CLIMBING THE CELLULOID LADDER

Women, Mentoring and Australian Feature Film

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

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ABSTRACT: CLIMBING THE CELLULOID LADDER

Women, Mentoring and Australian Feature Film

This thesis is an analysis of the lack of equality for female writers, director and producers working in the Australian feature film industry. It also explores mentoring and sponsorship as methods for redressing this gender imbalance, and proposes that stakeholders in the Australia screen industry institute a formalised and funded mentoring program to increase numbers of women in creative leadership roles. It uses an interdisciplinary approach, combining analysis of industry literature, scholarly studies and data analysis.

The paper finds that women make up a significant minority of all roles of creative leadership in feature film, in Australia and other international territories, including the United Kingdom and the United States. The most significant reason for this minority is the perpetuation of a flawed meritocracy, and the role of unconscious bias in the advancement of women up the ladder of their career in film. This is particularly important for women in the middle of their careers, aged roughly between 30 and 45 years old.

The conclusions offered by this thesis are that mentorship and sponsorship can provide real and practical benefits to women who want to advance to the positions of writer, director or producer of feature films. Mentorship is an excellent start, but sponsorship provides more tangible and long-lasting benefits through public advocacy for and demonstrable support of the protégé.

By way of conclusion, this thesis examines sponsorship programs currently in existence globally for women advancing in creative leadership in film. It also proposes the creation of a similar sponsorship program in Australia, aimed at women in the middle of their careers who are in a position to take on a leadership role as a writer, director or producer of a feature film. This program would be funded and supported by industry, and the desired outcome would be gender equality in leadership and a more diverse range of stories told on the Australian screen in the future.

INTRODUCTION

"The truth will set you free, but first it will piss you off."

Gloria Steinem

I have been a professional in the Australian screen industry since 1989, when I had my first poorly paid job as a camera assistant for a live comedy program on Channel 31. Even at that early stage my gender was an issue – at my job interview with two male producers, I was asked if I "could lift heavy things", and if I would be safe when leaving work alone after midnight. Although I appreciated their concerns, I am quite sure these questions would not have been asked of a male interviewee. I was later told by one of the producers that I had been given the job because no men had applied for the position, and I was consequently "the best of a bad bunch".

In the ensuing twenty-five years since that first gig I have worked as a writer, director and producer for the screen, both in Australia and overseas. I have started two production companies, one of which I ran successfully for twenty years, while the other continues to operate. I have attained a level of creative leadership in my field. In that same period of time statistics show that as a female in that position, I am part of a significant minority.

When I started working professionally in the screen industry, women made up 39% of screen workers in Australia (Cox & Laura, 1992), and in terms of creative leadership, the figures were follows:

- 17% of writers;
- 22% of directors;
- 29% of producers.

While certainly not equity, given the low numbers of women in leadership positions in the 1970s and 80s, these statistics were a positive sign. Two years before I started my first production company, the future for a female leader in the creation of screen content looked bright. I saw no reason to believe that my gender would hold me back; being a woman would be irrelevant as I ventured forth into independent screen work.

In 2014, women make up 51.5% of (ArtsHub Australia, 2014). However, in terms of creative leadership, the figures are follows:

- 21% writers are women;

- 17% directors are women;

- 34% producers are women

The number of women working in the industry has increased significantly, but our journey to parity in creative leadership has slowed. In feature film production the number of female producers and writers working in feature films has crept forward by only 4-5% over *twenty-two years*, and female directors have actually lost representation. Australia is not alone in these numbers. In Canada, the US, the UK and Europe, the numbers are similar – or worse. A further breakdown of these figures is explored in Chapter One.

While the numbers are healthier in the worlds of television and documentaries, particularly in the independent sector, so far true equality and a 50/50 split has not been achieved by any women in creative leadership in any area of screen. The closest we have come is female producers in the documentary sector, who currently number 45% (Screen Australia, 2014). My scope in this thesis is almost exclusively on the feature film industry, but my preliminary research indicates that my findings and recommendations can be extrapolated to cover all areas of screen production.

In essence, whether looking at Australian numbers or the global market, the result is one fact - over the course of my lifetime, as both a woman and a filmmaker, more than 80% of the stories I have seen on film and television have been stories creatively led by men. At the current rate, and without active intervention, my teenage daughters could face a similar disparity in twenty years. I find this situation unacceptable.

<u>Is this a problem?</u>

But is there really a problem here? Is it truly so bad that creative leadership in film is dominated by men? Of course, there are obvious human equality and social justice issues, but there are also financial benefits that come with a more objective, less discriminatory marketplace. Numerous studies have shown that a more diverse workforce is more productive, innovative and contributes to increased market share, profitability and lower employee turnover (Entelo Inc., 2014). Two critical areas of attention, however, are box office and cultural impact.

The report Women @ the Box Office (Lauzen, 2008) examined the top 100 grossing films at the UIS box office in 2007, and compared films with at least one woman working in a key behind-the-

scenes role with those employing only men in the same roles. The study found that, on average, a large budget was a far better predictor of box office success, and women were less likely to helm films with big budgets. However, "when women and men filmmakers have similar budgets for their films, the resulting box office grosses are also similar. In other words, the sex of filmmakers does not determine box office grosses".

In terms of cultural impact, the screen industry needs to assert itself both as a reflection of Australia, and as a participant in a global industry that is rapidly evolving. Producing new projects that stand tall internationally, and tell Australian stories, necessitates a collective portfolio produced by both genders (Pearson, 2011). After all, women are not an element of 'diversity' – women are half the population. Gender equality in the Australian screen industry is a vitally important and valid debate on a number of levels for both women and men.

Reasons and solutions

Some possible reasons for the lack of equality for women in leadership are detailed in Chapter 2, using examples from both the film industry and other areas of business. In particular, the middle years of a woman's working life (25 to 45 years old) are examined as a critical and vulnerable time for women seeking a position of leadership, in any industry.

While several solutions to the issue are possible, for the purposes of this thesis the avenues I chose to study are mentoring and sponsorship. Mentoring, explained more in Chapter 3, is a partnership between a more experienced person (the mentor) and someone less experienced (the protégé) (Hunter, 2002). Sponsorship is a more active advocacy, and detailed in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 looks globally at past and current programs that use elements of both mentoring and sponsorship to support women as they strive for creative leadership in screen. Finally, Chapter 6 looks at the possibility of introducing, subsidising and formalising a similar program in Australia.

My thesis takes this position not just because there is a vast amount of research and evidence to support the idea that mentorship and sponsorship can work; it is also my personal experience. As a young woman facing hurdles of both gender and inexperience in the screen industry, I deliberately sought out mentors to help me. My first, from 1989 to 1991, was a filmmaker named Joan Long whom I approached because she had been creatively involved in two of my favourite films, *Caddie* (as writer, 1976) and *Puberty Blues* (as producer, 1981). Joan made me cups of tea,

indulged my youthful narcissism, and answered all of my questions. She gave me invaluable advice about how to pursue my chosen vocation as a film writer and director.

My second mentor was the cinematographer and editor Chris Newling, and my third mentor was the producer David Hannay. Both men taught me about the realities of working in screen. Chris was instrumental in getting me my first job as a director of a long-form program, and Hannay helped me get my first feature film as a writer and director developed for production. He also planted the seed and subsequently urged me to grow my own screen business as a producer, and in time Chris became an employee of that production company.

My relationship with these men was very different from my relationship with Joan. They were not simply mentors but sponsors – they pushed me to take on challenges and actively put me forward for positions and opportunities in the industry. This was not cups-of-tea-and-chat support – this was tough, practical advocacy. Research suggests that women are often just as likely to be mentored as their male colleagues, but are under-sponsored, and subsequently less likely to advance to positions of leadership (Ibarra, Carter, Silva, 2010). In the 2012 WIFT study, Lisa French found that 8% of women cited their mentor as the way they got their first job, as opposed to 20% of men surveyed.

The screen industry is hard, and everyone needs a guide. Mentoring helped me find my way, and sponsorship pushed me into leadership. I pay back my past supporters by both mentoring and sponsoring others now. This thesis is an attempt to explore ways that mentoring and sponsorship could be a lasting solution to the critical issue of gender inequality in screen leadership for all women, and not just a fortunate minority.

Literature Review

In the Australian feature film industry, women make up 51.5% of screen workers but only 34% of feature film producers, 17% of directors and 21% of screenwriters. These numbers have not significantly improved since the 1992 survey of women in film, video and radio industries "What Do I Wear for a Hurricane" (Cox & Laura, 1992).

The numbers of women in the positions of producer, director and writer are not equal to men in Australian screen industry, in any sector. (French, 2012; Barber, 2013). In the early 1970s, the representation of women in creative leadership was as low as 4% for directors (Blonski, Creed, & Freiberg, 1987; Pip, 1987), although there was clear improvement in these numbers throughout the 1980s and into the 1990s (Cox & Laura, 1992; Hogan, 2013).

However, since that time the numbers of women have not increased, and in some cases have declined (Davidson, 2005; French, 2014; George, 2014). This is despite the fact that women make up the majority of positions of leadership in the screen funding bodies at both state and federal level (Screen Australia, 2014).

In other countries, there is a similar dearth of women in creative leadership roles, and in some cases the numbers are smaller to Australia. Equity in creative leadership has not been acheioved anywhere, as proven by studies of the film industries in the Unites Kingdom (David, 2013; Directors UK, 2014; Sinclair et al, 2006), the United States of America (Lauzen, 2014; Follows, 2014; Bielby & Bielby, 1996; Seger, 1996; Hunt, 2014; Hunter-Thomas, 2011; Klos, 2013; Smith et al, 2014), Canada (Nolan, 2004; Coles, 2013; French, 2012) and various countries across Europe (Godet, 2012; Ministry of Culture, 2013; Polacek, 2010; Swedish Film Institute, 2012).

There are abundant theories as to why women are less successful in leadership roles than men, and paid less, across a range of professions (Franze, 2013; CEDA, 2014; Sandberg, 2013). In this thesis the main theory explored is the 'myth' of meritocracy when hiring women for leadership roles in male dominated fields (Boyle et al, 2010; Castilla & Benard, 2010; Goldin & Rouse, 1997; Gould & Brown, 2013; Moss-Racusin et al, 2012). The so-called meritocracy has been demonstrated as a contributing factor to Imposter Theory, by which women are more likely than men to lack confidence and feel that they will be 'found out' as imposters in roles they are not qualified for (Shipman & Kay, 2014; Kumar & Jagacinski, 2006).

There have also been studies which provide evidence of a level of unconscious bias and demonstrated prejudice against women in positions of leadership, which is often based on gender

stereotyping (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Elsesser & Lever, 2011; Heilman, 2001; Ibarra et al, 2010; Stead, 1974; Swim & Cohen, 1997; Pew Research Center's Social & Demographic Trends Project, 2013). In the screen industry, particularly in Hollywood, this prejudice can be as pronounced and discriminatory as in other professions (Morgan, 2004; Fithian, 2012; Hunter-Thomas, 2011, Judah, 2013; Silverstein, 2014; Taylor, 2012)

One of the main theories for women's lack of leadership presence is the absence of peer and/or senior support in their journey up the leadership ladder (Miller et al, 2010; Barsh & Yee, 2012; Kurtulus & Tomaskovic-Devey, 2012; Haring-Hidore, 1987). One of the methods used with proven success to correct this deficiency across a range of corporate, government and educational sectors has been career mentoring. (Allen, 2007; Allen et al, 2004; Ragins & Kram, 2007; Rajendran, 2012). Mentoring, both structured and informal, has proven to be particularly helpful to women in academia (Chandler, 1996; Hall & Sandler, 1983; Nemiro et al. 2011; Neumark & Gardecki, 1996; Packard et al, 2004; Putsche et al, 2008; Sorcinelli & Yun, 2007) and the workplace (Allen, 2004; Egan, 2011; Knackstedt, 2000; Sterling, 2007; Wallace, 2001). Formal and informal mentoring programs have been established, reviewed and examined in the screen industry in Australia and abroad (Morgan, 2003; Bartyzel, 2014; Ensher & Murphy, 2005; Hollywood Reporter, 2013), but so far no literature has proven with any certainty that mentoring helps people working in any creative profession, including the screen.

Issues for women when accessing mentoring, whether informal or through a structured program have also been studied (Sandberg, 2013; O'Brien et al, 2008; Williams, 2011) and one of the attributions determined was a lack of support at a senior level for programs aimed at women within organisations (Barsh & Yee, 2011); women in power not 'paying it forward' through mentoring their junior co-workers (Drexler, 2013; Neal et al, 2013) and gender discrimination in the choosing of both mentors and protégés (Ragins, 1989; Ragins & Cotton, 1991; Rockwell et al, 2013; Semeniuk, 1999; Sernak & May, 2003).

Criticism of mentoring versus sponsorship has been presented (Carter & Silva, 2010; Erickson, 2014; Sabattini & Dinolfo, 2010) and studies have shown that sponsorship, rather than mentorship is more effective for improving leadership prospects for both genders. However, it is not as frequently implemented for women as it is for men (Fisher, 2012; Foust-Cummings et al, 2011; Hewlett, 2013; Peraino et al, 2010; WGEA, 2013).

Formal mentoring and sponsorship programs have been found to help the progress of women in general (Hunter, 2002, Boddy, 2009); and in the screen industry, particularly for women in

leadership positions and male-dominated professions such as cinematography (Kang, 2014; Kaufman, 2009; LIFT, 2014; Richard, 2010; Simon, 2014; Sundance Film Festival, 2014). Sponsorship programs exist in the form of a combined mentoring and access to funding or opportunity aimed at women (Horst, 2014; Lang, 2014; Sheppard, 2013) Non-academic studies have also documented benefits to a structured and funded program for women (Jones, 2012; WGEA, 2013); and the involvement of both male and female mentors for selected protégés (Prime & Miss-Racusin, 2009).

To date, I have found evidence of no study which has investigated the benefits of mentoring and sponsorship for women in the Australian screen industry, particularly those working in creative leadership as writers, directors and producers in feature film. In fact, there is no definitive research on the impact of mentoring in any creative industry worldwide for either gender.

Chapter One – The Numbers

"Excuse me, gentlemen, but the guys are eating all the cake."

Jane Campion, Jury President, Cannes 2014

In July 2014 the annual Screen Hub Salary Survey (ArtsHub Australia, 2014) released figures stating that 51.5% of the Australian screen industry is female. With just a few percentage points in the difference, the most recent Census of Population and Housing in August 2011 found that of the 45,846 people employed in film and video production and post-production services, 47% were women (screenaustralia.gov.au, 2014).

This is marked progress in terms of numbers of workers, based on previous surveys (Cox & Laura, 1992). However, women's journey to parity in creative leadership, especially in feature film production, has slowed down considerably. Behind the veil of progress lies a problem – women are not achieving positions of creative leadership at the same rate as men. This lack of equality is not just prevalent in Australia, but globally.

In a research report named "Women in the Victorian Film, Television and Related Industries" Associate Professor Lisa French from RMIT University undertook a survey of employment of women in the film, television and related industries (including digital media and games). She found that while numbers of women in television were higher than other areas (but not equal to men), overall women were suffering from a chronic lack of representation at almost every level of the screen industries, and in leadership positions in particular (French, 2012).

In Australian feature films in 2013, there were 273 currently active feature film producers in Australia, 156 directors and 214 writers. Women accounted for 34% of the producers, 18% of directors and 25% of the writers in that year. These numbers have not increased significantly since the 1990s. (Screen Australia, 2013).

In July 2013, Filmink magazine published the *20 Most Powerful People in Australian Film* (Kornits, 2013). Only two named women appeared on the list – Liz Watts at number 15 and Rosemary Blight at number 16. An ensuing twitter controversy did not change the list, but did raise the unanswered question – where are all the women? (twitter.com, 2014a).

The International Screen

In other countries, the representation of women in roles of creative leadership is as dire as it is in Australia, if not worse. The only country to see a consistent rise in the numbers of female writers, directors and producers has been Sweden, although they have not yet achieved parity (Swedish Film Institute, 2012). This is likely due to their introduction of affirmative action programs at a government funding level (Ministry of Culture, 2013).

United Kingdom

In 2014, filmmaker Stephen Follows released his report *What percentage of a UK film crew is female?* (Follows, 2014). In the report he studied 2,336 UK films and found that between 2009 and 2013, women made up 26.2% of crew members on British films. In terms of creative leadership, 27% of UK films in the period had a female producer, 15% a female writer, and 14% a female director. In the years prior, the British Film Institute reported that only 11.8% of films made between 2007-2010 had a female director (British Film Institute, 2011).

Compared to Australia, there is a relatively large amount of data gathering and industry-wide discussion of the gender inequality in the British creative industries, including film. In 2012 the BFI released *Succes de plume? An examination of female screenwriters and directors of UK films, 2010-2012* (Steele, 2013). The report stated that "Under-representation of women in key decision-making and creative roles has been a feature of the film industry for many years." In the UK over the period 1999 to 2007 the number of female film directors was less than 10%.

For women screenwriters, the numbers are also disproportionate. In *Scoping Study into the Lack of Women Screenwriters in the UK* (Sinclair, 2006), the Institute for Employment Studies found that women screenwriters are credited on less than 15% of UK films made between 1999 and 2003, even though women represent approximately 40% of participants on industry-accredited screenwriting courses and over 50% of people who nominate writing as their main profession.

Europe

Europe as a whole is far too large a territory to focus on in this thesis. However, a 2012 article in Cahiers du Cinema entitled *Un monde (presque) sans femmes* [A *world (almost) without women*] reported on the percentages of women working in film in positions of creative leadership around the world (Godet, 2012). While many of the figures are not directly comparable as they are based on different time periods, they give a good general indication of worldwide trends. The article reported that:

- In France in 2011, 25% of the 207 French films produced were directed by women.

- In Denmark, between 1992 and 2002, women made up 17% of screenwriters, 19% of producers and 20% of directors.

- In Spain, it is estimated that between 7 and 15% of directors and screenwriters are women.

In December 2013, the Federation of European Film Directors presented some preliminary findings from a joint task-force study on gender and filmmaking in Europe. The study found that of the 15,583 films produced in Europe between 1996 and 2012, 18.4% of directors were female (Sjaastad, 2014). At the 2014 Cannes Film Festival, a study of the European Audiovisual Observatory (EAO) showed that only 16% of European films from 2003 to 2011 were directed by female directors.

At a round table discussion on gender representation in European cinema hosted by the European Women's Audiovisual Network (EWA) at the 2014 Berlinale Film Festival, the lack of hard data evidence to substantiate arguments that women are still underrepresented in the three main creative roles of directing, screenwriting and producing was the main focus. It was put forward that a pan-European study is necessary in order to address the problem. A review of the event stated "It is in many ways a silent problem: we all know it exists, but few countries are willing to conduct serious research to gather the necessary data. Policies often don't change until there is evidence, and the panel made clear that such evidence is needed in order to counteract the problem." (Rowan-Legg, S. 2014**)**

As a step towards such pan-European research, the EWA is currently working on a two-tier research strategy to address gender inequality in screen. From 2014-2016 the organisation will be concentrating on a 5-country pilot study looking into the situation in Croatia, France, Spain, Sweden and the UK. From 2016-2020 the intention is to look into setting in motion a database on gender in film in Europe.

The Cannes Film Festival in 2014 became an unexpected lightning rod for gender issues, as the president of the main competition jury was Jane Campion. She stated at a press conference with fellow jurors that "I think you'd have to say there's some inherent sexism in the industry." She added that Thierry Frémaux, general delegate running the festival, was 'proud' that while only 7 to 8% of the 1,800 films submitted for competition were directed by women, 20% of the films chosen were made by female directors. "Nevertheless, it does feel very undemocratic and women do notice, you know," Ms. Campion said at the time. "Time and time again we don't get our share of representation. Excuse me, gentlemen," she added, looking at some of her fellow jurors, "but the guys are eating all the cake."(Donadio, 2014)

Canada

Focus on Women: Report on gender (in)equality in the Canadian independent screen-based production industry was released in 2013 (Coles, 2013). The report was created by Canadian Unions for Equality on Screen (CUES) and found that "the division of labour in the film and television industry is highly gendered, based on traditional gender roles. Women are overwhelmingly concentrated in areas that are traditionally considered to be 'women's work' such as hair, makeup and wardrobe, script supervision and publicity, and office and administrative jobs." Findings included in the report showed that:

- Of 139 feature films released in 2010 and 2011 in Canada, women comprise less than 20% of the directors and 21% of the screenwriters.
- Of the 76 feature-length, live action (fiction) films receiving production investment from Telefilm Canada in 2012, 22% of productions employed a female director.

United States

The representation of women in Hollywood is perhaps the most alarming story of gender inequality in the countries examined so far.

Dr. Martha Lauzen is the author of *The Celluloid Ceiling: Behind-the-Scenes Employment of Women on the Top 250 Films*, the longest-running and most comprehensive study of women's behind the-scenes employment in film available. It is sponsored and conducted by the Centre for the Study of Women in Television and Film, San Diego State University.

In her most recent study, Dr Lauzen examined 2,938 individuals working on the top 250 domestic grossing films (foreign films omitted) of 2013. She found that women accounted for 10% of screenwriters, 6% of directors and 25% of producers. Across almost all areas of production and creative leadership, numbers of women in the US film industry are decreasing each year (Lauzen, 2012).

Women in the independent film production sector in the US are faring better – but only just. A joint report *Exploring the Barriers and Opportunities for Independent Women Filmmakers* by the Sundance Institute and Women in Film Los Angeles (Smith, Pieper & Choueiti, 2014) found women made up 28.9% of 11,197 directors, writers, producers, cinematographers and editors on films that were selected for the Sundance Film Festival in the decade between 2002 to 2012. Other findings show:

- Across all behind-the-camera positions, females were most likely to be producers. However, as the prestige of the producing post increased, the percentage of female participation decreased – in other words, a woman is more likely to be a production manager than an executive producer. This trend was observed in both narrative and documentary filmmaking.
- Females were half as likely to be directors of narrative films as documentaries (16.9% vs. 34.5%).
- 23.9% of directors at the Sundance Film Festival from 2002-2012 were female, compared to 4.4% of directors across the top 100 box office films each year from 2002 to 2012 that were female.

Cathy Schulman, President, Women In Film Los Angeles, said of the results, "This data shows us that there is a higher representation of female filmmakers in independent film as compared to Hollywood – but it also highlights the work that is still to be done for women to achieve equal footing in the field." (Sundance Institute, 2013)

The Academy Awards have proven that there is an obvious gender disparity. Only 16% of the nominees have been women since the awards began, including the two Best Actress categories. Only one woman has ever won an Oscar for directing, Kathryn Bigelow in 2009, and only three other woman have been nominated (including Jane Campion, the only woman to win the Palme D'Or in Cannes). In screenwriting, 90% of nominees have been male. Best Film, the category for producers, is also overwhelmingly male (oscars.silk.co, 2014).

In her 2012 WIFT report, Lisa French wrote "Over the last decade gender equality has largely vanished from the policy agenda, but it is hoped that other researchers will take this work forward

and put gender back as an issue needing urgent attention. If the skills and aesthetic approaches of all people, including women, are not fully utilised, the effect is that audiovisual industries will lose talent, experience and potential styles that model varied approaches to work and creative endeavour." (French, 2012)

The statistics from the Australian film industry, and in other countries, demonstrate that serious attention needs to be paid to the inequality of women in creative leadership roles. Before possible solutions can be addressed, however, a question must be asked: why does this imbalance exist in the first place?

Chapter Two – Why Not Lead?

When Prime Minister Julia Gillard attended the Annual Pacific Island Forum in Auckland in 2011, a bus driver refused to allow her onto the bus with the other leaders, assuming that as a woman she would be on the spouses' bus.

Sydney Morning Herald, 2011

Why are there so few women in positions of creative power? When does the problem occur? There are a range of answers, of course, not all relevant and certainly not all helpful. A few, however, are worth exploring in that they could help identify specific solutions for women working in the Australian screen industry.

A Promising Start

It seems that being female is not an issue at an educational level. According to the Census of 2011, 72% of women in film and video production and post-production services had a qualification, compared to 65% of men. Women are also more likely to have a higher qualification. 51% of women working in the screen industry have a bachelor degree or higher, while only 38% of men are similarly qualified (screenaustralia.gov.au. 2011).

At AFTRS, which is both the best (Appelo, 2014) and longest running film school in Australia, the numbers of students is reflective of this promising start. Graduates in screenwriting, directing and/or producing since 1973 are 52% male and 48% female. Assuming these young men and women are the best potential filmmakers in Australia, gender does not seem to be an issue at a school that prides itself on 'merit selection' (aftrs.edu.au, 2014).

Numbers of film graduates in other countries seem to be similarly equal (De La O, 2014). In 2010, the Dean of the USC School of Cinematic Arts, Elizabeth M. Daley, wrote in Huffington Post "I'm happy to say that SCA has a 50/50 ratio of women to men for our fall admissions." (Daley, 2010)

However, to find out more about leadership, we need to look at the past. Assuming female leaders in Australian screen would currently be aged between 40 and 65, and assuming they might have studied at AFTRS, they could have graduated before 1995. Were the numbers of graduates more heavily male in that period?

At AFTRS, the answer is no. Graduates in screenwriting, directing and producing between 1977 and 1995 were 53% male and 47% female, almost identical to numbers across the history of the school. Once again, the phenomenon is global. In the United States, "the ratio of men and women who graduate from film school with a focus on directing is about 50/50 and has been for some time." (Renee, 2013)

So, is the problem at the top?

Administrative Leadership

The government funding agencies, at both federal and state level, are helmed in the majority by women. Only Screen Australia and SA Film have exclusively male heads at the time of writing (Screen West Chief Executive, Ian Booth, is on long service leave until January 2015, and in his absence the CEO role is being shared by three women) (ScreenWest, 2014).

The large number of women in top positions in screen administration distracts from the fact that women are not being represented in other areas of creative leadership. There has also been no commensurate trickledown effect – the increasing presence of powerful women in screen administration has not changed the numbers of women leading creative teams.

It also appears that the numbers of female creative leaders are lessening, but the perception of experience is improving. In her 2012 survey, Lisa French asked respondents to evaluate the situation for women in Australian film in the last five and ten years "based on your overall experience in the film and TV industries". The majority of female respondents thought the situation had improved for women in the industry, but there had been more improvement in the last 10 years compared to the last 5 years (French, 2012). In actuality, representation for women writers, directors and producers is the same or decreased from that of ten years ago. The situation has not improved – we just think that it has.

In other industries and contexts, it has been proven that once a woman achieves success, particularly in a gender biased context, "her capacity to see gender discrimination is reduced." (Sandberg, 2013). Research conducted in 2009 found that "people only suffer from illegitimate group-level disadvantage when this affects their personal outcomes" (Stroebe, Ellemers, Barreto & Mummendey, 2009). This disparity is also reflected in Stephen Follows' work. When asked "Do women have a harder time than men?" 64% of those working on projects with budgets over $10

million thought not. Only a quarter of those in exhibition, one of the most male dominated professions in screen, felt that women have a harder time than men (Follows, 2014).

French's report highlights the blindness of the industry when faced with obvious gender discrimination, and the lack of gender-based initiatives to correct the problem. "A perception of equity masks the fact that the position of women in audiovisual industries has not improved since 1992 when the last major survey (Cox & Laura, 1992) was conducted." (French, 2012) In 2014, the numbers demonstrate that women's proportional participation in key creative areas has not been increasing. In some areas, such as directing, it has been declining.

The Invisible Middle

The middle of a woman's career is her most vulnerable time when it comes to progressing upwards towards leadership. While young women in Australia enjoy relatively high levels of participation rates in work across all sectors, "once women reach the age they are most likely to have children, between 25 and 45, Australia has significantly lower participation rates than other Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) nations" (Ritchie, 2013).

A simple explanation for our lack of representation in leadership is that women are leaving the workforce to have children and not returning. In fact, 43% of highly qualified women with children are leaving careers or 'off-ramping' for a period of time (Hewlett & Luce, 2005). Also, "women off-ramp for surprisingly short periods of time—on average, 2.2 years. In business sectors, off-rampers average even shorter periods of time out (1.2 years)." (Hewlett, Sherbin & Forster, 2010). The same report also found that 25% of highly-qualified men take time off work for a significant period of time, although not for the same reasons as women.

Also, if having children was the only impediment to mothers working in screen, it would not explain the representation of women who work in other areas of the audiovisual industry. According to the 2011 census (screenaustralia.gov.au, 2014), women were a majority in the following occupations, and it must be assumed that a significant number of these women would be mothers (Baxter, 2013):

• Artistic directors, 57% female;

• Script editor, 53% female;

• Make-up artist, 95% female;

• Production assistant, 70% female;

The Committee for Economic Development in Australia surveyed 619 members of the business community, 93.3% of whom were female. Respondents were asked to rank in order of importance the barriers to women's equality in the workplace. Family was *not* placed number one – it barely made the top five. The most important barriers to women's equality were:

1. Workplace culture

2. Lack of female leaders

3. Gender stereotypes

4. Lack of flexible work practices

5. Affordability and accessibility of childcare

6. Sexism

7. Lack of mentors

8. Societal expectations regarding gender roles (e.g. household work/childcare)

The same respondents also identified "the 'boys' club', lack of support among women, unconscious bias and lack of confidence as important barriers." (CEDA, 2013). Lack of commitment from leaders and executive teams towards gender diversity was also mentioned extensively.

In the screen industry report *Women Directors – Who's Calling the Shots?* Directors UK (2014) found that some of the key reasons for the lack of women directors were:

1. Decisions on hiring are influenced by the opinions (or perceived opinions) of commissioners, in a risk-averse culture that keeps hiring the same directors;

2. Production executives responsible for hiring are unaware of low figures for women directors;

3. Gender stereotyping is prevalent when hiring in specific genres in drama, factual and comedy.

In the BFI study *Succes de plume? Female Screenwriters and Directors of UK Films 2010 – 2012,* production companies "emphasised the importance they perceive of hiring directors who are 'guaranteed to deliver'" (Steele, 2013). The study also found that "executives with hiring responsibilities within production companies tend to assume women find having children incompatible with directing". In another startling admission, there was "a perception that women may not be able to manage large, mainly male crews who, in turn, may feel uncomfortable being led by a woman. Some male lead actors do not like being directed by women".

The Myth of Meritocracy

If women are not climbing to levels of leadership organically then the notion of meritocracy needs to be unpacked. 'Merit' has become synonymous with fairness, equality, or objectivity. This is the case in all walks of life, from politics to the arts – and 'merit' means that gender diversity strategies are not needed. "Even when the lack of female managers and leaders is raised, it's been fashionable in business discussions to focus automatically on a set of perceived female inadequacies and stereotypes. An unspoken assumption is made that women, as a cohort, need simply to conform to a largely objective and unbiased set of workforce parameters to succeed." (Fox, 2013)

For women at the start of their careers, life certainly appears to be a meritocracy. Working hard at school, studying for exams and preparing for assignments are all activities rewarded by the education system. Women appear to respond very well to the clearly explained rules and processes of education - "study after study shows that girls outperform boys at school: they get better grades. They score better on standardised tests. They are disproportionately represented in top-tier graduate school programs." (Hewlett, Peraino, Sherbin & Sumberg, 2010). Carol Dweck, Stanford psychology professor and author, says "If life were one long grade school, women would be the undisputed rulers of the world." (Kay & Shipman, 2014)

However, the meritocracy of the working world is based on a different set of rules. In fact, discrimination is integral to a meritocratic system. "A merit-based system 'discriminates' on the basis of how much "merit" a person has – assuming the pre-condition that everyone has equal opportunity to acquire it – and favours those who have more of it". (Whelan, 2013). The perceptions of merit are shaped and influenced by the assumption of a level playing field, and the belief that only certain criteria can predict future performance. However, the main flaw in any meritocracy argument is that "meritocracies fail for reasons that are not intentional or overt, namely, unconscious bias". (Derby, 2014)

Unconscious bias is the process by which men and women form unconscious knowledge based on their existing associations and relationships, usually from childhood, which leads to 'auto-pilot' or 'fast' thinking (Kahneman, 2011). For example, the social and cultural expectations of young women are different from young men. Girls are usually rewarded for being unassertive and industrious, and criticised for being 'bossy' (Sandberg, 2013). They are taught both directly and subtly that they are not 'masters' of their own fate, are applauded for doing well in school but scolded for questioning authority or bragging about their accomplishments (Hewlett, Peraino,

Sherbin & Sumberg, 2010). By the age of twelve, "it is clear that both girls and boys have learned to equate maleness with opportunity and femininity with constraint." (Orenstein, 1994)

One of the only practical settings in the creative industries where merit, and merit only, can be proven is the famous use of blind auditions for the New York Philharmonic Orchestra. Rouse and Goldin found that from a base of 10%, women's representation increased to 45% of new hires at the orchestra after the adoption of a blind audition process (Goldin & Rouse, 2000).   When candidates are situated on a stage behind a screen to play for a jury that cannot see them, it has a powerful impact; the researchers have determined that this step alone makes it 50% more likely that a woman will advance to final auditions.

In the film industry, women are half or more of graduates, have been creatively involved in filmmaking since the silent era (Wright, 1986), and make up half of all screen workers. If the lack of women creatively in charge is based on merit, then 'merit' is defined by "a particularly narrow cohort of white, middle-aged men" (Fox, 2013). This explanation is difficult to justify. Short of forcing women to apply for filmmaking jobs by striking their names from their previous credits, more work needs to be done to evaluate the discrimination that occurs when women strive for positions of leadership.

The Impossible Dilemma

If women are repeatedly told that their progression is based on merit, and they are not making the cut, it can have a subtle but powerful effect on their likelihood of pushing for leadership. "Propping up this myth (of meritocracy)... acts as a key inhibitor to women trying to climb the ladder by eroding their confidence, sending a strong signal they are simply not up to senior jobs and, of course, depriving them of role models". (Fox, 2013)

Innumerable studies have shown that both men and women define the achievement-oriented or 'agentic' traits of someone with the "merit" to move up the ladder as aggressive, forceful, independent, and decisive. In these studies, such agentic traits are also assumed to be male characteristics (Heilman, 2001). Women's characteristics are defined as more social- and service-oriented or 'communal' traits – being kind, helpful, sympathetic, and empathetic.

Anecdotally, these 'communal' qualities may go some way to explain why women have been more successful as producers in the screen industry than in the other two creative roles explored in this thesis, directing and writing. Producing requires a leader who can work toward what's best for a

story and a team. Writers and directors, on the other hand, need to be more self-focused in order to work.

Women who defy the expected communal traits of their gender and demonstrate leadership ability through more agentic characteristics and behaviours, however, may face a backlash for behaving against 'type'. This was famously exposed by the Heidi/Howard experiment at Columbia Business School in 2003 (Sandberg, 2013). Students of both genders were asked to appraise the CV of a real-life entrepreneur, described as a successful venture capitalist, one who relied on an outgoing personality and large personal and professional networks. Some students read the CV with the real name of the entrepreneur attached – Heidi Roizen. Others were given the fictional name of Howard on the CV. While the students rated both candidates equally in terms of competence, Howard was perceived as "likeable, genuine and kind" while Heidi was deemed "aggressive, self-promoting and power-hungry" and "not the type of person you would want to hire or work for." (Ely, Ibarra & Kolb, 2011)

If women have their own unconscious bias about what makes a leader, they are likely to hold back from building sufficiently strong networks to support their leadership ambitions. This in turn informs their ability to meet whatever is deemed worthy of 'merit'. As a result, an ambitious woman faces the impossible dilemma. If she does not behave assertively she cannot demonstrate competence as a leader - but if she behaves assertively, she is considered less attractive for advancement. This is a particularly alarming situation in the context of screen, given that almost no attention is being paid to gender in the hiring, funding and promotion of women in the screen industry.

Imposter Syndrome

Women who make it, in the face of all gender odds, are also likely to experience the Imposter Syndrome. The imposter phenomenon was originally identified in 1978 to describe the feelings of fraudulence reported by high achieving women. Imposters doubt their achievements are a result of their ability and instead attribute their success to non-ability factors. "Compared with men, women don't consider themselves as ready for promotions, they predict they'll do worse on tests, and they generally underestimate their abilities." (Kay & Shipman, 2014)

Between the ages of 30 and 39, women are also likely to suffer from a 20% 'confidence gap' about their ability to become a senior business leader, compared to their male colleagues in junior to

senior middle management position. (Sanders, Zehner, Fagg & Hellicar, 2013) Perhaps not surprisingly, "these results come during the time when many professional women are starting to confront the challenges of integrating the demands of work and family" (Ritchie, 2013). If women are imposters, then the cure is not going to be found in a meritocracy. "The imposter syndrome is hard to cure when there are so few female role models and when women have to prove their worth every step of the way." (Pitterman, 2013)

Women are judged differently to men at every step of their career, at work and at home, in business and in the arts, across all sectors and workplaces. Sometimes this prejudice is obvious, sometimes the bias is unconscious. Women's 'failure' to attain equality as directors, producers and writers in Australia film is a result of the apparent meritocracy, which does not reward their lack of talent or experience. Lack of equality is instead based on entrenched discrimination built on familiar models of authority, unconscious bias about what it means to be a leader, and an industry-wide blind spot about gender and equality.

Role models, coaching and programs can help eliminate some of these issues (ILM, 2013). One way of encouraging women to access solutions is mentoring, and its riskier sibling, sponsorship.

Chapter Three – Mentorship

"Learn from the mistakes of others. You can't live long enough to make them all yourself. "

Eleanor Roosevelt

In Homer's Odyssey, Mentor was a wise and faithful male advisor entrusted to protect Odysseus' son, Telemachus, while Odysseus sailed against Troy. However, Mentor was only male in physical form in the time he was Telemachus' advisor – *he* was actually Athena, the female goddess of wisdom, assuming the form of the older man while Odysseus was away. She guided and taught young Telemachus, and encouraged him to travel abroad to find his father.

In the millennia since, the word 'mentor' has come to mean an advisor, usually an older and more experienced guide who teaches and protects a younger, less experienced protégé. Mentoring is a relationship in which hidden talent is nurtured, potential skills are honed and both parties - the mentor and the protégé - learn. There are positive and negative aspects to this relationship, which will be explored in this chapter.

In the professional arena, mentors generally provide two types of functions to their protégés (Ragins & Kram, 2007). The first is career-related, in which a mentor helps a protégé learn more about working in an industry or environment, and prepares them for advancement in their field. In practical terms this includes coaching, sponsoring their progress, and helping to increase their positive exposure to influential colleagues or leaders.

Secondly, a mentor may provide a psychosocial function. Psychosocial functions are more personal, and are built on trust and intimacy. An interpersonal bond helps contribute to the protégé's professional and personal growth, including their sense of identity, self-worth, and self-efficacy. In practical terms this includes listening, offering counsel and friendship, and access to a role-model. Many mentoring dyads will include a combination of both career and psychosocial behaviours and benefits, but career mentoring is the focus of this chapter.

There are four basic categories of career mentorship, defined by various researchers. The first is traditional mentoring, in which an older and wiser mentor uses their knowledge, power and status to assist protégés to develop. One of the major draw cards, and major disadvantages, of traditional mentorship is that it is highly selective and elitist in nature (Byrne, 1991). It is most common for the mentor to initiate a relationship with a protégé of their choosing, who is

recognised as having potential or talent. Consequently, mentors will have natural leanings or biases towards some protégés and not others (Ehrich & Hansford 1999).

Secondly, informal mentoring is a dyad of support that evolves casually. Two parties will be drawn to each other as protégé and mentor, perhaps due to perceived similarities or a willingness to partner up and learn from each other. Informal mentorships are usually without a structure or an intended, planned approach. Meetings happen when both parties are available, and the guidance provided by the mentor is unofficial. Often the two parties involved will not even refer to each other as 'mentor' or 'protégé'. Such relationships can continue for years without any sort of progress charting or formalised goals (O'Brien, Biga, Kessler & Allen, 2010).

The third category of mentoring is professional mentoring, in which mentor and protégé are part of a process which is promoted and encouraged as part of staff or practitioner development (Ehrich & Hansford 1999). Professional mentoring can also involve a trained mentor who is paid to participate in the relationship and provide guidance and support for a fee. The protégé will usually work to a set of structured criteria or goals, and payment will be made by the protégé or the protégé's workplace. The benefit of professional mentoring is that it dismantles the favouritism that prevents people from accessing more informal or traditional mentoring, as the protégé has more influence over the selection process. However, the major disadvantage is that success is not measurable or guaranteed, since such programs are not compulsory but voluntary.

Finally, formal or institutionalised mentorship involves three parties – a chosen protégé, a mentor matched to that protégé's needs, and the organisation that provides the program. The organisation assigns the dyads and maintains the program. In most cases the three parties will agree on a set of explicit goals that genuinely further the protégé's interests as well as the common good of the organisation involved (Mallick, 2008). This form of mentorship is a systemic policy issue and can be a standard part of management practice, making it compulsory and a core component within an organisation.

Mentoring can take many forms, and both experiences and outcomes of the relationship differ enormously. Two aspects of mentoring that demonstrate the width of the relationship are coaching and sponsorship. While there are many variable definitions of these two activities, coaching tends to concentrate on the process of developing specific business skills or competencies with a defined set of criteria and goals (Ehrich & Hansford 1999), while sponsorship is a form of mentorship coupled with advocacy and promotion. Sponsorship is explored in more detail in chapter 4. In brief:

A coach will …	A mentor will…	A sponsor will…
Focus on performance improvement or skill development	Provide career guidance and protection within an organisation or industry	Provide opportunities for growth and specific areas of challenge or improvement
Work with the protégé to set clear, performance-based goals that can realistically be met in a short amount of time	Invite exploration and discovery, often over a longer period of time	"Bet" on their protégé doing well in the opportunity provided and act as backer and referral source
Ask questions that prompt the protégé to discover their own solutions	Model, teach, advise, motivate, and inspire	Push, challenge, practice "tough love" and actively advocate

Adapted from *The Center for Creative Leadership Handbook of Leadership Development (*McCauley, Moxley & Van Velsor, 1998)

Mentoring, coaching and sponsorship are all slightly different, but the mentoring relationship can incorporate elements of all three forms of behaviour. (Klofsten & Oberg, 2012)

Benefits of Mentoring

The benefits of mentoring are difficult to pinpoint precisely because traditional, informal, professional and formal mentoring can be experienced very differently by both mentor and protégé. However, in the literature there tends to be a general acceptance of the benefits of mentoring for both mentors and protégés, in term of both career and psychosocial function.

Innumerable studies have shown that those who have participated in career-related mentoring will achieve greater benefits and career success than those who have not, including increased compensation and more frequent promotions. (Allen, Eby, Poteet, Lentz & Lima, 2004) Other benefits from the literature show that protégés take more pleasure in their work, have greater overall career satisfaction, higher status and an increased likelihood of success (Ehrich & Hansford 1999).

Mentoring helps the protégé learn new skills and become competent in the role they are performing. In the instance of a professional or formal program, 'socialisation' into an organisation's climate and culture may be an additional part of the learning process (Douglas, 1997). Protégés also report feeling more confident as a result of being integrated fully into a new role or organisation (Dunn, Ehrich, Hansford & Mylonas, 1998). As a result of mentoring, protégés

are believed to have a better working knowledge of their organisation and their industry, and the networks within (Wallace, 2001).

The knowledge of industry and socialisation within networks also provides the protégé with access to information that might not be available through more formal channels – insider tips, know-how, helpful gossip and speculation, and informal instruction. These "unwritten rules" of an organisation and industry can be difficult to navigate for someone trying to break into the power network, especially in a small creative industry such as screen. The "unwritten rules" don't pertain to technical ability, industry experience, or creative knowledge. "Rather, they relate to the 'soft' skills that combine to give decision makers an intuitive sense of whether a candidate will succeed at the senior level." (Beeson, 2014).

Protégés also benefit from mentoring when they are given the opportunity to advance professionally by demonstrating their talent and ability to their mentor and other leaders, thereby being able to get ahead and "join the club". A mentor facilitates social integration and promotes a sense of belonging. Mentors that set assignments to challenge their protégés and broaden their skill set, and provide tailored feedback and career strategy advice, are particularly important for career development (Eby & McManus, 2002).

While there is not as much empirical research on the topic, mentoring has been shown to be related to tangible career benefits to the mentor as well as the protégé. This includes increased promotion rates and salary (Allen, 2007). Other benefits include the sharing of useful information, respect from their peers, and a sense of fulfilment and pride (Ensher & Murphy, 2005). It can also result in a rejuvenation of a career, and feelings of satisfaction in assisting another person develop his or her capabilities (Ehrich & Hansford 1999).

Gender and Mentoring

In the seminal text *The Seasons of a Man's Life* (Levinson, 1978), the author emphasised that mentoring was an important mid-career enhancement strategy for men. Belle Rose Ragins (Ragins & Cotton, 1999) later formulated that gender composition is one of the most important components of mentoring, and females who have achieved a high level of success in organisations frequently mention the presence of a mentor as one of the reasons for that success (Ragins, Townsend, & Mattis, 1998)

Mentoring is widely considered a critical component to career success for women, because they often have difficulty building social capital at work, particularly in settings where there are fewer women in leadership (Chrisler & McCreary, 2010). The positive outcomes associated with mentoring (of all kinds) can be instrumental in counteracting some of the reasons behind the lack of female leadership documented in chapter 3.

However, in the report *Women as Mentors: Does She or Doesn't She?* (Neal, Boatman & Miller, 2013), 64% of the women surveyed reported never having had a formal mentor, and 54% of women had only been asked to be a mentor a few times in their career or less, while 20% reported they had never been asked to be a mentor (Neal, Boatman & Miller 2013). According to a LinkedIn report from 2011, 19% of women working professionally in the United States had never had a mentor of any kind (Jasper, 2011). Women's networking organisation Levo League conducted a survey of their users and found that 95% had never sought out a mentor at work. (Dufu, 2013).

Historically women have reported a more difficult time finding mentors than men do (Ragins & Cotton, 1991) and because women generally have less power within organisations and industries than men, it has been suggested that women may not have equal access to these kinds of developmental relationships, particularly with female mentors (Ragins & Cotton, 1999). One reason professional women in male-dominated occupations may face a "glass ceiling" in career advancement is because of the lack of female mentors or role models in more senior positions (Wallace, 2001).

In a sector largely made of solo entrepreneurs, small businesses and mid-sized companies, the Australian screen industry also presents organisational barriers for women finding mentors, including lack of contact with potential candidates. Women may lack interactions with potentially powerful mentors (Noe, 1988) and have limited access to resources that enable them to mentor others.

In a male-dominated screen industry, interpersonal barriers can make finding a mentor more difficult for women. Perceived similarity is an important factor in the mentor-protégé selection process (Ragins, 1989), as is common interests or when the junior members remind the more senior members of themselves (Sandberg, 2013). This can lead to a perpetuating of the "old boys' network" (Ragins & Cotton, 1991). A significant barrier to success is argued to be lack of integration into important social networks or exclusion from this network.

Mentor motivations play a part in the gender imbalance as well. Due to the reciprocity of the relationship, protégés are often selected by mentors based on their previous performance and

future potential, which in turn contributes to the mentor's reputation. Protégés involved in important and visible projects, such as a feature film, are more likely to be selected for mentoring (Ragin & Cotton, 1991), which led Sheryl Sandberg in *Lean In* to suggest that women are consequently getting the 'wrong message' about mentoring. "We need to stop telling them, 'Get a mentor and you will excel.' Instead, we need to tell them, 'Excel and you will get a mentor.'" (Sandberg, 2013) However, getting to play a role in 'important and visible projects' is more difficult for women in the first place. If women tend to occupy lower-level positions in the screen industry, they may be less likely than their male peers to get involved with projects that lead to mentoring relationships, or to attract the attention of a mentor.

Women have been proven to benefit from having a male mentor (Wallace, 2001), and mixed mentoring relationships (where mentor and protégé are different genders or ethnicity) are more likely to provide career benefits (MLDC, 2010). However, unconscious bias and gender stereotypes can negatively impact women as potential protégés. Men may not want to mentor a woman because of widely held perceptions that women lack managerial skills and are unsuitable for challenging positions (Noe, 1988). Even men who espouse equality in the workplace may perceive women as a greater risk for senior positions, fail to give women tough feedback that would help them grow, or hesitate to offer working mothers opportunities that come with more travel and stress (Barsh & Yee, 2011).

A male mentor with a female protégé also introduces the delicate but inevitable issue of sexuality. Sexual involvement, real or perceived, can produce anxiety and confusion between mentor and protégé, and concern about the perception of the dyad from outsiders. Even the possibility of unfounded rumours can deter people from becoming involved in cross-gender mentoring relationships (Clawson and Kram, 1984). In *The Sponsor Effect* (Hewlett, Peraino, Sherbin & Sumberg, 2010) 64% of senior men reported being hesitant to have a one-on-one meeting with a more junior woman. For their part, 50% of junior women avoided close contact with senior men, and Ragins and Cotton (1991) found that women may be reluctant to initiate cross-gender mentoring relationship for fear it will be misconstrued as a sexual advance. In a sinister addition, "the view of women as sexual objects and inherent power differentials in the mentee/mentor relationship may place mentees at risk for harassment" (Hedrick, 2005). Some women are being shut out of the mentoring process entirely, if the proposed mentor is male, due to perceptions or demonstrations of impropriety – an assumption that is not impacting on male protégés in the

same way. Sexual indiscretions are usually tolerated in men, but held against women (Hewlett, 2010; Hedrick, 2005).

Sadly, the difficulties that women have in finding an appropriate mentor, and establishing a mentoring relationship, can create a negative cycle that continues to disenfranchise women who want to lead. The most tested and consistent finding in the literature is that previous experience as a mentor, and previous experience as a protégé, both positively relate to future willingness to mentor others (Allen, 2007). If women are unable to find mentors, they are less likely to mentor others, and the vicious circle continues.

Mentoring is also important for women as mentors, as it can buffer women from discrimination and help them get on the "fast track" to advancement (Ragins & Cotton, 1991). 72% of state winners and finalists of the 2010 Telstra Business Women's Awards nominated mentoring programs for talented young women as vital for greater gender equality, and more valuable than quotas in improving gender equality at senior levels of business. 83% of the women surveyed said mentoring should be an essential component of a positive business culture. (Telstra Business Women's Awards, 2010)

Mentoring can also help women to negotiate the myth of meritocracy by giving them a guide to the 'unwritten rules' of an organisation or industry. In 2010 the non-profit organisation Catalyst Inc. found that women, and especially women of colour, cited seeking visibility as the best strategy for seeking advancement in the face of unwritten rules – and in terms of learning about advancement strategies in the workplace, participants rated seeking out mentors and soliciting feedback as their most used strategy (Sabattini & Dinolfo 2010).

Mentors can also help women overcome the "confidence gap" that results in being less likely to self-promote for jobs than men, and less likely to seek out mentors to give them either career or psychosocial support (Kay & Shipman 2014). Women who challenge this double bind and find a mentor are more likely to break the vicious cycle, because the career-related aspects of mentoring are proven to generate positive attitudes regarding a job and career. By challenging and enriching careers, which in turn enhances protégé job satisfaction, a woman is more likely to seek out mentors and be a mentor herself.

The Invisible Middle can particularly benefit from mentoring. Not only can mentors provide both career and psychosocial support, a woman who has successfully juggled the same barriers that prevent women from attaining leadership can become a role model for a woman struggling to find her way during the perilous middle years of a career. In the 2012 Australia Council research report

Women in Theatre, the surveyed professionals contributing to the report stressed the importance of recognising and developing mid-career artists. "There was a sense that a lot of attention has been paid in recent years to nurturing emerging artists, but that there needs to be more support for mid-career artists to build a reputation and to develop their voice, their craft, and their understanding of the nature of the audience. Investment in early career artists is wasted if there is no follow through" (Lally & Miller, 2012).

Mentoring has been shown to help women specifically with issues of leadership when they are in a position to seek career advancement. Ragins and McFarlin (1990) found that female mentors of female protégés served a role modelling function, which was found to be very important for female protégés in learning how to cope with work/family conflict, discrimination, social isolation and gender barriers to advancement – an issue of particular concern to the Invisible Middle.

Mentoring and Screen

There are multitudes of mentoring programs available to women in screen, in Australia and overseas, which will be examined in Chapter 5. In the Sundance and Women in Film Los Angeles report *Exploring the Barriers and Opportunities for Independent Women Filmmakers* (Smith, Pieper & Choueiti, 2012), individuals surveyed mentioned mentoring and encouragement for early career women as one of three key ways to change the status quo. French (2012) also suggested programs to encourage women to understand their leadership potential and mentoring (including mentoring of women by men), would be significant in "fostering women's belief in themselves, as well as developing a larger picture of women's work". Producer Sue Maslin, in her presentation to WIFT Victoria titled *Women and Leadership in the Australian Screen Industry*, also indentified several ways that women could have increased representation as leaders in the Australian screen industry, including mentorships (Maslin, 2012).

However, there is no data or empirical evidence to prove that mentoring in any form benefits women in the screen industry, or any creative industry in Australia. Anecdotally, though, the number of programs implemented across the world by a vast array of different screen organisations shows that there is generally accepted belief in the idea of mentoring as a way of assisting women in film, even if the benefits or downsides have not yet been proven. Individual practitioners also regularly cite their mentors as being instrumental in helping them progress their careers (THR Staff , 2013).

The Downsides

There is some evidence to suggest a 'darker side of mentoring' (Long, 1997), which indicates that there are various conditions where the relationship can be detrimental to both protégé and mentor. However, as the relationship can be very different depending on what form of mentoring is undertaken, absolute evidence is hard to find. Long (1997) describes a multitude of potential issues in relation to mentoring, including a lack of understanding and training about the mentoring process, the unsuccessful matching of and poor relationships between mentors and mentees, the time consuming nature of the process, and the lack of access to mentoring for women and minority groups.

Informal mentoring dyads can also suffer from a number of issues (Chandler, Eby & McManus, 2010). Manipulative mentors who bully or delegate work inappropriately, protégés who manipulate the relationship to harm or sabotage their mentor, and emotional issues of jealousy can all create problems in the mentoring relationship.

Professional and formal mentoring programs have also been critiqued by a number of studies, including Murray and Owen (1991). If there are few opportunities for advancement in an organisation or industry, the implementation of a mentoring program can be a waste of time and resources – a potential critique for mentoring programs in the film industry. Other issues occur when there is no organisational commitment to a program, the program is poorly managed, or there is a relative lack of hard data justifying the effectiveness of a program. Other researchers (Ehrich & Hansford 1999) refer to the creation of a program built around favouritism and the resentment that may arise among nonparticipants, unrealistic promotional expectations, over-dependence on the mentor, and the lack of a sound theoretical base for programs.

Another key criticism of mentoring is that it doesn't go far enough. Catalyst's report, *Mentoring: Necessary but Insufficient for Advancement* (Carter, 2010), finds that mentors aren't enough for women in particular. The survey of 4000 respondents found that men benefit more than women from traditional mentoring, men's mentors had more clout in positively impacting their protégés career, and mentors help narrow but do not close the career advancement gender gap. New research indicates that sponsorship, advocacy by someone highly placed in an organisation or industry, is a much more effective way for women to achieve positions of leadership and redress the gender imbalance of male dominated fields like the Australian screen industry.

Chapter Four – Sponsorship

"A sponsor doesn't just believe in you; a sponsor believes in you more than you believe in yourself."

Sylvia Ann Hewitt

A sponsor is a mentor with power within an organisation or industry who goes beyond giving feedback and advice, and uses their authority to advocate for their protégé in practical, demonstrable ways (Ibarra, Carter & Silva, 2010). While a mentor offers support and advice, a sponsor offers influence and incentive. A mentor can guide, while a sponsor amplifies that guidance by making a protégé visible and attractive to peers and other leaders.
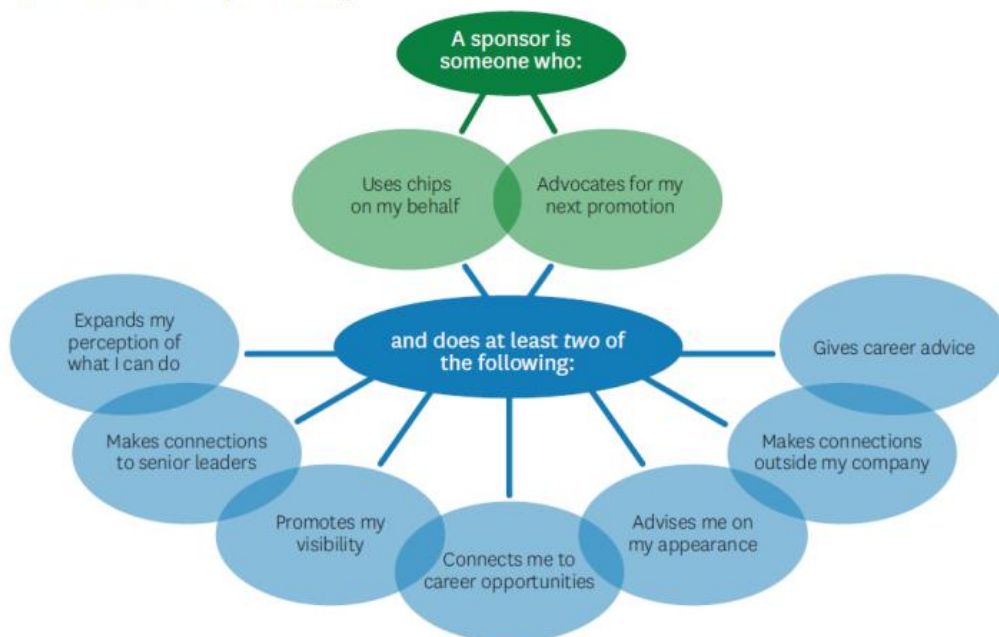
The Sponsor Effect: Breaking Through the Last Glass Ceiling. Hewlett, Peraino, Sherbin & Sumberg, 2010.

Protégés can benefit from sponsorship in a number of ways beyond just advocacy. According to a survey of more than 4000 professionals (Hewlett, Marshall & Sherbin, 2014), sponsors offer vision, a support for ambition and the tactical means of realising a protégé's goals. In the 2010 report *The Sponsor Effect: Breaking Through the Last Glass Ceiling* (Hewlett, Peraino, Sherbin & Sumberg, 2010), the authors found that having a sponsor can benefit "virtually every aspect of an

employee's career, boosting the ability to ask for and get raises and promotions and find satisfaction at work".

In the report, mid-career managers were asked what they hoped for in a sponsor. 74% said they wanted honest feedback, specifically by suggesting ways to narrow gaps in skills and experience. Other interviewees mentioned looking to their sponsors for tips on how to look and act like a leader, opportunities for visibility, and a willingness to protect and defend them if necessary.

In the Catalyst report *Sponsoring Women to Success* (Foust-Cummings, Dinolfo & Kohler, 2011), it was found that sponsors also benefit their protégés by preparing them for complex new roles or challenges. They can help strategically plan and executive their career development, and push them to achieve, beyond their own expectations. Overall, sponsors give high performers, or those with the potential to do well, a greater opportunity to excel.

In return, sponsors require commitment from their protégé. Harvard Business Review (Hewlett, Marshall & Sherbin, 2014) found that the majority of sponsors want their protégés to "assume responsibility and be self-directed," as well as "deliver 110%". Catalyst found that the four critical features of the relationship from the sponsors'' point of view trust, honesty, communication and commitment (Foust-Cummings, Dinolfo & Kohler, 2011).

Being a sponsor is a risky proposition. While a mentor can be supportive behind the scenes, the hallmark of sponsorship is its inherently public nature (Hewlett, Peraino, Sherbin & Sumberg, 2010). Sponsors help their protégés publically in two main ways – by putting their own reputation on the line for them, and taking responsibility for their success or failure. If a protégé disappoints or fails after a sponsor has used their power and influence to create opportunities, the sponsor's name and reputation can be tarnished. The more public a sponsor's advocacy, then the bigger the potential for a fall from grace for both parties, all of which heightens the risk.

However, there are significant benefits for sponsors as well. The public nature of the relationship means that sponsors are rewarded by advocating an exceptional person who meets their potential. By bestowing attention and support upon a protégé, a sponsor can promote, prepare, push and protect someone to the highest positions of leadership. If the protégé succeeds, this reflects well on the sponsor and the relationship is strengthened further.

Similarly, sponsors benefit by fostering talent and learning from their protégés. The interconnected nature of a small industry like screen means that a loyal and well connected protégé can benefit a sponsor by including them in a wider network. The unpredictable nature of

a film career means that supporting people on their way up as a sponsor can be invaluable when your own career needs similar support in the future.

Women and Sponsorship

In the article *Why Men Still Get More Promotions than Women*, Ibarra et al (2010) found that "high-potential women are over-mentored and under-sponsored relative to their male peers—and that they are not advancing". They also found that without sponsorship, "women not only are less likely than men to be appointed to top roles but may also be more reluctant to go for them".

Sponsorship works particularly well for women for a number of reasons. Firstly, it can help with the 'double bind' issues (Sabattini, 2007). If a woman advocates for herself she is perceived as being unlikeable, and can be penalised for doing so (Rudman & Glick, 2001) - having a sponsor means someone will speak up on her behalf, which can reduce any backlash effect.

Sponsorship also helps to level the playing field. The unwritten rules that can plague a woman's ascent can be explained by a sponsor, and the unconscious bias experienced by women can be mitigated by having a powerful advocate, particularly if that sponsor is male. "By providing women the authoritative voice they lack, the backroom access they're often denied, and the advocacy they desperately need, sponsorship truly levels the playing field". (Hewlett, Peraino, Sherbin & Sumberg, 2010)

In addition, a sponsor can cut through the imposter syndrome. If a powerful advocate believes in a woman, and is prepared to back her publically, perhaps she is not an imposter after all. The 'confidence gap' (Shipman & Kay, 2014) can be closed. Sponsorship has the potential to break down a range of barriers that women face from both above and below, as they seek to be both included in influential networks and seen as leaders (Workplace Gender Equality Agency, 2013).

However, according to *The Sponsor Effect* (Hewlett, Peraino, Sherbin & Sumberg, 2010) despite the obvious benefits to be found in a sponsor, the majority of ambitious women underestimate the pivotal role sponsorship plays in their advancement in the workplace and across their industry. 77% of women surveyed believed that the driving force behind a promotion is a combination of hard work, long hours, and education credentials. Of the women who had advanced, only 48% credited personal connections.

The vast majority of men (83%), however, credited relationships for their promotion, and demonstrated understanding that "who you know" is as important, if not more so, than doing a good job. Even more than "who you know" is the importance of "who knows you". Sponsors tend

to find their protégés directly, usually organically through work projects, recommendations, and informal networking (Zimmermann, 2013). Women need better access to sponsors, and the chance to prove themselves, if they are to reap the rewards that sponsorship can bring.

Relationship Capital

In the currency of favours owed and granted, common to screen and the creative industries, the relationship capital that is built through sponsorship cannot be overstated. Relationship capital is an aspect of intellectual capital, and refers to the worth and investment built into an organisation (or small industry) by the network of people that represent customers, partners, suppliers, employees and peers. The stronger and more inter-twined the network, the better the good will that generates, the greater the worth of relationship capital.

According to Hewlett et al, women excel at managing and investing in relationships, but often fail to grasp the importance of relationship capital. They will happily do favours for other people, but show reluctance to ask for favours in return, "lest they appear to be self-serving—or for fear they'll be turned down. Many feel that getting ahead based on "who you know" is an inherently unfair - even a 'dirty' - tactic". (Hewlett, Peraino, Sherbin & Sumberg, 2010)

Men, on the other hand, are less likely to perceive this as an issue. Sam Mostyn, the AFL's first female Commissioner, reports in W*omen in Leadership: Engaging Australian business* (Ernst & Young, 2014) that the Australian concept of mateship leads to different outcomes between the genders. "When men define a relationship as mateship, women tend to define as friendship. Mateship is like a contract to care for, look after and, in the business environment, recruit and promote those like you. Women's concept of friendship is more of providing emotional support and not so involved in outward demonstrations of support." Women seek out opportunity based on merit, rather than advocacy, which generates the paradox that women can find themselves surrounded by good will and supporters but lacking in advancement.

More seriously, this aversion to the quid pro quo of relationship capital can manifest as a lack of leadership skill. Being a team player is one thing, but advancing in any industry means demonstrating the ability to lead. Cultivating relationships and mobilising supporters for career gain is an anathema to many women, and seems to be the antithesis of good leadership, but ironically the reverse is often true. The practice of seeking out powerful people, understanding the currency of favours owed and granted, and having the ability to balance the quid pro quo are all

inherent to the demonstration of leadership potential. Women who do not act on the power of relationship capital can find themselves stuck under the glass ceiling.

By clinging to the hope that merit will somehow help them out of the power pipeline, and avoiding the development of relationships for career gain, women get stuck in the middle. At this point, and if she can find one, a sponsor can mitigate the imbalance because the relationship features both aspects of the paradox and is at once altruistic and beneficial to both parties. The sponsor recognises the protégé's merit in terms of talent and potential, and is compelled to offer their advocacy, which will not only help the protégé but allow the sponsor to publically benefit from the association.

Sponsorship in Film

Many successful women in the screen industry who cite mentors as their career support mechanism are in fact referring to sponsors. Gale Anne Hurd, producer of the Terminator films and now a mentor herself, was the protégé of B movie producer Roger Corman. She was originally his personal assistant on the film *Humanoids from the Deep* (1980) before working her way through the ranks of his production company, New World Films. Corman regularly hired women as writers, directors, producers and editors for his company New World Films (Neumer, 2014).

A more modern example of a sponsor for female filmmakers is Judd Apatow. The producer has regularly hired and sponsored talented women, including Kristen Wiig and Annie Mumulo (writers of *Bridesmaids*), Lena Dunham (creator of *Girls*) and the actress Melissa McCarthy (Bartyzel, 2014) By the definitions outlined in this chapter, both men are more sponsor than mentor.

Gillian Armstrong, arguably Australia's most successful directors, cites among her mentors Fred Schepisi, her assessor at Swinburne when she was a film school student. He offered her a job at Film House, and she was a "tea girl" on his first feature. She also cites editors Bill Stacey and Nicholas Beauman, both of whom gave her jobs as an assistant and recommended her for further work (Siemienowicz, 2010). In the limited cases supplied here, and perhaps not surprisingly, all the sponsors mentioned are male.

Sponsoring the Invisible Middle

For a woman in her middle carer, looking to take the next step, relationship capital becomes a compelling asset and connections become crucial. "The pyramid is narrower, where just being good at what you do is not sufficient. If you don't have somebody who can speak on your behalf and has high power, your chances of breaking through are greatly diminished." (Nayyar, 2006) It would seem logical that, due to the risky nature of the relationship, sponsorship is more likely to occur for women once they have developed in their chosen career. The risk to a sponsor is mitigated if a protégé has experience behind her, and has demonstrated both previous talent and the potential for development.

Paradoxically, though, mid-career women are still seen as risky – the issue is no longer their lack of experience, but their potential to take a career break. It is this risk that makes women less likely to receive sponsorship right at the point where they would benefit from it the most, as they shoot for the highest-level jobs (Ibarra, Carter & Silva, 2010) Women who are already mothers are even more likely to experience career stall because of the perception that a mother is less available, less flexible, and less dedicated to their work. This "cascade of assumptions" can label a mid-career parent as unsuitable for the step into creative leadership. (Hewlett, Peraino, Sherbin & Sumberg, 2010)

Programs

A solution to many of the pitfalls that women face when trying to find a sponsor can be overcome through formal sponsorship programs, provided by industry and workplaces. The choice of protégé, the awkwardness of approaching a potential sponsor, even the potential implications of impropriety between a female protégé and a male sponsor can be overcome through transparent and formalised programs.

Ibarra et al (2010) define "sponsorship that works" as a program that seeks to:

- Clarify and communicate the intent of the program;
- Select and match sponsors and high-potential women in light of program goals;
- Coordinate efforts and involve direct supervisors;
- Train sponsors on the complexities of gender and leadership, and;
- Hold sponsors accountable. (Ibarra, Carter & Silva, 2010)

For example, Price Waterhouse Coopers maintains a sponsor program, whereby a senior-level executive serves as an employee's advocate and guides that candidate toward nomination for partner (WorkingMother.com, 2014). Companies such as Telstra and the Commonwealth Bank work in partnership with Chief Executive Women (CEW) to develop tailored sponsorship programs. CEW is an organisation representing Australia's most senior women leaders from the corporate, public service, academic and not-for-profit sectors. (cew.org.au, 2014)

While sponsorship programs can work inside large structured corporations, seeing how they can benefit women in an industry wide context is less obvious. There is also little research at this stage to properly support the idea that sponsorship is a definite way of helping women in the screen industry. However, globally there are multiple mentorship programs for women in film that have sponsorship characteristics according to Ibarra et al, which are explored in more detail in Chapter Five.

Chapter Five – Programs in Screen

'You simply can't train a producer in film, therefore mentoring is important.'

Program Coordinator, Australian Film Commission (2002)

Programs in General

Mentorship programs for women, implemented by screen organisations, are plentiful across the world, as all countries suffer a significant gender gap in certain creative and technical roles. This chapter outlines a variety of these programs that offer a sponsorship model, and where possible an evaluation of whether or not the programs were successful in assisting women to advance their careers or professional development as a result. It should be noted again, however, that so far no empirical data exists to prove that such programs are beneficial or detrimental (or of no consequence) to either the protégés or mentors involved.

While there is an array of organisations implementing mentoring programs for women, the most active organisation in this area is Women In Film and Television International. WIFTI was established in 1979 and is a global network comprised of forty Women In Film chapters worldwide, including NSW, South Australia and Victoria in Australia. It has over 13,000 members in total, and some chapters have up to 20% male membership.

WIFTI is dedicated to "advancing professional development and achievement for women working in all areas of film, video, and other screen-based media" (Savoie, 2014) and the various schemes are "designed to increase women's skills, knowledge, networks and confidence as they build their careers" (wiftnz.org.nz, 2014). While each country and chapter differs, WIFTI is largely run by volunteers, and is usually not funded in the majority by government or industry.

Some of the global WIFTI chapters that have run mentoring programs recently include:

- WIFT NSW, which ran the program Media Mentorship for Women (MMW) in 2008. MMW established one-to-one mentor relationships between industry professionals and emerging women filmmakers who are seeking to further their careers in key technical areas in which women are consistently under represented (Tiwary, 2008).

- WIFT NZ, which offered a specialist national mentoring programme in 2008 that matched up members with experienced practitioners for twelve hours of paid mentoring over an eight month period (wiftnz.org.nz, 2014);

- WIFT Brasil has offered screenwriting workshops and mentorship since 2012 (wiftbrasil.org, 2014);

- WIFT India matches members with experienced practitioners for mentoring over a six month period or as designed by the mentor. Mentors include directors, editors and cinematographers (wift.co.in, 2014);

- WIFT in Iceland and Norway have partnered to present the Doris Film project, a screenplay competition that results in short films made by women, which are then used to educate primary school children and improve knowledge about gender and visual literacy (Wift Iceland, 2014)

While mentorship is clearly beneficial, as outlined in Chapter 4 it is sponsorship that provides the best chances for women to progress up the ladder of their film careers. The following is a selection of the programs that are based in mentoring, but have additional aspects that create sponsor relationships and advocated opportunities.

Australian Programs

While not strictly a sponsorship program, the Natalie Miller Fellowship awards an annual grant of up to $10,000 to a woman who has demonstrated initiative, entrepreneurship and excellence working in the Australian screen industries, and who has a professional development proposal that would assist her to reach her full potential in any field of the screen industry (Natalie Miller Fellowship Inc, 2014). It is a grant designed to urge women to take up position of leadership in the screen industry, which can include educational programs such as internships, attachments or secondments. It is named for Natalie Miller AO, the first independent woman distributor in Australia and co-founder of Cinema Nova in Melbourne.

The fellowship acts in part as a sponsorship opportunity for women by publically enhancing their reputation and providing them with practical means to advocate for their own career development. Previous winners are Rachel Okine (2012) and Harriet Pike (2013). Pike reported that her grant allowed her travel to the University of Oxford to attend the intensive High Performance Leadership Programme at the Said Business School, which gave her "an unprecedented opportunity to gain world class knowledge and expertise, it also gave me the confidence and the vision to see my own career and our industry in a completely different light." (mUmBRELLA, 2014)

British Programs

Operating since 2010, Women in Film & TV (UK) supports a Mentoring Scheme designed for mid-career women who have more than five years experience working in TV, film or digital production – although the majority have between ten to fifteen years experience. The scheme was set up in response to a survey by Creative Skillset (the UK film and TV industry training body), which revealed 4,950 women had lost their jobs in the screen industry since the start of the recession compared to 650 men (McMahon, 2010).

The scheme is open to any woman working in editorial, craft or business roles in any genre, and includes television and film. Over six months, the selected participants receive six hours of mentoring contact with an experienced industry figure (male or female), combined with an intensive programme of seminars, training workshops and networking opportunities (wftv.org.uk, 2014). Sponsorship exists in the form of advocacy for the participants, created by the wide support the scheme receives from by industry and government through EON Productions, Creative Skillset, the UK Film Council, BBC and Channel 4 (Kanter, 2010).

Eighty women have so far have completed the program since 2010, and the scheme is monitored on a regular basis. Feedback forms show that the mentoring scheme, from year to year, is closer and closer to the "100% success rate that WFTV has set as its goal". Also, based on the results of these forms, "participants had gained more confidence and improved their networking skills and knowledge; some of them had been able to progress in their career in the film and television industry". (EIGE, 2014)

Bird's Eye View is a United Kingdom based charity which aims to develop and support women in the UK film industry. The organisation launched *She Writes* in 2010*,* a training lab for emerging female screenwriters in partnership with training providers The Script Factory. The year long course is aimed specifically at female screenwriters and designed to push their careers up a level to feature film screenwriting. The participants are given advice and networking opportunities from a high-profile industry mentor who publically advocates on their behalf (Polacek, 2010).

Finally, digital culture agency Lighthouse hosts Guiding Lights, the UK film industry's most prestigious scheme. Started in 2006, the programme supports upcoming filmmakers and professionals through high-level mentoring, complemented by a range of training and networking activities. Each mentee is matched with a leading film industry professional who provides advice and guidance over a 9-month period. Previous mentors include Danny Boyle, Barbara Broccoli, Sam Mendes, Nira Park, Paul Greengrass, Abi Morgan and Kenneth Branagh. Although

not specifically targeted to women, Guiding Lights is committed to promoting diversity within the film industry and 54% of the protégés selected since 2006 have been female. (Cenatus, 2014)

European Programs

Europe is a very large territory, but once again WIFTI is active in several countries including Denmark, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Sweden, and France. However, a new, large organisation is the European Women's Audiovisual Network (EWA), which was deliberately established to combat the discrepancy between the equal numbers of women participating in film school, with the result that "in Europe, one in every ten films you'll see at the box office will have been directed by a woman" (EWA, 2014).

In order to correct gender inequality in employment, EWA supports several objectives including training and advocacy. EWA is also encouraging film funds to carry out data monitoring to reduce the fragmentation and lack of a harmonised approach towards gender equality in the European screen industry. The organisation is yet to launch any sponsorship programs, but is engaging in policy dialogue with government agencies and industry bodies. It is hoped this knowledge accumulation and sharing will lead to broader and more influential programs across the European Union, including mentoring and funding.

Canadian Programs

WIFT in Canada promotes a wide range of mentoring programs with a sponsorship edge. In Vancouver, the WIFTV Whistler Film Festival Mentorship gives one member of WIFTV who is a producer, director or writer the opportunity to attend the Whistler Film Festival (WFF) in British Columbia. The participant receives a WFF Premium Industry Pass as well as a pre-festival consultation with an experienced film professional to help them prepare for the film marketplace (womeninfilm.ca, 2014)

The WIFTV Banff World Media Festival Mentorship gives a WIFTV producer, director or writer the opportunity to attend the Banff World Media Festival, including a pre-festival consultation with an experienced television producer or development executive and a seat at WIFTV's pre-festival pitching workshop (womeninfilm.ca, 2014).

In Toronto, the Liaison of Independent Filmmakers of Toronto (LIFT) created a program in 2014 for eight women filmmakers to participate in Filmmentor, a five-month intensive film mentorship

program. The group participated in a series of hands-on technical and creative workshops taught by female film professionals, and in a sponsorship edge will make two short narrative film projects. The Filmmentor program was "a response to the massive gender inequities in the Canadian Film Industry" and is funded with a grant from the Canada Council for the Arts (lift.ca, 2014).

United States Programs

There is a profusion of mentoring programs for women in the United States, many run by the twenty-three Women In Film (WIF) chapters in various cities. WIF states that "Mentoring is a crucial part of Women In Film's mission, and we believe it is incumbent upon us to ensure that new generations of women in film, television and new media are able to take advantage of the experiences of those who are currently working in the business" (Kay D, 2014). In particular, WIF Los Angeles and WIFT New York (wif.org, 2014; NYwift.org, 2014) offer internship and speed mentoring programs.

WIFV Washington DC is noteworthy as it offers a practical sponsorship benefit to its mentoring program. Carolyn's First Decade Fund (Houghton, 2014) was established in memory of Carolyn Projansky, and helps advance the careers of individuals in their first decade of working as media professionals. In addition to one year of mentoring either by a Fund review panellists or another leading professional in the media industry, recipients receive a grant of up to $500 to be used for professional training related to career advancement.

One of the oldest sponsorship schemes in the world is the American Film Institute's Directing Workshop for Women (DWW), turning forty years old in 2014 (afi.com, 2014). The DWW is a hands-on program committed to educating and mentoring directors to increase the number of women working professionally in screen directing.

- Each selected participant attends an intensive training course in narrative filmmaking, and is required to complete a short film or series by the end of the program.
- Participants work remotely on developing their screenplays with AFI faculty mentors, and are given classes on fundraising for their projects.
- Each filmmaker raises their own budget and must find their own crew, but the AFI provides lighting, grip and camera equipment that can be used for a five-day shoot. AFI also provides limited insurance.
- Eligible Participants' work is screened in an annual Showcase for agents, managers, producers and executives at the DGA Theater in Los Angeles.

Over 275 women have taken part in the DWW since the program was launched and 25% have become professional directors, including Maya Angelou, Randa Haines, Marianne Jean-Baptiste, Lesli Linka Glatter and Anne Bancroft.

Another long-running 'incubator' program is Chicken & Egg Pictures (chickeneggpics.org, 2014), which since 2005 has raised and distributed more than $2.8 million to 140 woman-led film documentary projects in New York and San Francisco. Filmmakers are given seed money or funding to push a nearly completed project over the finish line, and mentorship in the editing suite to help them market the finished project. Recipient Martha Shane reported that "the financial support was great, but the creative and emotional support was almost even better." Two Chicken & Egg-backed films have won Oscars for short documentary, and two others were Oscar nominees (Sheppard, 2013). One of Chicken & Egg partnership programs is Gamechanger films, which provides financing exclusively for films directed by women (Zeitchik, 2013).

A newer program using the sponsorship model is the Women Filmmakers Initiative (sundance.org, 2014), launched in 2012. As a direct result of the Sundance and WIFT Los Angeles report *Exploring the Barriers and Opportunities for Independent Women Filmmakers* (Smith, Pieper & Choueiti, 2013), the program supports US-based independent women film producers and directors in advancing their careers to the next level. Each fellow of the program is matched with a film industry leader in a year-long mentorship tailored to the mentee's specific goals. For practical experience, filmmakers also collaborate with companies to create material such as a widely-seen Dove "redefining beauty" campaign (Redefine Beauty Campaign, 2013). Allied organisations such as the Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media also lend counsel to the projects and mentees. Mentors on the 2012-2013 program include Gale Anne Hurd, Paula Wagner, Catherine Hardwicke and Morgan Spurlock.

To measure the success of the program, mentees provide a written progress report three times during the Mentorship Year, to track their progress in alignment with their stated objectives. They also meet twice with each other and with Sundance staff advisors. "During these discussions, mentees gain insights from the experiences shared" (sundance.org, 2014).

The CineCause Women's Initiative is the newest program, launched in September 2014. It provides women directors with financial, professional, technological, and distribution support (Kang, 2014). Producer Gina Belafonte, head of Killer Films Christine Vachon, and writer-director-actress Jocelyn Towne appeared at the inaugural Fueling Female Filmmakers (F3) event in Hollywood to launch the program. The Initiative will include project pitches and discussions with female industry

professionals about financing, distribution modelling and effective industry networking. Five filmmakers will then be awarded financial support and/or private meetings with distributors.

#HireTheseWomen

The most recent sponsorship scheme was triggered directly by outrage over the lack of women working in the Hollywood system as leaders. On June 24th 2014 *Women and Hollywood* blog released an infographic that visually represented the fact that 4.7% of films released by a major studio were directed by women (Silverstein, 2014a). In response, movie critic Miriam Bale took to Twitter with the hashtag #hirethesewomen to promote women that she thought should be directing films. She stated that she "was so outraged... As I film critic and programmer I know or have written about so many talented women that would love a studio gig" (Seuss, 2014).

The resulting #hirethesewomen explosion on Twitter (twitter.com, 2014b) included suggestions for women directors from an array of contributors, including prominent organisation such as the Geena Davis Institute and WIFT (Rose, 2014). Unlike the Australian example of twitter outrage mentioned in Chapter 1, in the US the industry took notice. On 1st July 2014 21st Century Fox announced a new mentoring program to correct gender imbalance called the Fox Global Directors Initiative. The program will bolster the presence of women directors across all media platforms through an intensive lab, lengthy formalised mentoring, and production support and funding. (Lang, 2014)

The Fox Global Directors Initiative will select twenty participants for the program, who will join a five-week director's lab. During the Directors Lab, the participants will attend interactive lab sessions with established directors and creative executives to discuss case studies of their films and/or television series, gain an insider view of their career trajectories and analyse their respective creative processes. Five will then be elected to enter a 10-month mentoring program culminating in Fox producing a short film directed by each finalist. This mirrors a similar program currently in place for writers (Fox Writers Intensive, 2014)

Chapter Six – Where To From Here?

"If there's specific resistance to women making movies, I just choose to ignore that as an obstacle for two reasons: I can't change my gender, and I refuse to stop making movies."

- Kathryn Bigelow (Perry, 1990)

Women have been trying since the Australian film screen industry began to find equality in the roles of creative leadership. In the century since, women have become qualified and entered the industry in equal numbers. They've made films and demonstrated their ability. They've achieved 51.5% of the workforce. They're ready and waiting to lead – but they remain stuck in the middle of the ladder. Worse, they leave the industry and pursue other paths, creating a hole in our film culture that cannot be measured. The numbers of women in creative leadership have stagnated, or they are declining, and this is unacceptable.

The issue of gender equality in Australia has also stagnated. Bettering the position of women in any sector, or on any issue, is not seen as a human rights issue, an intellectual capital issue or an economic growth issue. Instead, the lack of women's access to equality has existed in a vacuum. In a broader sense the promotion of women is seen as something society *should* be doing, rather than being seen as inextricably linked to human rights and broader social and economic imperatives. (Ransom, 2013)

A system based on the myth of meritocracy is partly to blame. When an industry, organisation or management team believes that everyone gets a "fair go", there is no motivation or incentive to change. As a result, "the scores of women who cluster below the glass ceiling... must find it difficult to avoid the conclusion that their gender means they lack a set of essential skills, regardless of their experience or qualifications" (Fox, 2013).

In the film industry, the women who have made it through to positions of creative leadership clearly demonstrate that this is not the case. Of the top 50 Australian feature films of all time, ranked by total reported gross Australian box office as at January 2014 (Screen Australia, 2014), 22 had a female writer, director and/or producer. *The Piano*, *Bran Nue Dae* and *Looking for Alibrandi* had women in all three roles, and half of the top ten had a female producer. Since 1976, women have won best director in the AFI/AACTA awards eight times (Hawker, 2014). Given that women make up a significant minority in those roles in total, the impact women are having on the creative

leadership aspects of industry demonstrates that a lack of skill is not the problem. In fact, it seems women are punching above their weight.

Where We Are Now

Although the industry programs developed and implemented by WIFTI around the world are admirable, expecting an unfunded organisation staffed by volunteers to take responsibility for addressing the gender imbalance in screen leadership is unreasonable. Moreover, making a women's organisation take responsibility for the solution implies that women are responsible for the problem. To paraphrase Sex Discrimination Commissioner Elizabeth Broderick, it's time to stop asking what's wrong with women that they're not making it to the top, and start asking what's wrong with an industry that can't retain and promote women (Broderick, 2011). Responsibility for change needs to be carried by both men and women, at all levels, if a solution is to be found.

The Workplace Gender Equality Agency is charged with promoting and improving gender equality in Australian workplaces, and part of that function includes enforced reporting on workplace gender equality in non-public sector organisations with 100 or more employees. One of the requirements is for organisations to implement formal policies or strategies that specifically support gender equality, including to "implement mentoring and/or sponsorship programs". (Workplace Gender Equality Agency, 2014)

The screen industry is not usually bound by these regulations, as only 5% of businesses in the film, television and radio sector of the creative industries have between 20 and 199 employees, and less than 1% had 200 employees or over (Creative Industries Innovation Centre. 2013). Industry bodies and representational professional organisations have also not seen fit to implement any mentoring programs specifically for women in recent years, despite the release of an infographic by Screen Australia in March 2013 detailing the gender imbalance in all areas of the Australian screen industry (Screen Australia, 2013b). Consequently, there are no formal or professional sponsorship programs for women working in Australian film.

The McDonagh Fund

As proposed by this thesis, mentoring and sponsorship are a way of implementing change, and formalising a program that encourages and supports women to take leadership roles is a test to find a solution – The McDonagh Fund.

The McDonagh Fund is named for three sisters – Isabel, Paulette and Phyllis – all filmmakers, and the first Australian women to form their own independent film company in the 1920s and 1930s. Largely forgotten by Australian film history, their films were financially rewarded and publicly acclaimed, and they were publically sponsored by businessman Charles Stewart (Shirley, 2014).

The target group benefiting from the Fund would be qualified mid-career women in a position to write, direct or produce a feature film.

- Identified women would be teamed with paid sponsor (male or female) willing to mentor and advocate for them publically;

- Funding would be provided to allow the filmmaker to take their project to the next stage of development;

- Meetings would also be provided with relevant financiers, distributors and sales agents.

The Fund would be modelled on the programs outlines in Chapter Five, and abide by the criteria set out by Ibarra et all. It would be financed and administered by Screen Australia, AFTRS and the Workplace Gender Equality Agency, and supported by Screen Producers Australia, the Directors Guild and the Writers Guild.

As a way of controlling the McDonagh Fund using existing programs, Screen Enterprise companies funded by Screen Australia could provide the platform for potential protégés and projects. In her Australia Council report *Getting Connected: Making Your Mentorship Work* (Hunter, 2002), Mary Ann Hunter found that mentoring in the film and television sector was most successful when they required a concrete outcome from the mentoring relationship, such as a completed performance or film. Some form of measurement must be included in The McDonagh Fund, as demonstrated by some of the sponsorship programs outlined in Chapter 5.

<u>Ones To Watch</u>

The McDonagh Fund may seem too complicated to be possible, but happily a similar program already exists - although it is not specific to feature films, gender or mid-career. Ones to Watch is a mentor program for early-career producers from around Australia who create content for big and small screens. The program connects successful participants with a leading screen industry mentor, and provides the chance to submit an original TV concept to STUDIO Channel. In consultation with the STUDIO Executive Producer, one winner from the group will work within an

allocated budget of up to $300,000 to produce a low budget, high impact short form series for their channel (screenproducersaustralia.org.au, 2014).

Although not based on gender, in 2014 seventeen early-career producers were chosen, and fourteen (82%) were female. In 2013, the first year of the program, eighteen were chosen and twelve were female (if.com.au, 2014). Early-career women and the Australian pay-TV industry are clearly ready and willing to take on the challenge of a mentoring program with sponsorship application – mid-career women and the feature film industry could certainly benefit in the same way with a similar stepping stone.

Need for Evidence

Of course, a sponsorship program would not be a magic bullet solution. There is no empirical evidence to suggest that such programs work, and the programs being implemented in other countries, and other sectors, have not yet been measured to test their effectiveness in promoting gender equality. Any solution will not be fast, and learning from trial and error must be expected and even built into the program.

However, evidence will never be gathered if industry does not take the problem of gender inequity seriously. If the Australian film industry genuinely seeks to help women rise within the ranks, "the message is clear: It is hard to change when you don't have the right metrics to measure improvements. (Coffman, Gadiesh & Miller, 2010). Martha Lauzen puts it more bluntly, speaking about the USA – "We think of Hollywood as a very progressive place and a bastion of liberal thought. But when you look at the numbers and the representation of women onscreen, that's absolutely not the case. The film industry does not like change." (Lambert, 2014)

However, the significance of the female-focused sponsorship programs outlined in Chapter 5 indicates that there is hope. Similarly some countries are beginning to take gender inequality very seriously, at a policy level, as outlined in Chapter 1. Involving more women in film leadership would redress the gender imbalance, broaden the diversity of storytelling in Australian film, and provide greater benefits to all involved.

There may be another very compelling reason to promote women into leadership – they're better at it. In a 2012 study of women leaders, analysts Zenger Folkman found that "At every level, more women were rated by their peers, their bosses, their direct reports, and their other associates as

better overall leaders than their male counterparts — and the higher the level, the wider that gap grows" (Zenger & Folkman, 2012).

Allowing for the possibility of gender equality in creative leadership opens the door for what could be a better *kind* of leadership. In the Zenger Folkman study, to the apparent surprise of the researchers involved, women rated higher in twelve of sixteen competencies that make an outstanding leader. "Two of the traits where women outscored men to the highest degree — taking initiative and driving for results — have long been thought of as particularly male strengths". (Zenger & Folkman, 2012).

If it can be argued that implementing funding for programs to correct gender inequality will not *harm* the Australian film industry, a more compelling argument might be that more women in creative leadership would actually *help*.

Conclusion

"It's extremely important for women to be writing their own stories, truly crafting those stories, writing them down, directing them, and giving them to people."

- Rosario Dawson, *Miss Representation* (2011)

The Australian Screen industry has a long and proud tradition of showcasing the talent of female producers, writers and directors. It can ill afford to ignore the pool of talented women who are stagnating in the invisible middle of their careers. Equal representation of women in creative leadership is an industry-wide issue that needs to be addressed at an industry-wide level.

The Natalie Miller Fellowship website makes the most succinct argument urging for more women in positions of creative leadership. "We not only address the gender imbalance that's still evident at the top, we drive better company performances and greater innovation. And that means a more dynamic, diverse and robust screen industry for everyone" (Natalie Miller Fellowship Inc, 2014).

In her 2012 WIFT report, Lisa French wrote "Over the last decade gender equality has largely vanished from the policy agenda, but it is hoped that other researchers will take this work forward and put gender back as an issue needing urgent attention." (French, 2012) This thesis is another step towards taking the work further, and another voice in that urgent call.

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