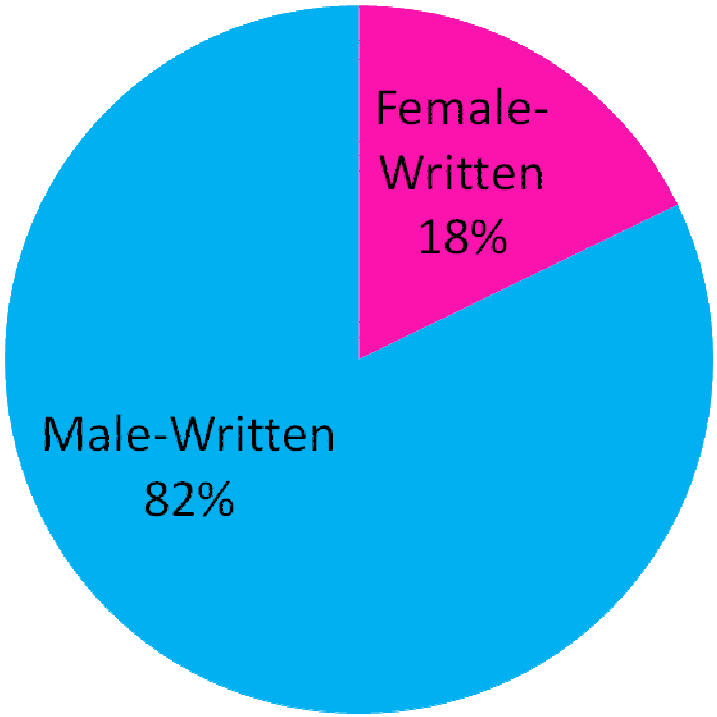
Opening the Curtain on Playwright Gender:

An Integrated Economic Analysis of Discrimination in American Theater

What We All Know: Few Female-Written Plays in Production

Productions in Non-Profit Subscription Houses with More than 99 Seats in 2008 Calendar Year



But Why?

- Human Capital Theories: Differences in ability, education, experience and training
  - Artistic Directors: Not enough good submissions by women from which to choose
- Discrimination Theory: Gender biases
  - Female Playwrights: It's harder to get produced as a woman

Defining Discrimination

- “Discrimination is a causal effect defined by a hypothetical *ceteris paribus* conceptual experiment – varying [gender] but keeping all else constant.” – Heckman
- Discrimination in playwriting would exist if a script by a woman is treated differently from an *otherwise identical* script by a man

Tonight's Agenda: 3 Studies

- Study 1: Do artistic directors just have too few female-written scripts from which to choose?

  Evidence from Doollee.com

- Study 2: Is a script better received when written by a man?

  Evidence from a 2009 audit study in American theater

- Study 3: Is the bar set higher for female playwrights than for male playwrights?

  Evidence from profits of each Broadway show 1999-2009

STUDY 1:

ARE ARTISTIC DIRECTORS RIGHT?

ARE THERE JUST TOO FEW FEMALE-WRITTEN SCRIPTS FROM WHICH TO CHOOSE?

Data from Doollee.com

- Over 20,000 playwrights and 80,000 scripts
- Info on each playwright
  - Gender from 1990 US Census: Accurate for 92% of names on both Doollee and Dramatist Guild membership list
  - Presence / absence of lit agent
- Info on each script
  - Number of male roles
  - Number of female roles
  - Whether or not produced

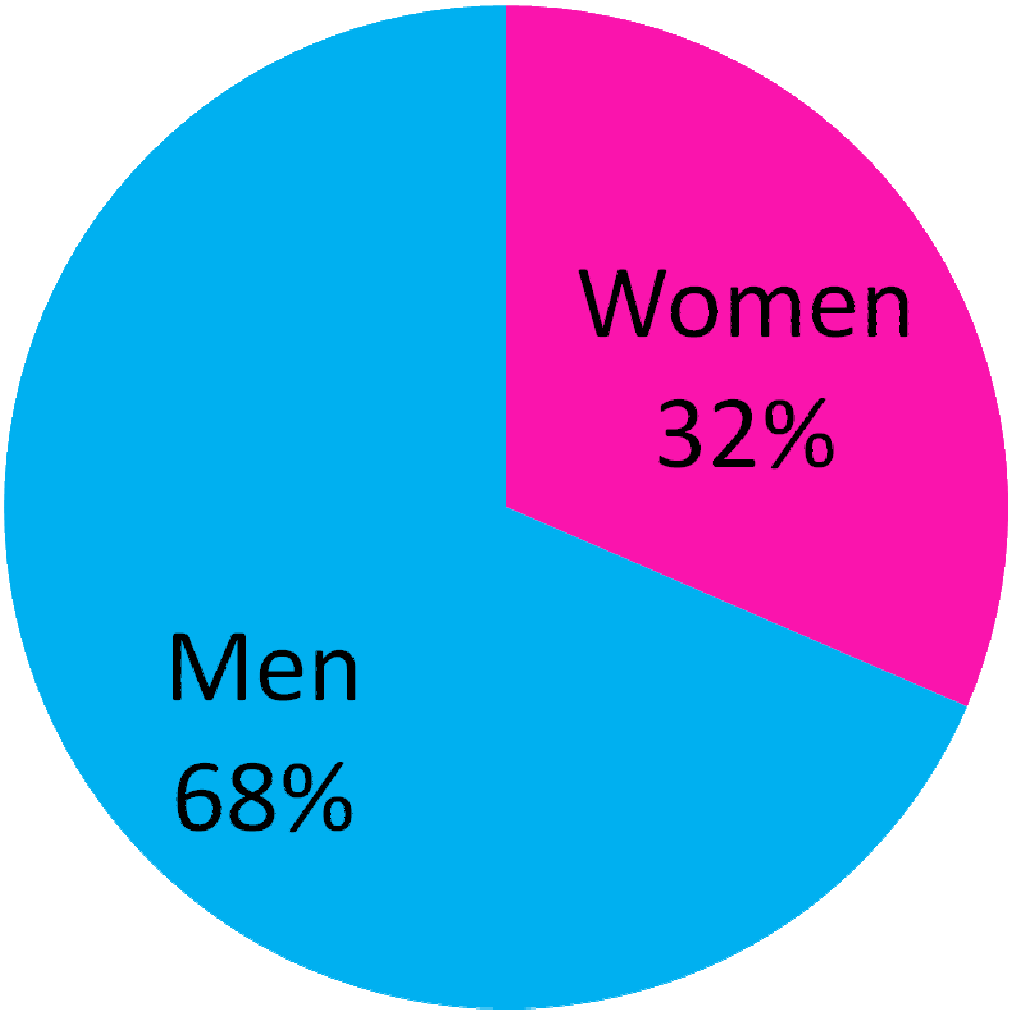
Artistic Directors Are Right (1)

Table 4.3: Comparison of Summary Statistics, Sample with Identifiable Playwright Gender (2) by Gender

		Male Sample (4)			Female Sample (5)			Mean4=Mean5
Level	*Variable*	*Obs.*	*Mean*	*S.D.*	*Obs.*	*Mean*	*S.D.*	*p-value*
Play	Produced	50,714	0.636	0.481	17,403	0.633	0.482	0.401
	# of Parts	19,910	7.749	5.849	6,395	6.753	4.664	0.000
	% Parts Fem (F)	19,865	0.428	0.149	6,383	0.496	0.152	0.000
	Majority Parts F	19,865	0.186	0.389	6,383	0.328	0.469	0.000
Playwright	# Plays Produced ≥1	11,620	0.807	0.395	5,345	0.794	0.404	0.049
	Ave # of Parts	5,709	7.546	4.620	2,327	6.761	4.312	0.000
	Ave % Parts F	5,706	0.421	0.125	2,323	0.493	0.130	0.000
	% with Maj F	5,706	0.178	0.383	2,323	0.369	0.483	0.000
	Literary Agent	11,620	0.121	0.326	5,345	0.114	0.318	0.203

Notes: This table compares summary statistics for the male subsample and the female subsample of the sample with identifiable gender on Doollee.com.The final column lists the p-value corresponding to the null hypothesis that the means of the two subsamples are equal.

Most Playwrights are Men



Artistic Directors Are Right (2)

Table 4.3: Comparison of Summary Statistics, Sample with Identifiable Playwright Gender (2) by Gender

		Male Sample (4)			Female Sample (5)			Mean4=Mean5
Level	*Variable*	*Obs.*	*Mean*	*S.D.*	*Obs.*	*Mean*	*S.D.*	*p-value*
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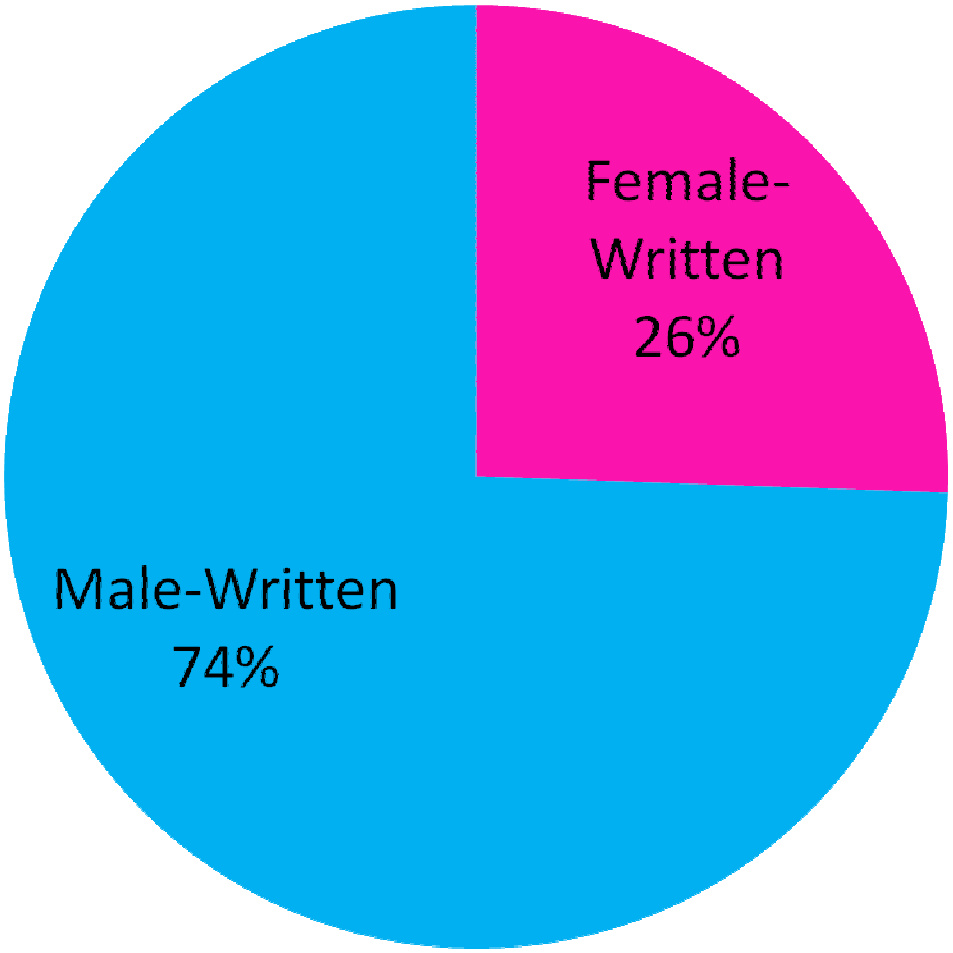
Most Scripts are Male-Written



Artistic Directors Are Right (3)

Table 4.3: Comparison of Summary Statistics, Sample with Identifiable Playwright Gender (2) by Gender

		Male Sample (4)			Female Sample (5)			Mean4=Mean5
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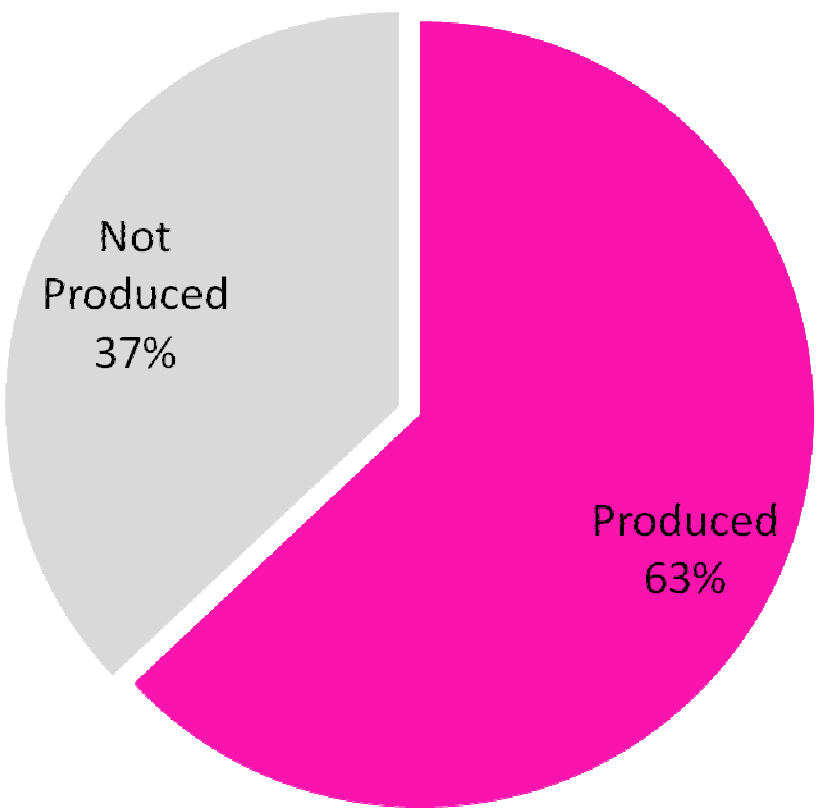
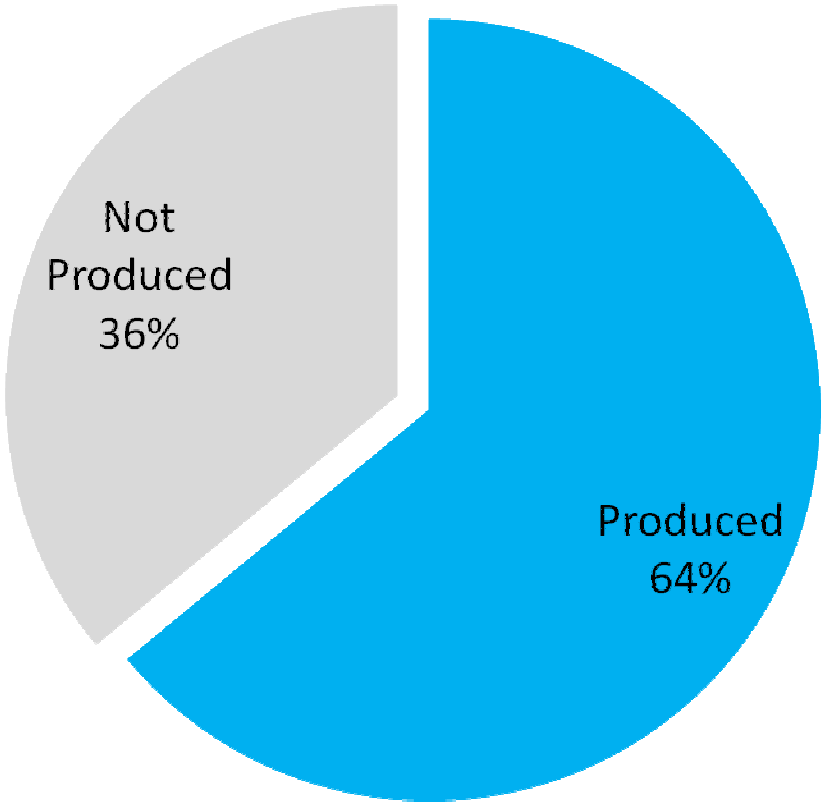
Scripts by Men and Women Get Produced at Equal Rates

Female-Written Scripts



Male-Written Scripts



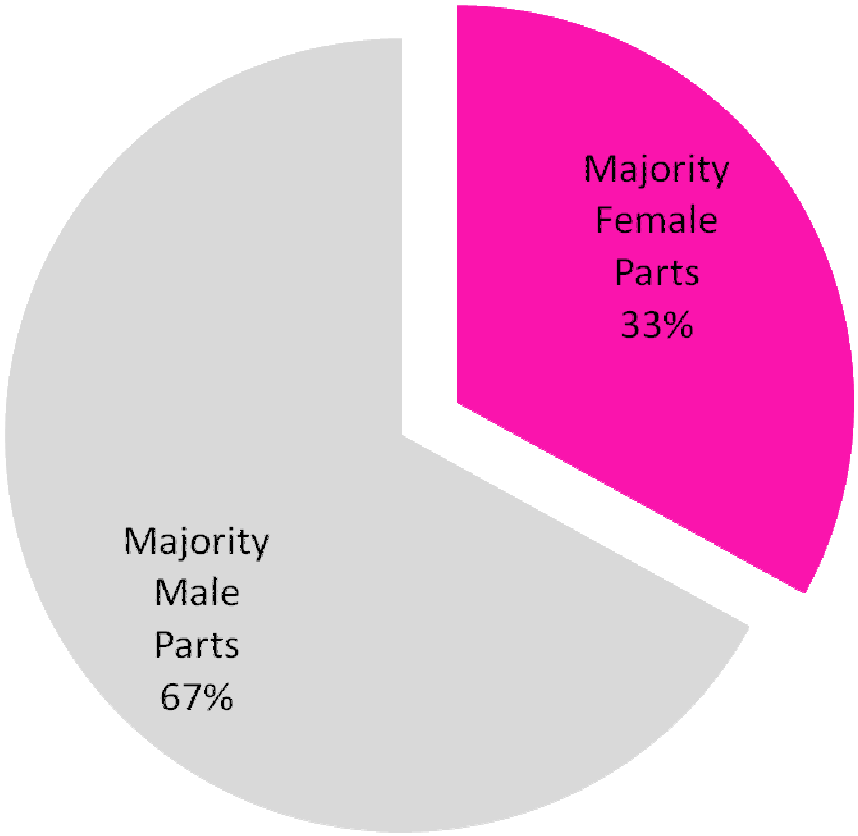
Not So Simple

- Do men and women write the same type and quality of script?
- WHY are so many more men than women playwrights?
- What about the LEVEL of production success?

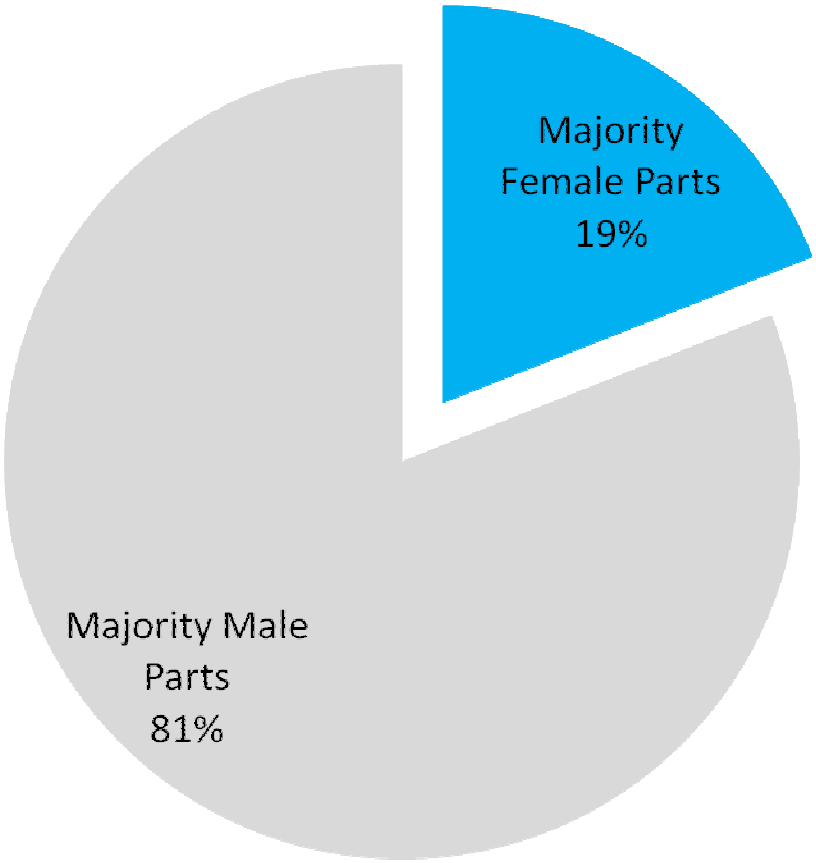
Do men and women write the same types of scripts?

Women Are More Likely than Men to Write About Women

Female-Written Scripts



Male-Written Scripts



And Plays About Women Less Likely to Be Produced

Table 4.4: Play-Level Results of Sample with Identifiable Gender, Equation 4.1

	OLS	**Probit**	**OLS**	**Probit**	**OLS**	**Probit**	**OLS**	**Probit**	**OLS**	**Probit**
Observations	*68,117*		*26,248*		*26,248*		*26,248*		*26,248*	
Female Playwright	0.0033	0.0034	0.0246*	0.0247*	0.0295**	0.0297**	0.0233*	0.0236*	0.0237*	0.0240*
	(0.0076)	(0.0076)	(0.0134)	(0.0136)	(0.0136)	(0.0138)	(0.0136)	(0.0138)	(0.0136)	(0.0138)
Majority Parts Female					-0.0361**	-0.0357**	-0.0356**	-0.0355**	-0.0352**	-0.0350**
					(0.0155)	(0.0151)	(0.0154)	(0.0152)	(0.0154)	(0.0152)
Total # of Parts							-0.0073***	-0.0070***	-0.0071***	-0.0068***
							(0.0013)	(0.0012)	(0.0013)	(0.0012)
Literary Agent									0.0676***	0.0698***
									(0.0158)	(0.0172)

Notes: This table presents the results of OLS and Probit estimations of Equation 4.1, regressions of the probability that a scipt reaches production on the independent variables in the first column. Probit parameters represent the marginal effect of a change in the independent variable on a change in the dependent variable where coefficients equal $\beta\Phi(X\beta)$. Standard errors, calculated clustering by Playwright, are reported in parentheses. *, **, and *** indicate significance at the 10%, 5%, and 1% levels, respectively.

Wait, What?

How can it be that

1. Men and women get their works produced in equal proportions

AND

2. Women are more likely to write scripts about women, which are less likely to get produced

Women Compensate for Writing About Women by Writing Smaller Plays

Table 4.3: Comparison of Summary Statistics, Sample with Identifiable Playwright Gender (2) by Gender

		Male Sample (4)			Female Sample (5)			Mean4=Mean5
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Notes: This table compares summary statistics for the male subsample and the female subsample of the sample with identifiable gender on Doollee.com.The final column lists the p-value corresponding to the null hypothesis that the means of the two subsamples are equal.

And Plays With Smaller Casts are More Likely to Get Produced

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Observations	*68,117*		*26,248*		*26,248*		*26,248*		*26,248*	
Female Playwright	0.0033	0.0034	0.0246*	0.0247*	0.0295**	0.0297**	0.0233*	0.0236*	0.0237*	0.0240*
	(0.0076)	(0.0076)	(0.0134)	(0.0136)	(0.0136)	(0.0138)	(0.0136)	(0.0138)	(0.0136)	(0.0138)
Majority Parts Female					-0.0361**	-0.0357**	-0.0356**	-0.0355**	-0.0352**	-0.0350**
					(0.0155)	(0.0151)	(0.0154)	(0.0152)	(0.0154)	(0.0152)
Total # of Parts							-0.0073***	-0.0070***	-0.0071***	-0.0068***
							(0.0013)	(0.0012)	(0.0013)	(0.0012)
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But WHY are so many more men than women playwrights?

Is it choice and preference?
Or is it gender bias?

STUDY 2:

ARE FEMALE PLAYWRIGHTS RIGHT?

IS A SCRIPT BETTER RECEIVED WHEN PURPORTEDLY WRITTEN BY A MAN?

An Example of Economics in the Arts

Cecilia Rouse and Claudia Goldin's

"Orchestrating impartiality: The impact of "blind" auditions on female musicians"

-- American Economic Review, 2000

The Audit Study: Creating "Otherwise Identical" Scripts

- Discrimination would mean that a female-written script is treated differently from an *otherwise identical* male-written script
- But we don't have men and women writing identical scripts in the real world
- Study modeled after "Are Greg and Emily More Employable than Lakisha and Jamal" by Marianne Bertrand and Sendhil Mullainathan

The Experimental Design (1)

- Four previously unseen scripts sent to artistic directors and literary managers around the country
- Each script wore a female penname when sent to ½ of the artistic directors and literary managers and wore a male penname when sent to the other ½ of recipients.

Naming

Table 5.1: First and Last Names Used in Audit Study		
Last Name	**Overall Frequency (%)**	**Rank**
Walker	0.219	25
Hall	0.200	26
Allen	0.199	27
Young	0.199	28
First Name	**Male Frequency (%)**	**Female Frequency (%)**
Michael	2.629	0.000
Mary	0.000	2.629
George	0.927	0.000
Jennifer	0.000	0.932
Steven	0.780	0.000
Susan	0.000	0.794
Larry	0.598	0.000
Lisa	0.000	0.510

Notes: This data was extracted from a comprehensive list of high frequency first and last names in the 1990 U.S. Census as published by the U.S. Census Bureau at http://www.census.gov/genealogy/names/names_files.html

Names Matched with Scripts

Table 5.2: Script-Playwright Matching		
Script	**Male Name**	**Female Name**
Script A	Michael Walker	Mary Walker
Script B	George Hall	Jennifer Hall
Script C	Steven Allen	Susan Allen
Script D	Larry Young	Lisa Young

The Experimental Design (2)

- Recipients: Artistic directors and literary managers at 250 American theaters randomly selected from
  - *The Dramatists Sourcebook, 24th Edition*
  - *2008 Dramatists Guild Resource Directory*

The Experimental Design (3)

Criteria included:

- Overall Quality:
  - "On a scale of 1 to 7…
    - … how likable are {Playwright's Name}'s characters?"
    - … to what extent is {Playwright's Name}'s script an example of artistic exceptionalism?"
    - … how likely is {Playwright's Name}'s script to win a prize or award?"
- Economic Prospects
- Audience Appeal
- Fit with Respondent's Theater

Data on Respondents

Table 5.4: Summary Statistics on Respondents and Their Theaters

		Full Sample (1)		Female Respondents (2)		Male Respondents(3)		Mean2=Mean3
Variable	*Sub-Variable*	*Obs.*	*Mean*	*Obs.*	*Mean*	*Obs.*	*Mean*	*p-value*
Female Respondent		79	0.494	39	1.000	40	0.000	0.000
Year of Birth		79	1959	39	1961	39	1957	0.373
Role in Theater	Artistic Director	82	0.561	39	0.564	40	0.600	0.746
	Literary Manager	82	0.280	39	0.308	40	0.250	0.567
	Producer	82	0.110	39	0.077	40	0.150	0.307
	Other	82	0.183	39	0.179	40	0.200	0.816
Theater's # of Stages		79	1.557	36	1.417	40	1.700	0.189
# of Seats in Largest Stage	0-99	80	0.263	39	0.308	40	0.175	0.168
	100-199	80	0.200	39	0.154	40	0.250	0.288
	200-299	80	0.200	39	0.179	40	0.225	0.615
	300-399	80	0.150	39	0.128	40	0.175	0.562
	400-499	80	0.188	39	0.308	40	0.175	0.168

Notes: This table contains summary statistics on respondents and their theaters. The final column lists the p-value corresponding to the test of the null that the mean of the subsample with female respondents equals the mean of the subsample with male respondents. All variables have been transformed into indicators except Year of Birth and Theater's # of Stages.

Female Playwrights are Right (1)

Table 5.7: Results of Equation 5.1, Coefficient on *FemalePlaywright*			
Outcome Category	**Outcome Variable**	**k**	α_1^k
Play Quality	Exceptional	1	-0.208 (0.167)
	Likable	2	-0.568*** (0.169)
	Prize	3	-0.132 (0.172)
	Aggregated Play Quality	1, 2, 3	-0.303** (0.142)

The exact same scripts are deemed to be of lower overall quality when purportedly written by a woman

- In particular, the characters are perceived as less likeable

Female Playwrights are Right (2)

Play's Economic Prospects	Produced	4	-0.186 (0.162)
	Venue	5	-0.142 (0.010)
	Reviews	6	-0.199 (-0.149)
	Marketing Director	7	-0.484** (0.244)
	Aggregated Economic Prospects	4, 5, 6, 7	-0.267** (0.120)

Artistic directors and literary managers rate the script to have substantially poorer economic prospects when purportedly written by a woman

How Sure Are You?
Touching on Statistical Significance

- "If we did this study 100 more times, how many out of those times would we find a different result?"
- All findings presented here are significant at the 10% significance level or smaller
- I.e., If we did the study 100 more times, we would find the same results *at least* 90 out of the 100 times or more

Results Driven by *Female* Artistic Directors and Literary Managers

Table 5.8: Results of Equation 5.1, Coefficient on *FemalePlaywright* by Respondent Gender					
			Male Respondents	Female Respondents	Chi-Squared Test
Outcome Category	**Outcome Variable**	**k**	α_1^k	α_1^k	**p-value**
Play Quality	Exceptional	1	-0.069 (0.244)	-0.348 (0.234)	0.464
	Likable	2	-0.266 (0.241)	-0.803*** (0.242)	0.147
	Prize	3	0.149 (0.263)	-0.500** (0.229)	0.058*
	Aggregated Play Quality	*1, 2, 3*	*-0.0162* *(0.206)*	*-0.550**** *(0.201)*	*0.254*
Play's Economic Prospects	Produced	4	-0.049 (0.242)	-0.443** (0.220)	0.202
	Venue	5	-0.041 (0.126)	-0.246 (0.153)	0.269
	Reviews	6	-0.228 (0.230)	-0.262 (0.200)	0.862
	Marketing Director	7	-0.242 (0.361)	-0.745** (0.333)	0.328
	Aggregated Economic Prospects	*4, 5, 6, 7*	*-0.144* *(0.1722)*	*-0.449**** *(0.171)*	*0.581*

Women Perceive Plays to Fit Less Well with Their Theaters When Written by other Women

Fit with Theater	Mission Statement	17	0.173 (0.341)	-0.586** (0.294)	0.122
	Similar	18	0.103 (0.264)	-0.524* (0.275)	0.116
	Aggregated Fit with Theater	*16, 17, 18*	*0.138* *(0.263)*	*-0.555*** *(0.262)*	*0.065**

Women say a script fits less well with their theater's mission statement when purportedly written by a woman than when the exact same script is purportedly written by a man

Worst-Off: Women Writing about Women

Table 5.9: Results of Equation 5.2, Coefficients on *FemPlFemPr* and *FemPlMalPr*

Outcome Category	Outcome Category	k	β_1^k	β_2^k	p-value for H_0: $\beta_1^k=\beta_2^k$
Play Quality	Exceptional	1	-0.212 (0.234)	-0.205 (0.238)	0.983
	Likable	2	-0.953*** (0.238)	-0.212 (0.239)	0.035**
	Prize	3	-0.247 (0.242)	-0.016 (0.245)	0.502
	Aggregated Play Quality	*1, 2, 3*	*-0.461*** *(0.218)*	*-0.144* *(0.181)*	*0.264*
Play's Economic Prospects	Produced	4	-0.502** (0.227)	0.133 (0.228)	0.049**
	Venue	5	-0.182 (0.135)	-0.102 (0.137)	0.675
	Reviews	6	-0.285 (0.210)	-0.112 (0.212)	0.563
	Marketing Director	7	-0.113 (0.342)	-0.862** (0.342)	0.125
	Aggregated Economic Prospects	*4, 5, 6, 7*	*-0.289* *(0.178)*	*-0.246* *(0.158)*	*0.858*

Given that a play has a female protagonist, it is less likely to reach production if it bears a female pen-name

When a play has a male protagonist, it doesn't matter whether it's purportedly written by a man or by a woman.

From an
Experimental Approach

To an
Observational Approach

STUDY 3:

ARE FEMALE PLAYWRIGHTS RIGHT?

IS THE BAR SET HIGHER FOR FEMALE PLAYWRIGHTS THAN FOR MALE PLAYWRIGHTS?

How Good Do You Have to Be?

- Baseball
  - Economists have found that in the 1960s and 1970s, black baseball players had to have better performance statistics (e.g. batting averages) to make it to the major leagues
  - This is evidence of racial discrimination in baseball decades back
- Playwriting
  - Do female-written scripts today have to be better than male-written scripts just to get produced?
  - If so, this is evidence of discrimination

Data: Using Profitability Thresholds

- Observations: 329 shows with identifiable playwright or book writer gender produced on Broadway between January 1, 1999 and January 1, 2009
- Variables (from Broadway League):
  - Average ticket price in each week
  - Number of tickets sold each week
  - Total revenue each week
  - Number of weeks in production

What the Data Looks Like

Table 6.1: Summary Statistics, 1/1/1999-1/1/2009

Variable	Obs.	Mean	S.D.	Min	Max
Average Ticket Price	329	$55.44	$15.14	$14.12	$112.87
Average Tickets Sold (per week)	329	5,592	2,340	826	15,376
Average Revenue (per week)	329	$332,196	$213,329	$23,606	$1,305,905
Run Length (in weeks)	329	32.46	48.54	1	378

Notes: This table contains summary statistics for the 329 productions on Broadway with an identifiable playwright or book-writer over the decade-long period starting January 1, 1999, excluding plays that began before January 1, 1999. The reported run length for the 30 plays still in production on January 1, 2009 is the lower bound as these plays may have remained in production beyond the end of the chosen window.

Very Few Shows by Women

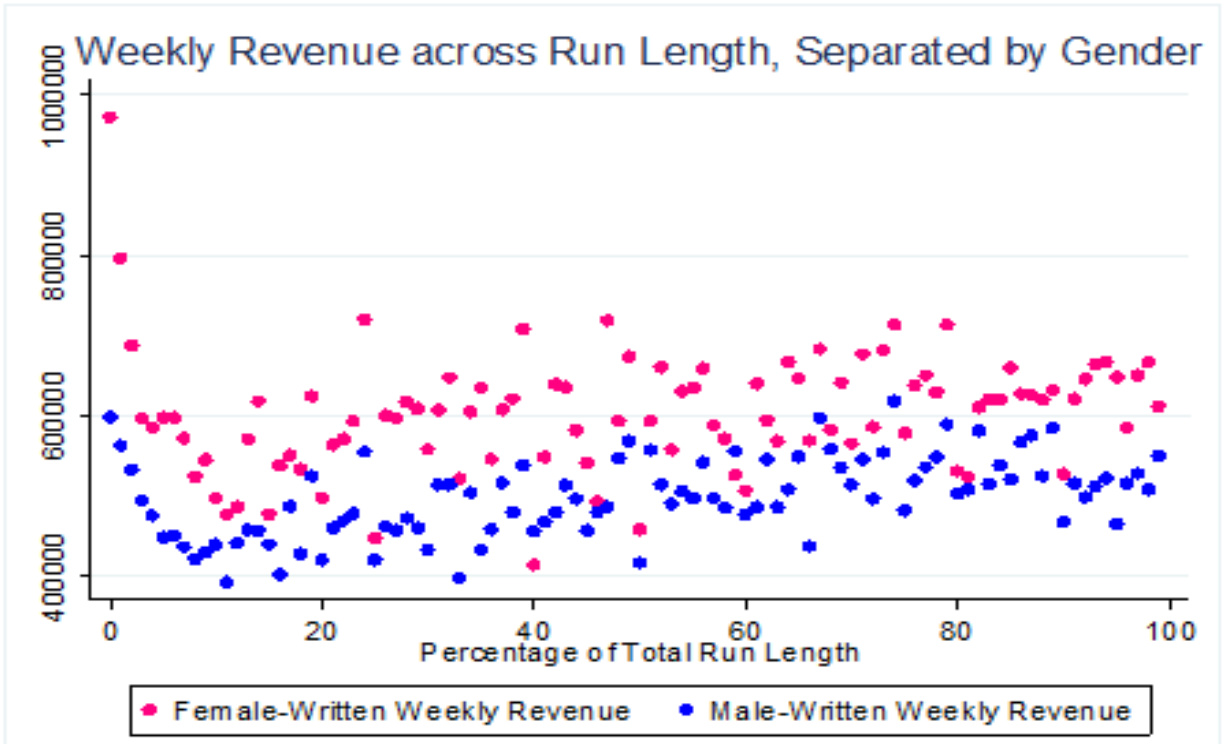
Table 6.2: Playwright Gender Frequencies by Play Type, 1/1/1999-1/1/2009				
	Frequency (Row Percentage)			
Play Type	**Male Playwright**	**Co-ed Playwright**	**Female Playwright**	**Total**
Musical	102 (83.30)	8 (6.61)	11 (9.09)	141 (100.00)
Straight	131 (88.51)	0 (0.00)	17 (11.49)	151 (100.00)
One-Man	20 (71.43)	4 (14.29)	4 (14.29)	28 (100.00)
Exception	28 (87.50)	0 (0.00)	4 (12.50)	32 (100.00)
Total	*281 (85.41)*	*12 (3.65)*	*36 (10.94)*	*329 (100.00)*

Notes: This table identifies the play type and playwright gender of the 329 shows on Broadway during the decade-long period beginning January 1, 1999, exempting both productions without an identifiable playwright or book writer and productions that opened before January 1, 1999. Row frequencies are reported in parentheses.

Only 11% of shows on Broadway over the past decade were written exclusively by women

On Broadway, the Bar Is Set Higher for Women

Figure 6.3: Similar Revenue Paths across Run Length between the Genders



Notes: I separated each production's run lengths into 100 units. I then averaged across exclusively female-written productions and across exclusively male-written productions the weekly revenues at each of the 100 points in the total run length. Productions written by a combination of male and female writers were exempted from this graphical analysis.

Female-written Shows on Broadway are 18% More Profitable than Male-Written Shows

Table 6.3: Result of Equation 6.3		
Dependent Variable	**ln(Average Weekly Revenue)**	**ln(Run Length)**
Female Playwright	0.1813*	-0.1206
	(0.0948)	(0.1412)
Straight Play	0.3086***	0.9956***
	(0.0986)	(0.1736)
Musical	0.8964***	0.2593
	(0.0982)	(0.1726)
One-Man Show	-0.0645	0.2039
	(0.1542)	(0.2252)
R^2	*0.5616*	*0.1915*

Notes: This table contains the results of the regressions of first the natural log of average weekly revenues and then the natural log of run length on playwright gender, controlling for play type. Where the dependent variable is defined as the natural log of average weekly revenue, these are the results of an OLS regression and the reported R^2 is the standard R^2. Where the dependent variable is defined as the natural log of run length, these are the results of a censored-normal regression, where productions that played beyond January 1, 2009 are left-censored; in this case, the reported R^2 is a pseudo-R^2. In both cases, Huber-White standard errors are reported in parentheses. Both samples have 329 observations, one for each of the productions in the decade-long sample with an observable writer, exempting productions that began before January 1, 1999. *, **, and *** indicate significance at the 10%, 5%, and 1% levels, respectively.

Despite Higher Weekly Profits, Female-Written Shows Have the Same Average Run Length as Male-Written Shows

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Shows by Men and Women Have the Same Average Ticket Price

Table 6.4: Results of Equation 6.3 for Extended Decomposition		
Dependent Variable	**ln(Average Ticket Price)**	**ln(Average # of Tickets Sold Weekly)**
Female Playwright	0.0287	0.1551**
	(0.0439)	(0.0655)
Straight Play	0.0747**	0.2299***
	(0.0343)	(0.0812)
Musical	0.2023***	0.6883***
	(0.0333)	(0.0827)
One-Man Show	0.0497	-0.1194
	(0.0581)	(0.1137)
R^2	*0.529*	*0.5218*

Notes: This table contains the results of OLS regressions of first the natural log of average ticket price and then the natural log ofaverage number of tickets sold weekly on playwright gender, controlling for play type. In both cases, Huber-White standard errors are reported in parentheses. Both samples have 329 observations, one for each of the productions in the decade-long sample with an observable writer, exempting productions that began before January 1, 1999. *, **, and *** indicate significance at the 10%, 5%, and 1% levels, respectively.

But Shows by Women Sell 16% More Tickets per Week

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