Agency Unrealized: Women Students in Film Production Classes

By

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Abstract

This study looks at the issue of agency in women undergraduate students enrolled in film production classes at the University of Kansas during the Spring Semester 2010. Women undergraduates students enrolled in production classes participated in a focus group which addressed their behavior and experiences in production classes. The writing of Dr. Jean Baker Miller in her work *Toward a New Psychology of Women*, 1976, served as a means to analyze the findings.

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and George, for being George, simply the best. This thesis is dedicated to my mother

Susan Christine Peterson Banion.

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Introduction

As a member of the Second Wave of the Women's Movement I have often wondered

what impact we had, did we make a difference in the lives of women? To find an answer, I

decided to look closer at the lives of women today, and their capacity to act in their own best

interest, independent of the social structure. I choose to look into my own backyard and ask, Do

women undergraduate students in production classes have agency?

Borrowing from Maja Mikula, *Key Concepts in Cultural Studies,* (2008) "Agency is the

capacity to originate social acts in ways that produce impact, independently of the constraints

imposed by social structure." I have taken that concept as it relates to the broader society and

applied it to the concept of individual agency in this thesis (Mikula 4).

Formed by the women's movement I knew I would have a particular point of view.

Equally important, I believe that the structure of the department is male dominant. Because of

these two factors there are issues of validity regarding my interpretation, however I have done

my best to be reflective and account for my own bias. Also, two of the students I knew from film

club activities and had worked with them on film projects.

I was interested in understanding how the students viewed the structure of production

classes. By structure, I mean the influences that promote free choice or limit choice and may be

spoken or implied expectations, which ultimately result in opportunities or the lack of

opportunities within the classroom, the practices employed in the class setting.

I attempted to gain an understanding by asking indirect questions. For example, why did

you choose film studies? What area of film interests you most? How are the class film projects

organized, how are the details worked out? How are club projects organized, how are the details

worked out? What aspects of film studies have meet your expectations? What do you hope to be

doing in ten years? Do you think you will be able to do what you want in film and why?

I was looking for meaning behind their words, trying to make a connection between their words

and actions.

Specifically, I wanted to know the following: Did gender determine the ability of the

women students to act, and was there a Birth Basis (defined as unequal because of sex, race, and

ethnicity)? Did women students think they could decide what roles they would have on a class

project? Did they determine what was normal? Did the women students know the male students

better than they knew themselves? Did women students sabotage other women students in effort

to become part of the dominant group? Did the women students feel they could be creative; and

what did they do when confronted by conflict? All of these concepts/questions are tied to the

work of Dr. Jean Baker Miller and help to answer the question of this thesis; Do undergraduate

women students in production classes have agency?

In order to understand where student agency fits in the context of film I thought it would

be important to look at the history of women in film (an abridged version). Did women in the

past have agency, did they act in their own best interest? By examining the stories of the women

who worked in the film business a limited comparison can be made between the agency of the

foremothers of film with women students of today.

In the early seventies, the Women's Movement had pushed American society to

reevaluate the contribution of women. There was a new understanding of the limitations placed

on women in a patriarchal system and a belief that women's history had been denied and

excluded from the "master" narrative. There was a demand for equity in most quarters of society.

It was during this period film scholars began to reclaim the lost history of women in film. Because of that work we now have a more authentic film history, a clearer understanding of the evolution of filmmaking and the names and individual contributions of many of the first women filmmakers, but certainly not all.

One of the earliest efforts to reclaim women's film history came with an interview that Francis Lacssin conducted, with Alice Guy Blache, published in the 1971 September issue of Sight and Sound "Out of Oblivion: Alice Guy Blache" and reprinted in *Women and the Cinema: A Critical Anthology*, (1977) edited by Karyn Kay and Gerald Peary. In the interview Lacssin brought to life the memories of a pioneering woman filmmaker. Blache was a secretary at Chronophone, Leon Gaumont's film company, in Paris, France, in the late 1890's where she made short films, of all genres. By 1910, Blache had moved to New York and opened the Solax Company, a Chronophone franchise. She contributed hundreds of films while at Solax (Perry 139-141). Peary, in recounting the interview suggests that "Alice Blache's secret was to make her mark in film before the barriers against women came into existence, indeed before there was such a thing as film industry" (ibid).

Dr. Jean Baker Miller, author of *Toward a New Psychology of Women* (1976), speaks to the notion of timing, as it relates to the behavior of the dominant in a dominant-subordinate culture. Miller writes "backlash may be an indication that women really have had an effect but backlashes occur when advances have been small, before major change has occurred" (20). Miller and Geary's comments intersect. Geary suggests that Blache's contribution was enormous but at a different time she might not have had the opportunity to do the work that she did. To paraphrase Miller, she suggests that the dominant culture would shut down the opportunity

before a significant contribution could be made. Both suggestions are probable. Film, in its

infancy, needed workers and Blache and many other women filled that need. However, before

the new institution was fully formed the doors that opened, out of need, closed.

Just as Miller suggests. It would be a crime to suggest that Blache was there, did her work, and

then disappeared. Her contribution was too immense to bury.

Women Filmmakers in Early Hollywood, (2006) written by Karen Mahar is a remarkable

history that weaves the stories of early women filmmakers with the culture of the times and

mechanics of filmmaking. Mahar reports that initially Blache was missing from the company

brand. A picture of a man was used when advertising Solax films (48). Apparently, as the

company expanded, the need to disguise the real power behind the company became less an

issue. Mahar quotes the magazine "Moving Pictures World" in 1912, as an example of the cache

that Blache had in the film industry as they describe the new facility of Solax at Fort Lee, New

Jersey,

> The entire studio and factory were planned by Madame Alice Blache,
>
> the presiding genius of the Solax Company. She is a remarkable
>
> personality, combining a true artistic temperament with executive
>
> ability and business acumen. Every detail of the making of a Solax
>
> picture comes directly under her personal supervision. She takes
>
> full responsibility for the Solax product, and when one considers that
>
> this model factory is the result of her work during the two years of
>
> existence of the Solax Company, her judgment is hardly questioned."
>
> (48)

Acker offers another side of Blache when she suggests that her sound judgment was not limited to the filmmaking process. Blache knew when to come out and be visible and how to manage the rhetoric. Acker says "If Blache felt herself to be feminist, she certainly didn't let anyone know. Perhaps she thought it would be more diplomatic not to ruffle anyone's feathers with her political views" (9). However, Acker goes on to suggest that two of Blache films display a certain feminist theme, *The Call of the Rose* and *Winsome But Wise* (10). Acker quotes Blache's daughter Simone, "In many respects she was a nineteenth-century person. She believed in the family structure. And yet, she had strong feminist views. She was enthused by everything she saw and heard that was feminist in any way" (Acker 8).

Peary cannot disguise his own bias when discussing an early interview conducted with Blache in Photoplay, "If Alice Blache's view of the nature of women is much closer to a Victorian male's conception than to an advocate of feminism, these discoveries cannot help but be a bit disappointing." He goes on to say,

> women's rights" also were no stranger to Alice Blache for Solax
>
> Company existed during a time of high levels of feminist activism,
>
> organized around the question of universal suffrage although almost
>
> every studio produced vehemently anti-suffrage movies in 1912-1913
>
> (at least twenty-five tracts), Alice Blache took no stand at all, boycotting
>
> the whole question by staying away from topical movies on the subject.
>
> (143)

Acker suggests that Blache, showed her true colors when she said, "There is nothing connected with the staging of a motion picture that a woman cannot do as easily as a man, and there is no reason why she cannot completely master every technicality of the art" (9). Acker has built upon the foundation that was unearth in the reclamation process of the seventies, a veritable, who, what, when, where of women in film. She paraphrases Anthony Slide's work in *Early Women Directors*, (1977) in describing Blache as "The first woman film director in history (and arguably the first director, male or women, to bring a narrative film to the screen), Blache directed, produced and/or supervised nearly three hundred films in her lifetime. She then spent the rest of her life attempting to prove to others that she had done so" (Acker 7).

By the late 1920's Blache, out of work and divorced, supported herself by conducting conferences at universities addressing the issue of "feminine psychology and filmmaking." Blache was honored late in life by the French, but at the time of her death in New Jersey at age 95 her contribution was not celebrated (Acker 11).

How do the accomplishments of such a talented filmmaker disappear? Probably benign neglect or as Linda Seger, *When Women Call the Shots* (1996) suggests in a modern explanation,

> "Not noticing may be the main form of discrimination in the
> entertainment industry. Many men do not notice that the most
> qualified person for a job may be a woman, or that there are only
> two women in their twenty-person department, that their film has
> only five women on the crew, that they have no woman producers,
> and that they've never hired a woman writer or director. Women easily
> become invisible, in spite of their achievements, because no one asked

them to the job, to the film, to the class." (86)

Mahar speaks to the agency of women in film within the context of an emerging industry. She suggests that women were employed in the film "industry" at the turn of the century in large part to the low wages they accepted and the similarity of the work, in the film industry, to other types of employment that women found (Mahar 19). Mahar provides a structure that not only underscores the achievements of early women filmmakers but allows the reader to understand the social dynamics of the times, and the fluidity of the process. Her approach is to look at the strategies that were employed to grow the industry, as well as a reaction of the industry to the demands of the greater society. For example, her understanding of the work of Blache differs from that of Geary and Acker when she says,

> Like women filmmakers who followed in her wake, Guy walked a
>
> tightrope between the centuries--balancing Victorian constraints for
>
> women, on the one hand, with possibilities for New Women on the
>
> other. At this point in the development of the American film industry,
>
> in which films were still judged by their technical merits, Alice Guy
>
> Blache's most valuable contribution was her demonstration that a
>
> woman could successfully run a studio. (51)

Mahar, cites multiple reasons for the increase in the participation of women in film during the period of 1908-1916. She suggests that it was a combination of factors that brought on the tipping point. The demand by audiences for bigger and better films, fear of censorship and intervention by government agencies, and the economic power of women stars—all related to the scheme of growing the fledgling industry. Additionally, the theatrical practice of "double

brassing" was adopted, which encouraged women to function both as an actor and stage hand. This model expanded the role of women in film from a factory worker into film employee (Mahar 27). Secondly, when more constrained and less liberal elements of society bristled at the unseemly nature of early film venues, the industry brought women in to provide a more feminine aesthetic. If a women serial star was successful, in bringing in women patrons, she would be highlighted in marketing strategies. Conversely, when "highbrow social problem films attracted middle-class patrons, "uplifter" Lois Weber became the most celebrated director in the industry" (Mahar 28).

Acker's take on Lois Weber was that of a woman who came to filmmaking through a religious commitment with the goal to reach as many people as possible and preach a moral message, "From God's mouth to Weber's lens to the eyes of the masses" (13). She suggests that it is reasonable to assume that Weber understood that, while plays had substantial influence in the middle class, a moving picture shown many times a day could reach many more (ibid). Weber had an earnest desire to better the world, however, it was the machinations of the business that gave her the opportunity.

Mahar addresses the issue of women in film as a means to generate money. Women, from working class, and immigrant families had been patrons of the Nickelodeon for years (an early venue for film) which were populated with vaudeville and burlesques actors and performers. There was a concerted effort to bring in middle-class families, especially women who brought respectability and legitimacy to this fledgling industry. They did this with films made by women like Weber who addressed social issues. Women were seen as morally superior, and the "Uplift"

movies took film from seedy to acceptable and broadened the base of patrons (Maher 28). Acker,

in describing Weber says, "Her films most often focused on women, although she

was loathe to pledge her allegiance to the suffragists, or to any other special interest group. More

important to Lois Weber was to attempt to change peoples' attitudes" (13). Weber flourished

from the early teens to mid 1920's; her films, such as *Hypocrites, Where are my Children, Shoes,*

and John Doe addressed the social ills of the day. However, it is clear that she understood that

she was in a business: "The public as a whole is sentimental and …unless you give them what

they want you're not going to make any money. And let those who set themselves up as idealists

chatter as much as they please about their art, the commercial side cannot be neglected" (Acker

15).

In 1917 Universal built Weber her own studio, but by 1920 she was convinced to join

Paramount where she enjoyed a large salary and profit sharing. Weber continued to make films,

but, by the late 1920's, her themes had worn thin with the general public and as Acker

points out "People were no longer interested in being preached to. They wanted to go to the

movies to have fun" (Acker 15). However, her influence extended beyond the audience into

the lives and careers of women working in film. One such person was Frances Marion, who had

a long and illustrious career as a writer and attributed her success to the early affiliation with

Weber. Marion paid for Weber's funeral when she died (Acker 341).

Another woman, not mentioned in traditional film scholarship and almost lost, was

Eloyce King Patrick Gist. In the 1970's, African American Scholar, Thomas Cripps, notified the

Library of Congress about a canister of film tucked away in the library archives and encouraged

the library to do something with the footage. Nothing was done until much later in the 1990's

when a relative of Ms. Gist contacted Gloria Gibson, film scholar, of Indiana University. Through those efforts the story of Eloyce and her husband James Gist became part of film history. Venise Berry, in her book *The 50 Most Influential Black Films*, (2000) retells the story of *Hellbound Train*, which was produced before the couple married. "Eloyce is credited with helping to rewrite the title cards and reediting his production into a stronger presentation" (Berry 130). The film was shown at churches and civic organizations as a morality play. Additional footage was found of the uncompleted film *Verdict Not Guilty*, credited to Ms. Gist. Ms.Gist would play the piano and led the audience in song before the screening, and her husband would preach after the film was shown (ibid). The importance of naming Eloyce Gist does not lie in the number of films recovered with her name attached but in the real possibility that she did not act in isolation.

There were probably many more African American women engaged in filmmaking in places other than in Washington D.C. during the silent era that have yet to be named. While there is significant scholarship in the field of African Americans in film, most of the discussion centers around the activities of men in production and performance with a focus on the impact of the African American women as actresses, but not as directors, producers, writers or editors. It is important to notice, name and nurture the memory of those who labored in the film business and bring them into the larger narrative.

Mahar describes the alternative to the more serious "uplift" movies were the serial queen films which appeared in the silent films and held the audiences attention until the early 1920's. "The serial queen of the 1910's was clearly not the virginal heroine of a D.W. Griffith film. She was a New Woman fantasy-athletic, courageous, intelligent and popular" (Mahar 22).

The New Woman, an educated member of the middle class joined the ranks of the

working class who enjoyed the antics of spunky heroines, rule benders and comediennes (Mahar

23). It is estimated that "250,000 New Yorkers patronized the city's 350 moving picture theaters

each day (500,000 on Sundays), and in Chicago 200,000 daily patrons attended the windy city's

345 theaters. Nationally, four million Americans were said to attend a moving picture show every

day (Mahar 55).

In 1915 the Supreme Court gave independent film a boost when they ruled against the

Motion Picture Patents Company (Edison monopoly) that had controlled distribution.

Independent production companies could seek out other distributors and get their films viewed.

Filmmaking was a global enterprise and the money men of Wall Street had a vested interest

(Mahar 154).

In the period of 1916-early 20's the ups and downs and shift in the economics of film

making were tumultuous. Women stars used the independent system to advance and were

successful. However, their successes were short lived and died with the advancement of vertical

integration (the process of making the movies, distributing the movies and owning the venue).

This practice was later declared a monopoly and dismantled (Mahar 155-160).

With the introduction of the talkie there were fewer and fewer women in film. What was

once an almost egualitarian industry with women producers, director, editors, and writers soon

became a landscape devoid of women. Dorothy Arzner, (feature director 1927-1943) was the one

women Hollywood director that was able to transition into the "talkies" from the silent era. She

began her career at Paramount, in 1919, then known as Famous Players-Lasky as a script typist

and worked her way through editing into directing. How did Arzner make the transition from

silent film to sound when so many women did not? She brought films in under budget

(Acker 26).

Hollywood, home to most film production was a monopoly. It is reasonable to suggest

that because many women silent film directors were actors first and took advantage of their

prestige and audience appeal to advance their careers that they were living on borrowed time.

Arzner was a film maker first. Acker quotes an interview that Arzner had with Francine Parker:

"My philosophy is that to be a director you cannot be subject to anyone, even the head of the

studio. I threatened to quit each time I didn't get my way, but no one ever let me walk out" (21).

For Arzner, her films about women, were popular, which kept the theaters full. She was asked

why she was the only woman director, and she responded, "I don't honestly know. Maybe

producers felt safer with men; they could go to a bar and exchange ideas more freely. But I made

one box-office movie after another, so they knew they could gamble a banker's money on me. If

I had a failure in the middle, I would have been finished" (Acker 28).

Ida Lupino knew something about agency. Born in England, in 1918, she directed six

features (1949-1954 while acting in seven others) during one of the worst periods for women

filmmakers. The studio monopoly was shattered and money was lost. Television became the

past time for many. The film business constricted, and the effect on women filmmakers was

disastrous. Lupino is compared with Lois Webber the great uplifter because "Like Weber, she

handled these topics at a time when they would, to say the least, elicit controversy. But, Lupino

was first and foremost an entertainer, not a preacher. Actors felt comfortable and confident taking

orders from her because she was also a performer" (Acker 76). She began her career as an actress

but was suspended for not accepting an acting role; she started her own production company and

began making movies. Because she was an independent director she could pick the projects she wanted without getting permission (Acker 75).

Lupino's legacy is pronounced because by the time she arrived, Azner was not directing and women had essentially been eliminated from the scene (with the exception of wardrobe and editing). She may have borrowed a page from Azner's play book: "She was known for films that stayed within or below budget, for her willingness to tackle complex social issues, for her ability to direct both action and love stories and for her good taste" (Acker 15).

Acker stipulates that "Many, especially from the early group, didn't tend to think of themselves as " women" in their professions. Their gender, as women, never entered their consciousness" (xxiv). Elaine May echoed this sentiment in a humorous way, "There's always some idiot who'll come up to you and say 'You're a great gal, you think exactly like a man!' For Chrissake, I always thought intelligence was neuter " (Acker 81).

It certainly is ironic that as the country was challenged by the activism of feminists in the sixties there was little opportunity for women filmmakers in Hollywood. Linda Seger in *When Women Call the Shots*, (1996) suggests that there were a few men who supported women film makers, men like Roger Corman (who began making independent films in the 1950's). She quotes Corman, " I believe in hiring the best talent, and since women are 50 percent of the population, I expect them to be 50 percent of the talent. Perhaps I give a bit of an edge to women because they haven't had much opportunity" (Seger 34). Roger Corman made independent movies he did not run a studio.

Mary Hurd, author of *Women Directors and Their Films* (2007) traces the discrimination against women filmmakers in Hollywood back to a time after the Second World War when film

noir painted women as threatening and evil while at the same time demur and sweet. She

contends that these images came during a time that society was adjusting to the changing role of

women, "reflecting an almost schizophrenic view of women by the men in charge" (Hurd 15).

She goes on to suggests that, "The two feminist periods in the United States --the 1920s and the

1960s--have had no real effects upon the major studios or the structure of mainstream films" and

adds that "the small percentage of women who direct or have directed mainstream films are not

radical feminists, but are women who have struck a compromise between the stories they might

want to tell and those that would appeal to a wide audience" (ibid).

What is known is that in the late sixties the Hollywood studio system was in decline. The

monopoly (production, distribution and exhibition) once held by the studios, had been ruled

illegal; television was born and the stars rebelled. Although Hollywood was forced to give up

the theaters, they held onto distribution (the most lucrative of the three components of film

making). David Bordwell in his book *The Way Hollywood tells it: story and style in modern*

movies (2006), explains that while the studios were producing a few big-budget films themselves

they relied on the "packaged unit" system of production. In some cases, in house producers

oversaw a unit that turned out a stream of releases (similar to what happened in the silent era). In

Hollywood the system limbed along working at half speed. In part the failure could be attributed

to an exhibition system that could not bring in enough cash to offset mega-movie failures. A

good film would have to carry the load for the studio but operating at a disadvantage, one theatre

at a time. The mega theater complex had yet to be invented (Bordwell 2). Bordwell goes on to

say "Feature filmmaking continued to hemorrhage money--by some estimates, as much as half a

billion dollars" (ibid). The seventies saw the studio system on the brink of disaster looking ripe

for a corporate take over. It was also at this time that a plethora of amazing films emerged. The

men that made these movies came to Hollywood during a period of restructuring; there were

very few women. The landscape had changed and a new breed of director appeared in town.

These directors, young and eager, came on the heels of the cultural revolution, which had

uncovered the sometimes ugly truth of government and provided them with a spring board for

creativity molded out of disillusionment and anger. They made money with films such as "Jaws",

"M*A*S*H", and "Patton". While they did produce films like "Straw Dogs" (a movie with

brutal disregard for women), they also produced films with female leads as varied as they were

complex, from Faye Dunaway in "Chinatown" to Jill Clayburgh in "An Unmarried Woman" and

finishing the decade with Sally Field, in "Norma Rae." These movies showed women making

choices that impacted their lives, with real consequences.

In *The New Hollywood: What the movies did with the new freedoms of the seventies*

(1991)*,* James Bernardoni states that "The auteur theory implied that the restrictions and

limitations on artistic freedom imposed by the big studio system created a potentially fruitful

tension that could result in the ideal synthesis: films of artistic merit that are accessible to mass

audiences." (1) The seventies would provide a new order and a new type of movie. Bernardoni

quotes Joseph Gelmis from his book *The Film Director as Superstar* (1970) " We are on the

threshold of a technical and aesthetic revolution in movies which will inevitability restructure

human consciousness and understanding. Accessibility of means of production and changes in

distribution and exhibition will democratize movies so there will be thousands made every year

instead of hundreds" (Bernardoni 2). However, he doesn't mention women. He contends that at

the end of the seventies Hollywood was flying high. Tax laws, passed in the Nixon years,

allowed current and future losses to be written off, which provided fertile ground for corporations with large amounts of capital to spread around. All major studios had merged into multi-national corporations. Despite the desires of many for a New Hollywood the traditions of the old Hollywood resurfaced, sometimes with foreign names like Sony or Matsushita, but with the same organizational scheme that brought together powerful producers and mega stars in packaged deals. Another critical piece was the integration of the competing forms of entertainment into one large corporation—television, cable, print media. The introduction of the "mega movie," the blockbuster (not to be confused with big budgeted movie), laid the ground for the decades of event movies. The Hollywood movie business had become a "real business" with an appetite for sequels coupled with merchandizing. However, these films, in order to be successful on a large scale, needed to viewed as many times as possible in as many locations as possible, thus the birth of the multi-plex. Just a few years before, Hollywood boutique was in fashion and character the focus. It appeared that the studio system that had evaporated under the weight of converging change had risen from the dead and made anew in the image of the blockbuster. Although the blockbuster made mega bucks for the studios the economic engine of Hollywood remained with the several hundred genre pictures that were produced each year. Mr. Gelmis had hoped for more when he wrote of "aesthetic revolution" and "thousands of films." Bernardino suggests multiple reasons that the heralded second coming of "film as art" had fizzled. First, the young titans found themselves at the mercy of the people that ran Hollywood, the money men. The new arrivals fresh with ideas and new ways of making movies had counter parts on the money side just as young and inexperienced. They brought shiny new MBAs and a corporate orientation. But these men did not have the kind of institutional memory that their

predecessors had (which provided stability and comfort), but they did have power: they had the money. Power mixed with immaturity provides a recipe for disaster in any situation, but is especially harmful when no overarching hierarchy exists to provide guidance. The financial bottom line became the conscience and the aesthetic of film. Secondly, he contends that the titans themselves sabotaged the great New Hollywood by their desire to make films, lots, and lots of films. They were co-opted and brought into the fold with their creative impulses deadened by the bright lights of Hollywood. Finally, he believed that the greatest damage done to the New Hollywood had come at the hands of a society that had grown tired of consciousness raising and simply wanted to be entertained (Bernardino 10). This sentiment was similar to the one that was heard as Lois Weber's star began to dim at the end of the great "Uplift' period of film. The same conservative wave that brought Ronald Reagan into the White House had also contributed to the death of the New Hollywood. But Bernardino's most controversial statements assert that a New Hollywood never existed and the illusion of a New Hollywood, fraught with failure, died before it emerged. He argues that the "fallacies" of the New Hollywood phenomenon contained a desire to shoot and write movies like television, a belief that film would replace the novel, that escapist film could some how be transformed into a work of art, and that a complete understanding of "cinematic techniques" gave the film meaning. The examination, by comparing the representation of women in film the 70s with films in the 80s, provides an important link between the women's movement and known conservative trends that swept the country in the years following the Reagan election as President. Did the corporate takeover, take over the vision of real women by removing the focus on character, in exchange for focusing on anything that could turn a profit? It would be incomplete to suggest that women only wanted to

make small movies that focused on character. I think it is also fair to suggest that if the only

people in the room cutting up the pie are men it is very likely there will not be a piece for the

lady.

For other observers such as Susan Faludi there is a belief that a particular backlash

occurred that sidetracked women in Hollywood. She describes in her book *Backlash: The*

Undeclared War Against Women, (1991) a world where the "backlash" is covert, unorganized

and at times unknown to those actively participating, "The antifeminist backlash has been set off

not by women's achievement of full equality but by the increased possibility that they might win

it" (11). She suggests that the media, in general, had joined the anti-feminist campaign in the

early 70s. She uses as an example the story of a women reporter at *Newsday*: " A male editor

assigned Marilyn Goldstein a story on the women's movement with these instructions: Get out

there and find an authority who'll say this is all a crock of shit" (75). She stipulates that the

active engagement of the film industry in the backlash lagged behind other institutions because

of production issues and began in the 1980s. This allowed the film world to take in the rhetoric

"of the general media, allow it to grow, and then place it back out in the public for all to see

(125).

While Hollywood was ignoring the capacity of women filmmakers an emerging women's

cinema movement had begun during the 70's. In an article written by Shilyah Warren, "By, For,

and About: The "Real" Problem in the Feminist Film Movement" for UCLA's Journal of

Cinema and Media Studies, Fall (2008) Ms. Warren states that, "For the first time, "women's

films" denoted films made by and for, not just starring or about, women and emerging out of the

political fever and radical demands of the women's movement. Exhibition of these films began

in earnest on a new "women's films" festival circuit where it became readily apparent that the

relationship between women and cinema was about to shift for good. The decade of the seventies

witnessed a veritable explosion of what I would like to embrace as "feminist cinema" and the

production of an unprecedented number of films by, for, and about women" (Warren 17).

A great number of these films were documentaries but there were narrative features that

found an audience. In Christina Lane's book *Feminist Hollywood: From Born in Flames to Point*

Break, (2000) she describes the evolution of women filmmakers in the 1970s through her

discussion of access. She choose "counter cinema" as the best descriptor of style over terms like

feminist documentary, art cinema, avant-garde, experimental and independent film. She defines

the funding mechanism for counter cinema as " Independent cinema" which are films distributed

outside of the major studios system. She offers an abridged history of the counter cinema

movement when she says, "Since the 1960s, counter cinema has emphasized the inherent

constructedness of so-called essential truths and attempted to coach the spectator toward

reflexivity and critical awareness" (10). It should be noted that Lane joined the many that have

questioned the notion of "essential truth" as a valid premise in film theory. In the process of

describing the evolution of counter cinema she draws the connection, between counter cinema

and documentary film, as the point in which each attempts to shine light on the small experiences

of everyday life. It is through this connection to the everyday life that documentary film and the

women's movement made a marriage. Lane draws from Annette Kuhn *Women's Pictures:*

Feminism and Cinema, (1993) when she says, "Documentary practices allowed women to

uncover past and present female "realities," a task that corresponded to the political goals of the

feminist movement and its "positive images" approach. Women's documentary was typically

organized around autobiography or oral history and was therefore structured through the consciousness-raising rhetoric of the 1970s feminist politics" (20).

In 1998 The Center for the Study of Women in Television and Film at San Diego State University began keeping track of how many women worked on Hollywood films. For over a decade they have published <u>Celluloid Ceiling: Behind the Scenes Employment of Women on the Top 250 Films</u>. This study has provided a baseline that gives a voice to those interested in articulating the advancement or lack of advancement of women in film, in a clear and concise fashion.

The center also published, <u>Independent Women: Behind-the-Scenes Representation on Festival Films</u>, (2009) which compared the employment numbers from feature-length festival films from June 2008 to May 2009 with the employment figures generated for the top 250 domestic films of 2008, published in the annual Celluloid Ceiling report.

In festival films, which employed 8,051 individuals working on 906 films with U.S. as country of origin, the number of women directors, writers, producers, cinematographers, and editors outpaced those for the top 250 domestic films in 2008, 24% vs. 16% (Lauzen). The authors attributed the difference to the number of documentary films that are viewed at festivals. Producers represented the highest number of women working behind the scene in festival films at 33% with editor at 23% and executive producers at 22%, directors 22%, writers 19% and directors of photography 9%. For the top 250 domestically produced films in 2008, the highest number of women working behind the scenes was in the area of producing--23% of films had a woman producer, 18% had a woman editor, and 17% had a woman executive producer (Lauzen).

The most significant difference between festivals films and top domestically produced films are in the areas of directing and cinematography. In 2008 the percentage of women directors working on festival films was 22% while only 7% of the top 250 grossing films produced domestically was directed by a women. Director of photography was even worse. Only 2% of the top 250 domestically produced films had a women director of photography while 9% of the festival films had a women director of photographer (Lauzen).

Lauzen found that documentaries made up 49% of festival films therefore a separate analysis was done between narrative and documentaries. Of those documentaries 28% were directed by , while 72% were directed by males. Of all directors working on narrative films 15% were women and 85% were male. In total, women directors working on festival films, 32% directed narrative films and 67% directed documentaries. While males were as likely to direct a documentary as a feature film. In essence women were more likely to direct documentaries and males were just as likely to direct a documentary as a narrative.

A higher percentage of that worked as director of photography on festival films worked on documentaries than narrative films. However, of all directors of photography working on documentaries only 11% were women. Of those directors of photography that worked on narrative festival films only 6% were women. Of those women directors of photography working on festival films 67% worked on a documentary films and 33% worked on narrative films (Lauzen).

Overall, behind the scenes, women worked on more documentary than narrative festival films. Of all individuals working on documentary 29% were women and 71% were males. Of the narrative festival films, behind the scenes employees, women made up 18% percent. There may

have been overlap between those festival films that achieved a high gross with the top 250

grossing domestic films, but the number is not significant. Film festivals traditionally screen

lower-budget films, which provides an opportunity for films that do not have funds to market

their film (Lauzen).

The Celluloid Ceiling project allows for a comparison to be made between the actual

positions held by women in film and the positions that women students hold in the classroom

setting.

Lauzen reports that the percentage of women working as directors, executive producers,

producers, writers, editors and cinematographers in the period of 1998-2009 has declined slightly.

The study states that in 2009, women composed 16% of all directors, executive producers, producers,

writers, cinematographers, and editors working on the top 250 domestic films. This represents a

decline of 3 percent points from 2001 and is even with 2008 figures.

The greatest decline came in the area of women writers. In 1998 13% of the top 250 domestic

films employed women writers, by 2009 that number had dropped to 8%. Also in 2009, 86% of the

films had no women writers. Similarly depressed are the number of women directors 7% in 2009, a

decrease of 2 % from 9% in 2008. And, 92% of films (top 250) produced in 2009 had no women

directors, hardly a surge in women running the show. Worse than directing, women cinematographers

are almost non-existent at 2% in 2009 with a high of 4% in 2008 (Lauzen).

The study shows that women have made progress behind the camera in the top 250

domestic films in areas of producing, executive producing and editing. In 2009, of the 250 top

domestic films, 17% of all executive producers were women, 23% were producers, and 18%

were editors (Lauzen).

Celluloid Ceiling, 2009, does not look at the skill sets needed for employment as a director, executive producer, producer, editor or cinematographer. However, in a companion study, The Celluloid Ceiling II: Production Design, Production Management, Sound Design, Key Grips, and Gaffers 2009, published for the first time because there was an interest in having a complete understanding of the status of women in film, a position description was included for each job in the study, "Production managers and production supervisors are responsible for the management of a production including the creation and maintenance of a budget, hiring crews, and managing union contracts. Sound designers and supervising sound editors determine overall sound of the film. Production designers are in charge of the art department and work closely with the cinematographer and costume designer to create an overall look of the film. Key grips oversee the other grips, the rigging technicians on set. Gaffers head up the electrical department on the films" (Lauzen).

lauzen's production study looked at the employment of 1,318 individuals working on the top 250 domestic films in 2008 in positions related to production supervision and management, production design and sound design. They found that 25% of all production managers were women, 44% of all production supervisors were women and 20% of production designers were women. These numbers were higher than the numbers for directors, writers and producers. However in the more technical departments such as sound design, supervising sound editing the numbers dropped significantly to 5%. Grips and gaffers were almost not existent. Once again there was a disconnect between the percentage of women that worked in a certain position on the top 250 films and the number of top 250 films that did not have a woman in that position. For example 25% of all production managers working on the top 250 films of 2008 were women but

85% of the top 250 films did not have a woman in that position. With that said, the percentage of women in the area of supervision and management are higher than any other position recognized in these studies. This corresponds with the data, from student focus groups conducted for this thesis, that reported positions of a managerial nature were the positions they often held during production projects. It may be appropriate to say that we do what we practice.

Literature Review

In 1970 Newsweek magazine published "Women in Revolt." An expose on the feminist movement that was sweeping the country. During that period 46 women filed a lawsuit, the first of its kind, on behalf of women media professionals against their employer for employment discrimination based on gender under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act. Ironically, Newsweek was the defendant in that lawsuit. While the management of Newsweek prepared to find the perfect writer for the story "Women in Revolt" their female employees were talking about legal action in the wash room. Their complaints ranged from discrimination in hiring, promotion and assignment practices. Unaware of the anger brewing Newsweek management decided to go out-side the organization (there were plenty of highly qualified women writers at Newsweek) and hired a high ranking male employee's wife, which they described as "a top flight journalist who is also a woman" to write the "Women in Revolt" story. This action went against the practice of an all staff magazine. The men were clueless and the women were outraged.

 Fast forward forty years and Newsweek is back at it with "The Visual Language of Liberation: Women's history on Newsweek." The lead story "Are We There Yet ?" is written by women of the new millennium, the "equal" generation, Jessica Bennett, Jesse Ellison and Sarah Bell. The story of the courageous pioneering plaintiffs of 1970 had been forgotten but would resurface and serve as an inspiration for the next generation of Newsweek women.

These authors were aware that they enjoyed the benefits of a changed world. They were all successful but they had a nagging feeling that perhaps the battle for equality was not over. They cite recent governmental reports showing that although women perform at a higher level than men in college they make less money once they graduate. They remind their readers that the "pregnancy gap" once

considered the reason for pay discrepancy between men and women did not stand up to scrutiny. Women who had not had children were still being paid 77 cents on the male dollar, long after college graduation.

They wondered how they could justify their feelings of frustration when there was nothing left to do; Women had arrived. Women were equal to men. However, through their research they found that parity between the sexes at Newsweek was not realized. Conditions were better but men still wrote most of the cover stories. They also recognized that Newsweek was not the only media organization that had many more men with bylines than women. Furthermore they found that only a fraction of major corporation are headed by women and only a fourth of all elected federal officials are women or partners at law firms.

One of the greatest fears of the "equal" generation, (the women who wrote this article) was that they would seen as ungrateful. How could they complain, even when a particular gender bias was blatant? They felt it was a no-win situation. The women that they talked with wondered if they would be able to achieve but were also afraid to step up and take a leadership role. They referenced a recent study of young women that showed a preference for stepping back when offered a leadership role for fear they would be called "bossy." The message they received from a greater society was that they needed to be successful but not too successful and under no circumstances should they complain or they would appear ungrateful or worse yet a nag.

Kelly Hankin, author of *And Introducing....The Women Director: Documentaries about Women Filmmakers as Feminist Activism,* NWSA Journal, 2007, writes in an effort to showcase the work of women documentary filmmakers. As a teacher she found that many of her students lacked an appreciation for the women voice or recognized the barriers that women directors face. She stipulates that in highlighting these documentaries women students will have gained a role model. One of the issues that has arisen in my thesis work has been the

effects of a dominant male film environment on women students and the importance of women voices and role models. The notion that role modeling is important certainly resonates with the research that I have conducted.

Hankin holds that although not all women directors ascribe to the feminist label they tend to tell stories that challenge the Hollywood representation of women, which in turn influences the general discourse of feminism. In an age where the term feminism is considered tired and outdated she argues that acknowledging that women have a different view of the world is important. Historically feminist film scholars tended to avoid the significance of the author but rather focused on content but Hankin believes there has been shift and an increased interest expressed in the stories of women directors. By focusing on women documentaries she believes that the notion of artist as spectator will be elevated and a valuable understanding of the motivation and inspiration that comes from seeing yourself in a film will be apparent. The bottom line is that by discussing the work of women filmmakers, Hankin allows other women to take notice and see themselves in the image of the women director. As a teacher of young women it is an opportunity to inspire.

In 2001, Stephen Galloway writing for Fade In online.com quotes women filmmakers recalling the early years of women in film, which from their point of view are the last two to three decades, not the time of Blache or Weber. The article is at times both encouraging and disheartening. Of course he sites the few success stories that exist of women working in the film business but once he gets past the names that float around Hollywood as examples of women advancement the dismal truth stands out. These truths are a product of those organizations that have been tracking employment practices and are sited in his article, Women in Film, and Writers Guild of America. One woman interviewed for the article talked about the choices that women

are making as they enter the business and the lack of interest in those crafts that are more physically demanding. She also attributed the lack of women cinematographers to the women themselves. Suggesting that often women get disenchanted when they are treated poorly by a director. One man offered that if you were to go to a film school and ask the women students what they wanted to do in film they would more often say they want to be directors. However, Galloway did check with the Director's Guild of America and found that women (in 2001) represented 21% of the members. That is not to say that women direct 21% of the films made in Hollywood. I found in my own research that while being a director was a possibility for some of the women students they were just as interested in other jobs in production.

He quotes women writers who say that no matter however successful they are (generally comedies, chick flicks) they are not considered for the important films. The films that the industry holds up as the best of what Hollywood has to offer.

With this type of article the author attempts to address the issue of women in film or the lack of women in film with the use of anecdotal evidence with a sprinkling of statistics. This provides a less than clear picture of the status of women in film. However, the anecdotal evidence if collected many times over does provide talking points for more research.

Why are There so Few Women Film-makers, Kira Cochrane, was published by the Guardian on Sunday January 31, 2010 just weeks before Kathryn Bigelow won the Oscar for Directing. The article reminds the reader of how few women have been nominated, and the sexist stereotypes that have been and continue to be applied to women. She offers hope by citing the increase in the number of women attending film programs.

She goes on to quote a report published in the UK by <u>Women in Television and Film</u> ,"a number of older participants reported direct experience of overt sexism, none of the younger participants did" (1). This may be a generational response. What women today consider sexist may be different from what women of a former generation might consider sexist.

She touches on issues that are directly related to the topic of power. Specifically she addresses the notion of women as negotiators. She provides two scenarios that she has heard; women negotiate differently from men and that is a challenge for women especially in a "male-dominated" environment and that women have a hard time selling themselves; women are better at selling other people's ideas. She counters that with remarks made by women directors who say that women negotiate just fine. It is the male orientation that is not to be open to women and their ideas.

Cochrane also addresses the lack of role models at the top of the film industry and the effect on women in film. She suggest that it plays out in two ways. First, there are few top women available to mentor and provide guidance. Secondly, because there are so few women at the top of studios there are serious implications for employment. Women are not seen as possible big budget movie directors, because they aren't seen period, and that is where Hollywood makes its money. Most of the big budget movies are geared to males made by males. However, she cites the films that have grossed over a 100 million directed by women as a means to dispel the notion that women can't direct big budgets.

Cochrane quotes Lauzen (of Celluloid Ceiling) while discussing the issue of women themed films and the reaction to those films by males, "I've been there when a film with a women protagonist has been screened and guys at the top go 'Well, I don't get it.' When the

majority of people in power are male, who are they going to relate to most on screen, and who do they think other people are going to relate to? Males. That's no big conspiracy. I don't think it's conscious, honestly" (Cochrane 3).

She believes that the challenges facing women directors are multi-faceted. A combination of conditions that are similar to the challenges that women face in employment where men dominate. I would suggest that film programs with a male dominant staff, faculty, and students is such an environment, the article could have been titled "Do Women in Film have Agency?"

Kathryn Bigelow is one woman who has labored in the male dominant world of film and has come out a winner. She is the subject Caetlin Benson-Allott's *Undoing Violence, Politics, Genre, and Duration in Kathryn Bigelow's Cinema,* Film Quarterly, Winter 2010. Benson-Allott follows Bigelow's film career and analyzes her methods and practices. As Benson-Allott points out, Kathryn Bigelow is not new to Hollywood. She has been an active director for thirty years. Benson-Allott reminds the reader repeatedly of Bigelow's comfort level with technology and her attempt to rethink film action and violence. The writer describes Bigelow's body of work as a constant attempt at reinventing the traditional approach to filmmaking seen in Hollywood. However, Benson-Allott does not suggest that Bigelow was on a mission. Benson-Allott describes Bigelow's work as "set of questions and engagements rather than a predetermined auteurist statement." (Benson-Allott p. 33) It is as if the title of auteur is something that happened while Bigelow was simply working. With or without the Oscar, the importance is that this filmmaker contributes on her own terms, and she has agency in a male dominant work environment and genre.

New York Times movie critic, Manhola Dargis, in her December 2009 article, _Women in the Seats but Not Behind the Camera_, sites the films in 2009 that motivated women to go to the theater, which included both movies about women and movies made by women. She notes that not all were critical successes but they made money which bodes well for women filmmakers. She posits that these movies dispel the notion that women don't go to movies and women can't make commercially successful movies. She shouts out from the page "Women need to develop their own muscles." She wants women filmmakers to make more movies about women, period. She makes a distinction between pre-pubescent films with young women who "lock and load" as she calls it and movies that women will want to see, that they will relate to. She points out that before Kathryn Bigelow only three women in over 80 years have been nominated for best director, none won. And hat in 2009 of the 600 films that will be reviewed by the New York Times only 60 were directed by women, some of those 60 films were foreign films, others documentaries.

One of her biggest complaints with Hollywood is the double standard that is applied when a movie fails to make money. She admits that the money people of Hollywood only care about making money however she points out what happens to women when their films fail to find an audience and what happens to their male counter part in the same situation. The standards change. She uses as an example Kathryn Bigelow and her big budget film "K-19: The Widowmaker," which failed to recover production costs and Michael Mann's "Ali" which also failed to recover production costs. It didn't take Kathryn Bigelow ten years but she didn't just pop back up. Bigelow did not come out with another movie until the independently produced "Hurt Locker" seven years later. Mann, on the other hand went on to make "Collateral" and "Miami Vice," two big budget studio movies during the same period.

Dargis doesn't have answers and truly seems perplexed because when given the opportunity, four of the major studios were headed by women, there was not a significant increase in women in production. (3). One student who was a member of a focus group for thesis felt it had to do with trust and that women don't trust women to do good work and men don't trust women but men trust men and women trust men. It was a matter of trust something that Dargis hints at but doesn't totally express.

Methodology

Dr. Jean Baker Miller published *Toward a New Psychology of Women* (1976) in her seminal work she examined the behavior of women in the context of a male dominated structure. This was a structure which controlled opportunities for women and limited a woman's power. In 2009 I came upon an article published in 2008, in the Journal of Feminism and Psychology, "Toward a New Psychology of Women: Still Relevant After All These Years?" which was one of several articles written as a part of a retrospective on the seminal work of Dr. Jean Baker Miller. The retrospective questioned the relevancy of Dr. Baker's theories in the lives of young women today. They asked four young women to read *Toward a New Psychology of Women* and converse with the authors about the merits of the book. The authors acknowledged that Miller had been criticized by Third Wave feminists for only addressing the issues of women that were straight, white and middle class. The students that were selected to participate reflected the same demographics of the original group. The authors also said that "we invited these particular four women, aged 22-30, because, on previous occasions, we had at least one interesting conversation with them about gender and feminism" (Greenwood et al 359). Also, because the women read the book the authors believed that the women became intimately aware of the concepts of *Toward a New Psychology of Women.*

The article looked at Miller's concepts of women's continued subordination to men, the continued devaluation of women's ways of knowing, conflict over gender roles and responsibilities, and possibilities for personal and social transformation. The authors noted that seeing themselves reflected in Miller's writings was a surprise for the four younger

women. They had expected the book to lack relevance. Each voiced surprise and dismay that

Miller's description of women's struggles to confront gender subordination reverberated down

through the years, and off the pages into their lives. They could relate. (Greenwood et. al 359)

Miller's theories could provide a baseline to compare the concept of women agency in a

male dominant environment. I decided that the best way to determine whether these young

women acted in ways that demonstrated agency was to conduct a focus groups. My analysis of

secondary questions, was based on the model Miller lays out in her book. The theoretical

foundation of Miller's work includes Birth Bias, Defining Normal, Other Oriented, Mimicking,

Stifled Creativity, Blaming, and Conflict Avoidance. These are key components of Miller's

theory that were utilized to assess power.

Birth Bias -- Miller compares the dominant-subordinate relationship of men and women

to that of the parent-child relationship, which she considers temporary. In the parent-child

relationship, the dominant interacts with the hope that the subordinate will one day reach a status

of equality. She suggests that the subordinate position in the male-women relationship does not

change as it does when a child reaches adulthood. A permanent subordinate position is the result

of being born the wrong color, sex, or nationality, and there is no illusion that the dominant will

work to emancipate the subordinate into a higher status.

Normal -- Miller suggests that the dominant also defines what is normal. It is not unusual

for the dominant to place the subordinate in roles that are less valued by society while reserving

the roles that are considered essential for the dominant. This is done to reinforce and retain the

dominant's power in society. The subordinate comes to believe that they are not able to move

into a position of authority. They are encouraged to foster personality traits that are more juvenile than adult and are acceptable to the dominant. Miller identifies the clusters of subordinate personality traits when she says "(t)hese characteristics form a certain familiar cluster: submissiveness, passivity, docility, dependency, lack of initiative, inability to act, to decide, to think and the like. In general, this cluster includes qualities more characteristic of children than adults--immaturity, weakness, and helplessness." The acceptance of these personality traits by the subordinate sends a message to the dominant that the subordinate is stable. Any attempt to subvert these labels and replace them with behaviors more suitable for adulthood such as being assertive, insightful, or intelligent proves unacceptable. (ibid) In a workplace environment the attempt to assert an opinion could result in a termination for the subordinate.

Other Oriented -- Miller found that it was commonpleace for the dominant group to treat a subordinate destructively; sabotaging equality, while believing that the subordinate shares the same interests and has a common experience. Because of this dynamic the dominant avoids self-understanding and the ability to know their impact on others. Miller contends that often the subordinate knows more about the dominant than they know about themselves. The dominant has the power and the subordinate must know what the dominant needs. The dominant, in turn, defines the subordinate.

Mimicking -- In every subordinate group, there will be those subordinates that will behave in a manner that reflects the behavior of the dominant. They may mistreat other subordinates with the hope that they will be recognized as part of the dominant group. They may posses some dominant characteristics that will allow them to pass into the dominant group.

However, more often than not they will never be fully accepted and lose the connection with the subordinate group (Miller 11).

Stifled Creativity -- Miller's view of creativity is that of a "continuous process of bringing forth a changing vision of oneself, and of oneself in relation to the world" (114). She makes a connection between authentic self and creativity, and the desire to match what is created with the experience, "For women to act and react out of their own being is to fly in the face of their appointed definition and their prescribed way of living" (114).

Blaming -- If the subordinate group begins to move more freely in society the more likely that the inequalities of the two groups will surface. This exposure causes conflict and risks for those promoting a change in the system; the dominant sees power as self-determination built on a system that restricts others, the subordinate sees power as the "capacity to implement" (116). It is easier for subordinates who are afraid to act because of their fear of conflict, to blame others. To act independently would require that the subordinate be willing to accept the possibility of "total isolation and complete condemnation" (122). The structure of power within the dominant culture continues unimpeded.

Conflict Avoidance -- Conflict as described by Miller should not be seen as good or bad but as a means to grow. It is through conflict that an individual can evaluate their experiences and find authenticity. An unequal system such as a dominant-subordinate precludes conflict and the opportunity to grow (13). As Miller so aptly suggests, "Inequality has created a state of conflict. Yet dominant groups will tend to suppress conflict. They will see any questioning of the "normal" situation as threatening; activities by subordinates in this direction will be perceived with alarm" (9). Do women students question the status quo? Miller argues that

conflict is essential, but that women have been taught to avoid conflict and settle into the position of the mediator. She says " All of us, but women especially, are taught to see conflict as something frightening and evil. These connotations have been assigned by the dominant group and have obscured the necessity for conflict. Even more crucially, they obscure the fundamental nature of reality--the fact that, in its most basic sense, conflict is inevitable, the source of all growth, and an absolute necessity if one is to be alive" (125).

The students were recruited through the department's email system with additional presentations to film studies classes. The students picked the time of day that they were available to participate in the focus groups and because of this decision the groups were uneven in the number of students. This may have influenced the dynamics of the groups and could have influenced their responses. I interviewed 10 women in a group settings (one group 6 women, the second group 4 women) much like a focus group discussion; one woman was first generation American, born in the United States but parents born in a different country; one woman was born outside of the United States and came to America with her parents; five Seniors, one Junior, three Sophomores, one Freshman; three students were from out of state. Students were not asked their sexual orientation, family income or ethnicity. They did provide their ages and year in school.

I operationalized the theories of Dr. Miller through seven core questions which were asked in each group. However, the responses of the women differed from group to group, therefore, the follow-up questions differed from group to group.

The women studied in Miller's book did not have agency. It is my contention that the lack agency identified by Miller was believed to be a product of a male dominant structure. Because

production classes are predominately male (both students and professors), I believe it is reasonable to say that the structure is male dominant. It is because of the male dominant structure in the production classes that a common denominator was found, and a bridge was made.

Finding out what the students felt about the structure of production classes was essential to assessing their agency. The acknowledgement of a male dominant structure allows a comparison to be made between women of the 70's and women of the new millennium, specifically women undergraduate students. Do the young women of today act differently from those women, who did not display agency that Miller describes in her writings? Do the students have agency? It is with this question in mind that an attempt will be made to interpret the findings obtained through a focus group conducted with women undergraduate students.

Findings

   The findings were combined, from the two focus groups, into one summary to protect the identities of the students.

   Why did you choose film studies? The first question was posed to learn more about the students' background and interests and I felt that talking about why they came to film studies was a fitting way to get the women use to talking about themselves. I wanted to get a sense of how they think about themselves and their positions by how they talk.

   Five of the ten women mentioned an experience with video and or film in high school. A sixth participant had experience in theater during high school. For those that had taken film courses in high school, the experience was not particularly good or particularly bad.

   One woman diminished the experience, noting that the teacher had little expertise; she had to teach herself but she declared that it was fun. Her family was involved in communications so she had always been around video and film. A second participant had a film course which she felt had helped her to see how film worked, but when she enrolled in a broadcast news course the next year she found that she hated what broadcasters did. Because of that second experience she was "thrown off" the idea of film as a course of study but apparently not enough to deter her from choosing film as her major.

   Another woman said when asked about any high school experience said, "I tried to, but my senior year was the first year they had it. It didn't really teach you very much. It was not organized. I don't know." One participant felt that she was behind because she had not had any exposure in high school.

One member of the group that had taken a course in high school had gotten interested in film by watching special features, how the movie was made, provided on the DVD. The experience of watching the special features showed her how "cool" it was and "how they fake a lot of stuff." A second woman who had no high school experience had also enjoyed the special features and was intrigued by what she saw. The special features she mentioned as most intriguing were the discussions of the different techniques that had been used. She specifically mentioned lighting and how they framed the shot or why they chose a certain costume.

Other reasons for attending film studies ranged from a need to be creative, to finding an outlet, seeing film as a career where anything is possible with more opportunities, loving the technical side of filmmaking, and the desire to be surprised and take chances.

One woman described herself as being creative but she had never felt at home with the other art forms that she tried. As she began to think about film she realized that she had been making movies in her head since she was a child.

One woman said she was "intrigued by the unpredictable and uncontrollable nature of filmmaking." She loved the idea that she could make movies for a living and travel the world.

For another woman, who described herself as not being a creative person, the aspect of film editing ignited her. She loved everything about editing. Her descriptions appeared to reflect how she felt about the work: tedious, detail oriented, and time consuming but she wanted the job nonetheless.

The second question posed was, what area of film interests you most? This question was asked in order to determine how active they were in their education, did they know what they

wanted to do? But knowing what you want to do and acting to bring this about are two different things.

There were several areas of interest mentioned by the women: Directing; editing; writing--one of the two that declared their interest in writing also expressed interest in production design; cinematography and lighting; script supervisor; production design. One of the three women who mentioned that they would like to direct, did not offer a strong opinion as to why she choose to direct but did mention that her work would require that she move to LA, and she was not all that excited about working there. She did suggest that perhaps she would travel to get jobs, and that would be acceptable.

The second woman also mentioned travel as a benefit but also talked about art in film "pretty much love the fact that you can include all the arts in film." She loved editing, filming, being creative, thinking of angles and visual ways of telling a story. She thought the visual part was her favorite, and because she liked every aspect of filmmaking she thought that directing pulled it all together, " You have to know what editing is, you have to know how the equipment works, you have to know set design, everything. I like that about directing. You get involved with the whole process of the movie. Yeah, you're kind of the boss."

The third woman that expressed interest in directing came to it from her experiences working on school and club projects. She liked production and directing " they are both things I really love and they are very similar—like creating worlds-its about creating a consistent world that things can take place in.'

The two women that wanted to be editors had been involved in high school film courses, and were very confident about the path they had chosen. During the discussion it was revealed

that both women had a family member with a connection to video or film and had served as a role model.

One woman received, as a birthday present, a video of her first eight years. That ritual continued for years. She sat with her relative (who considered himself an amateur videographer) while he edited and watched. She describes the editing process as "Its just constructing a story. I don't tell stories, but putting a story together is very interesting, to see the progress. Having a scattered thing and then organizing it into something that can tell a great story."

The second woman's family worked with 16 mm and cut tape, and she watched. She liked the sound the machines made when they were "cutting on a linear system" it was the first thing she did and she thought it was hard but cool. She remarked, "You can make something that is totally crap but you can make something that is really good even better."

Two women wanted to be writers, and of those two one offered that she was also interested in production; she was not completely sure what she wanted to do. The woman with the strongest connection to writing was raised to read books, and write narrative. She said she just sees the scene and that's how she gets going. She had not taken a screenwriting course but planned to in the next semester.

The second woman that ultimately wanted to be a writer had initially said that she was interested in production. When asked about what part of production interested her or if she had an interest in directing she said, "I don't have an eye for that. I wish I did." A follow up question of why she thought she did not have an eye for directing she said " I just don't know what to look for. How to get actors to go there or tell them what to do. I've been around directors, and I admire them for what they can do, but I can't come up with it myself." With further questions

about other aspects of filmmaking, she responded "I'm looking at writing, not sound at all, I don't have the ability for that either. That's not something that really comes to me. I'm looking at writing."

The woman interested in cinematography/lighting said an experience in high school for an extra-credit project had steered her in that direction, "I was just, light it like that, and I thought, oh that can make a huge change, so I like dictating."

The woman that wanted to be script supervisor was particularly strong about her intentions, as well. When asked why she had picked the role of the script supervisor as a career she replied "First I wanted to be a director, producer and all that. Then I figured out when I took production that I did not have a creative streak that they require." When asked what made her think she wasn't creative she said "You can see what they do, but then when you are up to do it, you're – I don't know." When asked if she thought more school or experience would make her feel more confident she replied "I don't know." Another woman suggested, "Not every job in this industry is creative. In every film there are three or four people that are creative and everybody else is just part of the hierarchy."

The woman that was interested in production design said she was still figuring it out, at first she was interested in writing but was leaning to production design. "I realized when I watched the sets that is what I focus on. I really focus on every element of production design. I really dig that about films." However, she was still not entirely sure but said, "I think that I can actually be determined enough, care enough, to actually want to do the work."

How are class projects organized? How are the details worked out? Who makes the decisions about the process? With these questions I wanted to understand their role, what they

did or didn't do. Straight out of the bag one woman offered that it "didn't work." When asked why she said it was "unorganized" she provided an example of a class project where everyone had a different idea of how to proceed, "A lot of people have different aspects of things like some people don't work well with writing everything down and usually they just follow it. Some people are strict with following a story board and you have to follow that for each shot."

The group was asked if the professor told the group what to do. They all replied no. Another woman offered that, in the professional world, you have a defined job, "you do your part" but in college everyone is learning. There is chaos, disagreements, unprofessional behavior and " people will change things, or they won't tell you or they'll do something different so you don't work so well in collaboration." She attributed this to a lack of defined parts. That was followed by a woman who said, "One of the production classes I had it wasn't that way. He gave us different roles. He had us try different things." She did add that sometimes jobs are not done because there are not enough people. Another woman said she thought it depended on the class.

The participants addressed how projects were selected and felt the process was democratic, however, there were several different models. The first process described was a pitch session. The pitches are all related to a general theme. The students vote and the people making the pitches of the top four projects are the directors. After that, the students vote/pick the project they want to be on. Within those groups, people step up and say what they want to do. Several women agreed that had been their experience. Another woman offered "Sometimes you don't get into voting. Sometimes people just gravitate to a project. At other times, we just go, people have all the ideas, let's vote."

Another woman said their process involved the pitching process, but a little differently, "We were assigned to groups before the pitching. We had to pitch to the group and then in the that group there had to be a director, a producer, whatever the four were. We couldn't repeat. We made three films. Once I was a director another time I was a producer etc…"

Another way of assigning positions that was mentioned required students to raise their hands if they were interested in directing, then divided into groups. "He never said that we can't repeat so we are repeating for our next project, so everyone is stuck in their role. It was a good way of doing it because you got everyone in a different area they wanted to focus on." One woman said, "Sometimes, you are going to go into groups, and you want to do something-like some photography- but, then there is somebody that has been lighting things since they were 14 or early in high school and you're really new at it. So, you say, you light this one and I'll see what I can do next time. There are some people more advanced in skills and have more experience that is it like, why do I want to light this scene when this guy knows twice as much about it than I do."

A follow up question was asked to understand the structure of the class. I asked "Does the teacher step in and say anything like it isn't just about getting it done, it's about everybody learning?"The woman said no then said "sometimes.' Another woman chimed in and said "For the grade you forsake your ambitions." A third woman offered, "For what we want to do today, there is only once along the way and some guy is obviously very good at it, so I'm going to grip under him, but in order to get it done in time, he's probably not going to share much.

A follow up question on the concept of giving up "your ambitions" I asked "Did you find that there are people in your class that are more experienced and because you want to get it done

that you choose someone with more experience? One student said, "With our professor you get it done." They all nod yes. However, for one woman, her experience was different, "My professor doesn't worry so much about us completing what we are starting because we are doing everything that he wants. He is more interested in that we learn and experiment. So, sometimes we will just start things and we might not finish it, but he is okay with that."

The process for picking projects to work on reflected what was done in the class setting. For small projects people have their groups already formed and they rent equipment and go on their way. For the large projects, the process resembles the class project. Students pitch a project, the student vote, but what differs with the class process is that students have to give a speech as to why they want to be a department head. Once the department heads are picked they pick their crew.

Do you attend clubs? I asked this question to determine if they augmented their learning by attending after hour film studies activities. Several women were active in the clubs with a couple that had attended at least one meeting. The response to the club activities varied.

One woman explained "I first went to Filmworks when I was a freshman but I didn't like it. I think it was more like a clique that it is today. It was very much run by people that really didn't have a vision and ambition. Everything was a joke to them-- that they thought was hysterical. You can make movies about ninjas or you can make a real movie. I think a lot of the people feel kind of alienated by that group. Just because they are such a tight knit group that it is more about their group than it is about filmmaking. But, they are passionate filmmakers, but not everyone wants to be a part of that.

Another woman went to Filmworks as a freshman but found that as a senior she did not have time.

What aspects of film production have met your expectations? Is it like what you thought it was going to be?" This question was asked to determine if they had acted and got what they wanted? One transfer student came to KU and found film and felt that her expectations had been met but offered, "Once I found film I was willing to learn anything. So, I didn't have very high expectations. I just really wanted to learn. And so far that is happening."

Another woman thought it was going to be like a movie, " We were going to be making movies all the time. It's not like that. You're not making movies all the time…But, what I do like about what I've gotten here is the variety of classes – sound and costuming, make-up and film music – just a bunch of different things that are really specialized helping me find my niche."

One woman talked about the amount of theory that they were required to take, "There is definitely a lot more theory that goes into film than I originally thought." She did appreciate learning the history of film and understood the importance of understanding the events that helped shape filmmaking; however, she wished for more production hours.

This was a common theme for several women. One woman was concerned that she was close to graduation but did not feel she was prepared "By the time you get to actually taking that production class you are really close to graduating. It makes you feel kind of uneasy." One of the women that had experience in high school was afraid that, by the time she was in production classes, she would have lost what she learned in high school. Another woman lamented, "I thought I was going to do more hands on work, honestly. I'm a junior and it took lots and lots of time to do my first production. It takes you a while to get to that production class. I think that it's

really, really, important to get your hands on the production side of it because that's where you learn what you're going to be doing." Several women agreed with her perspective.

Another woman remembered how she felt in the Spring of her sophomore year when she finally got into a production class "I know sophomore year, spring semester, one of the things you do is take basic video production. And, its like, I went in and the only strength I had was that one high school class. I had no clue what I was doing. I would have been nice to have all of these classes to tell you what everything means and not like sitting down in class and hurriedly scribbling down what someone writing FCU means." There was general concern that they were not learning enough in their production classes.

In both groups, the theme of Film Studies curriculum structured like an Art School surfaced. One woman even expected the experience to resemble an art school " I kind of expected it to be more like art school where you had studio time and be in there creating things a lot. That's not really the case." Another woman would structure film studies exactly like an art school "where you learn how to light and then you go up and up and up, and ramp up gradually. You're not all over the place. I just think that it would be better." She did offer that it would require students to know what they wanted to do.

The issue of competency with equipment was a larger issue in the small group. In general, they were looking for a structure that allowed them to become comfortable with equipment before they moved on and the need to feel competent. One woman reported an experience she had with her first production project, " I got a bunch of equipment from my department, and I said, wait a minute I've never touched it before. I've never done anything." In

a follow up question she was asked what she did to solve the problem. She replied, "I taught myself the whole process. I would go out and set up the equipment. I just had to teach myself. Another student helped me a lot. I would ask him questions about equipment. I would take it home. I'd read the manual. He did help us with lighting. In the class, we did learn how to light stuff. That helped a lot. For sound, I just figured out little by little. Of course, there is a price you pay with that. You have no experience with equipment."

Another woman active in school clubs was asked if her work in the clubs had supplemented her learning, she agreed that it did. But, she expressed concern that she was only learning lighting and camera in class. Another woman said "It would be nice if someone actually sat down and talked about equipment. They all agreed that the experience is like being thrown into something with the expectation that you sink or swim and that they pretty much swam.

Do you think that you are at a disadvantage because you are a woman? Do the men seem to have more experience or do they just say they have more experience. This question was asked of both groups. In the small group, a short discussion followed. The first speaker did not think it was a gender "thing". Another woman went on to say that, "If I'm in a group, we'll talk about it and then I'll say, lets get going, and I start doing things. And then others will tag along. I just think of ideas and sometimes they don't work but I follow through with it."

Do you think being a women is helpful, not important, or that it hurts you? In the large group, when the issue of gender came up there were stronger opinions of how it played out in the class, which ultimately lead to more questions and a discussion of competency.

The first speaker said " In most aspects I think it hurts. I think it was…actually…last Saturday I went to a production assistants training seminar with ADs in the business. They said for script revision that it helps to be a girl, or woman, because you guys (women) are organized and you can multi-task very well. Okay, but I noticed as I looked around that there were some women there in the class but not a lot. I just feel that some of us are detoured just because it's such a hard business to get into."

Another woman agreed but went further and added " I think that women don't trust a lot of women to do good work and men don't trust a lot of women to do good work. Men always trust men and women trust men. It's very bizarre. From what I've found…but what I think….but if all women just stood up and we said, okay, I might F this up but I'm going to do it anyway. Because that's what guys do and you know—if a wonder boy, genius director makes a flop he'll pop back up and make another one, but if a woman did that it would take her 10 years to make it up."

When asked about gender competency issues in the classroom at KU a woman said " I felt that in some classes. Like the guys that know what they're doing – they'd say let's set up the C Stands—whatever and I'm like…Yeah, and I want to, but I feel like I'm going to F it up. So, I don't step forward and that's how it might just be a women thing, but, yes, I've felt like that before.

Another woman was more direct with her experience in the classroom, "You are going to do something and people kind of look at you like you're going to do that (sarcastically), or I don't like what you said, or, sometimes you have to sort of earn your way. Even when it is

among the women, your opinion doesn't matter as much as other people's, initially. It feels like you have to earn a little bit more than you should have to."

Following that statement a woman related a story of studying in another country, "There it felt like it was based more on the spirit that you knew what you were doing and you were trusted no matter what, but here it's just like you always have to feel like I'm going to do this, but you always have to make sure they want you to do it before you actually do it."

A follow-up question spoke to the notion of a dominant culture. You are in a classroom, and there's like a ratio of 2 to 10, women to men. Do you feel that? Do you experience that, or is it just not important? "I'm more comfortable in front of guys anyway. I have a lot of guy friends, so I don't notice it. The ratio is definitely there. The ratio is worse than 2 to 10, It is less than that. I like it. If I hire guys to grip with me, then I just trust them more right away. Maybe he has a little bit more—I try not to do that, but, for some reasons... I was really bad about that for some reason and what the hell."

Another woman offered that "we've been taught, I think, men can do these jobs, can be a grip. You know, can do manual jobs." This question lead to a series of questions and answers that addressed issues of mastery and self awareness.

Is it because it is industrial in nature? The first speaker thought it had to do with attitude and how you approach the work, "I am a very quiet person, so, I always –and it doesn't matter what I'm doing- I step back a little bit, wait until I have an opening to act. I've noticed, not only in film, but in other areas that if I want to get something done and I want to be the one to do it, that I have to step forward. I've noticed in classes that where we have little group exercises that – because we are always changing and I'm working with guys and girls and they want to throw out

an idea I step back. That is my fault. I think it is more that the guys are just more willing to get in there—I might mess this up, but I am able to do it."

For several of the women, the previous statement brought up the notion of risk taking. They felt that women in production classes did not want to step up and take chances because they were afraid they would mess up, and that they had more to lose. This reluctance whether because of a fear of failure or a fear of being called "bossy" (which was referenced in the Literature Review) results in women not establishing themselves as leaders.

In the focus group one woman explained the difference between male and female students "I think guys are just more willing to go in and mess things up. I think women want to be taught things before they get in the thick of it. A guy might take a camera out and experiment and shoot all sorts of stuff. A woman would be like—I don't have a manual for this. We need a lot of instruction here." She went on to say, " It's not always about who knows the most about a certain piece of equipment or technique or whatever. Sometimes you let that person do their thing and then you try to learn as much as you can without impeding them from doing good work, but if you don't know, you don't know."

Another woman suggested that she didn't step up because she was afraid she would destroy equipment and there were people that knew more than she did so she would just say "go ahead."

During the discussion, the issue of curriculum surfaced again, a student said, " I think for me, going back to the program itself with competing theory and production classes. There is so much theory and I understand that it's extremely important, but the production classes give me a chance to make mistakes. I feel like I'm not given that chance because there is so much emphasis

placed on theory classes. When I did step up it was really scary but at the same time, this is your chance to make mistakes."

A follow up question was asked regarding the importance of experience in production classes. The sense was that although she didn't have much experience she learned a lot. "So, I got into production, and the first project was good and I learned a lot, but then there was so much that we had to do that it just became getting it done instead of actually getting to learn everything that I want to and needed to do. It was just pretty much get it done and move on to the next one."

This lead to more discussion regarding a portfolio that would allow students with more experience to move on and would allow students with little experience into a basic class. Their general concern and thoughts centered on everyone getting a chance to learn. They did not think that was happening.

The women talked about the desire to master basic film. One woman assigned a gender perspective "It's like driving somewhere. Guys, they don't like asking for directions. They drive until they get lost, and women like a map—this is what we are doing, this is where we need to go. The way it is set up now the guys jump in, lets make it and get it done."

All of you have said "You just got to get it done" and that is the way it is, and because of that you feel like you do not learn as much? This question triggered a conversation that led to a discussion of the importance of grades, mentioned previously. The first speaker said, "I don't know if that is the way it should be." However, they all accepted that "getting it done" was how they were expected to learn.

They offered that every project was graded. If they took too much time learning their grade might be affected; they might not get it done on time. They agreed that it was not the

best way to learn, but they were not willing to jeopardize their grades. They would allow someone with more experience do the job, and they would watch. It was suggested by one woman that the system, by default, encouraged students to learn one area and not be comprehensive. The concept was that if you watched for several projects you would eventually learn, and when you graduated you would know an area well enough to get a job.

When the issue of pass fail as a grade was suggested they were quite lukewarm, they were used to the current grading system. However, one woman said, "As long as I get my degree I would rather learn about making a film and learn the specific aspects instead of worrying about a grade."

I then asked about the importance of experience. Do you find that people want you to defer to them because of their sex, as opposed to their skill? This question was asked to help determine the environment of the classroom and their actions in the classroom. A woman offered her experience "Sometimes I feel –like when I was taking my basic production—there were three guys, and then there was me. Well, you guys don't obviously write down the schedule or plan anything or talk about time. Well, I'll have to do it. That was my role repeatedly." It is unclear if the woman voiced her concern or simply analyzed the situation and acted.

Other women nodded in agreement and one offered, "Guys are, I guess I was most anally organized in my group. It was like –you guys need to write down the schedule so that we can meet and know what we're doing and know what shots. We need to know what we're doing so that there is some semblance of work before chaos breaks out." That sentiment was echoed by other members of the group. One woman described what happened to her when she did get the group organized "They're just not going to do that, so, I will. And then all of a sudden they're

oriented and I'm more ready and oriented. I'm stuck with the paper pushing." When asked if professors did anything about this practice they all said no and suggested that they would not want a professor to intervene on their behalf, "I don't want to be singled out because I'm a girl I think that if I want to do something, it's my responsibility to set it up." The women were unanimous that the professors do not get involved. It was up to the student, and there was not much they were going to do to change that. These feelings are similar to the feeling of the young women writers of Newsweek, cited in the Literature Review, that felt frustrated at their work but also felt that the battle for equality had long been waged and women had won. There wasn't room for complaining or special treatment.

Do you feel at times you are pushed into a role, pigeon holed? This question was asked in order to determine if they had been pushed into a role that they did not want, and if so, what did they do about it. The responses varied, but in general they had been forced into roles by default because there was no one else to do it; however, they agreed to the role. One woman said, "I do have to say that I've never been pigeon holed except for cooking." She went on to say that after a lengthy discussion about the next project she was asked what she wanted to do, and when she replied they went on to ask if perhaps she would consider cooking, craft services. Her bottom line was that she would cook for them because they burned everything and she liked to bake. She went on to say, "But I find if you like what you do, are confident in what you do, and kind of take control of the situation, you'll get more respect. Because if you are good at your task at hand they'll finally realize that—Maybe she can do something else."

Another woman said, "I have been pigeon holed in the art department. So, I really like art department so it doesn't bother me as much. It does bother me when I try to write or direct. People don't take me seriously. That's when I have to go out and do it on my own."

Another woman illustrated a situation in which she was writing something she felt immensely proud of and was sharing it with a group of students, the males in the group laughed at her and said, "Oh, you're going to write some stupid romantic comedy." She thought that if they saw her as a writer of a "stupid romantic comedy" her chances for a leadership role were diminished.

This comment led into an interesting discussion of competency. Do you do this on your own dime, get experience? Yeah (heads nod).You know that is how you are going to get it done; you're not afraid of that? One woman said "I've been scared of –and doubted myself a million times and asked myself why I was even going into this field." She doubted that she was creative enough and added that she did not even like telling stories but then she would take a step back and think "I do want to do this and I'm confident that I am good at it." She was also convinced that if "I work hard enough and I dedicate time to it, then I'll succeed."

They generally thought that they had to work hard, not be lazy, and be willing to be "young and broke." Currently family and friends were seen as a resource, but they did not say what support they would have once they left school.

What do you want to be doing in ten years from now? The women that had declared their intentions early on in the interview were still confident about what they wanted to do; but the idea of success was not as clear for them or for the women who were less sure of their path.

A back and forth followed. "Where do I want to be or where do I realistically?" What do you hope to be doing in 10 years? "Hopefully DPing but that's not realistic, probably not." I asked her why it wasn't realistic and she said "I have heard multiple times from DP's that have graduated "you did a really good job, how'd you do that?" and then they say "but you'll never be working as a DP because you're a woman."

Another woman related an experience she had with a student in her screenwriting class. It was suggested that if she were to pitch an idea for a script "if you are going in and you're a woman you should probably have a partner. Whatever, but make sure it is a man. Well, if you want to pitch it you should have a guy with you. Yeah, even if he did nothing. Even if he was your assistant."

Both sessions ended with a wide-open question. Overall, is there anything else you want to talk about? At this point I wanted the students to have an opportunity to express their feelings and bring closure to the group process.

A woman offered "Something I've thought about a lot, and noticed is a disparity on the lowest level. I don't think it's conscious hurtful sexism. I think that it is more of a by product of how it has always been done, and it's still very much a boys club. I think, specifically, KUTV and Film Works is a boys club. If you look at faculty, the way they teach, it's very masculine." A very similar sentiment was reflected in the literature review, when Martha Lauzen suggested that the sexism that existed in Hollywood was not a "conscious" thing (Cochrane 3). These remarks, which were made miles and a generation apart, suggest that sexism, whether conscious or not, dressed up or plain, exists and is felt by those that it touches.

Conclusion

The students repeatedly said that they did not feel that their professors exhibited any Birth Bias or that they were expected to be subservient to the male students by their professors nor did the women students think that the professors reserved the best roles for the male students or attempted to squelch their creative spirits. If there was any sexism it was not intended. Equally important, the women students had not wanted any special treatment because of their sex.

However, when the subject of a "gender" role in class surfaced the women expressed their frustration. They felt that they were expected to get things organized because if they didn't it would not get done. It was also clear that while they may have been frustrated they had analyzed the situation and accepted the outcome. The less desired role of keeping track of the paper work, keeping the group organized fell to the women in many instances, and the women students accepted those roles. In these instances, the male students decided what roles the women would have because there was no intervention by the faculty and because the women students wanted a good grade. It would seem that the males called the women's bluff. Their grade would be impacted if the project did not proceed, and the women were not willing to take the chance.

The males may know this, although we did not conduct focus groups with the male students to know for sure. This then becomes the normal. It was normal for the male students not to want the less important positions, and it was normal for the women students to make food, keep schedules and plan the art direction. It is noteworthy that the roles that the female students reported that they often performed are similar in nature to the role of a producer; An area women have made progress in Hollywood as documented in Celluloid Ceiling.

The reality of the real norm was discussed. The students responded that, in most production classes, the normal is "Just Get It Done" although not all classes. One student said, "My professor doesn't worry so much about us completing what we started because we are doing what he wants. He is more interested that we learn and experiment. So, sometimes we will just start things and we might not finish it, but he is okay with that." However, that was the exception, not the rule.

In the "Just Get It Done" philosophy of teaching, students learn by practice, the students are expected to provide order and get the project done. If the process slows down, because a student needs more instruction, the project may not finish on time and the grade is in jeopardy. Many of the women students said that they would rather keep quiet and let the more experienced students (most often male) do the work so that they would complete on time and get a good grade. The grade for the class is dependent on outcomes, the final project, not necessarily the competency of the individual student (women students in production classes at KU have a higher GPA than the males).

For most of the students, a good grade could not hide the underlying fear of inadequacy that surfaced in a self-fulfilling prophecy of incompetence. The students did not make a connection between their behavior in class and their feelings of incompetency. They where afraid to make a mistake in front of their classmates, or jeopardize their grade, so they stepped back and learned less. They did not challenge the system, but accepted default roles, which did not advance their technical learning. In both situations, their competency was compromised, however, their understanding of that feeling was to blame the curriculum and suggest that it change.

The students suggested that they would feel more confident if they took production classes earlier in their education and were tested on their skills. However, they would still have to step up and demand that they have experiences equal to the males at every stage of their education. If the women students step back, avoid risk, they are sending a very strong message to each other and to their male counterparts--they are unfit for the job.

Why know yourself, your capacity, strengths and weaknesses if your path to success lies in knowing the dominant. One student offered that the students were clear that it was "normal" to take the default position of paper pusher because they "knew" the guys were not going to do it. However, knowing someone does not necessarily mean that you don't know yourself. They certainly admitted that they stepped back and did not push. They did not fault the male students or the professors for their lack of initiative; they took responsibility for their actions and inactions.

However, I sensed resentment. One student seemed a little angry, which could indicate that while she "knew" what to expect from the male students she didn't like it and she "knew" that she could do something else besides push paper or cook. In this case it was not a matter of knowing the dominant better than herself. It was a matter of not knowing what to do about the situation or feeling like she could demand something else.

Another area of interest to the women was the notion of women's way of knowing. Several women wanted very specific instructions and felt they learned more in that environment.

Was the work industrial in nature and perceived to be more masculine, therefore, inherently not female? When asked this question one student thought it had to do with attitude,

They did not want to step up and take chances; they were afraid they would mess up, and they had more to lose. By lose, I mean they did not have much standing, therefore, they were afraid of losing what little they had.

By avoiding and stepping back, the students are not experiencing the opportunity to succeed or to fail, they are denying an experience and perhaps denying the opportunity to be creative in a meaningful and authentic way.

Miller suggests that women define power as the "the capacity to implement" but in the larger society power is "generally meant the ability to advance oneself and simultaneously, to control, limit, and if possible, destroy the power of others. That is, power, so far, has had at least two components: power for oneself and power over others" (116).

The women students did not complain or demand equal opportunity because they viewed that behavior as an attempt to get special treatment and that was unacceptable. The notion that women have achieved equality would preclude complaining. But, it can also be viewed as code for not confronting power. The women students never mentioned that they would consider demanding that a class change so that their learning opportunities would increase and there were no instances reported during the focus groups where a women student stood up and demanded that a class be conducted differently. This would cause conflict, which the women students were willing to bypass. In this case it would seem that power and conflict are inseparable and a major hurdle for agency.

These women undergraduate students do not have agency in the sense of acting independently, all the time, in their own best interest without regard for their structure. However, they do act and they make decisions. Perhaps understanding the structure and acting accordingly

may show agency, acting in their own best interest. They had invested money in school and developed a network and they were not willing to risk either by complaining.

During the focus groups there were occasions when the students appeared absolutely optimistic about the future and were confident they would be successful. It was at times disconcerting and disjointed. The very individuals that appeared to be the most directed and sure of themselves were also very clear about not rocking the boat.

The importance of this study is that it opens the discussion of agency in young women in production classes and provides a small amount of useful data for those currently engaged in educating film students and curriculum development.

It is my belief that if young women are going to succeed as film makers their education must be one in which they are challenged, and provided with equal opportunity to succeed and fail. However, it cannot be the task of the educational institution alone, female students must step up and take risks, fail at times and be willing to lead. The composition of the faculty, in production classes, is male, which precludes any same sex role models, and that needs to change. Furthermore, an examination of the practices of production (structure of the classes) to determine what practices support agency and what practices inhibit agency in women students is necessary.

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Appendix

To ensure anonymity I deleted the names of the individual students and professors. I also edited the responses to ensure that their identities would not be reveled. There were two groups of women, ages 18-25.

Why did you come to film studies?

R - I always watched DVD's and watched the special features. And they would tell how it was made. It looked like so much fun. I thought I'd love to do that. So, in high school I took a video creation editing class and decided, yeah, this is what I want to do. I was a senior in high school, so, I couldn't be a video film major.

Did any of you have high school background?

Yes, yes, yes, no (head shakes)

So, half of you?

G - Mine was in theatre, but, not film.

So, you had some experience, but, mostly in acting and production?

Yeah, production.

So, three of you had some experience in high school. So, was that a good experience? Did it open you up to the experience?

D - I really enjoyed it. My parents are reporters. I have always been around cameras and everything and I didn't want to be a reporter. But, I took a broadcasting class because I loved it

and that's what my parents did. I took it when I was a sophomore in high school. Well, and then I decided this is what I want to do. We had a great deal of freedom. We could make shorts and music videos and stuff. My teacher didn't know much. But she knew the basics and we just taught ourselves. But I think that is the best way. It was a lot of fun.

How about you?

V - Yeah, my junior year was in a film class. And that made me sort of see how to work with film. I took a broadcast class my senior year and I hated it. I hated the news and I hated the type of work you make. And it threw me completely off of my high school stuff. I really disliked that but I decided to go to film school anyway.

So, you were inspired anyway?

V - Yeah.

 K - I didn't have any high school experience in film. I was like her (hand gesture pointing). I just enjoyed watching the special features.

Special features? What does that mean?

K - It talks about how they make the film sometimes. They'll even explain different techniques that they've used. Like the lighting or how they framed something or why they chose a certain costume

D - It's really good to know how cool it really is and how they can fake a lot of stuff.

Well, what about you, what made you ......?

G - For me, I started in theatre in junior high and I loved the atmosphere of theatre and all the people that were involved. I just felt right and I felt this is my place. So, then, as I started getting older I really wanted to go into film because it was like a step up. There are but there really aren't any limitations in film like there are in theatre because you are confined to a certain space. In film you can, virtually, go anywhere. So, that is what attracted me to it. Anything is possible, I think.

How about you?

P - My high school didn't offer a program or a class or anything. I'm a few steps behind you. (gestures to others). And I'm still figuring out if it's what I want to do.

If you could have picked an area of film that you are most interested in, what would that be? And I mean acting, writing, directing.

K - For me, it's writing.

How about anyone else?

V - For me, I just think it is direction, production

Let's go back to you. You want to be a writer. Are you aware today of the path that you go down to become a writer?

K - Not really. I'm interested but this is my first year.

Have you been able to take any screenwriting classes?

K - I'm planning to in the fall.

So, you know where you want to be. But, you're not quite sure how to get there.

How about you?

P - Cinematography and lighting.

And why did you pick that? What was your goal?

P - Well, in high school in one of my classes for an extra credit project I was just "light it like that" and I thought "oh, that can make a huge change" so, I like dictating.

That's interesting that these very small movements in your life have such a big impact. What was it for you and writing?

K - I grew up from a very early age - my parents started reading to us and I started loving books - and I like writing now. I write narrative. I don't really describe things very much. And, I just see and scene and that's how I started writing. So, I thought it would be fun.

G - I'm looking at production. I'm not quite sure if that's what I really want to do but right now that's the way I'm going.

So, do you want to be a director - do you think?

G - No. I don't have the eye for that. I wish I did.

Why do you think you don't have the eye for direction?

G - I just don't know what to look for. How to get actors to go there or tell them what to do. I've been around directors and I admire them for what they can do but, I can't come up with it myself. So, do you like lighting? Sound? Photography?

G - I'm looking at writing. Not sound at all. I don't have the ability for that either. That's not something that really comes to me. I'm looking at writing as well.

Okay, how about you?

D - I want to be an editor. Like I said earlier, when my parents were young they used to actually cut film. They would cut it and tape it and they taught me how to do it. They had 16mm. And, they didn't really teach me. When they were cutting on linear systems with the knobs and dragging it, you could make it sound like a squirrel. And that was the first thing I edited on. And we had that system at my high school before we got Max. It was the first thing I ever did and it was so hard. It's cool. You can make something that is totally crap but you can make something that is really good even better. And, I just did a lot of editing.

How about you?

R - Script supervision. First I was director, producer, and all that. Then I figured out when I took production that I do not have that creative streak that they require.

Really? You don't think really?

R - It's kind of like what she was saying (motion to other). You can see what they do, but, then when you are up to do it, you're " I don't know"

Do you think with more school and more experience that you would feel more confident?

R - I don't know.

V - There's nothing wrong with being descriptive ....Every job in this whole industry is creative. In every film there are three or four people that are creative and everybody else is just part of the hierarchy.

So, let's get back to you. You said that you are not that creative. And you said that lot's of it is not creative. It's getting the lights moved and the sound set up. And keeping people on time (head nods).

When you are in a class project, what happens and who makes what decisions about particular parts that you have in that project? For instance, is it the teacher or - how do you do that? Like getting roles and - Say you are doing a documentary assignment in class and we're going to do a project - and I'm just using that as an example - how does that decision get made in a class situation.

R - It's very democratic actually. I took basic video production with _____ and with _____my GTA, everyone brings in a pitch of what this general theme of a project was. Every student pitches. And then we vote on the top 4. Typically, then, the top 4 that were chosen would be the directors. Then the people would vote what film they wanted to be on. And kind of divide groups up that way. Then, within that film group they'd say "I want to be editor" or "I want to be sound" or "I want to be camera" Within the group you would prioritize it one, two, three.

Was that true for everybody else?

V - Yes that's true (many responses)

So, the teacher says "We're going to do this democratically and we're going to vote" So then you get into -

V - Sometimes you don't get into voting. Sometimes people just gravitate to a project. At other times, we just go "people have all these ideas, let's vote"

How are those decisions made about which people are going to DP? Or who is going to be the assistant director? How are those decisions made?

G - For our class, we were assigned to groups before pitching. We had to pitch to the group. And then, in that group, there had to be a director, a producer, whatever the four were. And we couldn't repeat. We made three films. One time I was director, one time producer, etc.

How about for other people. Is that what happened for you?

P - For our class, _____ just said "who wants to do -" Three of us raised our hands for director and he had us divide up into three groups. And he never said that we can't repeat so we are repeating for our next project, so, everyone is stuck in their role. It was a good way of doing it because you got everyone in a different area that they wanted to focus on. So people wanted to do that on the next project, too.

So, you might want that a bit different?

No. I liked how that went.

Did you have any trouble getting to the roles that you want?

V - Sometimes. Sometimes you are going to go into groups and you want to do something - like some photography - but, then there is somebody that has been actually lighting things since they were 14 or early in high school and you're really new at it. So, you say, "you light this one" and I'll see what I can do next time. And there are some people more advanced in skills and have more experience that is it like "why do I want to light this scene when this guy knows twice as much about it than I do?"

Does the teacher step in and say anything like "it isn't just about getting it done, it's about everybody learning?"

V - No. Sometimes.

R - For the sake of the grade you fore-sake your own ambition.

P - Like I said, for what we want to do today, there is only once along the way and _____ is obviously very good at it, so I'm going to grip under him, but, in order to get it done in time, he's probably not going to share much.

K - Basically, we haven't had any big projects yet. We have done exercises and we have 3 people that are learning how to get familiar with the light, with using the camera.

Did you find that there were people in your class that are - for instance she was saying that some people come in with a lot more experience and because you want to get it done that you choose someone with more experience. Has that happened at all?

K - I think my basic class is different because I have professor _____. And he doesn't worry so much about us completing what we are starting because we are doing everything that he wants. He is more interested in that we learn and experiment. So, sometimes we will just start things and we might not finish it but he is okay with that.

P - With _____, you get it done.

He's really focused. It's just kind of interesting. But you're saying that what people bring into this process kind of elevates them a little bit.

Yes (head nods)

Do any of you go to the clubs like KUTV or -

D - I used to when I was a freshman.

In the club situation, is it similar to what happens in a classroom situation?

P - It varies from project to project. Some people have their own group that is already ready to go and they just check out equipment and go. And then, like, for the bigger projects, there are voting processes. So, it's different from project to project.

Out of the six of you, only one .... is there a reason that you aren't a part of Filmworks?

D - At this point, my senior year I'm taking nothing but film classes. And my job is film editing - and at that point I just don't want to do any more at all.

How about you?

V - I first went to Filmworks when I was a freshman but I didn't like it. I think it was more ....

than it is today. And it was very much run by people that really didn't have vision and ambition.

Everything was a joke to them that they thought was hysterical. You can make movies about

ninjas or you can make a real movie. I think a lot of the people feel kind of alienated by that

group. Just because they are such a tight knit group that it is more about their group than it is

about film making. But they are passionate but not everyone wants to be a part of that.

What aspects of film studies have met your expectations? So far? Is it like what you

thought it was going to be?

K - Well, I came in and changed my major. I was willing to learn anything. So, I didn't have

very high expectations. I just really wanted to learn. And, so far, that is happening.

D - I thought I was going to be - you know, when I was a freshman I thought it was going to be

like a movie. We were going to be making movies all the time. It's not like that. You're not

making movies all the time. But, what I do like about what I've gotten here is the variety of

classes - sound and costuming, make-up and film music - just a bunch of different things that are

really specialized helping me find my niche. It's just really a variety.

Do you feel like when they had a lot of classes with the theatre department that you got a

variety of classes? Was that good?

D - Except some of them were just theatre and were not for credit. Like I took a scene design

and we studied one film the entire semester. The rest were theatre sets.

R - There is definitely a lot more theory that goes into film than I originally thought. Because watching movies all the time I thought we were going to analyze things and pick it all apart. Take it down bit by bit. But, then when you take the history of silent film, and then you take the history of international silent film, etc. you see all of these film making that went into creating the Hollywood that we know now - the European industry that we see - the differences that we see between what events in history changed all that. And it's - you watch films and you kind of think about it - how did this affect such and such. I don't mind learning theory but I would just prefer more film making. For me it helps you appreciate it.

What aspects of film studies have not met your expectations? What is it that you would really change? If you could change your experience here what would you change? So far?

D - I would structure it more. Like art school - where you take - where you learn how to light and then you go up and up and up. And ramp up gradually. You're not all over the place. I just think that it would be better. More like an art school that has your first year you do this - Your second year you do this. But that's what people do that know what they want to do film do.

R - I know sophomore year, spring semester, one of the things you do is take basic video production. And, it's like, I went in and the only strength I had was that one high school class. I had no clue what I was doing. It would have been nice to have all of these classes to tell you what everything means and not like sitting down in class and hurriedly scribbling down what someone writing FCU means.

P - I really like what you said about his class. I'm in it right now and we're learning how to like stuff. They don't tell you how. Like this frame looks good - how do they do that? They don't tell us that.

D - No, I agree. I really have a .... about that class.

K - I'm also in that class and, for me, that class blends very well with my basic. I have the same teacher. Like last night he'll be talking about one thing and then the next morning we actually went through it. So, for me it was more of a blend. And they have just changed over and made stuff separate. I'm going to have a different experience.

R - I think that it's going to take some time because it did just switch over for things to kind of figure out what the department is doing like in class wise and order it in such a way that it will make a student's life more easy. Or easier.

Okay, what do you hope to be doing in 10 years? Like ten years from now. Where do you want to be?

R - Script supervision.

You hope to be Hollywood?

R - Yes. Hollywood feature films doing script supervision.

What will your day look like?

R - I'd wake up early in the morning and make my calls, stay on set as long as I'm required and go home to do it again the next day. And, I'd be perfectly fine with that.

Okay, what do you think?

P - Where do I want to be or where do I realistically -

What do you hope to be doing in 10 years?

P - Hopefully, DPing but that's not realistic. Probably not.

And why isn't that realistic?

P - I've heard multiple times from DP's that have graduated that - well one that I'm thinking of -

well, he's not really working but he does really good work - he says some things like you did a

really good job, how'd you do that? But you'll never be working as a DP because you're a

woman.

Really?

P - Yes.

So someone actually told you that you wouldn't make it.

P - Yeah, several.

D - Someone told me when I was taking the screenwriting class that if you are going in and

you're a woman you should probably have a partner. Whatever, but make sure it is a man. Well,

if you want to pitch it, you should have a guy with you.

K - Well, like buying a car.

Like buying a car?

D - Yeah, even if he did nothing. Even if he is just your assistant.

Yeah, who was that person?

D - I was an intern and it was a guy that worked in LA and he had been an intern before and we were talking one day. But maybe it's changing, hopefully, it's changing.

Okay, what do you think? For yourself. Where do you want to be?

V - I want to be on a set as the Director or the Assistant Director, or something. I don't necessarily want to be working in LA. But that's where a lot of the work is. But, I lived out in LA, in southern California and I didn't like it. I would really love to be able to travel working on film. I'm guess producing but I'm not quite sure about that. I'd really love to be able to travel and film rather than staying in LA.

How about you?

K - I'm not sure quite where I want to be but I just know that I want to be writing.

Do you think being a women is helpful, not important, or that it hurts you?

R - In most aspects I think it hurts. But, I think it was…. actually…. last Saturday I went to a production assistants training seminar and they had Kenny Chapman and Gary Ferarelli Garrett. And they are AD's in the business and what not. And they said for script revision that it helps to be a girl. Or, be a woman. Because you guys are organized and you can multi-task very well. And, so, okay, well, but I noticed, as I looked around that there were some women there in the class but not a lot. And, just because I feel that some of us are detoured just because it's such a hard business to get into.

D - I think that. I think that women don't trust a lot of woman to do good work and men don't trust a lot of women to do good work. But, men always trust men and women trust men. It's very bizarre. From what I've found - but what I think - but if all women just stood up and we said "okay, I might fuck this up" but I'm going to do it anyway. Because that's what guys do.And you know - if a wonder boy, genius director makes a flop he'll pop back up and make another one. But if a woman did that it would take her 10 years to make it up.

Do you all see this being played out in our program here? Do you think that you can feel that here? No or Yes?

D - I felt like that in some production classes. Like the guys that know what they're doing - they'd say let's set up the C stands - whatever - and I'm like -

You mean they had the experience.

D - Yeah. And I want to but I feel like I'm going to fuck it up. So, I don't step forward and that's how it might just be a women thing. But, yes, I've felt like that before.

V - I think that sometimes people will look at you like ..... or you'll say you are going to do something and people kind of look at you like you're going to do that (sarcastic) or I don't like what you say. Or, sometimes you have to sort of earn your way. Even when it is among the women your opinion doesn't matter as much as other people's, initially. It feels like you have to earn a little bit more than you should have to.

R - Last semester I studied abroad and I took a television production course. There it felt like it was based more on the spirit that you knew what you were doing and you were trusted no matter

what. There were two days where I spent - one day I spent 10 hours out editing just because no one else was really comfortable with it. The next day I spent nine hours editing. Because I had the most experience with it. I had someone - I had one of my friends - she walk in and she'd say "try this" so I'd always have that second opinion. But, here, it's like "I'm going to do this" but you always have to make sure that they want you to do it before you actually do it.

So, you're in a class room sometimes and there's like the ratio 2 to 10 and then do you feel that? Do you experience that? Or is it just like not important?

P - I'm more comfortable in front of guys anyway. I have a lot of guy friends so I don't notice it. The ratio is definitely there. The ratio is worse than 2 to 10. It's less than that. I like it. If I hire _____or _____to grip with me - then I just trust him more right away. Maybe he has

a little bit more - I try to not do that but for some reason - But, I was really bad about that for some reason and what the hell.

D - Women are on. And it is just that we've been taught, I think. Men can do these jobs, can be a grip. You know, can do manual jobs.

Is it because it is industrial in nature? Or it is this myth?

K - I think that it has something to do with attitude and how you approach something. I am a very quiet person, so, I always - and it doesn't matter what I'm doing - I step back a little bit wait until I have an opening to act. But,I've noticed, not only in film, but in other areas that if I want to get something done and I want to be the one to do it, that I have to step forward. And I've noticed in classes that where we have little group exercises that - because we are always

changing and I'm working with guys and girls that I with a another girl and a guy and they wanted to wanted to throw in ideas - so, I stepped back but that was my fault. I think it's more that the guys are just more willing to get in there--I might mess this up, but I'm able to do it."

D - I think we have more to lose by doing that. By putting everything out there.

K - I think we care more about messing up.

R - It could be that. You just don't want to mess up.

What were you going to say?

V - I think guys are just more willing to go in and mess things up. I think women want to be taught things before they get in the thick of it. A guy might take a camera out and experiment and shoot all sorts of stuff. A woman would be like "I don't have the manual for this, I don't If somebody told me, I could go out and do some things. We need a lot of instruction here."

Because of that, is it just that gal or guy at the moment. We're just going to throw you out here it's the battle of the strongest kind of thing? So, it's not really about instruction so much.

V - Yeah. It's not always about who knows the most about a certain piece of equipment or technique or whatever. Sometimes you let that person do their thing and then you try to learn as much as you can without impeding them from doing good work. But, if you don't know then you don't know.

Are you giving up yourself for the good of the cause?

D - I don't know if that's it. I think a guy - I've stepped forward a lot in production because I've been in post production - but I have to take production classes. And I just don't step up because I'm scared. Or I don't want to burn a bowl over or stuff like that. And people, obviously, know more than I do. So, it's just like go ahead.

Does everybody feel that way? Where you don't want to mess up.

G - I think for me, going back to the program itself with competing theory and actual production classes, there is so much theory and I understand that it's extremely important but the production classes give me a chance to make mistakes and I feel like I'm not given that chance because there is so much emphasis placed on theory classes. And, so for production, when I did step up it was really scary but, at the same time, this is your chance to make mistakes. I'm a very hands on learner and so it has been hard for me to sit in lecture and try to take everything in because there is so much. But, when I was hands on and tried to mess with the camera or do editing I made mistakes over and over but I had that chance.

Do you think that you were at a disadvantage coming in for some reason - maybe because you didn't have it in high school?

G - Yeah. Definitely. A little disadvantage. Yeah. When I went into basic video I think I was one of the people with the least experience. Just because I hadn't taken anything yet and I knew that I wanted to film but I just hadn't had the chance. So, I got into production and the first project was good and I learned a lot. But, then there was so much that we had to do that it just became "getting it done" instead of actually getting to learn everything that I wanted to and

needed to. It was just "I'll get this project done and go on to the next one" Projects overlapped and so -

D - I think that it would be kind of cool if we had a portfolio for the film department. So we could work. And if you didn't have anything in high school, maybe you could take a basic class. Because I never took basic. I showed _____my portfolio and I skipped on. And I think that's good. Because I wasn't impeding anyone else who didn't know what I do. It also hurt me because I didn't want to turn a light bulb on. But, I guess I don't want to see things differently. I think that it would be good if we had a portfolio system where if you did that work before you wouldn't impede anybody else.

R - Or maybe how everyone - I don't know how this would work - but, if you had a class like basic basic, and your assignment was just - given a script or something - and your assignment was just to light that scene. Or, then another project would be take that scene out and apply it for camera techniques. Break down every single element so you give everyone a chance to learn it. And then you can go on to the basic and take all that and develop it.

Do you think that your male counterparts would agree with that? Do you think that would be an improvement?

K - The ones I've talked to - I think they would. They would benefit just as much.

D - I've seen guys here before that are afraid to do something. I've seen it on his face.

I want to summarize what you were just saying about that. Your sense of how you would be - a better experience would be - to get, specifically, skills- each one of them identified, that you are tested on it, but you absolutely do know it.

Yes. (head nods)

That's very different than saying "Okay, we're going to do this project" Get your equipment. Go for it. Which is a very different approach to -I think that we should do that later on - definitely - but, leave that open to experimentation. But, you should know -You should know what you're doing. And you're feeling a little bit that you don't?

D - In some areas, yeah. It's spotty. About what you latch on to. I think you should learn it.

R - For basic it's like - it's much more suited to - how do I say this - guys. It's like driving somewhere. Guys, they don't like asking for directions. They drive until they get lost. And women like a map. This is what we're doing. This is where we need to go. The way that it is set up now it very much guys jump in - let's make it and get it done.

All of you have said "You just got to get it done" That's the way it is.

D - I don't know if that's the way it should be.

V - Really, film making is about film making. And that's how you do it and that's how you do it here. You should - it would be a lot better if there was some instruction, more of it.

R - Overall, more production experience.

D - Because that is the best way - to learn by experience.

R - You should learn what you know by failing. But, I don't want to fail when my butt's on the line.

So, there's an issue of grades. You're concerned about grades. So, sometimes you will say "let's just get this done because I want to get an A in this" When you are the grip on this project - you may, though - would you say that sometimes you learn less by doing it? You might get an A but learn less?

R - But, you have that area - you don't want to fail because you don't want to get a bad grade - but, at the same token, that's a way that the industry works in real life. If you have a job such - if you fail you won't get hired again. And so it's a way to focus on what you want to do quickly so you can master it and so when you go to apply for a position as an AD or DP or whatever you know what you are doing so you don't screw up.

But, my question is: If you haven't fully learned it - you might have gotten an A and you might have gotten it done but you didn't really learn it. How does that add to your feeling of mastery?

It's true with a lot of college things. This specific difficulty. You sacrifice some things to get the grade. But this isn't art. I don't know how they grade in the art school. I think we should be a part of the art school. Well, we are part of the art school but, we should be an art.

Given the choice, would you say: It should be pass-fail?

R - I've been with the letter system so long, since 1st grade, you don't know anything else.

G - As long as I get my degree I would rather learn about making a film and learn the specific aspects instead of worrying about a grade. Because I do that - am I going to get an A? - am I going to fail? - and there is so much emphasis placed on that you want to get that grade - you sacrifice some of the possible learning.

Now, earlier we were talking about - sometimes you will defer to people with more experience. Have you ever found that people want you to defer because of their sex as opposed to their skill? (head nods no) Or do you see women say "I get this because I'm a woman?" Do you see any of that stuff going on at all?

V - Sometimes I feel -like when I was taking my basic production - there were three guys and then there was me. Well, you guys don't obviously write down the schedule or plan anything or talk about time. Well, I have to do it. That was my role repeatedly.

Do other people find that that is your role?

Yes (nod of heads)

R - Guys are - I guess I was most anally organized in my group. It was like "you guys need to write down a schedule so that we can meet and know what we're doing and know what shots. We need to know what we're doing so that some semblance of work before chaos breaks out.

V - They're just not going to do that. So, I will. And then, all of a sudden they're .... oriented and I'm more ready oriented. I'm stuck with the paper pushing.

D - There's definitely some of that.

What do your professors do about that?

 D - Nothing.

They don't do anything about that?

D - I think it might be weird if they came up and said "You know she's a girl, she deserves to" I don't want to be singled out because I'm a girl. I think that if I want to do something, it's my responsibility to set it up.

But, if they identify you and give you a role like you do the paperwork, then you own it and you'd be crazy not to? But, isn't that the same thing? They're identifying you as a women to do certain things.

D - Yeah, people in your group but not the professors.

Not the professors? (head nod no)

G - Professors are pretty hands off. The groups are assigned.

D - It's like go forth

But, let's say it was a problem, would they intervene and say "you know what, you know I notice in these groups that the women take all the notes and the guys do all the stuff."

R - If it was a problem, it would be up to you. It would be your responsibility to step up and say that it is a problem. And if they are more worried about - they are not worried about roles and paper pushing.

How do you think people would receive you saying "this sucks and I'm tired of it" Why do I have to put up with this?

R - Because they'd just have someone else do it. You're going to be forced to -D - And if you don't have the skills to back that up then you're screwed. You can't say let me run the camera if you don't know how to turn it on.

V - And that's why I let certain people get away with saying "I want to do this" Then they say, "you go for it" You're completely off and running. You totally .... people. You do whatever. But it does happen.

So it's the strongest personality sometimes?

D - Yeah. Sometimes.

Is there anything else that you would like to talk about? That I missed here in asking? We covered quite a bit. Anything you want to offer? Any thoughts you have?

D - We can do it. When I was working on television show, - this is really awesome -

This is an internship?

D - Yes, there were five interns. Four were men and one was a woman and she was from the Midwest.

Really.

D - And I was like "hell yes" It is possible that a girl from Kansas can learn about a major TV show. And so, it is possible. We just have to be hard asses and bad ass and do good work. And say my work is awesome, hire me. And have some balls. We're not genetically gifted with balls but you have to -

<u>Second Group Interview</u>

Alright, why did you come to film studies?   Or, why did you choose film?

B - Mostly because I found film to be a really creative way of getting an idea out there. As opposed to writing or whatever. I guess I'm more of a creative based person. Rather than technical. And I came here - and there's a lot of technical aspects - which really threw me off and I appreciate it. But, I still really like it as an art form and as a way of getting your point across. I've always really dug film and I thought it would be a really great experience. Opposed to going into something a little more financially secure. Like being a doctor. I think going into film is a little more risky. I like that. I like taking chances. Not being 100% certain what is going to happen next. I like surprises. I think that is why I chose film.

How about you?

M - Contrary to what she said, I always was creative and tried different art forms. None of it really fit. I like it but it didn't feel like home. I started thinking more and more about film and then I realized that ever since I was a little kid I've been thinking of that movie in my head. I had these elaborate daydreams - and, at birthday parties I made another addition of Star Wars - and I would do this when I was 6. It was embarrassing.

How about you?

E - I'm kind of the opposite. I'm not a very creative person. I like to think that I'm creative but obviously I'm not. But, I love the technical aspect of it. Especially, editing. It's very tedious. It takes up a lot of your time and you have to really concentrate on it. And that is one of my favorite things. If I want to do something, then I will concentrate on it. But, as a kid - when I was looking back in high school - all I really do is watch movies. And I really pay attention to the details of the movie- like where the story is going and how did they create that - how do they do their shots. So, I decided - you know what - I'm just going to try film. And then I a broadcast class and I did films with my friends. I got into it. My grandpa was a huge influence on it, too.

He made movies?

E - Not really, he was a lawyer. That's the technical thing. He was a lawyer and then when he retired he started making home videos and then he put films together and gave me a present for my 8th birthday. It was like "my first eight years" and then it was "my first 10 years" He just kept making movies. I thought "that's really cool, how'd you do it" I sat while he was editing.

You were quite young when you were exposed to it, too?

E - Kind of, yeah. Like around 8 or 10 years old.

How about you?

X - I'm really intrigued by the unpredictable and uncontrollable. I like the fact that it is not a job that I can expect anything really. You pretty much love the fact that you can include all the arts in film. Any subject, any art, any culture, any language - and the fact that you're always throwing things at - you would never learn otherwise. What are we doing now? You get this opportunity and then it's "learn about this" Doing our last documentary, I would never have gone through all the research and then talked to all of these performers. You go through experiences that are amazing that you don't really choose. That's really cool. And, also you can do world traveling. It's like my favorite thing to do. It's an art that I can include that. I can be any where in the world and do film. I love that.

Which job do you want in film making? What do you think?

M - For me right now I'm going into production and directing because they are both things that I really love.

That's a big difference - set direction, art direction, and direction.

M - The way I look at it, both those things are similar - like creating worlds - It's about creating a consistent world that things can take place in.

O - You have to pay attention to all the details.

What about you?

O - I think that it is quite obvious. Editing. It's just constructing a story. I don't tell stories. But, putting a story together is very interesting. To see how progresses through everything. Having a scattered thing and then organizing it into something that can tell a great story. If it's consistent and the continuity is perfect, then, why not? Either that or it can represent a love - like in a book shop - I find myself drawing story boards a lot. I don't usually draw story boards.

How about you?

X - I'm kind of undecided because I love so many aspects of film. I love editing. Filming.

Creating. Thinking of angles and visual ways of telling a story. I think that the visual part is my

favorite part. So, I think I'd say directing. Because there I would be involved in seeing all the

jobs that are involved. I'm just seeing the basics of everything. You have to know what editing

is, you have to know how the equipment works, you have to know set design, everything. I like

that about it. Directing. You get involved with the whole process of the movie.

Yeah, you're kind of the boss.

How about you?

B - I'm still trying to figure that out. I've been trying to figure that out all year. But, the more I

think about it the more I lean toward production design. I realized when I watched the sets that

that is what I focus on. I used to focus a lot on the script but just when I actually wanted to be a

writer. I really focus on every element of production design. I really dig that about films. That

is my favorite part of watching a movie is really focusing on every aspect of that - as opposed to

what the director is thinking or the shots or whatever. But, I'm still really undecided. But, that's

probably what I'll lean more towards. Because I really like the thought of doing that. I'm most

comfortable with doing that and pursuing that. And it's something that I think that I can actually

be determined enough to and care enough to actually want to do and work for.

How are your class projects organized? How are the details worked out? When you go to

class - say we're going to work on this project - How does that work?

E - It doesn't.

Okay. Why doesn't it?

E - For example, from my production discussion, we had to create an idea because we were working on editing. We had to do a confession. And so my group decided to do a police investigation. We were trying to think of thoughts like how to make it creative. How to make it funny. And I thought "why does it have to be funny" I thought "if it was meant to be funny, it will probably turn out to be funny" I was trying to do a story board and write a script or something like that. They said "I don't know if we can do that" We can't think of anything off the top of our heads right now. It was really unorganized. A lot of people have different aspects of things like some people don't work well with writing everything down and usually they just follow it. And some people are strict with following a story board and you have to follow that for each shot.

But there's not anybody saying there is a certain way that it has to be done?

No (All).

X - Well the problem is, in the professional world, you do a job and that's your job. You're assigned a job. You do play your part. You know exactly what you have to do and what you don't have to do. But when it comes to a class in college, everyone's learning and no one has a defined part to make the movie. Then, you have a lot of chaos going on. A lot of ideas. A lot of disagreements. It's very unprofessional. You end up disagreeing or people will change things or they won't tell you or they'll do something different so you don't work so well in collaboration. Because there are not defined parts of what you should do and shouldn't do.

Is it that way for you?

M - One of the production classes I had it wasn't that way. Because he gave us different roles. He had us try different things. That worked out okay. I took my first one with _____ and, in

general, he's pretty good at delineating paths. That can, sometimes, get tricky too because things

get ignored. There are key positions that aren't filled. We didn't have any grants or art

department so, everyone was doing those jobs. We had our roles and everyone had to help out

with other stuff. It's just that there weren't enough people. I don't think that he was trying to -

X - It just depends on the class, I think.

How about you?

B - I really haven't been in any production classes yet. I'm still taking things at the basic level.

The most experience I've had with film is personal time.

So that brings us to the question. Do you guys go to Film Works or any KU clubs. (head
nods no)?

X - I went once.

How does it work, really? How do you guys decide how you're going to pick up a project?

How is that organized? Do you like the way it is organized? Does it work for you?

M - From .... it's pretty different how they pick projects. .... everybody -

There's a big pitching process. Then we have a voting process for the department heads. And

from there, the department heads pick their crew. But I think it worked out fairly well. The

biggest problem is always getting a project done. Because everybody is so busy. KATV is more

of the fly by the seat of your pants. They're trying to get some content but it didn't work out.

B - KUTV is more scattered. Film works is a little more together and a little more focused.

KATV is "like this sounds good - I don't want to do this project" Film works is focused.

What aspect of the film studies has met your expectations?

X - I thought I was going to do more hands on work, honestly. I'm a junior and it took lots and lots of time to do my first production. It takes you a while to get to that production class. And I think that it's really, really important to get your hands on the production side of it because that's where you learn what you're going to be doing.

So, you'd like to take basic video as a freshman?

X - Yeah. But you really can't because you have to go through all of these requirements first and you have to take - not only classes that are related to film but your minor and courses that are not related to film - by the time you get to actually taking that production class you are really close to graduating. It makes you feel kind of uneasy. That's what you have to do when you graduate and that's the least amount of work that you've done is production work. In that case, I was kind of disappointed.

Was that true for you also?

O - Yes.

You got late into the production.

O - I was afraid that I wouldn't be able to start production until my junior year. And, I'm a sophomore. And I'm in my production class right now. I could have taken it last semester if I wasn't out of the country. I got an email, I was disappointed. I made sure that my requirements in so that I could finally do a production class. If I knew that I had waited too long I would probably lose all the stuff I learned in high school. So, I wanted to keep that going. Continue my knowledge in it. Next semester I'll probably add advanced production.

Did any of you have film experience in high school?

O - Yeah. I took both classes.

The other three of you didn't.

M - I tried to. But, my senior year was the first year they had it. It didn't really teach you very much. It was just not very organized. I don't know.

A little exposure?

M - Yeah.

What aspects of film studies have not met your expectations?

X - I think I answered that in your first question.

M - I kind of expected it to be more like art school where you had studio time and be in there creating things a lot.   That's not really the case.

How is it then?

M - It's more like art history. It's more theory. Which is good. I think you should have the basics in theory but, I think it's a little uneven right now.

O - It's hard to apply that theory without actually going out in the field.

X - You can't really check out equipment until you have taken a basic production class. So, you're kind of limited. If you actually want to try it, if you're not in a production class, you actually can't.

You sound like you are at a disadvantage to people who come in here with experience from high school.

M - With some stuff. I didn't know much about editing and that's something I had to learn.

O - I think, at this time, we're all kind of in the same boat. We're all being taught the same thing. With production classes, some people may have had experience and so they want to do it their

way but, you still have to collaborate with other people. It's still a learning experience for everyone.

Do you find that people with more experience step up and say "I'll do this"

O - Yes.

What do you do with that? If you're interested in doing something.

O - I kind of just let them do it and then I then I see what they're doing and if they are actually good at it then I'll probably mock it later like "let me see it, let me see how to do it"

So, if two of you came up and said "we want to do something" and you know this person has more experience then you would just watch them? That would be one way that you could learn.

X - I think, like she said, if they're good, they know what they're doing, it's good for the whole group.

O - You don't want a shitty film. You want a good one, so, if someone is actually good, it gives you a chance to look at it and then if you decide later - or they - let me see this shot - you can take control.

Are you learning very specific things like how to light. Do you feel like you're getting the best practice?

O - Yeah.

M - I kind of got more of that through film works than I did in class. I don't know if it's just me but the TA helped me less than anyone else in the class. We were teaching him how to do stuff.

O - That happens. That happened with us as students.

M - Yeah. I just decided that I don't know what's happening.

X - That's actually what's happening to me right now. So far no one has taught me how to use a camera. Maybe in film class with the old Bell and Howell cameras. It's very different from these cameras. I took a documentary class and we had video projects. I didn't know that you had to take basic video first. I was thrown into a project and it was just me and a journalist major. I knew nothing about film. We had to go shoot a whole documentary. And in the class they did not teach you how to do the equipment. They said "okay, go shoot now" Here I am with $15,000 and a bunch of equipment from my department and I said "wait a second" I've never touched it before. I've never done anything.

What did you end up doing?

X - I taught myself the whole process. I would go out and set up the equipment. I just had to teach myself. _____ helped me a lot. I was probably a pain in the ass. I would go to the editing room. I would ask him all these questions about equipment. I would take it home. I'd read the manual. He did help us with lighting. In the class, in did show you how to light stuff. That helped a lot. For sound, I just figured out little by little. Of course, there is a price you pay with that. You have no experience with equipment and -

You don't know if you are getting it right.

X - Yeah.

Do you supplement with club activities?

M - Yeah. I learned much more through that having people come in and talk to me about stuff. I learned it that way. Just going to basic video doesn't teach us very much. I think that it is really biased towards GNE and lighting and camera at KU. That's mainly what you learn.

That is like grip and electric. That is what they are training you to be. Other than that they act like they don't know what's going on.

So that's your feeling. You're not learning quite as much as you would like to learn - but you are getting - you are being thrown into something - pretty much sink or swim - and then you pretty much swim.

X - Yeah. And it works that way, too, but, it would be nice if someone actually sat down and talked about equipment.

Do you think that you are at a disadvantage because you are woman in those kind of situations? Do the men seem to have more experience or do they just say they have more experience?

X - I don't think that it is a gender thing necessarily.

Guys are as scared as you are when it comes to those kinds of things?

O - Usually, I think that I'm the one that takes control. With the production class, if I'm in a group, we'll talk about it and then I'll say " let's get going" and I start doing things. And then others will tag along. I just think of ideas and sometimes they don't work but I follow through with it. That's my experience in that class.

The guys, some of them in your class, won't follow through?

O - They'll follow through but not with as much enthusiasm as I would put to it.

What do you hope to be doing in 10 years?

O - Being in LA editing.

B - Probably being in a really distinct city. Not necessarily LA. LA would be cool. If I wind up in LA, I'm fine with that. I think there are still opportunities all over. It's Louisiana, isn't it - Yeah. There's Louisiana .... Albuquerque is huge. Every state. It just differs as time goes on. Pretty much whatever city would be most valuable for me career wise. Hopefully, being involved in several different projects. And having a semi-steady job though you can't really expect that from film. You can dream.

How about you?

M - Hopefully, I'll be creatively fulfilled and happy. I would like to be in the union. That would give me more stability. Any good, interesting city. I don't like Los Angeles that much but I would spend time there.

So you feel like there are many doors open to you?

M - Yeah.

You're hopeful about that.

X - As long as I have creative freedom and I'm in a jungle with five - a different - all these languages around me. I don't know. I really don't know. As long as I'm doing what makes me happy and I can eat, I'm happy. I can't see myself in a specific city or country. Honestly, just anywhere.

Do you think that you will be able to do what you want to do? Do you think doors are open?

(head nods yes)

O - I have no doubt in my mind that we will be shut off from what we could do or should do. If someone says "you can't do that" that's impossible. You can always do something.

So, if someone said " we aren't going to let you be a cinema-photographer" you'd just go differently and you'd do it somehow. (head nods yes)

M - It would be hard. But I think it's possible.

Overall, is there anything that you want to talk about that you've thought about a lot that are going on in film studies. How you are moving through it. Or your ambitions. Anything?

M - Something I've thought about a lot and noticed is disparity on the lowest level. I don't think it's conscious hurtful sexism. I think that it is more of a by product of how it has always been done and it's still very much a boys club. I think, specifically, KUTV and Film Works is a boys club. If you look at faculty, the way they teach, it's very masculine.

What do you mean? What's an example of that?

M - We talked about how no one ever sat down and taught us. They just kind of threw us in. Can you swim? Also, the way that it is very technically but it's not step by step technical. I would like for it to be more collaborative. I mean, it should be competitive, but, I feel like bragging rights competitive - you need to learn your craft and do the best you can.

How about you? Do you ever get pigeon holed?

B - I think that the difference depends on who you are working with. I think that if you are a woman, you are expected to do art department. I've noticed that a lot. Men step up and do more technical aspects. They're usually grips and electrics and if you are a woman you are expected to

be creative. I noticed this because I was involved in a project but a couple friends of mine were doing an intermediate project and I was just there. They asked me to come along and I was observing and they didn't have an art department on this project and pretty soon the cinematographer - none of the guys were stepping up. None of them were doing anything. And the producer was a woman and she was pushing a woman to do it. They just expected her to do it. I found that rather interesting. I don't think that there is a gender specific role in any aspect of film. I consider doing everything from grip to art department to directing. I'd consider them all and I know several different people with different qualifications and I know a woman who does grip work and she's really good at it. Or, at least, I think she is. And I know several guys that do grip and I know guys that write and women that do write and I just think sometimes women are designed to have a more creative role.

That's what you've seen?

B - That's what I've seen so far. I don't how it is in classes specifically. I just noticed this one group that did it.

M - I have been pigeon holed in the art department. But, I really like art department so, it doesn't bother me as much. It does bother me when I try to write or direct. People don't take me seriously. That's when I have to go out and do it on my own.

When do you do that?

M - Usually when I write something that I'm really passionate about - I'm actually finishing one right now - I just ask people that I like and respect their work to work on this. I did .... I and .... we were writing something together and a lot of the guys were laughing. So, they

said "oh, you're going to write some stupid romantic comedy, etc. etc." If I try to get high leadership roles, that's kind of their perspective.

So, you found a way that you can do it. Your own process.

M - Yeah.

Okay.

X - Once. We had four hours to shoot and so it was a very short experience. And, the other documentary I had it was just me and another person. There was just two of us. There were no specific roles. It was "let's see whatever the hell we can do" I haven't had a lot of experience working with guys.

O - I do have to say that I've never been pigeon holed except for cooking. The group that I'm in - last night you had to leave early, but they were saying what they want to do on the next project. And I said that I want to something and they said, "okay, cool" They said "do you want to do anything else" like cook. And I said "I probably will" I would cook for them because they burn stuff and I like baking. But I find if you like what you do, are confident in what you do and kind of take control of the situation, you'll get more respect. Because if you're good at your task at hand they'll finally realize that "maybe she's can do something else"

B - I think that really is the key to success in this business. Competency. Whether you are male or women you really have to show that you do the job.

It sounds like some of this you have to do on your own dime.

O - Yeah.

You know that's how you are going to get it done and you are not afraid of that at all?

O - I've been scared of - and doubted myself - about a million times but, "why are you even going into this field" "You're not creative, you're hate telling stories, all this stuff" Then I step back and I think "I do want to do this" I'm confident that I am good at it. I know for a fact that if someone interviews me that I will show them my work and it is going to be great. And every time I start to feel - this is going to be amazing - if I work hard enough and I dedicate time to it, then I'll succeed.

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