

The Effect of the Underemployment of Female Filmmakers in the Industry on Aspiring Female Filmmakers ages 14-19 in South Florida

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ABSTRACT

The paper explores the impact of underemployment among female filmmakers on aspiring young women aged 14-19 in South Florida. By delving into the historical background of female participation in the film industry, this study highlights the persistent gender imbalance in this male-dominated field. The study aims to assess the effects of this underrepresentation on aspiring female filmmakers and determine whether it has a positive or negative impact.

Introduction

The film industry is a glorified industry diluted with illusions of glamor that take away from the substantial issues that lie within. Some of these problems remained unaddressed and were pushed under the rug until recent years when women's voices are only beginning to be heard. Women have been involved in cinema ever since female filmmaker Alice Guy-Blaché created a short film in 1896 that paved the way for female filmmakers all over the world.

However, her creations were not enough because one thing remains constant after all these years, and that is the mistreatment/underrepresentation of female filmmakers. Being the first female filmmaker Alice-Guy Blaché had to work extremely hard to work her way up in the industry.

Through this dedication, Alice-Guy Blaché was able to accomplish directing around 1,000 films. Many of Alice-Guy Blaché brought into light what cinema had been missing and that was life from the perspective of a woman. Even today in Hollywood, women are depicted in ways that are unrecognizable from the reality women face everyday and are rather depicted from the romanticized version that a man has curated in his head. This unique perspective only a woman could have is continually overlooked in the film industry. For example, as of March 28th, 2022, only three women have won best director throughout the 94 years of the Oscars. This gap between the number of men who have won compared to the amount of women who have won is a great demonstration of how females in the film industry have to work twice as hard as men.

Alice Guy- Blaché was multitalented and created films that are forever bound with the history of women and the fight for equality. Alice Guy-Blaché, a prominent figure in the roots of the film industry, is forgotten by many and is not given the same respect as her male counterparts. Another talented woman who is forgotten by many is Florence Lois Weber, who was a famous actress, screenwriter, producer, and director from the silent film era. Florence Lois Weber included things in her films that were unheard of at the time. In Florence Lois Webers' films, she included Mentions of abortions, birth control, and prostitution; many prominent female issues now had light shed on them instead of hiding these things that happen in real life to adhere to what is considered "attractive" for television. Florence Lois Webers was a prominent filmmaker who broke down boundaries for future female filmmakers to continue to demolish to achieve the truth of female experiences. Another filmmaker and former philosophy student Vera Chytilová created a new form of avant-garde art films that shook her country. Vera Chytilová used her knowledge from learning philosophy to create commentary on the state of her nation utilizing a stylistic

and at the time bizarre form of filmmaking. Though her films were a unique commentary on the state of her nation she was consistent in making sure to portray the films through a female eye/perspective. One of her films was even so controversial at the time that it was banned in Czech due to certain imagery that portrayed the wasting of food. This ban prohibited Vera from continuing to expand her films and find work in her country therefore, being back at square one and having to work even harder as if it wasn't already difficult enough.

All these filmmakers have two things in common with one another and that is that they have all had to work twice as hard as any man due to being a woman and have not been recognized or remembered as they should be. This proves that the issues women have been facing have been occurring for an extremely long time and the history of females involvement in film is not given the amount of recognition it truly deserves. This issue is only one of many that derive from the male dominated industry. For example in the year 2020 women were still extremely underrepresented in the film industry, a study by Martha M. Lauzen called "The Celluloid Ceiling: Behind-the-Scenes Employment of Women on the Top U.S. Films of 2020" was conducted and collected data on the employment of women in the top U.S. Films of 2020.

The results of this study concluded that the film industry only consisted of 21% of all directors, writers, producers, executive producers, editors, and cinematographers in the top U.S. Films of 2020. This study is a great example of how the environment for women in the film industry has barely improved because 79% of men/others took up the majority of employment in the top U.S. Films of 2020. Unfortunately, the problem with underemployment of females is not only present in the film industry but is present in any male-dominated industry. Even Though the issue of underemployment is known in the media, there are limited articles regarding this information which makes it hard to draw from.

Due to the underemployment of female filmmakers, there are barely any well-known films that have a woman behind them, and that can be extremely discouraging to young aspiring females who have an interest in film. Young girls may look at movies they like and discover that there is a minimal amount that they can aspire to. This effect is detrimental to the future of cinema and should be addressed accordingly and not ignored. This is why it is important to improve these factors so young girls feel like they can pursue a career in film. Not only have women been underrepresented, but they have also been extremely mistreated. This mistreatment is not unknown and has recently had light shed on the bad work environments. Many females involved with film have come out and have explained they have had to work twice as hard to earn the respect of their male peers. These issues coming out into the open is a step forward in the positive direction for female filmmakers in the film industry but might scare younger aspiring female filmmakers.

Many scholars have written and analyzed the underemployment of female film filmmakers in the film industry through statistics gathered from active employment; however, no work has been published regarding the effects that this underemployment may have. There are also no published articles available regarding young female filmmakers ages 14-19 in South Florida. This paper aims to discuss both of these undiscussed points by analyzing what kind of effects underemployment may have and who is affected. As an aspiring female filmmaker aged 14-19 based in South Florida currently, in this study, I am extremely intrigued to figure out whether my peers and people whom I've never met have noticed these effects, that I have begun to question myself. The lack of information regarding these two important topics creates the question of whether underemployment really has a prominent effect or not on aspiring female filmmakers ages 14-19 based in South Florida.

Literature Review

Martha M. Lauzen examines how women have been underrepresented in the film industry. "The Celluloid Ceiling: Behind-the-Scenes Employment of Women on the Top U.S. Films of 2020". The Celluloid Ceiling has been tracking the employment of the women in the top grossing films for 23 years and have found in the year 2020 "Women comprised 23% of all directors, writers, producers, executive producers, editors, and cinematographers working on the top 100 grossing films in 2020". Furthermore the author continued to describe how there has been a slight im-

provement in the employment rates from 2019 21% to 23% in 2020. This helps solidify the research in how even though there has been a slight increase in employment it is still nowhere near an equal amount compared to men. This presents the gap in research on how it presents the statistics but now on how it can affect other young women specifically in the South Florida area.

Sara Carraway examines different leadership practices that female film directors may utilize and which ones are the most effective. “BEST LEADERSHIP PRACTICES OF FEMALE FILM DIRECTORS”. Sara Caraway successfully examined this by conducting interviews to participants that are female film directors. The data concluded that “it seemed that those who had a more positive attitude towards their careers felt both more successful and confident when overcoming obstacles within their career”. Furthermore, the author continued to describe how “being able to work with different personalities and understand how to negotiate conflict” is a good leadership practice and helps lessen conflict. This study is beneficial in providing advice to young female filmmakers all around the world who may want to become a filmmaker in the future.

Sidorova G.P. describes how female film directors are often characterized as having masculine personality traits. “SIDOROVA G.P., SHUTAYA N.K. 'MALE' PERSONALITY AND 'FEMALE' CREATIVITY OF FEMALE FILM DIRECTORS”. The author examined this by utilizing content analysis and analyzing what female directors say and express to their creative teams. The content analyzed concluded in the findings that female film directors with “masculine personalities” make ‘female’ films, moreover, these are films of high artistic merit recognized by both the audience and authoritative professional community.” This shows that a “masculine personality” has no effect on the content and quality of the film. This article is extremely beneficial for female filmmakers who are scared to act as a leader in their environment due to criticism that men do not face.

Leanne M. Dzubinski and Amy B. Diehl focus on the issue of gender essentialism and the implications for women in leadership positions. “The Problem of Gender Essentialism and its Implications for Women in Leadership”. The author believes that a large amount of male-normed leadership practices have created a one-size-fits-all theory that has been unhelpful for men and certainly will not benefit women. These authors use past research to provide background for their own findings. The authors claim that the issues presented are due to stereotypical gender assumptions such as if women are more emotional than men. Furthermore, the authors recommend for scholars and practitioners to do more research and become educated on females’ experiences instead of their assumptions of what women need. This in turn would make the environment better for women in leadership positions. The authors’ conclusion (or process) is of interest to me in my research on female directors because female directors are in strong leadership positions and to learn how people above them view the things they deem necessary for women in leadership being opposite of what is actually needed shows another area where females are mistreated in the film industry. The article “The problem of gender essentialism and its implications for women in leadership.” focuses on gender-specific issues within an international context and time frame. The author believes that there may be a difference in whether online film production benefit women or traditional forms do. These authors use case studies on female filmmakers such as directors like Sofia Coppola to provide evidence in order to identify the varied and competing discourses and practices associated with females in cinema and which benefits them more. The author claims that new forms of media are beneficial to female filmmakers to advance their work. Furthermore, the authors recommend for female directors to not ignore new forms of media as a way to work in the industry but to accept it. The authors’ conclusion (or process) is of interest to me in my research on females in film because it provides a view in which females can grow and advance their progress even more.

Methodology

The way in which I will effectively answer my research question will include the use of google form surveys which include questions pertaining to how these aspiring female filmmakers aged 14-19 in South Florida are affected by the mistreatment/underrepresentation of female Filmmakers. This study does not pertain to one profession such as directing or cinematography however, focuses on any individual who is involved with any area of film. This will be

conducted through a series of questions with some yes/no questions and some questions where the participants have free reign to tell anything they think would be beneficial to the study.

Their answers will then be used as data to identify how aspiring female filmmakers ages 14-19 in South Florida are affected by the mistreatment/underrepresentation of female Filmmakers.

Therefore, applying a stratified sampling method because I am sampling from a specific group of people of a certain gender, age, and area. This is a narrative/cause and effect study that utilizes both personal stories from participants as data and distinguishes how aspiring female filmmakers ages 14-19 were affected by the mistreatment/underrepresentation of working female filmmakers. I will select young female filmmakers who have yet to enter the film industry, however, create films on their own time. However, I will need to get proper consent from all of the individuals participating and make sure they know that if at any time they are unwilling to answer the questions, they are more than welcome to not answer them if they are uncomfortable. Utilizing a thematic analysis process, I plan on finding their knowledge of the mistreatment/underrepresentation of female Filmmakers and if it affects them in any way. I will try to find similarities between their answers to come to a conclusion of which are the most prominent effects.

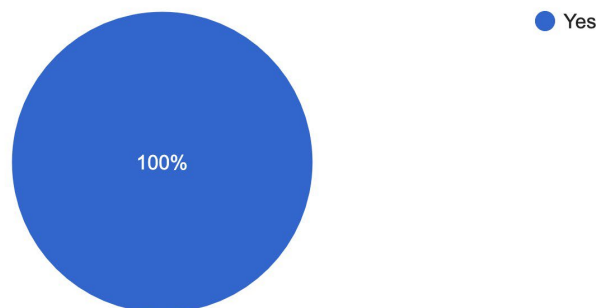
Sampling Method

In this study, the sampling method used is cluster sampling. This study uses cluster sampling because the survey is taken from the population of all female filmmakers. After utilizing the population of all female filmmakers numerous minor groups out of a larger population. First, the survey takes the population of female filmmakers. This group is curated into a smaller group of aspiring female filmmakers ages 14-19, and then simplifies this group to only be aspiring female filmmakers ages 14-19 based in South Florida. This minor group is now used to participate and complete the study. This study may include other sampling methods; however cluster sampling is the method that most aligns with my research.

Results

Do you confirm you identify as a female?

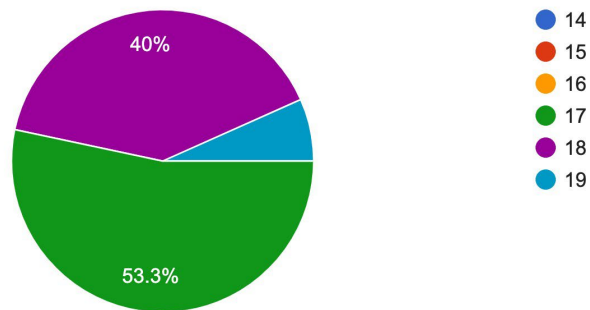
15 responses



Findings

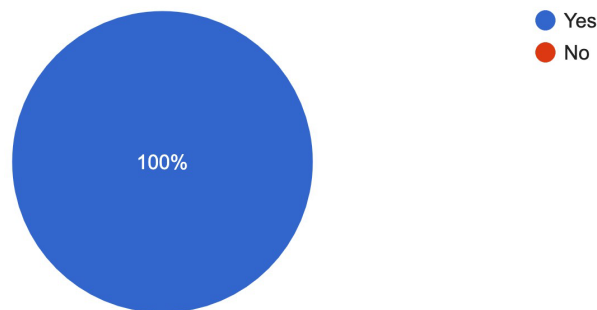
This pie-chart confirms that all of the people who participated in this survey are females.

Age
15 responses



This pie chart portrays how 40% of participants were 18 years old, 53.3% of participants were 17 years old and 6.7% of the participants were 19 years old.

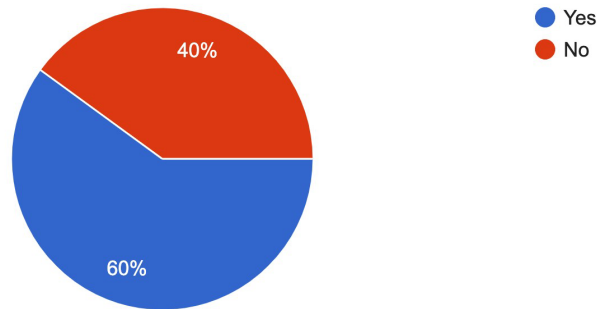
Are you aware of the underrepresentation of female filmmakers in the film industry?
15 responses



This pie chart portrays how 100% of the participants were aware of the underrepresentation of female filmmakers in the film industry.

Have you been affected in any way by viewing this underrepresentation in the film industry?

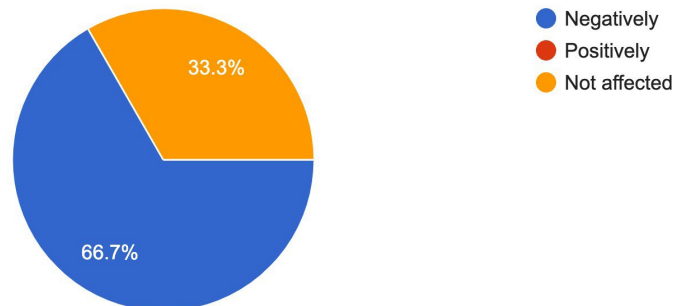
15 responses



This pie chart portrays how 60% of the participants have been affected in any way by viewing the underrepresentation in the film industry and 40% of the participants were not affected in any way by the underrepresentation in the film industry.

In what way have you been affected by this underrepresentation?

15 responses



This chart shows how 66.7% of the participants were negatively affected by the underrepresentation of female filmmakers in the film industry and 33.3% of the participants were not affected by the underrepresentation of female filmmakers in the film industry and none of the participants were positively affected.

According to figure one 100% of the participants in the survey were aware of the underrepresentation females face in the film industry. According to figure three 100% of the participants are aware of the underrepresentation. According to figure four 60% of the participants were affected by the underrepresentation and 40% were not affected. According to the fifth figure 66.7% of the respondents were negatively affected and 33.3% were not affected.

Data Analysis

The data collected in the first figure shows that all participants are knowledgeable about the underrepresentation in the film industry and portrays how underrepresentation is a well-known issue that many are aware of. The participants may be aware of this underrepresentation because they themselves are females therefore, this issue affects people like them. The data collected in the second figure shows how the ages of the participants are 17-19 years old therefore, there is no information on the younger ages due to how none of these age groups participated in this study. This may be caused because most of the participants are around the same age as me and are more easily available to participate in my study. The majority of participants have been affected by the underrepresentation which may be caused from having extended knowledge of this underrepresentation. However, there still was a significant number of people who said they were not affected by this underrepresentation. This result may be because these participants have not delved deeper into the issue of underrepresentation and only view it as a concept which in turn would limit the effect this issue would have on them. The fifth figure portrays how all of the participants who were affected by the underrepresentation in a negative way and none were affected in a positive way. This may be because there are very limited ways for this to affect someone in a positive way. The only way this could affect one of the participants in a positive way would be if it motivates them to make a change in the film industry and break through the barriers that they view. Most participants were affected in a negative way which is inline with my hypothesis that viewing this negative treatment may affect young female filmmakers ages 14-19 in South Florida negatively due to various reasons such as losing motivation or feeling as if there is no place for female filmmakers in the film industry and much more.

The results from each of the questions support my hypothesis that I assume that aspiring female filmmakers ages 14-19 in South Florida have been negatively affected by viewing the underrepresentation of female filmmakers in the film industry. This shows that not only does this underrepresentation affect female filmmakers already in the film industry it affects bystanders as well. However, the extent to which this may affect others may not be as prominent as I predicted because even though the majority was negatively affected there was still a significant amount of participants who did not seem to be affected. These results do not take away from the struggles of the aspiring female filmmakers ages 14-19 in South Florida who were negatively impacted by this underrepresentation. There was a section of this study where participants were allowed to expand further on the negative impact and one participant shared how they felt. "I feel as if with an underrepresentation of females in the filmmaking industry, the role a female plays in films is deeply affected. Often, females drive a direct correlation to symbols such as vulnerability and sex. With more women in the industry, this would correlate to a more accurate portrayal of women that will change the stigma : powerful and strong.". This statement from this participant signifies how strongly the participants who were negatively impacted feel about this subject and how they seem to have researched it in depth. This statement also delves into the issue of miss representation females may face while watching cinema. Due to the large number of men in the film industry the way women are portrayed in cinema is not accurate and affects the younger generation of females around the world. This participant also brought up how with an increase in the number of female filmmakers the misrepresentation in cinema can evolve to a more positive representation of females with "powerful and strong" female characters. Though this is a great step for the film industry to take it can not take away from the damage that has already been done and take away from the minds of the aspiring female filmmakers have already been negatively impacted. It is also important to remember the history of female filmmakers and how long and hard the ongoing journey has been to reach an equality in this industry. This statement from the participant gives light to a new way in which aspiring female filmmakers ages 14-19 in South Florida are affected by the underemployment of female filmmakers in the film industry by showing how the misrepresentation of females caused by the underemployment of females makes cinema less truthful to these aspiring female filmmakers.

Limitations

Following the analysis of my study it is important to address the issues/problems that may have affected my results in any way before introducing my discussion/conclusion. This study gathered significant information about aspiring female filmmakers ages 14-19 in South Florida, however there have been some limitations that this study has faced. For example, there were only 15 participants in this study due to the limited number of female filmmakers aged 14-19 in South Florida. This small group of participants does not represent the entirety of the female filmmakers ages 14-19 in South Florida. Another limitation this study has faced was the inability to have anyone from the ages of 14-16 participate. This leaves a gap and gives less of an understanding of the younger age group which can be caused by my own age and the people I know myself. This study could have also done a better job of curating a more specific set of questions to understand more in depth the perspective of each individual aspiring female filmmaker age 14-19 in South Florida.

Conclusion

The underemployment of females in all types of male dominated industries has effects on the youth and this effect should not be ignored because it can help change this endless cycle of not encouraging females to work in male dominated industries. This problem has been continuous and has yet to be significantly halted despite the efforts of strong females around the world. The results may come slowly however, some ounce of result is better than none at all. Though the employment of females is increasing the past cannot be erased and is still present in the film industry today. These visions of the past disrupt the development of young aspiring female filmmakers ages 14-19 in South Florida and will continue to disrupt them until substantial progress is made. Future studies should be completed to help shed more light on how significant the effect is on aspiring female filmmakers ages 14-19 , South Florida in different areas and different age groups to demonstrate the effects globally. These studies may help shed light on this effect and may show organizations and schools from across the world which may result in them doing something about it. After learning about this effect, schools and organizations are more likely to put systems in place to cancel out the effects of underemployment. Additional studies on how to turn this inherently negative effect towards a more positive effect in which motivates the aspiring female filmmakers ages 14-19 in South Florida.

The results of this study effectively answered my research question of “What were the effects of The underrepresentation of female filmmakers on new aspiring female filmmakers ages 14-19 in the South Florida film industry?”. According to this study there is a proven prominent negative effect on Aspiring female filmmakers ages 14-19 in the South Florida area. The majority of participants answered that they were negatively affected while only a small sum said that they were not affected at all. My hypothesis was proven right however, I did think that some of the participants would have answered that they were positively affected instead of just not affected or negatively affected. The cause of this negative effect is already known because it was stated in the research question. The results of this study further prove the importance of the damaging effect underemployment of female filmmakers in the film industry has on aspiring female filmmakers ages 14-19 in South Florida and how this problem continues to go unnoticed by the majority of the film industry. A good way to combat these negative effects would be to create organizations where aspiring female filmmakers can meet each other and build a sense of community in the male dominated film industry. An organization like this could provide helpful resources for the aspiring female filmmakers and can help them create connections with people experiencing the same things as them. This study holds great significance because of all the ways it can help improve and change for the better the environment in which aspiring female filmmakers grow in.

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