. This is notable as it indicates that women have the industry connections to obtain work, but that the process of putting them up for jobs and negotiating employment is where the breakdown occurs.

There has been no meaningful change in the employment of Black or Asian directors over time. Just 5.1% of directors were Black and 3% were Asian across 1,000 films released in the last decade. Examining unique or individual directors reveals that the ranks of top-grossing filmmakers included just 27 Black directors (vs. 585 non-Black directors) and 17 Asian directors (vs. 595 non-Asian directors). Additionally, few Black directors worked more than once across the ten years examined.

Black directors also face limits in the types of movies they direct. These individuals are most likely to direct comedic or dramatic fare—not action or tent pole movies. Over three-quarters (78.6%) of movies helmed by a Black director featured one or two Black actors in the top-billed cast. In contrast, only 19.2% of Asian-directed films featured one or two top-billed actors who were Asian. As long as the work of Black directors is connected to casting decisions, progress behind the camera will remain stalled.

An intersectional look at the director’s chair reveals that women of color are virtually absent as top-grossing directors. Of the females who have directed top-grossing fare in this sample, only three are Black, two are Asian, and one is a Latina. The near erasure of women of color among the ranks of top directors suggests that solving Hollywood’s

“female director problem” will require solutions that create access for more than just White women.

The major film companies have a poor track record of hiring and/or releasing films by female, Black, and/or Asian directors. No film distributor has released a film by a female director each year across the last decade. In terms of Black directors, Lionsgate leads while Disney falls very short in their support of filmmakers of color. In a sample that spans a decade of top-grossing content, Disney has not released a single film by a Black director. When it comes to Asian-directed movies, Universal has the strongest track record, but again, none of the major film distributors excels at employing Asian filmmakers.

In conclusion, the results presented in this report demonstrate that there is ongoing inequality in the director’s chair for women and people of color. For women, age also restricts opportunities to work in film. For the last decade, there has been no change and no progress for directors who deviate from the White, male director prototype. Given this, the next section proposes several solutions to address the persistent and pernicious inequity behind the camera.

Solutions

As noted above, the findings in this brief reveal that the activism, advocacy, and attempts to address director diversity have not created change. However, there are solutions that can be adopted by different constituencies that we believe will advance the efforts to change the status quo. We overview these opportunities to address barriers due to gender, race and age that prevent directors from being hired on top-grossing films.

Studio Executives, Producers, and Agents. The buyers and sellers responsible for the transactions that occur in show business can work together and separately to expand the career opportunities for females and people of color. Buyers—film producers and executives—can agree to fill consideration lists in a way that matches the known talent pool. Women comprise 28% of narrative short film directors at major international festivals. Thus, females should fill roughly 30% of the names on consideration lists and roughly 30% of film directors hired per year for fictional movies. Moving beyond adding one or two individual names to a list of directors is one way to counter biases that may perpetuate the status quo.

Agents can follow these guidelines when submitting names—30% of the clients put up for directing jobs should be female. Producers can also request female directors from agency rosters. Previously, we have referred to adopting similar strategies as invoking a “Rooney Rule” for Hollywood. In the NFL, the Rooney Rule stipulates that individuals from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups must be considered for outside coaching hires. This idea can be enacted as a studio policy, or merely as a rule of thumb. Simply asking

for the names of women and people of color could launch a process that changes the practice or the outcome of hiring a director.

Uncoupling the relationship between lead character and director gender and/or race is also crucial. Individuals should develop consideration lists without regard for the demographic characteristics of the individual inhabiting the film's story. For instance, ensuring that Black directors are considered for stories about White protagonists. Or, considering female directors to tell stories that center on male characters. Diversifying the consideration pool is a necessary step toward diversifying the employment ranks of directors. By cooperating to expand the talent considered for top film jobs, agents, managers, executives, and producers can work from the top down to create change.

Directors. The community of male and female directors also has a role to play. One means of supporting novice filmmakers is through mentorship or sponsorship. Senior directors who have industry clout and expertise can provide early to mid-career guidance or assistance, particularly shadowing and co-directing opportunities (where possible). Examples of this include the Directors Attachment Scheme, managed by the Australian Directors Guild.²¹ The program pairs developing filmmakers with seasoned directors of film and television. For instance, two female directors (*Brooke Goldfinch*, *Catriona McKenzie*) were paired with *Ridley Scott* on an upcoming sequel in the *Alien* franchise.²² Given that 43.9% of female directors interviewed in our previous research²³ stated that they were interested in directing action or tent pole fare, this placement is noteworthy. Opportunities to nurture the ambitions and interests of women should be done with an eye toward positioning them for future career success—beginning in film school. This means that teachers and mentors must work with women to consider market forces, their early samples of work, and industry beliefs and stereotypes that may hinder their occupational progress.

A-List Talent. Actors have the ability to support inclusion as well. A-list talent can add an “equity rider” to their contract stipulating that efforts must be made to achieve inclusive hiring practices. The contract language can focus on pursuing diversity in the above- and below-the-line positions that have historically underrepresented females, people of color, the LGBT community, individuals with disabilities, and other marginalized groups. By exercising their power contractually, actors and other talent can ensure that equality is part of a film from the nascent stages of the project.

Philanthropists and Financiers. Philanthropists who financially support films can also ensure that they are part of the solution. Giving to films that are directed by women and/or individuals from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups is one way to do this. Investing in these movies can give directors important early-career opportunities to build a resume and step into larger directing roles. The documentary model offers a strong example of this, and some film funds have already emerged that attempt to emulate that success.

Philanthropists can, like actors, also tie their giving to inclusion-related outcomes. Donors can set benchmarks for on-screen or behind-the-scenes inclusion on the films they fund. They can also recommend that filmmakers pursue hiring processes that cast a wide net to encourage greater representation. Philanthropists on the boards at film festivals or film schools have opportunities to influence policies and practices in favor of inclusion, asking for yearly metrics on achieving set benchmarks for change. Donors can also give to programs that go beyond supporting directors, for instance contributing to diversifying the programming team or faculty. Fiscal supporters should aim to be certain their funding contributes in a meaningful way to changing the landscape of media content.

Educators. The data presented in this report demonstrate that female, Black, and/or Asian directors face a truncated career path compared to their male, non-Black, and non-Asian counterparts. Age also plays a role in the career achievements of female directors. Film education programs must address the barriers these directors face in their filmmaking pursuits. This includes understanding the obstacles and offering training that facilitates overcoming them. For instance, courses might focus on the beliefs and myths that guide industry decision-making and the evidence that counters these perceptions. Educators must help build bridges into the industry for the filmmakers most at risk of encountering identity-based impediments. Film schools must also address the attributes of the environment that may limit interest or feelings of belonging in female students or those from underrepresented racial/ethnic backgrounds. By doing so, they will bolster the pipeline for women and people of color to more sustainable careers.

Film Audiences or Movie-Goers. Audience members have a powerful and persuasive tool at their disposal—their wallets. The film-going public can demand more films by, for, and about women simply by attending the movies that currently exist. The same is true of films by underrepresented directors. Supporting these movies means paying to see them in theaters and via on-demand platforms. Buying a ticket and increasing films' box-office receipts provides a director with evidence that their work is marketable and financially lucrative. Moreover, strong box office returns on smaller films make the case that a director's work will appeal to a larger audience. This counters industry mythologizing about market forces²⁴ that serves as a barrier to the advancement of female or underrepresented directors.

It is important to note several limitations of the current study. First, the accuracy of data on films and directors presented here depends on the strength and precision of information in industry databases. While efforts were made to confirm race judgments from online sources, database errors outside of the researchers' control may mean that some underrepresented individuals were not counted as such. Limitations related to database accuracy extend to our focus on race over ethnicity. Despite a desire to assess how other groups fare behind the camera (e.g., Hispanic/Latino filmmakers, Middle Eastern filmmakers), available data did not allow for this analysis. One means of addressing this gap would be for industry groups such as the DGA or Writers Guild of America to make disaggregated data available and to work with academics engaged in

intersectional research. This would allow for more complex questions about the directing workforce and pay equality to be answered. The limitation of available data is a caveat that also applies to genre, agency representation, box office rank, and distribution which were derived from database listings.

Finally, the lack of film school data means that the picture of the directing pipeline remains incomplete. Although popular press articles may report that females represent half of film students, the issue is nuanced and more specific data is needed. Film schools may contain majors focused on writing or critical studies, which may appeal more to women and may inflate enrollment numbers. A true metric of interest in directing would be the percentage of females in *production* majors at film schools at the undergraduate and graduate level. Additionally, any work on film school should address questions about the experience of women and people of color in these formative years. Understanding the educational practices that incubate or inhibit the interest of females and/or people of color in directing is a vital step toward increasing the size of the diverse talent pool of directors.

Despite these limitations, this initial inclusion report on top-grossing directors reveals the consistent under-employment of women and people of color. Over a significant period of time the role of the director has been the domain of White men. ***Unless the industry relies on evidence-based solutions, it is very likely that this trend will continue.*** It is imperative that entertainment leaders, content creators, and philanthropists work with experts and take steps to remedy the exclusion and erasure of diverse directing voices. Currently, neither storytelling nor storytellers reflect the world in which we live. We can sit by as this continues for another decade, or can act to ensure that equality and inclusion are the hallmark of entertainment in the years to come.

Footnotes

¹ Smith, S.L., Choueiti, M., Pieper, K. (2016). *Inequality in 800 Popular Films: Examining Portrayals of Gender, Race/Ethnicity, LGBT, and Disability from 2007 to 2015*. Media, Diversity, & Social Change Initiative at USC Annenberg. Los Angeles, CA. The data for the 100 top films for 2016 was pulled on January 9th, 2017. Given that the box office is still open on some movies (i.e., *Hidden Figures*), the list may change between now and March. As a result, the findings should be interpreted with caution.

² Assessing gender and race emerged from a two-step process. First, grids were built from IMDbPro.com for each movie with key production personnel. Second, the gender and race of each director was looked up in the same database as well as other industry sources (e.g., Variety Insight, Studio System, DGA women and minority member listings). Gender judgments are relatively easy to confirm via photo or pronoun use.

For race, we focused exclusively on Black and Asian directors. However, we examined all women directors for their race or ethnic identification from 2007 to 2016. In cases where race was not listed, we searched online for information on nationality, photos of filmmakers' parents, and names on lists of underrepresented directors. When no information was unearthed to make a judgment, representatives of the filmmaker's team (e.g., agent, manager) were contacted. Confirming the race of White directors was the most difficult.

For the 45 female directors, we were able to retrieve all race/ethnicity decisions. For the overall sample of 1,114 directors, only 16 (1.4%) were not confirmable. In these cases, the research team made judgments about whether directors were Black (no, yes) or Asian (no, yes). If a director was mixed race, they were counted within the applicable category above. Based on previous research, our MDSC team members' racial/ethnic judgments correlate highly with online sources ($r=.90, p <.01$). Thus, the assessments made by the MDSC Initiative team are highly consistent with industry evaluations.

³ Age was evaluated by using the film's theatrical release date. Information on each director's date of birth was obtained from online databases or other public sources. When an exact date was not provided, the year of birth was used or estimated from publicly available information. The birth date or year of birth was not available for 12 directors—11 males and 1 female. To determine if these individuals influenced the overall average for men and women, simulations were run using the minimum and maximum ages. Only minor fluctuations in the average were observed.

⁴ Genre designations were obtained from Variety Insight listings for each movie.

⁵ To determine agency representation, each director's Studio System and IMDbPro profile were examined for the listing of agency representation. We stipulated that individuals had to have either a talent or literary agent. Book, commercial, theatrical, or voice over agents were not included. In the case of high-profile directors who were also actors, the director's literary (or directing) agent was used to make the distinction.

⁶ Smith, S.L., Pieper, K., & Choueiti, M. (2015). *Exploring the Careers of Female Directors: Phase III*. Media, Diversity, & Social Change Initiative. Report prepared for Sundance Institute and Women in Film Los Angeles. See pages 15-16.

⁷ Smith et al. (2015). See page 17. Smith, S.L., Pieper, K., & Choueiti, M. (2014). *Exploring the Barriers and Opportunities for Independent Women Filmmakers Phase I and II*. Media, Diversity, & Social Change Initiative. Report prepared for Sundance Institute and Women in Film Los Angeles. See pages 29-30.

⁸ Smith, et al. (2014).

⁹ Smith, et al. (2015). See pages 17-18.

¹⁰ Smith, S.L., Pieper, K.M., Choueiti, M., & Case, A. (2015). *Gender & Short Films: Emerging Female Filmmakers and the Barriers Surrounding their Careers*. Media, Diversity & Social Change Initiative. Report prepared for LUNAFEST. Smith, et al. (2015). Smith, et al. (2014).

¹¹ *DGA Study: Women and Ethnic Minorities Continue to be Overlooked for Critical First Breaks in Television Directing* (August, 2016). Retrieved January 6, 2017: <http://www.dga.org/News/PressReleases/2016/160817-DGA-Study-Women-and-Ethnic-Minorities-Overlooked-for-First-Breaks-in-TV-Directing.aspx>

¹² For the short film investigation, we assessed the 10 top film festivals, as ranked by Indiewire: <http://www.indiewire.com/2010/05/10-best-fests-a-directory-55135/>. The 10 include: Festival de Cannes (Cannes), Sundance Film Festival (SFF), Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF), South By Southwest (SXSW), International Documentary Festival Amsterdam (IDFA), Venice Film Festival (VFF), Berlin International Film Festival (BIFF), International Film Festival Rotterdam (IFFR), New York Film Festival (NYFF), and Telluride Film Festival (TFF). Only narrative shorts were reported, excluding documentary, animated and other types of shorts (i.e., experimental).

¹³ Data for this analysis was taken from Smith, et al. (2015) and Smith, et al. (2014). Using the same approach as listed in these reports, we updated director gender for Sundance Film Festival U.S. Dramatic Competition films for 2015 and 2016. Information on director race/ethnicity was obtained from online or public sources. When information was not available, data obtained for other studies was used, including Smith, et al., (2015) and Pieper, K.M., Choueiti, M., & Smith, S.L. (2014). *Race & Ethnicity in Independent Films: Prevalence of Underrepresented Directors and the Barriers They Face*. Working Paper. National Endowment for the Arts. <https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/Research-Art-Works-Sundance.pdf>

¹⁴ DGA Study (2016).

¹⁵ *DGA Diversity – Frequently asked questions*. Retrieved January 7, 2017 from: <http://www.dga.org/The-Guild/Diversity/Diversity-FAQ.aspx>

¹⁶ U.S. Census Bureau (n.d.). U.S. Census Quick Facts. Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/RHI125215/00>

¹⁷ The race of prominent actors in films by Black or Asian directors was assessed using the following procedure. First, the front of the DVD jacket cover was evaluated for the names of the two top-billed cast members. When no cast members were listed, the credits on the back jacket cover were consulted. If no cast was listed on the jacket cover, the first two actors credited on Variety Insight were included. Jacket covers were obtained from the MDSC Initiative media library. When jacket covers were not available, the U.S. DVD jacket cover image was obtained from online sources (Amazon.com). The race of top-billed actors was obtained from Variety Insight designations. Some animated features were not included in this analysis, as the race of the top-billed actor may not translate to on-screen representation in this genre.

¹⁸ U.S. Census Bureau (n.d.). U.S. Census Quick Facts.

¹⁹ Information on distribution was taken from BoxOfficeMojo.com. For films released by the seven major distributors listed in Table 11, the distributor listed on BoxOfficeMojo.com was used. Specialty divisions and labels were assigned to the studio parent company as follows: 20th Century Fox (Fox Atomic, Fox Searchlight Pictures), Paramount Pictures (Paramount Insurge, Paramount Vantage), Sony Pictures (Columbia Pictures, Screen Gems, Sony Pictures Classics, Sony Revoluion, TriStar Pictures), Universal Pictures (Focus Features, Gramercy Pictures, Rogue Pictures), Walt Disney Studios (Buena Vista, Miramax), Warner Bros. Pictures (New Line Cinema, Picturehouse), and Lionsgate Films (Summit Entertainment). For films in the “other” category, all distributors listed on BoxOfficeMojo.com were confirmed using

IMDbPro.com. The list of distributors in the “other” category include: A24, Broad Green Pictures, CBS Films, FilmDistrict, Freestyle Releasing, Samuel Goldwyn Films, IFC Films, MGM, Open Road Films, Overture Films, Roadside Attractions, Relativity, STX Entertainment, United Artists, The Weinstein Company (including Dimension Films). Three cases required additional scrutiny: *Fireproof* (Samuel Goldwyn Films), *Halloween* (MGM), and *Philomena* (The Weinstein Company). For these three films, other online databases (Variety Insight, Studio System) and additional sources were used to confirm that the distributor listed on BoxOfficeMojo.com was correct.

²⁰ Smith et al. (2015). Smith, S.L., Pieper, K., & Choueiti, M. (2013). *Exploring the Barriers and Opportunities for Independent Women Filmmakers*. Media, Diversity & Social Change Initiative. Report prepared for Sundance Institute and Women in Film Los Angeles.

²¹ Australian Directors Guild (n.d.). Directors Attachment Scheme. <https://adg.org.au/professional-development#DirectorsAttachmentScheme>

²² Screen Australia. (2016 May 13). Two female Australian directors to join Ridley Scott on *Alien: Covenant*. Media Release. <https://www.screenaustralia.gov.au/sa/newsroom/news/2016/mr-160513-directors-attachments-alien-covenant>

²³ Smith et al. (2015). See page 19.

²⁴ Smith et al. (2014, 2015), Pieper, et al. (2014).

Acknowledgements

It is with gratitude and service to humanity that we carry out this work. For Marc, Kate, and I, the MDSC Initiative's research is designed specifically to give voice and visibility to those muted and mistreated by the media. Our hope is that future hiring decisions behind the camera will reflect or look like the vibrant world we inhabit. Of course, this work would not be possible without the generous support of a group of bold donors who champion inclusion in word and deed. We are indebted to Jacquelyn Zehner, Barbara Bridges, Bonnie Arnold, Ruth Ann Harnisch, Suzanne Lerner, Julie Parker Benello, Ann Lovell, Mari and Manuel Alba, Beth Friedman, and Ann Erickson. These women (and one man) are our "squad" and the work is possible by their generosity, passion, and commitment to a just and inclusive society. We are also grateful to our partners at Sony Pictures Entertainment and EPIX for their support of our efforts.

One special note of thanks goes to Wallis Annenberg and Cinny Kennard at the Annenberg Foundation. Your commitment to our team and USC's undergraduates is unparalleled and immensely appreciated. It is with pride and responsibility that our work bears the Annenberg name. Additionally, we are flanked by a remarkable team that carries the inclusion torch. A special nod to Leah Fischman for strategic advice and insight on not only this project but all things related to the MDSC Initiative. Additional thanks go to Patricia Lapadula for her assistance with our infographics. Of course, our daily lives are brightened by the dedication, enthusiasm, intellect, and humor of our leadership team. We would like to thank each of them, listed below, for continuing the fight against inequality. The world is a better place because each of you are in it! Fight on.

Celine Carrasco
Ariana Case
Kelly Ching
Angel Choi
Christine Choi

Samantha Cioppa
Anne-Marie DePauw
Megan Jackson
Gary Keller
Edward Lau

Artur Tofan
Rachael Woods
Kevin Yao