

Female characters in film and TV motivate women to be more ambitious, more successful, and have even given them the courage to break out of abusive relationships

Findings show that the lack of strong female characters in film and TV have long term effects on society and the progress of women

London 25 Feb, 2016: As the Oscars and Hollywood continues to draw criticism for the lack of equal representation of gender and diversity, ground-breaking global research by the Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media and J. Walter Thompson Company shows that female role models in film and TV are hugely influential in driving women to improve their lives.

The research by the Institute and JWT finds that 90% of women globally feel that female role models in film or TV are important, 61% said female role models in film and TV have been influential in their lives and 58% said that women have been inspired to be more ambitious or assertive.

The survey of 4,300 women in nine countries; **Brazil, China, India Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Russia, Australia, the United Kingdom and the U.S.**, also showed that one-in-nine globally, rising as high as one-in-four in Brazil, **said that positive female role models had given them the courage to leave an abusive relationship.**

However, 53% of women globally think there is a lack of female role models in film and TV, 74% said they wished they had seen more female role models growing up and 80% said that women should have a louder voice when it comes to cultural influence.

Previous [research by the Institute](#) found that the percentage of fictional women in the workforce is even lower than the one that **exists in the real world**. Of the female characters with a job, less than 25% of employed characters were female, while women make up 40% of the global workforce. Film depictions also fail to reflect the slow but steady progress of female representation across professions. Despite women holding 24% of **global political positions** out of 127 characters holding political office in films, only 12 were female. In the legal sphere, male judges and lawyers outnumbered females 13 to 1, and in computer science and engineering, the ratio of men to women is 7.6 to 1.

Geena Davis, Founder & Chair, Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media said: “The fact is – women are *seriously under-represented* across nearly all sectors of society around the globe, not just on-screen, but for the most part we’re simply not aware of the extent. And media images exert a powerful influence in creating and perpetuating our unconscious biases.

“However, media images can also have a very positive impact on our perceptions. In the time it takes to make a movie, we can change what the future looks like. There are woefully few women CEOs in the world, but there can be lots of them onscreen. How do we encourage a lot more girls to aspire to lead? By casting droves of women in STEM, politics, law and other professions today in movies.”

Rachel Pashley, global planner at J. Walter Thompson said: “The combination of existing research and the new findings from our global research prove that the lack of female role models on film and TV has been trivialised for too long – the statistics around abusive relationships in particular brings the importance of the issue into stark contrast. This is a real issue with real societal impact around the globe.

“Saying anything is possible isn’t as powerful as seeing that anything is possible. It’s about setting a precedent; if girls don’t see physicists, racing cars drivers and CEOs on screen, how are they expected to want to be physicists, racing cars drivers and CEOs? By shining a light on this issue when the world is watching, we can start to affect real and significant change.”

The full research report will be available through the Geena Davis Institute in March.

The findings form part of J. Walter Thompson’s Female Tribes project. A living breathing research study dedicated to the largest consumer category in the world; women.

<https://www.jwt.com/femaletribes/what-is-female-tribes>

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J. Walter Thompson, the world’s best-known marketing communications brand, has been inventing pioneering ideas for the past 150 years. Headquartered in New York, JWT is a true global network with more than 200 offices in over 90 countries, employing nearly 10,000 marketing professionals. JWT consistently ranks among the top agency networks in the world and continues a dominant presence in the industry by staying on the leading edge—from hiring the industry’s first female copywriter to developing award-winning branded content today.

About the Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media

Founded by Academy Award®-winning actor Geena Davis, the Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media, at Mt. St. Mary’s University, is the only research-based organization working with media and entertainment companies with cutting-edge research, education and advocacy programs to dramatically improve how girls and women are reflected in media targeting children 11 and under. For more information, visit: www.seejane.org