



SCREEN ACTORS GUILD

PATRICIA A. HEISSER METOYER, Ph.D.
Executive Administrator
Affirmative Action

10/12/98
Save Vicky a copy

October 1, 1998

Dr. George Gerbner
234 Golf View Road
Ardmore, Pennsylvania 19003

Handwritten signature/initials

RE: Fairness and Diversity in Television and Movies Including an Update of the 1993 SAG/AFTRA Report on Women and Minorities on Television; Casting and Fate

Dear Dr. Gerbner:

Forwarded herewith are the following documents regarding the above mentioned project:

1. A check in the amount of \$10,000 balance due for the completed study. ✓
2. Comments on the Gerbner Report /Draft June 8, 1998- June 1993/Bart Story's 1997 Casting Data/ Affirmative Action Department Industry Totals 1984-1997. ✓
3. A summary of the plan for announcing the results from the Communications Department. *Mining*
4. An edited copy of the Gerbner Draft. *Mining*

Questions Regarding Final Report:

1. Will you be using the "Diversity Index" to Prod U.S. Entertainment Industry data in you final report?
2. The introductory statements are exactly the same as in the 1993 report will you be giving us new language to be used in our releases?
3. In your interview with Derrick Jensen discussing the impact of violence on children would it be possible to reference this more recent information in your final report?

A disproportionate number of ill fated characters come 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.

The results present the record of television performance and policy. They show not what the industry says or thinks it does but what it actually presents on the public's airways.

Therefore, they provide a basis for judgment and action regarding employment, casting, and programming policies vital to a democratic society.

Women

In 1993—played 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 fell short of majority even in daytime serials. They age faster than men do, and as they age, they are more likely to be portrayed evil and unsuccessful. 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 makes news as criminals at least twice as often as other groups do.

In 1998—one out of three roles in prime time television. They fall short of majority even in daytime serials. They age faster than men do, and as they age, they are more likely to be portrayed as sexless and evil.

What is the significance of this in light of the fact that as of 1997, the numbers of female executives producers and co-executive producers, producers and co-producers, and writers have increased significantly over the last decade, the number of female directors, cinematographers, and editors have remained stagnant? An examination of the genre analysis reveals that women in the creative behind-the-scenes community were most likely to work on romantic comedies and musicals, and least likely to work on horror and gangster films in the top 200 films of 1997. Can you make interpretations from your findings to address this data? What are the implications for future research?

Seniors

1993—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—hard to take. They are disproportionately underrepresented, undervalued, and undersexed.

1998—Seniors 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. Mature women seem to be disproportionately underrepresented, undervalued and undersexed.

Disabled

1993—As the 43 million disabled American gain legal rights of equal access and employment in real life, physical disability is visible in one 1.5 percent of prime-time

programs. 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

1998—As the 43 million disabled Americans gain legal rights o equal access and employment in real life, physical disability is visible in only 0.7 percent of characters. Mental illness is portrayed in 1.2 percent of prime-time characters. Mentally ill characters are presented as bad people who fare badly in all types of programs.

Minorities

1993—The Fox network and to a lesser extent cable —originate 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.

1998—Minorities are made, not born. Gender, race, class, ethnicity, age, and disability define society's power structure. Their portrayals affect how we see each other and ourselves. The world of television seems to be frozen in a time-warp of obsolete and damaging representatives.

Children

1993—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 tat 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 see, are most likely to play the villain. That is where witches come from.

All 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.

Could you include more discussion regarding these findings and socialization of children?

1998—

People of Color

1993—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 is less than 11 percent of prime time and 3 percent of children's program casts. **Latino/Hispanics, over 9 percent of U.S. Population. Is 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 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.

1998—People of color, estimated to reach a majority in America by the year 2000, are 18 percent of prime time network characters... African-Americans are 12.3 percent of prime-time, but **Latino-Hispanics, over 10 percent of the U.S. population, are about 2.6 percent of prime time and 3.7 percent of daytime serials.** Americans of Asian/pacific origin, 3.4 percent of the U.S. population, also suffer conspicuous by their virtual absence as 1.4 percent of prime time and 0.4 percent of daytime roles. Minorities are more likely to play minor than major parts. The world of daytime serials is even more "white" than prime time.

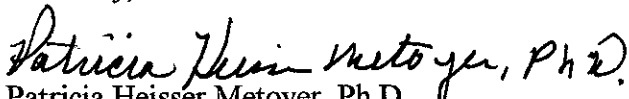
If prime time is a time of macho adventures, family comedies, and societal power plays, daytime is a time of interior turbulence. Its sexual and marital themes raise female representation but reduce social diversity below that of prime time.

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.

In summary, obviously the picture still looks very grim with respect to representation of minorities, women and the disabled in the industry. We plan to strategically release the findings of your study along with the employment statistics of the Screen Actors Guild. As soon as you can revise and finalize your report, we plan to schedule a nation press event.

If you have further questions please feel free to contact me at 213-549-6643.

Sincerely,


Patricia Heisser Metoyer, Ph.D.
Executive Administrator
Screen Actors Guild