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Sundance Institute and Women In Film Los Angeles Study Examines Gender Disparity in Independent Film

Study Finds More Women in Independent Film than Hollywood

**Study Conducted by Stacy L. Smith, Ph.D., Katherine Pieper, Ph.D. and Marc Choueiti at
Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism, University of Southern California**

Los Angeles, CA — Keri Putnam, Executive Director, Sundance Institute, and Cathy Schulman, President, Women In Film Los Angeles, announced today the results of a first-of-its-kind research study examining gender disparity in American independent film. The study is part of a collaboration between Sundance Institute and Women In Film Los Angeles to support independent female filmmakers. Results were shared at a gathering of film and industry leaders at the 2013 Sundance Film Festival in Park City, Utah.

The study was commissioned by Sundance Institute and Women In Film Los Angeles and was conducted by Stacy L. Smith, Ph.D., Katherine Pieper, Ph.D. and Marc Choueiti at Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism, University of Southern California.

Putnam said, "The results of this research are encouraging, and we hope they will highlight the barriers and opportunities facing women behind the camera. We look forward to collaborating with Women In Film Los Angeles and other allied organizations to raise awareness and inspire action around this important issue."

Schulman said of the results, "This data shows us that there is a higher representation of female filmmakers in independent film as compared to Hollywood – but it also highlights the work that is still to be done for women to achieve equal footing in the field."

The research was conducted with a two-prong approach. First, it quantitatively assessed the gender of 11,197 directors, writers, producers, cinematographers and editors in U.S. movies programmed for the Sundance Film Festival between 2002 and 2012 to identify the prevalence of female filmmakers. Second, researchers documented the qualitative experiences of female filmmakers through interviews with filmmakers and film industry representatives.

Findings include:

- Of U.S. films selected for the Sundance Film Festival from 2002-2012, 29.8% of filmmakers (directors, writers, producers, cinematographers and editors) were female.
- Across all behind-the-camera positions, females were most likely to be producers. As the prestige of the producing post increased, the percentage of female participation decreased. This trend was observed in both narrative and documentary filmmaking. Fewer than one third of all narrative producers but just over 40% of associate producers were female. In documentaries, 42.5% of producers and 59.5% of associate producers were female.
- When compared to films directed by males, those directed by females feature more women filmmakers behind the camera (writers, producers, cinematographers, editors). This is true in both narratives (21% increase) and documentaries (24% increase).
- Females were half as likely to be directors of narrative films than documentaries (16.9% vs. 34.5%).
- Female directors of Sundance Film Festival films exceed those of the top 100 box office films. 23.9% of directors at the Sundance Film Festival from 2002-2012 were female, compared to 4.4% of directors across the top 100 box office films each year from 2002 to 2012 that were female.
- 41.5% of the female directors across 1,100 top-grossing movies of the past ten years had been supported by Sundance Institute.
- Five major areas were identified as hampering women's career development in film:
 - Gendered financial barriers (43.1%)
 - Male-dominated industry networking (39.2%)
 - Stereotyping on set (15.7%)
 - Work and family balance (19.6%)
 - Exclusionary hiring decisions (13.7%)
- Opportunities exist to improve the situation for women in independent film. Individuals mentioned three key ways to change the status quo:
 - Mentoring and encouragement for early career women (36.7%)
 - Improving access to finance (26.5%)
 - Raising awareness of the problem (20.4%)

The first initiative of the Sundance Institute and Women In Film Los Angeles collaboration, which began in January 2012, was to create a Mentorship Program, matching 17 Sundance Institute-supported women directors and producers with leaders in the field. Sundance Institute and Women In Film Los Angeles also convened meetings in New York and Los Angeles this fall with leading organizations working on gender in media. These Allied Organizations will be involved in and lend counsel to the project, and include: AFI; Alliance of Women Directors; Women in Film New York; Athena Film Festival / Women & Hollywood; Chapman University; Chicken & Egg; Film Independent; Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media; IFP; Impact Partners Women's Fund; Loreen Arbus Foundation; Mayor's Office of Film, Theatre and Broadcasting, NYC; Paley Center for Media; PGA; Tangerine; UCLA; USC; Women Make Movies; Women Moving Millions; and Women's Media Center.

The Sundance Institute and Women In Film Los Angeles collaboration is supported by LUNA and JPMorgan Chase Foundation.

Sundance Institute

Founded by Robert Redford in 1981, Sundance Institute is a global, nonprofit cultural organization dedicated to nurturing artistic expression in film and theater, and to supporting intercultural dialogue between artists and audiences. The Institute promotes independent storytelling to unite, inform and inspire, regardless of geo-political, social, religious or cultural differences. Internationally recognized for its annual Sundance Film Festival and its artistic development programs for directors, screenwriters, producers, film composers, playwrights and theatre artists, Sundance Institute has nurtured such projects as *Born into Brothels*, *Trouble the Water*, *Beasts of the Southern Wild*, *Amreeka*, *An Inconvenient Truth*, *Spring Awakening*, *Light in the Piazza* and *Angels in America*. Join [Sundance Institute](#) on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [YouTube](#).

Women In Film

Women In Film is a non-profit organization dedicated to helping women achieve their highest potential within the global entertainment, communication and media industries and to preserving the legacy of women within those industries. Founded in 1973, Women In Film and its Women In Film Foundation provide for members an extensive network of contacts, educational programs, scholarships, film finishing funds and grants, access to employment opportunities, mentorships and numerous practical services in support of this mission. www.wif.org

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