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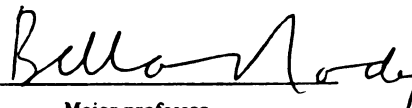
Women in Television Production
in South Central Michigan:
The Continuous Struggle

presented by

Traci Runata Robinson

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**WOMEN IN TELEVISION PRODUCTION
IN SOUTH CENTRAL MICHIGAN:
THE CONTINUOUS STRUGGLE**

By

Traci Runata Robinson

A THESIS

**Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
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ABSTRACT

WOMEN IN TELEVISION PRODUCTION IN SOUTH CENTRAL MICHIGAN: THE CONTINUOUS STRUGGLE

By

Traci Runata Robinson

Women who work behind the scenes in television production are severely underrepresented in the television industry. The faces of women in front of the camera have grown significantly over the years. However, the number of women who work in key positions behind the camera, such as director or producer, has not changed much over the past twenty years. Women are almost nonexistent behind the scenes in the production world.

Questionnaires were mailed to thirty-one women who work behind the scenes in the Mid-Michigan area. On-camera interviews were held with two women who work at the commercial cable channel WXON-TV and the Government Access Channel in Detroit, Michigan. The data showed that there are a lot of positive aspects when working in the production field, such as women received the same responsibilities and benefits as men. However, many are faced with sex and race discrimination that often hinders them from advancing to key positions.

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Traci Runata Robinson

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WOMEN IN TELEVISION PRODUCTION IN SOUTH CENTRAL MICHIGAN: THE CONTINUOUS STRUGGLE

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The main purpose of this thesis is to document the challenges faced by the small number of women who work behind the scenes in television in the mid-Michigan area. This study examined women, in general, and African American women particular.

ORGANIZATION OF STUDY

This thesis is divided into the following sections: Introduction, Portrayal of Women in Television, Jobs for Women, Fewer Jobs for African American Women: Reasons, Research Method: Video Documentary, and Conclusion.

INTRODUCTION

When a person watches the credits at the end of a television program, the majority of the names that appear next to key positions such as director or producer, are male. According to Coyle (1988), the television industry is characterized by male (patriarchal) dominance. The patriarchal dominance Coyle described is defined by Webster's dictionary as follows- patriarch: a man revered as father or founder (as of a tribe). Dominance is defined as authority or control.

Society has assigned men and women confining gender roles that have developed ideologies as rationalizations. These gender ideologies are the basis of sex stereotypes. We live in a culture built on a particular set of gender assumptions and structured to amplify if not produce gender asymmetries and inequalities; we come to view these differences as part of the natural world (Creedon, 1988).

"Support" jobs such as secretary, nurse, teacher, or domestic worker were assigned to women when they initially entered the paid work force. Women were not supposed to become doctors, lawyers or managers. This territory was preserved primarily for men. Women were usually told to stay at home and let the man obtain the education needed to take care of the household since he was considered the "breadwinner" of the family. These were gender-based occupational stereotypes.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony started the woman's suffrage movement in the United States. During 1910, women went to work on the assembly lines of wartime factories due to the men called to the war effort. Although many men were unimpressed by suffrage arguments, the sight of women doing "men's work" in the heat, noise, and danger of war, affected public opinion in the United States (Butler, 1980). Woman's suffrage was not actually won to the first world war. In 1994, the number of women graduating with bachelor degrees from professional schools was substantial, for example, 60% of those receiving law degrees were women, 60% of the business majors were women, 35% of those receiving communication degrees and 50% of those receiving visual and performing arts majors were women (Almanac of Higher Education, 1995).

PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN ON TV

A group is said to be stereotyped whenever it is depicted or portrayed in such a way that all its members appear to have the same set of characteristics (Liebert & Sprakin, 1988).

Television works with the stereotypes articulated in the Introduction. During the 50s, television tended to portray the "all-American family" as one in which, typically, the father worked in an office, while the mother supervised the running of the family's suburban home. June Cleaver, the wife on "Leave It to Beaver," is a perfect example of this. The increasing trend of popular television shows during the late 50s and 60s reiterated the norm that a woman's place was in the home and not at work. Many authors wonder if there is an apparent simple link between imagery and participation of women in the media. Gallagher (1981) states that women often find their identity from images constructed in the media and those images generally contribute to and reflect their subordination in society.

During the 70s, the stereotype basically stayed the same. Carol Brady re-emphasized the importance of staying at home with the children on the ever popular program, "The Brady Bunch." Television in the early 80s began to portray a different aspect of the female stereotype. Women began to appear more sexual and tougher. Programs such as the "Dukes of Hazzard or Wonder Woman," showed women wearing tight clothing that showed off their legs. This was a huge step from the Carol Brady and June Cleaver days. While women were told by the images presented by the media that it was only appropriate for a woman to allow the man of the house to take care of them, they were also told that the only way a woman would be accepted in society was through

tight clothes and a tough attitude. This type of subordination limited their self-esteem about their place in life. According to Muir (1987), children were shown a one-sided (basically male) view of the part that women played in our society. Women themselves were presented with models which were far from reality, making individuals feel isolated and aberrant when they did not conform to these stereotypes, which inhibited, rather than stimulated their belief in their actual strength and capabilities.

The “sex object” stereotype continued to increase as the years passed. In the late 80s, the hit program “The Golden Girls,” presented a unique portrayal of women. This show was about four older single women. First, Blanche, a main character on the show, was so sex-crazed that she had a hard time keeping up with the men she slept with. Although Blanche was a senior citizen by age, she often wore tight clothing to make her appear younger than what she was. Second, Rose was the naive blond of the group. She never caught on to the fact that men often used her. Dorothy, on the other hand, could not catch a man because she was tall, outspoken and dominating. Lastly, there was Sophia, the oldest of the group and Dorothy's mother. Even at her old age, she still had a strong sex drive and she was not ashamed to talk about it.

In the 90s, another example of a program that presented women in a demeaning manner is the ever popular show, “Baywatch.” This show displays a large number of well-endowed women portraying lifeguards in revealing swim wear. The only positive aspect of “Baywatch” is that women were working alongside men, but at what cost? The presentation of women on television takes from the gender ideologies created by society and amplifies the stereotype to attract larger audiences.

On the other hand, there was a lot of positive progression involving women representation. Shows such as “NYPD Blue,” “Star Trek Voyager,” “X-Files,” and “ER” present positive portrayals of women. In these programs, women are detectives, captains of a ship, special agents, and doctors. This is a significant step, however, the negative

portrayals still exist which undoubtedly effects the way women are perceived in society.

The negative portrayals of Blacks on television has unfortunately been one-sided. During the 60s, the few Blacks that did appear on television were depicted derogatorily as “coons”, “mulattos”, “bucks” or “mammies”. Newcomb and Alley (1983) state that Black women are the only group in this society declared “ugly” and “unfeminine” a priori due to the stereotypes of the mammies of the sixties. A majority of Americans are not watching these types of programs, then they are viewing shows that may only have a small or zero percentage of Black actresses gracing their screens. For example, it is rare that one would see a Black actress on hit broadcast TV shows “Frazier” or “Friends.”

Not only are Black women forced to fight even harder than White women, due to sex and racial prejudices, but they also have to break down the forces of stereotypes of appearance. Wilson and Gutierrez (1981) maintain that media-industry employment data clearly reveal that minorities have virtually no influence in determining how they are represented. Resulting media images are, therefore, fashioned through eyes of non-minority creators and decision making.

Some negative stereotyping of African Americans continued into the 90s as millions of Americans watched shows such as “Dangerous Minds,” where most of the women or young adults presented are from a minority background. These adolescents in the show come from poverty-stricken homes or gang related communities. The teacher of this class is a white female, who is there to save these children from the war on the streets.

The development of middle-class audiences of women and African Americans in the 1990s, and the expansion of cable channels have led to separate TV channels for these market segments (e.g. Lifetime and BET).

JOBS FOR WOMEN

Since men usually occupy higher key positions in the television industry, their actions and decisions naturally reflect male norms and priorities. The industry is designed and structured around their interests due to the fact that men have the power to define the organization. Men participate knowingly or unknowingly in a system of privilege. In this organization, work hierarchies are the place where gender identities are lived out daily. It is apparent that such a male hierarchy as television is maintained despite formal equality because masculinity itself remains an essential qualification and quality required for the occupancy of many key positions within the occupational structure and hierarchy (Coyle, 1988). When the male gender produces a story, that story is usually structured towards the male point of view. This is not only unfair to the women who are unable to break through the barriers of the “glass ceiling” but it is also unfair to society and children who are unable to view many programs on television from a female's point of view.

The number of women in front of the TV camera has increased but the representation of women found behind the camera remains relatively small. Due to the large audiences and long hours TV is on in the average home, television has an enormous impact on American life. Thus, employment practices of the broadcasting industry have an importance greater than that suggested by the number of its employees. The enforcement of equal opportunity in employment in broadcasting could therefore contribute significantly toward reducing and ending discrimination in other industries (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1977).

The Equal Employment Opportunity Act (1972) made it possible for women to

enter the workforce. The intent of the law is clear: employees are not to discriminate on the basis of sex. However, the Bureau of Labor Statistics show equally qualified women in the work force are paid 71 cents for every dollar a comparable male earned (Jet, 1997).

Affirmative action was the next step after the introduction of the EEO (Equal Employment Opportunity Act). The process of affirmative action (discrimination in favor of a historically disadvantaged group) could be viewed as a shameful and unnecessary act in a country where “all men are created equal”. The only problem with affirmative action is that it does not introduce a way of changing attitudes: what it does not provide is a strategy for effective intervention which will change this situation; there is no blueprint for ensuring equality of opportunity and similarity of outcome; there is no model for organizational change of this kind (Coyle, 1988).

Behind the scenes employment: If there was ever any doubt that sexism was rampant in American society, off-camera developments in television broadcasting have dispelled it (Strainchamps, 1974). Women have had a hard time entering the television industry, although it is unclear whether this is due to lack of trained women. Women are hired as clericals, they were not seen as producers or directors.

The brave few who do pursue technical and managerial grades both jeopardize their feminine status and never quite come to (masculine) par. In a man's world, they are in a sense segregated from their male colleagues by their gender. A female's world does not exist once one enters into the production world. This process may be a greater hurdle than formal entry requirements; it involves leaving behind all popular notions of femininity (Coyle, 1988). Therefore, women are not allowed to act as women in order to be viewed as an equal counterpart. Regardless if a women are able to get their foot in the door behind the scenes of television, they still finds many obstacles placed in the way for

them to achieve higher positions. According to Larissa Grunig, women...often encounter a “glass ceiling” that limits the likelihood of their advancement (Creedon, 1989). This “glass ceiling” is what hinders women from making independent decisions or advancing to key positions where one would have the power to make those decisions. Most of the power behind the camera lies in the hands of the director, producer, or management. The director is responsible for making sure that all cooperate to create the sound and images which will produce the desired effect. The producer usually has the overall responsibility for a production and often has the final say in all decision-making regarding the program (Muir, 1987). The management consists of the general manager or those who work in the office of the station. These people usually make the decision as to who gets hired.

In the 1970s, the management of the major networks (ABC, NBC, CBS), who generate significant profits, employed very few women in significant jobs behind the scenes. In 1973, there were some 600 people working for ABC. One hundred and fifty were women. Most of those were secretaries. Five females were associate producers; six females were full producers; and there were five female production associates. NBC did not have any women working as camera operators, engineers, technical directors, unit managers, or in top management. There were female associate producers because NBC has benefited from women working harder and longer for less pay than men on the job. CBS had approximately twenty-five network producers, three were women; of the thirty associate producers, fewer than ten were women (Strainchamps, 1974).

With the Enactment of the Equal Employment Opportunity Act, it would appear that women began to progress somewhat in the employment world of television. In the late 1970s, the U.S. Civil Rights Commission (p.11-113) reported women represented roughly 49% of producers in eight major television stations in the United States, 11% of directors, 2% in the category of editors, approximately 39% of writers, 23% of promotion

and graphic artists, and 7% of floor manager positions. See Figure A-1 that shows the significant strides that appear to have been made by the television industry in 1977.

However, a survey of eight stations conducted by the US Commission on Civil Rights found misrepresentation of the actual status of women employees. One station classified a wide range of jobs held by women in the official and manager category, many of which were actually clerical in nature. Their titles included: supervisor of word processing, news administrator, supervisor of broadcast log, administration (in charge of scheduling union personnel), sales service administrator (in charge of computer printouts), administrator of budgeting and bookkeeping, and manager of sales traffic. None of these job titles appear to fit FCC's definition for official and manager positions (US Commission on Civil Rights, 1977). The casual observer may have been under the impression that women held upper level positions, but in actuality, the positions that they held were merely false titles to adhere to the FCC law. It appeared that such managerial titles as "supervisor," "administrator," and "manager," were used to justify the inclusion of these positions under the official and manager category, but they more aptly denoted clerical positions (US Commission on Civil Rights, 1977).

In the late 80s, the number of women who worked behind the scenes did not change significantly. The "Golden Girls" had predominantly male producers, directors, and writers working on their sets. The surprising aspect of the "Golden Girls" was that this particular show starred four women. Although this situation seemed to show numbers of women on the screen were improving, the actual portrayal of these women conformed to the ideologies of men. The "Golden Girls" had 11% women producers, 0% women directors and 16% women writers. In the 90s, the program "Baywatch," shows many women on the screen but they are portrayed on the beach in revealing swim wear; the show has 0% women producers, 0% women directors and only 18% women writers

(Steenland, 1990).

In spite of a predominately male crew a few programs such as “NYPD Blue,” “Star Trek Voyager,” “The X-Files,” and “ER” actually portray women in a positive manner. Unfortunately, other programs have not followed. This means that society itself is changing, however, more is needed especially behind the scenes of television in order for the deterioration of negative stereotypes which still hinder women in the present day. In entertainment series on the major networks (ABC, CBS, NBC and FOX), women made up 15% producers, only 9% directors, and 25% writers. The new network FOX had the highest percentage of women producers, writers and directors - 26% producers, 33% writers and 12% directors. FOX has managed to surpass its competition where women employment was concerned. CBS ranked second with 20% producers, 29% writers and 11% directors; NBC ranked third with 16% producers, 22% writers and 8% directors; ABC ranked last with 8% producers, 22% writers and 8% directors (Steenland, 1990). Figures B-1, B-2, and B-3 in Appendix B show women employment behind the scenes in the spring 1990 season.

African Americans And The Race To The Top: Wage differences and promotions are often attributed to employee' education, age, IQ skills and abilities and job experience. However, economists admit that these factors alone do not explain more than 50 percent of wage differences in the country's population. Black women are still underrepresented in the television industry. Statistics released by the FCC showed that in 1982, minorities only held about 17% of all jobs in broadcast television. Although the number of minority “officials and managers” were 9%, it was in the category of low authority positions (Wilson and Gutierrez, 1985).

News Representation: Societal gender-based employment patterns are reflected in television news. Not only is it hard to find a woman anchor (only 21% in 1994) on a national network but it is even more difficult to find any women behind the camera in news. A survey conducted by Pinnacle Communications in 1992 showed that only 18% of news directors were women; 45% of station promotion jobs are headed by women. In the managerial department, women occupy only 26% of the top five management positions. Women are not only underrepresented behind the scenes of the newsroom but many women felt that they see disadvantages for them in areas of salary (91%), promotions (83%) and power (87%) (Media Report to Women, 1992). Obviously, this is a huge leap for women since the 1960s but it is not enough to provide an equal balance in the credits where the names of the males and females who worked hard on the production are placed. However, a survey released by Vernon Stone, professor at the University of Missouri School of Journalism, found that women had made a significant increase since 1992. Stone found that 21% of the news directors in 1994 were women, compared to 16% in 1990 to 8.5% in 1993. The survey also found women increasing their share of the news work force from 34% in 1990 to 35% in 1993 and 36% in 1994 (Media Report to Women, 1995).

On the contrary, minorities found it even harder to survive or even exist in the news room. The minority share of news directors dropped from 10% in 1990 to 8.5% in 1993 and 8% in 1994 (Media Report to Women, 1995). Obviously, according to the statistics presented, women, in general, have a hard time beating the odds in news. But Black women have two prejudices against them - the fact that they are women and, that they are of color. This not only forces them to face the barriers of sex discrimination but Black women also have to overcome the obstacles of racial discrimination.

Salaries: Most women employed in television are less well-paid than men (Coyle, 1988). Unfortunately, this is a national reality in all occupations. In 1981, the Census Bureau released figures showing that full-time male workers received a median annual salary of \$21,881. The equivalent figure was \$13,915, about 59% of what men earned. The main reason for this situation is that 80% of all women hold down so-called “pink collar” jobs where the pay has traditionally been low; women constitute 98.3% receptionists and other low entry status jobs (Gager 1983). Unfortunately, even if women are equally educated, they still find discrimination.

The American Public Television Association did a study of salaries for public television in the United States in 1972. This study showed that female managers earned about \$12,000 and male managers earned about \$21,000; female directors earned about \$10,000 and male directors earned about \$11,000. The study also indicated that when all positions are included, we find that women have an average salary of \$7690 and men have an average salary of \$10,970 (Butler, 1980).

Correlation of Women Employees Behind the Scenes to Women's Portrayals: Many wonder if there is a link between the underrepresentation of women employees in key positions behind the camera, and the stereotype portrayals of women found in front of the camera. Although the “link may be too weak to measure,” (Steenland, p. 63), commonsense indicates the relationship might explain why the trend of stereotyping women in particular roles has continued throughout the years. Women who have had the opportunity to act in numerous programs alongside male colleagues suggest progress since the women's movement. However, the fact that women continue to be found in demeaning roles says that women still have a long way to go toward the goal of equality for women.

A study of sixty-five prime-time series during the 1995-96 years found that when women are in positions behind the scenes, female characters become more powerful in their use of language. When shows employed women behind the scenes, female characters spoke more often, and introduced topics of conversation and had the last word more frequently. Female characters also interrupted others significantly more often when shows employed women executive producers or writers ("Making a Difference in Prime Time," 1996). They create female characters who speak their minds and talk back to others.

Other authors seem to concur with the fact that women who work behind the scenes do contribute to the portrayal of women who work in front of the camera. Without women present in key positions, there would not be anyone to help change the output so it reflects more adequately women's interests and points of view. According to Coyle (1988), the absence of women in technical and production jobs, effectively excludes women both from making a visible contribution to the industry's product and from its decision making process.

Gallagher (1981) listed several assumptions regarding women's employment. First, there is a concern for women's employment in the mass media industries in the development of job opportunities for women at all levels and in the removal of obstacles to their equal participation in every field of work. Second, women's employment rests on an assumption that there is a link between media output and the producers of that output: since the presence of women - particularly in creative positions - in media organization is severely imbalanced in relation to that of men, the assumption is that the images of women disseminated by mass media reflect and express male concepts and interpretations. The implication of this assumption is that by opening up the media to women workers on a larger scale, the images which have given cause for concern will gradually change for the better.

While the imbalance seems to favor whites and males in many parts of the country, in some areas, at least, minorities seem to be making comparatively greater progress than elsewhere. Between 1960 and 1968, the proportion of white women engaged in white collar work remained at 68 percent, while the proportion of Negro women increased from 21 percent to 34 percent. Most of this took place in clerical jobs (Pluski, 1971 p.82).

Black women said they had never been in work situations where they felt fully accepted. They were isolated either as women or as Blacks (Butler, 1988).

Many white males who have legitimately earned their place in an organization harbor resentment as a result of the preferential treatment afforded the "protected" class of employees--non-whites and women. This resentment was apparent during the 1970s. In 1977, the Commission on Civil Rights published its findings on minority and female employment in television. During this period, the term "two-fer" became part of the lexicon of American broadcasting. A "two-fer" was any woman employed in broadcasting who happened also to be a member of an ethnic minority group. Broadcast executives were able to list such women in their hiring statistics twice, once under the sex category and again under the ethnic category - a "two-for-one" employee. The tabulated result padded the actual affirmative action employment total. The use of "two-fers" and other manipulative measures created some unusual employment data reported on American broadcasters. In an attempt to make the hiring and placement of minorities in upper-level job categories seem more equitable, the industry reported an astonishing 45 % increase in ethnic managers between 1971 and 1975. This was done for fear of being labeled "racist" or "sexist," honest concerns of such employees has often been suppressed. The resentment is understandable; the circumstances that foster it exist (Wilson and Gutierrez, 1985).

Women have made significant progress over the past few decades. The faces of women in front of the camera has grown significantly over the years in a negative and positive manner. However, the story or plot may still be structured towards a male's point of view due to underrepresentation of women found behind the camera. Women and women of color still have a long journey ahead in order to receive equal pay and equality in promotions. Perhaps the most significant development since the 1970s has been the shift in public attitudes in support of equal pay for equal work. Four out of five working Americans now support the idea of equal pay for jobs of equal value (Wright, 1988).

Women of the Future: Many women have begun to establish their own production companies where they can make the executive decisions as to who gets hired or what type of programs are produced. Women producers such as Marcy Carsey, Diane English and Linda Bloodworth-Thomason have been able to break through the ranks of discrimination to create successful shows such as "Cagney and Lacy" or "Designing Women." They are able to make the type of money men earn and they are also able to have complete control over their shows.

The number of women in the cable industry has grown tremendously over the years. The percentage of women holding positions as officials and managers grew from 21.5 percent in 1978 to 26.2 percent in 1982. In 1994, the number increased to 34.4 percent of all top-level executives (Jobs in Cable, 1995). Two women highly visible among cable executives are Kay Koplovitz, president of USA Network program service, and Carolyn Chambers, president of Chambers Cable Communications, Inc., a string of western cable systems. Koplovitz is one of many female programming executives with a six-figure salary; Chambers, a former CPA who recently sold her stock in a large cable company, is now a multimillionaire (Jobs in Cable, 1995).

African American women have made a small difference in society by producing very successful Black shows that are still on the air today. Susan DePasse, president of Motown productions, can today be seen on the set of "Sister Sister," a show centering around two African American twins. Yvette Lee-Bowser and Winifred Hervey joined the cast of DePasse. Bowser happens to be the executive producer of "Living Single," a show featuring four African American women. This show happens to be the number one show today among African Americans. The program is currently in its seventh season on FOX. Hervey has won awards for her work on programs such as "Benson" and "The Steve Hervey Show" (Ebony, 1995). Hervey is currently the executive producer of "In the House," a show featuring an African American cast, can be seen regularly on UPN 50. DePasse has won several Emmys for her work as executive producer on shows such as "Motown 25: Yesterday, Today, Forever" and "Motown Returns to the Apollo" (Hill, Raglin and Johnson, 1990).

Women writers have also increased over the past twenty years. They hold executive positions on sitcoms and dramas alike, where they develop characters and shape the season's story line. A number of women are successful writers for action shows (Steenland, 1990).

The trend begins to take affect when one realizes that, of all the media together (commercial and public television, radio, magazines, newspapers, films and books), men hold almost 80% of the desirable positions (Butler, 1988).

The slowly increasing number of women in mass communication careers is a significant change, presumably with potential for bringing about some changes in the dominant value system (Gallagher, 1988).

FEWER JOBS FOR WOMEN: REASONS

The notion of a melting pot in the U.S. assumes all groups will melt into one common identity. In Canada, the state supports the concept of a "tossed salad" where different groups are encouraged to retain and celebrate their unique appearances and identity. Assimilation in the melting pot can make for superficial harmony. Effective management in organizations today and in the future will require a departure from traditional management methods that could succeed when organizations were more homogenous. With the influx of new workers bringing in their different values, beliefs, and cultural orientations, the "culture" of the organizations, particularly television, itself is bound to change (The University of Virginia Newsletter, 1990).

Lack of self-esteem becomes a factor and this may explain why many African Americans do not possess the confidence needed to survive in a medium that does not represent them fully in front of the camera nor behind it. According to Berry and Mitchell-Kernan (1978), self-esteem is derived from two main sources: the self and other's perception of one's self...the values and standards are learned from others and one's self-esteem is dependent on their judgment. Without self-esteem, one cannot survive in a harsh and sometimes brutal world.

There are several reasons why women are still plagued by sex discrimination, despite all the legislation to the contrary. These range from sex discrimination in hiring and promotion into middle and top management positions to sex discrimination in the development of lower-level women managers, which leaves them unprepared to gain the experience or training to advance to higher positions; or less interest among women to succeed in management careers (Powell, 1988 p.82).

Some authors believe that the reasons for the underrepresentation of women of color deals with the economic status, political power, body of knowledge and the women's movement, which did not address the problems of minorities (Butler, 1988). If employers had better understanding of different cultures, than it would not be difficult to accept people of color as individuals. Unfortunately, the mass media may have deliberately or unintentionally contributed to the political and economic forces in America that have perpetuated Black women's low status.

Lack of Technical Preparation: A major problem which could contribute to the prevailing situation is that women have been ill prepared for some of the technical changes that are taking place. Many women who have acquired little more than the traditional skills which they were stereotyped into accepting in the past, have thus failed to train themselves in some of the skills that are currently becoming more and more necessary for those desirous of advancing in their careers. Women also need to have as much experience in television production, especially in the new technologies that change the way television programs are developed. Women are rarely being given the training and education which is necessary to enhance career opportunity and so women become increasingly restricted to unskilled clerical and secretarial work (Diamond, 1987).

Lack of Incentives: Yet another reason why women are not allowed to advance into key positions is the lack of incentives for companies to promote women into those higher ranks. This tendency is especially present, where women are relatively more expensive due to maternity issues than men.

The reason behind the difference in salaries and promotions between men and women lies in the apparent fact that women lack political and economic power (Gager,

1974). In a world where women's access to political, economic and cultural systems is limited, this is what tends to exclude them from active participation (Gager, 1974).

Without the ammunition of political power, it is hard to win a battle. Men's strength lies in the way in which an ideology of gender, of expectations of masculinity and femininity, is lived out in the collective practice of an organization (Coyle, 1988).

Butler (1980) believes the reasons also lie in the attitude of management that women need less money than men. Married women who are bringing in a second income for the family are placed at disadvantage both by management's attitude and by their own training not to be pushy in demanding fair pay.

RESEARCH METHOD: VIDEO DOCUMENTARY

Research indicated thirty-three women are employed behind the scenes at WLNS-TV, WKBD-TV, WXON-TV, WWJ-TV, WDIV-TV, Time Warner Cable, Comcast Cable, and Detroit Government Television in South-Central Michigan. Preliminary mailed questionnaires elicited the following responses from five women who work behind the scenes in television in South-Central Michigan. The five women worked at WXON-TV, Comcast Cable, UPN 50 and the Government Access Channel in Detroit.

How long have you held your current position?

Two women had held their position for three years. One woman had been in her position for over ten years. The other two women had been in their occupations for seven years and six months.

What decisions do you make independently in your present job?

Most women made a majority of the decisions regarding the way their programs were structured. However, the final decisions were made by their supervisors.

How would you rate your satisfaction on this job: Very Satisfied, Satisfied, Unsatisfied?

The majority of women were satisfied with their jobs.

What are some of the benefits of your job?

Access to people and places without anyone looking over their shoulders was mentioned. Flexibility and variety of jobs were also mentioned as benefits.

What is the average salary range for someone in your occupation with your experience?

Producer (Cable) - \$25,000

Producer (Commercial TV) - \$35,000

Editor - \$25.00 an hour

Director of Public Affairs - \$40,000

Do you think you are given the same responsibilities as men in this job?

Most women felt that they were given the same responsibilities as men.

Do you think you are expected to do more than a man in this job?

Most felt that they were not expected to do more than men in the same job.

Do you think you are more motivated than men in this job?

The majority of women did not feel as if they were more motivated than men.

Do you think women in general have to work harder than men who have the same job?

Most women said that women, in general, have to work harder than men in order to prove themselves.

Do you work longer hours than men on the same job?

Men and women basically work the same hours in production.

What are the problems you face in this present job?

Women felt men had the upper-hand. Men basically controlled their future in terms of raises or instructions or requiring them to do something that is not in their job description.

How much of this is because you are a woman?

Everything

How many previous jobs in production have you had?

The average was between five and seven jobs.

And what were they?

Most previous experience was producing local shows.

What kinds of problems have you faced in your previous jobs?

One woman felt discriminated against because she was African American and a woman.

The other women experienced wage discrimination and lack of help with the work load.

What factors helped you get where you are in your career today?

Most women perceived they had to work harder to get to their present job status.

What is your highest level of education?

Mostly some college education

Please tell us what specialized education you have in TV production.

Two women attended Specs Howard Broadcast School. The other women had

experience from college courses and internships.

What needs to be done to improve the quality and the number of women choosing TV production as a career today?

One woman said more female production companies. The other women said more experience in production from schools or more women willing to go out and teach.

How has the portrayal of women on TV shows changed in general?

The women surveyed felt that women are definitely more independent and stronger on television. There has been a significant change since the 1950s.

How has the portrayal of women on TV shows produced at your station changed?

More women are taking positions of power on the shows produced at their stations.

If you think there have been changes, why do you think this change occurred?

Women are being more respected and are generally being accepted in the work force.

According to this study, women have made some progress in areas of decision making, benefits, salaries, responsibilities, and the hours worked on the job in comparison to men. However, this study dealt with a small number of women. There is still a lot of work to be done because the women who participated in the study felt that men had the upper-hand and men basically controlled their future as far as raises and promotions were concerned. Most of the women had dealt with some type of discrimination whether it was sex or race related. The most interesting aspect of the study dealt with the fact that most of women did not attend an accredited university. This could be the reason why women have a hard time entering the television industry.

Education and training are essential aspects for women who want to enter the world of television production.

On screen interviews were held with two women. One is the director of public affairs and the other is a producer, both at cable television stations. The interviews focused on the following questions:

1. What is your present job?
2. How long have you held your current position?
3. What decisions do you make independently in your present job?
4. How would you rate your satisfaction on this job: Very Satisfied, Satisfied, Unsatisfied?
5. What are some of the benefits of your job?
6. What is the average salary range of someone in your occupation with your experience?
7. Do you think you are given the same responsibilities as men in this job?
8. Do you think you are expected to do more than a man in this job?
9. Do you think you are more motivated than men in this job?
10. Do you think women in general have to work harder than men who have the same job?
11. Do you work longer hours than men on the same job?
12. a. What are the problems you face in this present job?
b. How much of this is because you are a woman

13. a. How many previous jobs in production have you had?
b. And what were they?
14. What kinds of problems have you faced in your previous jobs?
15. What factors helped you get where you are in your career today?
16. What is your highest level of education?
17. Please tell us what specialized education you have in TV production?
18. What needs to be done to improve the qualities and the number of women choosing
TV production as a career today?
19. a. How has the portrayal of women on TV shows in general changed?
b. How has the portrayal of women on TV shows produced at your station changed?
20. If you think there have been changes, why do you think this change occurred?

CONCLUSION

During recent decades, much has been achieved for women's rights in the work place and in society as a whole. Due to legislation and federal laws, women have been able to achieve greater representation in television production than their fore mother's of the women's movement. The problem, however, is not simply to open up media employment to women, but at the same time to work towards changing cultural value systems which at present not only accord women lower status but also frequently leave them unaware of the fact (Gallagher, 1988).

On screen portrayals of women has changed over the years. Some negative stereotyping has continued since the 60s but there has been a positive change with shows such as "ER" or "NYPD Blue." Unfortunately, the negative stereotypes have impeded women in gaining equality because of the gender ideologies created by the patriarchal dominance. However, society is definitely changing for the better when women are presented in occupations such as doctors, lawyers and detectives.

The jobs behind the camera still indicate that women are underrepresented in that field. Data from the spring 1990 season indicates that women make up fifteen percent of producers, nine percent of directors and twenty-five percent of writers in the major networks. The reason why there is a small number of women who work behind the scenes could be related to sex discrimination in society. Until this problem is combated, women will have a hard time being accepted as equal counterparts. It is important to have an adequate representation of women behind the camera in order to provide society a balance of programs that reflect a male and female's point of view.

The literature review also indicates lack of incentives for men and corporations to hire women. There are more women writers than producers and directors. This could be because fewer women are trained for these jobs. This could also be due to the fewer women who apply for these stressful project management time-pressure jobs. But it could also be because men do not think women are tough enough to handle the high-stress jobs of production and direction.

One of the main reasons why there is a limited number of African American women found behind the scenes is because they have to fight two prejudices against them. The fact that they are of color and the fact that they are part of a subordinate gender group. Another important reason is due to the lack of confidence possessed by that particular group towards a medium that does not respect them fully in front of the camera. This lack of confidence is derived from the years of derogatory stereotypes developed from the presentation of “mammies” and the “mulattos.”

According to the questionnaires mailed in South-Central Michigan, the five women indicated that they made most of the decisions regarding the structure of their work. The final decision may be made by their supervisors but this is usually how the system operates in TV and most occupations. The women also stated that they are given the same responsibilities as men. The most beneficial aspect of their jobs was that they had access to people and places without anyone looking over their shoulders to make sure the job was being completed. Another positive aspect of women’s work behind the scenes in mid-michigan dealt with the fact that they basically worked the same hours as men. At their particular stations, more women are getting positions of power on shows. The reason for this change is that women are being more respected and accepted in the work force.

The limited responses to the mailed questionnaire showed there are a lot of positive aspects in women's work situations in the TV production field. However, there were negative aspects too. The women stated that their male supervisors had the upper-hand and that men basically controlled their future in terms of raises and promotions. The most important aspect stated by all of the women was that women, in general, had to work harder to advance in their careers. Many of the women have faced problems with maternity leave, lack of help with the work load and discrimination based on sex and race.

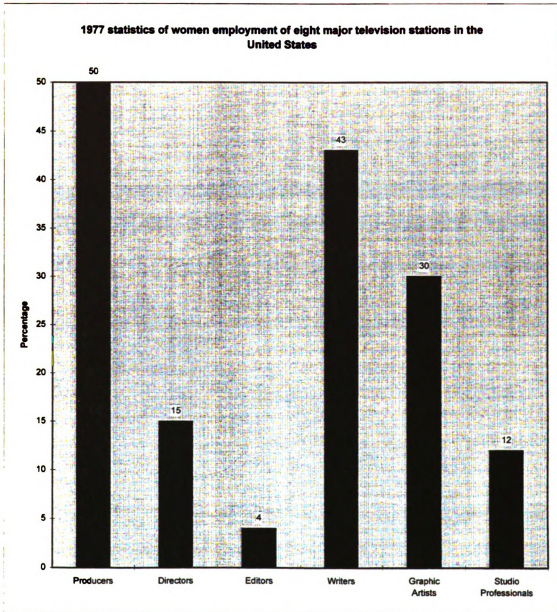
In comparing the women who work in South-Central Michigan to the small number of women on a national level, it is apparent that more women are needed in the key positions, such as director or producer, to continue the struggle towards equality. Since most of women in the study did not attend a four year university, they stressed the importance of education. Another solution calls for more female production companies in order to create the type of environment that women can comfortably work in. TV employment reflects the gender and racial imbalance at the societal level. Without the knowledge by male employers that the task towards equality is still incomplete, women, in general and those belonging to minority communities, cannot expect to have equal access to creative and executive level positions.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

FIGURE A-1

Women's employment behind the scenes in TV at eight major television stations in 1977.



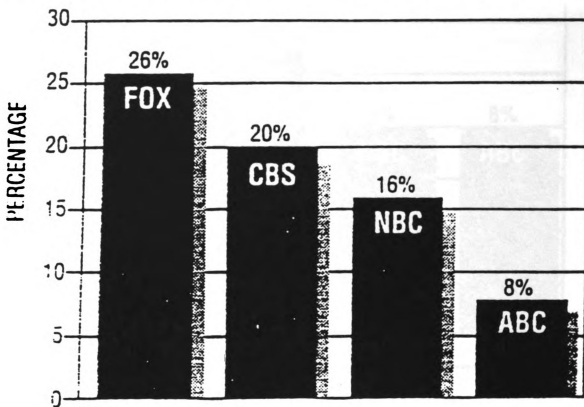
Source: U.S. Civil Rights Commission, 1977.

APPENDIX B

FIGURE B-1

Women's employment behind the scenes in TV at the major networks in the spring prime time entertainment programs:
TV producers.

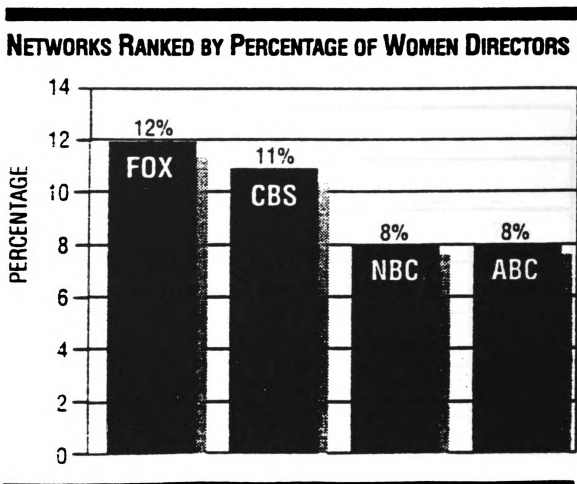
NETWORKS RANKED BY PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN PRODUCERS



Source: Steenland, 1990.

FIGURE B-2

Women's employment behind the scenes in TV at the major networks in the spring 1990 prime time entertainment programs: TV directors.

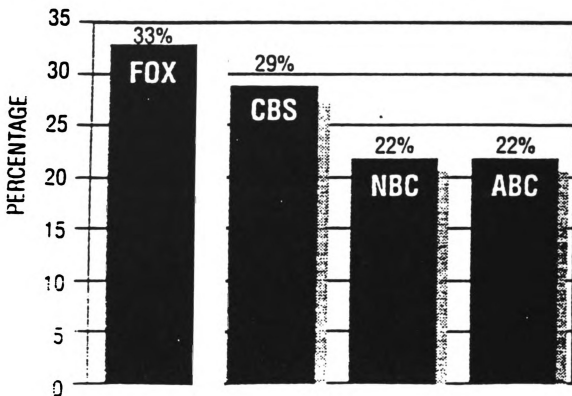


Source: Steenland, 1990

FIGURE B-3

Women's employment behind the scenes in TV at the major networks in the spring 1990 prime time entertainment programs: TV writers.

NETWORKS RANKED BY PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN WRITERS



Source: Steenland, 1990

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