

Women in television and film:

How on-screen roles and behind-the-scenes jobs limit the future of females in the industry

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Abstract

Various factors contribute to the issue of gender imbalances in the television and film industry, including motherhood demands, networking barriers, and cultural practices. For this study, news media, television broadcasts, and film productions are all explored as each sub-industry shares many standard environmental features. The global history of women in television and film—both on-screen and behind-the-scenes, statistics covering the presence of females in the industries, organizational structures, sexism and discrimination in entertainment workplaces, and the challenges facing women in film and television are all examined.

Keywords: gender imbalances, networking, media, television broadcasts, film production

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Introduction

Although there may be discrepancies between men and women in various industries across the globe, there is clear, evident gender imbalances in television and film, both on-camera and behind-the-scenes, appearing in the forms of occupations held, roles played, quantities of each gender present, environmental conditions, and mentors guiding the way to success. Despite the rise of current stars and personalities, such as Kerry Washington, Reese Witherspoon, and Oprah Winfrey, and the monumental legacies of Mary Tyler Moore and Lucille Ball, it appears to the public eye that women are still required to go above and beyond, outperforming their male counterparts in hopes of creating an impact and sustaining a sufficient level of respect and recognition. All of the aforementioned women are more than just actresses. They have taken on additional roles and responsibilities, fulfilling the expectations that in order for a female to be a leader in the industry, they must go beyond the functions of an actress.

This issue is not just present in front of the camera, as many female creators and showrunners hold positions beyond their primary roles. Marta Kauffman, most notably known for her work on *Friends*, *Dream On*, and *Veronica's Closet*, is one key executive that has set a new standard for women as she has succeeded in the roles of co-creator, showrunner, writer, executive producer, and even most-recently finding success as a director on one of her biggest triumphs, Netflix's *Grace and Frankie* (Morfoot, 2020). Many of these roles Kauffman completed simultaneously, and she recently received the 2020 Norman Lear Achievement Award in Television, presented by the Producers Guild of America (Morfoot, 2020).

Amy Sherman-Palladino is another example of a woman working on the creative side of television and film in numerous roles simultaneously. Sherman-Palladino is most known for her work as a creator, writer, director, and executive producer for groundbreaking television series including *Gilmore Girls*, *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel*, and *Roseanne*, which is where she discovered her big break in 1990 into the television industry when she co-wrote an episode with another female writer and “tackled the issue of birth control,” a topic that was often taboo in television and film at the time of its broadcast, and led to Sherman-Palladino’s first Emmy award nomination (Moreau, 2019).

Literature Review

Despite the rise of female stars and personalities, including Oprah Winfrey, Reese Witherspoon, and Kerry Washington, the number of women working behind-the-scenes in television and film has remained scarce, and often absent, both in present industries and the history of media. Other present-day notable, experienced creators and executives in television include Amy Sherman-Palladino, of *Gilmore Girls* and *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel*, and Marta Kauffman, of *Friends*; however all of these women are exceptions to the existence of women working in film and television and are neither the standard nor the norm of the industry. There are various factors that likely contribute to this issue of gender imbalances, including motherhood demands, networking barriers, and cultural practices.

For this study, news media, television broadcasts, and film productions are all explored as each sub-industry shares many standard environmental features. The global history of women in television and film—both on-screen and behind-the-scenes, statistics covering the presence of

females in the industries, organizational structures, sexism and discrimination in entertainment workplaces, and the challenges facing women in film and television are all examined further.

History of Women in Television and Film

Many individuals who are currently involved in film and television production may believe these industries have always been male-dominated; however, that is not factually correct. Women have been involved with film-making, and eventually, the beginning of television production since the silent era during the 1890s-1920s (Clarke, 2018). The insufficient levels of females working behind-the-scenes in today's industries is a result of a shift in jobs from above-the-line positions to below-the-line placements. Previous research surrounding the history of film-making and television broadcasting often fails to discuss the presence of female employees as well as their accomplishments, despite evidence that women held many editing and screenwriting jobs before the industry's shift of gender roles moved below-the-line (Clarke, 2018). According to Clarke (2018), industry jobs, such as editing and screenwriting, maintain similarities to other established female professions in outside industries.

Women were not removed from the industry but were, instead, moved to film-working jobs from prior positions in film-making. Many males received a boost in the industry due to this shift in female occupations. Men began to predominantly fill the creative jobs and above-the-line roles of directors, writers, and producers. Meanwhile, women were found working menial and technical positions in below-the-line assignments, including employment as secretaries, wardrobe assistants, camera operators, and grips (Clarke, 2018, p. 826).

The 1960s and the 1970s were a significant period for the media and film industries as well as women's studies and the institutionalization of feminist theory as the women's rights

movement started the “second wave of feminism” in the 1960s and created multiple theoretical perspectives ranging from liberal to radical and even social feminism (Kosut, 2012, p. xxi).

Feminism refers to the commitment and loyalty towards improving the daily lives and livelihoods of women in addition to improving the societies in which they live (Kosut, 2012, p. 90). These second-wave feminists explored a possible link between images of women in media, specifically advertisements and magazines, and the “perpetuation of sexism and misogyny” (Kosut, 2012, p. xxi). Betty Friedan, who some considered to be a liberal feminist, examined the content of women’s magazines while also analyzing how stories and advertisements normalized and celebrated a female’s place within the home. Friedan found that the content strengthened the belief that all women were required to carry out their fundamental roles in society as mothers and devoted wives (Kosut, 2012, p. xxi). Andrea Dworkin, a radical feminist, argued for a correlation between pornographic images of women with the real experiences of females who worked in the porn industry. Dworkin believed that obscene media content should not have the same protections as free speech, due to the view that it is founded on, in addition to contributing to the “perpetuation of sexual assault and violence against women,” (Kosut, 2012, p. xxi). While both of these feminist scholars complicate varying forms of content in mass media, they also both believe a correlation exists between the daily lives of women and men and the representations of each gender in the media. Current feminists continue to showcase issues and break down popular culture messages in the media (Kosut, 2012, p. xxi).

Mass media has always consisted of exclusion, especially that of women and other minorities, both on-screen and behind-the-scenes, in Hollywood films, newspapers, network and cable television, and radio (Kosut, 2012, p. xx). Mass media can be seen as a source of

information, entertainment, pleasure, and an escape; however, the media is often criticized as being overly political, whether liberal or conservative, superficial, sexualized, and excessively influential in the everyday lives of both young adults and minors (Kosut, 2012, p. xix). In terms of network television news reporting, only a handful of women sat behind the anchor desk before the 1970s. At the same time, an absence of females was also found behind-the-scenes within the positions of reporters and writers. Two women began to pave a path for female news anchors: Barbara Walters in the 1970s and Connie Chung in the 1990s (Kosut, 2012, p. xx). However, both of these women were only co-anchors and were joined at the news desk with their male counterparts, Harry Reasoner, with Walters and Dan Rather with Chung. Katie Couric was the first female solo nightly news anchor in 2006 (Kosut, 2012, p. xx).

Many research studies completed on Hollywood's cultural production demonstrate a "problematic trend of disadvantages in opportunities and outcomes facing women" (Erigha, 2015, p. 78). This issue leads to a lack of diversity on-screen becoming routine in film-making and television broadcasting in addition to stereotypes plaguing production workers. Many print newsrooms followed a similar path of excluding women in their key reporter roles or assigning females to cover news stories that were assumed to be of feminine interest and ranged from topics revolving around fashion, beauty, entertainment, health, and celebrities. Meanwhile, male reporters covered subjects of hard news that were significant, both culturally and politically (Kosut, 2012, p. xx). These practices and habits have led to a stereotypical belief that stories of high significance and a more serious nature will more naturally fall under the male scope and responsibility. Stereotyping is a significant deterrent to a woman's attempt to progress her career as the tendency for other individuals to generalize and establish these stereotypes can only

prohibit a female's work. To reach a level of broad acceptance, societies must be able to recognize that women contain a wide range of diverse styles, attitudes, and abilities, just as men do too (Fox and Renas, 1977).

In contrast to the history of women working in film, there was a significant lack of females in lead on-screen roles in addition to women often playing supporting characters that are typically housewives. Lucille Ball was an original pioneer for women on television. Her ideas for the show, *I Love Lucy*, in the 1950s was initially turned down by major broadcasters, which led to her and Desi Arnaz, her husband, funding the production through Desilu, their own company (Kosut, 2012, p. 74). By using film cameras to create a television program, Ball established the possibility for syndication to occur, which allowed the networks to seek out reruns to gain an additional source of income.

Ball also contributed significantly to the expansion of television. At the time when *I Love Lucy* premiered in 1952, only fifteen million television sets existed in homes in the United States; however, by 1954, this amount had doubled to over 30 million television sets in American houses (Alder, 2019). Within this period, Lucille Ball entrenched herself as the “most popular female comedian on television and [...] the most popular female practitioner of physical comedy in the first half-century of prime-time television,” (Alder, 2019). Ball also became only the second woman to lead a Hollywood studio, following the path paved by Mary Pickford in 1920 when Pickford formed the United Artists Corporation with her husband, Douglas Fairbanks, in addition to D. W. Griffith, a director Pickford had worked with for many years, and Charlie Chaplin (Frazer, 2019). United Artists Corporation functioned as a distributor for independent producers, who were often the leading stars in films, which allowed the artists to

sustain profits from their own projects and permitted the actors to “select or reject any role and control publicity” (Frazer, 2019).

Pickford continued to find success as a producer throughout the opening of United Artists and released many of her best films, including *Rosita* in 1923, *Pollyanna* in 1920, and *Little Lord Fauntleroy* in 1926. Known for its “gothic texture and brooding cinematography,” *Sparrows* was released in 1926 by United Artists and became a lesser-known, yet critically acclaimed, film (Frazer, 2019). Between 1920 and 1933, Pickford starred in sixteen films for United Artists, and she continued to produce many other projects following her retirement from acting.

Pickford became a trailblazer for women as her life and work established a “valuable role model for women,” despite not considering herself as a feminist due to her conservative views, both politically and socially (Frazer, 2019). Pickford’s audiences insisted on “middle-class conventionality”; however, her interpretations of on-screen characters provided attributes of “plucky independence” (Frazer, 2019). Despite Pickford’s career taking place in an “era when Victorian mores still predominated,” she became one of the only financially independent women in film during this time, which was a distinguished accomplishment, which she achieved through “hard work and gritty determination” (Frazer, 2019).

In 1970, *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*, which was created by James L. Brooks and Allan Burns, established itself as the first American sitcom revolving around a career woman not interested in gaining a husband (Kosut, 2012, p. xxvii). Further expanding on the idea of a working-woman, the television show *Murphy Brown* was created in 1988 and was also a situation comedy based on a woman who was not seeking a husband and, instead, focused on her as a journalist and news anchor. One specific storyline was centered around Murphy becoming

pregnant and deciding to raise the baby as a single mother without the father, which was noted by the Vice President at the time, Dan Quayle, to be symbolic for “the decay of family values in America,” (Kosut, 2012, p. xxix). In addition to *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* in the 1970s and *Murphy Brown* in the 1990s, *Maude* (1972-1978) showcased strong women in leading roles while other productions, such as *Ally McBeal* (1997-2002) further persevered with female-leading storylines (Kosut, 2012, p. 74).

Television and film characters that depicted women in traditional marriages and rearing children reinforced gender stereotypes, despite the increases in appearances of more females in non-domestic roles (Kosut, 2012, p. 74). These traditional representations strengthened a society that was designed primarily for white, middle-class women while avoiding the concerns of non-middle-class females. Although women continued to make up the majority of victims in crime and police procedural programs, some productions began to carve their own path, including *All in the Family*, *The Golden Girls*, *Family Ties*, and *The Cosby Show* (Kosut, 2012, p. 74). While intentionally parodying undermining domestic stereotypes, *All in the Family* (1971-1979) showcased the “ignorance and ridiculousness of a traditional 1960s husband, Archie Bunker [...] whose submissive housewife [...] often, if unwittingly, foiled her husband’s bigotry and chauvinism,” (Kosut, 2012, p. 74). *Family Ties* revolved around a strong mother in the 1980s who appreciated the equal relationship she shared with her husband, despite them being “ideologically at odds with a neoconservative Reaganite son” (Kosut, 2012, p. 74). For the very first time, an upper-middle-class black family was depicted in *The Cosby Show* (1984-1992) as social leaders within their society while *The Golden Girls* (1984-1992) showcased “four aging

women who debunked the grandma stereotype with active lives, rapier wit, and a healthy interest in dating and sex,” (Kosut, 2012, p. 74).

The cultural icon of the ‘supermom/superwoman’ exemplified the “evolving feminine mystique” in the 1980s and the 1990s (Kosut, 2012, p. 128). These supermoms showcased their ability to be in control of their family and work domains, which was rare to be seen since situational comedies, also known as sitcoms, hardly ever displayed the labor of mothers equally at home and work. The improvements and expansions of female representation in television have helped some women gain additional access to positions within production companies; however, these adjustments have transpired “within the context of major media conglomerate control” (Kosut, 2012, p. 75). These companies anchor on the goal of increasing profits and obtaining advertisers, therefore, the opportunities for “radical social change” in both production and representation is minimal (Kosut, 2012, p. 75). PBS does provide some possibilities through the airing of documentaries that focus on significant women’s issues and are often directed by women. Yet still, a fear of losing advertisers, in addition to membership support, limits PBS and forces the company to minimize the controversial materials covered (Kosut, 2012, p. 75).

Expanding on the inclusion of superwomen characters, Alanis Obomsawin, a Canadian and Indigenous filmmaker, has incorporated an underlying theme in the majority of her work: the females in her films, both women and girls, are typically in roles of peacemakers, mothers, warriors, and women’s activists (Freeman, 2011, p. 187). These characters will nurture their people and act as a teacher while fighting for their own individual rights as well as the rights of other members of their community while also serving as “intermediaries and negotiators in times of conflict,” (Freeman, 2011, p. 187). Freeman (2011) studied films that covered economic,

social, and political conditions that many women experienced, including subjects of varying ethnic and racial backgrounds, classes, working conditions, family relationships, and political perspectives (p. 4). A significant theme in this form of film is the filmmaker's "insistence on women's self-determination in the face of prejudices of all kinds [and] perspectives that apply to media workers" (Freeman, 2011, p. 4).

Global Film History

When exploring the global history of film and television and examining the impact on current practices and environments, one industry that can be studied is the Spanish film and television industry. In Spanish cinema, there are three female filmmakers that are considered to be the pioneer women for Spanish cinema (Cascajosa, 2015, p. 49). These pioneers are Pilar Miró, Josefina Molina, and Cecilia Bartolomé and were the first female directors to graduate from the Official School of Cinema, also known as the Escuela Oficial de Cinematografía, or EOC (Cascajosa, 2015, p. 28). Although Molina and Bartolomé are referred to as two of the women pioneers of Spanish cinema, they were not amongst the first women creators of Spanish television, who are often forgotten in discussions of women's history and the Spanish Transition, which is further discussed below (Cascajosa, 2015, p. 30). Miró, along with Pilar Ulía and Clara Ronay, were the original three women who worked as filmmakers in television in 1968 (Cascajosa, 2015, p. 30). One year later, Molina joined the group as the fourth female filmmaker. The women pioneers of Spanish cinema, which comprises of Molina and Bartolomé with Miró, may have been the first women to graduate from EOC; however, they were not the only ones to do so during this period.

Before the women pioneers of Spanish cinema, at least four other female directors existed in Spanish film: Rosario Pi, Helena Cortesina, Ana Mariscal, and Margarita Alexandre (Cascajosa, 2015, p. 49). Cascajosa (2015) argues that Molina, Bartolomé, and Miró are referred to as the pioneers who paved a path for female filmmakers since Pi, Cortesina, Mariscal, and Alexandre “remained outside the canon and lacked recognition” which, in turn, made it infeasible to inspire future female filmmakers through the establishment of a sense of continuous progression (p. 49).

In order to comprehend the impact that Molina, Bartolomé, and Miró had on Spanish film, the political and cultural events and changes that came to Spain as a result of the Spanish Transition must also be examined. The Spanish Transition refers to a time in which the political environment of Spain shifted from a dictatorship to a democracy in the late 1970s and coincided with the rebirth of the feminist movement, both of which contributed to the “decriminalization of adultery and contraception in 1977, the equality statements of the Constitution of 1978, and the regulation of divorce in 1981,” (Cascajosa, 2015, p. 33). These legislative changes promised Spanish women a new social status and a higher quality of life.

The Spanish Transition was a critical period in history due to numerous intriguing political and cultural events occurring (Cascajosa, 2015, p. 32). According to Cascajosa (2015), representations of women, in addition to other minorities, through film and television broadcasting, deeply reflected fundamental changes that transpired throughout the Transition era (p. 36). During this period, alienated groups, including women and LGBTQ+ individuals, began to participate in public life and make themselves noticeable. The change in the political environment led to more women becoming workers and an increase in female students at

colleges and universities in addition to a rise in “liberal professions and of those who renounced marriage and motherhood” (Cascajosa, 2015, p. 32-33).

During the Spanish Transition in the 1970s, the involvement of women in Spanish cinema would significantly expand. According to Cascajosa (2015), the number of professional females who filled relevant occupations in film and television would remarkably impact the industry with their own individual work (p. 30). The existence of women in Spanish media and broadcasting would become universal during this time period in genres ranging from “news [programs] to children’s fiction [programs] and entertainment” (Cascajosa, 2015, p. 30).

Pilar Miró is the most notable pioneer and started her career as an assistant news editor while also being assigned to tasks such as cleaning the studio and television sets (Cascajosa, 2015, p. 27). Prior to Miró becoming the first female in Spanish film to be employed as an assistant director, women were prohibited from working inside of a control room due to the belief that they “only served to distract people” and the assumption that the position was not considered to be a women’s occupation (Cascajose, 2015, p. 27). While looking to further her experience working in film, Miró approached her programming director, Adolfo Suárez, who eventually went on to become the first democratic president of Spain during the Transition, and asked if she would be allowed to direct dramas; however, he declined permission under the belief that he did not trust a woman to lead a drama show (Cascajose, 2015, p. 28). Nevertheless, she persisted and eventually became the first female director of a television drama in 1966. Miró’s most recognized program consisted of a plot revolving around the challenges a young woman faces while being employed in a sexist organization, likely inspired by the struggles Miró encountered under the male-dominated Spanish television industry (Cascajose, 2015, p. 29).

The Spanish Broadcasting industry became a hostile environment for females in large part due to the long working hours, which contributed to Miró's reputation as a "strict, bad-tempered, and unpleasant" director. However, Miró claimed she developed this method of work in an attempt to make herself understood by male colleagues (Cascajose, 2015, p. 29). This hostile environment can still be found in film industries across the globe. The idea of women being more strict bosses than males within organizations exists across varying industries as well. When a woman exercises a high degree of assertiveness, she may be referred to as a bossy female. Yet, if she utilizes a gentle approach to subordinates, she is "a sweet young thing who lacks the guts to be a good manager," (Fox and Renas, 1977, p. 29).

Spanish television fiction programs in Miró's era accurately portrayed and showcased many gender discourses as well as the cultural representations of womanhood, which was especially critical during the Spanish Transition period consisting of numerous fascinating cultural and political, historical events (Cascajose, 2015, p. 32). During this era, many minority groups of people, including women, started making themselves visible through participation in public events and lifestyles, including enrolling in academic institutions, attaining employment, and rejecting involvement in marriage and motherhood (Cascajose, 2015, p. 32-33). The feminist movement was reborn in the late 1970s and led to numerous changes in legislation, including the "decriminalization of adultery and contraception (1977), the equality statements of the Constitution of 1978, and the regulation of divorce (1981), which guaranteed Spanish women a new quality of life and social status," (Cascajose, 2015, p. 33). Many Spanish television programs during this time period helped establish a new outlook on the newly created roles of women in both the new-formed democracy and the broadcasting industry. By examining Pilar

Miró, her work, and the impact she had on the Spanish television industry, it is apparent that crucial changes made throughout the Spanish Transition period impacted the method of cinema and television for the future (Cascajose, 2015, p. 36).

In addition to the Spanish film and television industries, Bollywood, which is the Hindi film industry in India, has also made strides in achieving gender equality, both on-screen and behind-the-scenes. In 2017, IBM and two universities in Delhi, the Indraprastha Institute of Information Technology and the Delhi Technological University, completed an analysis studying 4,000 Bollywood films showcasing discrepancies between the “introduction of male and female characters,” (Ghosh, 2020). These results highlighted the varying identifiers for each gender. They found that professions were most often used for males while physical attributes or the relation to a male character was utilized for female characters, such as being a daughter or wife of a man.

Fortunately, Bollywood continues to take steps to repair the disparities between men and women by including more females in the filmmaking and writing processes, which are, in turn, contributing to a transition in perspectives throughout the creative process of filmmaking (Ghosh, 2020). In Alankrita Shrivastava’s 2017 film *Lipstick Under My Burkha*, four women are presented as well as their own individual journeys in “breaking free from the shackles of domestic limitations and embracing their desires,” (Ghosh, 2020). According to Ghosh (2020), although females are no longer solely “damsels in distress [needing] a muscled hero to swoop in and save the day,” Shrivastava’s film was initially denied certification for being overly “lady-oriented” while displaying the women’s “fantasy above life.”

For every two steps forward, Bollywood makes in reducing disparities between on-screen male and female characters; it appears the industry takes one step backward. Within a year of Amitabh Bachchan releasing the film *Pink*, which focused on the message that “no means no” in terms of men looking to advance with women without mutual consent, Bollywood delivered three films: *Great Grand Masti*, *Kyaa Superkool Hai Hum*, and *Mastizaade*, all of which focused on the mere purpose of women being to “flaunt their perfectly sculpted bodies in skimpy outfits,” (Ghosh, 2020).

Although Bollywood appears to be heading the right direction, in order to achieve gender equality, more will need to be accomplished than only releasing a handful of progressive films each year in an attempt to turn the tide on misogyny (Ghosh, 2020).

Kaushal (2020) agrees with Ghosh on Bollywood’s “chequered history” in terms of portraying women and the topic of feminism in films. Female characters in movies are most often found to be “surrendered to the male dominance or merely taken upon the chauvinist role of men” (Kaushal, 2020). One illustration of this problematic standard exists in Anil Kapoor’s 1990 film, *Ghar Ho To Aisa*, where the female protagonist was portrayed as a “male-hater who founded a women empowerment [organization] and manipulated women into breaking from their own families,” (Kaushal, 2020). Although the film was promoted as a top film of its time, *Khoon Bhari Maang* was an atrocious model for how to showcase feminism in Bollywood films as it displayed the main character, Rekha, in a “typical chauvinist role” while taking vengeance on her violent husband by making sure each member of his family ended up dead (Kaushal, 2020). On the contrary, Hrishikesh Mukherjee’s 1980 film, *Khoobsurat*, which featured the same actress,

Rekha, gave the female lead an impulsive, compelling character that she could champion and integrate her own personality.

Most recently, Bollywood films have acknowledged the fact that feminism does not have to be about “[demonizing] the men in the equation,” but instead revolves around patriarchy as well as a “patriarchal set-up” (Kaushal, 2020). *Kahaani*, directed by Sujoy Ghosh, was the first Bollywood film to guarantee that the main character, a female, embraced her femininity rather than displaying a strong sense of masculine pride in an attempt to prove her worth. At the same time, Vidya’s *Vidya Bagchi* did not steer away from “pregnancy and the physical limitations that come with it” in hopes of appearing as a heroine in the film (Kaushal, 2020).

In the 2017 film, *Anarkali of Aarah*, which was Avinash Das’s debut as a director, the character of Anarkali, played by Swara Bhaskar, appears as a “female version of Amitabh Bachchan’s angry young man” which is distinctly evident in the film’s climax scene, but there was a specific goal the film wanted to reach, which was to call attention to the utmost importance of a woman’s consent, no matter if she is a wife, friend, or a sex worker (Kaushal, 2020). The film “defied all patriarchal definitions of [a] woman and good [women]” and showcased Swara’s character’s resilience by not “[bowing] down to the criticism and rejection that is reserved for her [character] as a Bhojpuri singer and dancer,” (Kaushal, 2020).

Mittal (2019) argues that many women working in Bollywood face challenges with prevalent gender biases in addition to the “unorganized nature of the backstage work in the industry post-globalization of Bollywood,” (p. 160). Gender imbalances are another aspect of the discrepancies facing women in the male-dominated Bollywood industry, where the ratio stands at 6.2 men to everyone one woman working behind-the-scenes (Mittal, 2019). The study

referenced by Mittal (2019) analyzes the experiences of twenty women who held jobs behind-the-scenes, including the occupations of “make-up artists, scriptwriters, stylists, film journalists, editors, directors, and choreographers,” (p. 160). This study, which included well-known names such as choreographer Geeta Kapur, director Farah Khan, and producer Kiran Rao, examines the women’s status of employment in addition to their cultural and socio-economic positions in India.

According to Mittal (2019), parenting practices during these women’s childhood gave the feminists the “courage to choose their pathbreaking careers and later the role of Indian spirituality” in order to persevere through challenging events (p. 161). The majority of employment in the newly globalized Bollywood is of a scattered nature in large part due to the industry slowly becoming defined, which, in turn, produced critical challenges for women attempting to break into careers in the industry.

The women included in this study have all found success in transforming the image of their profession and have made the occupations “highly glamorous and attractive,” which was greatly due to the emergence of reality television in India (Mittal, 2019, p. 161). One woman featured was make-up artist Charu Khurana, who faced a courageous legal battle against the severely regressive 59-year old ban that prohibited women from working as make-up artists. This ban was created due to a fear of infringing on men’s employment opportunities in India.

Mittal (2019) argues that one frequent subject across all twenty women was “their tact in meandering their way through various roadblocks in their professional lives which constituted of intimidated men, suspicious regarding their talents, judgments on their dressing style and facing exclusion owing to being the only woman professional in their field,” (p. 162). Other struggles

encountered involved sexual discrimination, gaps in wages, harassment, and challenges with family. In hopes of establishing an “alternative cinematic trend in Bollywood,” many of these women attempted to create a “unique niche” and avoid taking over areas held by men (Mittal, 2019, p. 162). This was evident in Guneet Monga’s attempt to transform the Bollywood stereotype of song and dance sequences through experiments with varying genres.

Juhi Chaturvedi, a scriptwriter, also incorporated her personal experiences into the scripts she created for films that transformed the movie into real-life scenarios and struggles instead of being based on “grand escapist narratives” (Mittal, 2019, p. 162). Chaturvedi focused on transforming trends occurring while India was in the process of modernizing, which was exceptionally well received by the Indian film industry in addition to assisting in the encouraging of women’s voices in a post-globalized Bollywood.

Statistics

It is evident that women continue to be underrepresented in technical, below-the-line, behind-the-scenes jobs. According to Erigha (2015), only 16-18% of these roles were filled by females on top-grossing films from 1998 to 2011. In 2007, women held 13% of jobs behind-the-scenes on the top 100 worldwide grossing films, while 29% of these exact films had zero females working in technical, behind-the-scenes roles (Erigha, 2015, p. 83). In terms of film directors, the amount of female directors in Hollywood on the top 250 films each year has never reached 10% and even declined from 9% in 1998 to 5% in 2011 (Erigha, 2015, p. 83).

Although writing occupations in television have also struggled with female representation, the number of women in writing roles is significantly higher than those directing (Erigha, 2015). One staggering statistic is that in 2014 “female writers comprised 33% of all

writers on broadcast comedies and dramas and 27% of all cable television comedy and drama writers” (Erigha, 2015, p. 84). According to Kosut (2012), approximately 27% of employees in prime-time television production were women as of 2010, while the 2009-2010 television season consisted of nearly 40% of producers being female (p. 74-75). Even when it comes to news media, women are more present than ever and constitute 33.3% of the full-time journalism workforce, 27% of top management positions, 35% of senior professional jobs, and 33% of reporter positions (O’Brien, 2014, p. 1207). These statistics demonstrate the higher amounts of women in creative roles for television compared to the sparse levels in film, especially directing.

A study involving vital creative roles in the Australian film industry showed that women make up 32% of their producers, 16% of directors, and 23% of writers in fiction filmmaking while composing 46% of producers, 34% of directors, and 38% of writers in the documentary genre (Storey, 2018, p. 123).

Structure of the Current Film & Television Industries

The current organizational model utilized by global film industries strengthens dominance for men and the “male status quo” through rewards for “single-minded devotion” in addition to committing to long working hours (O’Brien, 2014, p. 1217). High-level male employees continue to control the rankings and statures in an organization, which, in turn, creates additional difficulties for women to break through gender barriers and inefficiencies (O’Brien, 2014).

Storey (2018) agrees that factors specific to the industry are often instrumental in the systemic disadvantages for women. These factors include “systemic obstacles to women’s participation, representation, and seniority [...] an unconscious bias towards men; gendered roles;

inflexible ‘flexible’ work conditions (excessive work hours, unpredictable schedules and geographic mobility); discriminatory hiring practices; gendered financing and distribution of projects; lack of female role models; lack of career-progression opportunities; and caring duties predominantly falling on women,” (Storey, 2018, p. 121).

Another contributing factor to the discrepancies between women and men in media is the presence of mentors. Men who have risen to high-power positions often have male mentors guiding them along with the “pitfalls and intricacies of company politics” (Fox and Renas, 1977, p. 28). Mentorship also provides an opportunity for an individual to observe proper behaviors within an organization. Due to the absence of women at upper levels of media organizations, very few females are even able to act as mentors to fellow women working in the field, which has made it impossible and unreasonable for women to rely on female forerunners to assist them in advancing within male-dominated occupations and industries.

When lacking a mentor, a female executive may not be aware of whether or not they are behaving correctly according to corporate mores (Fox and Renas, 1977). Men often find it to be much easier to observe other individuals of their peer group within their organization and assess styles of dress code, behaviors with managers, and the amount of time that should be spent socializing. Meanwhile, a female executive will most-likely lack a role model and not receive assistance in gaining entry into the informal aspects of an organization (Fox and Renas, 1977). Women must attempt to work with male mentors; however, “cultural bias and male unwillingness to aid the upward-striving female combine to deny women the same advantages as men,” (Fox and Renas, 1977, p. 28). This leads to a continuous division between the number of men in power and the number of women of authority in the media and film industries.

One unique yet demanding aspect of the film and television industries is the vital presence of networking. Many studies completed discuss the idea that a film or television worker is ‘only as good as their last job’ (Jones and Pringle, 2015). This demonstrates the importance of networking for individuals to find additional work for the future while completing one gig presently. According to Wing-Fai et al. (2015), “the informality that characterizes the hiring for and securing of jobs in creative media” leads to a significant worldwide barrier for women looking to break into the male-dominated industry while often lacking the ability to promote oneself to build a network to secure future work and remain in the film and television industry (p. 62). Women have been present in the labor force throughout history; however, they continue to often be found in lower-status jobs or working at lesser pay than men (Fox and Renas, 1977). Regardless of well-publicized exceptions, the discrepancies in job types and pay rates continue and may very well be contributed to by advertisements, in addition to film and media content.

One previous study examined a wide range of women working in the UK screen industry and claimed that female employees reportedly filled lower-status and gendered positions while facing discrimination surrounding gender and economic status when applying for new jobs (Storey, 2018). The research study centered around thirteen individuals and were a combination of workers classified as ‘midcareer’ or ‘established,’ were involved in a range of genres including documentary, reality, and drama, a blend of those with and without children, and came from occupations such as writers, directors, and producers (Storey, 2018, p. 121). This study reported that interviewees knew certain professions, including camera and sound positions, were not open to females; therefore, they did not even bother to apply for these positions.

In addition to a lack of open positions, another factor that may lead to many women

departing the industry is motherhood. In a study conducted of seventeen women who had left media jobs in the film and television industries, many of the former employees stated that family life and child-bearing factors were the leading causes of departing their jobs. According to O'Brien (2014), "it is not a proactive desire to care for families, but rather the gendered nature of media work cultures, added to the [informalization] of work organization, and also restrictions placed on women's agency to participate in [professional] networks, that ultimately explains why women media workers 'quit' their careers," (p. 1209). Many distinct challenges of parenting while working in the film and television fields exist in large part due to long hours working and unpredictable working patterns in addition to a culture of 'presenteeism' (Wing-Fai, Gill, and Randle, 2015, p. 62). This poses particular problems for females with the responsibilities of caring for children while rarely impacting males within the industry (Wing-Fai et al., 2015).

Even when a male and female appear as equal candidates in other respects, an organization will be drawn to the man due to his lifetime commitment to a career caused by his economic responsibilities (Fox and Renas, 1977). The expectation of a business to assess the likelihood of a female remaining with them while pursuing a career as equivalent to that of a man, who carries no alternate options other than to seek a job, contradicts what society expects businesses to do when hiring employees (Fox and Renas, 1977, p. 29-30).

Sexism & Discrimination

There are various characteristics and social roles that correspond with masculinity and have been found to be of higher value than those of feminine nature which leads to the social construction of gender being directly linked to the concept of power (Kosut, 2012, p. xx). Men have been found to have more economic, political, and cultural influence than women in various

industries, including the film and television broadcasting sectors. According to Kosut (2012), “men disproportionately hold upper-level positions in media industries and are more often owners of major media outlets such as television broadcasting companies, advertising agencies, and social networking sites” (p. xx).

Although there are clear signs of sexism in the film and television industries across the globe, some female workers do not see the sexist habits and practices as such and, in turn, attribute these male-promoting practices as part of the environment they choose to work in (Jones and Pringle, 2015). According to the study conducted by Jones and Pringle (2015), many New Zealand female workers view the sexist industry practices as unavoidable and the cost of fulfilling their dream of working in film or television. Despite substantial evidence of sexist practices in the New Zealand industry, “in a situation where there are no unions, there are a few statistics that make inequalities visible, and equal opportunities policies have no traction, inequalities may well be unmanageable,” (Jones and Pringle, 2015, p. 46).

O’Brien (2014) agrees a lack of acknowledgment exists of the realities and conditions that surround gender-motivated discrimination globally against female employees in film and television industries. This often leads to a misbelief that women are forced out of media work due to the gendered nature of work culture and the choice to be a parent over a producer and forces women to “adapt to the status quo in the industry” while resigning from their impossible occupation and giving up on their careers in the media (O’Brien, 2014, p. 1217).

Women in all social classes may face gender-based discrimination; however, the privilege of middle-class and upper-class women provides some benefits regarding lifestyle choices, especially in educational possibilities and options for raising children (Kosut, 2012, p.

37-38). Critics have argued that the feminist movements only consider the distresses of white, middle-class women, without a substantial amount of concern for women in poverty or the working-class. According to Kosut (2012), contemporary black feminist scholars believe that “the intensive mothering ideology—the notion that mothers must lavish all their attention on their children—is based on the privileges available to middle-class white women,” (p. 37-38). This viewpoint on mothering is often believed to belittle those who are Black, Indigenous, people of color, or BIPOC, in addition to the practices of working-class women on how to raise children, which typically revolve around dividing responsibilities among community members and family or friends (Kosut, 2012, p. 37-38).

Erigha (2015) argues that the practices of productions and media distributions are adapting to new transformations in technology, which is leading to the establishment of new jobs and additional possibilities for women, in addition to racial and ethnic minorities, in hopes of reducing inequalities in their fields of media work. Although the creation of new platforms and mediums establishes a desire to empower minority groups in addition to promoting social equality, new forms of media often strengthen the division between those in power and underrepresented groups (Kosut, 2012, p. 73). Technology and new ways of electronic media can empower recently developed methods of participation globally, provide access to unlimited knowledge, and establish new communities; however, electronic forms of technology have also created a divide for individuals without access to them in addition to generating challenges and concerns around knowledge gaps and media literacy (Kosut, 2012, p. 73). Consequently, women on higher socioeconomic levels in more developed communities, receive advantages, whereas females on lower socioeconomic levels from less advanced societies face challenges with

obtaining access.

Summary

To summarize, various factors lead to the underrepresentation of women and minorities in film, television, and news media. These factors include cultural practices, motherhood, lack of technology and resources, and gender discrepancies with pay and potential employment positions. Based on the global history of women in television and film, there appears to be a correlation between the roles played on-screen by females and the employment positions held by women behind-the-scenes.

Many studies have examined the presence of women in high-level occupations in the film and television industries; however, there appears to be a lack of information on women who work in below-the-line positions, including camera operators, talent wranglers, casting associates, and production assistants. This leads to the question of how can women be supported and empowered in lower-level occupations in order to work towards closing the gap for gender inequalities?

Applied Practical Project

Based on the analyzed studies and reviewed literature, an evident connection remains between the roles women play on-screen with the jobs held by females behind-the-scenes. The studies also prove that a gap in gender inequalities exists, which creates a clear need for mentorship to support and empower women in lower-level occupations in the industry to work towards establishing more women as executives. My intention for this capstone is to produce an applied practical project focusing on guiding women in entry-level positions to further employment opportunities. My goal is to create a manual to provide guidance and assistance in

how to advance within the industry and how to avoid the obstacles that have led to women leaving their entertainment careers.

How To Achieve This

First, I need to identify and examine existing programs that share a common goal of assisting entry-level employees in the film and television industry in finding future employment opportunities. Through my prior experiences in joining the Page Program at CBS, I am aware of the attempts of various studios and production companies to combat this issue; however, I am also cognizant that the internal goals of an organization may not align with the program's publicized goals and mission. When I first joined the Page Program, I was informed that the organization provides various opportunities for employees to network in addition to temporary gigs in covering the desk of a network executive's assistant that may lead to full-time employment. My own experiences in the program contradicted this information provided to me as the managers did not want to lose the "better" employees and leaders of the program, which contributed to them assigning the less-skilled pages more superior opportunities.

Next, I need to consider methods of publicizing my applied practical project to get the product into the hands of entry-level females in the film and television industry. I cannot underestimate the power of word-of-mouth. I also must consider the need for further research on the topic. The industry is constantly evolving, which is proven to be even more evident as we learn to adapt to a pandemic society while valuing and implementing COVID-19 guidelines for both crew and on-screen talent. Unfortunately, the current conditions of our society force production companies to limit the amount of crew on-set, which brings to light the number of positions that may be deemed "unnecessary" based on what a company can survive on. The

knowledge of what crew positions can be eliminated will likely lead to a reduction in employment opportunities, increasing the demand for women to work towards closing the gap of gender imbalances.

Contents

There are various aspects of the film and television industries that could be covered in my applied practical project. One essential feature that I will cover is the resources available to the up-and-coming women working in the industry. Whether it is an entertainment attorney willing to provide a free consult, a Facebook group providing job postings, or courses and certifications relevant to our work and technical skills, I have an essential responsibility to discuss and cover in detail many of the resources currently available. These resources are especially vital in the time of the “#MeToo Movement” when women are standing up for themselves and each other in the occurrence of sexual harassment and altercations in the workplace. Many of these unacceptable habits and practices by powerful men in our industry have been tolerated for decades, but we will not stay silent any longer. If we want to tackle the gender gap of our male-dominated industry, we must band together and not fear the repercussions while maintaining hope that change will come.

One critical skill for an entry-level individual to be successful in any industry is having the ability to be resourceful and seek out information that will benefit you. Although there are situations that call for an individual to ask questions to others, all levels of employees must be able to take the initiative and attempt to solve their problems on their own, first and foremost. This resource that I am creating can acknowledge the significance of maintaining a high level of self-accountability and the skill of taking initiative while also answering common questions.

Finished Project

My goal of the applied practical project is to produce a finished product that can be published and provided to entry-level women looking to advance in the film and television production industries. Similar to a manual or handbook, this product can provide resources and the “do’s and don’ts” of working in these positions. I may also consider discussing the female pioneers that have paved the way in hopes of inspiring young women and showing them that their own dreams can be achieved too. A secondary goal of my project would be to establish a network consisting of established women who want to help entry-level females progress to future employment opportunities. I have found success through networking, although not all of my mentors were women. My finished product must emphasize the importance of networking to find other gigs and move up the ladder in the industry.

Target Audience

The target audience of my applied practical project is entry-level, female employees in the film and television industries. A clear gender gap filled with inequalities is actively occurring in our male-dominated industry. In order to work towards balancing the number of female executives with male senior officials, established women must assist in empowering and supporting those on lower levels. As a page at CBS, I often felt like a peasant who did not make a difference in the overall production of shows; however, we must all work towards connecting with our future colleagues and demonstrate that hard work, networking, and perseverance will pay off and lead to better opportunities.

Shaking Hands & Exchanging Numbers While Keeping it Professional: How to Climb the Ladder of Success in Hollywood as a Woman

My applied practical project, in the form of a manual on navigating Hollywood as an entry-level woman, can be found in its entirety below.



**Shaking Hands & Exchanging Numbers While Keeping it Professional:
How to Climb the Ladder of Success in Hollywood as a Woman**

Lauren A. Foster

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Introduction: Female Trailblazers

Oprah. Reese Witherspoon. Kerry Washington. Jennifer Aniston. What do all of these women have in common? They all are experts at their craft and go beyond their roles as on-screen actresses and personalities. Although they have paved a path for women in Hollywood, they remain the exception rather than the norm. Many factors specific to the industry are often instrumental in the systemic disadvantages for women, including obstacles to representation and seniority, an unconscious bias employers may have towards genders, inflexible working conditions of excessive hours and unpredictable schedules, a lack of female role models and career-progression opportunities, and child-rearing duties predominantly falling on women¹.



An additional contributing factor to the discrepancies between women and men in the industry is the presence of mentors, which we will discuss later. Men who have risen to high-power positions frequently have a male mentor guiding them along the path of corporate politics and organizational environments². Mentorship often provides an opportunity for an individual to observe proper behaviors within an organization. Due to the absence of women at upper levels of media organizations, very few females are even able to act as mentors to fellow women working in the field. This has made it impossible and unreasonable for women to rely on female forerunners to assist them in advancing with male-dominated occupations and industries.

It seems in today's industry, female on-screen personalities and actresses must go beyond their roles in order to be considered one of the best in the industry. Book clubs, clothing lines, cookbooks, executive credits, and active social media accounts all seem to be part of the scorecard now when discussing the success of female stars. But how does one, whether on-screen or behind-the-scenes, begin to climb the ladder in Hollywood?

¹ Storey, S. (2018). Obstacle Course: Increasing women's participation in Australian film and television. *Metro*, 198, 118.

² Fox, H. W., & Renas, S. R. (1977). Stereotypes of Women in the Media and Their Impact on Women's Careers. *Human Resource Management*, 16(1), 28–31. <https://doi.org/10.1002/hrm.3930160105>

Existing Entry-Level Programs

Depending on which area of the industry and career positions interest you, there are many different entry-level programs available.

Talent Agency Training Programs:

William Morris Endeavor Agency Training Program³

This training program, also often referred to as the Mailroom, focuses on shaping the talent agents, lawyers, accountants, public relations professionals, and many other professions of the future. In order to move up the ladder of this monumental talent agency, you must start at the bottom. Trainees typically work 50-hour workweeks (at a minimum!) at the legal minimum wage in Beverly Hills. Unfortunately, this environment is a standard of the industry for individuals looking to get their foot in the door. The program tends to have a high turnover rate as many become burnt out quickly; however, the trainees that last often quickly move on to higher jobs that are not based on menial tasks and gopher responsibilities.

United Talent Agency Agent Training Program⁴

UTA's program consists of both classes and working opportunities behind an assistant's desk. One goal of the program is to instill a high work ethic and teach trainees how to prioritize tasks in stressful scenarios. Similar to WME's program, UTA is competitive and trainees begin in the organization's Mailroom. Any entertainment business' mailroom provides an opportunity for individuals to network and learn the fundamentals of the industry and organization. UTA's program is unique in that it also offers classes and training sessions as part of its program. UTA also provides the opportunity for trainees to work directly for agents and executives which creates the possibility of advancing within the company.

³ Get In Media. (n.d.). *William Morris Endeavor*. Retrieved from <http://getinmedia.com/employers/william-morris-endeavor>

⁴ United Talent Agency. (n.d.). *About — Careers*. Retrieved from <https://www.unitedtalent.com/careers/>

Television Production Programs:

Disney - ABC Writing Program⁵

The Walt Disney Television Writing Program has existed for 30 years now in Los Angeles and claims to be the only program of its design, supported by the Writers Guild of America, west. Alumni of the one-year program include Bryan Oh (Chicago Fire), George Mastras (Breaking Bad), Maria Jacquemetton (Mad Men), and Jane Espenson (Once Upon A Time). Program attendees are neither interns nor trainees and are considered employees of Walt Disney Television and are paid \$50,000 annually in addition to company benefits. The goal of the Walt Disney Television Writing Program is to staff on a Disney television show during their time in the program, although it is not guaranteed. Events and meetings intended to spark new mentorships and professional networks are held with executives and producers. The first month of the program focuses on a curriculum that prepares the writers for staffing opportunities and includes workshops led by industry veterans, including writers, producers, and program alumni, networking mixers with current WDT programming and development executives, and improvisational classes. It is the intention of the program to provide Disney executives and producers with feasible prospects for future and current openings of writing positions.



**Disney's 2020
Writing Program Participants**

⁵ Walt Disney Television. (n.d.). *Writing*. Retrieved from https://www.abctalentdevelopment.com/writing_program.html

Page Programs:

CBS Page Program

Los Angeles⁶:

The CBS Page Program in LA is heavily based around audience coordination. Loading in audiences, accommodating anyone with special needs, seating, restroom runs, distributing food for sitcom audiences, and loading out – that's just a short list of the tasks you can expect. Working closely with shows is a great way to get to know the crew. CBS pages do not do studio tours. Departmental assignments are available but not frequent. The New York program is smaller and is primarily focused on assisting CBS Sports and News. The CBS program is part-time and has a term limit of 2 years.

New York City⁷:

The CBS Page Program in New York City has some similarities to the Los Angeles program in addition to many differences. First, this program is only 18 months long. The program is based out of the CBS Broadcast Center in NYC and exposes pages to a large assortment of real experiences in broadcasting. This program also has a goal of introducing pages to other executives and professionals in the industry in hopes of leading to better opportunities for employment. Pages in NYC have responsibilities ranging from audience coordination to researching news stories, from assigning closed captioning to tape logging, from selecting footage to organizing and distributing tapes, and from assisting staff members to escorting talent. Responsibilities and tasks assigned can vary based on the department.

Similar to LA's program, all placements and assignments for NYC pages are at the discretion solely of the head of the program, which is typically the Guest Relations Manager. Rumors I heard during my time as a Page in LA claimed that the NYC program had better chances of leading to a career within CBS. Meanwhile, only a handful of my colleagues in LA actually went on to work full-time at CBS.

⁶ The Anonymous Production Assistant. (2017). *What to Know About Page Programs*. <http://www.anonymousproductionassistant.com/2017/10/10/know-page-programs/>

⁷ CBS. (n.d.). *Page Program*. Retrieved from <https://www.velvetjobs.com/job-posting/page-program-174207>

Paramount Pictures Page Program⁸

Unlike both CBS Page Programs, the main responsibilities (at least during the first six months) of a page at Paramount Pictures is to perform as a brand ambassador for the studio while serving as a professional studio tour guide to guests in addition to studio executives. Pages will provide multiple tours every shift, especially during peak seasons. For the rest of their time in the program, pages will be eligible to work production positions throughout the lot as well as provide support with managing live audiences for television shows. Veteran pages will also serve as tour guides for VIP guests. These positions are only available after an individual has been in the program for more than six months and before the page hits their 18-24 month mark, depending on the season.

Although employment for Paramount Pages is considered to be part-time, individuals are expected to make this position a priority and during the peak season, pages will have weeks at work that are closer to full-time hours. Many Paramount Pages find employment in entry-level administrative positions at the end of their time in the program.



⁸ Paramount Pictures. (n.d.). *Page Program*. Retrieved from <https://www.paramount.com/about-page-program>

NBC Page Program⁹

You've probably heard of "Kenneth, the Page" from the television show, *30 Rock*, but did you know that NBC has pages in both New York City and Universal City, CA? Both NBC Page Programs follow the same 12-month model and provide rotational learning and developmental experience through exposure to a multitude of areas and departments of NBCUniversal. Pages complete 3-4 assignments throughout their time in the program and work full-time hours. Similar to Paramount Pictures, NBC Pages also serve as ambassadors for the organization. After program completion, pages are eligible for employment positions at NBCUniversal. For three months immediately following program completion, pages are given both support and guidance from their program team in addition to NBCU recruiters all throughout the hiring process. Placement at NBCUniversal is not guaranteed; however, word of mouth has proven the success of the NBC Program.

It is important to note that all page programs require a Bachelor's degree. They also typically come with a unique uniform that makes pages easier to spot for guests, audience members, and production employees. During my time at CBS in Los Angeles, we wore bright red blazers, black pants, striped ties (both men and women), and white, button-up shirts. Males were also prohibited from any facial hair and all pages were required to have a natural hair color (i.e., not pink, purple, blue, or green).

A quick google search would let you know that there are also various programs aimed at training individuals to become Production Assistants. I have not included information on these programs because I want to be honest with you. The best training to become a Production Assistant (also known as a PA) is real-world experience. Page Programs provide the opportunity to network and move up within a major network or broadcasting company. A PA is technically a step up from being a Page; however, most PA's I have worked with or met were never a page. They simply knew someone who helped them get their first gig. To be a PA you *should* have some basic knowledge: walkie lingo, professionalism, and the importance of being punctual. The first can be taught with another simple google search while the others are skills that are not often taught, but rather learned throughout life and real-world experiences.

⁹ NBCUniversal. (n.d.). *About the Program*. Retrieved from <https://www.nbcunicareers.com/pageprogram>

Resources Available

Job-Search Sites:

StaffMeUp - a site designed specifically for production work in television, film, and commercials. Basic information is provided in each post, although it may not provide the specific company name. There is a premium option for members that requires a monthly payment. Each individual has their own varying needs and financial opportunities. Weigh your options and choose the plan that best fits your needs. You can always do a premium trial to get a better idea of what benefits the monthly fee can provide you.

LinkedIn - a professional social media platform used for networking and job-posting. Although I do not often use it, I always make sure my profile is up-to-date when I have any major professional changes in my life.

Facebook Groups - there are thousands of groups with the goal of connecting gig-seekers with job-posters. If you don't mind your timeline being bombarded with posts, join as many as you want. If you do mind this, try to limit your groups only to the ones that are specifically in your area.

Tip: to get started, conduct a group search with your location and the words production, film, or television.

Example: "New England Film"; "LA Television"; "New York Production". This will lead you to various groups that may be beneficial. When joining a group, Facebook often recommends similar groups as well.



Craigslist* - can be helpful when searching for short-term, freelance gigs in the industry.

Times Up & The #MeToo Movement:

www.timesupnow.org

Sexual harassment and/or assault is NEVER acceptable. The ratio of men to women in the industry is visibly unequal. Women have stayed silent on these issues and experiences for far too long. If you experience any sexual harassment or sexual assault, there are resources and help available for you. Never stay silent for fear of repercussions. Based on history, you may lose a job or gig, but you will guarantee that another woman will not endure the same actions of the man that you did.

*Although I have coworkers who have found successful gigs through Craigslist, it is important to use this site with caution when searching for jobs. Often times, this site is the choice for gigs with illegal wages and/or sketchy environments. Always search the company's name and their contact's information to see if there are reviews or scams attached to it. Trust your gut before agreeing to anything.

The Do's and Do Not's of Hollywood

The Do's

Do send out “feelers” to your network when looking for a job - as mentioned previously, networking is uncomfortable. The only thing that makes it easier is practice and repetition. A former co-worker of mine said she likes to send out “feelers” to her network every month or so, depending on the season. This helps her get an idea of who has shows coming up and will be hiring a crew. It also helps keep her fresh in their minds. Feelers are easier and more laid-back. “Hey! How are you? What’s new? The weather’s been wild lately, hasn’t it? Anything exciting coming up for you?” These conversations are much easier than putting yourself out there and begging (ok, hopefully not actually begging but we’ve all been there...) for your next gig.

Do be proactive - don’t sit back and wait for a gig to land on your lap. You must be proactive in searching for work and keeping in contact with your network. You also must be proactive on-set. Stand out from other co-workers, but do so in a good way. Try to spot problems before they happen. Be cautious about not pushing your ideas or beliefs onto your boss in a way that makes you come off as superior. You want to help, not overthrow them.

Do go the extra mile - I can confirm that managers in the industry love assistants and crews that go beyond their responsibilities. If you walk past trash on the ground, pick it up. Sure, it might not be yours, but it is easy to pick up a wrapper or small piece of trash and simply place it where it belongs. Again, I cannot stress the importance of standing out from your colleagues when trying to climb the ladder of Hollywood. By completing tasks beyond your responsibilities, in addition to completing the roles of your job, leaves a great impression of you on superiors when hiring crews for the future.



Do arrive early each day - I once had a boss that said, "If you're early, then you're on time, if you're on time, then you're late, and if you're late, then you just don't care". Things come up. Traffic, parking issues, a change in meeting location... By allowing extra time for your commute, you can account for any unexpected surprises and still make it to your check-in early or at least on time.

Do bring a portable charger with you every day - many shooting locations struggle with cell phone service. Historic buildings, secluded houses, and deserted woods are all less than ideal areas for service. A lack of cellular service can drain your battery. I never leave home for an extended period without a portable charger. Many times I have had difficulty locating staff members due to their phones being dead. Portable chargers can be found for decent quality and low prices on Amazon amongst other stores. It is an

essential tool for anyone working in the industry. Equally important: keeping your portable charger charged! Similar to your cell phone, make this part of your nightly routine before going to bed.



The Do Not's

Don't sit down while working until it is deemed acceptable - some jobs are more laid back and do not care as much about whether or not you are sitting or standing. Other jobs will fire you on the spot for sitting down while working.

Generally speaking, production office jobs and positions that involve checking people or items in/out, promote a sitting environment. It is crucial to determine what is acceptable before sitting down on the job.

Don't use your phone unless necessary for the job or allowed by a superior - similar to sitting down on the job, cell phone usage depends on the organizational environment. In my work as a page, we were not even allowed to check our phones to see the current time. If we were caught looking at our phone, we would be written up. I have also worked jobs where PA's were constantly on their phone during downtime and that was considered acceptable. Before using your phone while working, for reasons other than the job you are on the clock for, determine what your superior (and their superior) have deemed as acceptable phone usage.

Don't be late - this one speaks for itself and goes back to the saying, "If you're early, then you're on time, if you're on time, then you're late, and if you're late, then you just don't care". This should go without saying, but if you are running late, don't show up with a coffee or food in your hand.

Don't be afraid to reach out to your network - networking is uncomfortable. Believe me, I've spent many days avoiding the task of sending a message out to someone that I knew was working on a specific show coming up. There were numerous jobs that I missed out on all because I was too scared to send a message out to a member of my network. Send that message as soon as you find out they are on a show and hiring. It is never too early to reach out and let them know of your interest.

Don't hand out business cards on set* - this one comes with an asterisk. I do think there are some scenarios that this is acceptable; however, it is only when passing out a business card to someone below you on the Hollywood ladder in hopes of hiring them again and/or finding future employment for the individual. In my work as a production manager, I had many PA's that gave me their business card at the end of a gig. If I liked your work ethic and wanted to hire you again, I saved your contact information on my own. It is also annoying to be bombarded with business cards. On the other hand, I have had mentors, friends-of-a-friend, and bosses that gave me their business card for potential future employment. I believe these scenarios are acceptable as it is a way to help individuals in lower-level positions move forward in the industry. Pass your cards down, but not up the ladder.

Don't disappear - one of my other pet peeves as a production manager was losing staff members. Even if you are just running to the restroom for a moment, let someone know. What might seem like a quick trip can turn timely quickly. There could be a line or the closest restroom might be closed, sending you to a farther location. It is critical for you to always let someone know when you need to step away for a minute. If you are assigned to a specific post, you should also make sure you have coverage for your spot.

Don't assume anything, especially regarding pay and wrap time - you know what they say about assumers... Never assume anything. I would rather a PA ask me 20 questions than assume they know the answer and complete a task wrong. You should also never assume you will get out at the wrap time you were given. Working in production is not like your



typical job at Starbucks or the grocery store. The wrap time is an estimate, not a guarantee. Unfortunately, overtime is another aspect that is not guaranteed. Overtime also has a different meaning in the industry as it typically refers to any payment over your flat-rate. Standard rates for 12-hour shifts include 8 hours of regular pay and 4 hours of time-and-a-half.

It is important to touch base with your superior if you do go over your estimated wrap time. Most positions offer flat-rates, which means you are guaranteed to get this payment amount, even if you wrap before the estimated time. 200/12 means that you are guaranteed \$200 and are estimated to work a 12-hour shift. This comes out to be about \$14.28 an hour with 8 hours of regular pay + 4 hours of time-and-a-half. Most jobs will pay you more if you have a 12-hour flat-rate and work for over 12 hours. Typically it is double-time for any work after 12-hours; however, unfortunately, there are still companies that will try to cut corners and only give you the flat-rate if you do go over. Yes, this is illegal in some states, but not in every state and even so, many times you are hired as an independent contractor and employee regulations do not apply. If you do work over your flat-rate, and it has not been established previously, prior to leaving set that day you must find out the terms of payment. Preferably, you will get the determination in writing, but at the very least, you need to have a discussion with your supervisor or manager.



Networking

I've touched on this previously, but the importance of networking is crucial if you want to succeed in the industry. Your résumé will only get you so far. The structure of the industry requires a significant amount of networking to find future employment. Many of the training and page programs discuss the inclusion of networking and putting individuals in the right place at the right time. It is not about what you know or what you can do, but rather who you know and what they can do for you.

Always keep your résumé up to date

This goes without saying: always, always, always keep your résumé up to date. If you complete a lot of freelance work, shorter gigs can quickly come and go. As you complete one project, add it to your résumé. There are individuals and companies that offer services in résumé-writing; however, many of the support offered can be found online for free. Always weigh the pros and cons of services that offer to give you a boost in the industry. Many groups and individuals are, unfortunately, trying to make a quick buck and do not care who or where it comes from.

Network, network, network

Any chance you get, network and exchange information. You don't want to (PROFESSIONALLY) hit it off with someone on-set and leave the conversation without any information to connect with them in the future. With that being said, don't come off as over-eager. No one wants to connect with someone who is only looking to propel themselves forward.

It's uncomfortable to put yourself out there, but power through. As I mentioned before, I have lost out on work because I wasn't willing to power-through the uncomfortable feeling of putting myself out there. What is the worst that can happen? That they say they're not hiring? You don't get a response? I do recommend sending a follow-up if you haven't heard back within a week. People get busy. I, myself, often mentally respond and forget to actually physically reply to a message. Always be polite and well-mannered, but be direct in verbalizing that you are open and interested in future work.

Send feelers out prior to wrapping

It is less than ideal to wrap one project without another lined up. Yes, there is always unemployment as an option, if absolutely needed financially, but it is not guaranteed and can turn into quite the process. One former colleague used to utilize wrap parties as a way to mingle, network, and find his next gig. Mix in a little booze (but not TOO much! You don't want to be that PA...) and the nerves and uneasiness of putting yourself out there to higher-ups quickly fades away.

Maintain connections

This is a vital aspect of networking. You can have all the connections in the world, but unless you stay fresh in their mind, you will disappear from their memory. Adding people on Facebook is highly acceptable in the industry, as long as you've been properly introduced and had a conversation with the individual. Simply liking posts, checking-in with messages (whether text or Messenger), and dropping a comment here and there, will help you stay fresh in their minds and on the top of their list for future gigs.

Mentorship

Mentorship and networking go hand-in-hand with one another. You will establish connections in your network that are stronger than others. As part of your professional network, you should also create mentorships. This does not have to be an official mentorship, with a unique handshake and label, but rather someone that you can turn to for more than just job opportunities. This person should be someone who you respect and trust that can provide input for difficult situations. It doesn't hurt for

this person to be able to get your résumé to the top of a stack on a production manager's desk, but a mentor should be able to do more than this. There are many cultural differences in Hollywood compared to other industries. How many jobs would write you up for checking the time on your phone? How many companies provide meals for every lunch break? There are pros and cons of the industry and a mentor can help you better understand the actions that are acceptable and what is culturally appropriate.



Conclusion

In this industry, you will face many trials and tribulations. It is not easy to succeed, which is why many people end up leaving and pursuing careers in other areas. The experiences you may gain are unlike any other.

It is extremely difficult to get your foot in the door in Hollywood. Even once you have, there are constant obstacles that may try and tear you down. While working as a CBS page, I had to work multiple jobs to make ends meet. I had to budget my money, alter my lifestyle, and figure out how many extra shifts I would need to work in order to pay my rent and bills.

One factor that led to my success was having a mentor. As women, we are grossly outnumbered. There are certain jobs (stagehands, grips, camera operators, etc.) that we are not expected to hold, or even apply for, as it is a "man's job". Don't listen to these men. If you want to work as a camera operator, do everything in your power to fulfill your dreams and goals.

Most importantly: when presented with the opportunity to pave a path for other females, become a trailblazer and set an example for others to follow in your footsteps for the future.



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Conclusion

Leadership Theories

Three theories that directly relate to my capstone project while supporting the apparent correlation of the roles played by women on-screen with the jobs held by females behind-the-scenes and proving the significance of mentorship in the film and television industries are: Leader-Member Exchange Theory, Social Cognitive Theory, and Cultivation Theory. The Leader-Member Exchange Theory connects to the topic of mentorship. At the same time, Social Cognitive Theory and Cultivation Theory correlates with the idea that individuals learn acceptable behaviors and gender stereotypes through what they see on television and in film. My goal of creating an applied practical project and manual while establishing a mentorship program for women working in film and television closely aligns with the Leader-Member Exchange Theory. The possibility that the roles women play on-screen impact the occupations held by females behind-the-scenes is validated by Social Cognitive Theory and Cultivation Theory.

Leader-Member Exchange Theory

According to Matta and Van Dyne (2020), Leader-Member Exchange, or LMX, refers to “the quality of the exchange relationship between leader and subordinate [...] [and] an observable two-way exchange relationship that varies on the extent to which the relationship includes socioemotional resources, such as information, influence, tasks, latitude, support, and attention,” (p. 155). Some employees may turn down opportunities to become high-LMX staff members due to a lack of power, autonomy, resources, or trust; however, both high-LMX and low-LMX individuals value LMX and the power of mentorship. Low-LMX relationships are unmistakably

different from negative and hostile relations between employees. Instead, low-LMX links are “void of mutual trust, loyalty, respect, and liking” (Matta & Van Dyne, 2020, p. 157). Successful leaders differentiate the quality of exchanges with other individuals within the organization by making the most effective use of limited resources, including providing such support to subordinates to gain additional contributions and move towards accomplishing collective objectives.

High-LMX relationships can lead to a mentorship between an individual with power or authority as well as a significant amount of experience and a second individual with less experience, typically seeking advancement in their career. Due to a lack of stability in jobs and careers, high-quality mentoring relationships have become a necessity as the information age replaces the industrial era (Lee and Hastings, 2020). Mentoring can be utilized as a form of social intervention and can assist an individual in an organization’s environment that is changing by encouraging positive relationships and promoting socially-correct behaviors. Lee and Hastings (2020) define mentoring as a “developmental process existing in the relationship between a more-experienced individual and a less-experienced individual with the purpose of development in the mentee,” (p. 45). In order to benefit mentors and mentees, a mentoring program must utilize empirically-driven practices as the presence of mentorship does not guarantee success (Lee and Hastings, 2020).

According to Lee and Hastings (2020), studies have proven that successful, prominent men often reported having a mentor throughout their career which demonstrates the importance of mentorship to advance within an industry. Other research that I have used throughout my literature review shows that the absence of mentorship for women, in large part due to a lack of

female executives, has contributed to a male-dominated industry for both film and television production.

Social Cognitive Theory and Cultivation Theory

Social Cognitive Theory and Cultivation Theory both revolve around the examination of audience interpretations of the representation of gender in film and television (Murphy, 2015). An individual's ability to "develop expectations for real-world situations" based on learning completed through observation while consuming media (p. 5). According to Murphy (2015), studies have shown that people may develop expectations for real-life relationships based on the fictional relationships that are presented to them in film and television. Individuals may preserve both benefits and consequences that were caused by behaviors shown through the media based on observation, retention, and reenactment.

Societal gender-typing can profoundly influence gender development as various aspects of an individual's life, including cultivated talents, conceptions held of oneself, sociostructural opportunities as well as constraints encountered, in addition to the social path and occupational choices one pursues, can be impacted by the beliefs demonstrated through the media (Murphy, 2015).

A substantial issue caused by gender development being impacted by the media is that often unrealistic representations are presented in film and television. Instead, both women and men are typically portrayed in hyper-traditional manners, which, in turn, reinforces stereotypes of aspirations, capabilities, and personality traits of both genders (Murphy, 2015). Social Cognitive Theory states that individuals continue to be influenced by social factors, including the media, throughout life for both males and females and is not limited to one period of life

early-on, despite previous research.

Cultivation Theory is similar to Social Cognitive Theory. Still, it infers that the impact representations in the media have on an audience's perceptions of reality is more passive than the impact Social Cognitive Theory promotes (Murphy, 2015). According to the Cultivation Theory, continuous exposure to specific cultural messages will impact how an individual associates with the message long-term. Prior studies completed claimed that overall interactions with the media influence an audience's perceptions, but further research asserts that genre-specific exposure is significantly more likely to alter beliefs and expectations, especially regarding relationships and their portrayal (Murphy, 2015).

Need For Future Research

Despite supporting evidence of a potential connection between the roles women play on-screen with the jobs females hold behind-the-scenes and significant verification of the vital need for mentorship in the film and television industry, an apparent need remains for future research on these topics. There are various studies previously completed that analyze the existence of women in high-level or executive occupations in the industry. However, an absence of information and data on females working below-the-line, technical jobs is still unaccounted for in our industry. Further research must be completed on the presence of females working as camera operators, talent wranglers, casting associates, production assistants, and other lower-level positions as these women are the future of the industry.

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