Women and Minorities in Television: A Study in Casting and Fate[1]

A report to the Screen Actors Guild and The American Federation of Radio and Television Artists, June, 1993

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A child today is born into a home in which television is on an average of seven hours a day. For the first time in human history, most of the stories about people, life and values are told not by parents, schools, churches, or others in the community who have something to tell, but by a group of distant conglomerates that have something to sell.

This is a radical change in the way we employ creative talent and the way we cast the symbolic environment. The roles we grow into and the ways others see us are no longer home-made, hand-crafted, community-inspired. They are products of a complex manufacturing and marketing process. We are usually not aware of the relative shadings of each role because each is rationalized by the particular plot, the selected news event, the conventional rules of the game. We are even less aware of the associations common to large numbers of characterizations that we do not perceive to be parts of a wider pattern. That is why this study is necessary.

The report was commissioned by the Screen Actors Guild and the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists in connection with their continuing campaign to ensure that media decision makers reflect more fairly the diversity of the "American Scene" by broadening the range of images and increasing the presence of women, racial and ethnic groups, seniors and people with disabilities in television, film, commercials and all broadcasting and cable.

The study was conducted by the Cultural Indicators research team at the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg School for Communication.[2] It was designed to investigate patterns of televised messages and images presented to large and diverse publics over long periods of time.

The focus is on the basic building-blocks of storytelling: casting and fate. Casting the symbolic world defines the pool of human characterizations from which stories and images are drawn. Fate is the destiny associated with different social types. Who are the characters that populate the world of television? How are women and minorities (seniors, racial and ethnic groups, poor and disabled persons, etc.) represented? And, finally, how do they fare in that world?

The special concerns of this study have been the recurrent and inescapable images that cultivate conceptions of majority and minority status and the corresponding calculus of visibility, power, and risk. Inescapable also are the implications for the television industry—the people who sponsor it, run it, write, produce and direct its programs, and act in it.

Samples and Design

The results are based on the analysis of 19,642 speaking parts appearing in 1,371 television programs in 8 samples. Each season's programming, except cable-originated, is represented by a solid week's sample from the Cultural Indicators database. Cable-originated program samples varied from two to three weeks. The following is a list of samples, chosen to avoid seasonal, holiday, or other deviations from normal programming:

(1) Ten seasons of major network (ABC, CBS, NBC) prime time (8 to 11 p.m., EST) dramatic programs, 1982-83 through 1991-92; 675 programs, 30 percent "mostly humorous."

(2) Nine seasons of major network Saturday morning (8 a.m. to 2 p.m.) dramatic (mostly cartoon) programs, same as above with the

[1] An appendix containing 29 tables may be obtained by sending the author a self-addressed, stamped envelope to the University of Pennsylvania, 3620 Walnut Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104.

[2] The Cultural Indicators project was initiated by the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence in 1969 and supported by the Surgeon General's Scientific Advisory Committee on Television and Social Behavior, the National Institute of Mental Health, the White House Office of Telecommunications Policy, the American Medical Association, the U.S. Administration on Aging, the National Science Foundation, The Hoso Bunka Foundation, the National Cable Television Association and other organizations. The author of this report is the originator of the Cultural Indicators project and co-principal investigator (with Profs. Larry Gross, University of Pennsylvania; Michael Morgan, University of Massachusetts, Amherst; and Nancy Signorielli, University of Delaware) of the television Violence Index and other reports listed in the Bibliography. Results and interpretation are the sole responsibility of the project director. For able assistance and coordination, credit is due to Mariaelena Bartesaghi, Kristen Conrad, Cynthia Kandra, Amy Nyman and Nejat Ozyegin.

exception of 1989-90; 394 programs, 50 percent "mostly humorous."

(3) Major network daytime serial drama for the week of April 20, 1992; 60 programs, 7 percent "mostly humorous."

(4) Fox network dramatic programs for the week of April 20, 1992; 13 programs, 46 percent "mostly humorous."

(5) Cable-originated general dramatic programs transmitted by 11 major cable networks at different times during 1991 and 1992; 119 full-length programs, 53 comedy skits; 30 percent "mostly humorous."

(6) Cable-originated children's dramatic (including cartoon) programs transmitted during 1991; 26 programs, 35 percent "mostly humorous."

(7) Major network game shows for the week of April 20, 1992; 26 programs.

(8) Major network news; 10 weekday daytime local news for April 20-24, 1992 and 21 national evening national news programs for April 16-22, 1992.

"Dramatic" was defined as fictional programs with a story-line or plot, including series, films, cartoons and other clearly fictional programs shown on television. "Cable-originated" was defined as those programs, including feature movies, in whose production the 11 major cable networks had a substantial financial interest.

All programs were screened and coded by trained analysts using an extensively tested instrument of analysis. The procedure requires the reliable observation by multiple independent coders of programs and characters in the samples. Table 1 provides an overview of the number of characters in each sample. All Tables can be found in the Appendix.

Casting

Americans spend one-third of their freely disposable time with television. That is more than the next ten highest-ranked leisure-time activities put together. During that time, the average viewer of a major network station is exposed to an average of 355 characters playing speaking parts each week in prime-time dramatic programs, 353 in daytime dramatic series, 138 in Saturday morning (children's) programs, 51 in game shows, and 209 news professional (including repeated appearances) delivering the local and national news. During the sample period, the Fox network showed 149 dramatic characters, and the 11 cable-networks-originated programs together presented 624 characters in adult drama and 66 in children's dramatic programs. Overall, about one out of five characters play major roles.

Demographic Cross-Section

Although the coming of television introduced changes that are still sweeping the cultural landscape, the demography of the world on television is impressive in its repetitiveness and stability. Tables 2 and 3 display the results.

Women comprise one-third or less of the characters in all samples except daytime serials, in which they are 45.5 percent and in game shows, in which they are 55.3 percent. The smallest percentage of women is in the news (27.8 percent) and in children's programs (23.4 percent). As major characters, women's roles shrink in children's programs to 18 percent.

Age was observed in two ways. "Elderly" was a casting term for characters who definitely looked and acted old. Chronological age was also estimated. Tables 2 and 3 show the number and percent of "elderly" and separately of "seniors" judged to be 60 and over. While all seniors are greatly underrepresented, *visibly* old people are almost invisible on television. Their representation ranges from none on the youth-oriented Fox network and about 1 percent on network daytime series to less than 3 percent in other samples.

African Americans are most visible on Fox and in game shows. On major network prime-time programs, they are 10.8 percent and on daytime serials, 8.8 percent of all characters. They are least visible on Saturday morning children's programs (partly because identification of race and color is least reliable in cartoons).

Latino/Hispanic characters are rarely seen. Only in game shows do they rise significantly above 1 percent representation. Americans of Asian/Pacific origin and Native Americans ("Indians") are the most conspicuous by their absence. Less than 1 percent (in the case of Native Americans 0.3 percent) is their general proportion in most samples.

Almost as invisible are members of the "lower classes" (judged by a three-way classification of the socio-economic status of major characters). Although the U.S. census classifies more than 13 percent of the population (and one-third of African Americans) as "poor," and many more as low-income wage-earners, on network television, they make up only 1.3 percent of major characters in prime time, 1.2 percent in daytime, half that (0.6 percent) in children's programs, and 0.2 percent in the news.

Disability was recorded for major characters only. Physical disability is portrayed in 1.5 percent and mental illness in 3.7 percent of major characters in prime-time programs.

Next, we take a closer look at prime-time, daytime, children's Fox and cable-originated dramatic programs and news.

Prime-Time Dramatic Programs

Annual trends for all seasons studied have been tabulated and can be seen in Tables 4-15. Here we shall highlight and compare major network samples with Fox and cable-originated samples. (The latter were not all necessarily aired in prime time.

Major Networks

Despite changes in styles, stars, and formats, prime-time network dramatic television presents a

remarkably stable cast. As we have noted, two-third of the cast are men. The gender imbalance was virtually the same in the 1982-83 as in the 1991-92 season (35.0 percent and 33.9 percent, respectively). There is no clear overall difference in gender representation between major and minor characters.

Young and middle-aged adults dominate the cast of prime-time characters with more than 8 out of 10 (Table 16). "Elderly" characters are 2.5 percent (the real-life proportion is more than 12 percent). "Elderly" characters tend to decline in their proportion of the prime-time population, a trend contrary to real life.

Females "age faster" on television than males. Women tend to be concentrated in the younger age groups. Their proportion of "settled adults" declines significantly more than men's.

Romance may be rampant on prime time but marriage is not. Only 1 in 10 characters is married. Marriage is a more defining circumstance for women than it is for men (Tables 17, 28). Almost two-third of all men, but only 43.7 percent of women appear in roles whose marital status is undefined. Women are almost twice as likely to play the role of wife as men are to play the role of husband. One-third of all characters, but nearly half of all married characters, are married.

The population of prime-time television drama is overwhelmingly "middle class." About 9 out of 10 characters are so classified each year and, if anything, their proportion increased recently. As already noted, "lower class" characters make up 1.3 percent of the prime-time population; three times as many were "upper class" (Table 7). Women, who hold most of the lower-paid jobs in real life, are even more invisible. Their percentage of lower-class characters is 0.9 percent of all characters and 0.5 percent of major characters.

Race and ethnicity of prime-time characters is as skewed as gender, age and class. All people of color are 13.2 percent, African Americans about 10.8 percent of the prime-time population. These percentage fluctuated between 6 and 16 percent, with no clear tendency since 1982-83. In the 1991-92 season, African Americans were 12.4 percent.

Latino/Hispanic characters are 1.1 percent of the prime-time population, Asian/Pacific 0.8 percent and Native American ("Indian") 0.3 percent (Table 8). All seasonal fluctuation are within 1 percent of the 10-season average.

Some form of disability, as we have seen before, strikes 11.2 percent of prime-time major characters. Seasonal fluctuations range between 7 and 17 percent (Table 8). Physical injury afflicts about 8 percent of men and 7 percent of women (despite the fact that 49 percent of men and 31 percent of women suffer some violence). Physical illness strikes almost as many, and mental illness nearly 4 percent.

Fox and Cable-originated Programs

Fox network programming targets young viewers; their average age is 27. The average age of characters on Fox is 31—the youngest of all dramatic programs. (The average age of characters in major network and cable-originated dramatic programs is 35.) Fox is also heavily comedy and action-oriented, as is cable-originated programming. Consequently, more men and fewer women are cast in major roles. Seniors are fewer and those cast, play minor roles. On Fox, and to a lesser extent on cable-originated program, more characters are observed as unmarried and as injured than on the other networks (Table 18).

Daytime Serials

Daytime is serious business, mostly sexual and marital (Table 19). Only 7 percent of daytime drama was judged to be "mostly humorous," far below the prime time 30 percent. Daytime is the only daypart in which the number of women *almost* equals that of men (45 percent) and in which *almost* as many women (49 percent) as men play major roles.

Male hegemony is again preserved, if barely, in age-casting. Daytime favors men with a longer mid-life span, as does prime time. However, the age distribution is little more even-handed than in prime time (Table 19). The daytime cast is also more clearly and evenly defined along marital lines. The world of daytime serial drama has less use for maritally undefined men and more need for married men and women.

The class and race structure of daytime is similar to that of prime time, and, if anything, more "white." There are no characters with physical handicaps. Illness or injury are rare and seem to afflict mostly men.

Saturday Morning

Women are less than one-fourth (23.4 percent) of the Saturday morning cast. Their percentage ranges between 16 and 27 percent, with no clear tendency over time. (In 1991-92, they were 21.7 percent.) As major characters, their percentage goes down to 18; it ranges between 15 and 24, again with no clear trend over the nine seasons.

Cartoon characters make up most of the Saturday morning cast. Anthropomorphic animals and other creatures are not easily classified. Two out of 10 are "ageless," compared to only 2 out of 100 in prime time. "Elderly" characters are as invisible as on prime time. Their percentage was 1.8 in 1982-83 and 1.7 in 1991-92; the nine-year average is 2.3

Importance declines with age, as well as with gender. Children and adolescents play a larger role than in prime time (Tables 20, 21). More than 4 out of 10 female parts are young girls. As age increase, the percentage of major compared to minor roles drops, especially for women.

Curiously for children's programs, married characters, potential father and mother images, are less than half their prime-time proportions (Table 9). Saturday

morning shuns married women: they play 20 percent of major female roles in prime time, but only 3 percent in children's programs.

Social class, when it can be observed, is as skewed in children's as in prime-time program. The child viewer of Saturday morning major network programs would see, on the average, one lower class character every three weeks, usually in a minor role.

With more than half of all characters unclassifiable by race, people of color make up less than 5 percent of the Saturday morning program population. African Americans average 2.9 percent, though their proportion varies greatly, reaching 6.9 percent in 1991-92. Hispanics are seen, on the average, once every two weeks (0.5 percent) and Asian/Pacific Americans once every three weeks (0.3 percent), and mostly in minor roles. In the nine Saturday morning three-network samples, only three Native Americans appeared (0.1 percent).

Despite all the mayhem, only 3.2 percent of Saturday morning characters suffer any injury (in the 1991-92, none seemed injured) and 4.9 percent exhibit signs of any disability (in 1991-92, 2.3 percent).

Cable-originated children's programs present a slightly more equitable gender, race and disability character distribution, but otherwise, they resemble the Saturday morning cast.

Major Network Game Shows

Game shows feature a populist patriarchy. The contestants are more diverse than the casts of other programs. Women are 58 percent, African Americans 18.3 percent, Latino/Hispanics 4.6 percent—more than on any other program—and they tend to win more often than the others. The ringmasters, however, are all men (Tables 22, 23). Women who are not contestants are young assistants to the hosts. Three out of four assistants are seen but not heard.

Major Network News

The thematic structure of television news items provides the context within which the selection of persons takes place. The news item was defined by the newscaster's announcement of the topic. Each new topic started a new unit. A total of 434 news items were analyzed. Of 50 different themes coded, including political, economic, and human interest, the only issues judged to be significant or the main topics in more than 15 percent of the news items were issues of power: who has it, who uses it, who seeks it, and, most of all, who are threats to life, limb, and the social order.

Criminal activities and health issues each attract major attention in 18 percent of the items; law enforcement and other legal issues 16 percent each; and death and dying 15 percent. Women's rights attract major attention only in connection with abortion, in 6 percent of the items. Other minority groups, people or rights together are featured in only 3 percent.

That is the context of topics in which 1,825 persons appear either as delivering the news, cited in the news, or making news. Next to game show hosts, the world of newsmakers is the most male-dominated (Tables 24, 25). The mean age of those in the news is 41, the highest of all except game show hosts. Men are 64.3 percent of those delivering the news, 80 percent of those cited as authorities, and 81.9 percent of those making news. Women are most visible (35.4 percent) as news deliverers. As authorities cited, they drop to 20 percent and as newsmakers to 17.4 percent.

Productive aging in the news, even more than in other types of programs, is a privilege of men and majorities. Newsmakers over 60 are 12 percent of men, 6 percent of women, and 1 percent or less of other minorities.

African Americans are most visible (14.2 percent) as news-deliverers. They are 7.8 percent of newsmakers, and 4 percent of those cited in the news as spokespersons or authorities. Americans of Asian/Pacific origin are most likely to appear as sources cited (4.0 percent) and as delivering the news (2.3 percent). Latino/Hispanics make 1.5 percent of news, or less, in any category.

Government officials (including law enforcement) are 43 percent of newsmakers and 12 percent of authorities cited. Private business makes up 11.5 percent of newsmakers and 8 percent of those cited. The next highest newsmaking activity (6.4 percent of newsmakers) is of those arrayed against law and order: the criminals.

Minorities (except women) have a better chance to make news as government officials than as private business persons. Women in business are relatively more visible in the news than women in government. African Americans in government are four times as newsworthy as they are in business. This may be because African American business people rarely make news, or because government is more of an equal-opportunity newsmaker, or both.

The disparities are even greater when we compare news of legitimate and illegal activity. Women make news as government officials and business persons combined 9.9 times as much as in crime. The same ratio for men is 8.2, for Latino/Hispanics 5.0, and for African Americans 1.7. The ratio of business-related vs. crime-related news shows even more striking contrasts. For one woman in crime news, there are 2.6 in business news; for one man in crime news, there are 1.7 in business news; but for each Latino/Hispanic in business news, there is one in crime news, and for each African American in business news, there are 6.6 in crime news.

This begins the discussion of "fate" on television, the subject we turn to next.

Fate

"Fate" is the evaluation of characters as "good" or "bad" and the outcome (successful or unsuccessful) for which they are destined. We present the dynamics of "fate" in the multi-season samples of major network prime-time and Saturday morning programs.

First, we discuss the evaluation of characters as "good" or "bad" (also dubbed "heroes" and "villains"). Secondly, we discuss success and failure ("winners" and "loser") in terms of the objectives the characters set for themselves, whether those are good or bad. That judgment required fuller character development and was made only for major characters.

Significant proportions of mixed and unclear characterizations are ignored in much of this discussion. We proceed on the assumption that when evaluation and success are not clear, the character's "fate" is also not as determined as when those characteristics are well-defined. "Fate," therefore, means the clear-cut and unambiguous evaluation and goal-attainment of those characters for whom such judgments could be made.

Heroes and Villains

Seen from the birds-eye-view of this report, television seems to present a preordained world. Its distribution of values is as stable as its casting and thematic structure.

Positively valued ("good") characters outnumber evil ("bad") between two and three to one each of the years studied. From half to two-thirds of the cast are of "mixed" character. Children's program characters are more sharply differentiated, with fewer mixed evaluations.

For every "bad" man, there are about two "good" men, and for every "bad" woman, about five "good" women in both prime-time and Saturday morning programs. When we look at gender evaluation by age, however, we discover that older women in children's programs bear a disproportionate burden of negative characterizations.

While the ratio of "good" characters to "bad" is generally favorable to women, the evaluations are reversed for "elderly" women. For every elderly male villain, there are 13 male heroes of the same age. But for every such heroin, there is one elderly female villain. The proportion of "bad" old females is more than eight times that of "bad" old males.

Prime-time romance involves more young women than men, but more mature men than women (Table 28, 29). The disparity is even greater in Saturday morning children's programs. Nearly half (48.6 percent) of female romance is in adolescence. Men's romantic parts occur in greater numbers at all other ages. The child viewer may see three mature men involved in romance for every mature woman, and even a romantic old man every once in a great while, but never a romantically-involved old woman.

A ranking of "goodness/badness" ratios has been constructed by dividing the number of positively valued by the number of negatively valued characters in each group. The results give us an order of "villainy" (Tables 20-27).

Being "bad" is not necessarily all bad in the sense that one needs power to be a credible villain. Conversely, a "good" character may lack effectiveness to succeed, as we shall see later. But the results of this ratio show a relative sense of moral value attributed to different groups of characters.

We have already noted that, on the whole, there are more "good" than "bad" characters. We have also examined how many more (or less) are in each group. Here we shall line up groups we have identified in this study in the total casts of all characters. After that overall view, we shall see if being a major character changes the lineup. Finally, we shall look at the most important gender and other differences.

For every 100 heroes in prime time, there are overall 43 villains. On top of the prime time evaluation order are most minorities, women, and children. (Characteristics coded only for major characters will be discussed below.) Knowing the age, marital and family status of characters means more favorable portrayal than not knowing. Villains are disproportionately male, lower class, young, Latino/Hispanic and foreign, or at least not identifiable American.

The lineup for major characters shows relatively more Latino/Hispanic heroes, indicating that most Latino/Hispanic villains are minor characters. The most negatively valued characters, with actually more villains than heroes, are the mentally ill.

Differences by gender shed further light on some of these ratios. Evil aliens of color are all men. For males, it is better not to be married than to be married. Among all male characters, foreign, young, and Latino/Hispanic men have the least favorable "hero/villain" ratios. Foreign white and mentally ill males provide a disproportionate ratio of major male villains. The largest ratio of female villains in major roles comes from mentally ill and old women characters.

Saturday morning, disabled and older characters fare worse than in prime time. Gender comparisons show that, unlike in prime time, both men and women in leading roles are generally more evil than in other parts. Villains actually outnumber heroes among male aliens of color. Mother figures in leading roles—married, elderly, settled women—and major African American female characters, few as they are, are among the most wicked.

Winners and Losers

Those who succeed in their aims we call "winners," and those who fail "losers." A reliable determination of success in achieving objectives was made for major characters only. Although

"good" characters usually win and "bad" lose, it is possible for negatively valued characters to achieve their aims and for positive characters to fail. Therefore, we can consider this measure as one of effectiveness. A character may be good but ineffective, while another bad but effective.

As with heroes and villains, a significant proportion of mixed and unclear characterizations is ignored in this discussion in order to make the main points more distinct. Nearly half of all major characters are "mixed" both in evaluation and success. Of those judged "good," 63.2 percent succeed and 6.4 percent fail. Of the "bad" characters, 9.6 percent succeed, and 69.9 percent fail (Tables 14-29).

In prime time, boys and elderly men have a much higher effectiveness ratio than girls and elderly women. A ranking of success/failure ratios shows the order of failures for every 100 successes in selected groups. Latino/Hispanic and Asian/Pacific Americans have higher relative failure rates than most others. Foreign whites, Native Americans, and the mentally ill fail at least as often as they succeed.

Lower class men succeed more often than they fail, but lower class women fail as often as they succeed. To be cast as a major female character in prime time who is old, unmarried, ill, or poor carries a disproportionately high risk of failure. Women cast as Native American or Asian/Pacific leading characters, few as they are, are destined for failure; none of them succeeds in achieving her aims.

The world of Saturday morning children's programs is more starkly, and darkly, defined. More than one-fourth (25.5 percent) of all characters fail, compared to the prime-time failure rate of 18.4 percent. The failure of those depicted as mentally ill is higher (57.1 percent) than in prime time (42.3 percent). Boys and older men also have a higher percentage of success and lower percentage of failure than girls and older women.

Success/failure ratio rankings show that the general rate of failure is higher, and being married is even more of a losing proposition Saturday morning than in prime time. Foreign, old, and ill characters fail more than they succeed. The mentally ill fail twice as often.

Major male characters on Saturday morning programs run the highest risks of failure when they are cast as not American, over 60 and mentally ill. Major female characters are most likely to fail as foreign and over 60. While marriage hurts men and helps women in prime time, in children's programs it hurts both. Elderly women have four times the relative failure rate of elderly men. To be cast as an older woman or a mentally ill character in children's programs is to run the highest risk of ill fate on television.

Conclusions

Minorities are made, not born. Gender, race, class, ethnicity, age, and disability define society's power structure. Their portrayals affect how we see ourselves and each other. The world of television seems to be frozen in a time-warp of obsolete and damaging representations.

Women play one out of three roles in prime-time television, one out of four in children's programs, and one out of five of those who make news. They fall short of majority, even in daytime serials. They age faster than men, and as they age, they are more likely to be portrayed evil and unsuccessful.

Seniors of both genders are greatly underrepresented and seem to be vanishing instead of increasing as in real life. As characters age, they lose importance, value, and effectiveness. *Visibly* old people are almost invisible on television. Mature women seem to be especially hard to cast—and hard to take. They are disproportionately underrepresented, undervalued, and undersexed.

People of color, the vast majority of humankind, estimated to reach a majority in America by the year 2000, are 13 percent of the major network prime-time and less than 5 percent of children's program casts. African Americans are less than 11 percent of prime-time and 3 percent of children's program casts. Latino/Hispanics, over 9 percent of the U.S. population, are about 1 percent of prime-time and half of that of children's program casts. Americans of Asian/Pacific origin, more than 3 percent of the U.S. population, and Native Americans ("Indians"), more than 1 percent, are conspicuous by their virtual absence. Minorities are more likely to play minor than major parts. The world of daytime serials is even more "white" than prime time. A child viewer sees the fewest minorities.

In the overwhelmingly middle-class world of television, poor people play a negligible role. The low-income 13 percent of the U.S. (and much larger percentage of minorities and of the world's) population is reduced to 1.3 percent or less on television. Women of low income, who hold most of the low-income jobs in real life, are even more invisible.

As the 43 million disabled Americans gain legal rights of equal access and employment in real life, physical disability is visible in only 1.5 percent of prime-time television. Mental illness is portrayed in 3.7 of prime-time programs. Those shown as disabled fare relatively badly in Saturday morning children's programs. Mentally ill characters fare badly in all types of programs.

The Fox network and, to a less extent, cable-originated programs target young viewers; the age of their character population is skewed accordingly. Fox programs have the highest percentage of African Americans. Game show contestants are the most diverse, but the hosts are middle-aged men and their helpers young women, most of whom are only seen but not heard.

If prime time is a time of macho adventures, family comedies, and societal power-plays, daytime is a time of interior turbulence. Its sexual and marital themes raise female

representation but reduce social diversity below that of prime time.

Programs designed specifically for children's favorite viewing time, Saturday morning, may be expected to present a world that is more tranquil and fair than the troubled worlds of prime time and daytime drama. However, the world of children's programming is, in fact, the harshest and most exploitive. The inequities of prime time are magnified Saturday morning.

A child growing up with children's major network television will see about 123 characters each Saturday morning, but rarely, if ever, a role model of a mature female as leader. The Saturday morning viewer sees an elderly leading character, if at all, about once every three weeks, and it is most likely to be a man. Married and parent images are curiously rare and gloomy in children's programs. Older women, when seen, are most likely to play the villain. That is where witches come from.

All the mayhem in children's cartoons (32 acts per hour according to our studies) seems painless. Cartoon humor appears to be the sugar coating on the pill of cool, happy violence.

A disproportionate number of ill-fated characters comes from the ranks of poor, Latino and foreign men, and both young and old, African American, and poor women. At the bottom of fate's "pecking order" are characters portrayed as old women and as mentally ill, perpetuating stigma of the most damaging kinds.

Casting and fate also affect those who deliver the news, who are referred to and cited in the news, and who *are* news. In most essential characteristics, news deals with the exercise of power: who has it, who uses it, who seeks it, and, most of all, who threatens it.

Women decline in representation from 35 percent as newscasters to 20 percent as authorities cited and 17 percent as newsmakers. Other minorities are also most visible delivering and least visible making news. When they do, they are most likely to appear as government officials or as criminals. African Americans make news as criminals at least twice as often as other groups do.

These results present a record of television performance and policy. They show not what the industry says or thinks it does, but what it actually presents to the public. Therefore, they provide a basis for judgment and action regarding employment and programming policies vital to a democratic society.

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