

# Increasing Inclusion in Animation

## Investigating Opportunities, Challenges, and the Classroom to the C-Suite Pipeline

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Dr. Stacy L. Smith, Marc Choueiti,  
Dr. Katherine Pieper and Hannah Clark

*with assistance from*  
Ariana Case, Angel Choi, and Kevin Yao

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USC Annenberg  
*Inclusion Initiative*

*wia* WOMEN IN  
ANIMATION

# INCLUSION IN ANIMATION?

## INVESTIGATING OPPORTUNITIES, CHALLENGES, AND THE CLASSROOM TO THE C-SUITE PIPELINE

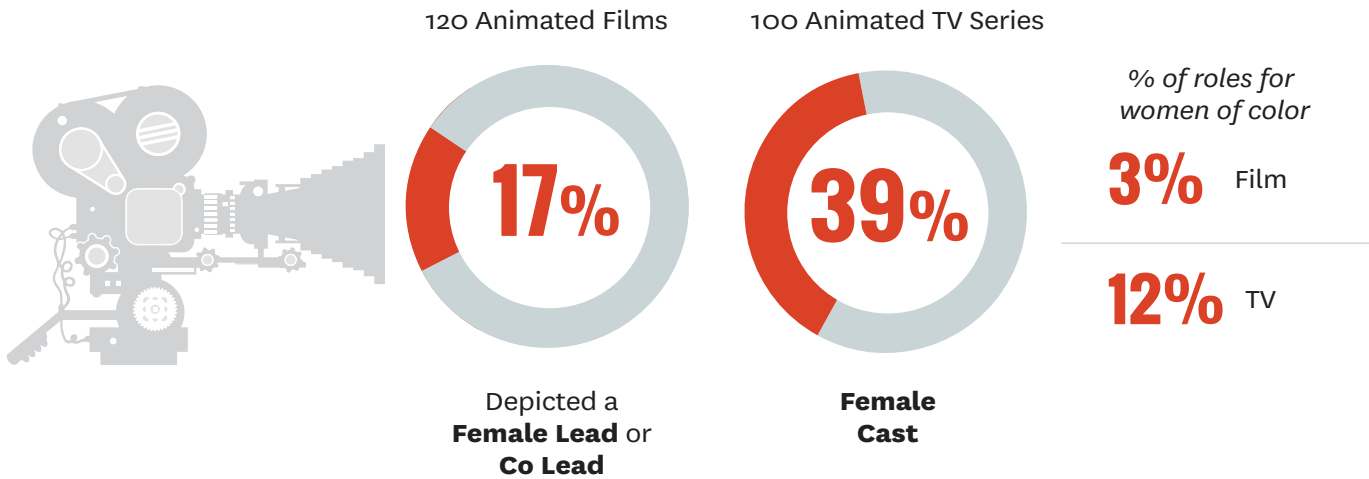
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### FEMALES ON SCREEN IN ANIMATED STORYTELLING

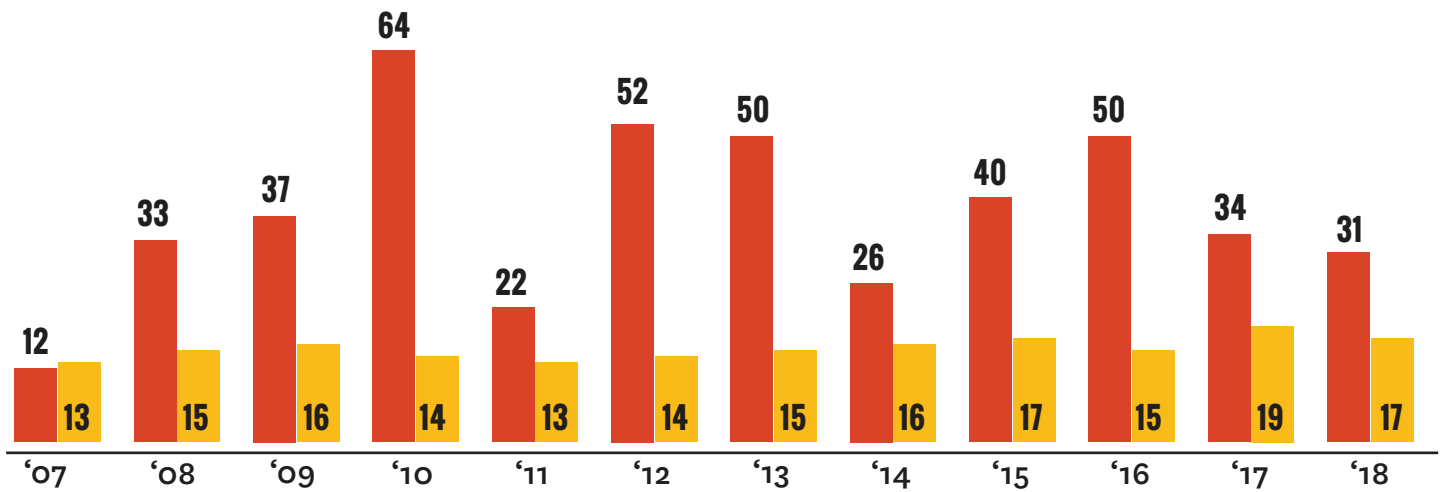
Percentage of animated films with a female lead or co lead and female cast in TV series



### ANIMATED AND LIVE ACTION FEMALE PRODUCERS

Percentage of female producers across 1,200 films

Animation      Live Action



OVERALL

**37%**      **15%**

ANIMATION      LIVE ACTION

WOMEN OF COLOR

**5%**      **1%**

ANIMATION      LIVE ACTION

## FEMALE DIRECTORS ARE RARE IN ANIMATION

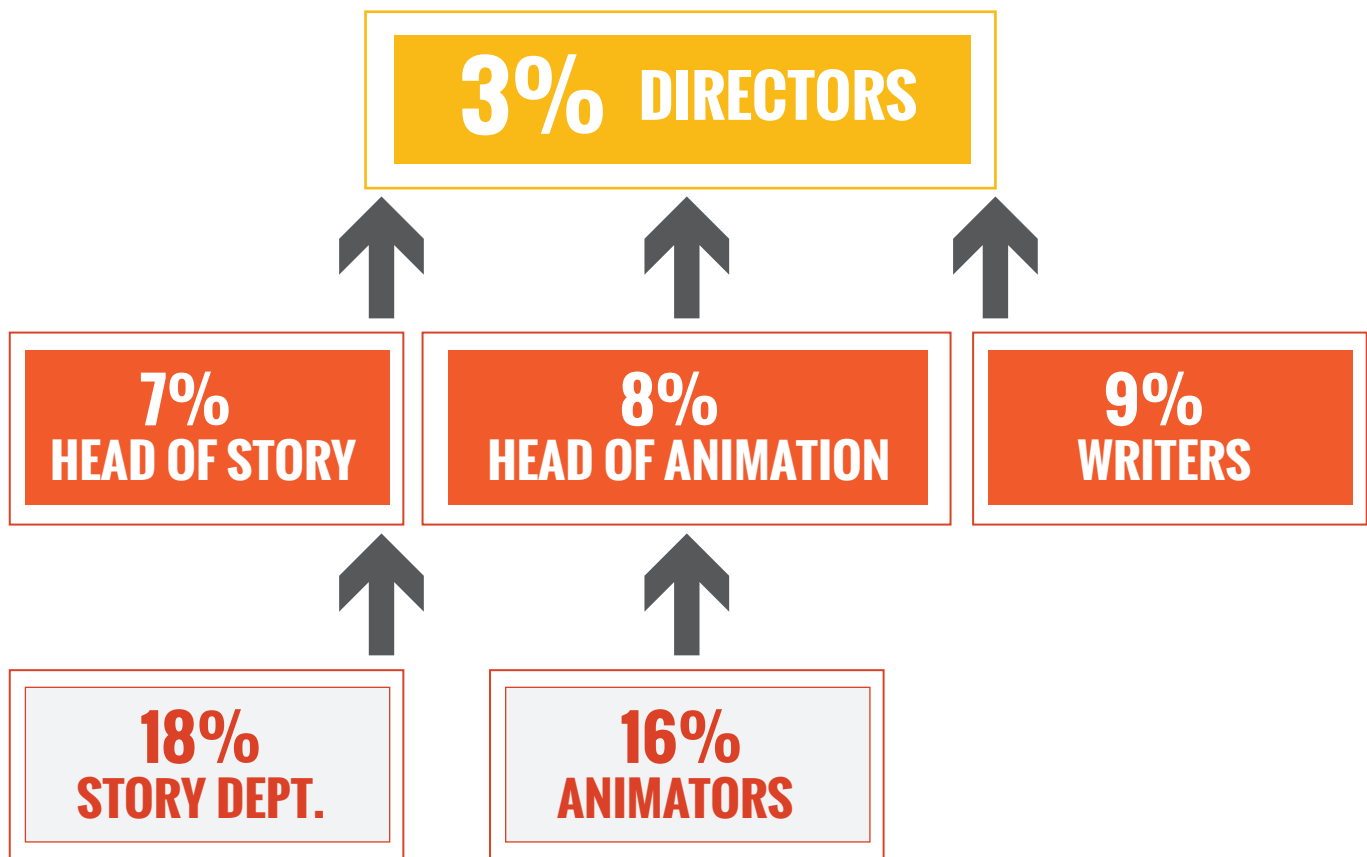
Directors by platform across film & TV

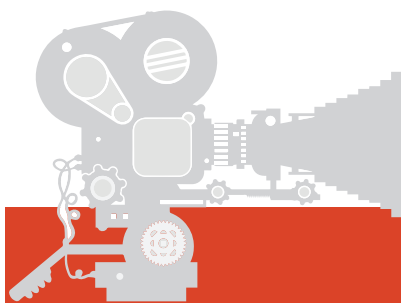
FILM DIRECTORS	TV DIRECTORS
<b>3%</b> WOMEN	<b>13%</b> WOMEN
<b>1%</b> WOMEN OF COLOR	<b>2%</b> WOMEN OF COLOR



## PIPELINE PROBLEMS: CAREER PROGRESS STALLS FOR FEMALES

Percentage of Females in the pipeline to directing animated feature films



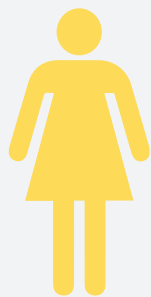


## WOMEN BELOW THE LINE IN TOP ANIMATED TV SERIES

	WOMEN	WOMEN OF COLOR
STORY EDITOR	28%	1%
HEAD OF EDITING	18%	4%
ANIMATION DIRECTOR	16%	8%
LEAD ANIMATOR	20%	13%
LEAD CHARACTER DESIGNER	24%	7%
LEAD STORYBOARD ARTIST	11%	3%
TOTAL	19%	7%

## FEMALE PRODUCERS BY POSITION

Percentage of female producers across 100 top animated series of 2018



**17%**

CREATED BY/  
DEVELOPED BY

24 women  
3 women of color



**20%**

EXEC  
PRODUCERS

71 women  
6 women of color



**17%**

CO-EXEC  
PRODUCERS

10 women  
0 women of color







**34%**

PRODUCERS

64 women  
16 women of color

# EXECUTIVE RANKS AT ANIMATION FILM & TV COMPANIES

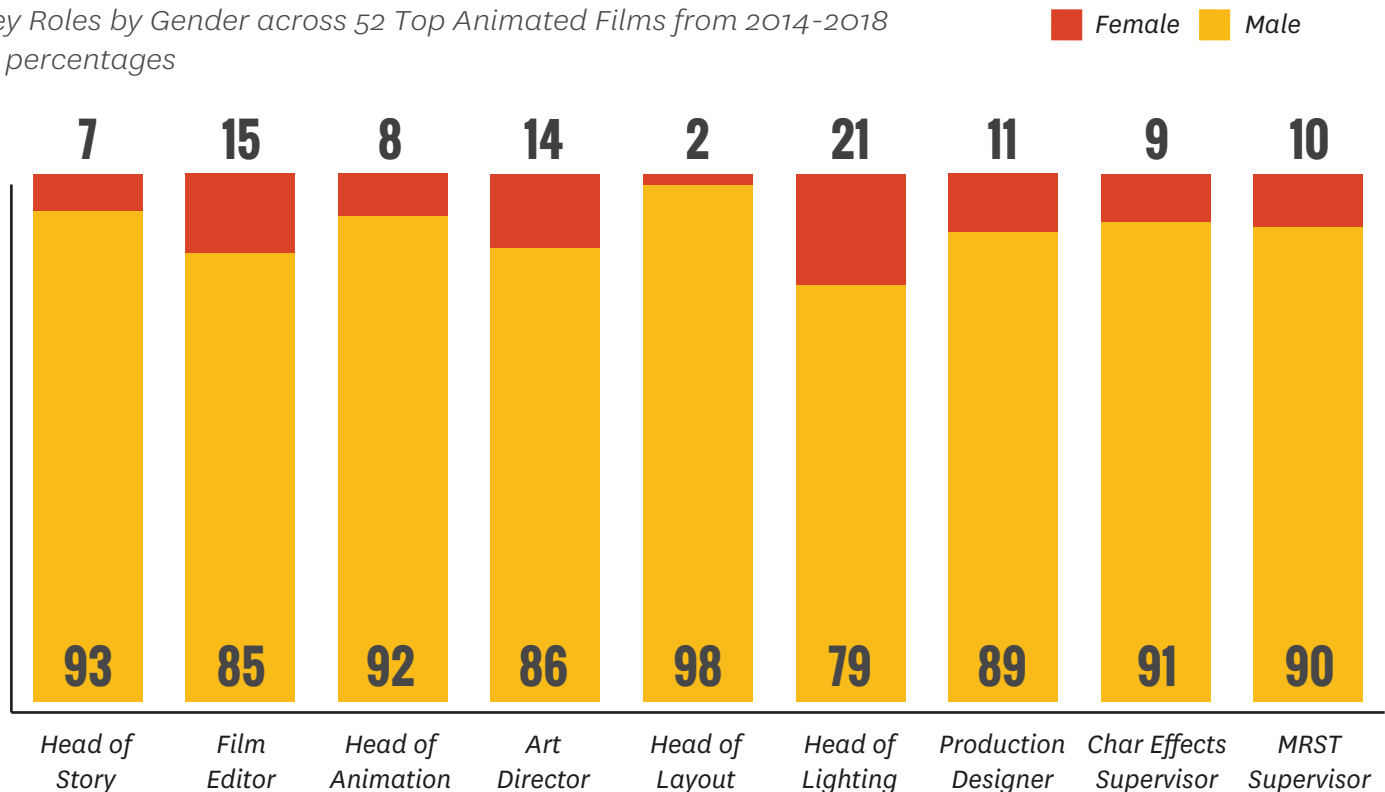
Women in leadership positions across major film and TV animation companies

		FILM	TV
PRES/CEO/CCO		50%	6%
CHIEF/EVP		29%	14%
SVP		50%	37%
VP/HEAD		68%	42%

Women of color filled 6% of executive roles in film and 9% in television.



## GENDER GAPS IN FILM PRODUCTION

Key Roles by Gender across 52 Top Animated Films from 2014-2018 in percentages



## THE PIPELINE IS PLENTIFUL IN EARLY CAREER

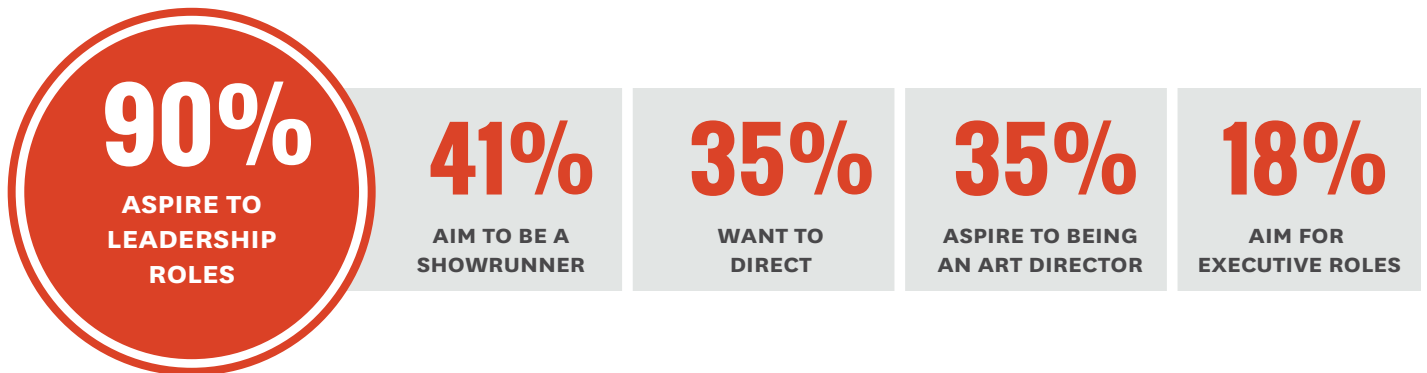
Percentage of animated short films with women directors attached at prominent film festivals

	2016	2017	2018
	67%	49%	40%
	33%	51%	60%

Short film programs at Sundance Film Festival, SXSW, Tribeca Film Festival, New York Film Festival, and Telluride were included in the analysis.

## WHAT ARE WOMEN'S AMBITIONS IN ANIMATION?

Career goals of 38 early-career women interviewed



## WOMEN WRITERS OF ANIMATED FEATURE FILMS

% OF WOMEN WRITERS	3	0	10	0	11	15	6	7	9	12	11	19	40 OUT OF 423
% OF WOMEN OF COLOR	0	0	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	4	
	'07	'08	'09	'10	'11	'12	'13	'14	'15	'16	'17	'18	TOTAL

## WOMEN'S INTEREST IN DIRECTING IS QUESTIONED

Percentage of interview and survey respondents explaining the lack of women film directors due to interest



## UNDERREPRESENTED FEMALES ARE INVISIBLE AS DIRECTORS

ONLY **4** WOMEN OF COLOR WORKED AS FILM OR TV DIRECTORS ACROSS 120 TOP ANIMATED FILMS AND 100 EPISODES/SEGMENTS OF TOP ANIMATED TV SERIES. ALL OF THESE WOMEN WERE ASIAN.

## RESPONSES STATING A MASCULINE CULTURE EXISTS IN ANIMATION

in percentages



**ALL 3**  
GROUPS OF PARTICIPANTS  
CITED THE HISTORICAL  
LEGACY OF THE  
ANIMATION  
INDUSTRY AS  
A REASON FOR  
EXCLUSION

## STRATEGIC SOLUTIONS TO FOSTER SYSTEMIC CHANGE THROUGHOUT THE INDUSTRY

SET TARGET INCLUSION GOALS

REDUCE AMBIGUITY & SUBJECTIVITY IN EVALUATION

FOSTER BELONGING

ENSURE ENVIRONMENTS DO NOT TRIGGER STEREOTYPES

CREATE INCLUSIVE CONSIDERATION LISTS

MAKE INCLUSION A GOAL FOR EVERYONE



## Inclusion in Animation? Investigating Opportunities, Challenges, and the Classroom to the C-Suite Pipeline

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The purpose of the present study was to examine the ecosystem of animation for gender inclusion quantitatively and qualitatively. To this end, we assessed gender and the percentage of women of color working above the line, below the line in key roles, and in the executive ranks of both the film and TV animation industry. We also mapped out the U.S. pipeline from 2016-2018, examining the percentage of women enrolled or attending 5 prestigious animation programs and screening animated shorts at the 5 top film festivals in this country.

Qualitatively, we interviewed 75 early career women in animation as well as executives to understand the barriers to inclusion and belonging in the industry. These 75 in depth interviews were supplemented with a survey from over 250 men and women in the animation guild investigating reasons for the lack of gender parity in this industry. Solutions to inequality in key positions are tackled in the report and a way forward to create an organizational and industry wide culture of belonging. Below highlights the quantitative and qualitative key findings.

### Key Findings

#### *Above the Line*

In terms of cast, only 20 (17%) of the 120 top animated features from 2007-2018 had a female lead or co lead. Three of these films depicted a female of color (3%) as the protagonist. The numbers were better – but not equal – across the first episode or segment of the 100 top animated TV series on broadcast and cable. Just 39% ( $n=431$  of 1,105) of the credited cast was filled with girls or women. Only 12% of the cast were females of color.

Looking again to the 120 film sample, only 2.5% ( $n=5$  of 197) of directors were women. Four women held these five jobs. Only 1 was a woman of color (Asian) who worked twice. Turning to TV, 13% ( $n=16$ ) of the episodes or 1<sup>st</sup> segments coded were directed by women. Only 3 or 2% were helmed by a woman of color. All 3 underrepresented females directors were Asian.

Across 120 top animated movies released between 2007 and 2018, 37% ( $n=91$  of 249) of producers ("Produced by" only) were women. Only 5% ( $n=12$ ) of all producers were women of color, however. Fifteen percent of live action producers ( $n=520$  out of 3,398) across 1,080 movies were women. Across the same time frame, only 1% of producers were women of color on these live action productions.

There has been no meaningful improvement in the percentage of female producers in live action features over 12 years. In animation, there has been a significant increase over time. While yearly trends followed a curvilinear pattern (i.e., linear increases followed by abrupt decreases), the lowest percentages improved substantially and linearly every 3-4 years.

The producers of the 100 top animation series of 2018 also were captured. Females held only 20% of EPs and 17% of CoEPs across 100 animated television shows. Only 6 women of color held EP titles. No

co EP titles in the sample credited a woman of color. More women (34%) were credited as producers but there were few women from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups with this title (8%). Just 17% ( $n=24$  of 145) of “Created by” or “Developed by” credits were held by women and only 3 of those women were from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups.

Nine percent of writers ( $n=40$  out of 423) across the 120 top animated films were women. Only 6 or 1% of these writers were women of color (4 Asian, 1 Latinx, 1 multiracial). In 100 animated TV series, 25% of the writers ( $n=198$ ) were women. Ten of these women were from underrepresented racial/ethnic backgrounds (6 Asian, 2 Latinx, 1 Black, 1 multiracial).

### ***Below the Line***

Across 52 of the top animated films from 2014-2018, the gender ratio of males to females across 9 key roles or unit head positions was 8.5 to 1. In terms of specific titles, only 7% ( $n=4$ ) of head of story positions were filled with women (6% women of color,  $n=3$ ), 15% ( $n=10$ ) of editors (3% women of color,  $n=2$ ), 8% ( $n=6$ ) of animation heads (3% women of color,  $n=2$ ), 14% ( $n=7$ ) of art directors (4% women of color,  $n=2$ ), 2% ( $n=1$ ) of head of layout (0 women of color), 21% ( $n=10$ ) of head of lighting (0 women of color), 11% ( $n=5$ ) of production designers (0 women of color), 9% ( $n=6$ ) of character effects supervisors (3% women of color,  $n=2$ ), and 10% ( $n=14$ ) of character composition supervisors (3% women of color,  $n=4$ ).

Looking at the story department, only 18% ( $n=111$  of 605) of team members were female with roughly the same level of participation for women in animation (16%,  $n=511$  of 3,140) and slightly higher participation for women in art (23%,  $n=128$  of 544). About a quarter of the labor pool was female in character effects (24%,  $n=251$  of 1,061) and composition (26%,  $n=408$  of 1,571).

For the below the line key roles in animated TV series, females comprised only 28% ( $n=20$ ) of story editors (1% women of color,  $n=1$ ), 18% ( $n=24$ ) of editors (4% women of color,  $n=5$ ), 16% ( $n=21$ ) of animation directors (8% women of color,  $n=11$ ), 20% ( $n=26$ ) of lead animators (13% women of color,  $n=17$ ), 24% ( $n=10$ ) of lead character designers (7% women of color,  $n=3$ ), and 11% ( $n=4$ ) of lead storyboard artists (3% women of color,  $n=1$ ).

We took a deeper dive into the gender composition of departments in animated television too ( $n=1,721$  employees). Just over a third of animators were women (35%,  $n=330$  of 937). In comparison, a similar percentage was found of women in character design (33%,  $n=98$  of 300) and a lower percentage of women as storyboard artists (24%,  $n=75$  of 312). Of the 172 storyboard revisionists listed, fully half (54%,  $n=93$ ) were women.

### ***Executive Ranks***

The executive ranks of 10 film and 14 TV companies were examined for gender and the race/ethnicity of female leaders as of early June 2018. Over half (52%,  $n=53$ ) of all animation executives in film were female and 39% ( $n=66$ ) in television. Fewer women of color were executives, with only 7 in film (6%) and 16 (9%) in television. Clearly, the experiences of white women and women of color are vastly different on the corporate side of animation.

The distribution for film and television executives by gender were quite different. At the top of film, fully half of the leadership positions (e.g., CEO, CCO, Presidents) were held by women whereas only 6% of the most prestigious posts in television were. A common pattern was also found across television and from VP level to EVP/Chief level in film: as power increases, females' participation decreases. All but 2 of the 23 women of color executives were found at the SVP level and below.

### *Pipeline from Classroom to Career*

Across 5 esteemed animation programs in the U.S. (USC, UCLA, CalArts, Ringling, SVA), well over half of all those attending or enrolled were female. Cutting across graduate *and* undergraduate programs evaluated, 65% of students enrolled in top animated programs were female in 2016 and 69% in 2018.

Turning to the 5 top film festivals (Sundance Film Festival, SXSW, Tribeca, NYFF, Telluride), 47% of all animated shorts evaluated ( $n=69$  out of 146) had at least one female director attached. The percentages increased notably across the three years evaluated (2016=33%; 2017=51%, 2018=60%). Thus, there is a strong and female-tipping pipeline coming out of top animation programs and film festivals in the country.

While this represents the pipeline prior to entering the industry, executives indicated that the pathway within film animation to becoming a director was through story, animation, or writing. Only 7% of those running story were women followed by 18% of the story team. If the path is through animation, the numbers are equally problematic from unit heads (8% female) to 16% of animators. Last, some directors come through writing and only 9% of credited writers were women across 52 top animated films. The same trajectory in TV was not possible to illuminate, given the vast differences in crediting domestically and internationally in the industry. Clearly, the drop off in female participation is between Festival screenings and working within animation companies. Females do not have the same access and opportunity as males and do not seem to be moving up the ranks as quickly in the space.

### *Qualitative Findings*

Results from interviews and surveys point to three major impediments facing women. First, that a culture of homophily prevents women from feeling a sense of belonging and moving forward in their careers. Responses from 50% of early-career women, 32% of decision-makers, and 25% of Animation Guild members indicated that a 'boy's club' interfered with women becoming directors. This sentiment was also conveyed by 37% of early-career women, 19% of decision-makers, and 32% of Animation Guild members when discussing the reasons for the lack of women across the animation industry.

Second, women reported being valued less than their male counterparts and that gender stereotyping plays a role in their career path. When discussing directors, 37% of early-career women, 57% of decision-makers, and 26% of Animation Guild members cited women's experience and a perception of riskiness as reasons that prevent more women from ascending to roles as a director. A culture that does not value women was identified by 47% of early-career women, and 19% each of decision-makers and Animation Guild members as a reason for the gender imbalance in employment more broadly.

Third, women are perceived to lack ambition or interest in the field. Roughly one-quarter of early-career women cited this explanation for both directors and when discussing general employment. Thirty-five percent of decision-makers claimed women's ambition was a reason for the lack of women directing, and 30% gave this reason for women's employment overall. Finally, 21% of Animation Guild members stated

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women's interest steered them away from directing, while 20% offered this explanation for women's participation across the industry. In contrast to these statements, 90% of women interviewed stated that they aspired to leadership positions in animation, including being a showrunner, director, art director, or other key roles.

The final set of responses focused on the unique experiences of women of color in the industry, namely their status as tokens and the resulting issues that created. Two-thirds of the early-career women of color who participated in the interviews stated that negative consequences emerged from their "token" status in the industry, including isolation and loneliness.

## Inclusion in Animation? Investigating Opportunities, Challenges, and the Classroom to the C-Suite Pipeline

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The conversation surrounding women's participation in entertainment has reached a fever pitch in the last year. An important aspect of the dialogue has been workplace equity, illuminating a lack of inclusion on screen and behind the camera in key production roles. Previous research has demonstrated that females are underrepresented in the C-suite of media entertainment companies as well as on production sets in roles as directors, writers, and producers in both TV and film.<sup>1</sup> Individuals from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups also face employment disparities across these platforms, particularly women of color. Just 4% of the 1,335 directors of top-grossing films released between 2007 and 2018 were females and only 9 were women of color.

While the above statistics are shocking, they refer to features in both live action and animated formats. Little is known about women working above and below the line in animation specifically, as this art form rarely receives the same level of empirical scrutiny by academics and advocacy groups as does its live action counterpart. For instance, the Directors Guild of America publishes yearly the total number of women and people of color directing episodes of scripted live action series.<sup>2</sup> Animated programs are not included in their tallies, making it impossible to track the career progress – or lack thereof – of hiring women directors across this form of entertainment. Past directors, we know very little about other key roles in animation such as producing, editing, story or character design. Clearly, a comprehensive assessment is needed to not only understand the current state of the union as it pertains to diversity, inclusion and belonging in the animation industry but also a map of the way forward toward change.

This report is intended to fill this void using both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Quantitatively, we assess the gender of employees working above and below the line across the top animated films and TV shows. The scope of our research is not limited to production and creative roles, we also examine the gender composition of C-suites and organizational charts of the major animation companies working in the movie and television spaces as well as the pipeline (e.g., animation programs, film festivals) from classroom to career. We highlight the percentage of women in these positions as well as those females from underrepresented races/ethnicities.

Qualitatively, we conducted 75 in depth interviews with executives and leaders in animation as well as those females employed at companies and/or doing freelance work in the space for roughly 2-7 years. The goal here was to examine perceptions of the barriers to entry, promotion and retention among women as well as obstacles and opportunities within the animation industry to accelerating change. To further illuminate the results from the interviews, we conducted a short online survey with over 250 male and female members of the Animation Guild asking open-ended questions about the lack of gender equity in the industry. The report concludes with summarizing the research and offering solutions for change.

Overall, this multi-prong approach will begin to paint a picture of the animation ecosystem. Whenever possible, we break out the results for women by underrepresented status (no, yes) as we know women's lived experiences within entertainment vary greatly by race/ethnicity. Only differences of 5 percentage

points or greater are indicators of change in this report.

### Quantitative Analysis

Below, we will document the gender and race/ethnicity (when captured) of individuals working above (directors, producers, cast) and below the line (unit heads, key roles, crew within specific departments) in film and then television.<sup>3</sup> Not all analyses are completely replicated across the two platforms, due to the differences in the type of animation typically used (3D vs. 2D) and the issues of one story vs. multiple episodes and segments within series. Movie or TV credits appearing at the beginning and end of storylines, segments, or episodes were used to make determinations. Put differently, we did not rely on industry databases (IMDbPro.com, Variety Insight) to ascertain who was credited in film and TV (save one position, writers in film).

#### *Above the Line*

Four above the line occupations were explored. The first was casting (see Table 1). Across the 120 top animated films from 2007-2018, we examined the percentage with a female lead or co lead driving the action.<sup>4</sup> In TV, we assessed the gender of the credited cast/voice talent across the first episode or segment of the 100 top animated TV shows of 2018 targeted at children and/or adults.<sup>5</sup> Neither film nor TV is anywhere close to parity.

Only 20 (17%) of the top animated features ( $n=120$ ) had a female lead or co lead. Three of these films (*Smurfs: The Lost Village*, *Moana*, *The Princess and the Frog*) featured a female of color (3%) voicing or appearing as the protagonist. The numbers were better in TV, but still far from equal. Just 39% ( $n=431$  of 1,105) of the credited cast was filled with girls or women.<sup>6</sup> Unpacking the females on screen in TV was important, as 27% were white females and 12% were females of color.

**Table 1**  
**Leads & Credited Casts in Animated Films & TV Shows**

Measures	Animated Films	Animated TV Shows
% w/women	17% ( $n=20$ )	39% ( $n=431$ )
% w/women of color	3% ( $n=3$ )	12% ( $n=132$ )
Total	120	100

*Note:* For films, the percentages should be read “the percentage of top animated films with a female lead or co lead.” For TV, the results are framed as “the percentage of the credited cast that is voiced by women/girls.”

The second position above the line evaluated was directing (see Table 2). Looking again to the 120 film sample, only 2.5% ( $n=5$  of 197) of directors were women. Four women held these five jobs, as Jennifer Yuh Nelson worked twice across the *Kung Fu Panda* franchise. The other 3 female directors were all Caucasian. Turning to TV, 13% ( $n=16$ ) of the episodes or 1<sup>st</sup> segments coded were directed by women.<sup>7</sup> Only 3 or 2% were helmed by a woman of color. All three underrepresented female directors were Asian (i.e., Niki Yang, Lynn Wang, Aoi Umeki).

**Table 2**  
**Percentage of Women Directors in Animated Film & TV Shows**

Measures	Film	TV
% of directors that were women	2.5% ( <i>n</i> =5)	13% ( <i>n</i> =16)
% of directors that were women of color	1% ( <i>n</i> =2)	2% ( <i>n</i> =3)
<b>Total</b>	197	127

*Note:* The total sample size was 120 animated films and the first episode or segment coded across 100 animated TV series. Five episodes did not credit a director.

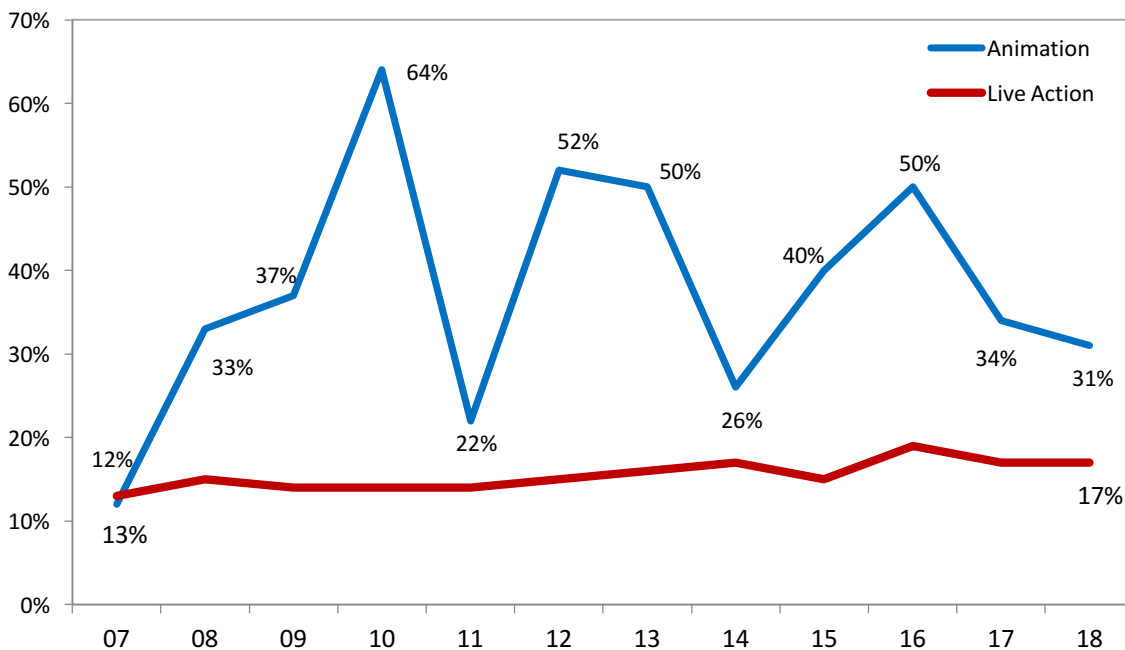
The third above the line position assessed is producing. Because of the notable differences between film and television, we will discuss them separately. For film, we only examined the gender of those with “Produced by” credits (see Table 3). Across 120 top animated movies released between 2007 and 2018, 37% (*n*=91 of 249) of these credits were held by women. Only 5% (*n*=12) of all producers were women of color. In comparison, 15% of live action producers (*n*=520 out of 3,398) were women. Only 1% (*n*=40) of producers across this sample were women of color on live action productions.

**Table 3**  
**Percentage of Women Producers in Animated vs. Live Action Films**

Measures	Animation	Live Action
% of producers that were women	37% ( <i>n</i> =91)	15% ( <i>n</i> =520)
% of producers that were women of color	5% ( <i>n</i> =12)	1% ( <i>n</i> =40)

Has the percentage of female producers changed over time? Examining 1,200 live action and animated films theatrically released between 2007 and 2018 revealed two major trends, as shown in Figure 1. First, the percentage of female producers in live action content (15%) has remained a flat line for 12 years. There has been no meaningful change, probably due to largely explicit biases.<sup>8</sup> Second, not only is the percentage of female producers 22 percentage points higher in animated films, but the pattern of hiring increases and decreases over time. Most notably, the lowest percentages across the study time frame have increased (12%, 22%, 26%, 31%) suggesting the animation industry in film may be at work towards more inclusive hiring practices in the producer ranks.

**Figure 1**  
**Women Producers by Platform Type: 2007-2018**



The crediting process and hierarchy of producers is slightly different in animated television. Here, we assessed the gender of executive producers, co executive producers and producers across the 100 top animation series of 2018. Females were only 20% of EPs and 17% of CoEPs across 100 animated television shows (see Table 4).<sup>9</sup> Only 6 women of color held EP titles (i.e., 4 Asian, 1 Middle Eastern/North African, 1 Latinx) and none held co EP titles in the sample. More women (34%) were credited as producers, but few of these women were from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups (8%; 12 Asian women, 2 Black women, 2 Latinx women).<sup>10</sup> Additionally, only 17% ( $n=24$  of 145) of “Created by” or “Developed by” credits were attributed to women. Only 3 (2%) of those women were underrepresented (i.e., 1 Asian, 1 Middle Eastern/North African, 1 Black).

**Table 4**  
**Percentage of Women by Producer Type in Animated TV Shows**

Measures	Created by	Executive Producers	Co Executive Producers	Producers
% women	17% ( $n=24$ )	20% ( $n=71$ )	17% ( $n=10$ )	34% ( $n=64$ )
% women of color	2% ( $n=3$ )	2% ( $n=6$ )	0	8% ( $n=16$ )
<b>Total</b>	145	352	57	190

The final position was writing.<sup>11</sup> Across 120 films, 9% of writers were female ( $n=40$ ) and only 6 of 423 were women of color (1%). Of the 6 women of color, 4 were Asian, 1 was Latinx and 1 was multicultural. Less than a fifth of writers were women (19%) in 2018 which is higher than 2007 when only 1 female writer was credited across the theatrically released animated features (see Table 5). Numerically, the highest number of women working was in 2012 but none of these jobs were held by women of color. For



television, 198 writers were credited across the 100 top animated series.<sup>12</sup> A quarter of the writers were women ( $n=50$ ) and only 10 were women of color (5%). Six of these women were Asian, 2 Latinx, 1 Black, and 1 multiracial.

**Table 5**  
Percentage of Women Writers in Animated Feature Films by Year

Measures	07	08	09	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
% women writers	3%	0	10%	0	11%	15%	6%	7%	9%	12%	11%	19%
% women of color writers	0	0	7%	0	0	0	0	0	0	2%	2%	4%
<b>Total Writers</b>	36	23	41	16	55	45	35	29	21	43	52	27

In sum, few women participate on screen or above the line in animated storytelling. This is true for film and TV. The percentage and number of women of color with access and opportunity on screen and above the line was at the floor. However, there was one major bright spot in the results of this section. The percentage of female producers in animated filmmaking was strong and increasing. However, most of these positions were filled primarily by white women.

### *Below the Line*

The processes below the line for films (3D/CGI) and television shows (2D/hand drawing) are vastly different. As such, we report on these positions separately below. Starting with animated films, we looked at the gender of individuals holding 9 key roles as well as the race/ethnicity of women in these positions (underrepresented vs. not) across 52 of the top animated films from 2014-2018.<sup>13</sup> As shown in Table 6, the range of female participation below the line is from a low of 2% to a high of 21%. For women from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups, there is complete absence in some positions (i.e., Head of Layout, Lighting, Production Designer) and less than 7% in all others.

**Table 6**  
Women's Participation Below the Line in Animated Films

Department	% Women	% Women of Color	Total
Head of Story	7% ( $n=4$ )	6% ( $n=3$ )	54
Film Editor	15% ( $n=10$ )	3% ( $n=2$ )	67
Head of Animation	8% ( $n=6$ )	3% ( $n=2$ )	76
Art Director	14% ( $n=7$ )	4% ( $n=2$ )	51
Head of Layout	2% ( $n=1$ )	0	53
Head of Lighting	21% ( $n=10$ )	0	48
Production Designer	11% ( $n=5$ )	0	45
Character Effects Supervisor	9% ( $n=6$ )	3% ( $n=2$ )	67
MRST Supervisor	10% ( $n=14$ )	3% ( $n=4$ )	135
<b>Total</b>	11% ( $n=63$ )	3% ( $n=15$ )	596

Note: MRST refers to Modeling, Rigging, Surfacing, Texturing or character composition.

We conducted a deeper dive into the gender composition of departments ( $n=6,921$ ) that might be important for pipeline purposes in film animation.<sup>14</sup> An online name and gender database was queried with an API for these analyses, so race/ethnicity was not captured. In story, only 18% ( $n=111$  of 605) of

team members were female with roughly the same level of participation for women in animation departments (16%,  $n=511$  of 3,140) and slightly higher participation in art (23%,  $n=128$  of 544). About a quarter of the labor pool was female in character effects (24%,  $n=251$  of 1,061) and composition (26%,  $n=408$  of 1,571).

Turning to the 100 top animated TV series, we illuminate the percentages and numbers of women working across 6 key roles.<sup>15</sup> Two particular trends emerge in Table 7. Female participation ranges from a low of 11% (lead storyboard artists) to a high of 28% (story editors). Focusing on women of color, just over half of all female animation directors were underrepresented. Across these women there was little variation by race/ethnicity, as all 38 underrepresented women were Asian save three.

**Table 7**  
**Women's Participation Below the Line in Animated TV Series**

Department	% Women	% Women of Color	Total
Story Editor	28% ( $n=20$ )	1% ( $n=1$ )	72
Head of Editing	18% ( $n=24$ )	4% ( $n=5$ )	132
Animation Director	16% ( $n=21$ )	8% ( $n=11$ )	135
Lead Animator	20% ( $n=26$ )	13% ( $n=17$ )	132
Lead Character Designer	24% ( $n=10$ )	7% ( $n=3$ )	41
Lead Storyboard Artist	11% ( $n=4$ )	3% ( $n=1$ )	36
<b>Total</b>	<b>19% (<math>n=105</math>)</b>	<b>7% (<math>n=38</math>)</b>	<b>548</b>

*Note:* Not all shows credited leads or unit heads. If the sample size is below 100, the findings should be interpreted with caution. Lead/supervising/key were terms all treated synonymously.

Similar to film, we took a deeper dive into departments using available information on the gender of team members online ( $n=1,721$ ). Just over a third of animators were women (35%,  $n=330$  of 937). In comparison, a similar percentage was found for women in character design (33%,  $n=98$  of 300) and a lower percentage as storyboard artists (24%,  $n=75$  of 312). Of the 172 storyboard revisionists listed, fully half (54%,  $n=93$ ) were women.

Overall, the percentages of females in film and TV working below the line as unit heads and in key roles do not differ that dramatically. Where we see more female participation is at the lower levels below the line, particularly in TV animation. There, females take up from a quarter to fully half of the space on teams. Thus, 2D animation seems to be more open to women in below the line roles than 3D animation.

### **Executive Ranks**

Here, we examined 24 of the top film ( $n=10$ ) and television ( $n=14$ ) studios and production companies creating animated content.<sup>16</sup> Each of the organizational charts or executive ranks for the companies were pulled from the company's website or Variety Insight, if they were publicly available. Then, we sought to verify the current organizational hierarchy of each company with members of the animation community, human resources departments, or their business executives. Each name was examined for gender and underrepresented racial/ethnic status (no/yes). It must be noted that if a company produces/distributes both film and television content and did not differentiate teams within each platform, the executives were put in the film column.

**Table 8**  
**Women's Participation Across Film & TV Animation Companies**

Measures	Film Executives	TV Executives
% women across all ranks	52%	39%
% women of color across all ranks	6%	9%

As shown in Table 8, the executive ranks were filled with women as of early June 2018. Over half (52%,  $n=53$ ) of all animation executives in film were female and 39% ( $n=66$ ) in television. Fewer women of color were executives, with only 7 in film (6%) and 16 (9%) in television. Clearly, the experiences of white women and women of color are vastly different on the corporate side of animation. The above percentages do not reveal how women were doing across the range of executive titles at animation companies. To this end, the executive ranks are displayed in Table 9. The distributions for film and television were quite different.

**Table 9**  
**Women's Participation Across Executive Ranks in Film & TV Animation Companies**

Rank	% Women Executives in Film Animation	% Women Executives in TV Animation
CEO, CCO, President	50%	6%
Chief/EVP	29%	14%
SVP	50%	37%
VP/Head	68%	52%
Director Equivalent	50%	42%

At the top of film, women held fully half of the top leadership positions whereas only 6% of the most prestigious posts in television were. A common pattern was also found across television and from VP level to EVP/Chief level in film: as power increases, females' participation decreases. All but 2 of the 23 women of color were found at the SVP level and below.

### ***Pipeline for Women in Animation***

We assessed the pipeline in two ways. First, we were interested in females' participation in animation programs across the United States. Enrollment or attendance data per term or year was collected from school officials at the University of Southern California; University of California, Los Angeles; Ringling College of Art and Design; School of Visual Arts; California Institute for the Arts; and Rhode Island School of Design.<sup>17</sup> The data were collected at both the undergraduate and graduate level for 2016, 2017, and 2018. Across every year at both the Bachelor's and Master's levels, females clocked in at half or more of enrolled or attending students in animation programs. Averages reveal that between 65% in 2016 and 69% in 2018 of the animation student body across these institutions was female. Thus, roughly two-thirds of the student body in these feeder schools are women!

The second indicator of interest was to examine the percentage of animated short films with a female director attached across the same time frame.<sup>18</sup> Here, every animated short from Sundance Film Festival, SXSW, Tribeca, New York Film Festival, and Telluride was evaluated between 2016 and 2018. Overall, 47% of all animated shorts assessed ( $n=69$  out of 146) had at least one female director attached (see Table

10). Further, the percentages increased notably each year (2016=33%, 2017=51%, 2018=60%). The pipeline doesn't seem to be cracking or leaking from the classroom to exhibiting shorts in the broader U.S. animation ecosystem.

**Table 10**  
**Percentage of Animated Short Films Directed by Women Across 5 U.S. Festivals: 2016-2018**

Measure	2016	2017	2018
% w/women directors attached	33%	51%	60%
<b>Total</b>	54	47	45

While these may be standard ways to frame a baseline, we also wanted to assess the pipeline for directing positions within companies. The numbers for female participation in 3D and 2D animation are low, as noted above. For film, the pipeline or track to directing is primarily through story and writing but also animation. As shown in Table 11, there is a small pool of women at the head of story and animation and slightly more in those teams. But the percentages are well below even a fifth of the current workforce. Efforts are needed to encourage and accelerate women coming out of schools and Festival programs onto teams within these tracks so that they can occupy leadership roles over time leading to directing.

**Table 11**  
**Tracks Leading to Directing Animated Films**

Film Directors (2.5%)		
↑Head of Story (7%)	↑Head of Animation (8%)	↑Writing (9%)
↑Story Department (18%)	↑Animators (16%)	n/a

Examining the pipeline to directing animation in television is far more difficult. Not all shows credit story editors or those leading or supervising storyboard artists. If the track to directing (13%) is through story in TV, the pipeline emerged from storyboard supervising (11%) and storyboarding (24%) on one hand or from the head of story department on the other (28%). Roughly a quarter of the workforce was held by women in two of these positions, though the vast majority of these females were Caucasian. These findings should be interpreted with caution, given that not all shows credit above or below the line talent consistently.

Taken together, the pipeline from the classroom to sustainable career falls off in the tracks or ranks within animation companies – not before! While this is true for women overall, the lack of racial/ethnic diversity among women is a particular challenge to the animation industry as inclusion is a strong characteristic of Gen Z or those currently entering the workforce.<sup>19</sup> Given these trends, it becomes important to understand the how and why women's participation declines in certain areas and why they are thriving in others. Toward this goal, we interviewed and surveyed women – and men – in the industry to understand where impediments to belonging and inclusion are occurring and what to do about them. The results of these studies are the focus of the next section of the report.

## Qualitative Study

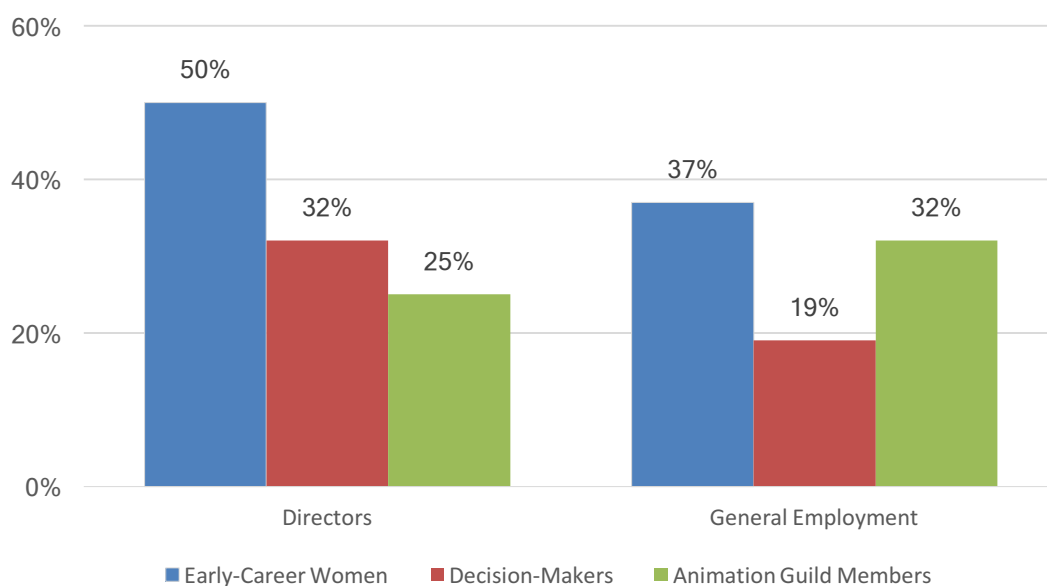
It is important to understand the reasons *why* there are fewer women and especially women of color in certain roles throughout the animation industry. To supplement the quantitative portion of the report, a qualitative study that consisted of three components was undertaken. In-depth interviews were conducted with 38 early-career women (1.5 to 12 years of experience in the industry, 32% from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups), with an average age of 29.<sup>20</sup> An additional set of in-depth interviews were held with 37 decision-makers (30% male, 19% underrepresented, average age=51).<sup>21</sup> We supplemented these two sets of data with an online survey of Animation Guild members. More than 250 individuals answered questions designed to ascertain perceptions about the lack of women working in various industry roles. Nearly half (48%) were male, 32% were from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups, and the sample had an average age of 43.<sup>22</sup>

The interviews and survey covered three main areas: reasons for the lack of women as directors, producers, and working throughout the industry. In addition, actions taken by companies and other groups to facilitate change were discussed.<sup>23</sup> Responses from interview and survey participants were analyzed and grouped into four unique categories that illuminate themes. Below, each of these areas will be discussed alongside contextually relevant theoretical and empirical insights from other organizations and academic disciplines.

### **#1 Women are Hampered by Homophily**

Although the animation industry employs more men than women in its ranks, responses from interviews and surveys pointed to more than simply a numerical imbalance. The existence of what participants called the “boy’s club”—a masculine culture that favors and promotes men due to similarity—was highlighted as limiting women’s work and ascension through the industry ranks.

**Figure 2**  
Responses Indicating the Existence of A Boy’s Club as An Impediment to Women’s Careers



Labelling the industry a ‘boy’s club’ tells us very little about the reasons women are left out of animation, other than pointing to a numerical imbalance that skews toward men. ***Instead, looking deeper at the responses reveals that the primary issue facing women is a lack of belonging to an organizational culture in which preference is given to male employees.*** This was evident in responses that centered around men’s conscious and unconscious biases and allegiances to work with other men-- which aligns with an empirical concept called *homophily*, the idea that individuals form relationships with other people who are similar to them on a key trait (e.g., gender, race, etc.).<sup>24</sup>

Beyond difficulty in accessing predominantly male networks, a lack of culture fit may reduce women’s sense of belonging and desire to work in the animation industry. Research in the domain of computer science reveals that when women are confronted with stereotypical role models or environments, they report *less interest* in joining the field, lower sense of belonging, and *reduced perceptions* of their success.<sup>25</sup> In these studies, role models can be male *or* female, while stereotypical environments consist of rooms with science-fiction posters on the wall, artifacts on shelves (e.g., toys, robots, science fiction characters) or with visible tech equipment. It is possible that the male-skewed environments of animation companies create a similar feeling in women in this industry.

Eighteen percent of early-career women named the male-dominated culture as a personal barrier to their career. One effect of working in an industry where women expect to experience threats to their gender identity is related to their attention. At least one study shows that women may devote more attention to environmental cues when they anticipate interacting with a sexist man.<sup>26</sup> If women are allotting attention and energy to remaining vigilant regarding potential identity harms, this may reduce their ability to devote focus and attention to their work. In this way, the male-dominated environments or male cultures in which women work may have detrimental effects beyond women themselves to influence their work product.

*... systems in place inherently favor men, while the aggressive competitive nature of finding work can be unfairly discouraging to women.*

*Studios are more likely to treat women unfairly; not hiring them for leadership positions, less pay for the same job, requesting extra work/duties of women rather than men because [of] women being more insecure and going with the flow is expected.*

*Men in charge give jobs to people they feel comfortable with (other men) and don't see women as capable leaders.*

*Because women are given less opportunities and do not benefit of the male support that guys prefer to give to each other.*

Across survey and interview responses to questions about leadership and Guild employment, an additional factor emerged. The legacy of the animation industry, or historical practices from the inception of the medium, were said to have birthed an environment where women were not welcome. This became even more clear when responses to the question regarding the lack of female directors was examined. Citing the early days of animation and the Nine Old Men at Disney, respondents stated that women had been kept out of masculine occupations and relegated to “ink and paint” roles. Not included in this category, but relevant to the discussion were responses that referenced how more recent

historical industry trends (e.g., past few decades, generations) favored men in leadership or more general roles.

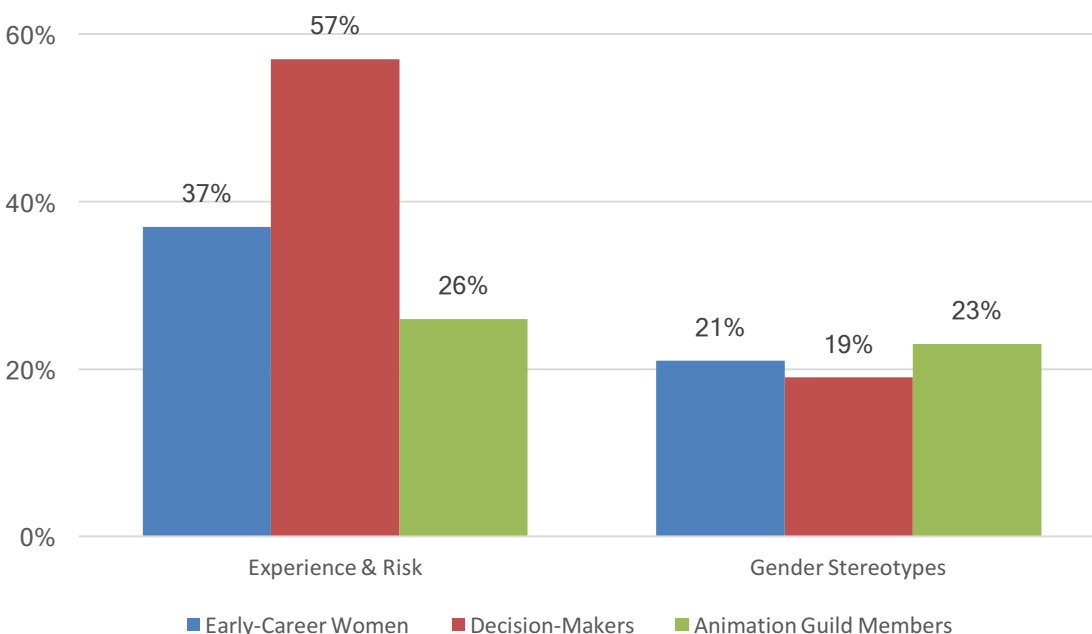
Historical biases in animation were mentioned by 24% ( $n=9$ ) of early career women, 22% ( $n=8$ ) of decision-makers, and 6% ( $n=14$ ) of Animation Guild members when speaking about the lack of directors. This explanation was also provided when discussing Guild employee disparities. Twenty-one percent ( $n=8$ ) of early career women, 35% ( $n=13$ ) of decision-makers, and 13% ( $n=36$ ) of Animation Guild members stated that traditions from early animation affect today's gender imbalance.

While women have made strides in relation to where they began in the animation industry, relying on this indicator as an explanation for bias in the present is insufficient. Research evidence shows that comparing progress for women with a time point in the past reduces perceptions of current discrimination relative to drawing a comparison between present-day treatment of men and women.<sup>27</sup> To ensure that individuals accurately estimate progress for women, providing data on women's participation in the current moment is essential.

### ***#2 Women are Viewed as Less Valuable***

A second pattern that emerged across interviews and surveys surrounded the view and treatment of women in animation. Across participants and questions, answers recounted the ways in which women are doubted, discredited, or less valued by individuals and institutions. The results reveal that the way women are perceived and the resulting behaviors they face present a key impediment to progress.

**Figure 3**  
**Responses Regarding the Lack of Female Directors**



Women's capabilities, experience and presence in the talent pipeline were called on as explanations for the lack of female directors. Additionally, elevating women to the role of director is seen to incur risk for studios and even for individuals who advocate for women's ascension. Thirty-seven percent of early-

career women ( $n=14$ ), 57% ( $n=21$ ) of decision-makers, and 26% ( $n=65$ ) of Animation Guild participants provided answers that fit into this category.

*Because people are not willing to try something new - females are seen as a risk as most animators are male.*

*When it comes to feature films, studios aren't willing to take as many "risks." Being a non-white, non-male director is still considered a "risk" in the industry... the studios tend to hire the same directors that have made successful films before.*

A second reason given for the lack of female directors is pervasive gender stereotypes—particularly related to leadership—that still govern how women are perceived. Twenty-one percent of early career women ( $n=8$ ), 19% ( $n=7$ ) of decision-makers, and 23% ( $n=59$ ) of Animation Guild participants offered explanations that aligned with this category. Respondents indicated that qualities associated with directing are linked to traditionally masculine attributes (e.g., being competitive, decisive, and aggressive). In contrast, conventionally feminine traits were mentioned as less desirable for directors, or created different professional opportunities or impeded equality in organizations.

The role of producing is also linked to gender stereotypes—though in the opposite direction. Stereotypically feminine traits were invoked to explain why women rise to positions of influence as producers. Qualities that were seen as more feminine in nature were named by 58% ( $n=22$ ) of the early-career women interviewed and 62% ( $n=23$ ) of decision-makers as reasons that women excel or enter the field of producing. Examples of these attributes included being organized, collaborating, and supporting others. More condescending references included describing producers as “caretakers,” or “helpmates,” and associated tasks as “secretarial,” “administrative,” and even “parenting.”

Across directors and producers, the dependence on stereotypical assumptions about leadership and gender roles is perhaps best illustrated by the respondents who stated that women were better at multitasking, which in turn made them better producers. Yet the empirical evidence that women are better at multitasking is insufficient to support this widely-held stereotype.<sup>28</sup> The conclusion across these categories is that the industry still relies on gender-based expectations to ascertain “fit” between an individual and a leader role rather than establishing a true approximation of an individual’s skills or utilizing objective hiring criteria. Organizational fit is a component of feeling a sense of belonging.<sup>29</sup> If women are seen to only fit the role of producing and are absent from the story pipeline to directing, this leaves a narrow scope of the field to which they may feel a degree of belonging.

More broadly, *role congruity theory* describes how perceptions of leadership align with traditionally masculine attributes, while stereotypically feminine traits are less likely to overlap with leadership qualities.<sup>30</sup> As a consequence, women may be punished for adopting more agentic or masculine behaviors to fulfill the requirements of leader roles. The consequence of stereotypical thinking about job roles is that women must balance a fine line between being successful or competent and being liked. Evidence suggests that hiring criteria shifts to penalize women who behave more agentially (e.g., demonstrate more stereotypically-male qualities) by placing more weight on these women’s social skills than their competence.<sup>31</sup> In another study, in the absence of information about women’s communal (e.g., more stereotypically-feminine) traits, perceptions of a female manager’s likeability suffered relative to a male manager.<sup>32</sup> Even when clear information is given about women’s success on a male-typed task or job, women are viewed as less likeable and more hostile than men.<sup>33</sup> This is particularly important, as likeability may influence evaluations, consideration for special assignments, and even pay.<sup>34</sup>



According to role congruity theory, a second consequence of the lack of overlap between feminine qualities and leader roles is that women may not be projected into leadership.<sup>35</sup> In line with this research, participants indicated that women are not viewed as trustworthy in creative roles—particularly the role of director—and thus their work as producers is more acceptable. Respondents expressed that female producers are less threatening to male directors and team members than a female director. One-third (34%,  $n=13$ ) of early-career women and 38% ( $n=14$ ) of decision-makers provided this reasoning. Hence, the gender stereotypes that participants used to define qualities of directors and producers in animation may serve as an underlying reason for perceptions about women’s experience, risk, and competence to work as directors.

*There is a perception that women are not “tough enough” to manage and direct a crew of mostly male artists.*

*Lack of trust in women to lead a team because they don't lead the same way men lead and change is uncomfortable.*

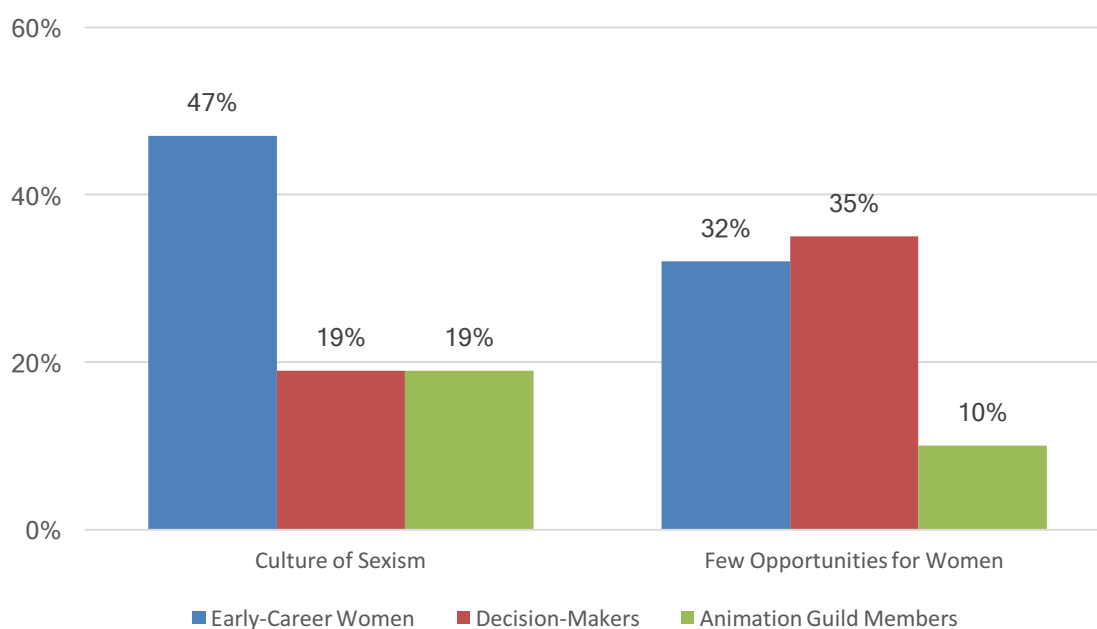
*Bias in how women are perceived. Strong men are “assertive,” strong women are “bitchy.”*

While stereotypes about women seemingly disqualify them from working as directors, women who move through the production ranks are able to move up into leadership roles at companies and studios. Six of the seven women filling the top positions in film (President, CEO, CCO) worked as producers before ascending to these executive roles. Clearly, within these organizations, women’s leadership in certain positions is not demeaned or dismissed. Instead, women who demonstrate a capacity to manage others and shepherd projects are valued and promoted to the senior ranks. The question remains, then, how to transform the ranks of directors to mirror this reality.

What women experience at the highest levels of the industry is mirrored in less prestigious jobs. When asked why there are fewer women working in union roles across companies, 47% ( $n=18$ ) of early career women, 19% ( $n=7$ ) of decision-makers, and 19% ( $n=52$ ) of Animation Guild members focused on a culture of sexism that makes it difficult for women to navigate the business. This included being treated as inferior, being questioned about their work, and assumed incompetence. Experiencing bias or discrimination can reduce perceptions of validation and thus a sense of belonging.<sup>36</sup> The day-to-day work life of women in animation may be communicating that they are not valued and that they do not belong in the field.

An additional facet 32% ( $n=12$ ) of early career women, 35% ( $n=13$ ) of decision-makers, and 10% ( $n=27$ ) of Animation Guild members mentioned was that women lack opportunities in animation. This category reflects the perception that there are few opportunities or not enough jobs available for women, or that they are overlooked or not hired by employers. This may also include feeling unwelcome to apply for jobs, and barriers to getting in the door. As shown earlier in the paper, the lack of women in the pipeline for directing via the story department in both TV and film, demonstrates that the point of entry is indeed inaccessible for many women.

**Figure 4**  
**Responses Regarding the Lack of Females in General Employment**



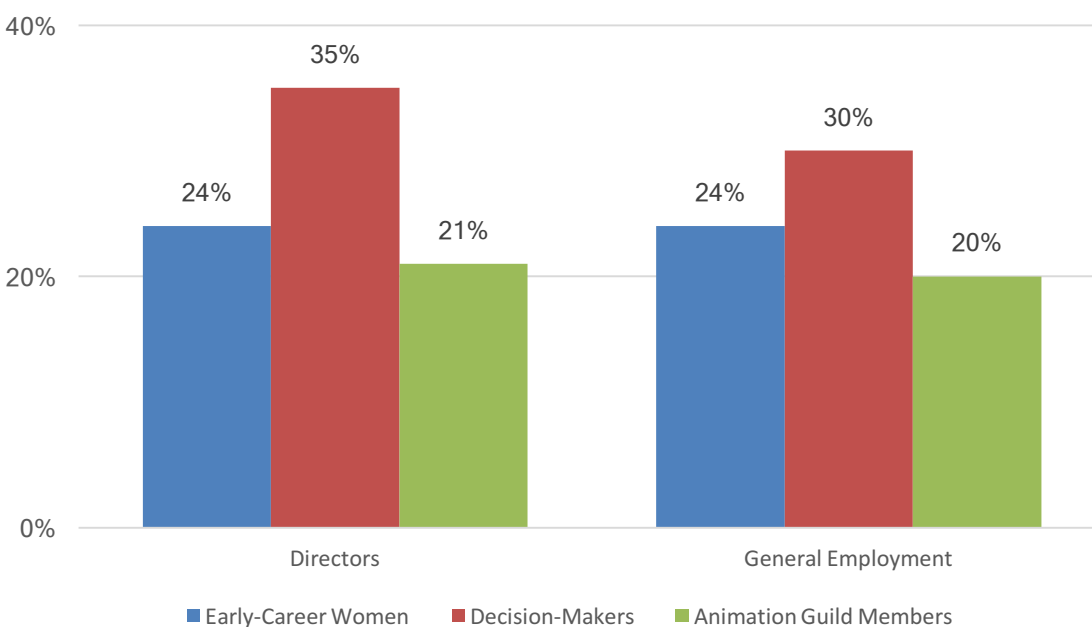
To add further support to the findings above, 71% ( $n=27$ ) of the early career females in animation who were interviewed indicated that they faced personal challenges due to their treatment in the industry. Responses described having to prove one's abilities, not being taken seriously by co-workers or supervisors, not being trusted, experiencing wage gaps compared to male employees, and having their work discounted by others.

In concert with these responses, 37% ( $n=14$ ) of women stated that *sexism* more generally was present in the industry. Women invoked that term directly and recounted their own experiences or knowledge of others who had dealt with sexual harassment from colleagues in animation. The general perception from the women who participated in the study is of an industry that does not value women or the contributions they might make.

### ***#3 Women are Not Interested, Not Supported, Not Present***

The third major theme that emerged was related to the interests and desires of women to pursue careers in the animation industry both as directors and more generally. When asked about why women are not filling directing positions in film, responses across early career women (24%,  $n=9$ ), decision-makers (35%,  $n=13$ ), and Animation Guild members (21%,  $n=54$ ) indicated a perception that women were not interested in these roles. Additionally, responses focused on a lack of encouragement or support for women who might consider directing, or the lack of opportunities provided by companies. The absence of visible female directors, mentors, or even programs that could bolster the pipeline was also included here.

**Figure 5**  
**Responses Regarding Women's Interest in Working as Directors and in Animation**



A similar set of responses emerged when participants were asked about the lack of women employed more generally across the animation industry. Nearly one-fourth (24%,  $n=9$ ) of early-career women, 30% of decision-makers ( $n=11$ ), and one-fifth (20%,  $n=54$ ) of Animation Guild members indicated that women may not be interested in pursuing careers in animation. The reasons that women were not interested in animation ranged from reservations about the industry to inherent predispositions that led women to other careers.

Despite the perceptions of industry members, women's ambitions encompass a variety of different roles within animation. Of the 38 women in their early careers who were interviewed, 90% ( $n=34$ ) stated that they aspired to leadership positions across the industry. With further prompting, the 34 women indicated that they were interested in becoming a showrunner (41%,  $n=14$ ), directing (35%,  $n=12$ ), art direction (35%,  $n=12$ ), working as an executive (18%,  $n=6$ ), and filling a variety of further roles (35%,  $n=12$ ) such as producer, storyboard director, head of story, lead animator, production designer, series creator and other lead jobs. Twelve percent ( $n=4$ ) offered that they wanted to move up in the ranks in creative endeavors.<sup>37</sup>

Clearly, women are interested in leadership roles in the animation industry. What prevents them from reaching these positions in greater number? One explanation is that they are not in roles that lead to these opportunities. Almost one-quarter (24%,  $n=9$ ) of the early-career women stated that women are do not fill the positions that lead to directing. This was also cited by 19% ( $n=7$ ) of the decision-makers. These responses indicated that women are rarely found in story, animator, or artistic roles that form the pathway to directing.

In contrast to directing, another career path is more open to women. In particular, the ladder to producing appears to be more conducive to women's ambitions. When asked why there were more female producers than directors, 61% ( $n=23$ ) of early-career women and 54% ( $n=20$ ) of decision-makers

cited the existence of a career path that women can follow. That is, women may be tracked into the positions that precede becoming a producer (e.g., production assistant, coordinator, supervisor, or manager) and there find a trajectory that will take them into a leadership role. If this pathway is less likely to incur the negative outcomes women might find working in other positions, then this may be one explanation for their choices.

Another reason why individuals may perceive a lack of interest in the field may stem from women's reluctance to assert their ambitions. Sixteen percent of the early-career women we interviewed stated that internal barriers such as doubts or lack of confidence—feelings largely stemming from a lack of role models and their day-to-day experiences in the industry— hindered their career trajectory. The uncertainties that women have in their own ability or likelihood to succeed may inhibit them from sharing their ambitions or desires to pursue a leadership track in the industry.

Women's ambitions or interest in the field of animation may not be evident for several reasons. For one, expressing ambition or self-promoting may result in lower evaluations of women.<sup>38</sup> Second, stereotypical environments may reduce women's perceptions of success or interest in the field, as noted earlier.<sup>39</sup> Third, conditions of social identity threat may influence women's career choices. For example, when women feel they are at risk of confirming a negative stereotype about their gender, they may elect to pursue more stereotypically feminine career paths.<sup>40</sup> Fourth, when individuals see that organizations or positions are only open to a few token members of their group, they may be less likely to believe that they will be personally successful in a job or company.<sup>41</sup> Thus, women may be aware of potential negative consequences for speaking up or demonstrating interest in animation, and refrain from declaring their ambitions to others who could facilitate their success.

#### ***#4 Women of Color Experience Negative Consequences***

A final area of exploration was the unique experiences women of color face in the animation industry. As the quantitative evidence above demonstrates, the prevalence of women from underrepresented racial/ethnic backgrounds lags behind the numbers for women overall. For that reason, it was important to understand if women of color report facing any unique barriers or challenges in the industry that would impede their participation.

Across 12 women of color in their early careers who participated in the interview process, two-thirds (67%,  $n=8$ ) stated that negative experiences were associated with their work in animation. This included being tokenized or “the only one” in their company or work group, resulting in isolation; feeling that they had to work harder or their contributions were erased or minimized; and the negative emotions they felt as a consequence of their status.

Half of women of color ( $n=6$ ) stated that while their skin color or background may now be seen as an asset by companies or individuals, the industry is still tone deaf to many of these issues. Women noted that being identified for opportunities because they were women of color created suspicion or negative feelings.

One-quarter ( $n=3$ ) of individuals stated that the racial/ethnic background of women is a factor in these conversations, and that more women with Asian heritage work in animation than Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, or women from other marginalized backgrounds. Finally, 2 women stated that they feel lucky or fortunate to be working in this industry.

Research supports the idea that women of color face unique career impediments compared to their white female counterparts. This includes promotion disparities, wage gaps (for certain racial/ethnic groups), and access to high-visibility assignments.<sup>42</sup> Perceptions of leadership may also differ for women from certain racial/ethnic groups, as being 'white' may be perceived as a prototypical trait of leaders.<sup>43</sup> This may affect their long-term career path and ability to be promoted into supervisory positions. Finally, women of color who hold meritocratic beliefs about the industry or the world may experience lower self-esteem when confronted with discrimination.<sup>44</sup> As women from underrepresented backgrounds navigate the field of animation, it is not surprising that they experience negative emotions or skepticism about the industry. The lack of women from underrepresented backgrounds working as directors, producers, and executives in the field presents a clear indication that women of color do not have opportunities to participate or are excluded from leadership roles.

### ***Industry Attempts to Address Inequalities***

The animation industry has taken steps to address issues of inequality in its ranks. Although disparities still persist, we were curious about industry-members' knowledge of remedies in place to increase inclusion throughout company ranks. Several questions across interviews and surveys focused on solutions for change and the effectiveness of those efforts.<sup>45</sup>

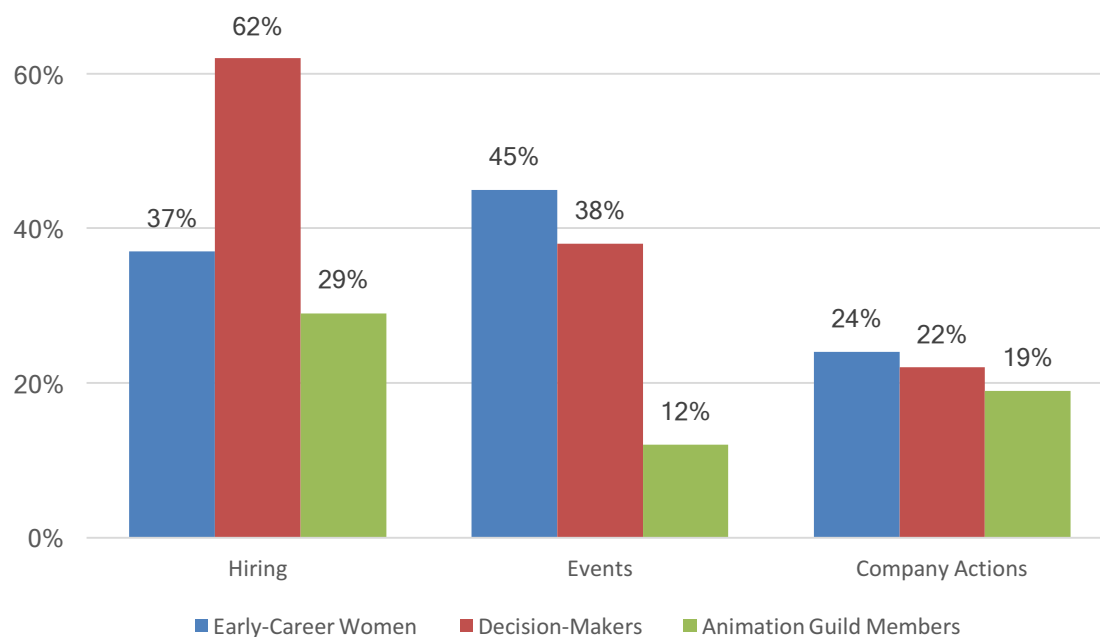
As shown in Figure 6, two sets of responses outpaced the others. First, inclusive hiring patterns were mentioned by respondents, particularly by decision-makers. Early-career women were more aware of events, talks, mixers, or other activities put on primarily to increase awareness. A few responses focused on the formation of affinity groups at companies, while fewer discussed mandates in place to promote hiring. Not included on the chart is the focus on inclusive leadership that some participants noted (8%  $n=3$ , early-career women, 19%  $n=7$ , decision-makers, 5%  $n=13$ , Animation Guild members). These responses focused on placing women, people of color, or other groups into positions of responsibility.

A follow-up question asked individuals to consider whether the efforts they noticed were working. Most participants stated that they were: 47% ( $n=18$ ) of early-career women, 54% ( $n=20$ ) of decision-makers, and 64% ( $n=116$ ) of survey participants. The result pointed to most often was again a change in hiring. Twenty-nine percent ( $n=7$ ) of early-career women, 23% ( $n=7$ ) of decision-makers and 18% ( $n=33$ ) of Animation Guild members stated that hiring practices were shifting noticeably.

Despite their assertions that the industry is on a path to greater inclusion, one-third of early-career women ( $n=8$ ) and decision-makers ( $n=10$ ) as well as 15% ( $n=27$ ) of survey participants stated that the pace of change is slow. Additionally, 21% ( $n=5$ ) of women, 17% ( $n=5$ ) of decision-makers, and 16% ( $n=28$ ) of Guild members stated that the efforts underway are not a panacea for the issues in the industry. In particular, individuals wondered how women or those from other underrepresented groups would feel to know they were hired because they are a statistical minority or to fill a quota, rather than for their talent and merit.

A few individuals (3%,  $n=1$  of decision-makers and 15%,  $n=27$  of Guild members) indicated that the work being done to create a more balanced industry was not working. Finally, an additional 16% ( $n=6$ ) of women, 24% ( $n=9$ ) of decision-makers and 17% ( $n=31$ ) of Animation Guild respondents replied that efforts might be working, or that they were unsure, didn't know, or that it was too early to tell about the effects of different programs.

**Figure 6**  
Efforts to Increase Inclusion



While the general perception that there are changes taking place in the animation industry is promising, not everyone holds a positive opinion regarding these efforts. When asked about the work being done by companies to improve inclusion, 8% ( $n=19$ ) of Animation Guild members stated that lowering standards was one outcome that the push toward inclusion encouraged. In response to the question regarding whether efforts were working, 18% ( $n=32$ ) of survey participants offered replies that illuminated backlash toward inclusion. Namely, these responses included that men were being pushed out or passed over for jobs, a reduction in quality of the work product, that experience is not taken into account the way diversity is, and that changes being made create a rift in the industry. Nearly two-thirds (66%,  $n=21$ ) of the responses in this category came from those who identified as male, while 13% ( $n=4$ ) of responses were from women, and 22% ( $n=7$ ) from those who were gender non-conforming or did not provide a gender.

Anonymous respondents were not the only ones to find the actions of the industry with regard to inclusion an issue. One-third (34%,  $n=13$ ) of the women in their early careers who were interviewed expressed doubt about inclusion efforts. This included mentioning that the efforts of different companies were limited to lip-service, such as photo shoots or publicity opportunities, rather than substantial efforts to increase the presence and participation of women in the industry.

Clearly, the animation industry has attempted to address inclusion deficits, with various degrees of success. Notably, while hiring efforts are noticed and many perceive these strategies to be working, a sense of discontent and skepticism is present across the industry. It is critical that individuals working across the field are attuned to the need to feel belonging in organizations and a lack of authenticity when efforts do not meet this need. In the following section, we turn to empirically-based evidence that can drive company efforts, along with strategies to reduce backlash and create buy-in around tactics that facilitate inclusion in organizations.

## Conclusion

The goal of this investigation was to understand the ecosystem of the animation industry through both a quantitative and qualitative examination of key industry roles, the executive ranks, and the pipeline. This was accompanied by in-depth interviews and surveys with women at the start of their career, decision-makers, and members of the Animation Guild. Across the study, the results point to several trends regarding women's participation in animation.

### *Some Women are Climbing to Power Positions in Film*

The presence of women in key decision-making roles in film is a unique facet of the animation industry. As executives, women represent roughly half of all positions across the major film animation companies. Moreover, women filled 50% of the leadership jobs (e.g., CEO, CCO, President) at the pinnacle of these organizations. In TV, most executive roles were awarded to men, with 39% held by women. At the top of TV animation organizations, women filled 6% of prestigious posts, and increased in number as the power of their position decreased.

A second area where women were plentiful is in the realm of film producing. Across 120 animated features over the last 12 years, 37% of producers were women. This is a strong and encouraging showing for women in this role and the pattern represents an upward trend, particularly in contrast to the 15% who comprised live action producers in the same time frame. Where there has not been improvement is in the percentage of women of color garnering producing credits on the most popular movies. The industry's perception of an animation producer may have expanded to include women, but has not grown past white women. When women of color fill this important creative and management role, they can influence inclusivity across the entire production. Their absence means that important avenues for advocacy and change remain empty.

### *Directing Remains Devoid of Women in Film and TV*

In contrast to women in leadership as executives and producers in film, there is a dearth of female directors in animation. Only 3% of directors of animated movies in the last 12 years were women, with just one woman of color holding this role. In TV, the figures are not much better. A mere 13% of directors of the first episode or segment of the 100 top animation series on TV in 2018 had a female director. Only 3 of those directors were women of color. More specifically, all female directors of color were Asian.

One explanation for the lack of women working as directors is the limited number of women working in pipeline roles. Less than one-fifth of story department members in film were female, and less than 10% of heads of story positions went to women in feature films. In TV, 28% of story editors, and 24% of storyboard artists were women. The drop off from these positions to directing is steep, suggesting that crucial impediments limit women's career paths in animation.

### *TV Leads On Screen and Below the Line*

On screen roles for girls and women are not equal in TV series, but they are stronger than in film. Thirty-nine percent of credited cast in the first episode or segment of popular TV series from 2018 were female, while only 17% of the 120 top animated features from 2007 to present had girls or women in the leading or co leading role. Across both media platforms, women of color were rare: 12% of cast in TV and a mere

3% of films. The stories told in animation reflect a skewed view of reality, which is mirrored in the creative ranks.

TV also comes out on top with regard to the participation of women, at least compared to film. Women filled more of the ranks of character design (33%), animation (35%) and unit head roles as lead animators (20%) and lead character designers (24%) in TV than in film. Importantly, credits for key roles across series were not always consistent, which means there may be additional women (or men) whose contributions are not included in these metrics. Shows and companies should consider keeping their own internal metrics and reporting transparently to demonstrate how their efforts toward inclusion are working from year to year (or season to season).

Women's access to work in TV may be more open than other facets of the industry. These findings also align with industry perceptions about where women are most plentiful. Of the industry members who responded to our survey, 59% answered that animated television is the platform that in their experience has the highest percentage of women. An additional 23% gave this designation to animated series airing on streaming platforms.

### *The Pipeline is Plentiful but the Culture Preempts Progress*

While the pipeline of future animation industry members is robust for women—both leaving animation schools and showing their work at film festivals—the number of women in the business is noticeably lower. What prevents more women from working in animation? Results from interviews and surveys point to three major impediments facing women. First, that a culture of homophily prevents women from feeling a sense of belonging and moving forward in their careers. Second, that women are valued less than their male counterparts and that gender stereotyping plays a role in their career path. Third, that women are perceived to lack ambition or interest in the field. The final set of responses focused on the unique experiences of women of color in the industry, namely their status as tokens and the resulting issues that created.

The challenges facing women in animation cut across culture, stereotyping, and perceptions of women's ambitions. Together, they offer a picture of how women's early experiences in organizations might thwart their desire or ability to move into leadership positions in key creative roles. Addressing the impediments women face is crucial to expanding the participation of women throughout the field of animation, and ensuring that the pipeline of women entering this industry carries through to the top. In the next section, we examine potential solutions for industry-wide change.

### ***Inclusion is Everyone's Business: Solutions to Inequality in Animation***

The results from this study demonstrate that there is work to be done to include women's voices throughout the animation industry. Below, we examine research and theory in three major categories to offer a starting point for the industry to move forward. Importantly, these tactics have been identified as ways to combat the biases we have discussed in this report. Moreover, as the industry seeks to overcome the skepticism and backlash that can confront efforts for change these empirically-based strategies send the message that inclusion is not only for executives, content creators, or marginalized groups. Inclusion is for everyone.



### *Cultivating Belonging and Value for All Women*

The qualitative responses above indicate that a culture that is based on homophily—a preference for individuals who are similar on a salient characteristic—governs the animation industry. In this case, the male-dominated nature of animation means that women feel excluded, and often less valued, as a consequence. The result may be that women leave the industry for opportunities where they can feel a sense of belonging and value. Why is belonging so important? Research suggests that belonging may be a key component of academic and social adjustment for college students, as well as intent and persistence to remain in school.<sup>46</sup> At least one study has shown that representation within a science-based field is an important contributor to students' feelings of belonging in that discipline.<sup>47</sup> More generally, a sense of belonging broadly defined has also been related to better perceptions of health for women and lower overall physical symptoms for men.<sup>48</sup>

A related concept, validation, which involves communicating “recognition, respect, and appreciation,”<sup>49</sup> has also been linked to a sense of belonging. For students, experiencing bias and discrimination was associated with lower academic and interpersonal validation, which in turn predicted levels of belonging.<sup>50</sup> Even more subtle environmental cues can influence belonging and intentions to continue in a field. For example, women who perceived more gender-based stereotyping and stronger messages related to innate mathematical abilities reported a decreased sense of belonging over time and lower intentions to pursue math courses.<sup>51</sup>

How does this relate to the animation industry? Interview and survey respondents reported the variety of ways in which gender stereotypes permeate environments in animation, both in terms of women's abilities (producing vs. directing) and the cultures that are created. As women navigate their career paths, they encounter these perceptions (from men and women), which may reduce their sense of belonging in the field, as well as their intention to stay. Altering organizational culture is an important way to stave off women's attrition.

One important part of creating organizational cultures that allow for belonging and achievement is to “clear the air” of stereotypes.<sup>52</sup> Researchers have demonstrated that women's leadership aspirations for a task are diminished when gender stereotypes are activated, but this effect is neutralized when women are told that ability to perform the task does not differ by gender.<sup>53</sup> Similarly, researchers indicate that instilling a value for an incremental mindset—that ability is not fixed and everyone can improve—is one way to signal that anyone in the organization is likely to succeed if they contribute and work hard.<sup>54</sup> Moreover, communicating the organizational diversity efforts and even awards a company has won regarding inclusion can increase the perception of procedural fairness and “fit” for women and people of color—even when companies take actions that do not specifically benefit their group. For example, women's perceptions of fairness for women within a company improve when they are told about organizational policies that target racial/ethnic disparities.<sup>55</sup> Sending the message that all are valued, able to contribute, and succeed is important to creating a culture that promotes inclusion.

Another way to dismantle organizational cultures that create divides based on gender, race/ethnicity or other demographic characteristics is to redefine groups based on another salient dimension. In-group biases that typically fall along demographic lines (e.g., gender, race/ethnicity, age, LGBTQ) may be one reason that women feel they exist outside the prevailing culture in animation. Researchers have demonstrated that decategorization (e.g., thinking of oneself as an individual rather than group member) or recategorization (e.g., creating a larger group to which all belong) can both create a pathway that reduces “us vs. them” thinking.<sup>56</sup> A third option is to set goals that rely on groups' recognition of

individual strengths and weaknesses and require interdependency and cooperation to be achieved.<sup>57</sup> Scholars in the area of task diversity also recommend moving away from assigning tasks in ways that may rely on stereotypical thinking and toward a model of randomized or rotated assignments.<sup>58</sup>

Across these ideas, solutions require companies to make concerted, thoughtful efforts regarding how teams are constructed and how information is distributed. By doing so, the status quo culture that relies on bonds formed as a result of demographic similarity can be disrupted in favor of new models that communicate greater value and belonging to women and individuals from other marginalized communities.

### *Reducing Ambiguity and Subjectivity*

If the respondents to our survey and interviews are to be believed, the animation industry privileges stereotypes over skills. Stereotypical thinking about what women can or cannot do, their talents, and their preferences were abundant in the interview and survey responses detailed earlier. This reliance on gender roles as a way to organize information about real or potential employees introduces persistent and pervasive bias into decision-making, particularly around leadership positions. To increase women's contributions in supervisory roles, the industry must carefully examine its practices and consider how to eliminate two contributors to bias: subjectivity and ambiguity.

While all judgments are to some degree subjective, stereotypes can influence the encoding, storage, and recall of information relevant to performance evaluations.<sup>59</sup> The content of stereotypes can also influence expectations about performance, particularly when women are working in male-typed jobs or roles.<sup>60</sup> Evidence suggests that stereotypes that favor males for leadership roles can influence the criteria we use to make hiring judgments, or the weight given to that criteria even when individuals are primed to or report a strong belief in their own objectivity.<sup>61</sup> In the animation industry, this tendency was demonstrated clearly in the way that participants in this study described women's qualifications (or lack thereof) for working as a film director, focusing on stereotypes about what the role requires.

Subjectivity becomes detrimental to women when information about their work or role is ambiguous or absent. Research has demonstrated that when their contributions to a task are ambiguous or not stated, women are rated as less competent, less influential, and less likely to have demonstrated leadership compared to a male partner. However, when their impact is made clear, women are rated no differently than men.<sup>62</sup> Yet this can be a double-edged sword. When women's solo performance in a male-typed task is ambiguous, they are still rated as less competent than a male peer. However, when their competence in a masculine arena is clear, perceptions of their likeability suffer relative to an equally competent man.<sup>63</sup> Additionally, expectations about gender role adherence also play a role in women's evaluations.<sup>64</sup> Thus, to ensure that women are evaluated fairly, these biases about women's performance must be avoided.

For the animation industry, situations in which subjectivity and ambiguity are avoided is paramount to creating conditions in which fair evaluations can occur. Researchers suggest that making evaluations of candidates both interdependent and accountable to others can be important contributors to avoiding bias.<sup>65</sup> Creating a situation in which an evaluator feels self-interested regarding the outcome of their judgments (such as when the evaluator's performance will be tied to making an accurate assessment) can motivate less biased evaluations. Similarly, requiring evaluators to justify their decisions can prompt greater accuracy, or setting up systems to audit judgments are also ways to improve fairness.<sup>66</sup>

A second remedy is to set clear criteria at the outset, bearing in mind whether required attributes are stereotypically masculine or feminine. Research on hiring patterns of lawyers has demonstrated that including more traditionally male attributes in a job description reduces the likelihood of hiring a female into the position. In contrast, incorporating more feminine-aligned traits increases the chance that a woman will be hired.<sup>67</sup> Along these lines, having individuals commit to the importance or weight they will give each criterion in a job description *before* evaluating candidates can reduce differences in hiring evaluations between male and female applicants.<sup>68</sup>

The prevalence of stereotypes about what women prefer or choose to do in the animation industry is a likely contributor to the lack of women in creative leadership roles. By ensuring that judgments about performance—across men and women—are made objectively and with clear criteria that are agreed upon in advance, the industry can move away from evaluating stereotypes instead of skills. In doing so, talent can be readily identified and shepherded, so that companies and audiences benefit.

### *Making Inclusion for Everyone*

Industry-wide efforts for change must be just that—involving every individual who works in organizations, from executive leadership to new hires. As noted earlier, a sense of belonging is important not just for individuals from marginalized groups, but for individuals overall. Employment can be a source of income, certainly, but it can also be a deeply meaningful and central aspect of identity. As organizations recognize and cultivate belonging among employees, retention and performance should increase for employees from all backgrounds. Yet, currently, companies are missing the mark when it comes to facilitating women's careers in the same way as men's.

The need for organizational cultures that are sensitive to women and other marginalized communities can be seen primarily in the coming demographic shift facing employers. Individuals entering university over the next several years belong to the most diverse generation in U.S. history.<sup>69</sup> Moreover, they hold a strong orientation toward diversity and inclusion.<sup>70</sup> As today's students enter the workforce, their sensitivity to organizational cultures that do not facilitate inclusion will present a challenge to companies that have not taken seriously the need to diversify. Organizations must prepare for the influx of workers from this generation, or lose the accumulated talent and creative power they represent.

In opposition to this coming ideological shift are the individuals and policies of the current animation industry that are steeped in historical and cultural inertia. This is a system that privileges standing in line, moving up the ranks, and “waiting your turn” to be placed into leadership roles. Inclusion efforts that encourage seeking talent from diverse backgrounds and fast-tracking these individuals into leader roles may fly in the face of this established culture. As we heard, some individuals feel that as a result of the desire for greater inclusion, experience is sacrificed for diversity, men lose opportunities, and ultimately the creative product suffers.

The feeling that inclusion efforts marginalize men maps onto a larger trend culturally. In one study, male and female participants rated discrimination against both men and women over time from the 1950s to 2012. In the most recent year evaluated, men believed that discrimination against men was significantly greater than women did; though men still rated discrimination against women as more severe, they also rated discrimination against women lower than women did.<sup>71</sup> Political ideology also played a role in these beliefs. Conservative men did not differ in their ratings of discrimination against men and women in 2012.<sup>72</sup> Responses in our study seem to indicate that the perception of anti-male bias exists in individuals working in the animation industry as well.

How can organizations reconcile these two disparate forces? In the educational arena, Brannon, Carter, Murdock-Perriera, and Higginbotham have offered a few solutions aimed at increasing a sense of inclusion across both dominant and marginalized communities, and establishing that inclusion is not for one group, but for all. Their ideas and strategies are directly applicable to the animation industry. The first is to consider environmental details that can convey either inclusion or exclusion. These might include providing information on the demographics of the organization, using messages that emphasize the need for inclusion of *all* voices, and ensuring that the art, design, and other artifacts do not provoke stereotypes.<sup>73</sup>

A second avenue that Brannon et al. recommend organizations can pursue relates to the approach taken to bring employees to the “inclusion table,” so to speak. Rather than framing inclusion efforts as a “need” for organizations, organizations can position inclusion as an effort that stems from internal motivation. To accompany this idea, researchers also suggest creating opportunities where employees learn about how institutional biases (including historical exclusion) are embedded within the animation industry, rather than merely individual discrimination. The researchers also recommend creating opportunities to for interaction between members of different groups.<sup>74</sup> Helping employees to comprehend cultural differences offers a way to reduce anxiety that might prevent greater contact between dissimilar individuals. Executives should examine how other sectors—education, health, etc.—are engaging with structural inequalities that impede matriculation, access, or success in an effort to understand how animation may need to adopt strategies in use by other industries. Moreover, evaluating how recruitment to Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and Latino-serving institutions has succeeded (or not), companies can work to strengthen the pipeline into the industry. By helping employees see how efforts to create inclusion must be addressed through policies and practices rather than only reducing individual bias, they can grow in a more holistic understanding of the impediments their colleagues face.<sup>75</sup>

One last area to address involves the very language that is used throughout organizations. Using terms, pronouns, and phrasing sensitive to the needs of various groups communicates belonging and value. This cuts across groups, to be inclusive of all genders, races, ethnic identities, and even faith communities. Addressing how communication in institutions takes place is a key way to reduce bias and foster inclusion.

Embracing culture change at the organizational level requires bringing everyone along on a journey with a clear destination in mind. For that reason, setting target inclusion goals, measuring progress, and acting transparently are all tangible ways that companies can make clear their values, priorities, and strategies for change. In doing so, employees can begin to see how they fit into the larger organizational practices that foster inclusion.

### *Limitations*

As with any research study, this investigation has several limitations associated with it. First, we utilized on-screen credits (save for film writing) to obtain the personnel working on films and TV series. This was purposeful, as industry databases contain incomplete or inaccurate information about animated films. However, due to unstandardized reporting and the negotiation process, it is possible that additional individuals worked on these films but their names did not appear on screen.

Second, the interview and survey methods utilized relied on voluntary participation. It is possible that insights might be altered if additional participants were included in the study. Despite this, the volume

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and tenor of responses collected from the online survey suggests that we obtained a broad set of perspectives that are representative of the animation industry.

The goal of this project was to understand the unique profile of the animation industry. What emerged is a picture of an industry grappling with how to create greater inclusion while situated in a legacy that privileges certain types of stories and storytellers. As the business moves forward, it will be crucial to address how individuals working within the field can collectively create environments and opportunities that welcome new voices and talents from all backgrounds. Given the industry's success at crafting fantastical, immersive worlds, we are hopeful that shaping a new reality is well within its grasp.

## Footnotes

1. Smith, S.L., Choueiti, M., Choi, A., & Pieper, K. (2019). Inclusion in the Director's Chair: Gender, Race/Ethnicity, & Age of Directors Across the Top Films From 2007-2018. USC Annenberg Inclusion Initiative, Los Angeles, CA. Retrieved from: <http://assets.uscannenberg.org/docs/inclusion-in-the-directors-chair-2019.pdf>
2. Directors Guild of America (n.d.). DGA Diversity – Industry Reports. See <https://www.dga.org/The-Guild/Diversity/Industry-Reports.aspx>
3. Two strategies were used for assessing the gender and underrepresented status of individuals in this sample. First, we relied on publicly available information about content creators and executives. Pronoun use and pictures as well as gender designation on industry websites (e.g., IMDbPro, Variety Insight, Studio System, AniDB, etc) were used to categorize individuals as male, female, and gender non-conforming. Second, and in the absence of the aforementioned information, we determined gender by the first name of the individual when possible (e.g., John was categorized as Male, Jane was categorized as Female). For this step, we utilized a website linking names to gender (i.e., BabyNames.com, BabyNameWizard.com) or queried a database (Gender-API.com) for the percentage likelihood of gender across a dozen territories internationally. See <https://gender-api.com/> for more information. Apparent race/ethnicity was determined via photos and publicly available information about individuals. In previous research, our judgments of apparent underrepresented status were found to correlate highly with actors' actual underrepresented status ( $r=.90$ ).
4. Each year the Initiative examines the 100 top grossing films based on domestic box office performance. The list is pulled from Box Office Mojo.
5. A report of the 100 top animated series was purchased from Nielsen Media Research and was sorted high to low by U.S. Average Audience ratings for ages 2 and above. The shows aired on broadcast and cable outlets – including PBS – between January 1st, 2018 and December 31st, 2018. All credits for crew and cast were based on the first episode or segment of episode during the applicable timeframe. For each popular series, the first episode of the season that premiered in 2018 was sampled. Otherwise, we examined the first episode that aired in 2018.
6. The credited cast did not include “additional voices.” Two exclusions applied in the data. One credit attributed the voice to a robot and the other voice actor was publicly referenced as gender non-conforming. Of underrepresented status, 3.5% of actors could not be identified. 23 were men and 16 were women.
7. Five series did not credit a director of the episode or segment evaluated. In the absence of a “Directed by” or “Co-Director” credit, we counted “Episode Director” as the director if present, followed by “Supervising Director,” and lastly “Series Director”.
8. Smith, S.L., Pieper, K., & Choueiti, M. (2013). Exploring the Barriers and Opportunities for Independent Women Filmmakers. USC Annenberg Inclusion Initiative, Los Angeles, CA. [https://annenberg.usc.edu/sites/default/files/MDSCI\\_2013\\_Exploring-The-Barriers.pdf](https://annenberg.usc.edu/sites/default/files/MDSCI_2013_Exploring-The-Barriers.pdf)
9. For executive producers, 4 shows did not credit an individual with this title. Of those with the title, one could not be determined for gender and three for underrepresented status. Seventy-eight shows did not credit a co executive producer, and of those credited, one individual did not have an ascertainable race/ethnicity.
10. Twenty-six shows out of the 100 TV animated series did not credit a Producer. Of those shows that did, we did not have enough information on gender for one individual, and for race/ethnicity, five individuals. Additionally, twenty-eight shows did not credit a creator/developer.
11. The addition of writers was the only category not taken from the credits/title cards of the films. The writers for each animated film were collected from IMDbPro. The film credits were referenced in cases where information was suspect. Using standards gleaned from the Writers Guild of America (<https://www.wga.org/>), we collected individuals credited under ‘Written by,’ ‘Story by,’ and ‘Screenplay by’. In two instances ‘Story Adapted by’ was

included, and one writer credited as ‘Collaborating Writer’ was taken as well. No source material, additional dialogue, and credit for original work (e.g., ‘Characters by’) was included.

12. The writer(s) of each episode sampled was garnered from the opening or end credits. Credits were predominately presented as ‘Written by’, followed by ‘Story by’ and in some international productions, ‘Script by,’ ‘Screenplay by,’ and ‘Adapted by’ when no other writing credits were presented. Three television series did not credit the writer for the episode sampled. Of the 50 female writers, not enough information was found to discern the apparent race/ethnicity of one individual.

13. Not all films were credited in the same way nor did all films credit individuals within every key role listed above. In the absence of a specific title card or credit (e.g., story by, edited by, head of layout), we turned to language in the credits that would suggest the senior most person working in a specific department (e.g., supervisor, lead). Only 1 female’s race/ethnicity could not be determined in one of the key roles. For underrepresented status, the sample size drops from 63 to 62.

14. To content analyze gender across departmental credits, we unitized all credited positions and names within five select departments across the 52 animated films using credits. Then, using an iterative approach we selected the roles to be analyzed within each department. The first name of person credited under those roles was then submitted to an online database (Gender-API.com) to determine probability of gender (male, female). Only instances where accuracy, probability and the amount of samples used by the database were reasonable or high were used to inform gender. The remaining names and individuals were looked up on a case by case basis by searching online across various sources (Industry Databases and social media). Prior to analysis, there were 24 individuals whose names were not linked to a particular gender using online databases nor was their identity found online. In terms of which department those positions appeared in, 5 were animators, 2 worked in the art department, 3 in character effects and 14 were in character composition.

15. Across the key roles for TV, the below the line credits were pulled from the first episode or segment coded. Two editors, one animation director, one lead animator, and two lead character designers were categorized as “can’t tell” for race/ethnicity. It must be noted that 47 shows did not credit a Story Editor, 4 – Editor, 40 – Animation Director, 52 – Lead Animator, 66 – Lead Character Designer, and 72 – Lead Storyboard Artist. Within departments in TV, 44 shows did not credit Animators, 11 - Character Designers, 5 - Storyboard Artists, and 41 - Storyboard Revisionists. The method for analyzing gender of film departments was similarly applied to television department credits.

16. The executive ranks of 10 film companies were examined: DreamWorks Animation, Sony Pictures Animation, Walt Disney Animation Studios, Pixar Animation Studios, Illumination Entertainment, 20th Century Fox Animation/Blue Sky Studios, Laika, Paramount Animation, Warner Animation Group, and Skydance Animation. It must be noted that all of DreamWorks employees were loaded into film as their titles did not allow for us to disentangle platform.

For television, the following 14 companies were assessed: Cartoon Network Studio, Crunchyroll, Walt Disney Television Animation, Nickelodeon Animation Studio, Warner Bros. Animation, Stoopid Buddy Studios, Disney Junior, Bento Box Entertainment, Starburns Industries, Six Point Harness, Wild Canary, Powerhouse Animation, OddBot, Inc., and Titmouse, Inc.

17. Schools provided race/ethnicity data that was difficult to disentangle for this report due to reporting international students, grouping of race/ethnicity categories and educational institutions’ different approaches to collecting information on racial/ethnic identity. As such, we chose to leave that data out of the report because it could not be standardized in a meaningful way.

18. Five film festivals were scrutinized online for their shorts program or shorts listings. Each short from 2016 through 2018 was noted and the gender of the directors were looked up online using industry databases. Data on race/ethnicity was not gleaned for this aspect of the study.

19. NPR (Nov. 15, 2018). Generation Z Is The Most Racially And Ethnically Diverse Yet. Retrieved from: <https://www.npr.org/2018/11/15/668106376/generation-z-is-the-most-racially-and-ethnically-diverse-yet>

20. The first group of participants interviewed for this study consisted of 38 female individuals working in animated film and television in the earliest stages of their career according to both their position or title description and in terms of number of years working in the industry. All participants were identified using a variety of sources including film credits, online databases, and social media sites like LinkedIn.com. All participants were recruited to participate in the study via email. Additional recruitment included recommendations from several individuals within the animation industry.

Of the 38 female participants interviewed, 68% ( $n=26$ ) identified their racial and/or ethnic background as white with 32% ( $n=12$ ) identifying as another or of multiple racial/ethnic origins. Across this group, the sample had an average age of 29 years.

Each interview was conducted over the phone by one of three of the study authors. Participants were asked a series of ten questions, some of which included follow up prompts when necessary. The interviews focused on experiences of individuals working in animation. All responses were transcribed from audio recordings, checked for accuracy, aggregated by members of the research team, and analyzed by the study authors. Coding of qualitative interviews focused on frequently occurring themes and theoretically relevant information from the interview questions, including all relevant follow-ups. The unit of analysis is an individual's response to a single question. Thus, answers range in length by question and by respondent, and may fit into multiple categories. Responses to additional interview questions are included in discussions of each career impediment when relevant.

21. The second group of participants interviewed for this study consisted of 37 individuals from animated television and film who were identified to be in decision-making roles including at the executive or hiring level. The same methods used to identify and recruit the individuals in the first group of participants were used for this group of decision-makers.

This group consisted of both female (70%,  $n=26$ ) and male (30%,  $n=11$ ) respondents. The majority of the sample in this group identified their racial and/or ethnic background as white (81%,  $n=30$ ), with 19% ( $n=7$ ) identifying as another or multiple racial/ethnic origins. Across this group, the sample had an average age of 51 years. In order to gauge their level of experience, each individual in this group was also asked: *How long have you been working in the animation industry?* Based on the responses to this question, the average number of years calculated for this sample was 21.

The nine questions posed to these individuals focused on industry perceptions and current decision-making processes surrounding key roles in animation. The interviews were conducted and analyzed in the same manner described above.

22. The last group of participants in this study consisted of respondents to an online survey sent via email. The participants in this group were identified by the Animation Guild and asked to participate in the survey via email. The respondents in this group was asked up to 13 questions and the responses were given anonymously. Because the survey was conducted online, respondents could choose not to answer every question and as a result the sample size across each of the questions varies. If an individual did not respond to a question, they were not included in the overall number of participants. Their responses were analyzed similarly to the responses from the participants in groups 1 and 2.

Participants in this survey were asked to identify their primary gender identity. Of the 251 participants who provided a response to this question 121 were male (48.2%), 120 were female (47.8%), 5 were gender non-conforming, and 5 provided another gender not listed as one of the options. A majority of participants who provided their race and/or ethnic origin marked Caucasian/White (68%,  $n=170$ ), with 79 (32%) identifying as another or of multiple racial/ethnic origins. The average number of years of experience amongst the 250 participants who provided a response to this particular question was 17 years.



23. All three groups of respondents were presented with data on women in specific roles in animation and asked for their insights. Data provided to all participants included the percentage of females directing across the last 12 years and 120 top-grossing animated feature films (2.5%). The first two groups—women in their early careers and decision-makers—were also asked to respond to additional data about the percentage of female producers of these animated films (35.7%) and asked to comment on why they believed that percentage to be higher than the percentage of directors. These same two groups were also given data on the percentage of females in the Animation Guild (25.6%) and asked: *Why do you think the animation industry lacks gender parity?* Participants who answered questions via the online survey were not asked a question related to the percentage of producers, but were asked about Animation Guild provided data; more specifically, they were given the percentage of union-covered employees at animation studios who were female (28%) and asked: *What do you think accounts for the lack of gender parity in studio hiring?*

The 38 participants identified to be in the early stages of their career were asked to answer a series of three questions regarding their own career trajectories. All 38 participants were asked: *What challenges have you personally faced as a woman working in animation?* The twelve participants in this sample who identified as any racial/ethnic group other than white were asked a follow-up prompt to this question: *are there any unique challenges you have faced as a woman of color in animation?* Responses to the follow-up question were analyzed separately and are described in the text.

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45. All three groups of respondents were asked about efforts within the animation industry to increase inclusion for women in the workplace. The first two groups – women in the early stages of their career and decision-makers – were specifically asked: *Have you seen any effort by your company, other companies, or the broader animation industry to increase inclusion for women in the workplace?* If they responded positively they were asked two additional follow-up prompts. First: *What have you seen?* And second: *Does it seem to be working?* When participants indicated that they had not seen any efforts they were asked: *What accounts for the lack of industry action?* The third group of respondents – participants from the survey sent via email were asked this question slightly differently: *Are you aware of efforts by companies or the broader animation industry to increase diversity and inclusion of underrepresented groups (e.g., women, people of color, members of the LGBT community, individuals with disabilities)?* The prompts that followed either a *yes* or *no* response were the same as above.

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