

TELEVISION DEMOGRAPHY: WHAT'S WRONG WITH THIS PICTURE?

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The study examined 1,755 characters cast in the 1997 prime time network television drama programs from the four major networks (ABC, CBS, NBC, Fox) and WB and UPN.

Highlights of the findings:

- * Poor people are almost invisible on commercial television, making up only 1.3 percent of characters.

- * Black males are increasingly presented as relatively more numerous and prosperous than whites, thus masking the actual situation.

- * Women, Hispanic and Asian characters are greatly under represented.

- * Characters between ages 25 and 40 are over represented; all other age groups are under represented.

- * Children and older adults, and especially mid-life and older women, are virtually absent from the world of television.

REPRESENTING TELEVISION DIVERSITY WITH DEMOGRAPHIC INDICES

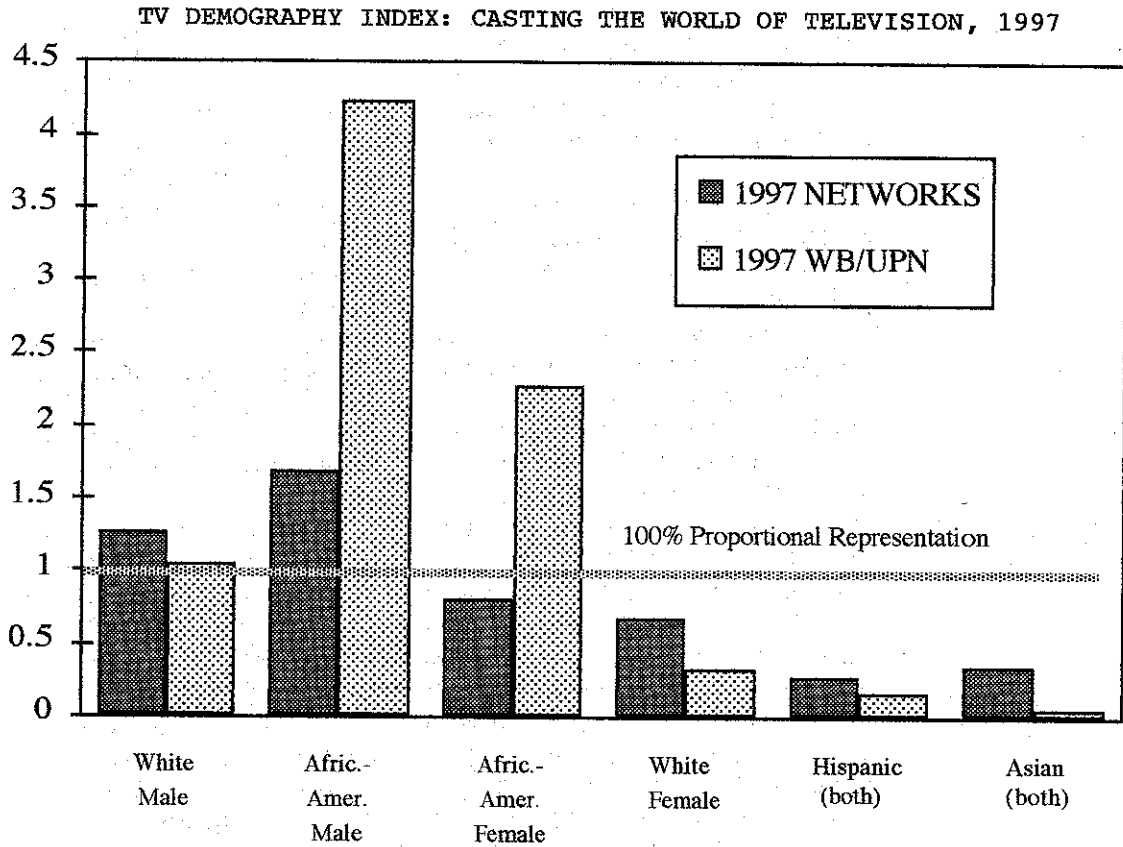


Figure 1. The cast of all (1,755) speaking parts of human characters on prime time network television drama in 1997, comparing four major networks (ABC, CBS, FOX, and NBC) with "black-oriented" WB and UPN. An index value of 1.0 (100% line) indicates accurate proportional representation according to 1996 US Census. "Proportional Index" in Table 1 below refers to deviations from the 100% representation line.

Table 1. TV Demography Index: Casting the world of television, 1997

Demographic Categories	ABC, CBS, NBC, FOX		WB, UPN		US Census % of actual US Population
	Number of TV characters	Proportional Index	Number of TV characters	Proportional Index	
White Male	52%	1.27	43.2%	1.05	40.7%
Afric.-Amer. Male	10%	1.68	25.6%	4.23	6.0%
Afric.-Amer. Female	5.3%	.80	15.2%	2.27	6.6%
White Female	28.4%	.67	14%	.33	42.0%
Latin./Hisp.	2.9%	.35	1.8%	.17	10.7%
Asian-Pac.	1.2%	.27	.2%	.06	3.4%

TV DEMOGRAPHY INDEX: CHANGES IN GENDER AND RACE, 1994-97

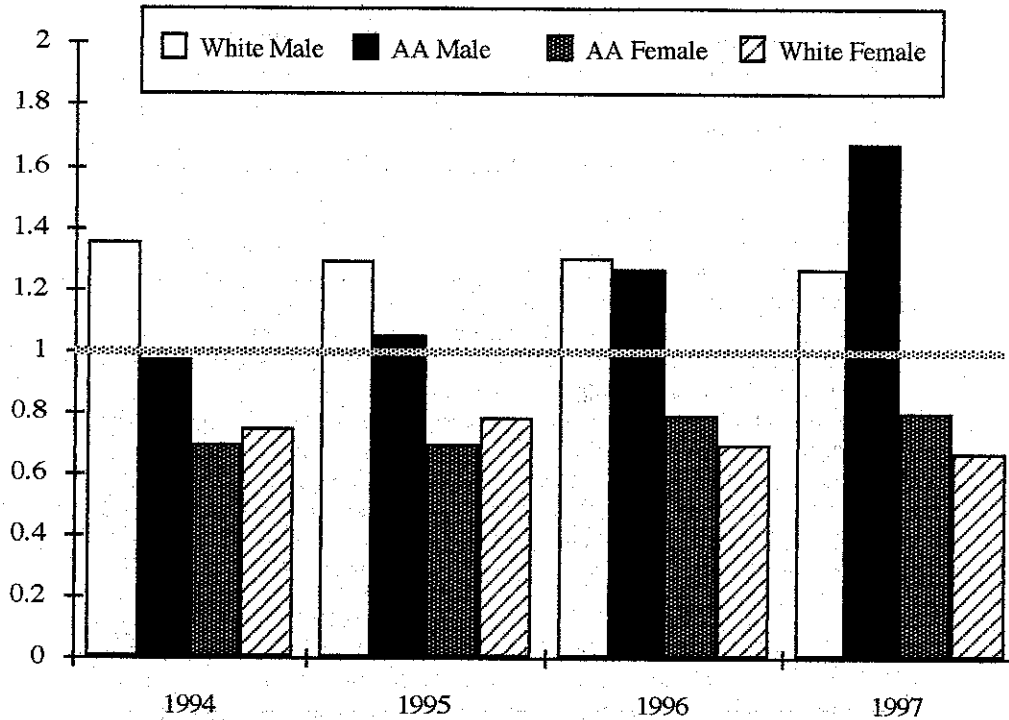


Figure 2. Annual changes in TV gender and race of all speaking parts (6,757 characters) from 1994 through 1997 on the four major networks. An index value of 1 (100% line) indicates accurate representation according to 1996 US Census estimates. Table below refers to deviations from the 100% representation line.

Table 2. TV Demography Index: Changes in gender and race, 1994-1997

Demographic Categories	1994	1995	1996	1997
White Male	1.36	1.29	1.30	1.27
Afric.-Amer. Male	.97	1.05	1.26	1.68
Afric.-Amer. Female	.69	.69	.79	.80
White Female	.75	.78	.69	.67

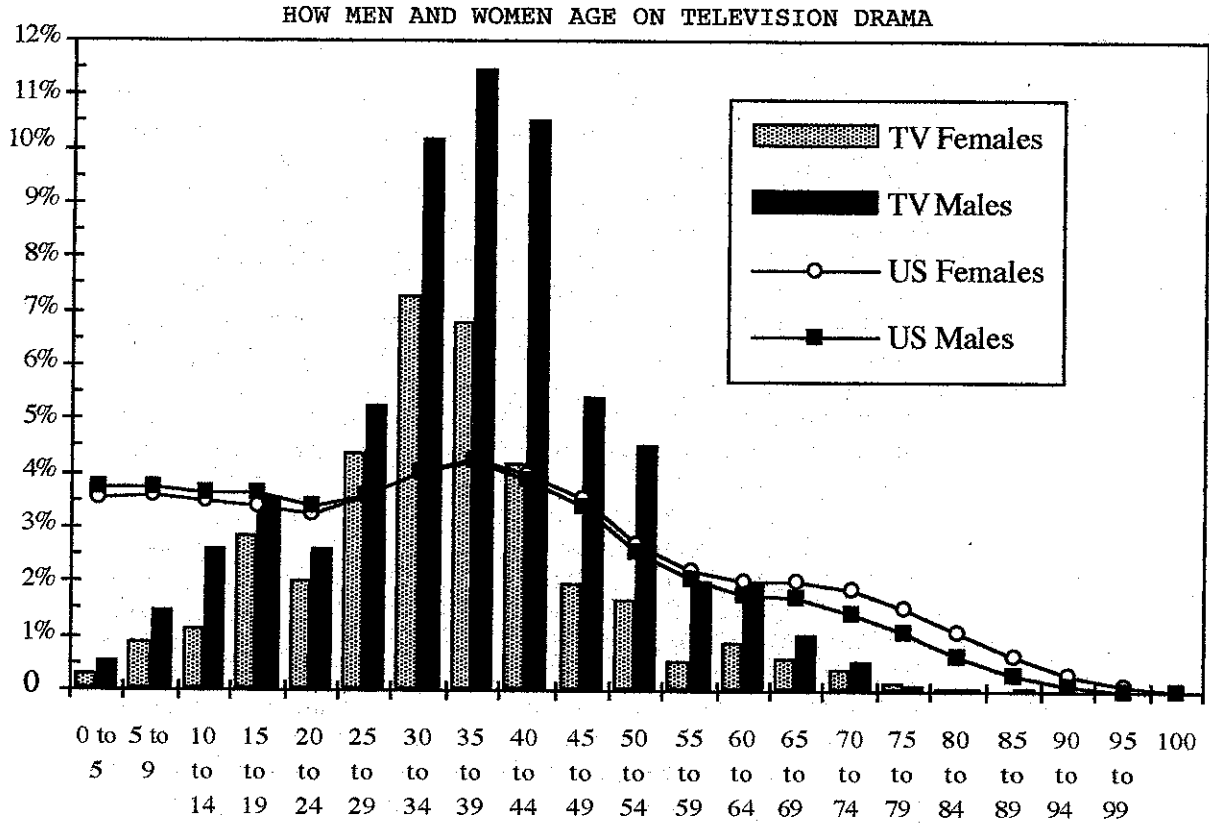


Figure 3. Age and gender distribution of the prime time major network television cast (all speaking parts, ABC, CBS, FOX and NBC 1994-97 and WB and UPN in 1997) compared to US Census figures for the same years.

Table 3. How men and women age on television drama

	0-5	5-9	10-14	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	50-54	55-59	60-64	65-69	70-74	75-79	80-84	85-89	90-94	95-99	100
% US Males	3.7	3.8	3.7	3.6	3.4	3.6	4.0	4.2	3.9	3.4	2.6	2.2	1.8	1.7	1.6	1.4	1.0	0.6	0.3	0.1	0.0
% US Fem.	3.6	3.6	3.5	3.4	3.2	3.6	4.0	4.3	4.0	3.5	2.7	2.2	2.0	1.9	1.8	1.6	1.1	0.7	0.4	0.2	0.0
% TV Males	0.5	1.5	2.6	3.5	2.6	5.3	10.0	11.5	10.5	5.3	4.4	2.0	2.0	1.8	0.5	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
% TV Fem	0.3	0.8	1.1	2.8	2.0	4.3	7.3	6.8	4.2	2.0	1.5	0.4	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

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