

UC Santa Barbara

UC Santa Barbara Previously Published Works

Title

Gender inequality in culture industries: Women and men writers in film and television

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/5zk092mn>

Journal

Sociologie du Travail, 51(Vol. 51 - n° 2)

ISSN

0038-0296

Author

Bielby, Denise D

Publication Date

2009-05-19

DOI

10.4000/sdt.16462

Peer reviewed

12

Gender inequality in culture industries

Denise D. Bielby

Gender inequality—the unequal distribution of pay between men and women or level of female labor force participation relative to men’s—can be found across occupations and professions in industrialized countries around the globe (Charles and Grusky 2004). Although the gender gap in pay and employment and in other job-related opportunities, resources, and rewards has lessened somewhat over time for the labor force as a whole, considerable gender inequality remains at the highest levels of management in paid labor (Blau *et al.* 2006).¹ Sex segregation, which is the concentration of men and women in different kinds of work because of the division of labor in which the delegation of tasks is determined by workers’ sex, is the causal mechanism that underlies differences in women’s and men’s employment and pay. Sex segregation occurs because of societal beliefs about the appropriateness of activities for one sex or the other.² Jobs become gendered—perceived as more suitable for one sex than another—through employers’ conscious and unconscious beliefs (i.e. sex stereotypes) about the characteristics that various jobs require and about what tasks women and men are capable of doing. These beliefs, in turn, affect how work is organized and workers produce (Padavic and Reskin 2002). Although the gender ideology that underlies occupational sex segregation is deeply entrenched within societies, the sex segregation it creates can change over time within occupations and industries and vary cross-nationally (Blau *et al.* 2006). Reskin and Roos’ (1990) seminal research on the link between sex segregation and gender inequality was based upon the study of work throughout the American occupational structure as a whole, but less is known about the distinctive mechanisms at play within culture industries.

The distinctiveness of creative industries

While gender inequality appears throughout the paid labor force, the cause of the unequal distribution of employment and earnings between men and women in the culture industries of film, television, and music, among others such as video games, is particularly complex because of the way in which creative industries and their