The James Irvine Foundation funded the Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media to conduct an independent assessment in order to quantify the impact of the Institute's research, education and advocacy efforts with leading entertainment companies conducted by Worldwide Motion Picture Group. The first phase of the study was to survey all those who had attended the Institute's presentations and Symposiums and measure how the Institute's research has impacted decisions that have positively impacted the quality and quantity of female character portrayals.

Who Completed the Study?

Respondents came from a wide range of fields from live action and animated film and TV to web content creators. Respondents were executives in the content creation, development and production fields. Close to three quarters worked on projects that target "adults of all ages," a third worked on projects targeting teens and just over one in four worked on projects targeting children.

Key Findings

#1 The Institute's research is creating change in how girls and women are portrayed in film and television.

Two-thirds had utilized information learned from the Institute in their work. This rose to 86% of the males surveyed and was stronger among those aged 50+ (76%). This reflects the Institute's success in targeting and educating a broad range of demographic groups.

70% plan to use what they've learned through the Geena Davis Institute in future projects.

68% used what they learned in two or more projects and 41% of study participants utilized what they learned in four or more projects — one quarter had done so in four or more projects.

Number of projects in which findings were utilized
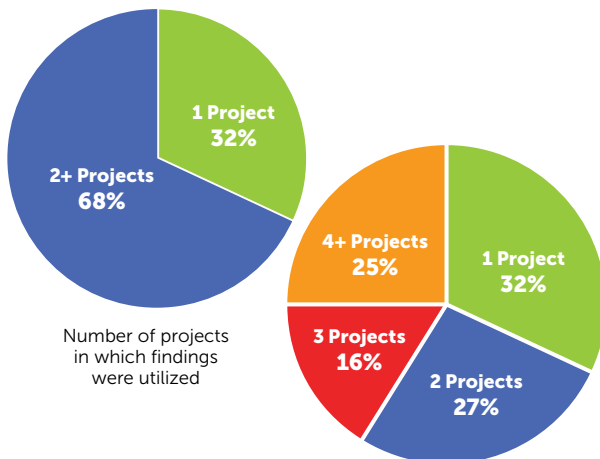
#2 Content creators are changing different elements of their projects in order to work towards gender balance, reducing stereotyping and creating a wide variety of female characters.

When asked what they had changed about their projects, over a quarter changed **"the aspirations / occupations of female characters"** or their **"dialogue."** Close to a fifth (18%) had changed **"story development"** and 16% had **"increased female characters as secondary characters."**

TABLE 1 • What changed in response to what they learned?

Change	%
Aspirations or occupations of female characters	27%
Dialogue	27%
Story development	18%
More female characters as secondary characters	16%
More female characters as lead characters	11%
Switched male characters to female	11%
The look of the characters	11%
More female characters as extras	7%
More female characters as supporting characters	7%

In their own words, respondents described these changes as:

- "I began producing video profiles of exceptional women to be shown to kids."
- "I've tried to employ more women on the crew, writers, and musicians."
- "I make children's media. I've made more of an effort to have my lead female characters into math and science and to have them model play patterns that are not typically considered girly."
- "I hired female talent."
- "I've leveraged this research to influence filmmakers."

When asked more specifically to describe the wider impact of what they had learned, many spoke of wide-reaching effects:

- "My writing has become richer, more real and more enjoyable to write, and I feel more validated in the adventures I create for my protagonists, both female and male."
- "It changed how I parent, specifically, how I talk to my 15-year-old daughter about media portrayals of men and women."
- "I pay more conscious attention to the dialog of characters, keeping gender in roles fluid, introducing a few words here and there to keep bias or budding stereotypes from 'sticking' (*e.g.,* pink/blue color assignments, fairies can be boys)."
- "I felt empowered to stand on the facts of the research to help create foundational awareness of the need to elevate the female factor and help others see girls/women in roles that have previously been male dominant."

#3 The need to desexualize many female roles in programming and movies stands out as the most important research topic presented, placed first in importance by 38% of respondents. At lower levels, a range of different topics were deemed most important by about one in 10.

TABLE 2 • Need for change

Change	%
Desexualize female roles in programming and movies	39%
Increase the number of females in children's programming	12%
Show a break from traditional gender stereotypes and roles	12%
Show a broader/diverse physical representation in children's programming	12%
Show female characters in non-traditional gender stereotypes and roles	12%
Show girls and women in professions usually associated with boys and men	9%
Show male characters in non-traditional gender stereotypes and roles	3%

Phase Two

We are currently beginning Phase Two of this project—interviews with survey respondents.

This process will illustrate specific examples of how the Institute has influenced content creators to incorporate an ongoing assessment of the Institute's guidelines and demonstrate how they are using the resulting assessment to inform their decision-making in meaningful ways.

Funding

About Worldwide MPG

Having been directly involved in research and consultation for box office blockbusters, award winners and independent films for close to a decade, MPG has a reputation in the industry as one of the leaders in motion picture market research and strategy, with clients as diverse as major motion picture studios and award winning producers, to filmmakers that are new to the arena.

Our philosophy is that storytelling is key—in scripts, in the visuals within a movie and in research. MPG doesn't just give numbers; there is a story to be gained from the data and context. Our full service strategic research model is designed in such a way that we can partner from the inception of an idea all the way through to when the audience leaves the theater. Using our extensive experience in all areas of entertainment research and a rich database of historical comparisons, we provide actionable results within an industry context.