

January 2017

Book Review: *Making Change - Nordic Examples of Working Towards Gender Equality in the Media*

Meghan Murphy
Bridgewater State University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://vc.bridgew.edu/jiws>



Part of the [Women's Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Murphy, Meghan (2017). Book Review: *Making Change - Nordic Examples of Working Towards Gender Equality in the Media*. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 18(2), 275-277.

Available at: <https://vc.bridgew.edu/jiws/vol18/iss2/19>

This item is available as part of Virtual Commons, the open-access institutional repository of Bridgewater State University, Bridgewater, Massachusetts.

This journal and its contents may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, re-distribution, re-selling, loan or sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden. Authors share joint copyright with the JIWS. ©2022 Journal of International Women's Studies.

This journal and its contents may be used for research, teaching and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, re-distribution, re-selling, loan or sub-licensing, systematic supply or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden. ©2017 Journal of International Women's Studies.

***Making Change- Nordic Examples of Working Towards Gender Equality in the Media*, Maria Edström & Ragnhild Mølster (eds), 2014. Nordicom. Göteborg, Sweden. 203 pages. Illustrations included. 16,000 Euro or 15,000 kr, paperback.**

Reviewed by:
Meghan A. Murphy¹

Introduction

Providing a thorough analysis of gender equality in the media can be a near impossible task. In *Making Change- Nordic Examples of Working Towards Gender Equality in the Media*, editors Edström and Mølster break down the multiple types of mediums with a focus on film, journalism, computer games, and advertising. This book is comprised of a variety of short entries from authors with expertise in the field. These authors focus on Nordic countries, Denmark, Sweden, Iceland, Norway, and Finland throughout their analysis of gender equality.

Making Change has a very applied approach for gender equality. Throughout the book, the focus is to discuss different mechanisms of change for gender equality in Nordic media. The examples that are provided are well thought-out, applicable to the topic, and include additional resources for the reader to further explore. Not only do the authors provide ample statistics regarding this topic, they also include longitudinal data that shows change over time as well as specific initiatives to help this forward progression. One important overarching theme in this book is for a continued need to collect and share reliable, consistent, and comparative data across all mediums of Nordic media. Without this data, researchers claim it can be very difficult to make a case for the necessary change within the media. A broader theme found in this book explains how a gender equality gap in the media is often a clear echo of the gender equality gap found in everyday life.

Analysis of Content

Film

The Nordic film industry is known for actively working to eliminate gender inequality through a variety of avenues, however, there is still a gender gap both in front of and behind the cameras. This book works to achieve its overarching goal of discussing how change can take place surrounding gender inequality by explaining how the Bechdel Test is a good measurement tool. In order to pass this test, the film in question must include two women, who have been named, who have a conversation about something other than a man. Research shows that 60% of Norwegian films in a particularly study did not pass the Bechdel test (Vollan 2013). This alarming statistic shows that continued work regarding gender equality in the film industry needs to be done.

On a more positive note, research in this book shows that in one year, Nordic countries were able to close the media gender gap by 80% (World Economic Forum 2014) and have become role models for other change-seeking countries. Researchers find that putting women in directing roles is likely to lead to more female character development on screen. Many of the Nordic countries are paving the way as leading examples of how to achieve more gender equitable conditions in film.

¹ Meghan A. Murphy, PhD Visiting Professor, Sociology Department Bridgewater State University. Meghan.murphy@bridgew.edu

Journalism

Making Change explains how there are more blind spots regarding gender equality when it comes to journalism. Since journalism is about choice, it is important to choose important stories to gain a bigger audience, ultimately resulting in making more money. When these choices are made, it is often more likely that these stories will be about men, particularly men in positions of power. That being said, research on Nordic journalism finds that women are more likely to be employed part-time or found in temporary positions.

To continue with *Making Change's* overarching goal, this section of the book outlines different organizations that are working toward equality in journalism. Similarly, they put out a call for further research, and the sharing of that research, by counting and keeping track of who is represented through journalism. Having hard data is the way to make consistent progress in this area.

Computer Games

A very important call for computer games regarding gender equality is for an inclusive game design. Researchers stress the importance of not filling games with traditional gender stereotypes, as that may be a turn-off to certain audience members. Newzoo Games Market Research suggests that 1.2 billion people across the globe play video games. Since 48% of United States gamers are female, and 50% of purchasers of games are female, it is important to pay attention to such matters (The Entertainment Software Association 2014).

Making Change does highlight a specific method used to include more gender equality in the gaming world. The Game Girl Workshop is designed to include more women in the gaming industry and works to empower women to take charge when it comes to gaming design. A hope of this workshop is that women will take the skills learned here and use them in other areas of their lives.

Advertising

The most difficult component of achieving gender equality through advertising comes in the regulation process. Most Nordic states have laws that actively fight against gender discrimination in advertising. At this time, Sweden is the only Nordic state that self-regulates. There are pros and cons for both of these approaches. This section of the book gives a more detailed analysis of how Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden handle combating gender discrimination in advertising.

To continue looking for forward progression regarding equality in advertising, this book gives a clear plan on how to achieve such success by 2020. The initiative includes changing the current rules and regulation, continue to collect valid data, look for role models, implement a standard equality plan, and continue to public discourse on this topic.

Initiatives

To wrap up the content section of this book, the editors Edström and Mølster included a section on initiatives to achieve gender equality in the Nordic media. This section certainly aligns with the broader goal of the book, not to simply discuss gender inequality but look at applied ways to alleviate the issues. More specifically, The Danish Centre for Information on Gender, Equality and Diversity, KVINFO, has been implementing ways to create more visibility of women for many

years. KVINFO shares some tips for success in this section. Readers can also find course exercises, films, and resources to open the discussion on gender inequality in the classroom environment.

Critiques

Making Change provides a great deal of information regarding gender equality in the Nordic media. The book is organized by medium and frequently broken down by country, which allows the reader to easily retain and systematize the information provided. The majority of the authors who contributed to this book write in a clear, concise manner that allows the reader to fully comprehend their contributions.

Although the book provides a lot of information on this topic, at times it reads a little choppy having so many authors weighing in on related topics. After piecing together the information from the short chapters in each section, it may leave the reader wanting more materials. Luckily for us readers, the editors provide information in the margins as to where to seek out more information as well as a list of doctoral dissertation on these topics at the end of the book.

Making Change does seem to achieve its goal of discussing the different mechanisms of change for gender equality in the Nordic media. The thoroughness of external resources in this book makes it a great resource for anyone interested in this topic. The editors go even further by including a chapter that examines what needs to take place to achieve gender equality in the Nordic media by 2020. These stems include changing the rules and regulation of the media, carry out more longitudinal data on gender equality, creating role models to support change, have an equality plan implemented for employers, and continue with the scholarship on this topic. Focusing on an applied course of action helps this book achieve its overarching goal.

This book would be a great addition to an undergraduate media and/or gender course. The professor should be prepared to supplement this book with a lot of additional readings on each specific topic. Edström and Mølster provide multiple examples for course exercises aimed at going beyond simply recognizing that inequalities exist in the media but being able to provide students with the proper tools to act and reflect on the representation of genders in the media.

References

- The Entertainment Software Association: 2014 Sales, Demographic and Usage Data
http://www.theesa.com/facts/pdfs/ESA_EF_2014.pdf.
- Newzoo: Global Games Market Report Infographics
<http://www.newzoo.com/infographics/global-games-market-report-inforgraphics/>.
- The Nordic Gender & Media Forum and Nordicom (2013).
http://www.nordicom.gu.se/sites/default/files/medieforskning-statistik/7099_ngmf_film-seminar_giff201429.pdf.
- Vollan, Mari B. (2013). Består ikke kjønnstest, Klassekampen, 27.2.2013.
- World Economic Forum (2014). *The Global Gender Gap Index 2013*.
[Http://www.3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GenderGap_Report_2013.pdf](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GenderGap_Report_2013.pdf).