The Gendered World of Work in TV Programming and the Media Industry

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Television, regularly portrayed as a purveyor of entertainment and reflector of "the good life" (Dow, 1976; Signorielli, 1984) came into American living rooms as a mass medium in the 1950s, at the same time that gender, race, and class began to be challenged and redefined by critical outliers. Simone de Beauvoir published The Second Sex in 1949, as Madison Avenue ads emphasized the necessity for the modern day housewife to keep her house clean. Over the last few decades, forces such as shifting notions of (1) the dominant norms of masculinity and femininity, (2) the dramatic rise of women entering the paid work force, (3) capitalism/neoliberalism going through drastic changes through the growth of globalization, and (4) social media bringing instant imagery and representation into common consumption converged to create new dynamics in the interactions of these shifts.

This article discusses these shifting norms through a cultural critical analysis of research on how gender at work has been portrayed in television over time. Ultimately, I unpack an abiding contemporary debate around gendered occupational portrayals and economic realities, and make recommendations on potential interventions to reduce gender inequities in both television programmatic content and production/distribution industry practices. The depiction of women and men in television since its inception as a mass medium in the 1950s has presented an evolving and ever-challenging conundrum and opportunity for researchers (Davis, 1990).

On the one hand, television programming in the 1980s - 2000s reflects a growing body and variety of gender portrayals, particularly in the prime-time daypart which accounts for the majority (22-28%) of viewership between 1980-2011 (Nielsen Ratings Report, 2012). Furthermore, women represented not quite half of all fictional television characters, comprising 41% in the 2010-2011 season (Pugh & Dearfield, 2012). There has been an increase in the percentage of television characters reflecting broader diversity across ethnicity, race, sexual orientation and occupations. Prime-time television programming from 2006-2011 shows the highest percentage of black females (45.3%) when compared to family films and children's shows (30.2% and 31.7% respectively). Over 40% of prime-time shows likewise contain Hispanic and Asian characters. From 2006-2011, females were shown in leadership positions as "14% of corporate executives, 42.9 of characters with financial clout, 27.8% of high-level politicians, 29.6% of doctors, 38.5% of academic administrators, and the only 'editor in chief' in journalism" (Smith, Choueiti, Prescott & Pieper, 2012).

On the other hand, research results analyzing gender continue to reflect underrepresentation "with little changes in proportions over time" and stereotypical imaging that continues to hypersexualize females and reflect lesser or undefined occupational status of female characters. Television programming continues to over-emphasize character appearance attributes, especially youth, and under-emphasize occupational qualities signaling power or high status, such as leadership and use of powerful language patterns (Pugh Yi & Dearfield, p. 1; Lauzen & Dozier, 1999). Though 24% of the occupations in the STEM fields (science, technology, engineering, math) were held by women in 2009 (Smith et al., p. 6), prime time "does not portray females in the full range of STEM careers. Not one female engineer or mathematician is shown" in a content analysis of 11,927 speaking characters portrayed between 2006–2011 in 275 prime-time programs. Occupational segregation and glass ceilings are dominant in media organizations, with women representing only a quarter (25.2 percent) of individuals in high-status behind-the-scenes occupations such as executive producers (p. 8; Smith et al., p. 4). Moreover, the process of media content creation and production is still heavily supported through an advertising-revenue dependent model which "has great interest in maintaining the dominance of cultural

codes" (Beck, 1998) that skew heavily towards a male-dominated production establishment.

Prime-time programming in television, then, contributes to a complex and at times confusing narrative regarding the potentiality and promise of gender equality. Women are making progress within the realm, yet similarly to other occupational sectors across industries, it is within limited arenas shaped by a confluence of economic, ideological, cultural, and historical practices. It is with this in mind that a contextualization of gender portrayals in television over time can bring to light discourse and dilemmas that continue to motivate researchers, and represents an issue deserving ongoing attention, the use of media framing within the television industry. This is significant because the manner in which media employ "standard framing devices of selection, exclusion, emphasis, and tone can profoundly affect cultural perceptions" (Gitlin, 1980; Goffman, 1974; in Rhode, 1995).

Television, as a mass medium, has been viewed as the primary mechanism through which portrayals of "reality" (everyday life in culture, society), and subsequent representations of feminism and masculinity are made accessible to viewers. Through the trope of television programming, gender becomes a "social institution...one of the major ways that human beings organize their lives" (Lorber, 1994). With more than 97% of American households tuned in to, on average, 2.3 television sets (Nielsen, 2011), television continues to hold its dominance as the "great socializer in American society. It teaches what is believed important" (Davis, p. 325), how to "think, behave and act" (Signorielli & Kahlenberg, 2001). "Television is pervasive," Davis says (p. 325).

Not only may television "reflect contemporary standards in gender roles, but may also generate such standards" (Hess & Grant, 1983). It behooves media researchers and television viewers alike, then, to ascertain how these gender roles are made manifest in television content, and draw conclusions on the implications of this for gender equality. It is critical to understand the production and reproduction of television's symbolic and semiotic world, and the external influences that shape its presence and positionality in today's culture, including the third-wave feminist movement towards equality, shifts in the political economy towards globalization and in the

The Donna Reed Show ran from 1958 to 1966.

academy towards neoliberalism, and media access and viewership in a multichannel world, "so that future research can accurately ascertain how this medium affects and influences the beliefs of adults, adolescents, and especially children about social reality" (Signorielli & Kahlenberg, p. 4). My examination, then, is situated in the context of the historical evolution of television programming and gender portrayals over time, in an effort to better extrapolate factors influencing contemporary dilemmas with media production, and how these might be addressed.

Gender Role Portrayals on Television: 1950s-1960s

Television in what is commonly categorized as the "golden age" (Press, 2009) between the 1950s and 1970s encompassed the Cold War period which spawned the Baby Boomer generation (those born between 1945-1965, and the first to have broadcast images brought into the home of the "model" American life), the burgeoning second-wave feminist movements of the 1960s, mass migration to the suburbs impacting the cultural landscape and normative practices in the family (gathering around the television became a reinforcing semiotic and symbolic activity), and the hyper-commodification era in which show sponsorship and advertising came to play a central part in the model of consumption post-World War II (Campbell et al., p. 230).

Television became the cultural tool through which this process could occur with the least amount of disruption to society: media sponsors, corporate and consumer goods companies, and government partnered to successfully restore the social order by introducing vibrant and exciting home goods and appliances with the latest technology to the household, and women to the commodification and consumption process subsequently reflected on television. As Dow states, "Television programming's ideological role is not incidental to its status as a commodity, but rather, is thoroughly implicated in it" (1996).

Shows like I Love Lucy (1951-1957), Father Knows Best (1954-1960), and The Donna Reed Show (1958-1966), among others, all portrayed the American middle-to-upper middle class family, yet presented varying representations of matriarchal characters (although all were involved in family purchasing/consumption decisions, as intended by network sponsors). Though I Love Lucy's lovable heroine,

Lucy Ricardo, made valiant attempts to manage domestic responsibilities while simultaneously pursuing outside professional interests, her penchant for getting into various scrapes and blunders painted her a comedic rather than a competent figure. Margaret's role as wife to Jim Anderson and mother to three children on Father Knows Best was often secondary to the plot device and revolved around the husband as the main character. The Donna Reed Show was able to showcase Donna Stone as a matriarch who deftly navigated domestic chores, mitigated of family squabbles, interacted with neighbors and her local environs in charity and community participation, and smoothly negotiated her gender role within the private sphere of family rather than the public arena of occupational trajectories.

"The white suburban sitcom genre of the late 1950s and early 1960s" represented women as "cultural icons" (Press, p. 140) and television narratives focused on family values by which to "create a unifying address with which to capture an American majority...and 'mainstream' through which notions of proper behavior and a desirable lifestyle were represented" (Oren, 2003; in Press, p. 140). Interestingly, Press notes, ethnic and racial diversity in television representation through earlier family shows such as I Remember Mama (1949-1957) which told of a Swedish middle-class family, The Goldbergs (1949-1956), and the iconic The Honeymooners (1951-1955), reflected different socioeconomic statuses than the sitcoms in the later part of the decade, but it was the white, middle-class status portrayals that drove sponsorship and inexorably linked the entire decade with majority collective identity (p. 140). The era of the 1950s is generally associated with this cultural myth.

During this period, a targeted number of programs also depicted single working women. I intentionally emphasize the word single as reflective of acceptable social norms that attributed the option for unmarried women to pursue service-oriented occupations – secretarial, educational, or library work being the dominant choice – but relegated married women to "blissful" domesticity. However, despite their occupations, the schoolteacher in Our Miss Brooks (1952-1956), cruise director in My Little Margie (1952-1955) and secretary in Private Secretary (1953-1957) regularly voiced their anxiousness to marry and continued to retain strong familial ties that allowed their legitimization within the dominant institutional arrangements. Television narratives permitted the characters to toe but not transgress the lines of social conformity, thereby retaining their appropriate gender status (Lorber, p. 58) and allowing television's cultural production to sustain "the moral hegemony of the dominant gender ideology" (p. 58) through an essentially invisible process.

On occasion, rebellion against the binding ideological gender constructs did occur through the guise of comediennes such as Lucille Ball, Gracie Allen (The Burns and Allen Show, 1950-1958), and Joan Davis (I Married Joan, 1952-1955), whose were "strong and memorable women actresses playing housewives" (Press, p. 141) but whose involvement in narratives frequently took them in to the public sphere (Lucy to her husband, Ricky's, club, or in pursuit of a part-time position for extra spending money) or positioned them as the logical counterfoil to their husband's persona (the ditzy Gracie to the bemused George). The dominant white middle-class model characterized the bulk of programming until the 1960s: family values, women as wives and mothers, men as strong father role-models, and suburban cultural practices defined the period. Paradoxically, these portrayals skewed radically from the actual percentages of said families. Increasing numbers of women were entering the professional domain – in part to achieve the idealized version of white, middle-class, suburban life (Press p. 142). By the late 1960s, a confluence of events, economic, political and social in nature, conspired to transform television narratives and character representation related to shifts in the established gender paradigm.

Beginning in the 1960s, hallmarks of the "sweeping changes in the gender system" (England, p. 149) included a sharp increase in women's employment levels (resulting in a decline in occupational segregation), legislative advances in reproductive rights, increasing numbers of female college students, and implementation of anti-discriminatory laws (the Civil Rights Act of 1964; Title IX in 1972) and diversity policies (Dobbin and Edelman, 1991) designed to level the organizational playing fields. Concurrently, the second-wave women's movement, which gained strength in the late 1960s and early 1970s, began to focus on portrayals of occupational roles in media (Berg & Streckfuss, 1992).

Prime Time in the 1970s and 1980s

Alternative images of women in the workplace in addition to ongoing portrayals in the domestic arena led to shows representing what Dow refers to as "lifestyle feminism" (p. 24). That Girl (1966-1971) with Marlo Thomas as a young, single woman seeking a career as an actress is followed by the critical The Mary Tyler Moore Show (1970-1977), whose protagonist Mary Richards not only refuses her soon-to-be doctor boyfriend's marriage proposal but goes to work as a 30-something associate producer in an

all-male newsroom, and is promptly finds herself having multiple experiences with which the second-wave feminist movement is grappling under the "equality" umbrella: the implications of being a "token woman" in a male-dominant workplace, legislative rights surrounding hiring practices and the illegality of asking status-based questions during the interview process, the opportunity to have a job title that wasn't traditionally female (secretary), and gender pay disparity (Mary's boss, Lou, indicates she will earn less as an associate producer than as a secretary). "As the 'token woman' hired for her sex rather than her qualifications, Mary does not begin her job with the presumption of equality; rather, she will have to earn it" (Dow, p. 31). Secondary characters such as Mary's married friend, Phyllis, are also afforded the opportunity to critique what second-wave feminists attributed to traditional gender roles. In one episode, Phyllis tells Mary that marriage can be a beautiful institution, "if you face the fact that it means a certain amount of sacrificing, unselfishness, denying your own ego, sublimating, accommodating, surrendering" (p. 31); while delivering this line, Phyllis' hand tightens on Mary's and she grows more agitated, heightening the comic effect while underscoring the premise and promise of feminist equality. It is important to note, however, that women continued to comprise fewer than 30% of prime-time characters, and the percentage of white female characters analyzed in a 1969-1977 sample of characters remained under 25% (Reinhard, 1980, in Atkin et al., p. 678) though they represented 41.6% of the general population (U.S. Census Bureau, 1980; in Atkin et al., p. 678). Underrepresentation continued to be a normative practice until an increase of representation in the 1980s.

With the advent of the Mary Tyler Moore show, "television family shows began to exhibit a marked differentiation from the old pattern. While some single families always appeared on television prior to this period, "all of them...were male-headed households" (Press, p. 143), including My Three Sons (1960-1972) and The Courtship of Eddie's Father

The Mary Tyler Moore Show

(1969-1972). These programs may have been a strategic effort by media content producers to reinforce traditional masculine hegemonic ideologies, and counteract the growing effects of feminist rhetoric. The Mary Tyler Moore Show exerted too powerful an influence, however: the "single woman on her own" theme began to inhabit the same space as and eventually refine the white, middle-class model by incorporating the feminist charge of individualism and survival against all odds (divorce, death of a spouse, relocation to a new city). One Day at a Time (1975-1984) witnessed Ann Romano as the mother of two nearly-adult children navigating divorce; Alice (1976-1985), a waitress ardently supported by her friends and colleagues through the passing of her husband, and Rhoda (1974-1978), a spinoff of The Mary Tyler Moore Show, featured Rhoda moving out of her parents' home, living with her also-single sister, falling in love, marrying, trying on and discarding the role of housewife by starting her own business, and separating, only to start a new career with a new cast of coworkers (Dow, p. 59).

Feminist rhetoric which pointed towards consciousness-raising and an evaluation of the implications of women's liberation, reinforced the growing idea that traditional rules, beliefs and attitudes were no longer suitable or applicable to the changing landscape. Ann Romano's character was "acutely aware that all of the rules by which she'd lived her life were no longer applicable" (Jones, 1992, in Down, p. 68). Prior to this period, "sexual freedom, gender stereotypes, class issues, and the impact of divorce on children – these were issues that simply had not been explored on television in a recurring fashion, at least not from a female, proto-feminist point of view" (Dow, p. 81).

In tandem with or perhaps in response to a growing feminist voice, other shows, such as WKRP in Cincinnati (1978-1982) and Barney Miller (1975-1982), highlighted masculine constructs from a male-dominated point of view. The fictional radio station was managed by men, the disc jockeys were male

and crossed racial and age boundaries, and both female characters, despite having intellectual wit, education and drive, were, in the case of Loni Anderson's character, hyper-sexualized (blonde, thin, hourglass figure, and flirtatious behavior to match), and, in Jan Smither's persona, limited by sexual tension with one of the male program directors. The world of Barney Miller, ensconced in a fictional police precinct in New York, had no women as detectives and provided little narrative representation for Miller's wife as a secondary character for one season. It did, however, also attempt to portray a wider diversity in ethnic, racial and generational characters: Sergeant Fish, acted by the then-70 year old Abe Vigoda, Nathan Harris (the African-American actor Ron Glass) Sergeant Wojciehowicz, a Polish-American detective, Sgt. Nick Yemana (Japanese-American), and Sgt. Miguel Amangual (Puerto Rican) exemplified the divergent cultural urban landscape of the city. It also reified the working-class/middle-class labor system – and men as the key drivers of it – by not including females within the workplace.

By the late 1970s and 1980s continuing seismic confluences of social, economic and political changes made it necessary for television content to reflect updated and changing realities. A number of critical trends influenced a sea change in television narratives: the continued strength of the women's movement, concern about television's influence on children, the failure to pass the Equal Rights Amendment, a political shift under the Reagan era framing liberalism as pejorative, the "discovery" of the female prime-time market, and the deregulation of media industries resulting in rapid consolidation and reduced power of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to regulate content and the subsequent weakening of the "Big 3" network dominance, (Press, p. 143; Davis, p. 326).

Programming now established its relevance by featuring the single or divorced mother, networks of mothers, combined families, and working/career women. Walters & Huck (1989) note, "The 1980s were recently characterized as a decade of 'feminization' for network television. The prominence of such series as Roseanne, Designing Women, and Murphy Brown suggest that working women have arrived in force on network television" (p. 677). Kate and Allie (1984-1989) told the story of two single mothers sharing parenting responsibilities. In a nod to the possibility of evolving masculine roles, Who's The Boss? (1984-1992) featured a female, single mother and committed career woman whose domestic care provider was male.

Concomitantly, networks were willing to attempt a move away from "symbolic annihila-

tion" (Tuchman, 1978) by increasing the representation of female characters working outside the home and developing primary character series around women's occupational roles. Seventy-five percent of female characters pursued careers in prime-time television in the 1980s, a figure much higher than the actual 55% employment rate in the U.S. (Walters & Huck, 1989; in Atkin et al., p. 679). Career-oriented shows like Cagney and Lacey (1982-1988), China Beach (1988-1991) and L.A. Law (1986-1994) showcased women in police detective, military nursing, and legal professions, combining "action, adventure...and melodramatic events" with compelling personal challenges (health issues, divorce, financial concerns, sexual and relationship dramas; Press, p. 143).

The characterizations of television women, however, left much to be desired. Females occupied lower-status positions, a finding consistent with research on occupational segregation data at this time regardless of profession. Only 6.6% of women were portrayed in managerial positions on television. Davis's 1990 study of 50 hours of prime-time network programming on 894 characters from shows broadcast in 1987 showed little if any changes in female portrayals. Women characters continued to turn up in similar proportions to those of the 1950s and 1970s (p. 330). Atkin et al.'s summary of more recent studies on 1980s programming, which analyzed 550 television characters, "confirm this view, as the vast majority conformed to male fantasies of scantily clad half-wits who need to be rescued (Women and Film, 1990)".

The 1990s

The advent of the 1990s ushered in a newer articulation (and response to) the second-wave feminist movement of the 1960s-1980s. Media coverage of the earlier women's movement had declared it "dead, dying, or permanently disabled" (Faludi, 1991; in Rhode, 1995). A 1981 cover story in the New York Times heralded the official end of the movement (Rhode, p. 689); the solution to "women's ills" was reframed as individual in nature and effort rather than a societal issue or transformation (p. 691). By denying legitimacy to the movement by denouncing the label of "feminist movement," media attempted to remove the possibility of negotiating feminist space (Kinser, 2004). Television and the women represented, I argue, by this point had gained sufficient momentum to carry forward not only a

third-wave feminist movement, but renegotiate female identities within a rapidly-changing era in the 1990s. Situating the third wave, then, requires a keen understanding of second-wave legacies and the remaining inequities that manifest themselves ideologically, structurally, and culturally in order to best interpret and engage in critical discourse around media and television portrayals at this time.

This is a rather herculean task, as third-wave feminism is "less fully formed than other branches of feminism" (Wood, 2010), embodies "multiplicity and the resistance to any single center" (Henry, 2004, in Wood, p. 87), and recognizes the issues associated with the intersectionality of gender, race, and class as requiring holistic solutions. The reproduction of media content and visual images, therefore, also requires an integrated analysis of these strands. More than previous generations, a distinctive feature of third-wave feminists is the extent of their knowledge of and comfort with media as a tool of engagement and resistance (Wood, p. 89). Media-saturation has reached epic levels; many third-wavers produce, create, reproduce and negotiate media spaces to advance feminist rhetoric, including blogs, zines, social media sites, and email campaigns (Harris, 2004; Kearney, 2006; Johnson, 2007; Nunes, 2006).

What is the relevance of this for television content and gender representations produced during the 1990s and 2000s? Studies examining mid-1990s network programming reveal a clear push toward contemporary portrayals of fully liberated and multi-faceted females represented across the marital spectrum (single, dating, married, divorced), in various occupations but always advancement-oriented (moving out of the service sector to managerial positions or entrepreneurial ownership), and embedded not only in relationships within the nuclear family but also with colleagues and peer groups. Sex in the City (1998-2004), Friends (1994-2004) and Seinfeld (1990-1998) featured ensemble casts that positioned women in primary roles, equal to those of the male characters in the cast. The X-Files (1993-2002) presented FBI special agents Fox Mulder and Dana Scully as colleagues who solved investigative cases around supernatural phenomena, using the foil of gender-attribute reversal by writing Scully as the logical, analytical, and somewhat detached skeptic (character attributes traditionally regarded as more masculine in nature) and Mulder as the more emotional, intuitive and empathic persona. These shows fit well within the ideological heritage being shaped around the third-wave movement: women could be different yet respect those differences,

build coalitions with the male gender, and confront sexist attitudes which may be "more subtle today than in 1960 or 1980, but still exist" (Wood, p. 88). For third-wave feminists, say activists Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richards (2000), "our politics emerge from our everyday lives" (p. 88). Gender portrayals on television during the 1990s, then, reflect the "doing of gender" (West and Zimmerman, 2000) in routine, mundane actions that permeate daily living. Friends and Seinfeld, and later Will and Grace (1998-2006), explore the potential for friendships and relationships – in essence, coalition building across genders and, in the case of the latter, against heteronormativity – to advance the movement against oppressive ideologies.

As with any form of social progress and rebellion, waves occur in fits and starts, often stalling and restarting during the process of progress. There are advancements, to be sure, in both gender portrayals and the minimization of occupational segregation in the television labor force during this era. Concomitantly, issues involving television labor disparities, overemphasis on certain character attributes, and underrepresentation of occupational portrayals continue to exist. A study by Lauzen (1999) analyzed the top-100 rated television programs in the 1995-1996 and 1997-1998 prime-time seasons, coding for character type, program, and behind-the-scene workforce composition (the creative arm of the industry: producers, writers, directors), as prior research suggests a positive correlation between a diverse gender composition and the final media product (Gitlin, 1983; Turow, 1984). The results bear out the direct correlation between homogeneity and content: the more non-homogenous the media content producers, the more likely the viewing public is to be exposed to a broader representation of character attributes and types, as these reflect cross-strata of society across race, ethnicity, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, and socio-economic status.

Lauzen's (1999) findings indicated a slight increase in the percent of female characters from the first (1995-1996) to the second season (1997-1998), from 37 to 39 percent (p. 362). As women's representation in earlier 1990s programming equaled roughly one-third of prime-time characters (Gerbner, 1993), this indicated a slight increase in representation over the decade. Sadly, the variable assessing representations of character age is less positive: the U.S. Census of 1998 reflected 29% of women in their twenties and thirties; on television, a full 61 (1995-1996) and 67 percent (1997-1998) were portrayed in this same age bracket. "In the forty and older age category, the percentage of women dropped from 26 percent to 24 percent" (p. 363), indicating an ongoing preference for younger women who are overrepresented, and a significant underrepresentation for older adult women. The variable assessing character age is

less positive: the U.S. Census of 1998 reflected 29% of women in their twenties and thirties; on television, a full 61 percent (1995-1996) and 67 percent (1997-1998) were portrayed in that age bracket. "In the forty and older age category, the percentage of women dropped from 26 percent to 24 percent" (p. 363), indicating an ongoing preference for younger women who are overrepresented, and a significant underrepresentation for older adult women.

In the behind-the-scenes workforce, significant correlations were noted in several variables. The percentage of female primary characters was positively correlated to the number of female executive producers, but negatively correlated to the number of male executive producers. The number of male creative personnel (producers, directors, writers and creators) outweighs females in the same positions by 3.6 to 1 (Glascock, p. 661). Lauzen's (1999) examination of gender composition also notes a positive correlation between macro-level influence of female executive producers and the increase of both female writers and the percentage of female characters with more gender-varied dialogue (p. 355). "With only one exception (female executive producers and first words in the 1995-1996 season), women behind the scenes increased the percentage of powerful language behavior of on-screen female characters. In both seasons, women executive producers, producers, and writers increased the percentage of first words, last words, and interruptions uttered by female characters" (p. 368), all linguistic indicators of a movement towards less gendered language. When women work behind the scenes, they make a significant impact on the number and portrayals of female characters "with fewer stereotypically male traits and more female characteristics portrayed across genders" (Lauzen & Dozier, 2004). By 1999, the percentage of women working in prime-time in gender-influential roles had not exceeded 25 percent (Lauzen, p. 369). Studies of later seasons (2005-2006) indicate a slight decrease, with women comprising "only 24 percent of individuals employed" (Lauzen, 2006a); this figure has increased in 2012-2013 to an historical all-time high of 28 percent (Lauzen, 2013).

Moving forward, then into the contemporary television landscape of 2014, how might the variability of gender portrayals be explained, particularly in the context of third-wave feminism which is interested in exploring contributory factors to gender inequality? Several perspectives have been put forth, divisible into structural (institutional), cultural (persistent hegemonic beliefs), and economic (producer, network, audience narrowcasting, social media) factors. Though prime-time television has improved in gender representation over time

(Signorielli, 2001, p. 18), the "nature of women's characterizations" – that is, the gender attributes with which women are categorized that ultimately reinforce stereotypical portrayals (age or appearance, for example) -- "is less encouraging" (Atkin et al., p. 679). Schiller's (1973) examination of labor market workers in a capitalist system shows the economic constraints that operate within institutional practice. Departures from formulaic, conventional narratives are perceived as threats to an expansion of audience viewership (Glasock, p. 666), particularly in a multi-channel era characterized by audience fragmentation (Webster, 2005). "Female-led shows...while attracting female viewers, tend to turn off males and may not be as appealing to advertisers or networks marketing mass appeal as series with ensemble casts or male leads, which tend to attract audiences more evenly split along gender lines" (Kissell, 2000, in Glasock, p. 666).

With cable television, direct broadcast, and "alternative delivery systems" capturing 80% of the U.S. television market, and broadcast network viewership down to 10% (Nielsen Ratings, 2012), decisions on media content and programmatic narratives are heavily based on polarization, the alignment of audiences to particular content and/or network programming. The media companies "are interested in creating loyal, demographically homogeneous audiences" (Webster, p. 369) as a driver of increased profitability. Regretfully, though audiences may seek out content that feeds their "predispositions," this process of group polarization may in fact reinforce beliefs and value systems around already ingrained gender stereotypes.

More appropriate representations of gender correspond directly to addressing structural inequities in the behind-the-scenes television workforce (Glasock, p. 666). Women who occupy powerful roles (executive director) in the television industry "exert more or less direct influence on the number of women characters on screen. They also increase the representation of women in other creative positions (e.g. writers) who in turn influence on-screen portrayals" (Lauzen, p. 371). As Greenberg and Collette (1997) note

Writers are hired by producers to write the script for the shows. Directors wield relatively little power in the industry and simply direct the actors based on scripts provided by writers and producers. As such, producers would seem more concerned with the general plot and major characterizations, while writers would be more responsible for incorporating extraneous, minor characters. Seemingly one way to increase female numbers in front of the camera would be to increase the ranks of female

writers, an idea reportedly endorsed by the television industry.

Interventions to address these concerns include the following: ideally programmatic content would be developed in an effort separated from the economic and market structures of networks, to best ensure equal gender representation. As this is clearly not possible, given that media companies live and die based on content creation, viewership and advertising revenue, institutional changes within the employment practices (recruitment, hiring) that target more women, and educational/occupational support for young women interested in pursuing media careers, are critical levers for influencing industry-wide change. This is particularly relevant when contextualized in the era of third-wave feminism and unprecedented media saturation. Not only are younger adult viewers savvy and sophisticated in better understanding the nuances of gender inequities (they grew up with second-wave feminist parents, in many cases, and although many will argue they live in a post-feminist world in which feminism doesn't matter, research continues to show their allegiance in aligning with movements and causes that battle discrimination; Kinser, p. 143), but they are more effectively reliant upon media dissemination to respond to programmatic content either positively (high ratings) or negatively (show cancellation). Paradoxically, competitive pressures in the industry place networks in a sort-of "catch-22" position: heavily-dependent upon ratings for sustenance, they seek to develop creative content that captures audience viewers yet also stays within conventional formulaic norms that have proven to be successful, and also market to audiences of female baby boomers and younger women (ages 18-49) "who have become the most sought-after target for advertisers" (Wood, 2010).

There is ongoing potential for substantive change in the television industry, programmatic content, and gender representations. It is possible to reinvent the media environment, reduce stereotypical portrayals, and subsequently transform our collective perceptions of gender differences, leading to a more equitable and just society that concomitantly meets the economic realities of media content producers and organizations.

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pants. "Every entrepreneur that I spoke with for this article has a story like that, maybe not as grotesque," Burleigh said. Burleigh says that's what people should be outraged about, not a clever graphic that many felt was in itself very sexist and deliberately provocative. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/02/03/newsweek-sexist-february-cover_n_6596120.html

And more on the problem of women's contributions to technology being overlooked: U.S. Chief Technology Officer Megan Smith, at January's "State of the Net" conference in Washington, complained that **Hollywood routinely omits women from historical movies they deserve to be in.** Female codebreakers key to cracking the Nazi's Enigma code during World War II were nowhere to be found in the Oscar-nominated "The Imitation Game." And "If you look at Rolling Stone's photographs about who made the Macintosh with Steve, seven men and five women appear in all those photos," Smith, a former Google executive, said in remarks reported by The Hill. "But in the scene of the movie from Hollywood, no women were cast in that scene." This is not a new beef for Smith. Last year, she told Elle Magazine how significant the omission of women from the Jobs biopic was: "Joanna Hoffman was the product manager for Mac, the fifth person on the developer team. The breakthrough for Mac was in fonts and graphics, and the person who did the core work on the front end was Susan Kare, who created all the Apple graphics you've ever seen," Smith said. "All the men in those photos from Macintosh's early days have speaking parts. All the women in those photos are not in the cast." http://thehill.com/policy/technology/230847-white-house-tech-chief-hits-hollywood-for-gender-bias http://www.elle.com/culture/tech/interviews/a14072/megan-smith-interview/

Who Makes the News?, the web site of the Global Media Monitoring Project, offers **a close look at the media's marginalization of rural women in Bangladesh.** Ignored even by periodicals and programming targeting the rural population, women are the central focus of fewer than 8% of news stories. In newspapers, women are portrayed more in photographs but quoted less in new stories compared to men. Moreover, less than one percent of these news stories across news media directly mentioned gender equality/inequality. In journalism, women are marginalized in the newsroom as well. The overwhelming majority (97%) of women seen on the television