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Race, Gender, Hollywood: Representation in Cultural Production and Digital Media's Potential for Change

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Abstract

Since its inception, the Hollywood industry has played an instrumental role in the mass dissemination of popular culture, both within the United States and globally. Yet, White men have almost exclusively created the narratives and myths that comprise Hollywood cultural production, while narratives by women and racial/ethnic minorities are fewer and less prominent. This article gives an overview of current research on racial and gender inequality in representation in the production of Hollywood film and television in the United States, with a focus on the contemporary era. Research on Hollywood cultural production points to a problematic trend of disadvantages in opportunities and outcomes facing women and racial/ethnic minorities, leading to the prevalence of stereotypes and a lack of diversity on-screen. However, transformations in technology that alter the production and dissemination of media present the possibility of decreasing inequality for women and racial/ethnic minorities.

For nearly a century, Hollywood studios have played an instrumental role in the mass dissemination of popular culture, both within the United States and globally—for better or worse. On the one hand, American cinema has left an indelible footprint of narratives, images, and myths about American and global culture. On the other, the orchestrators of this historical and wide-reaching trail of American popular cultural artifacts have been almost exclusively White men, while the narratives from women and racial/ethnic minorities have occupied far less space in the cultural canon. For decades, scholars, workers in creative industries, as well as civil rights organizations have pressured decision-makers in Hollywood film and television industries to open their doors to embrace greater diversity in participation of racial/ethnic minorities and women in the cultural production process. A growing number of studies—like those from The Writers Guild of America; The Directors Guild of America; and studies on screenwriters, actors, and directors written by scholars like Bielby and Bielby (1996) and Guerrero (1993)—revealed dismal statistics on the dearth of diversity behind-the-scenes in Hollywood.

Unfortunately, recent research confirms that not much has changed 20 years after those landmark studies. Women and racial/ethnic minorities remain underrepresented in Hollywood, far below their proportion of the US population. How does this lack of proportional representation contribute to how societal culture is created? More specifically, how does the dearth of women and racial/ethnic minorities in behind-the-scenes positions in Hollywood translate into stereotypical and limited creative visions on screen? And finally, what might changes in technology, including the changing nature of the television medium and the proliferation of digital media, mean for future diversity of Hollywood cultural production?

This article gives an overview of current research on racial and gender inequality in representation in the production of Hollywood film and television in the United States, with a focus on the contemporary era. Unsurprisingly, research on Hollywood cultural production

points to a problematic trend of disadvantages in opportunities and outcomes facing women and racial/ethnic minorities, leading to the prevalence of stereotypes and a lack of diversity on-screen. However, changes in technology and in the production and dissemination of media present the possibility of decreasing inequality for women and racial/ethnic minorities. Sociologists and media scholars can learn a great deal about what the future holds for underrepresented groups in Hollywood by investigating what changes the production of mainstream culture will have to undergo in order to maintain dominance in the face of rising competition from new online methods of production, distribution, and exhibition.

Three types of representation in cultural production

Production of culture scholars analyze the manufacturing, organization, and distribution of cultural products, as well as the organizations, occupations, and characteristics of the industries that produce cultural goods for mass audience consumption (Du Gay et al. 1997; Grindstaff 2008; Negus 1997; Peterson and Anand 2004). The making of the images and narratives that form the backbone of societal culture is crystallized through the values, attitudes, and opinions of people working in culture industries (Grindstaff 2008). Because cultural products are inextricably linked to meanings derived from the people working in culture industries, at stake in the production of popular culture is the ability for various social groups to develop and disseminate their own meaning systems. Therefore, understanding the demographic characteristics, employment conditions, and experiences of diverse groups of cultural laborers will give us greater insight into the system in which societal culture is produced and why stereotypical and limited creative visions might emerge from it (Caldwell 2008; Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2011).

Of great concern to marginalized groups is the precise quantity that constitutes adequate representation in media. *Numerical representation* describes a social group's presence or absence on-screen or behind-the-scenes, usually referring to the proportion of a particular occupation that the group occupies. Several studies described Hollywood as a predominantly White and male sphere, with women and racial/ethnic minorities being highly underrepresented with proportions well below their share of the US population (Bielby and Bielby 2002; Erigha 2014; Lauzen 2008; Lauzen 2009a; Lauzen 2009b; Lauzen 2012; Smith and Choueiti 2011a; Smith and Choueiti 2011b; Smith et al. 2014).

In addition to numerical representation, *quality of representation* also matters. Quality of representation includes the kinds of roles that groups occupy on-screen and behind-the-scenes. In front of the camera, actors favor multi-dimensional, multi-faceted roles over stereotypical, one-dimensional parts (Shohat and Stam 1997). Behind-the-camera directors and producers prefer to work in a range of genres rather than be typecasted, or relegated to niches, ultimately making long-term viability vulnerable due to genre popularity cycles (Bielby and Bielby 2002; Yuen 2010). Cultural producers also have varying leverage in terms of their behind-the-scenes conditions of employment. For instance, although directors and producers desire production circumstances that allow for maximum creativity, industry decision-makers may only circumscribe them to limited scales of production or provide them with sparingly few resources for the execution of a project. Nonetheless, the quality of representation that characterizes the participation of women and racial/ethnic minorities in Hollywood largely dictates the parameters for what kinds of culture they can and cannot produce.

Another measure of representation, *centrality of representation*, assesses how central groups are to an industry's core institutions. Research on centrality of representation investigates whether racial/ethnic minorities and women are located in institutions that are in the core or periphery of cultural production. Prior research has demonstrated that women and racial/ethnic minorities employed in Hollywood face difficulty accessing the core of the industry and more often find

work with marginal companies, such as in the Bielby and Bielby (1999) study, which showed that women and racial/ethnic minorities were less likely than White men to belong to core talent agencies. However, the benefits of belonging to core talent agencies—better reputation, resources, authentication, legitimacy, employment, and income—make career success and advancement substantially more likely with membership in core talent agencies compared to membership in non-core talent agencies.

In film, major studios offer cultural producers advantages that smaller studios cannot afford. With regard to the exhibition of films in theaters, major studios have branch offices in critical regional markets, allowing them to maintain extensive and continuous contact with theater chains across the country, whereas independent distributors are less strategically networked with exhibitors and generally have greater difficulty marketing, publicizing, and gaining large theatrical releases for their films (Marcks 2008; Scott 2004). Consequently, directors working primarily with independent studios experience disadvantages in theatrical releases for their films compared to directors primarily working with major studios (Erigha 2014). Given the benefits of belonging to core organizations, having limited access to core organizations demonstrates yet another level of inequality that presents disadvantages in career opportunities for women and racial/ethnic minorities in the cultural labor market.

Integrating key points about representation through these three interrelated concepts—numerical representation, quality of representation, and centrality of representation—allows us to understand the totality of marginalization facing women and racial/ethnic minorities in Hollywood, whereas focusing solely on one while ignoring others provides an incomplete portrait of the layers of inequality facing marginalized groups in culture industries. Therefore, the most thorough studies on cultural representation should take their simultaneous effects into account. These three types of representation come to bear on prominent positions in the production of popular film and television. Above-the-line positions, such as writers, directors, producers, and creators, each play instrumental, yet different, roles in the production of mainstream culture. "Writers are crucial to film and television because without a script there is no product" (Bielby 2013: 140). Producers oversee all aspects of making of films and television programs. The director is the key role facilitating the making of the video product, as well as guiding actors, camera placement, technical crew, and other elements of production. On television shows, the creator is the key figure who successfully sells the television show's concept and has an integral voice in production choices (Hunt et al. 2014, p. 12). In different ways, each position influences on-screen outcomes, shaping who is cast, what traits and behaviors characters exhibit, and how central characters are in narratives. Racial/ethnic minorities' and women's representation in film and television is at the heart of their quest to gain a platform in popular culture.

Racial/ethnic minorities in Hollywood

Numerical representation

Comprehensive data on employment in Hollywood production illustrate that racial/ethnic minorities are vastly underrepresented in acting, writing, directing, and creating for Hollywood film and television. Few television directors are from racial/ethnic minority backgrounds. The Hunt et al. (2014) Hollywood Diversity Report, which analyzes 1061 television shows airing during the 2011–12 season on 6 broadcast and 62 cable networks, showed that minorities directed only 2 percent of broadcast comedies and dramas and 7 percent of cable comedies and dramas. Meanwhile, on most television shows—73 percent of broadcast comedies

and dramas and 71 percent of cable comedies and dramas—minorities directed 10 percent or less of episodes (Hunt et al. 2014, p. 15).

Film directors were similarly underrepresented in Hollywood. For instance, in 2008, only 6 of the 100 top-grossing films were directed by Black directors—translating into roughly 5 percent Black directors (Smith and Choueiti 2011a). In 2013, 6.5 percent of top-grossing Hollywood films had Black directors (Smith et al. 2014). The trend of few Black directors extended over the first decade of the 21st century with Black filmmakers directing only 7 percent of all theatrically released Hollywood films between 2000 and 2011 (Erigha 2014).

It is true that critically acclaimed films also matter; in fact, they can carry as much, if not more cultural influence, than top-grossing films. However, racial minority film directors have been largely ignored at major Academy Awards ceremonies. Thus far, the only Black-directed feature to win a directing or producing award was Steve McQueen's *12 Years A Slave* (2013), which won a Best Picture Academy Award. To date, no Black director has won a Best Director Academy Award for a feature film. Asian-born American film director Ang Lee, however, broke a long-time barrier for racial/ethnic minorities in Hollywood when he won Best Director for *Life of Pi* (2012). While sociologists have focused on racial minority directors' advancement among top-grossing films and in the largest Hollywood studios, more work on which minority-directed films receive critical acclaim will ultimately question what we think we know about which films, directors, and actors gain visibility in critics' circles and why they achieve this recognition.

In acting for film and television, a Screen Actor's Guild report showed that while White actors dominated positions, occupying 75 percent of all roles, African Americans occupied 14 percent, Latinos 5 percent, and Asian Americans less than 3 percent of roles (Screen Actors Guild 2000). Examining the race/ethnicity of speaking characters for the top-grossing films of 2013, these numbers remained largely unchanged. Only Asian Americans increased their presence with 4.4 percent of speaking roles from less than 3 percent. Latinos, however, were most underrepresented, comprising over 16 percent of the 2010 population in the United States but slightly less than 5 percent of speaking characters (Smith et al. 2014). More than half of theatrical films had casts that were 10 percent or less minority (Hunt et al. 2014).

The racial/ethnic disparity in acting becomes even more substantial when examining placement in lead roles. Of the top 172 non-foreign feature films released to theaters in 2011, racial/ethnic minorities only accounted for 10.5 percent of lead roles, although they accounted for 36.3 percent of the US population in 2010 (Hunt et al. 2014). Minority actors were a dismal 5 percent of lead acting roles in broadcast comedies and dramas, on shows like *Scandal* (ABC) and *Nikita* (CW), and 15 percent of lead roles in cable comedies and dramas, on shows like *Single Ladies* (VH1) and *Tyler Perry's For Better or Worse* (TBS) (Hunt et al. 2014, p. 8–9). In reality television, minorities comprised of 15 percent of broadcast reality television leads, on shows like *America's Next Top Model* (CW), and 13 percent of reality television leads on cable networks on shows like *Basketball Wives LA* (VH1) and *Tia & Tamera* (Style) (Hunt et al. 2014, p. 10). Racial/ethnic minorities' subordination in supporting roles compared to leading roles provides them with less on-screen visibility than their White counterparts, despite their increasing proportion of the general population.

The writing occupation shows similar patterns of White overrepresentation and minority underrepresentation. Over the past decades, White Americans accounted for nearly 80 percent of feature film writers and 70 percent of television writers (Hunt 2002). Together, Latino, Asian American, and Native American writers comprised less than 2 percent of working television writers between 1999 and 2000 (Bielby and Bielby 2002, p. 25). In recent years, this disparity has increased significantly. According to the 2011 Hollywood Writer's Report, between 2005 and 2009, minorities comprised of just 9–10 percent of television writers and 5–6 percent

of screenwriters (Motion Picture Association of America 2011). For the 2011–2012 season, most broadcast television writing staffs (62.5 percent) and cable television writing staffs (69 percent) were comprised of 10 percent or less minority, while only 10 percent of writers across all broadcast comedies and dramas and 7 percent of writers across all cable comedies and dramas were from racial/ethnic minority groups (Hunt et al. 2014, p. 13–14).

Television creators can possibly impact diversity in the racial composition of the cast and writing staff, but here too, racial minorities face severe underrepresentation. However, African American Shonda Rhimes was the only creator from a racial/ethnic minority group whose television shows aired on a major broadcast network during the 2011–2012 season (Hunt et al. 2014). Her shows, *Grey's Anatomy*, *Private Practice*, *and Scandal*, which aired on ABC, constituted 3.1 percent of broadcast comedies and dramas during the 2011–2012 season (Hunt et al. 2014, p. 12). In contrast to broadcast television, 7 percent of cable comedies and dramas were created by racial/ethnic minorities, including shows like *Let's Stay Together* (BET). All in all, minorities remained largely underrepresented across behind-the-scenes occupations in Hollywood with the vast majority of television shows and films excluding members of racial/ethnic minority groups from behind-the-scenes participation.

Quality and centrality of representation

Across all media occupations, racial minorities were typically associated with ethnic genres and performances of race and ethnicity (Hunt et al. 2014; Yuen 2004; Yuen 2010). Nancy Wang Yuen's ethnographic studies on race and film actors revealed ways in which actors were cast in racialized roles. In popular films, African Americans were typed to play roles that exhibited ghetto behavior or linked to ties with inner city communities (Yuen 2010). Asian and Asian American actors were racialized in roles as martial arts gurus, superhuman characters, or victims (Yuen 2004, p. 254). Actors with Asian backgrounds were generally typed as foreign and asked to speak in Chinese accents, since casting directors failed to distinguish between foreign-born Asians and Asian Americans, nor account for variation in Asians' ethnic backgrounds and cultures (Yuen 2004, p. 255).

Similar to the stereotyping actors faced, directors and writers were also typecasted into ethnic genres. In Hollywood feature films, Black filmmakers were overrepresented in directing music-themed movies, arguably the most entertainment and performance-oriented film genre (Erigha 2014). Likewise, minority film and television writers had few opportunities for work outside of minority-themed genres (Bielby and Bielby 2002). Between 1999 and 2000, 90 percent of minority television writers worked on programs that featured predominantly African American characters (Bielby and Bielby 2002, p. 25). Even today, minority writers remain concentrated on ethnic niche shows (Hunt et al. 2014, p. 15).

In addition to being limited to narrow roles and genres for cultural production, racial/ethnic minorities also had less presence than White Americans in core institutions in Hollywood film and television industries. In television, minority-themed programs aired on networks like UPN, WB, and Fox, while racial/ethnic minorities faced near exclusion from traditional networks like ABC, CBS, and NBC (Bielby and Bielby 2002, p. 25). In the film industry, racial/ethnic minorities were vastly underrepresented in major studios compared to non-core studios (Erigha 2014). In fact, in 2009, over 93 percent of Hollywood studio directors from the 6 largest film companies were White and male (Cieply 2009). Underrepresentation at major studios is associated with fewer resources for film production, distribution, and exhibition (Scott 2004). Consequently, compared to White directors, African American directors in Hollywood had films with smaller production budgets and theatrical releases, due in part to their

underrepresentation at major studios, which boast the highest average budgets, theatrical releases, and box office grosses (Erigha 2014).

Moreover, talent agencies that assemble writing, producing, acting, and directing teams for projects served as gatekeepers in television and film production labor markets, limiting racial/ethnic minorities' access to jobs with major studios (Hunt et al. 2014, p. 22). According to Hunt et al. (2014), three core talent agencies were responsible for the majority of actors', writers', and directors' employment on Hollywood film projects. These three talent agencies claimed 70 percent of directors, 65 percent of writers, and 72 percent of lead actors on the 172 top-grossing domestic films of 2011; yet, only 9.2 percent of actors, 6.3 percent of writers, and 7.3 percent of racial/ethnic minority directors were represented by these talent agencies, while the majority found representation from talent agencies outside of the core talent agencies (Hunt et al. 2014, p. 22). Likewise, the same three talent agencies dominated broadcast comedy and television production, representing 74 percent of creators and 56 percent of lead actors. At core talent agencies, however, only 1.4 percent of creators were racial minorities, while outside of core talent agencies, 23.5 percent of creators were from racial minority groups (Hunt et al. 2014, p. 23). In cable television, dominant talent agencies represented 70.5 percent of all creators and 46 percent of all show leads. However, only 6.1 percent of creators and 13 percent of actors represented by dominant talent agencies were racial minorities.

Underrepresentation in core institutions in film and television prevents racial minority directors, writers, actors, and creators from full participation in Hollywood cultural production and also limits the scope of their careers in Hollywood. Further investigations by sociologists and media scholars should reach beyond numerical data to understand how inequality manifests itself in the everyday work lives of cultural producers. Perhaps in addition to industry studies, qualitative inquiries that shed light on how the process of racial underrepresentation unfolds through casting, hiring, and production decisions are necessary.

Women in Hollywood

Numerical representation

Although women accounted for more than half of the 2010 US population, there remains a substantial amount of gender inequality in Hollywood film and television production. Women were particularly underrepresented in technical behind-the-scenes positions (Lauzen 2009b; Lauzen 2012). From 1998 to 2011, women worked between 16 and 18 percent of behind-the-scenes roles on top-grossing films (Lauzen 2012). Of the top 100 worldwide grossing films in 2007, women comprised 13 percent of behind-the-scenes roles; however, while all films employed at least one man in technical behind-the-scenes roles, 29 percent of films had no women in technical behind-the-scenes roles (Lauzen 2008).

In film directing, the percentage of female Hollywood directors in any given year has yet to reach 10 percent. Overall, the percentage of female directors of the top 250 films declined over time from 9 percent in 1998 to 5 percent in 2011 (Lauzen 2012). Of the 200 top-grossing fictional films in 2010, 8 percent of directors were women (9 out of 112 total directors) (Smith and Choueiti 2011b, p. 2), while only 7 percent of Hollywood films theatrically released between 2000 and 2011 had female directors (Erigha 2014). Women's imprint on film directing appears to be declining over time. In 2011, women directed just 4 percent of the top 172 films (Hunt et al. 2014). Of the top 250 grossing films in 2011, women were 5 percent of directors (Lauzen 2012).

In television, women directed 10 percent or less of episodes for 53 percent of broadcast comedies and dramas and 65 percent of cable comedies and dramas for the 2011–2012 season

(Hunt et al. 2014). Women directed the majority of episodes on broadcast comedies and dramas for only three shows, *Are You There Chelsea?* (NBC), *How I Met Your Mother* (CBS), and *The Firm* (NBC), and the majority of episodes for only 2 percent of cable comedies and dramas, including *Austin and Ally* (Disney) and *Single Ladies* (VH1) (Hunt et al. 2014, p. 16). Moreover, only 26.5 percent of creators of broadcast comedies and dramas were women, on shows like *30 Rock* (NBC) and *Gossip Girl* (CW). In cable comedies and dramas, fewer women were creators, 21.5 percent, on shows like *The Big C* (Showtime) and *The Game* (BET) (Hunt et al. 2014, p. 13).

Gender inequality persisted in writing occupations, although women had greater representation in writing than in directing. Overall, cable writing staffs were less gender diverse than broadcast writing staffs. Female writers comprised 33 percent of all writers on broadcast comedies and dramas and 27 percent of all cable television comedy and drama writers (Hunt et al. 2014, p. 15). Half of writing staffs for broadcast comedies and dramas had greater than 30 percent female representation, while 12.5 percent had 10 percent female representation or less (Hunt et al. 2014, p. 14–15). In contrast, more than 26 percent of cable comedy and drama writing staffs had 10 percent female writers or less. In film, women comprised of 14 percent of screenwriters of top-grossing films in 2008, 2011, and 2013 (Hunt et al. 2014; Lauzen 2012; Smith and Choueiti 2011b). Female screenwriters of feature films also experienced a cumulative disadvantage as gender disparities between male and female writers tended to increase over their careers (Bielby 2009; Motion Picture Association of America 2011).

Inequality also existed for actresses, although women found more visibility on-screen compared to their presence in behind-the-scenes positions. In acting, women accounted for 26 percent of lead roles in theatrical films (Hunt et al. 2014, p. 6). Despite being underrepresented in films, on broadcast comedies and dramas, women accounted for a proportionate share of lead actors, 51.5 percent, although in cable television, they fell short of their representative proportion of the US population with only 37 percent of lead roles (Hunt et al. 2014, p. 9). In behind-the-scenes roles, more women were employed on reality television programs (28 percent) compared to television dramas (25 percent) and comedies (22 percent) (Lauzen 2011). However, women were underrepresented as reality television leads: only 24.5 percent for broadcast reality leads, on shows like Fox's *The Wendy Williams Show* and ABCs *Live! With Kelly*, and 31 percent of cable reality leads, on shows like E!'s *Keeping Up With the Kardashians* and Bravo's *The Real Housewives of Atlanta* (Hunt et al. 2014). Compared to racial/ethnic minorities, women had greater presence behind-the-scenes of Hollywood cultural production, though they still faced underrepresentation in virtually every occupation.

Quality of representation

Like racial/ethnic minorities, women experienced constraints on the kinds of work they performed in Hollywood. For instance, women found presence in few film genres, typecasted into some genres and out of others, while men found presence across all genres (Erigha 2014; Lauzen 2012). On Hollywood studio films between 2000 and 2011, female directors were underrepresented in action and sci-fi genres and found the greatest representation in the romance genre, aligning with problematic stereotypes of women being overly emotional (Erigha 2014). In the top 250 films of 2011, female directors were most likely to work in documentary, drama, and comedy genres and least likely to work in action, horror, and animated genres (Lauzen 2012). In television, network executives found it financially risky to hire women who wrote "against type" or wrote for male characters (Bielby 2009: 245).

Several studies highlighted women's concentrations in areas of work that were less lucrative and profitable relative to men's areas of work (Erigha 2014; Lauzen 2008; Lauzen 2009a). Women were particularly concentrated in film genres with smaller average budgets like comedy, drama, romance, and music, compared to genres with larger average budgets: action, horror/thriller, and sci-fi (Erigha 2014). At film festivals, women had greater presence in the documentary film genre than working on narrative feature films. Narrative films have a greater likelihood of wide theatrical releases than do documentary films, which are usually limited to exhibition in small art house theaters. Accordingly, women were 28 percent of directors on documentaries and 15 percent of directors on narrative films (Lauzen 2009a). Although documentaries were half of feature-length films at festivals, two-thirds of women directed documentaries at festivals, while a minority of women, 32 percent, directed narrative films at festivals. Women were also more likely to work in behind-the-scenes roles on documentary films (29 percent of all behind-the-scenes workers) than on narrative films (18 percent) at festivals (Lauzen 2009a). Women's underrepresentation in financially lucrative genres places restrictions on the scope of their work in Hollywood.

In acting Lauzen (2008) found that on average, films with female protagonists or women in prominent roles of an ensemble cast had significantly smaller budgets than did films featuring male protagonists ($45m compared to $78m). Compared to films with male characters in feature roles, films with female characters in feature roles also opened on slightly fewer screens (2670 compared to 2832); stayed in theaters for slightly fewer weeks (12 weeks compared to 14 weeks); and had significantly smaller average domestic box office grosses ($55m compared to $101m), foreign box office grosses ($57m compared to $115m), and opening weekend grosses in domestic markets ($18m compared to $32m). However, when conditions like production budgets were equal between genders, box office grosses for men and women were similar, suggesting that regardless of the gender of the protagonist, films with larger budgets tend to generate larger grosses. Thus, when cultural laborers have similar quality of representation, outcomes are more equal. Notions of inequality in cultural representations can be more effectively challenged when scholars point to such instances that undermine the logics of social disadvantage and show that women and racial minorities would be equally successful as White men if given a fair shot.

The link to stereotypes and limited on-screen diversity

Because production and consumption are inextricably linked, persistent inequality regarding who creates culture is directly related to the content available for audience consumption (Du Gay et al. 1997; Molotoch 2003). Tuchman's (1978) foundational work on the production of visual images of gender initially prompted scholars to take on questions of who produces images, forging the missing link between on-screen representations and the adequacy of representation behind-the-scenes (also see Bielby 2013). Her work elucidated two primary ideas: (i) compared to men, women appeared less frequently in the media, and (ii) the few visible depictions of women portrayed controlling images. Still today, disproportionate representation of racial/ethnic minorities and women translates to the creation of a societal culture with stereotypical images and limited creative visions on screen.

Stereotypes portray groups in controlling ways, labeling some groups and their perspectives as socially normative and others as deviant, troubled, and problematic. In large part, the media is a central locale where contentious battles over racial and gender representations take place (Smith 2013; Thakore 2014). With the underrepresentation of women and racial/ethnic minorities in Hollywood, White men exercise a cultural imperialism and hegemony with unilateral control over media images. In turn, these biased images can influence social behavior towards members

of marginalized groups, impacting public perceptions of racial/ethnic minorities, women, and of race and gender relations (Glenn and Cunningham 2009). Through participation in the film industry, members of underrepresented groups can impact media images and cultural products by contesting and counteracting stereotypes, while dismantling the White male hegemony of American civic myth and culture. Without adequate representation in media, groups lose power to manufacture and disseminate ideologies and shape consciousness through the perpetuation of their own meaning systems (Collins 2009).

Underrepresentation of women and racial/ethnic minorities can lead to the perpetuation of racist or sexist stereotypes and myths about marginalized groups on-screen due to bias or lack of experience with that group. For instance, because of racial residential segregation, most White Americans live in majority-White communities (Charles 2003). For the production of culture, this means that White Americans in behind-the-scenes roles largely create images based on their imagined perspectives of racial/ethnic communities rather than grounded upon lived-experiences (Yuen 2010). Still other White Americans may have had contact with racial/ethnic minorities only in particular interactions governed by structured power relations of domination and subordination. However, in the absence of regular, equal relations between groups, stereotypes prevail.

Therefore, another way media scholars and sociologists can challenge their understandings of cultural representations is through research and inquiry on cultural decision-makers and producers. In what sorts of environments were they socialized? What beliefs about society inform their cultural production? Without knowing additional information about cultural producers, what feminist scholars call "positionality" (Collins 2009), we are at a loss for understanding precisely how their social locations might inform their cultural products.

Underrepresentation of women and racial/ethnic minorities in behind-the-scenes positions in Hollywood also leads to little on-screen diversity. In their study of the 100 top-grossing Hollywood films in 2008, Smith and Choueiti (2011b) found that the employment of women and racial/ethnic minorities behind-the-scenes positively impacted their quality of on-screen images, while an absence of women and racial/ethnic minorities corresponded with fewer and less empowered characters. In a similar study, Black film directors provided a greater number of roles for Black characters and for female characters (also Smith et al. 2014). In addition, the presence of women in behind-the-scenes positions of control (as producers, executive producers, and directors) was correlated with more major female characters and female characters who were more multi-dimensional, appeared on screen longer, spoke more often, interrupted others more, and had the last word more frequently (Lauzen and Dozier 1999; Smith and Choueiti 2011b). Without question, racial and gender diversity behind-the-scenes impacts the on-screen cultural product, while creative visions on-screen are significantly inhibited in the absence of diversity in behind-the-scenes positions.

However, a lack of diversity behind-the-scenes of Hollywood cultural productions contributes to a vicious cycle of unemployment that makes it increasingly difficult for women and racial/ethnic minorities to break the chain of underrepresentation and misrepresentation. Racial and gender integration behind-the-scenes is a necessary step to desegregate workplaces and occupations in Hollywood. For instance, workplaces with more racial/ethnic minorities or women in authoritative, behind-the-scenes positions of influence exhibit higher levels of gender and racial integration: more women and racial/ethnic minorities in other cast and crew positions (Reid 2005; Smith and Choueiti 2011b). On top-grossing Hollywood films, movies with a female producer, writer, and/or director were associated with a greater number of female actors compared to films with only male producers, writers, and directors (Smith and Choueiti 2011b). Likewise, African Americans in larger and more powerful roles on major studio productions demand inclusion for others, such as facilitating African Americans' integration into predominantly White trade and technical unions (Reid 2005). However, lacking adequate

representation and employment, racial/ethnic minorities and women cannot effectively create work opportunities for other underrepresented minorities in behind-the-scenes positions. Hence, the lack of diversity enables a cycle of unemployment, leading to misrepresentation, which prohibits members of underrepresented groups from manufacturing their own on-screen representations in mainstream popular culture.

Changing technology, digital media: is a more diverse Hollywood on the horizon?

Despite their considerable share of the US population, women and racial/ethnic minorities do not find adequate representation in Hollywood cultural production. Proportionally, they are vastly underrepresented in behind-the-scenes positions. They are also marginalized in terms of quality of representation with limited scopes of work: projects in few genres and on small scales of production, distribution, and exhibition. In addition, women and racial/ethnic minorities face underrepresentation in studios and on networks that are most central to the film and television industry. This research points to the importance of studies on industry decision-making processes, especially on unmasking the process of hiring workers in above-the-line positions in cultural industries. Such research will contribute to understanding the process by which racial and gender disadvantage in cultural representation is perpetuated. Moreover, a sustained understanding of the representation and experiences of double minorities—people who are women and racial/ethnic minorities—is lacking. For example, Black female directors comprised less than 1 percent of Hollywood directors between 2000 and 2011 (Erigha 2014; Smith et al. 2014), but beyond this statistic, we know surprisingly little about the experiences of women of color who work in media and culture industries. Understanding inequality posed by intersectional identities will enable scholars and media practitioners to more effectively advocate for the inclusion of a more diverse group of cultural producers.

Though much research has illustrated the degree to which women and racial/ethnic minorities are stereotyped on-screen and marginalized behind-the-scenes in Hollywood film and television, the path from inequality to parity is less understood. For women and racial/ethnic minorities, the laborious road to inclusion in Hollywood has seemingly come to a standstill. However, new changes in technology and the ubiquity of digital media could potentially disrupt patterns of inequality in Hollywood. For example, Snow (2001) discussed the promise that digital technology holds for greater diversity of sources of cultural production. Likewise, Guins (2008) found that artistic practices in the digital domain offered more diversity online than traditional media studios provided. Although his study focused on hip hop music, media scholars could further investigate the racial and gender diversity of online cultural production in film and television. Furthermore, Jenkins (2006) discussed the convergence of film, television, and the Internet having positive results for digital media grassroots production that enables a democratization of media industries with everyday people contributing to producing culture.

Evolving programming models also enable a wider range of content from a diverse array of cultural producers. A fundamental shift in televisual form enables content to be viewed at any time across multiple forms—mobile phones, computers, game consoles, PDAs, and online video platforms like Hulu, YouTube, and Netflix—and marketed to an individual or particular community rather than to a broad audience (Bennett and Strange 2011). These distribution channels allow avenues for women and racial/ethnic minorities to create and disseminate media to audiences. Knowledge about Hollywood's reaction to shifts in cultural production, statements or changes that studio executives make in response to diversity of digital cultural production, would contribute to understanding the impact of new technologies on industry decision-makers' positions on racial and gender inclusion in media industries.

Changing racial/ethnic demographics in the US population also presents captive audiences for multicultural digital content. Evidence suggests that millennials, regardless of race, are more likely than members of previous generations to watch and even seek out media by or about people from racial/ethnic groups different from their own (Beltran 2005). In the Hollywood Diversity Report, Hunt et al. (2014) suggested that Hollywood's bottom line would change as the US population becomes increasingly diverse—as groups that are now racial/ethnic minorities become the majority. As more people drift to the Internet and alternate models of distribution for media content, Hollywood decision-makers might be compelled to incorporate a more diverse group of cultural creators in order to maintain dominance in the face of greater competition for audience attention. Whether the mainstream will open its doors to the inclusion of racial/ethnic minorities and women, if only to employ co-optation strategies and drain their products of any oppositional material, emerging studies point to a need to articulate how and why digital media might compel change in diversity in Hollywood.

Short Biography

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