

Boxed In: Employment of Behind-the-Scenes Women in the 2008-09 Prime-time Television Season

by Martha M. Lauzen, Ph.D.

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The percentage of women working in powerful behind-the-scenes roles in prime-time programming airing on the five broadcast networks (ABC, CBS, CW, Fox, NBC) remained relatively stable in the 2008-09 season when compared with prior seasons. Overall, women comprised 25% of all creators, executive producers, producers, directors, writers, editors, and directors of photography working on situation comedies, dramas, and reality programs. This represents a decline of one percentage point from 26% in 2007-08 but an increase of four percentage points from 21% in 1997-98.

Women writers and directors of photography experienced substantial increases this year. The percentage of women writers increased from 23% in the 2007-08 season to 29% in 2008-09. This percentage remains below the recent historical high of 35% in the 2006-07 season. The percentage of women directors of photography increased from a meager 1% in 2007-08 to 4% in 2008-09.

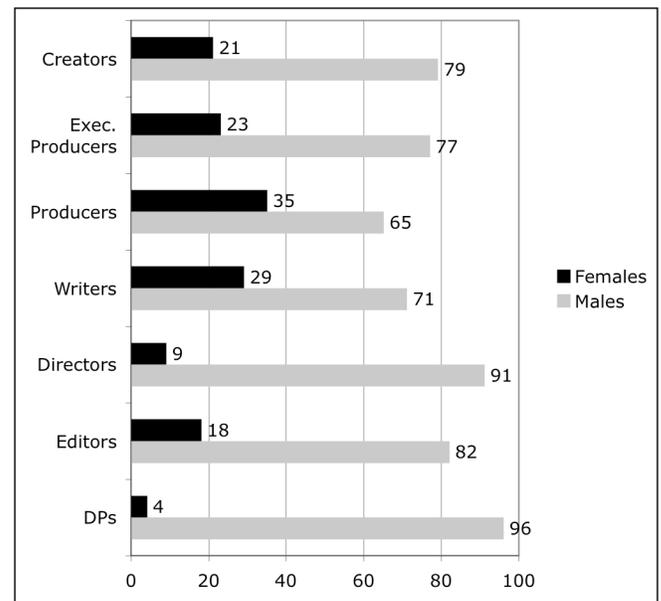
Findings

- This study examined 2,137 individuals working behind the scenes on one randomly selected episode of every prime-time drama,

situation comedy, and reality program airing on ABC, CBS, CW, Fox, and NBC. (MyNetworkTV halted airing original programming midseason and is thus not included in the current study.)

- Overall, women fared best as producers (35%), followed by writers (29%), executive producers (23%), creators (21%), editors (18%), directors (9%), and directors of photography (4%) (see Figure 1).

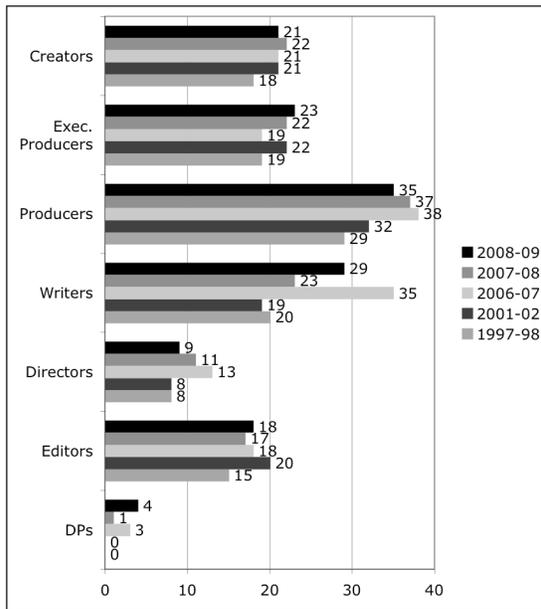
Figure 1.
Percent of Behind-the-Scenes Women and Men during the 2008-09 Season



- The representation of behind-the-scenes women did not vary by program genre. Dramas, situation comedies, and reality programs all employed 25% women and 75% men.
- Women comprised the largest percentage of behind-the-scenes individuals at ABC (30%), followed

by CBS (26%), NBC and CW (24%), and Fox (19%),

*Figure 2.
Historical Comparison of
Percentages of Behind-the-Scenes
Employment of Women*



- Women comprised 21% of creators. This represents a decline of one percentage point from 2007-08 (22%) but an increase of three percentage points from 1997-98 (18%). 85% of programs employed no women creators (see Figure 2).
- Women accounted for 23% of executive producers. This represents an increase of one percentage point from 22% in 2007-08 and an increase of four percentage points from 19% in 1997-98.
- In 2008-09, women comprised 35% of producers. This represents a decline of two percentage points from 2007-08 (37%) but an increase of six percentage points from 1997-98 (29%).

- Women accounted for 29% of writers. This represents an increase of six percentage points from 23% in 2007-08 and an increase of nine percentage points from 20% in 1997-98. However, it is less than the recent historical high achieved in 2006-07 when women accounted for 35% of writers. 72% of the programs employed no women writers.
- Women comprised 9% of directors. This represents a decline of two percentage points from 2007-08 (11%) but an increase of one percentage point from 1997-98 (8%). 92% of programs employed no women directors.
- In 2008-09, women accounted for 18% of editors. This represents an increase of one percentage point from 17% in 2007-08 and an increase of three percentage points from 15% in 1997-98. However, it is less than the recent historical high achieved in 2001-02 when women accounted for 20% of editors. 68% of programs employed no women editors.
- Women comprised 4% of directors of photography. This represents substantial increases from 1% in 2007-08 and 0% in 1997-98. 96% of programs employed no women directors of photography.

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