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**Network television executives: A study of organizational
behaviors and decision strategies in entertainment programming**

Johnston, Susan Healy, Ph.D.

City University of New York, 1987

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NETWORK TELEVISION EXECUTIVES:
A STUDY OF
ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIORS AND DECISION STRATEGIES
IN ENTERTAINMENT PROGRAMMING

by

Susan Healy Johnston

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in
Sociology in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City
University of New York.

1987

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Susan Healy Johnston

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Sociology in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Abstract

NETWORK TELEVISION EXECUTIVES:
A STUDY OF
ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIORS AND DECISION STRATEGIES
IN ENTERTAINMENT PROGRAMMING

by

Susan Healy Johnston

Adviser: Professor Charles Winick

The dynamics of decision making in television entertainment programming and the organizational behavior and management style of executives in the television industry was the subject of a rigorous research study.

Fifty key network television entertainment executives were interviewed in depth for up to five hours each in connection with decision making pertaining to the development, selection, scheduling, maintenance, and cancellation of entertainment programs. Interviews were conducted with executives from the three major commercial networks at both the east and west coast offices and categories of prime time drama and comedy series, made-for-TV movies, mini-series, daytime programs, children's programs, and talent were included. Individuals in research, broadcast standards, finance, sales, and promotion departments were also

interviewed for collateral data. Comparative data was obtained from a sub-sample of studio and independent production company executives and talent agency personnel.

The study analyzed the decision process in all phases of entertainment programming and established the existing criteria for problem solving decisions on the above program operations. The study also assessed the contribution of job characteristics, internal organizational dynamics including political processes and the protege system, management philosophy, executive leadership, communication activities, idiosyncratic and intuitive elements of individuals, and the actual and perceived status and role of women in the occupation including their impact on programming decisions. Popular industry concepts were analyzed and their component parts identified, thus clarifying their use in decision making.

Network programming executives were found to use both traditional-rational approaches and intuitive-conceptual strategies in decision making regarding all phases of programming. The executives were found to operate in an environment characterized by a high degree of uncertainty and change with a weak information gathering system. Problem solving behavior was found to be both goal oriented and calculated to reduce risk. Decisions regarding operative, coordinative and strategic problems were found to be group decisions arrived at by consensus, using satisficing

criteria which reflect sub-optimal general constraints rather than optimal requirements. Loyalty ties to the organization were assessed as weak; executives' allegiance appeared to be to their own skills, expertise, and advancement. Subjective perceptions reflect the belief among both men and women that women use different criteria (more intuitive, less objective) in decision making than do men but analysis of interview self-descriptions show no difference in actual reported decision criteria or technique.

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Like scripts for entertainment programming, dissertations often reflect the input of other parties besides the author. Many thanks to Professor Charles Winick, chairman of my committee, and to Professors Patricia Kendall and Cynthia Epstein for their help and guidance.

Special thanks to friends Sid Lirtzman, Dan Abraham, and Julian Goodman for their encouragement, support, and wisdom.

Eternal thanks to my parents, Florence Healy Johnston and William H. Johnston for their love, patience, and understanding, not only during my Ph.D. odyssey but throughout my life.

Because they were promised confidentiality the network executives and others in the TV industry who participated in this research must remain anonymous but I want my appreciation to each of them known.

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INTRODUCTION

The mass media are widely believed to have a pervasive influence upon Americans and their orientation towards ways of life. The mass media have been viewed as opinion makers, image formers, agenda setters, contributors to values, and culture disseminators.¹ Much of the social concern over the mass media stems from the view that they are strong instruments of influence that may be used to manipulate publics for good or for ill. Without proper control, it is claimed, the latter negative aspect of the media will prevail.²

Television, in particular, has been cited for having tremendous influence over people's lives and behaviors. Like the movies, television relies on the visual image. Film has been so integrated into the everyday life of people that "film literacy" is a language that many people understand.³

¹B. M. Compaine, Who Owns the Media? (New York: Harmony Books, 1979).

²P. F. Lazarsfeld and R. K. Merton, "Mass Communication, Popular Taste and Social Action," in The Communication of Ideas, ed. L. Bryson (New York: Harper & Bros., 1948).

³R. P. Madsen, The Impact of Film (New York: Macmillan Co., 1973), pp. 5-6.

Television is viewed for a little over seven hours per day in the average American household; the average person spends four hours per day watching television.⁴

Television is considered the most ubiquitous and powerful mass medium.⁵

Because of this assumption of television's influence, the content of television programs as well as their effect on audiences has long been an important area of research and study. This perspective focuses on the symbols and themes of televised messages and the consequent short- and long-term effects of those messages on the individual.⁶ Other kinds of research concentrates on the structural aspects of the broadcast industry, the ways in which various governments and economic systems support broadcasting and the implications that these structures have for both society and the production of message content.⁷

³R. P. Madsen, The Impact of Film (New York: Macmillan Co., 1973), pp. 5-6.

⁴TV Dimensions 1986 (New York: Media Dynamics, 1986), p. 20.

⁵R. Goldsen, Interview in The Television Explosion, WGBH Transcripts (Boston: WGBH Educational Foundation, 1982); M. Gallagher, "Negotiation of Control in Media Organizations and Occupations," in Culture, Society and the Media, ed. M. Gurevitch et al. (London: Methuen & Co., 1982), pp. 151-73.

⁶The media studies of George Gerbner and his associates at the Annenberg School of Communications at the University of Pennsylvania represent a prime example of this approach.

⁷G. Murdock, "Large Corporations and the Control of the Communications Industries," in Culture, Society and the Media, ed. M. Gurevitch et al. (London: Methuen & Co., 1982).

Berelson identified four major approaches to communication research in the years between 1934-1959. The major lines of research were the political approach reflected in the works of Lasswell; the sample survey approach represented by Lazarsfeld; the small group approach personified by Lewin; and the experimental approach exemplified by Hovland.⁸

A much less studied area within communications is that of the communicator, who generates the most representative product of television: the entertainment program.⁹ Network program executives, in spite of the importance of this occupation in terms of its contributions to the program content which is broadcast, have not been studied systematically. Public and research attention has concentrated on the content of television programs rather than on those functionaries who are responsible for determining or selecting the content to be portrayed in entertainment programs.

Media organizations and occupations should be at the core of any study of mass communication since they are the vehicles through which the product of the media is produced.¹⁰ Recently, the need to fill this gap in the literature has been

⁸B. Berelson, "The State of Communication Research," Public Opinion Quarterly 23 (Spring 1959):1-15.

⁹J. D. Lewis, "Programmer's Choice: Eight Factors in Program Decision-making," Journal of Broadcasting 14 (1970):71-82; Gallagher, "Negotiation of Control."

¹⁰C. R. Wright, Mass Communication (New York: Random House, 1975); Gallagher, "Negotiation of Control."

discussed.¹¹ Cantor in particular has noted that the role of the networks in the decision-making process in programming needs to be studied, terming this an area of "highest priority."¹²

Much of what is known about the television industry is based on anecdotal reports by insiders such as Les Brown, Ben Stein, and Richard Levinson and William Link.¹³ The process by which a network decides to put a program on television was the subject of a TV documentary.¹⁴ However, no systematic scrutiny of the process has been undertaken.

For nearly forty years, a major paradigm in mass communications research has been Lasswell's famous phrase, "Who--says what--in which channel--to whom--with what effect?" Using Lasswell's paradigm as a framework, this dissertation is essentially concerned with the who--the entertainment programming executives in network television, and the processes by which they decide on the what--the

¹¹J. Curran, M. Gurevitch, and J. Woolacott, "The Study of the Media: Theoretical Approaches," in Culture, Society, and the Media, ed. M. Gurevitch et al. (London: Methuen & Co., 1986), pp.

¹²M. G. Cantor, "Producing Television for Children," in The TV Establishment, ed. G. Tuchman (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1974), p. 118.

¹³L. Brown, Television: The Business Behind the Box (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971); B. Stein, The View from Hollywood and Vine (New York: Basic Books, 1979); R. Levinson and W. Link, Stay Tuned (New York: Ace Books, 1981).

¹⁴CBS Reports, December 23, 1983.

entertainment program. To a great extent, the network executive's success is measured by the whom, the audience receiving the message. Thus, the current study deals with four of the five dimensions identified by Lasswell but the communicator and the processes of program selection were the major concern of the research.

It is the intent and purpose of this study to detail the organizational behavior and managerial style as well as the dynamics of programming decisions by network entertainment executives in commercial television. This study represents a systematic approach to the subject. The research focuses on the development, selection, scheduling, and maintenance, of entertainment programs and identifies the relative contributions of different factors to these programming decisions.

The status of women in the occupation was a special focus of the research and the comparative roles of men and women in program executive jobs were compared through the respondents' perception of their relative positions in the job and in their work organization.

It should be noted that the research was done during the last year of the traditional structural organization and ownership of the networks. This organizational structure had been in place for over four decades and is responsible for television as we know it today.

The final interview for the study was conducted on March 5, 1985. Two weeks later, Capital Cities Corporation purchased the American Broadcasting Company and by the end of the year, Radio Corporation of America (RCA), the parent company of the National Broadcasting Company, was acquired by General Electric Corporation. Throughout 1985 and part of 1986, the Columbia Broadcasting System was the target of corporate takeover attempts, most notably one by the Turner Broadcasting System and a conservative group backed by a prominent United States Senator attempted to raise funds to buy CBS stock to challenge what they perceived as the liberal bias of the CBS news.

Additionally, changes in the environment occurred. The Federal Communications Commission amended the limitations on the number of television stations that a network could own, increasing the number from seven to twelve. The growth of independent and cable system television continued and the opportunities for local stations to carry original programming created expressly for non-network distribution increased dramatically.

These separate events involving all three commercial networks reflected a major change in the way broadcasting was perceived by investors, the financial community, and executives of corporations having a financial interest in the networks. The view that the networks were not materially different from other large business operations and could be

treated in the same manner as any other investment began to gain substance, thus changing traditional perceptions about the networks. These modified views suggest that the organization of network broadcasting and the modes of operating them may change materially in the near future, as managements in the more traditional industrial and financial corporate model are installed at the networks. It will be interesting to observe the importance of factors such as return on investment and contribution to shareholder equity and their relationship to the networks' role in the dissemination of news, entertainment programming, the distribution of the various types of programming, and the development of new kinds of programming as well as the way the entertainment divisions are managed, the kinds of people developed for management and the values which will guide management decisions.

In light of these possible changes, the present research can be viewed as a reflection of the way networks operated in the twilight of the values of the original entrepreneurs under which they were created and thus serve as a point of comparison against which the new management of network organizations can be evaluated. However, we must remember that the original organizational structure provided the television industry with the enormous momentum and ability to engage audiences that made the medium so important.

CHAPTER 1

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE
AND STUDY METHODSStructure of Commercial Television
in the United States

The broadcasting media in the United States are generally privately owned and operated as profit making organizations. However, the airways broadcasters utilize have been declared public property by the government and consequently, each radio and television station is licensed by the Federal Communications Commission. Each station is subject to the general requirement to operate "in the public interest, convenience, and necessity."¹

Commercial broadcasting is organized around the concept of networks, an idea which originated in the early days of radio. Essentially, a network is a group of broadcasting stations that have been connected through a contractual agreement so that they can transmit the same programs. Each station then becomes an affiliate of a network. The networks function in three separate roles for their affiliated stations: first, in the dissemination of information,

¹S. W. Head, Broadcasting in America (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1976), pp. 322-24.

specifically in transmitting significant contemporary events; second, in supplying programs to affiliates; third, in acting as advertising brokers for the affiliated stations. In addition, each of the three major networks (ABC, CBS, NBC) owns and operates five television stations, which are located in major cities throughout the country.² With regard to the supply of programs, the networks generate most of the country's programming. They can provide attractive program packages for their affiliates regarding program flow. Each of the three networks can reach most of the United States through its affiliates. Approximately nine-tenths of television network expenses go towards programs.³

The major source of revenue for television stations comes from selling airtime to an advertiser, who pays according to the size of the audience presumed to be watching. An estimate of relative audience size is based on the rating point system. The rating point compares the total number of television households, the potential audience, to the number of households tuned to one program in preference to other competing programs or activities.⁴ Ratings are related to the amount of money the network can charge advertisers for commercial time slots during a show.

²S. M. DeLuca, Television's Transformation: The Next 25 Years (New York: A. S. Barnes & Company, 1980).

³Head, Broadcasting in America; DeLuca, Television's Transformation.

⁴Head, Broadcasting in America.

Much scholarly research has focused on the production of program content, as in Cantor's studies of Hollywood television producers.⁵ This work has tended to focus on organizational and interorganizational constraints on content production in the context of the economic imperative. By focusing on these constraints in this way, the belief that commercial network television does not take risks or dare to be innovative is reinforced.⁶ Emerging from this line of research is a perspective which views the creation of television programs as reflecting an economic determinism which cites financial elements as defining the limits of acceptable programming and suitable programs.⁷ Economic determinism, or the programming for profit view, centers on

⁵M. G. Cantor, The Hollywood TV Producer (New York: Basic Books, 1971); M. G. Cantor, Prime-Time Television (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1980).

⁶G. Tuchman, "Introduction," in The TV Establishment, ed. G. Tuchman (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1974), pp. 1-39; J. Turow, "Unconventional Programs on Commercial Television: An Organizational Perspective," in Individuals in Mass Media Organizations: Creativity and Constraint, ed. J. S. Ettema and D. C. Whitney (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1982), pp. 107-29; M. Gallagher, "Negotiations of Control in Media Organizations and Occupations," in Culture, Society and the Media, ed. M. Gurevitch et al. (London: Methuen & Co., 1982), pp. 151-73.

⁷Tuchman, "Introduction"; G. Murdoch and P. Golding, "Capitalism, Communication and Class Relations," in Mass Communication and Society, ed. J. Curran et al. (London: Edward Arnold, 1977); J. Curran and J. Seaton, Power Without Responsibility (London: Fontana, 1980).

commercial television's role as a marketing medium where the program serves as the vehicle for the advertiser's message.⁸

The assumption of the programming for profit view is that only ratings determine which shows are telecast. The ratings, which act as a feedback mechanism for the networks, give an impression of society based on viewing behaviors. This leads network executives to believe that if a show receives high ratings, it must be the type of show the public wants and should get. Thus, the patterned repetition of television shows based on formulas and past successes are the result of this system.⁹ Innovation and creativity in programming are perceived by network executives as requiring too high a risk in an industry geared towards profits and where the profits are substantial. These managers cannot afford to deviate from the perceived proven path and consequently, innovation and creativity are stifled.¹⁰

However, reliance on formulas and past success is not always viewed as a criticism of the industry. According to Gallagher, formula styles do not necessarily mean a standardized, trivial product. The ability of those in the

⁸P. Klein, "Programming," in Inside the TV Business, ed. S. Morgenstern (New York: Sterling Publishing Co., 1979).

⁹B. Cole, Television Today (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981); F. Mankiewicz and J. Swerdlow, Remote Control (New York: Ballantine Books, 1978).

¹⁰Tuchman, "Introduction"; L. Brown, Television: The Business Behind the Box (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971); Gallagher, "Negotiations of Control."

creative process to work within the organizational and technological constraints is important to the quality of the finished program.¹¹ Newcomb and Alley add that too many studies assume that organizational limitations thwart creativity. In the case of the TV producer, they propose that the individual is aware of the constraints provided by the organization and that the individual has chosen television as the arena in which to create special forms and means. As in any occupation, not all succeed in achieving their creative goals. They maintain that the status role of the producer in television is as open as any role in the arts to creative manipulation by the incumbent.¹²

Regarding the view that programming decisions are based purely on economic factors, some research has indicated that profit maximization is not the major contributor to decision making in business organizations. The Cyert and March concept of satisficing behavior provides one example. According to this concept, when looking for alternatives to meet a problem, decision makers will choose alternatives

¹¹Gallagher, "Negotiations of Control."

¹²H. M. Newcomb and R. S. Alley, "The Producer as Artist: Commercial Television," in Individuals in Mass Media Organizations: Creativity and Constraint, ed. J. S. Ettema and D. C. Whitney (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1982), pp. 69-89; R. Pekurny expresses a similar view regarding organizations and the expression of creativity. See "Coping with Television Production" in Individuals in Mass Media Organizations: Creativity and Constraint, ed. J. S. Ettema and D. C. Whitney (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1982), pp. 131-43.

which are satisfactory rather than optimum solutions.¹³

Based upon his work with managers, Stagner concluded that company image and tradition often outweigh profit factors in decision making by executives.¹⁴ As yet, there are no data to indicate that media organizations are more oriented to profit maximization than other corporations in this society.

The environment of the television industry is complex and the level of uncertainty is high. Decision makers in television deal with problems where there is a high degree of ambiguity regarding cause/effect relations. It is an industry where outcomes are partially dependent upon the behaviors of other forces and factors, such as other networks and stations, program suppliers, and advertisers.¹⁵ In operational terms, for example, there is the large amount of programming that must be generated, the rigid deadlines of program schedules, and the government review of station practices. There is also a great deal of uncertainty regarding the audience reaction to entertainment programs.

With regard to revenues, if a station has not sold all of the commercial time in a particular slot by air time,

¹³R. M. Cyert and J. G. March, A Behavioral Theory by the Firm (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1963).

¹⁴R. Stagner, "Attitude Toward Authority: An Exploratory Study," Journal of Social Psychology 40 (1954): 197-210.

¹⁵J. D. Thompson, Organizations in Action (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967).

the money represented by the air time cannot be recouped. It represents an instant loss.¹⁶

Occupations in the Industry

Occupations in the media, and especially in television, have not been widely studied. However, media organizations and occupations should be at the core of any study of mass communication. They are the mode through which the product of the media is produced.¹⁷ Research is increasingly focusing on the interaction of organizational, production, professional and personal factors and their relative contributions to the output of the media, thus broadening the context by which mass communication can be judged.

Occupations in the communication systems are characterized by status fluctuation, that is, frequent changes of employment and of specific occupational activity. Movement of personnel is usually into related occupations; for example, an individual in advertising may move into the area of public relations. Consequently, the sharpest short-run changes in income and prestige among the occupations are experienced by this group. Individuals in these positions engage in occupational change to a relatively high degree.

¹⁶C. Winick, "The Television Station Manager," Advanced Management Journal 31 (1966):53-60.

¹⁷C. R. Wright, Mass Communication (New York: Random House, 1975).

In the various mass communication sectors, occupational change appears to be a major contributor to vertical mobility.¹⁸ In general, occupational change in other industrial sectors is not as related to vertical mobility as it is in media occupations.¹⁹

The term gatekeeper has been used to describe media occupations although the term originally applied to individuals in jobs associated with the selection of news. A gatekeeper is defined as a person who selects, processes and organizes the information for the access of an audience.²⁰ The gatekeeper studies addressed the way in which the personal values and subjectivity of individuals in the position as well as the needs of the communication organization and relationships in the workplace affected the content of mass media messages.²¹

There is little consensus regarding types of occupational roles in the mass media. Some researchers argue that occupational roles in the mass media are not those that

¹⁸T. Caplow, The Sociology of Work (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964).

¹⁹P. M. Blau and O. D. Duncan, The American Occupational Structure (New York: John Wiley, 1967).

²⁰D. M. White, "The 'Gate-keeper': A Case Study in the Selection of News," Journalism Quarterly 27 (1950):383-96.

²¹Ibid.; W. Breed, "Social Control in the Newsroom," Social Forces (May 1955); W. Beiber, "News is What Newspapermen Make It," in People, Society, and Mass Communications, ed. L. A. Dexter and D. M. White (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1964), pp. 173-82.

can be equated with individual skill or craft because the production process and emphasis is on quantity, speed and marketability. The output is usually determined by a group, not an individual.²²

There is some evidence that work roles within media organizations are not clearly defined or formalized and that television organizations have found it beneficial to leave the position of creative roles structurally imprecise. This structural imprecision leads to role ambiguity which is often a source of conflict or tension. One way to counter this ambiguity is by creating a professional ideology. Professionalization entails the development of professional pride and values and can help to resolve the conflict or tension between organizational and individual goals.²³

However, there is no agreement in the literature regarding the issue of professionalism in media occupations. There is uncertainty about the attributes of these various jobs and the ability to meet the traditional criteria applied to professional occupations. This includes the development of a separate body of knowledge acquired through special training, a professional ideology, guidelines for professional behavior, and the right of the profession to

²²F. Newton, The Jazz Scene (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1961).

²³Gallagher, "Negotiations for Control."

autonomy, that is, to regulate the occupation and its members.

Two theoretical perspectives often applied to mass communication provide disparate views on this issue. The pluralist view, in which the media are conceptualized as just one of a number of power elites seeking to extend its influence, accepts the relative autonomy of the media occupation. The pluralists hold that the practitioner is ultimately responsible for the production process in the media, regardless of internal and external constraints. Consequently, media and media practitioners are autonomous, responsible institutions and individuals.²⁴ In contrast, some of the class based analyses insist that autonomy is low among these occupations and institutions because the meanings of the messages produced by this group have been determined by others in the dominant culture. According to class based perspectives, the media are believed to be bound to society's dominant institutions and ideologies.²⁵ The conclusion is that media occupations are not characterized

²⁴J. G. Blumler, "Producers' Attitudes toward Television Coverage of an Election Campaign: A Case Study," Sociological Review Monograph 13 (1969):85-116.

²⁵S. Hall, "Culture, the Media and the 'Ideological Effect,'" in Mass Communication and Society, ed. J. Curran et al. (London: Edward Arnold, 1977); Murdoch and Golding, "Capitalism, Communication and Class Relations"; J. Curran, M. Gurevitch, and J. Woolacott, "The Study of the Media: Theoretical Approaches," in Culture, Society and the Media, ed. M. Gurevitch et al. (London: Methuen & Co., 1982), pp. 11-29.

by occupational autonomy, because the occupational norms are created by outsiders.²⁶

Network Programming Executives

Descriptions of network executives are diverse, somewhat nebulous and often judgmental in tone. They are usually derived from anecdotal accounts or secondary sources. The diversity in reports revolves around the degree to which the network executive is thought to intervene in the creative process of production for television. According to Levinson and Link, the critical element in the accounts is based on the fact that network executives are the bosses. Although this group is considered generally lacking in so-called "creative" skills, its members give their input into shows which are being developed by creative personnel.²⁷

Reports on the degree to which network executives intervene in the creative process are inconsistent. Barnouw, writing as an outside historian, believes that network executives maintain very tight controls over the content of program scripts.²⁸ Stein, an industry insider, views the networks as having minimal input into the production and creative processes. According to the Stein account, the

²⁶Cantor, The Hollywood TV Producer.

²⁷R. Levinson and W. Link, Stay Tuned (New York: Ace Books, 1981).

²⁸E. Barnouw, The Image Empire: A History of Broadcasting in the United States since 1953 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970).

producers and writers are the creative authorities and operate with little interference from the network people.²⁹

Cantor's account of network intervention in the creative process is somewhat mixed. She states that the final decisions about which shows will be broadcast are made by a few people at the networks who are removed from the production process. Yet she asserts that the networks are involved in every step of the production process. By her account, the role of the network executive in this process is still unclear.³⁰

Others view the role of the network executive as an administrative manager, supervising and encouraging the producer or production team in a particular direction.³¹

Reports by industry insiders regarding network programming executives and their functions are not always complimentary. According to one source, these managers try to sustain the myth that programming decisions are based on factors other than maximizing the network's profits.

The individuals who make these decisions are for the most part, well-educated, well-read, and well-meaning men who love their children and their country--but they

²⁹B. Stein, The View from Hollywood and Vine (New York: Basic Books, 1979).

³⁰M. G. Cantor, "The Organization and Production of Prime-time Television," in Television and Behavior: Ten Years of Scientific Progress and Implications for the Eighties, ed. D. Pearl, L. Bouthilet and J. Lazr (Washington, DC: Government Printing office, 1982), pp. 349-62.

³¹A. V. Hannah, "In Conversation with Lucy Johnson," Television and Children (Summer 1982), pp. 5-8.

are also people who have risen to the top of a highly competitive industry that still believes that the ability to get a reservation in the latest restaurant is worth as much as good character, in fact may even be good character.³²

Although Gitlin interviewed a number of network television program executives and producers, he essentially uses an anecdotal approach to the making of television programs rather than a systematic study of program executives and decision-making.³³

The television industry has been described as male dominated.³⁴ According to Jeff Greenfield, the 1975-76 NBC program schedule was decided by a group of all white males, aged forty-five to forty-nine, with one exception, who lived in either New York or Los Angeles and earned anywhere from \$40,000 to \$250,000 per year.³⁵

With regard to executives in charge of the news, Epstein has found that these top managers function in a way which is similar to all managers. For the organization to operate effectively, the necessary organizational values must be imparted to subordinates. News executives depend on producers to make the same kinds of judgments that they would make under similar conditions. Top management

³²Mankiewicz and Swerdlow, Remote Control.

³³T. Gitlin, Inside Prime Time (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983).

³⁴"Six Women TV Station GMs Recount Diverse Paths to Top," Television/Radio Age, June 15, 1981, pp. 50-52, 81, 86.

³⁵Mankiewicz and Swerdlow, Remote Control.

recruits producers with an appropriate outlook and values for their particular jobs. Consequently, executives are involved in a continuous process of impressing particular views on producers.³⁵

Women in the Occupation

In 1980 women represented 33 percent of the full-time employees in broadcasting. The majority of these women are clustered in clerical and support work, with few women in policy making positions or managerial jobs. Less than 2 percent of commercial broadcast properties in the United States are controlled by women.³⁷

The television industry is dominated by white males and women still have little influence in decision-making.³⁸ According to a report in Variety, the number of women in network executive suites is continually increasing. However, most of the women executives mentioned are involved in daytime programming, children's programs, talent and casting, and novels and limited series.³⁹

³⁶D. J. Epstein, News from Nowhere: Television and the News (New York: Random House, Vintage Books, 1973).

³⁷"Careers behind the Screen," National Business Woman (December 1981/January 1982), pp. 14-16.

³⁸"Six Women TV Station GMs"; A. Chambers, "Prime-time for Careers in TV," Working Woman (February 1978), pp. 29-33.

³⁹D. Kaufman, "Women Are on the Rise in Television's Executive Suites," Variety, February 4, 1982, p. 99.

Women have not always succeeded in acquiring network executive positions. In 1975, sex discrimination was found to be "pattern and practice" at one network by the New York City Commission on Human Rights. After an investigation, the Commission found that the network developed a strategy which operated to exclude females from managerial positions and promotions, to place females consistently in clerical positions regardless of their qualifications, and to deny them the same opportunity given to men regarding upward movement in the organization. This was accomplished through particular practices of recruitment, hiring, assignment, and promotion.

One area where women have been able to break into management is in the newsroom. Although the number of women news directors at the station level is small, thirty women representing 5 percent of the total in television news, the figures are referred to as a "dramatic upsurge." Women represent 26 percent of the television news workforce, in on-camera and off-camera job.⁴⁰

There are approximately 700 commercial television stations in the United States.⁴¹ At the station level, many minorities and women who are classified as officials

⁴⁰V. A. Stone, "Many More Women News Directors," Radio and Television News Directors Association Communicator, March 1980, pp. 6-7.

⁴¹G. Comstock, Television in America (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1980).

and managers do not actually hold decision making positions. The lack of women and minorities in these positions is related to individual licensees' lack of commitment towards equal opportunity for these groups. Traditional stereotypes seem to prevail among the station managers regarding the capabilities for employment of women and minorities.⁴²

The General Manager is one occupation in television which has been systematically studied by Winick.⁴³ A summary of the characteristics of the people in the occupation is pertinent to a discussion of related occupations and provides some insight into the position of women in the industry. The general manager is the chief executive officer and is responsible for the complete operation of the station. This includes personnel, programming, engineering, accounting, sales, profits and continuation of the license to operate. General managers are usually salaried employees rather than station owners and stockholders. These individuals are in their early forties, in contrast to the typical American top executive who is ten years older. The job of station management requires higher education and very few individuals

⁴¹G. Comstock, Television in America (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1980).

⁴²A. S. Flemming, Window Dressing on the Set: Women and Minorities in Television, A Report on the United States Commission on Civil Rights (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, August 1977).

⁴³Winick, "The Television Station Manager," Advanced Management Journal 31 (1966):53-60.

interviewed by Winick drifted into television. Their career decisions were made in high school or college. The road to the top began in the television industry, usually in sales, followed by programming. Only a small proportion of the study sample population had engineering responsibilities, or publicity and public relations positions.

Winick noted that there were few women general managers in his sample. Fifteen years later, Television/ Radio Age reported on the six women who had reached the position of general manager of a commercial television station in the United States. Although the number of women in this latter study is small, it is interesting to compare their career paths with the earlier data. Essentially, these women followed the same route as the male general managers, fifteen years earlier. Higher education and business knowledge were stressed as requirements by this group. Performance in sales positions figured prominently in establishing these women as viable candidates for upper management. Most went into programming following their selling experience. The women admitted that the industry is white-male dominated, but in general, this group believed that television offers opportunity to any individual who is willing to work hard.⁴⁴

The scarcity of women among media elites is a phenomenon that appears in a variety of countries for which data

⁴⁴"Six Women TV Station GMs."

are available.⁴⁵ Findings regarding the status of women in managerial positions in television in Great Britain have been similar to those for the United States. In a study of women at the British Broadcasting Corporation, Fogarty et al. found that up to a certain point in the organizational hierarchy women had the appearance of equal opportunity to men. But when the job normally included at least some element of managerial responsibility, the consensus was that women were at a disadvantage. The more important the job in the managerial hierarchy, the greater the disadvantage for women.⁴⁶

Managerial and clerical jobs are the major sex-segregated white collar occupations. Sex typing of managerial jobs has been linked to the ideology of rational man that dominated early management theory and practice.⁴⁷ Thus, any investigation of the network executive should be concerned with the representation of women in the occupation. The question of sex typing in the occupation must be addressed. For example, from Smith's study of women on Fleet Street, we know that in journalism in Great Britain women journalists are most likely found in women's

⁴⁵R. Smith, "Women and Occupational Elites: The Case of Newspaper Journalism in England," in Access to Power, ed. C. F. Epstein and R. L. Coser (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1981), pp. 237-48.

⁴⁶M. Fogarty et al., Women in Top Jobs: Four Studies in Achievement (London: Allen & Unwin, 1971).

⁴⁷R. M. Kanter, Men and Women of the Corporation (New York: Basic Books, 1977).

specialties, i.e., fashion, beauty, home interests, and food. These women can most easily succeed in the occupation by entering the women's specialties or by transferring to women's magazines.⁴⁸ The programming specialties in which women are placed in television merit further investigation.

Methods and Analysis

The field of mass communication is vast and there is no one theory which integrates the research in this area.⁴⁹ In the current study much of the data have been analyzed in terms of the structural functional tradition in sociology. Role theory and reference group theory provided an excellent framework for studying the tasks of program executives and their relations to others in their organization and in the production community which supplies television programs to the networks. Robert K. Merton's notion that an individual can have either a local or cosmopolitan orientation to a social structure was instrumental in developing a profile of program executives and their approach to their jobs, their allegiance to a work organization and their priorities for their career development.

Since this analysis focused on the operational aspect of media organizations and occupations in the context

⁴⁸Smith, "Women and Occupational Elites."

⁴⁹W. P. Davison and F. T. C. Yu (eds.), Mass Communication Research: Major Issues and Future Directions (New York: Praeger, 1974).

of industry wide conditions, the findings were also related to the general management literature wherever applicable.⁵⁰

The data will be presented as a narrative exposition of the occupation of entertainment program executive in network television and the decision making involved in the process of creating programming for entertainment.

The data are based on personal interviews with fifty senior executives in television networks who were asked to describe the process by which an entertainment program is conceived, developed, and scheduled. In the case of an ongoing series, these executives were asked how the program was maintained for the on-air run and how they determined program renewal or cancellation.

The responses represent the way this group of executives perceive the process by which specific series and programs got on the air. All three commercial networks are represented by executives concerned with the areas of prime time drama and comedy, movies, mini-series, daytime and children's programs and talent. Executives representing research, broadcast standards, business affairs and sales functions were also interviewed to provide collateral information. The participants represent a majority of the

⁵⁰ Rather than serving as a mutually exclusive paradigm, Merton proposes that structuralism is compatible with a variety of perspectives which enhance analysis. See R. K. Merton, "Structural analysis in sociology," pp. 109-14 in R. K. Merton, Sociological Ambivalence and Other Essays (New York: The Free Press, 1976), pp. 109-43.

universe of network television executives in the entertainment divisions of those organizations. The sample contained just six executives at the level of department director; all others were vice presidents or members of senior management, including the level of division president. Additionally, corporate executives up to and including the level of chairman of the board were interviewed.

It took approximately two years to complete the interviewing. The networks have established their entertainment divisions on the west coast; thus forty-five interviews were conducted in the Los Angeles area offices of each network. The remaining five interviews were held in the New York offices of the networks and followed the same form. The interviews were held in the private office of the executive and lasted for an average of almost two hours. Each session lasted from thirty minutes to four and a half hours. Some respondents were interviewed several times. The interviews on the west coast took a total of eight weeks to complete. Arrangements to conduct the interviews were made with a senior member of management at each network.

The other respondents were contacted either by phone or by personal introduction at the work place. Confidentiality was assured to all respondents. In many cases, following an interview, the subject referred me to a colleague, to whom she/he acted as my reference. Thus, the interviews began to "snowball." Additionally, interviews were conducted

with approximately twenty-five collateral personnel, including network officials in research, sales, and business affairs departments and key decision makers in program supplier organizations.

The interview guide consisted of open-ended questions which addressed job requirements and decision making in regard to an entertainment program. This interview guide had been pretested on a group of television executives involved in entertainment programming for first run and off-network syndication.⁵¹ All participants were asked the same group of core questions. All interviews were tape recorded with the permission of the respondents. Participants were assured of confidentiality and were guaranteed that no one respondent would be identified by name.

In many cases, due to the specialized nature of their duties, the executives did not comment on a topic or were unable to provide any information which could be coded for a particular dimension. Some executives, on occasion, were not responsive or avoided answering a question. The interviewer tried to bring the participant back to the subject by probing but the technique was not always successful.

⁵¹Syndicated programs are television programs which are usually filmed or taped series available through a distributor to individual stations for telecast. First run programs are made for syndication while off-network programs have already been aired on a network prior to their availability for syndication.

Categories for coding the data were developed from a content analysis of the transcribed interviews. The interviews were read again and coded. Data was tabulated by totals, then by network. For the purposes of clarity of presentation, the data are represented in percentages. Reliability was determined by recoding a sample of the data after a year had passed. A $+0.99$ correlation was determined.

The three commercial networks will be referred to as NET X, NET Y, and NET Z. In order to illustrate particular processes or points of view, quotes from the interviews are used. In order to maintain confidentiality, neither the names nor the specific titles of the respondents are used. However, identifying titles, such as vice president, are used where such designation is important in order to convey the relevance of a statement. In all cases, different individuals are used in each example. If one section contains ten quotes for illustration, the statements are from ten different participants. Where several comments are used as examples, in order to distinguish the respondents from one another, the quote will be preceded by the notation R followed by a number. The numbers are used to order the responses and do not designate any one individual. In cases where the networks have been grouped together for analysis, the excerpts have been taken from across the sample. Thus, a comment by an executive from each network is provided in the illustration.

Many of the quotes contain underlinings that indicate a portion of the comment that appears to warrant special attention. All such emphases have been added by me.

CHAPTER II

ORIGIN OF IDEAS FOR ENTERTAINMENT PROGRAMS

The network entertainment divisions are part of a conglomerate organization to which broadcasting properties contribute their revenues. Each conglomerate has a subsidiary corporation which is concerned solely with broadcast interests and the entertainment divisions are parts of those subsidiaries, as are the television network, the wholly owned and operated stations, and radio, news, and sports divisions. Generally, it is these subsidiary corporations and their component parts which are referred to as "the networks."

The networks most resemble an enterprise with a mediating technology. A mediating technology is one which links participants who are or want to remain independent. Banks are an example of this kind of technology; they link depositors and borrowers. Television networks, too, fit this mode; they link several parties. These parties include the individual station owners, the program producers, the advertisers and the audience.¹

¹J. D. Thompson, Organizations in Action (New York: McGraw Hill, 1969).

The networks organize the management of entertainment programs into departments that specialize in particular program types: prime time comedy and drama, movies, mini-series, variety and specials, daytime and children's programs.

Each network has constructed the system whereby the several departments report to an organizational superior somewhat differently. Although movies and mini-series are broadcast during prime time hours, they are separate areas and respective department heads do not report to the executive in charge of programs for that daypart. Department heads report to the executive responsible for all programming at each organization.

The executive title varies from network to network. For example, the movies and mini-series executive in charge at NET Y reports to a president of a movie division. This division president then reports to the president of the entertainment division. At NET X the top executive for this area reports to a vice president in charge of all entertainment programming, while at NET Z, the movies and mini-series chief reports directly to the president of the entertainment division. This description gives some indication of the differences in organizational structure among the three networks.

For each of the three networks, the prime time series area is subdivided both by genre or form and by

function. Prime time is the peak period of evening television viewing.² There are specialized departments for comedy and drama that handle the development and current aspects of programming. The development function is the process, both creative and bureaucratic, by which an idea is implemented into an actual television show. Once the implemented television show becomes a scheduled series, the on-air or current department oversees the creative and bureaucratic aspects of the show.

An important element of series television is that the creative function is continuous. Although the main characters and settings are constant, new situations in which to highlight the characters and their relationships are needed each week. The specialized function of the current or on-air series executive is to maintain the creative blueprints of the show as well as to insure that production of the contracted episodes remains on schedule. In a sense, on-air series evolve over time; characters grow and relationships may change among the principals. Pilot programs, which are prototypical samples of the series, are the end result of the development process and are actually static entities. They act as standards for a kind of mini-development which occurs during the life of an on-air series.

²The prime time viewing period is defined as 8:00-11:00 P.M. Monday through Saturday and 7:00-11:00 P.M., Sunday EST.

The developmental and on-air series functions are combined for daytime and children's areas, with one executive responsible for all aspects of a program. Movies, mini-series, variety and specials are, by their nature, one-time program opportunities and do not require ongoing supervision. Both the organizational structures of the networks and the characteristics of the development and on-air series processes will be covered in greater detail in a later section.

The focus of this chapter is the origin of ideas for an entertainment program, which is the first step in the process of development. Since we are primarily here concerned with the way in which ideas enter into the system, a discussion of the concept of the gatekeeper and how it applies to our group of executives is relevant before we proceed to analyze the procedures by which entertainment program ideas are generated and accepted into the developmental process.

The Concept of the Gatekeeper

The concept of the gatekeeper was first applied by Kurt Lewin³ to the process by which a news item travels through communication channels. Lewin indicated that certain structures within these channels acted as gates for

³See K. Lewin, "Channels of Group Life," Human Relations vol. 1 (no. 2), p. 145, and K. Lewin, Field Theory in Social Science, ed. D. Cartwright (New York: Harper & Bros., 1951).

determining whether or not a message was allowed into the channel. Along the channel, structures which are gates are regulated either by impartial rules or by gatekeepers, individuals or groups who have the power in the communication chain to make the decisions regarding the acceptance or rejection of incoming messages or messages already proceeding along the communication chain. By studying the factors which affect the decisions of the gatekeepers, the function of the gate is understood, thus giving insight into the structure and patterns of the particular communication channel.⁴

Many interdependent communication chains exist within society and the commercial television networks represent one form. As a communication chain the networks provide two specific functions for the public: 1) the surveillance of the environment and the dissemination of the news; and 2) the distribution of entertainment programs to the public. Every programmer knows the function of the networks. As many executives succinctly state, "It is the network's job to inform and entertain the audience."

⁴Others who added to the conceptual basis of the gatekeeper include R. K. Merton's work on role behavior within reference groups and the Westley and MacLean model for communication research. See R. K. Merton, Social Theory and Social Structure, rev. ed. (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1957); B. H. Westley and M. S. MacLean, Jr., "A Conceptual Model for Communications Research," Journalism Quarterly 34 (Winter 1957):31-38.

The process of gatekeeping has been compared to a chain. At each part of the chain, someone has the right to decide whether the message should be received and retransmitted. If the message is allowed to proceed along the chain, someone decides if the message will be retransmitted in its original form or restated. These restatements constitute a change in the message. Communication channels have, at certain points, a series of gatekeepers who have the right to open or close the gate to any message that is in that chain.⁵

Although the gatekeeper concept originated from the study of the news and the selection of noteworthy events to be reported, the concept can be extended to apply to the selection of ideas for potential entertainment programs. It is possible to make this analogy to the original studies since both newspapers and television networks are communications organizations and both have an enormous number of incoming messages which have to be filtered and transmitted to the public. Although the job of the wire/telegraph editor in the original studies may seem quite different from the complex duties of a television program executive, the occupations share a common element. Their gatekeeper function was structurally determined by the communications

⁵See "The Gate Keeper: A Memorandum," in Mass Communication, ed. Wilbur Schramm (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1975), pp. 75-77.

organization. Their respective organizations have defined these roles as gatekeeping ones.

The initial study of gatekeepers was conducted by David Manning White (1950) and was based upon the responses of one newspaper wire/telegraph editor whom White considered to be representative of all individuals in that occupation. White studied the criteria used by this wire editor in accepting or rejecting news stories filed by the three major press associations in existence at that time. He concluded that the selection process was a highly subjective one and relied upon the experience, attitudes and expectations of the gatekeeper. Available space in the newspaper and time of day that the item came in were also factors affecting selection.⁶

Basing his work on White's conclusions of the subjective nature of news selection, Geiber studied the degree of subjectivity of telegraph editors. He concluded that the pressures of the production process superceded any personal evaluation in the selection process. The mechanics of going to press was the major concern of the job occupant rather than the social meaning or impact associated with the news. Geiber indicated that the telegraph editor was passive, task oriented, preoccupied with the goals of production and had

⁶White asked his subject to mark all incoming copy. The notations included the following: propaganda; B.S.; He's too red. See D. M. White, "The 'Gate-keeper': A Case Study in the Selection of News," Journalism Quarterly 27 (Fall 1950): 383-96.

no real perception of the audience, the newspaper readership, to whom he was communicating. Bureaucratic pressures acted to constrain the subjectivity of the job occupant.⁷

Breed's study of reporters is more concerned with the way policy, the values of the communication organization, is imparted to those in gatekeeping positions in the newsroom. According to Breed, policy, which can be either explicit or tacit, acts as a type of social control in the newsroom by establishing norms and sanctions. While policy is clearly set at the top of the organization, Breed sought to identify the mode by which staffers learned the norms and sanctions of the newsroom. Breed's subjects reported that they learned "by osmosis." He interpreted this comment to mean that through observation and on the job training the new staffers learned the requirements of their position and the behaviors that were expected of them. Their socialization also occurred by reading their own newspaper every day and then assessing the paper's characteristics. Thus, editorials and columns acted as a guide to the newcomer and novice reporters shaped their stories to fit in with the established style of the newspaper. As a result, the new

⁷W. Geiber, "News Is What Newspapermen Make It," in People, Society, and Mass Communications, ed. L. A. Dexter and D. M. White (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1964), pp. 173-82.

staffers gained acceptance into the social organization of the newsroom.⁸

These gatekeeper studies provide one basis for the analysis of our data. Not only can our findings be compared to the work in this area but the implications of the observations of the gatekeeper studies allows us to relate our data to a variety of perspectives. For example, White's observation that irrational factors, such as personal values and expectations, play a determinant role in the selection process, suggests a look not only at intuitive elements attached to decision making but to the different statuses and roles that this group of executives hold in their professional and personal lives. Geiber's finding that the audience was of little importance to his communicators brings us to question the part audience considerations play in decision making and how our television programmers perceive of the audience. Reference group theory can help to clarify the issue as we attempt to discover the way in which the programmers relate to the television audience.

Breed's discussion of policy dissemination may clarify the mechanisms that operate to train network

⁸Breed also addressed why people may conform to policy. For example, the positive feelings associated with belonging to the "in-group."

The individual's degree of mobility aspirations may also be a factor. Bucking the system is not perceived as a way to advance in the organization or to use the job as a stepping stone to an occupation in a related field. See W. Breed, "Social Control in the News Room," Social Forces (May 1955).

programming executives to the requirements of their jobs, as well as the norms and values of their organization and the television industry. The allocation of resources and economic factors become pertinent to the analysis since the element of time and the mechanics of production were identified as variables which impinged on the selection process for gatekeepers.

Since gatekeepers are structurally determined bearers of influence, Merton's concept of influentials and its application to network programming executives may also be relevant since these are individuals who, in a sense, act as opinion leaders. Consequently, a variety of perspectives can be used to interpret the data. Because of the way the data are organized, many of the issues raised by the gatekeeper studies will not be addressed in this chapter but will be covered in later sections. It is instructive to observe how our group of gatekeepers addressed the selection of ideas for entertainment programs.

Generation of Ideas

Where do the ideas for a television entertainment program originate? Are they generated by the network executives? Do they come from the writers and producers who form a creative community which supplies the finished product to the networks? Or is it some combination of both?

Seventy-seven percent of the executives reported that program ideas are generated outside of the network and

are introduced to the executive by either a writer, producer, writer-producer, or a studio or production company executive through the process of "pitching" an idea. The "pitch" is a verbal presentation to the network program executive which explains the premise of the show and describes the characters.

Are program ideas ever generated by network executives? According to our sample, 54 percent said that ideas originate with the executives in the network and are handed out to the creative teams or program suppliers for implementation.

A third way of originating ideas was described by 20 percent of the respondents. Ideas which are generated by the creative individuals are presented to the network and the idea is then restructured by the network executives, and returned to the creator for implementation. These three groups of responses come to 151 percent because a number of executives mentioned more than one pathway to a program idea achieving development.

Are there any differences in the way the three networks perceive the approaches? With regard to the generation of ideas occurring outside and inside the network, the distribution of executives reporting each of these two methods is the same at all three networks. One-fifth of the executives at NET X mentioned both methods for obtaining

ideas, two-thirds of the executives at NET Y indicated both methods as did two-fifths of the executives at NET Z. It is interesting to note that at NET Z, half of the executives estimated that 50 to 70 percent of the ideas for all their prime time series were generated in house. The estimates for internally-generated ideas at the other two organizations were much smaller, 10 percent or less. Executives from NET X and NET Y also reported that they believed NET Z to generate more ideas in-house than did their organizations.

However, 86 percent of the executives from NET Y said that their colleagues restructured ideas that were "pitched" from outside suppliers. Executives from NET X comprised the remaining 14 percent and no individual from NET Z indicated that pitched ideas were restructured by a network executive. The restructuring of ideas is actually a very active position and executives at NET Y may have more input to network generation of ideas than their estimates reveal.

Sources of Ideas

Sixty percent of the sample indicated that concepts well known to the general public which have a previous mass familiarity and people or events which have a high recognition quality are the most frequent source of ideas.

The type of mass familiarity concepts divide according to program area. Movies and mini-series mentioned

exclusively bestsellers and books (36 percent) and significant cultural or historical events and past and present public personalities (9 percent). Although bestsellers are indeed books, they were mentioned separately because they represent very popular and well known material.

Bestsellers and books, both published and prior to publication, come to the attention of movie and mini-series departments in several ways. The property can be brought in by the author, an agent, a producer, a director, or sometimes a combination of all those individuals, who have acquired or optioned the rights to a property. In some circumstances the network may provide the money for an individual to take the option on the property.

Talent was seen as an inspirational source for ideas and prime time series mentioned talent, established stars from both television and the movies, exclusively (32 percent), followed by movie concepts (9 percent). A variety of program areas mentioned contemporary events (14 percent), which include trends and the news (broadcast and published), as a source for program ideas to the executives.

The most frequently mentioned source for talent (actors and actresses) was the agent. Agents were described as continually informing network executives of the availability of their clients for a potential television series. The casting departments of the networks, which are based on the west coast but keep a small staff in their east coast

offices, maintain a search for talent by attending plays, movies, surveying modelling agencies and by interviewing actors. Production companies have their own casting directors and go through a similar process to find actors for entertainment series.

The present television schedule was mentioned as a guide to generating ideas for programs by 20 percent of the sample. NET Z mentioned this mode five times more frequently than both NET X and NET Y.

Imitation of past and present television successes were reported as a source by 17 percent of the executives. Those respondents were limited to NET Y and NET Z. No executives from NET X mentioned imitation as a mode for generating ideas. Participants from NET Z accounted for 67 percent of the respondents while half as many executives at NET Y (33 percent) reported imitation as a source for generating ideas.

How frequently do producers ask network executives specifically what type of program the network wants for its schedule? A third of the executives at each network indicated that producers directly ask the program executive what kind of ideas are desired for development by the network. All the executives in the area of movie and mini-series said they are frequently asked by producers what types of projects the network wants to develop.

The respondents in the movie and mini-series area expressed dissatisfaction with this approach by the creative community. One executive stated:

I find that a lot of the producers are so conditioned that they don't come to me with their ideas, they're so conditioned to think that the networks are controlling that they come to me and say, "what are you looking for?" I may be looking for something⁹ in terms of number of hours for the long form. I'm looking for something that is good and it's not my job to create programming.

Another executive responded:

I think it's silly. If I knew what I wanted I'd go out and do it myself. I would be embarrassed to come in and say, "Tell me what you want."

Network executives were asked the number of ideas they encountered in the process of seeking new programs. Several movie and mini-series executives estimated that nearly 5,000 ideas a year come into their offices. As one executive put it, "You name it, they are coming to us." When actively seeking projects for development, the executives estimate the number of meetings with potential program suppliers to be between twenty to thirty per week and the number of ideas presented to them to be between sixty and eighty weekly. One drama development executive said that there are at least 150 categories of program ideas and fifteen "pitches" are made annually for each one. A drama development executive can have 600 to 700 meetings a year to discuss ideas for dramatic series. During "pitch" season,

⁸"Long form" refers to programs which are two hours or more in duration.

executives estimate that they have ten meetings per day to discuss program possibilities. One executive stated that these conferences "seem like a series of endless meetings."

In house, at NET Y, the head of all prime time current series requires that his executives come up with eight to ten story ideas for each of their assigned series during NET Y's January planning meetings. NET Z has brainstorming sessions where development executives come up with approximately twenty possibilities for a series and agree on half a dozen for development. A network may have eighty to 150 projects in various stages of development at one time for all entertainment programming: comedy, drama, movies, mini-series, variety and specials. One executive claims that all the ideas are different. "If all the ideas were similar, I couldn't last in the job six months, I'd go crazy. The ideas are so different."

Value of Ideas

Some of the respondents from NET Y and NET Z (11 percent) outlined the ideas which form the base of a potential entertainment program. From their responses, it appears that an idea useful to the network has two components: the essence of the idea and the operational aspect of the concept. For the respondents at NET Y, the value of the idea and the translation of the concept into a television show were considered equally important. Their descriptions included a statement about the idea as well as the ability

to produce it.

It's better to have a show with a good, strong concept where you've got a character, where the entire show makes sense. Shows that eventually collapse have no strong focal point; they don't have writing.¹⁰

Respondents at NET Z separated the essence of an idea from the ability to make the idea operative. In doing this, the emphasis shifted from the generation of the idea to the ability to translate it into a television show. Thus, it was the ability to execute any concept which largely determined its utility. The following statements illustrate the thinking at NET Z:

According to one participant:

An idea doesn't mean anything. An idea is not great until those creative people who make the show take it and executive it. I put zero store in an idea for a television show.

Another executive said:

An idea is cheap. The people that do it are the people who have to sit down and write it and bring those characters to life and you know, that's the hardest part of the show. The idea is just one part, 25 percent; the big part, 75 percent, is the execution.

Role Approaches to Generating Ideas

Role is a central concept to the understanding of the person in sociological terms. Theoretical approaches to the role concept vary. For example, sociologists such

¹⁰It should be noted that the word "good" is often used in association with the word "idea" by these executives; however, no operational definition of a good idea could be provided.

as Merton, Parsons, and Blau would perceive individuals as being substantially shaped by their social structures, their statuses and roles.¹¹ Much of role theory is based on Linton's¹² definition of status and role. Linton defined status as a position in a social system, role as the expected behavior associated with that position, the dynamic aspect of a structural element. In contrast to the structural view, Goffman¹³ proposes that the individual has freedom from standardized role behaviors and can manage his behavior in a role in terms of the impressions he makes upon others. For Blumer,¹⁴ social structure is created by the social processes in the group. Rules and norms are created by individuals as a result of their interaction. Status is viewed as a social object and its meaning is subject to interpretation by the occupant. Consequently the concept of role, the behavior attached to a status, becomes a fluid one, dependent upon human interaction rather than determined by social structure.

¹¹This is essentially a structuralist position, and in Blau's view, Exchange Structuralism. See Merton, Social Theory and Social Structure; T. Parsons, The Social Systems (New York: Free Press, 1951); P. M. Blau, Exchange and Power in Social Life (Chicago: John Wiley & Sons, 1964).

¹²R. Linton, The Cultural Background of Personality (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1945), pp. 125-28.

¹³E. Goffman, The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life (Garden City, NY: Doubleday Anchor, 1959).

¹⁴H. Blumer, Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1969).

Since we are interested in identifying the participants in decision making as well as the factors that contribute to problem solving in the various kinds of programming decisions, Merton's view of status and role provides a useful framework for an analysis of our data. It also provides a base to apply other perspectives regarding role behaviors to our findings. As previously mentioned, status is conceived as a position in a social structure with particular rights and duties associated with this state. Role is the behavioral component of status and the behaviors are based on what others' expectations of conduct should be for an individual in a particular social position. These expectations are norms for role performance which maintain order and consistency in human interaction which is set within the context of formal organizations.

According to Merton, each status involves several roles. Each person who occupies a particular social status is involved in complementary role relationships. This arrangement is called the role-set. The relationships in role-sets are both vertical and lateral. The role occupant interacts with others above, below or in the same status position as himself. For example, a network vice president of prime time drama development will probably interact with the senior vice president in charge of prime time programming (higher status); a director in the drama development department (lower status) and other vice presidents in

charge of program departments (equivalent status). These role relationships in the role-set occur within the network organization but others in the set are located in separate enterprises such as a production company. All individuals in society hold multiple statuses. Some are ascribed, such as sex, some are achieved, such as one's vocation. This is Merton's concept of the status-set; a complement of all the social positions each individual holds. Consequently, people play multiple roles and have multiple role relationships. These status-sets and role-sets are both subject to conflict and integrating the expectations of all those players involved in the role interactions.¹⁵

It is apparent that the concept of the role-set can help us to understand the jobs of network executives. By detailing the executives' descriptions of their jobs we can determine the size of the role-sets,¹⁶ identify the persons in the role relationships, locate possible points and types of conflict for the role incumbent and look for mechanisms which operate to resolve conflicts. Since we are also concerned with subjectivity in decision making, the other statuses and roles of the individuals which are not directly linked to the occupational one will be considered and their impact, if any, on the decision and selection

¹⁵Merton, Social Theory and Social Structure, pp. 368-82.

¹⁶J. Hage, Theories of Organizations (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1980), p. 346.

process will be assessed. In later chapters, as we gain greater information about these programmers in terms of their complete job functions, their personal backgrounds, and the characteristics of the network organizations and the industry environment, the concepts of role theory will be related to our findings. Particularly applicable to our analysis are two types of role conflict: interrole conflict, which occurs when both the central figure (job occupant) and members of the role-set have conflicting expectations regarding each other's behaviors;¹⁷ intrarole conflict, which occurs when the central figure (job occupant) in the role set experiences conflicting expectations for his behavior from the various members of his role-set, usually members at different status levels.¹⁸

So far the three networks appear similar in the way they manage the initial stage of the development process with the exception of four areas:

- (1) restructuring of pitched ideas;
- (2) use of the present television schedule;
- (3) reliance on imitation of past success;
- (4) value of an idea.

From this finding we can ask two questions. First, will the differences among the three groups be reflected in the

¹⁷N. Gross, W. S. Mason and A. W. McEachern, Explorations in Role Analysis (New York: Wiley, 1958).

¹⁸R. L. Kahn et al., Organizational Stress: Studies in Role Conflict and Ambiguity (New York: John Wiley, 1964).

perception of the role of the network executive in the phase in which ideas are originated? Second, is there a relationship between the type of work role described by the sample and any of the above four variables outlined above? Before we address these questions, we must see how the members of this group referred to their jobs.

The role of the network executive in the process of generating ideas was described by 66 percent of the respondents. A content analysis of the role descriptions yielded three categories of possible roles in their gatekeeper function. The INITIATOR causes or facilitates the beginning of an idea as well as providing instruction in the rudiments or principles of that idea. The NEGOTIATOR engages in a process by which an agreement about an idea is reached as a function of give and take between parties. An idea is arrived at, not imposed by one party. The EVALUATOR determines the worth of the idea through a process of a rating judgment. The control of the idea remains in the hands of the person who proposed the idea.

Overall, 23 percent viewed the role of the program executive as that of initiator. The role of negotiator was described by 23 percent. The evaluator role was mentioned by 20 percent. These roles appear to be evenly distributed as acceptable ways of performing one's job. However, when we look at the data by network, differences appear among the groups.

For all of the respondents who described the initiator role, both NET X and NET Z reported 37.5 percent, while 25 percent of the NET Y executives reported using that role. In the negotiator and evaluator categories the differences among networks is greater. For those describing the negotiator role, 12 percent were programmers from NET X and 88 percent were executives from NET Y. No programming executive from NET Z described this position. In contrast, NET Z executives accounted for 72 percent of the respondents describing the position of an evaluator, while 14 percent of the programmers from NET X and 14 percent from NET Y reported using this role approach.

The most salient difference among networks appears to be in the perception of the type of role the network executive plays in this process. How does this relate to the generation of ideas and the four variables where differences were apparent?

We know that NET Y strongly defines the role of the executive as one of negotiator. By our definition, negotiation alters the original concept by arriving at an idea through a mutual agreement. If we return to the data for ideas which were generated outside of the network but restructured by the executive, we see that NET Y accounted for 86 percent of the responses in that category. An executive of NET Y expressed the phenomenon this way:

When you hear an idea which is not quite what you want, you try to shift the idea to something the network can use. I mean, they walk out having sold their idea, but, of course, it really isn't any longer.

Executives at NET Z perceive themselves as evaluators and initiators. Consequently, the differences in responses to three of the four variables is congruent with these kinds of roles. By our definition we can see that an initiator and an evaluator do not restructure ideas. Need is important to the initiator. Consequently, the television schedule will be referred to more frequently as a guide in generating ideas. Since implementation is important to the evaluator, the operative component of the idea will have a greater weight. When the members of this group report that the network generates ideas, they will perceive themselves as generating a larger portion of the ideas. A top level executive at NET Z states that "We look for people to do the show that we think we need." In using the TV schedule as a guide to selecting ideas, the same respondent says that:

Series executives know what their needs are. They know they are going to have to fill a slot, let's say Friday, at nine o'clock. They want a show that will capitalize on the lead-in audience and not lose that audience.

Another NET Z executive states a similar view which reflects the needs approach.

We make sure that we have the right kinds of shows in development to fill time periods that may not be working.

However, whether they are initiators, negotiators or evaluators at the networks, they judge by their need in the sense of time period and audience requirements.

NET X executives take the role of the initiator more often than that of a negotiator or an evaluator. Forty-four percent of the executives at NET X responded that they generate ideas for potential entertainment programs. A top level executive commented on this phenomenon:

It's all based on inductive reasoning, by taking in information. The network executive wakes up one morning and says, "Hey, I've got a great idea for a series." The network executive sees and knows the same things as everybody else; they just put it together differently.

Another executive from NET X states: "The network approach to the job involves an enormous amount of creativity."

Discussion

Clearly our group of executives filters ideas for the organization. However, it would appear that the characterization of the gatekeeper as a passive individual (Geiber, 1964) who relies heavily on subjective assessments (White, 1950) in selecting incoming messages to the communication chain does not fully correspond to the part played by these executives.

The factors which are more important to the selection process appear to be related to organizational goals in terms of audience needs and the requirements of the program production process. Thus, our group shows that they do hold

an idea of the audience in their selection of the ideas¹⁹ in contrast to Geiber's observation that his communicators had no real perception of their audience and therefore did not actually communicate to it. However, his findings that the mechanical pressures of the work played an important role in selection does apply to this group. As we will come to see, the ability of the creative team to supply the network with products on time becomes increasingly important as program ideas move through the various stages of the development process.

Restructuring of messages before they are allowed to proceed along the communication chain is apparent from the data. Breed's observations on policy and values may apply to this instance. When a network executive reformulates an idea and returns it to the creator for implementation he is also socializing the supplier to the values of the particular network. Since the schedule of programs plays such a significant role in determining what is needed by the network and which ideas will be selected for potential programs, executives who are continually watching their network's fare are socialized to the requirements of their organization,

¹⁹The fact that network executives do hold an idea of the audience is an important point and will be considered in a later chapter. Partially a reference group phenomenon, the communicator's idea of the audience also draws on Cooley's notion of imaginary interlocutors. See I. de Sola Pool and I. Shulman, "Newsmen's Fantasies, Audiences, and Newswriting," Public Opinion Quarterly 23 (1959):145-58.

just as Breed's sample was socialized to their organization's values by daily reading of their newspaper.²⁰

An important consideration about these television organizations is that the gatekeeping process does not always adhere to the hierarchical type described in the literature. At the networks, ideas come into the system through multiple channels. Ideas come into the entertainment divisions at different levels of the hierarchy. Presentations can be made to a department director or to the division president.

What is significant is that the level at which the ideas enter the system appears to be related to the relative position of the supplier in the overall status system of the industry. For example, creative talent with a high reputation, a good track record of program successes, often deal with the upper echelon for the initial presentation of potential series projects. Also, ideas for programs can be generated by those in the networks and the individuals can occupy different status positions within the organization. Thus, the gatekeeping function at the initial phase of a project occurs at several different levels within the

²⁰We will also see that many of the interactions and decisions among these executives take place in small groups. That social process becomes a mechanism for learning acceptable role behaviors and organizational values. These programmers also pay a great deal of attention to the competition's programming which allows them to formulate ideas about the needs and values of the other networks and the industry.

organization and at each of these points an idea can be rejected or accepted and channeled into the developmental process in either the original form or reshaped by the gatekeeper.

We can see that network executives take different approaches in the gatekeeping phase of the program process and the three types of roles, the initiator, the negotiator, and the evaluator are distributed across the networks. This finding brings a number of questions to the fore: for example, what mechanisms allow for the executive to take these various role approaches? Are certain types of executive action more likely to be associated with a particular network? The data in subsequent chapters pertaining to network creative guidance and the subject of organizational dimensions of these entertainment divisions will help to clarify these questions.

CHAPTER III

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

This chapter will cover the development of an entertainment program as well as getting that program on the air and, in the case of ongoing series, maintaining the show for its on-air run. Examples will be given in the area of prime time series, movies, mini-series, variety and specials, children's programs and daytime programs. There will be a general discussion of what these executives look for in the development of a property in all program areas as well as a detailed description of the processes involved in developing and maintaining programs. Casting requirements and broadcast standards will also be included in the discussion.

The job of development is to provide potential products for the network to distribute to their affiliates. The basic process sounds very simple and straightforward. For all areas, the process is fairly standard, as one seasoned senior executive said:

Somebody comes in with an idea. Somebody at the network likes the idea. Somebody here says "write a script." Somebody says "script's good, let's cast it." Somebody has gotta say who is in it, who directs it and finally somebody is going to say if it gets in the schedule. That's the process. There's a few variations to it but 98 percent of the time that is how it is done.

We are interested in who are the somebodies, what is going on during each phase, which factors are considered when developing an idea, and is there more to it than the executive just liking the concept?

In engaging in development activity, the executive is exposed to a lot of "pitching" of ideas or properties either in the form of talking the idea through or of presenting a brief summary. Typical assessments of the process by two of the respondents are:

R₁ Development people do all the initial work of nurturing the idea with the producer, getting the script and all its drafts written.

R₂ So in development we read a lot, we talk a lot.

How they decide which ideas to develop for their organization and which aspects of the creative process they pursue, are areas for our study. Thus, we ask: what are the objective and creative dimensions which concern these executives and what criteria are used in these decisions?

Objective Dimensions

The network executives who responded (76 percent), mentioned four specific considerations associated with their decisions to develop an idea for a television show. These were: the audience (39 percent); the schedule (34 percent); economic factors (15 percent); promotability (8 percent). The language of the executives best expresses the range of their reasoning.

Audience

These executives believe that the taste of the audience is an important consideration in program development.

- R₁ You must think of the total audience, what is most appealing to huge chunks of different kinds of audiences.
- R₂ We develop movies knowing what the audience likes. So we are patterning what we produce to what the audience wants.
- R₃ The audience affects everything. You try and gauge what the audience wants to see. That's a must.
- R₄ You have to have a bridge to your audience and a lot of people overlook that in this business. If you don't have that bridge, you're in trouble. A common denominator, something in common. I don't mean "common." It's just that the denominator has to be something that the audience could crossover.

Clearly, these programmers hold a picture of the audience in their mind as a reference point in making decisions. This is in contrast to Geiber's reports of the early gatekeeper studies, where it was proposed that the gatekeeper had no real perception of the audience to which he was communicating.¹ That network executives do consider the audience as they make programming decisions supports the thesis that communication effects are reciprocal; the messages that communicators send are in part determined by both the communicator's idea of the audience and his

¹Geiber refers to both published and unpublished accounts. See W. Geiber, "News Is What Newspapermen Make It," in People, Society, and Mass Communications, ed. L. A. Dexter and D. M. White (New York: Free Press, 1964), pp. 173-82.

expectations of their reaction to the message.² Research has suggested that at the time the message is constructed, "imaginary interlocutors"³ or reference persons, enter into the mental associations of the communicator and influence the selection and direction of the communication.

Reference persons or reference groups are used as an evaluative technique for an individual, as points of comparison for shaping attitudes, evaluations and behavior; actual membership in the group is not necessary for this appraisal phenomenon to occur.⁴ The relationship between the communicator and the reference persons or group is a mental supposition⁵ in which the communicator tests the

²I. de Sola Pool and I. Shulman, "Newsmen's Fantasies, Audiences, and Newswriting," Public Opinion Quarterly 23 (1959):145-58.

³The term "imaginary interlocutor" was first used by C. H. Cooley, Human Nature and the Social Order (New York: Scribners, 1902).

⁴For a full description of Reference Group Theory, see R. K. Merton, Social Theory and Social Structure (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1957), chapters VIII and IX. The use of reference persons as a key component in communications is well documented. Several studies detailing this relationship are: S. A. Stouffer et al., The American Soldier (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1949); B. Berelson, P. Lazarsfeld, and W. McPhee, Voting (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1954); E. Katz and P. Lazarsfeld, Personal Influence (New York: Free Press, 1955).

⁵This mental strategy has also been described as a typification process. See J. C. McKinney, "Sociological Theory and the Process of Typification," in Theoretical Sociology, ed. J. C. McKinney and E. Tiryakin (New York: Appleton Century Croft, 1970), pp. 235-69.

reception of his message. How this group of programming executives develop their mental pictures of the television audience will be discussed in the sections covering audience research and personal subjectivity. The relative importance of the audience as a reference group to the programmer in selecting material should be assessed since research has indicated that the least important reference group for the Hollywood producer of television shows in determining content is the viewing audience.⁶

Schedule

According to these executives, all programs are on a schedule and they must be appraised in relation to each other. In addition, the schedules of the competing networks must also be considered since they offer the audience a minimum of two other viewing opportunities for any given time period and its companion program. Consequently, the network's program schedule indicates successes and failures⁷ and program needs can be inferred.⁸

⁶M. G. Cantor, "Producing Television for Children" in Television and Social Behavior, Vol. I, ed. G. Comstock and E. Rubinstein (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1971), pp. 259-89.

⁷Program success and failure is largely determined by the Nielsen rating system and will be discussed under program research.

⁸This concern with the schedule is somewhat similar to the way Breed described reporters' reliance on reading their newspapers and inferring the organization's values and policies through the editorial and daily columns of the newspaper.

The following respondents describe the way the schedule is used to determine program need and mix.

- R₁ You are constantly looking at what is not working on the schedule and trying to figure out what will work.
- R₂ So we, in our department, discuss the scripts in relation to the others that have been submitted and we look for weaknesses in our schedule. So, do we need an eight, nine, or 10 o'clock show and on which day. We think in terms of time period development.
- R₃ It doesn't make sense to develop shows for time slots that are working.
- R₄ In deciding whether or not you think a particular program will make it, our needs are very important in terms of whether or not we have a time period open, one that isn't working for example.

According to this executive, time period determines the kind of audience for which a program is developed.

- R₅ There are concerns with where you think the show will go. For example, if you have purchased a show to be an 8 P.M. half hour comedy, there are certain guidelines which are unwritten that have to do with what will probably be a workable show at 8 P.M. If the script comes in with a theme that seems only appropriate to a solely adult audience, it is not going to work. The reason for buying the show initially, which you presumably had told the producers because it is generally done, is that you were designing the show for 8 P.M. In the vernacular of this business, people understand what that means. But it often happens that in an action adventure show you bought for 8 o'clock, it is really a 10 o'clock show, which is, perhaps more violent and much more adult; more talk, less activity or action.

Economic Considerations

Economic considerations were also considered significant by these programmers both in the sense of program expenditure and the potential for maintaining strong advertising rates for revenues.

- R₁ When we go to pilot a half hour comedy is about \$750,000 commitment. For hour series we usually do a two-hour pilot and that will be anywhere from \$2.5 to \$3 million, each decision. So the decisions have substantial ramifications on the company as a whole.
- R₂ It is just that we want to do good shows that sell soap.

Mini-series area

Economic factors are especially important in the mini-series area since considerable resources are allocated to these projects. At one network, the executive in charge states:

There are huge risks involved and in order to make them pay off--in order for there to be reason for the network to do them--they have to be so special to get the largest possible audience.

At another network, the head of mini-series commented:

We have a responsibility to the advertisers where we can't take the chance for a risk because we are indeed filling the slot between the commercials. We are doing it in the best possible way we can but this is a business.

Promotability

Promotability or marketing of the show was the fourth factor mentioned by executives. Those respondents

clustered in program areas which combined the development and on-air responsibilities of a project and also included executives in prime time current programming. One vice-president said:

I get very analytical about the marketing of things because it doesn't make any difference how good my story is if I can't sell it beforehand. I know right at the outset that the quality of the film itself is largely irrelevant to its commercial success. If I make a wonderful film, it is nothing if I can't market it. I am going to make that decision before I spend one nickel to develop the script. There is no point in investing \$50,000, \$60,000 or more in a script for a television movie if I don't know beforehand what the ad, the trailer and all of these marketing devices are going to amount to, hence, the development of the concept movie; the two lines in TV guide.

Another participant in the prime time series area stated:

Promotability of an episode is the key. I mean, first and foremost, it means you can write a one line description of the episode to go into TV guide or whether or not you can get that one second blurb telling people to watch show X tonight.

The orderings of these considerations among the three networks differs somewhat. Both NET X and NET Z ranked audience first followed by schedule. NET Z ranked as third, economic factors and as fourth, promotional considerations. NET Y ranked as first both schedule and economic considerations, followed by audience and promotional factors. NET X executives did not mention economic or promotional considerations as part of their decision.

Gatekeeper studies have indicated that bureaucratic elements are important aspects in the selection process for

gatekeepers. These elements act to constrain subjectivity on the part of the individual in the gatekeeping position.⁹ From our data, it is apparent that the goals of the organization and marketplace needs are major considerations in the decision process. The importance of the audience/consumer, the schedule/product line, budget requirements/allocation of resources, and product marketing/strategic planning are indeed organizational concerns. Thus, the data from this study support the notion that bureaucratic and organizational requirements affect the selection of program ideas in television.

Creative Dimensions

What are the dimensions that entertainment executives look for during the creative process? Based upon the responses of nearly 80 percent of the executives interviewed, four creative dimensions emerged. In order of frequency mentioned they are 1) script, 2) character, 3) acting talent and 4) production values (technical considerations). Script and character dimensions were heavily weighted, accounting for 97 percent and 72 percent of the response. Less emphasis was placed on acting talent (21 percent) and the production values (10 percent), which included considerations

⁹W. Breed, "Social Control in the News Room," Social Forces (May 1955); W. Gieber, "News Is What Newspapermen Make it," in Dexter and White, People, Society and Mass Communications; J. G. Blumler, "Producers' Attitudes Toward Television Coverage of an Election Campaign: A Case Study," in The Sociological Review Monograph 13 (1969):85-116.

regarding the set and filming of the show. The three networks are similar in their response that script and character are the primary creative dimensions of interest to them, with all executives from NET Y and NET Z and 88 percent of the executives from NET X citing script as a central consideration. NET X placed more emphasis on acting talent than the other two networks and NET X and NET Y mentioned technical aspects of the production. Technical aspects were not mentioned by executives at NET Z.

Script

What do the network executives seek when looking at a script? They look at the premises of the program, for a solid plot or a story that holds together, for the concept to be congruent with the original intention of the show and for structural elements such as dialogue, pacing and act-breaks. Episodes are written as teleplays and contain acts. Commercials are shown between the acts. Consequently, the end or break of an act must contain an element, for example, jeopardy, that will compel the audience to continue to view both the commercial messages and the remaining portion of the program. The following comments by executives in the various program areas illustrate the priority that script seems to have in the judgment process.

- R₁ The basis of this business is still story and concept.
- R₂ Writing is the area the network executive spends the bulk of his time on. Writing is

the key to every show. If you don't have a good script, you don't have a chance in the world of getting a good show. To me writing is the key; it is crucial. It is the backbone of television.

- R₃ The best thing to do in development is to concentrate on attracting the best writers you can.

Character

Character is also considered important by the executives in this group, who want characters to be interesting and appealing. In series, they seek to strengthen both primary and secondary characters. For example, one executive states:

You may want to build up extra characters so that the show will run to a series week in and week out and hold up.

Others think that you look for interesting characters.

You look for characters that you are interested in, not necessarily that you like but that you are interested in. Some characters are evil but you are fascinated by them.

One executive provided an interesting explanation of the importance of characters to all entertainment forms.

What is crucial in developing all entertainment shows, including game shows, children's programs, dramas and comedies is characterization. The stories themselves are not the issues that determine the success of the show, it is a lot more complicated than that. Characterization means that you are presenting the audience interesting people they can relate to--that's what people care about. What you are asking the audience to do is to become involved with the characters. That works for game shows, too. In game shows you get a process that produces interesting contestants (characters), the right process that allows those people to make decisions and choices and demonstrate something

about themselves and you provide access for the viewer to share and participate in that situation. In a serial or series the writer writes all that.

Acting Talent

Less frequently mentioned but part of the criteria was acting talent. The following quote from an executive who was not in casting expresses this view:

I don't care how well-written, produced, photographed or anything a series is, it's, do they like the stars of the show? I don't care how great you write a character, if the audience does not grab onto the person, then it is going to fail.

Production Values

Production values or the technical considerations were mentioned by a small group of respondents in several program areas. For example, executives responsible for game shows described what they meant by technical aspects in this way:

We work carefully over the set, the colors of the set and the layout of the audience. And how the cameras are positioned. We have to ask, do they add or subtract to the game? It's important to make the show work.

Character or Casting

In relation to the creative dimensions, the respondents were asked which is more important to the success of a television show, the main character and how it is written or the casting of a role. The majority of the executives (59 percent) responded that characters were more important in building a television show, and some expressed the view

that it is the character and its creative construction that helps stars to succeed in television or to create new stars. Twenty-four percent said that both elements were equally important and 18 percent emphasized the casting aspect.

The following comments cover the range of thought on the importance of characters:

- R₁ Character is more important to a show, without a doubt. All you have to do is to take a "star's" track record. Of all the people who have been giant stars of television, start laying them out and see as you read them the number of successes and failures. You'll find most of them don't repeat that well. So it must have been character.
- R₂ Characters are critical in terms of the long-term success of the show, people have to like the characters.
- R₃ It's the character and the story. If the show is not well crafted and the character isn't much, the stories aren't good, you can fail. A lot of stars have failed in television.
- R₄ Instead of signing up old stars we figure the most important thing is to start with a property, with characters and whatever the show concept is and then cast the thing and you find your next big TV stars coming out of that show.

Characters and casting were equally important for almost a quarter of the respondents as these statements demonstrate:

- R₁ It is important in a series to find the right character for the right actor. I mean that is the magic of it. It's the right writing for the right look.
- R₂ You have to marry character and casting. It's a little bit of both; the right character with the right characterization.

Eighteen percent stressed casting.

- R₁ Networks are too script oriented. They are not oriented enough to talent. It's the talent who is on the screen and that is who the people tune in and watch.
- R₂ The casting basically is what makes the show work or not work.

Twelve percent indicated that the presence of a star can give the series a better chance of being sampled by the viewing public.

- R₁ Walking in with an unproven idea but with a known star or stars you are that much farther along you think or you hope, with trying to attract an audience enough to stay with you. Hopefully, once you get them there they will be attracted to the show and want to stay with you.
- R₂ Clearly, what seems to be working in television today are stars. The audience comes to follow the stars.

In summary, this group of gatekeepers appears to have an objective set of criteria for the selection of ideas and their processing in the communication chain relating to both organizational factors and creative dimensions. These elements are: the audience; the program schedule; economic requirements; product marketing; script; character; acting talent; and production values.

How do all these elements work in concert during the developmental process for the various program genres? Our next section covers the interplay of factors in the decision-making process for the different program areas, as ideas are channeled into the network's communication chain.

Program Areas

Prime Time Series

Development

During the development phase, the creative blueprints for a show are formed. In the development process, the executive works with the producers and writers in defining and agreeing upon both the concept of the show and the program's inherent strengths as well as evaluating the time period placement for the program and identifying the audience to whom the show will appeal. In this process, all of the network executives agree that it is the writers and producers of the program who have a vision of what the show should be.

All of the input from the network is focused on "fine tuning" the work, something that can make a big difference according to the executives. To illustrate briefly, one prime time series development executive believes that the network is at its best when its development team can sit down and say to a producer three things: "Your show is terrific; this is what is wrong with your show; you need to brighten it up." However, the degree of network input is variable and differs for each executive. This subject will be covered separately in the section concerning network creative guidance.

In series, the job of the development personnel is to provide management with alternatives of different kinds

of products. Each season, these development executives seek to find the new contexts, approaches and attitudes that will fit within the existing forms of television entertainment. This is usually accomplished through the process of creating pilot programs which are described by some as an internal sales tool to senior management. These single episodes of a potential product which state the premise and introduce the characters, result in decisions whether to launch a series. Generally, when a prime time series is selected for a network broadcasting commitment, the network has only seen one script for that show. The writers who developed that show and script do not always stay with the project once it goes on the air.

Series deal with a much bigger volume of material than movies, mini-series, or specials. The time span for making the product into episodes is shorter than for movies or mini-series. The needs of the form are different in that a series is an ongoing situation with a different script for each episode and a mandate to attract a faithful audience from week to week. Thus, according to current or on-air series executives, the problems are ongoing, too. The goal of series development is to create a solid framework for shows that can be repeated in each episode and hold up over time.

At each of the networks, the development phase and the current or on-air phase of a prime time series is

handled by a separate department for both drama and comedy. The steps involved in the development phase for comedy and drama series are quite similar and will be covered together. The current or maintenance function of the process will be covered separately and organizational structures for continuity between the two tasks of development and program maintenance will be discussed. In all other entertainment program areas the executive has the responsibility for both the development and production aspect of the project. We will look at mini-series, movies for television, children's programs, daytime and specials.

Development procedures

The procedures for series development are established and, as previously indicated, there is little deviation in the process. The following example is representative of the process and steps in a series.

1. An idea is optioned for a series from the outside producers.
2. There is a first meeting between the network and the outside producers to discuss, in a general way, who the writers will be for the script.¹⁰

¹⁰In some cases, when the project is initially proposed a writer has already agreed with the production company to do the pilot script. This is usually a well established writer with a history of successes in television and the networks are usually eager to have that individual work on the project. The proposers of the potential program may be both the writer and producer for the project.

3. At this point, the development executives discuss the proposed choices with others in the department:

That's the process in which there is a lot of conversation, idea searching that goes on with people who are right in the network. We talk about different writers we have been exposed to, what they had done in the past and the tone of their writing.

The network then makes a list of writers suitable for the job.

4. A similar process occurs among production company development executives. They also devise a list of acceptable writers.

5. The network meets with the producers again; they go over the names and

We find a group of mutually agreeable writers out of their list and our list. We prioritize our choices with the representatives from the production company.

6. Financial offers are sent out to the writers to do that project by the production company based upon an amount the network is willing to pay.

7. Once the choice of a writer has been made, there are a series of meetings at the network with the writer (or writers) during which the writer, producer, and representatives from the network are present. The subjects of discussion are the potential stories and character points.

We usually talk out a story or receive a formal story outline that we go through beat by beat, discussing it before the script ever goes to first draft.

This is the time when the network wants to make sure that "you're in sync with the producer and the writer."

8. The script goes to first draft. It takes approximately four to eight weeks to write a one-hour script.

9. The first draft is sent to the network. A variety of development executives read the script, depending upon the network; in all cases, however, at least two individuals see the first draft. They then write their notes directly on the script. The notes are concerned with the creative dimensions discussed earlier and, to a lesser degree, technical considerations.

10. Before meeting with the production team to go over the first draft, the network development executives discuss their notes.

We have a pre-meeting in our department. We run through all our notes and see we are in sync.

Usually, the comments of the executive who is actually responsible for the project, carrying the information directly to the producer and the writer, have somewhat more weight but this may not always be the case.

11. There is a meeting on the first draft of the script where the "writers and producers come in and get all our notes together."

12. Script is revised. The same process is followed as with the first draft.

13. Finally the script is polished. Presumably, all the notes and suggestions of both parties are incorporated

into the final script which is mutually acceptable to those involved.

14. Before the executive makes a decision to recommend the preparation of a pilot program, the script is sent to the broadcast standards department, which looks for possible problems of taste, stereotyping, language, and the like. If the series concept involves something the executive feels is sensitive, the broadcast standards staff may already have been involved during the drafting of the script.

15. The senior development executive recommends to division management that the script go to pilot.

16. Once the pilot has been approved, a license fee is negotiated by the business affairs department with the production company.

17. The preproduction period begins. A director and the cast are chosen for the pilot. The process of choosing a director and cast is similar to choosing the writer. Both the production company and the network have a list of possible choices. They meet, discuss the list and determine a mutually acceptable list from which offers are made by the production company to the designated individuals. In casting, the network has a talent and casting department which becomes involved in the process working in conjunction with the network development staff and the casting representative from the production company.

18. Production starts. During this phase the development executive may look at every foot of film shot for the

pilot, giving notes to the producer and occasionally the director.

19. A rough cut of the pilot is made. The network person goes to the production studio to see the rough cut and gives more notes to the producer. Two rough cuts may be done to get the pilot into shape.

20. The final rough cut is screened by senior management of the division.

21. When senior management approves the rough cut an "answer" print, which is the completed pilot, is made.

That is the product that will be considered by senior division management and corporate management when determining which properties will be chosen as series for the network.

The time frame for a typical project is approximately nine months, though it can vary from as long as a year and a half to as little as six months. Some estimate that:

It really takes two years for your material to go from its raw inception as an idea to make its way through the development process and to production and then to the schedule.

Writers are given approximately four, six or eight weeks to do a first draft; two to four weeks for a second draft; and two to four weeks for a polish. As soon as the networks announce their schedules for the fall season during the month of May, ideas for next fall's season come into the network.

You want to buy scripts in July so writers have July and August to write it; first draft in September; rewrite, second draft in October and polish in November.

The networks decide in January and February which scripts will go to pilot and pilots usually come in at the end of March through mid April. According to prime time executives:

The lead time for a pilot is about four weeks-- that's all the time they have to shoot it.

There are occasions where pilots will not be made, where the decision to go to series is based upon the strength of the pilot script and the talent of the people involved in the production. In that case a particular number of episodes is ordered, either six, eight or thirteen. At one network, the development executive will handle the show for the first season. At another network, the series immediately becomes the responsibility of the current or on-air series programming executive. One respondent in a senior management position sees going straight to the preparation of the series as increasing the risk for the network because without the pilot, "you haven't seen how the chemistry between actors works or see how it is executed in the pilot."

At another network, a top programming executive does not agree. According to him, no matter which road is followed, the network never truly knows what they are getting until the episodes are delivered. He also explains that deals are best made with people who have established their reputation through former successful shows. Thus, the

network assumes that the production team knows what they are doing. In that case, by foregoing the pilot, the cost may be less to the network even if the series fails.

On-air or current programs

Once a pilot is selected to be made into a series and is placed on the schedule, the current programming department takes over. Often referred to as the maintenance function, current program executives are quick to indicate that their jobs require far more than keeping an eye on the product. One development executive even added that

Current is more a maintenance function and the use of the term maintenance is not used to diminish the importance of their jobs. Because maintaining the standard of a particular show, week in and week out, is absolutely of paramount importance to a network because that is what the audience is expecting each time they come back.

Current executives point out that

The pilot is just a start, networks and producers keep discussing what the show could be and the direction to take.

Current executives see to it that the creative blueprints that every show has are followed by the parties involved in the production. They are the network liaison with the production company and the show.

It's current's job [the on-air series department] to ascertain what it is the network ordered and what it wants and to make sure that the producers know what the network vision is of the show. So, I ascertain what the producer has in mind and try and make sure the two come reasonably close.

In doing this, current executives try to keep each show true

to its initial idea, keeping the main character and story-lines congruent with the original concept. Current executives also work with the producers on a creative basis to "make sure that the shows are as interesting as they can be." According to one executive:

A lot of good development comes from current trying out ideas and characters. Development is not divorced from the current process.

Another executive states:

Current is the development of an episode, the development of character relationships.

Although current executives are committed to seeing to it that series remain true to concept (some used the term "quality control"), their other objective is to "fit the needs of the network, which means hit shows. That means shows must appeal to the largest, broadest audience we can get." So the on air series department looks to keep established shows fresh as well as increasing the audience of a show.

For example, if a show is strong in the 18 to 49 area, we may try to expand it with the 50 plus group. We do this by creating an additional character who is older and can give us a window to that audience.

They also look to increase audience size by doing something special in the show.

In the fall, the most important thing we can do in terms of the returning series is to grab the audience as quickly and for as long as possible. From the premiere of each new series or returning series (third, fourth week of September) to the end of the November sweeps we try to create in each episode some element, some one element that

is truly eventful, that is unique, important, that enables us to reach out to an audience and say, "You must watch us, we will offer you the best single alternative. We will offer you a better alternative than the competition."

On-air series executives do have approval over the staffing of the show: the producers, the writers, the story editors. They do have approval over all story lines and scripts. As one executive said:

Current oversees the entire production process of each and every episode under the agreement.

Another vice-president indicated that:

Current approves all story lines that come up. Before an idea goes to script, we have approved it and current also contributes ideas.

On-air series program procedures

The assignment of the on-air series executive is to maintain the creative blueprints of a program for every episode of the series. The on air series executive also handles any bureaucratic matters between the network and the production company during the run of the series. The procedures for creating each episode are very similar to the ones followed during the development of the series. In fact, some on-air series executives refer to their jobs as containing an aspect of "continuous mini-development." The following description illustrates the typical process in creating an episode for an ongoing series.

1. Producers "pitch" a story to the on-air series executive. The bare bone, what is called the major beats of the story.

2. The on-air series executive approves.
3. The writer prepares script draft.
4. The on-air series executive reads the script and gives notes. For a half-hour situation comedy the notes may be something like this: scene one, too boring, needs a funnier grabber, if it's opening too slowly. Or too cliché, needs more meaning; more underbelly; more emotional foundation.
5. There is a meeting to convey notes.
6. The script undergoes revisions.

According to one executive, a script for a series episode goes through an average of three drafts. The process is slightly different for comedy half hours and hour dramas. Comedies evolve over the course of one week while hour dramas take longer to write. The executive describes the process:

Take a drama like CITY HOSPITAL. Usually before it gets to the stage it has been gone over three or four times. A comedy that is rehearsed Monday to Friday and shot on Friday night does evolve. There are distinct drafts but it is more of a work in progress all week long. For an hour show, it depends on how fast the writers are. If you really put them under the gun and you've got to have a script by x date, some writers can do it in a couple of weeks, some writers take a couple of months. It really varies a lot and obviously if you ask them to do it too quickly, it's not as good as when they had more time, so it can take four to six to eight weeks for a script. Comedy you can do faster. Frequently, there are collaborations (for both forms) and groups in effect are writing--if you look at the scripts you see lots of names. Three or four people worked out the story and one or two wrote the script.

With comedies, the executive attends rehearsals and the tapings. Usually at the beginning of each season, the on-air series executives and the executive producer from each show meet to discuss the strength of the particular series; which character must always be at the center of the show; the show's competition, time slot, the audience which is available, the audience they want to attract; to set story lines for the season; to discuss ideas and potential guest stars. The purpose of an on-air series program executive is to represent that show within the network.

The executive is in charge of whatever is necessary, whether it means a star making a public appearance, a promotion, 'cause lots of times, frequently, the producers are not satisfied with what the network is doing; they're hollering at you, "Jeez, I haven't seen a promo for weeks on my show," and then the on-air series program guy comes back into our building and starts phone calling around.

Because current series program executives have a different set of expectations than do development executives, there is sometimes a change in executive perception from one phase to the next. For the current series executive:

The most important thing is what is on the air. That machine eats up talent, product. You must be servicing your shows and bolstering them every way you can.

Consequently, there are some structures for continuity between the development program departments and the on-air series department which range from formal, defined duties to informal interactions. The organization provides some of the structures but the degree of actual involvement varies

by the individual. At NET Y, one development executive stated that:

Development never gets involved with a show once it is on the air.

While a colleague at NET Y said:

I am the product manager, I mean I take the idea in my office all the way through the first thirteen on the air, although I am not as involved once they get on the air, I am involved in story and script and the direction it is going.

And the head of current programming at the same network observes:

For new series of the fall we work closely with development for the first couple of episodes, but current is the spokesperson for the network in discussions with the suppliers.

Continuity structures between program functions

Continuity structures are necessary to ensure that the vision of the show remains the same within the network and within the production company. One development executive concluded his remarks about his involvement in the on-air series department by stating that it was necessary to insure that the producers gave the network exactly what had been agreed upon.

And also, so the producer can't say, "Well, we really didn't want to do that before, this is what we really wanted to do."

The crossover between functions is necessary to avoid unpleasant counterproductive situations. One respondent provided this description:

Because of a change of perception from the development executive to the current group, producers may go through a period of hostility, isolation, when they try to figure out what happened to the show.

The structures can be as formal as development and current executives reporting to one head of comedy or drama, or as informal as the following situation where the on-air series executive is included in the development process through his own initiative.

I officially get involved once the show has been bought and ordered to pilot. But because I often get involved with development executives by reading scripts and seeing the pilots, I know what they bought, why they bought it and where there are problems. So that by the time it's moved to my area I will have the same vision of the show.

It should be noted that these two executive functions in prime time series were not always separated into different job categories at the networks. The separation evolved in the early 1970s, as this account explains:

Twenty years ago, there were actually less people involved in the process. The head of programming usually put a project into development and once it was picked up, he assigned it to people in the program department to cover the various shows as "current" executives. Over time, the business has become much more complicated and obviously much more populated. It changed through the 70s. The big development departments did not exist in those (earlier) days. One person, the head of programs, was responsible for putting things into development, the pitches were presentations made directly to the head program guy on the coast. The VP in charge of programs had no development people, he did that himself. When somebody wanted to present a show to the network, they brought it to him and he might buy it or not buy it. And if he did buy it and it went on the air, then there were current executives. The person in charge of programs remained interested in the show. The big development

departments did not exist in those days. Although the job today (president) is a great deal more complex than the vice president of programs, it is essentially the same, the head program guy on the coast.

Mini-series

While one of the requirements in the prime time series area is to get the audience to tune in each week to the network's regularly scheduled programs, in mini-series it is necessary that the audience commit a specific amount of their viewing time to that network and program for several nights, either consecutively or occurring within the time span of a week.

The mini-series area, which is often referred to as "long form," works on projects that require more than two hours of broadcast time. The projects in this area are finite both in the creative sense and in the job tasks. Just as there is a beginning, a middle, and an end to the script, the executive follows the project from inception, development, pre-production, production, post production, and to air. Projects in mini-series often take several years to be developed and produced and are more expensive than the other program areas.

At two of the networks, the major factor involved in deciding to develop a project is that it be something extraordinary.

R₁ Mini-series looks for something exciting, an event. You have to try and create an event from the property.

R₂ We believe you have to have a large canvas; a large theme, a bigger than life kind of arena for a miniseries.

The head of mini-series at the other network develops only projects which are personal likes because "that's when I do my best work." The people presenting the project to this person must have a "passion" to do the work because that enthusiasm attracts the executive's interest. But all three heads of mini-series concur that this area is unique and unrivaled in television for the opportunity to "put something special on the air. It's the one area in TV where you can concentrate on your product."

The consensus is that mini-series is the area in which the audience sees and wants something that it cannot see anywhere else. Consequently, more time and money are provided to mini-series projects. Thus, the executives see advantages to working in this form. One vice president in this area says:

There is more of an opportunity to do quality work.

At another network, the executive in charge of mini-series says:

The advantage of mini-series is that I don't have to work with trends because a mini-series takes so many years to get them going.

Another vice president of mini-series describes other advantages to the form:

For the most part in the mini-series and how it is different from other forms, we deal usually with the best: the best writers, the best producers.

The one thing this form does is attract the really good writer. This is the one particular place in the industry where the product rules. So writers who would write for the features will come in and do projects with us.

In making the decisions to develop a mini-series, the executive may take into account the size of the audience it will attract. At one network they avoid particular kinds of stories, leaving them to the others to do.

We don't do mini-series with a limited kind of focus, like about a public figure, because you're just confined to that person's canvas and we have to get the largest possible audience.

Often mini-series are based on books and frequently best sellers. Although best sellers are a known quantity, they are so big that all the networks are willing to do them. All agree that:

Best sellers are easy decisions to make, they are going to be made sooner or later, so why not us? The tough decisions are mini-series that are made from original ideas or based on factual events.

The process starts in the usual way with someone pitching an idea to the executive. Although mini-series are often based on books,

Books have to be adapted to make a television show. What makes a good book very seldom in its whole form, does not work as a television drama. So there are always adjustments to be made.

Consequently, the network finds a writer to start an outline which is usually referred to as a "bible"; an accounting of "what exactly the show is, the plan, the skeleton of the piece."

Procedures

The following is a first person accounting of how a typical mini-series is developed. In this example the mini-series title is denoted as DEF.

1. People come to me and say, "I would like to do DEF."
2. I say "that sounds good. Let me read the book--it's got an exciting arena, country x, some place we haven't been in a mini-series."
3. I read the book, I evaluate it. "Yes, I think this would make a very exciting mini-series."
4. At this point we discuss writers, we acquire the rights to the book or the producer has the rights.
5. We then hire a writer and then the writer will write a story or a bible which gives an idea of what the mini-series will be. (The bible includes concept, characters, plan, the "skeleton of the piece" as well as segmenting the hours; action first night, second night, how long the mini-series will run.)
6. Then they write a script. All the time I am giving input on the various drafts of the script.
7. Then, if we like the script we will go to film, order the film, a budget will be drawn up by the producer, business affairs will approve it and we will go to film.
8. We hire a director, in which I have input. I have input into casting.
9. I will see the film shot everyday.
10. Then I will see a rough cut put together from all the dailies.
11. I give notes on the rough cut. Who should write the music, who should score it.

12. Then the answer print, the technically completed version of the edited film, is delivered, scored and dubbed.

Then there is the second stage.

1. I co-ordinate all of the efforts that are made to promote it. I must make sure the producers meet with the press.
2. I must see that the advertising department (network) has the input of the producer.
3. I also say to the advertising people "this is the way I think we should see this show, this is what I would like to emphasize."
4. The mini-series gets an air date and is broadcast.

An important consideration to remember about mini-series and non-series programs like movies and specials is that

It's going to get scheduled once it goes to film. It's different than the series, you don't have to fight to get it scheduled because movies and mini-series are too expensive. One shots, when they go to film, get scheduled unless they are such a disaster, which happens very seldom.

In fact, at two networks, each head of mini-series knows the number of hours of mini-series that is wanted by management to fit into their schedule. At one network, there is always a mini-series ready for each of the ratings sweeps¹¹ because that is when the head of programming likes to show them.

¹¹A "sweep" is usually a four week period of time during which all local TV markets are simultaneously measured and reported by a rating service. November, February and May are the traditional sweep months. Additionally, Nielsen Station Index (NSI) measures and issues complete Viewers in Profile reports on all Designated Market Areas (DMA's) in July.

But the approach to development on the part of these two executives who know what is required of them at least in terms of broadcast hours, indicates the degree of idiosyncrasy associated with these jobs. While one network miniseries head states:

I don't think about when a miniseries is being aired because I have nothing to do with that decision. I just make them.

The vice-president in charge at another network stressed that:

It pays to be a whole programmer even though scheduling isn't my area. I am more valuable to my network if I think in terms of scheduling. For example, next year we need something to play against a major sports event on another network. I will have at least one, if not two, woman-oriented mini-series to go against it.

At another network the mini-series area follows a different approach:

We don't look at it that way, that we need x amount of mini-series per season to schedule. At this network we are very selective with what we develop. They take a long time to develop and we let them develop at their own rate. We try to have two ready every year but if I have more they may not put them on but if I don't have two, that means there aren't two that are good enough.

Television Movies

It usually takes a minimum of a year to develop a movie made for television. The procedure is basically well established; writers are hired, scripts drafted and approved, deals are negotiated and the project goes to film. In the process, approximately two hundred people are brought

together to work in concert for the month that it takes to make. As in all other forms, the network has approval over all the key elements: writers, producers, directors, principal cast, location, casting director, composer. A vice-president in charge of movies for television gave the following account of the process of creating a TV movie. In this case the project was proposed to the network by talent; a writer and an actress. A production company to implement the project had to be found.

Procedures

1. A well known television star, currently in a series on another network, and an established writer approached the network with an idea. They gave a verbal presentation with a beginning, a middle and an end. They also said they had a major film star attached to play one of the key roles. From my own view, I want a very detailed presentation with everything worked out because I feel that unless everybody is on board about what you are doing at the beginning, then you'll have far less disagreements down the road. I think it's very important to spend a lot of time on the story.
2. This was a good idea but it was not with an existing production company. It was a writer-producer and a performing-producer. Management said it sounds good, if you can get that to go with one of our commitments, we will develop a script.¹² (In cases where there is a producer/production company but no writer, then both parties suggest writers and come to a mutual agreement about the selection.)
3. I looked over a list of our existing commitments and found a production company. I

¹²Commitments will be discussed in the chapter on finance.

contacted them and said I would like to do this project under your commitment and they agreed.

4. The writer does a first draft script. It usually takes two to five months to write a script.
5. I got the script, read it, put my notes on it.
6. I had a meeting with the writer-producer, the performing-producer and the executive producer on the project. We discussed our notes.
7. The writer goes to work on a second draft.
8. I receive the second draft. Now, there are two kinds of movies. There is the very commercial kind, a concept which is so promotable and exploitive that the audience will tune in. The other kind is not a very commercial piece; it depends on casting, good critical reviews, strong emotional subject matter, to get an audience to watch. So you do not trigger a movie, especially the latter kind, until the script is ready because people's concerns tend to go off the script and onto casting and who will direct and the network begins to lose control. So, if I don't like a script I won't say "make it." I wait and work on the script until it's ready.
9. The network has contracted for final services from the writer, a polish. It's generally intended for when you decide to go to film and the director comes in and has thoughts about what needs to be done and you use those final services. The network gets back another revised script.
10. We decide to make the film. Depending on how big a film it is in terms of actors, action, location, the number of scenes, a license fee is negotiated.
11. From the time we have decided to make the film and have negotiated the license fee there is a six-week to two-month period before we start production. That is the pre-production period where all the casting is done, locations are scouted, crews are hired. The production

company is in charge of those tasks. The network has the right of approval built into its contract on writer, director, producer, editor, music, casting. Now, in an action piece there is no need for rehearsal but in a real drama there is, so the network can negotiate for rehearsal time as well as a longer shooting schedule. (The average TV film takes 21 days to shoot.)

12. Once the film is in production, on a next day basis, the network gets dailies. At this point, a large part of the network executive's job is done; it's now in the hands of the producer, the director and the performers. I look at the first two days closely, does it look good? Do the performances work or not? Is it moving? Also, I look for coverage; is there a master, singles of characters in a scene and some other kinds of shots?
13. The film wraps, it's completed.
14. The film is then turned over to the editor. In a period of three to six weeks working with the director, they do a first cut of the film, that's the director's cut. The network does not see that. That director's cut is shown to the producers, the producers give their input.
15. A rough cut, which includes input from the producers, is sent to the network. It's called a rough cut because it doesn't have special effects, it doesn't have optical space that dissolves, it doesn't have looping of bad lines, it's not clean, it's scratchy. It's a work in progress. Now, if we don't like a scene in there, we know from watching the dailies that there was other coverage for it and we can ask for a substitution.
16. The music and the composer for the film is next. The network meets with the producers and a composer--the network has the right of approval. The producers will usually suggest the composer.
17. The editor will probably then recut the film, show it to the network again and then we will sign off on it.

18. The other people involved in the network are the standards people. They are involved in the script. We can't go to film until they've signed off saying this is acceptable to our department. They look at the film and sign off if it is acceptable.
19. Then there is the cleaning up of the film. They bring back actors for looping bad dialogue, do the special effects and the opticals. Then they put together a final print of the film. I will ask before they lock that final print of the film and deliver it, to see it one more time just to make sure it is what we agreed upon.
20. The technical people at the network look at the completed film to make sure it meets our broadcast requirements.
21. I stay with the film until it's time to be aired. In many ways, this is one of the more critical aspects of my job.
22. We discuss the air date with our scheduling people. The network has long-range schedules, a blueprint for the season. I roughly know where all my films will play but they will not lock up a date until somewhere between four and eight weeks, with exceptions. For example, I have one film that is about an important event and for six months it's been locked up to play on the anniversary of that tragedy.
23. We--the executive in charge on the project, the producers, the network promotion people--come up with a title.
24. Two and a half months prior to air date, I call in the producers and their press representatives and we meet with the network press people and discuss how to publicize the film. We arrange for the press to view the film, to have interviews and do feature stories about the film. The promotion department will arrange the interviews that will set the stars out and onto the talk shows and have them do telephone interviews. Our print advertising people will do the actual print advertising that will go in TV Guide and newspapers and TV supplements.

Our promotion department will cut the actual on-air 20-second promotions that we'll have. So, in that room at that meeting, everyone will have seen the film. We discuss all those things and we will map out a strategy.

25. Then the film airs and I wait nervously for the numbers to come in.

Children's Programs

The most frequent comment about the audience for children's programs is that it is fickle. Children are more apt to change the dial than any other group and the executives concerned with this area are constantly aware of that reality. Because of the special audience they program for, these executives think that their area is more detailed than prime time in that they need to interact with more people and it requires greater information to develop children's programs. At each of the networks, executives in this area are in much greater contact with the broadcast standards department and with research personnel, both at the network and with outside social science consultants. At each network, children's program staff do both their own development and their own current programming "so we actually come up with ideas rather than that being separate." The executive sees the project through to the finished product. Each of these departments follows the collective spirit that is a part of the network executive's job; when considering projects for development "everyone in the department reads all of the ideas that come in and we talk collectively about the ideas and what our reactions are."

The majority of children's programming consists of animated series. In cartoons, the key to the form is to do something in animation that cannot be portrayed in live action. Dramatic specials for children are regularly prepared by two of the networks. The dramatic shows usually deal with some kind of a problem that the children can identify with and try to show how one child can deal with a difficult situation. The goal of this type of program is to demonstrate to the young viewer that all children face problems and that solutions to these situations can be found once the facts are identified.

In developing a program for children, the executives interviewed said they look for "kid" appeal, for characters that are likeable and that children could identify with. They look for story lines that are exciting and structurally sound. Two elements are especially important to these executives in choosing stories. According to a vice-president:

Fast pace, you must have fast pace or you lose kids immediately.

Another executive indicates that:

An element of fantasy that will draw children in is necessary.

One executive clearly stated that:

A lot of things we are looking at recently have that built-in, presold quality, something that children are already familiar with, like toys and games, so kids are going to automatically want to tune into that show.

Since most of children's programming is in the animated form, our example will be the development of a cartoon

series to air as recounted by an executive in that area. In this case the idea for the series was generated by a programming person at the network and the program was based on a toy.¹³ The following is a first person account by a vice-president in children's programs.

Procedures

The story goes that this network executive's kid was playing with a toy and the guy got this idea that it would be great to center a children's show around it so the network got in touch with an animation production company and with the toy manufacturer. From the programming point of view, what we did once they made a deal to make the show, was a little research. The toy had a history, it was based on a series of books that the author had written and illustrated. One of the key factors in developing the series is to develop characters and situations that the kids can identify with. We, therefore, changed the characters somewhat, made them the sort of personalities that we can identify with and the kids can identify with. For example, we have an authority figure in the show because with everything we know about kids, everybody can be equal but the kids are really secure in having a positive authority figure around. So, we decided on the concept of the show, on these characters and on their day-to-day problems. When we are developing the show, in the bible, we want to know the direction of the show and how many cartoons to put in a show. We, the network, and the production company, decided what the show would be. The bible describes the series, who the characters are and the storylines.

Based on the bible, we ordered thirteen one-hour shows. The following steps happen once the show is ordered.

¹³It should be noted that this example differs from the recent trend by toy manufacturers of using cartoon series as a marketing device to introduce new products. This practice became more apparent during the 1984-85, 1985-86 TV seasons.

1. The production company submits premises that are congruent with the concept we have established in the bible. The premise is a two- or three-page synopsis of the proposed story.
2. The network approves or disapproves the premise when it comes in. If we think the premise is consistent with the concept of the show and the further development of the characters, then we approve it for either an 11- or 22-minute story. The premise is also sent to the standards department for comments, if applicable.
3. After giving approval of the premise to the writers, the network gets back an outline. The outline describes the story from the beginning, the middle and to the end. We agree to what is congruent with the concept by giving notes, which are suggestions and working out any creative differences or points of view with the writers during a meeting.
4. The writer goes back and writes the script.
5. The production company sends the script to the network.
6. The network reviews the script, gives notes on the script.
7. We have a conference with the writer about the notes on the script.
8. The writer does the final script.
9. The story board is sent to the network. The story board is the pictures of what the cartoons will look like. The story board depicts the action. There are six pictures to a page and it can be 70 pages long. The network approves the story board. The network has approval over all character designs, what the characters look like.
10. The cartoon with all the characters and backgrounds is drawn. It takes 12 weeks to draw an 11-minute cartoon.

During the time the cartoon is being prepared:

11. The voices are recorded. All the animation and the movement of the mouth and the movement

of the characters will be matched to the audio track.

12. While the shows are going through animation we decide what the main title of the show is going to be. The production company has people who specialize in main titles. The network comes up with thoughts or suggestions of what they think the main titles should cover. The production company gives their point of view. Then one producer goes away and puts it on paper and returns it to the network.
13. At the end of the drawing period the work comes back to the network as a rough cut. The network approves or makes changes in the rough cut.
14. Concurrently, the network is talking to the production company's music people to decide what the music will be. The children hear the music and know their characters will be on soon. That's a very subtle, positive message.
15. We see the answer print and screen it before it is broadcast.

Pilots are not developed for cartoons because they are too costly and take too much time to draw. The network's department of Broadcast Standards is involved to a great degree in children's programs. The respondents working in children's programs at each network indicated a close working relationship with the Broadcast Standards Department. The respondents stressed the strong role that Broadcast Standards personnel play in programs for children. Officials in that department are aware of everything that is going on in the children's area and are involved in all stages of the programming process.

Daytime Programs

Daytime programs are those that air from 10 o'clock in the morning to three in the afternoon, Monday through Friday, eastern time. Daytime is the only entertainment daypart that requires five shows a week of original material for each program fifty-two weeks of the year. There are approximately 260 programs compared to 22 or 26 in the prime time area. Following the financial interest and syndication ruling, daytime was the area the networks chose to exercise their limited right to program ownership. The financial interest and syndication rules developed from the Federal Communication Commission adoption of the "prime time access rule." The regulations were calculated to encourage the production of top quality programs by non-network production companies. The FCC rulings prohibited the three commercial networks from acquiring subsidiary syndication rights in programs brought from outside producers. According to the regulations, the networks had to discontinue to operate subsidiary syndication companies. Although the rulings allowed the networks to produce a limited amount of programming in-house, the FCC required that the syndication rights to network produced programming be sold to an outside syndicator.

Program fare in daytime television is concentrated on game shows and soap opera formats. According to one respondent daytime television has a lower status than other program areas.

Many executives in other program areas tend not to pay attention to daytime because it's considered a lower form of programming. The comedy or drama rerun, the soap opera, the game show, tend to, you know, because they are low budget, tend to be met with certain disdain except by upper management who love the bottom line that daytime delivers.

Daytime programs produce a significant amount of income for the networks. There are more commercial minutes in daytime than in prime time and the shows are less costly to produce. Consequently, the network can make more money in this area. The daytime audience is a very targeted or specific audience and all executives interviewed in this area indicated that they tried to develop programming with strong appeal to women aged 18 to 49. In general, the daytime departments of the networks are operated with a good deal of autonomy. One department head explained:

Daytime is in control of their own schedule: we decide which programs play at what time. We develop shows and take care of the shows already on. We interface with the outside production company and all of the network's various arms: the sales department, affiliate relations department, research, operations and technical services, publicity and promotion, and finance.

Serials

At each of the networks, the executives in daytime indicated that daytime serials or soap operas required "extraordinary patience to develop." Developing the bible is essential because once the serial is on "the audience will not allow you to deviate, they keep us in check." As in the other program areas, the network has approval

over the producers, writers, directors and casting for the various serials. In developing and maintaining the serials, the executives follow the familiar process.

We have a story meeting about the kind of stories we are going to do as well as how they are done. We discuss with the finance department about how the shows are budgeted. The writers go write and once each piece of material comes back to us, the long-term story projection, the script outline, or the script, we give notes to the producer, give our input, in varying degrees.

Game Shows

Game shows are developed along lines similar to other programming and go through the pilot process. Ideas are presented to the network executive in either a written form or, perhaps, a very rough simulation of how the game operates. Once the idea is approved for development, rather than concentrating on scripts, which really do not exist in this area, the network executive becomes involved in the run-throughs which are the repeated simulation of the game to perfect its structure. The pattern then is:

1. An entire series of run-throughs at the production offices to:

- (a) test different types of hosts;
- (b) test different types of questions;
- (c) test different combination of teams
or players.

2. Following each run through the production staff meets with the producer and the network representative to

discuss the simulated game and to compare observations and to give suggestions about how the game is played or types of questions used for improvements.

3. When the game appears to be in good shape, they go forward to the pilot stage.

4. At this point, more attention will be paid to the setting of the game, the camera positions used, the layout of the audience and the players to see if it is adding or detracting from the game. Often this process continues even after the pilot is scheduled as a series because "it's during the air run that you can see those things and make major changes."

All of the respondents in this area liked their particular daypart because their jobs combined many different functions.

I just couldn't have the same vision as another person who had handled a show so I like the fact that I develop something, see it through to air and then maintain it.

Specials

According to one executive:

What makes variety or dramatic specials special is they are not formula. Series is the easiest thing in the world to do because you have established "the formula."

But another executive in this area admits that:

What a network calls a special is sometimes not so special and the audience is intelligent enough to know what's special and what isn't.

Consequently, networks have been trying to develop another category of special rather than relying on the "one star musical specials which are not as potent, are not as enticing to an audience on commercial network television as they used to be ten or fifteen years ago." For example, they look for event shows which focus on awards, pageants, anniversaries, reunions, or for unique comedy programs. Our example will look at the development of a special in the latter category.

In the comedy area, the desire to lead the way in new kinds of programs resulted in specials created around mistakes or outtakes from TV shows and movies featuring well known celebrities and from humorous commercials which have become popular. This type of show is good for the network to develop because "they tend to repeat very well, in some cases better than the original and you can do more than one of them a year if you want. That is an ideal situation for us because you don't put up all the money for a one-time only situation." The program genre based on mistakes originated in England. Producers bought the American rights to the show and then presented the idea to the network.

"Television's Wonderful Commercials" appears to be a case where the program idea arose simultaneously at the network and in the creative community as the example illustrates:

Two and a half years ago one of the programs in the Filmex Series was called "The Mighty Minutes:

The History of the Television Commercial." I went because I am a child of television and I wanted to see it and I love that kind of thing. I got to the theater and much to my surprise the place was packed, I mean there wasn't a seat to be had. Went in there and sat down. All it was was full length commercials spliced together into categories and people were applauding every commercial. They were singing along to the jingles, they were laughing, and you have to be pretty stupid not to come out of that theater and say, "Wait a minute, I think there is a special here." And I assumed it could never get on commercial television because it would have to be logged as a commercial. So I had a meeting with the head of standards out here and I asked him how we can do it. "How can we do this show?" He thought about it and he came back a few days later and only had two restrictions on it and that is that any clip that is used in the show, let's say Koala Cola has a clip in the show, they cannot then also buy a unit as the sponsor and they asked us to avoid, when possible, the hard sell portion of the commercial, which we were happy to do. Those were the only two restrictions.

Subsequent to that meeting, a producer came in here not knowing that we already had this in the works, he brought into us the guy who had put together the program at Filmex. It was the fastest yes they ever got because, as we said to them, we already have it in the works. So we said "Fine, let's do it." And that show went on the air and it won its time period the first time on and it not only won its time period, it was number one for the week the first time on. Once again, we promoted it very carefully. In the artwork for the ads, I wanted those well known, familiar characters that have been sold to us for years and years. They are as big a star as any star you could possibly want in a television movie. We are now doing more episodes.

We wanted the show to be, we wanted it to be like a party where every time you hear ding dong and you go open the door, it's an old friend's face and that's what the atmosphere of the show is, we have fun with the commercials. We don't make fun of the commercials.

In the specials area the executive is responsible for all phases of the project:

We get to take the project from the idea, the blank page in the typewriter through every step of the way, pre-production, production, post-production, making sure that it gets the right kind of promos, making sure the ads are correct. We take it every step of the way to air.

The cost of specials is more than an episode of the series it will replace in that time period. Specials take a shorter time to develop and be aired than comedy or drama series because they do not require the development of a script and characters. But as one executive states, it is important that everything be clear from the beginning.

You have to be able to visualize that show even in the first meeting and what your ad is going to look like and say. You have that one time at bat and everyone needs to be clear, particularly the audience, on what it is they are going to be tuning in to see.

Casting

Network casting departments are involved in the selection of talent for all entertainment programs. They work in conjunction with the casting representatives from the production company handling the project. Their task is to provide choices and suggestions to the development team once a project has advanced to the pilot stage in series and the pre-production phase in the other program areas. The network casting people only get involved with prime time on-air series when there will be a replacement or addition of a key character. The casting of non-recurring roles for each episode is left to the production company.

Procedures

When the decision is made regarding which shows will be picked up to pilot (or in some cases go directly to series) the network casting executive becomes involved.

This first person account describes the procedure:

1. I and one or two of my people in the department have a meeting with whatever the creative team is. On the supplier's side it could be any combination of the following: producer, director, writer, casting director, development people. The mix varies depending on the individual property. At that initial meeting, on our side, I have involved our casting person for the project. Sometimes a person from the development department but that's not necessary 'cause they don't know the talent. At that initial meeting we exchange ideas.
2. I, the network, will make up a list. The production company comes in with a list of people. Then, on the basis of those two lists, we will eliminate an awful lot of people who I know and I know are not going to be good and not going to work. So, what the network tries to do is to cut down the amount of work the production company has to do initially and if there is someone that we all know and we all love maybe they will accept that person and they won't spin a lot of wheels.
3. If we agree, I like somebody, production company likes somebody, I say, "Why don't you have this person come in and we'll set up a reading and/or send me over a piece of film." That's the first meeting. Now let's assume we don't get anybody from what we did or we can't agree.
4. The next step--it's at the production company. They hold readings for their producer, director, whoever. At the end of a given amount of time, it should be a week but sometimes it could be four months, the production company says they found someone.

5. Within the network, I then go talk to the development people and say now they [production company] want to go with x and it's a great idea. If everybody knows the person and they also think it's a terrific idea, we will say fine, get them. If I know them but the others don't, then we'll bring them in to read or we'll see them on film. Or, we all really hate the production company's idea. The production company says, "We like him and want him to read for you." I say, "Great, but back yourself up with some other ideas." At this stage it culminates in readings at the network.
6. At that point we can all agree that they are okay. Or we can say we're still unsure, put him on camera, test this one.
7. On the basis of those readings, combined with the results of the screen test, the show is cast or not cast.

Casting and talent are not the same thing. One executive defined the distinction:

Casting is putting a person in a role. Talent implies that you are looking for people who might become stars in the future and you might sign them to contract to your network to hold them for a while and develop something for them. It's more inclusive.

It is also more expensive and each network approaches the issue of talent somewhat differently. While all casting people are in constant pursuit of new talent by seeing movies, plays and commercials, one network has a formalized new talent development program.

The plan is to take ten young actors per year and pay them x amount of money, say, anywhere from \$10,000 down to \$2,500 a year and that is to hold them to us for pilots only. The idea is to develop talent over the years so when a series comes up, hopefully, they will be weaned and hopefully, able to put on the show. We offer the young talent drama classes, we help them with agents, managers and photographers.

The recipients are recruited from cities across the country, including St. Louis, San Francisco, Dallas, Chicago, Atlanta, Miami and from Toronto in Canada. The heaviest effort to recruit is concentrated in New York and Los Angeles. All local agents are notified and asked to have their clientele prepare scenes for the network talent scouts. The scheduling can be arduous.

Last year in New York we actually took over a Broadway theater and we saw 1,700 actors. In other words, it was 850 scenes that we saw.

Although the network talent executives agree that "We are wide open for talent, television chews up talent so quickly"; at two of the networks the "look" of the actor may be more of a criterion for the initial opportunity than the ability to act.

It's the right looking people with the right type of show. That means that for a nighttime soap opera they have to be beautiful people and have beautiful clothes.

Having that look may be advantageous to an aspirant with little experience. For one of the casting executives:

Track record for an actor means nothing. The first thing you look for, again, is how appealing they are to me and then you give them a scene to read and they either make you very happy or make you very sad, very quickly. So someone who has never acted before has just as good a chance of getting a part as someone who did forty Off Broadway plays.

The tastes of the top executive decision makers can sometimes be considered in the casting process:

I ask them [the production company] to see the people I like or that I know upper management likes.

An executive who had been in the business for many years provided the following description of an individual in this particular job:

To be a good casting person, it is the skill of-- you have to be a bulldog. You have to go to all the plays, you have to see all the people and then again you have to understand human nature. You have to be able to read that person when you see them on the stage.

Broadcast Standards

The department of Broadcast Standards and Practices is responsible for the review of all entertainment programming and all commercials before they go on the air. It is not responsible for news and live sports coverage.

Based on these interviews, an interesting phenomenon emerged. The Broadcast Standards department was always mentioned by executives in children's programming as an integral part of the process, while the majority of executives in prime time programming had to be specifically queried about the role of that department in the process of developing and maintaining a series. Very few included Broadcast Standards as an integral part of the process, though, in fact, prime time programming must get the office's approval.

Procedures

The role of Broadcast Standards Departments in programming is described by an executive from that network department and is representative of accounts provided by

executives in Standards and Practices at each of the networks.

The review of programming starts at the idea concept stage and we get status reports that are put out by the programming department which let us know the kernel of the idea of the project they are working on. That may be a television movie, a multi-part, a special, daytime soap, game show, prime time series, late night, anything, any entertainment program. We get that and if we feel it needs a special note at that time, if it raises extraordinary problems or concerns, we would at that time comment on it. Hypothetically, most of them really don't call for any comment when it's just a kernel of an idea and we will wait for a story outline or treatment. Sometimes it goes directly to some kind of script and we would then comment on the script and we comment on these projects at every stage of development, script, every page of re-write, everything. We let them know of any problems or concerns. In other words, if they want to do something about incest, one of the concerns about the subject as a whole is that there would be certain values or materials that we would feel should be in. That would be communicated to the programming department from the beginning. And then we would also, as the script went on, comment on specifics. In other words, you cannot say, "Son of a bitch," or you have a scene here in which this woman gets into a shower. Let's caution you that she gets in so you cannot see nudity. Stuff like that. A controversial subject, obviously, would get a lot more discussion, a lot more review and you go over general concept and you probably end up going over lines. Representatives from broadcast standards attend the tapings of comedy shows and look at the rough cuts of filmed shows. In the case of problematic scenes, they would look at the dailies for that particular day.

The attitudes towards standards by the executives is somewhat mixed and many described the relationship as one bordering on the adversarial. That is because producers and the programming staff don't always think the changes have merit.

The producers and development people argue with those changes we think as not justified.

Another comment:

I don't believe in giving broadcast standards anything too early unless I have to scout terrain that I am not sure of.

One head of programming asserts the integral involvement of Broadcast Standards in both the development of projects and in on-air series at his network although the department was barely mentioned by his staff.

Once the series has been bought, our West Coast standards holds meetings with the suppliers before the episodes are even produced. This is immediately following the buys. They are involved from the beginning with an overview from the first meeting held at the network between the producers, writers, and the network executive in charge of the series, that conceptual meeting of what kinds of episodes we are looking to do.

Additionally, they began a policy this year where a broadcast standards vice-president sits in on our weekly staff meetings. This way, he anticipates the needs of his department by hearing what we are planning to do. He has people in his department who are directly responsible for going over the story outlines and first drafts of scripts when they come into the network. In a case where a subject is very sensitive, they see every draft of the script, they see the dailies, the rough cut and the final cut. Nothing gets on the air without broadcast standards approval, nothing. They actually have, theoretically, more power than even programming because they are the division of the corporation versus the entertainment division.

The separation of the Broadcast Standards Department from the entertainment division occurs at all three networks. Broadcast Standards can report to the law department or directly to the president of the corporation. In addressing the somewhat uneasy relationship between entertainment

executives and the Broadcast Standards Department, the executive quoted above continues:

Many times the relationship between programming and broadcast standards is adversarial, as it is between the producer and broadcast standards. The reason is the programmer's function is to oversee and broadcast hit series and the producer's function is to produce hit series. Many times in our desire, in our over-enthusiasm and zealously to getting the largest possible audience, we may do something which could be construed as offensive to a particular segment. Broadcast standards' job is to be a careful watchdog, to not offend any one segment of the populace in such a way that the network is going to be challenged.

Discussion

In the previous section we have detailed how network executives working in the various program areas described their jobs. Through their accounts, we have seen how the objective criteria for program selection which centered on organizational factors and creative dimensions meshed with the procedural elements of the job. However, these task accounts also provide some basis for analyzing these jobs in sociological terms.

In an organizational setting, expectations about role performance affect more than social interaction; they affect the product. From these job descriptions, much of the executive activity focuses on role definitions and expectations in relation to the "product" or the entertainment program. This is apparent from the number of small group meetings which take place both internally and between the network and the program supplier as well as the reported

content of those meetings. Members of the group discuss what they expect from others in terms of the project and they attempt to establish behaviors which will result in a successfully completed task.

In terms of role theory, the program executive or central role figure interacts with individuals of greater, lesser or the same status. That is, the relationships with role-set partners are vertical and lateral in kind. The network programmer interacts with role partners located within the network setting and within outside production companies. The vertical and lateral relationships exist for the programmer in both organizational domains. Thus, the network programming executive occupies a type of role which is called a "boundary" position.¹⁴

Role-sets can be analyzed both for size, which is the number of role partners, and complexity, which is the variety of occupations or job tasks that role partners hold in relation to the central role figure.¹⁵ From their descriptions of the various individuals involved in their jobs, it is apparent that programmers have relatively large role-sets which are characterized by a high degree

¹⁴R. Kahn et al., Organizational Stress: Studies in Role Conflict and Ambiguity (New York: John Wiley, 1964).

¹⁵J. Hage, Theories of Organizations (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1980), p. 345; R. L. Coser, "Complexity of Roles as a Seedbed of Autonomy," in The Idea of Social Structure, ed. L. A. Coser (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975), p. 243.

of complexity. The size of the role-set and the degree of complexity varies from program area. For example, in the prime time area, development and on-air or current programming jobs have smaller role-sets with the least amount of complexity in comparison to programmers in mini-series, movies, daytime and children's programs. This is related to the way the job responsibilities are structured. In a sense, it is related to the wholeness or completeness of the task. It could be said that an individual in prime time holds a segmented job in contrast to an individual in the other program areas, where the executive oversees the entire project, from inception through development, all aspects of production, and promotional requirements.

Because of the size and complexity of these programmers' roles and their boundary quality, these job positions appear susceptible to role conflicts at a number of points.¹⁶ Since network executives hold boundary positions, they are subject to intra-role conflict, experiencing pressures from role partners outside the organization as well as inside the organization. This conflict is very apparent when the network and the production team discuss creative control of a project. Within the network, programmers are subject to demands from role partners in their own departments, as well as from their superiors in programming in the entertainment

¹⁶Hage, Theories of Organizations; Kahn et al, Organizational Stress.

division and other areas in the company such as broadcast standards and finance. The appearance of conflict is an inherent element in role theory and attention has focused on various mechanisms that can be used to resolve the conflict.¹⁷ Based on the descriptions of their jobs, how do these executives appear to handle the potential conflicts?

One way to reduce conflicts between differentiated departments, such as the development and current departments in the prime time program area, is to have integrating mechanisms.¹⁸ The structures of continuity that were discussed, both formal and informal, provide a mechanism for conflict resolution between the two areas. It will be recalled that development and on-air executives thought it was necessary that both departments have the same vision (expectations) for the program. Keeping everyone "on board" with the original concept was seen as a way to avoid conflicts once the show was a series.

The major technique for dealing with conflict, both internally and with outside suppliers, appears to be the group meeting. Although the network executives and the

¹⁷Merton addresses conflict resolution in detail. See R. K. Merton. Social Theory and Social Structure, Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1957), pp. 371-84.

¹⁸P. R. Lawrence and J. W. Lorsch, "Differentiation and Integration in Complex Organizations," Administrative Science Quarterly 12 (June 1967):1-17; see also P. R. Lawrence and J. W. Lorsch, Organization and Environment: Managing Differentiation and Integration (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Graduate School of Business Administration, 1967).

production company executives have the contract, a formal mechanism that defines behavior between the buyer and the seller, the small group meeting seems to be the preferred method of establishing expectations in regard to role performance. The goal of each of these meetings is to create a consensus decision which satisfies both the requirements of the network and the creative supplier. In essence, it is the defining of expected behaviors by members of a role-set. According to Gross,¹⁹ consensus is the degree of agreement between role definers in respect to each other's position and its consequent behaviors. Tension and conflict result when role-set partners have failed to create reciprocal role relationships.²⁰ The series of meetings which occur both within the network and between the network team and the outside suppliers, seems to operate as a mechanism to establish congruent and clear expectations among role partners, resulting in a mode to diminish role conflict.

¹⁹N. Gross, W. S. Mason, and A. W. McEachern, Explorations in Role Analysis (New York: Wiley, 1958).

²⁰A. Zaleznik and A. Jardim, "Management," in The Uses of Sociology, ed. P. F. Lazarsfeld, W. H. Sewell and H. L. Wilensky (New York: Basic Books, 1967), pp. 193-233.

CHAPTER IV

CHOOSING CREATIVE TALENT

Clearly, no matter how excellent the ideas or themes selected for development into programs, part of their success depends on the people who will translate those ideas into programs of high quality and appeal. We have looked at the criteria used by network executives to develop ideas. Within that development process, a critical component is the selection of the creative talent that can translate those ideas into products for television.

Within this context, the single largest criterion used most often by network executives (83 percent) to select program idea implementers is the track record of the creative individual or team. Track record can be defined as the cumulative work experience of the producer or writer. It is the reputation, both personal and professional, of the creative person which follows him from project to project. The concept of track record also includes dimensions such as experience, reliability, sensitivity, talent, as well as being able to handle the emergencies and difficulties that continually crop up during all phases of the production process.

The executives interviewed identified the components of track record as follows: experience (76 percent), execution (46 percent), controlled risk (31 percent), provable skill (29 percent), and particular style (17 percent). Two other factors included in the selection of creative talent by this sample are the personal rapport between the network executive and the creative talent (17 percent) and creator enthusiasm for the project (7 percent).

A useful way to describe how network executives define track record as a criterion is through their descriptions. The selected comments below discuss the components of the track record concept as well as indicate the interrelationships among them. They also give some support for the notion that track record is used as a technique to limit risk and promote success. The comments also address the limitations of the concept and the reservations many executives have about relying on this approach. Only 7 percent of the sample, however, stated that they never consider track record when selecting creative talent.

Experience and Limiting Risk

According to one executive, an experienced producer will usually reason out creative and production problems before approaching the network.

You judge the idea in the context of who is doing it. Anybody can come in here and say, "Let's do AMOS AND ANDY IN SPACE," believe me, it's been

pitched. If Jim X came into me and said "I want to do AMOS AND ANDY IN SPACE," as skeptical as I may be of that idea, I respect Jim X's talent so much that I would say, "Jim, if anybody can pull it off you can do it and if you really think it is the one you want to do, then I will go with you on that." Because those kinds of people who have done all the things they have done, you are hoping they have thought through the problems; they would not have come to you if they hadn't. They have done all that work ahead of seeing you. They have tested in their own mind whether or not there is a series there. When they say series, they mean a five-year show because they are into syndication also, they just don't want to do a show, there just is too much energy involved. So when Jim X comes in and says AMOS AND ANDY IN SPACE, you listen to that.

A seasoned executive offered this comment:

Track record, absolutely. There is nobody who doesn't want to be in business with people who have been producing hits.

Two other executives who used track record as a means of selection stressed the aspect of experience:

- R₁ Experience and time have shown that certain creative people can communicate and do things far better than others.
- R₂ It's a skill to produce a series and a craft and the only way to develop your craft is having done it before.

Still another executive discusses track record as a guarantee:

Track record is usually used to mean the person has the golden touch. It's Jay X, the man who makes television what it is. I think it is all lucky, you get no reliability factors like track record. Although this industry parades itself on, they carry it like a platoon, its standard is track record. In many ways it's like war badges; genuflect and bow in front of it. Track record has nothing to do with the person, it is not about the individual as far as the producer/writer goes,

because, we all sit down and we are all making atomic bombs and there is only one way to make an atomic bomb, but it is not so in television. So what does track record mean? Television always looks for guarantees. You really want a guarantee because you risk so much you want somebody to step forward to us and put the Maytag seal of approval on it and guarantee us that when we put this on, there would be a 33-1/3 share. That would make everybody comfortable. And it doesn't exist. So we take the most insular of things and we hang them on as guarantees. Track record hopefully means guarantee. It just simply doesn't.

Another executive expresses reservation about the meaning and reliability of track record although he concedes that the use of track record as a criterion is retained as a safety measure to limit failures.

Track record means for the most part in my opinion that most network executives want to say no rather than yes. Most, not all. Now I am being cynical but the pattern of behavior indicates there is some evidence to support the theory that a lot of network executives a lot of the time don't buy the idea as much as they buy the producer's track record. This is generally more true of series but even here at our network we got a policy that says if you haven't made a television movie or mini-series for us before or one of the three networks and you come in with a great idea, you still have to be umbrellaed with somebody who has. Okay, remember those sixty-six hours of primetime television a week? That means that television is by definition, by necessity, unavoidably a medium of mediocracy. It has to be. So there is no way you can fill the number of network broadcasting hours a week, daytime, morning, prime time, late night and what have you, without making it possible for idiots to become millionaires, it can't be done. You have to fill those hours and unfortunately, the really gifted producers can't fill all of those hours, and surely you don't believe that just because it is television that everyone in it is talented. Track record somehow makes it safe. When a newcomer comes in, you say, if I buy this idea from this producer and he does a good pilot, will he be able to do episode 16? Is our \$2 or

\$3 million investment for a TV movie or a pilot safe in this guy's hands? Is this guy leading me into an ambush? Some things never change, that is what track record is all about.

A few executives do not regard track record and experience as the central consideration in choosing creative talents. They question the reliability of the criterion.

Unless you have personal experience with a writer or producer or director, one can't always look at their credits and Emmys and make a judgment because the writer may have had every word of his script changed by the time it got on the screen. Therefore, it is not necessarily a reflection of the writer. The same is true in terms of a director. The final thing that gets on the screen does not reflect sometimes the difficulty in the production and the fact that they may have gone an extra two days of shooting because the director didn't get the coverage he should have but the producer wanted to pull it out by spending the extra money to fix what the director might have done. But when that show wins an award or the credits come out, you remember the show as looking, as being nice or well written, you don't really know that they were also responsible for it.

One network was heavily committed to a particular supplier because of his track record of hits which in turn, proved to be enormously profitable to that network. Although the relationship was a comfortable one, one executive explained the down side of relying on this method.

The saddest thing is, again, I have to remain nameless, is there are some producers who have their one or two shows, who are exceptionally talented, who are hugely successful on the basis of those shows, and we would love to do business with and they, in turn, would love to do business with us but they can't because of this other relationship the network has right now.

Program Implementation

The ability of the creative team to execute the project with minimal network supervision is another concern and is related to track record. One vice president offered this account:

You have to look at the producers involved in a property. It is whom you believe in. Because making a pilot may be six months or a year in development and once you get on the air in September it turns into the grind, I mean twenty-two weeks, one week after another. And someone has to be able to deliver without having the whole process break down three weeks into the season. It is not an easy thing to do.

The importance of delivering the series on time to the network was also stressed by another program executive:

When you do a series you have got to have someone you know who knows how to do twenty-two one hour shows a year. I have got to tell you something. Forget a marathon runner or a person who crosses the English Channel. I don't know anything more difficult than doing twenty-two interesting and novel one hour movies in succession on time, get it on the air, make that air date and write scripts at the same time and be in production on one and pre-production on another and post-production on another and get them on the air. I don't know anything more difficult than that, horribly difficult. Because it is so creative, yet so empirical in terms of what the problems actually are, the physical problems of doing that in production.

Provable Skill

Another dimension of track record is provable skill. Writing was the only provable skill considered by the executives. As this senior executive states:

The reason you see the same people coming around again all the time is because they do have a track

record and you do look for that, for the insurance that that represents, particularly in the area of writing and I am a nut about writing as opposed to all the other elements that make up a show. All the others can be cast if you will, including the director and what not, but the writer is, if you don't have that, you don't have anything. I think that's the one guy who can prove that he can do it by simply sitting down at his typewriter and writing and then finding some network executive to get it read. All the other skills you can't prove, unless somebody gives you a chance to get up and act or direct, who's to know? But the writing is a provable skill and unfortunately, not many can do it in television terms because television not only needs good writing, it needs it every week.

This executive in the prime time series area agrees:

Track record or not, I still read their writing. I still read it because I like to get a feel for whether or not their characters are people who feel real. It always helps if they have wonderful academy awards in front of them, obviously, but I still read every writer I work with.

Style of Show

Style of show, or the unique features and requirements of the program represent another consideration and is also a dimension of the track record concept.

- R₁ I think track record should really be interpreted more as style. In other words, I can go to John X and get a specific style of show.
- R₂ If a producer says, "I'm going to give you a show with a lot of action in this show," you should also be asking yourself at the time, "Well, gee, the guy says he is going to be giving me a lot of action but I look at his last shows and they were LITTLE COTTAGE ON THE LANE, OUR HAPPY HOME and RAGAMUFFINS FOR RENT, so where does this guy all of a sudden have the expertise to do a heavy action show. Or he looks at the credentials and the guy says he's going to do one thing and his credentials check out.

Personal Rapport

Personal rapport between the network executive and the creative person is desired because of the importance of communication and avoiding misunderstandings between the parties. The networks hope to attract the top creative talent if they are perceived by the creative community as giving support to their ideas rather than constricting creativity. Each executive has a different style in approaching the relationship. For example, one executive perceives the creative suppliers as requiring tender care:

Personal relationships are so important. The most difficult and the most critical task that I have, we have, every day, is what I call accurate constant communication. Those individuals require tender care.

Another vice president tries to shape his style to be more in tune with the creative person:

I try to fit into the people that I want producing for this network, that we all want producing for this network, we try to fit into their style, their way of operating. We want them and it's much more important that we get them than they have us. Because they are good and everybody knows it.

This executive's approach is to be understanding to creative individuals:

Over time I developed a history with most of the people I have worked with. I know their strengths and weaknesses and try to assess that all the time. The one thing I can hope to bring to my job besides experience with people I am dealing with, and some instincts, is to hopefully be a magnet to those people out there, the top creative talent, who have an idea and say, "Hey, I have an idea and I would rather work with him first, rather than go to his competitors across town!"

Creator Enthusiasm

Enthusiasm on the part of the creative team is a significant factor.

When somebody comes to me with a piece, I look for passion on the part of the people, if they believe in what they want to do. I want them to subjectively, desperately want to do that and that helps me enormously. I usually am looking for that passion in the other person because it's their project, not mine. That is the difference between a salesperson who comes to sell or leave the material and hopes it gets done in any way possible and someone who really wants to make it work.

New Talent

The attempt to control risk leads the networks to continue to do business with established suppliers. Consequently, this affects inclusion of other sources of creative talent who are capable of providing product. It appears that there are practically no real newcomers to the business who can step into the market and immediately begin to supply the networks. The novices in the television industry usually have collateral experience. A writer has probably worked in related areas, writing scripts for feature films or stage plays. A producer is likely to have gained expertise through training in a series of jobs in production. As one network executive explained:

The way you develop new people is because of their association with someone else. They're working with this guy and they develop something under him and then suddenly, they become a valuable commodity, whereas, two years ago, they weren't.

For example, in one instance of a made-for-television movie,

the novice director was actually quite accomplished. He had been responsible for the direction of a thematically complex and technically complicated Broadway play and had successfully translated the production into a highly acclaimed television special. Even with his record, the man was considered a risk as a director for a television movie. The most probable reason for this is the time frame and budget requirements of that movie form. The same reservations about creative talent apply for series.

The following comments discuss the reasons network executives see for maintaining strong ties with established suppliers as well as what is involved in trying out new creative talent.

- R₁ In mini-series, it is a little harder to take chances on new people when you are talking about ten hours of film, ten hours of film, it is just too much risk. You are more likely gonna go for people that have been there before because there are writers who even if they are great at running two hours, they have never had to extend the plot and characters for ten hours. You have to have all those characters whose lives are interweaving, plot lines to go on and keep the audience hooked. It is tough stuff and that takes very excellent writing.
- R₂ One of the reasons, in series television in particular, where we go with experienced production teams and studios is because the down side is enormous. It is astronomically huge in terms of dollars. And we can't, none of us, can afford that down side.
- R₃ There is a finite number of people who do the topnotch work and as has been pointed out to me several times, this is not a liberal arts college, we are not in the business of giving people you know five or six hundred thousand

dollars and having them go off and see what they come up with, it's too expensive, it's too important to allow that to happen. You were asking about track record a minute ago, the reason that they are willing to do that at the network, to postpone something, is because you want that person to work for you, and you are willing to wait in line to get his services because it is a better bet to wait in line for that triple A person than to give it to a C person now and increase the chances of failure.

- R₄ Very occasionally, what I may do if someone has not written a pilot before but may come out of features and may come out of movies of the week because it, a pilot, is a tough thing to write because it is so specific. You can't use a novice. However, every year I try them, I bring in two or three young people who may have written one speculation script or written half hours, and have never done it, and are in their twenties. I take a shot because you never know but generally I look for the fresh view from features or movies of the week.
- R₅ All new writers have what they call spec scripts, sample scripts they have written. When I was in production, we used one or two writers based on materials they had written on their own in order to give them a start and I felt very good about it. If it is a producer, you look at what did that person produce. A new producer would usually come to us with an associate producer or he will have come up through the ranks of being a writer and then being a co-executive producer. There are various ways but basically you look at the track record and you see what is there.
- R₆ I think it is absolutely true that it is difficult to break into television for a new producer or writer. Again, it is a comfort level, not having to stick your neck out. It is easier to say no and be protected and to go with somebody who is acceptable to the networks. Even if they don't do a good job, you can't blame yourself because, well, "He won an Emmy for the last show he did," that is safe.

Discussion

Track record is perceived as a strategy to reduce risk; it provides the network, in effect, with a kind of insurance to minimize the risk involved in the production of expensive entertainment programs. Track record is also a mechanism to reduce conflict in the role-set. It is assumed that an experienced producer or writer will have anticipated and reasoned the considerations involved in the television production, the story, the technical and the economic aspects, so that what is presented to the network requires a minimum amount of work rather than maximum effort by the buyer.

Additionally, the data regarding the presence of new creative talent in the production sector of the television industry seem to indicate that status-sequences are attached to these creative jobs. It appears that there are accepted progressions from one status position to another and that this phenomenon is congruent with the expectations of members in the industry for attaining those positions.¹ In following the status sequence, individuals become socialized to the norms and values of their ultimately desired occupation as well as learning the norms, values and expectations of the networks and production companies which comprise the

¹See Merton, Social Theory and Social Structure, p. 370; C. F. Epstein, Woman's Place (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970), p. 89.

industry. In each job, the individual experiences anticipatory socialization or training for his next position.²

The network view towards new talent also acts as a mechanism to reduce conflict in the role-set of the network programmer. By adhering to the belief that the proper status-sequence of jobs or an established track record is a necessary requirement for project assignment, tension and conflict can be diminished for the programmer in his interactions with members of his role-set. For example, an individual who can produce a program without exceeding the budget limitations set by the network prevents a conflict between the programmer and the network's finance department. In this case experience means that there is a greater chance that role-set partners will have similar expectations regarding each other's behaviors as well as sharing the norms of the industry. In this respect, the opportunities for conflict will decrease. However, even in an industry that mass produces art, the question of the rights of the artist to control his creation is still an unresolved issue. Consequently, even with the experienced creative program supplier, conflicts can arise in the role-set and constant refinements of role members' expectations occur concerning the content and implementation of an entertainment program. In the next chapter we shall address the topic of creative

²Merton, Social Theory and Social Structure, p. 385.

guidance by the network and consider when the networks offer advice to the creative team and why the networks give this guidance.

CHAPTER V

CREATIVE GUIDANCE BY THE NETWORK

We have seen that the method of communicating between the creative suppliers and the network is through the story meeting and the use of notes on the part of the network to the supplier. This section is a more detailed account of this communication process from the perspective of the network and covers all phases of program management.

Factors in Creative Guidance

Thirty-six percent of the sample responded that creative guidance depends on how clearly the suppliers express their vision of the ultimate product. Eight percent responded that there should be no network creative guidance (in the sense of interfering or altering the supplier's vision). The most frequently cited reason for giving guidance was to improve the show (68 percent). This included reconfigurations of faltering shows, strengthening the show, increasing the audience size and just about anything that the network thought would either help the project in development go to series or keep a series on the air. Network guidance related to economic factors involved accounted for 24 percent of the response and network guidance pertaining

to broadcast standards accounted for 8 percent of the response. Thirty-two percent were strongly committed to the idea that it is the producers who produce the show and the network executive's function is to help the creative team do the best job possible by providing various supports, e.g., promotion, extra money for guest stars, better placement in the schedule, and emotional support. When the network does provide creative guidance, the areas involved the essence of the property: script (28 percent); casting (28 percent); story (24 percent); characters (8 percent); as well as staffing (8 percent) and promotion (4 percent). Script and story were coded separately because there is a difference in the amount of network control over each of these factors.

Network intervention in the creative process is usually a function of some combination of the above dimensions. As previously mentioned, the degree of involvement is really idiosyncratic and varies greatly from individual to individual regardless of purported network philosophy. For example, policy-making executives at both NET X and NET Z believe firmly in allowing the creative individuals autonomy; yet the majority of their executives provide quite a bit of creative guidance. Many respondents from NET X and NET Z had been classified as evaluators. Despite their self-perception as individuals who allow the creative team autonomy, their reports indicate that they do engage in restructuring of ideas or initiate ideas as projects evolve.

Almost all NET Y programmers were classified as negotiators; in the initial phase they restructured the creative team's ideas and found ideas that were mutually acceptable to the network and the program supplier. The data indicate that NET X and NET Z executives gave the same kind of guidance during the development process and on-air series phase of entertainment programming as the executives from NET Y. In practice, the differences in the degree of creative guidance are not associated with a network philosophy. Rather, the degree to which programmers intervene in the creative process is idiosyncratic.

It should also be noted that even the most sought after writing and producing talent receive input from the network, although, because of their status, they may be getting that direction from the president of the entertainment division.

Since the network's creative guidance is usually a combination of factors, the following examples have not been categorized according to a particular dimension. By keeping the elements within their contexts, an interesting picture of the way each of these individuals approaches his job emerges.

One vice president in the area of prime time series explains his control:

The writers don't write anything until they come to me first. After I bought the concept and they are going to write the script they come in here and

tell me the story that they want to write about and they don't go to the typewriter until I say "Yes, that is a good story."

Network restructuring of creative ideas is seen as a positive contribution by this vice president:

I think networks are never given the amount of credit they should be for having talent in this business. Not that we put pen to paper or whatever but there are many examples and I can point to our schedule in particular, where the biggest hit of last year for us was a show that had been faltering. Based on network ideas, it was refashioned and reconfigured in a minor way, was put in another time slot, again, a network decision, and the show caught on. Last week it was the number one show in the country. The show isn't any different beyond a reconfiguration, but the network helped shape and guide that show and deliver an audience to that show, the audience came to love. Although an idea may come from a network source, it finally and ultimately is the creative person who molds that, takes that and executes it.

Another executive chooses to leave the project in the hands of the creative team:

It is our policy to be as laissez faire as is possible. We have made contracts with people who say they can deliver the show and if they don't deliver the show, we get rid of them. We don't try to go in and stormtroop through their backyard. We should never fly our flag and say because we are the network you will do it this way. We would like to sometimes but we don't do it that way, but there is another network that does.

The right of the buyer is given as one reason for creative guidance by a vice president:

I can appreciate the producers' difficulty when it comes to the creative say-so from the network. But on the other hand, when I have those discussions with our producers and writers or whatever, I always challenge them if they are so committed to an idea that they refuse to change because you will find that most people are committed up to

the point where they have to put their money where their mouth is. Now the network is out to put their money where their mouth is because it is our commitment to an idea and our development of the idea and our pick-up of the idea that is done all on our money. Therefore, there is no way the creative community, I think, will ever be independent of the network's influence as long as the network is paying for it. If they are equally committed to the idea, then where is their commitment, in terms of the money? Many people will come in and pitch books to me and I would say nine out of ten people will pitch books they have not even gotten the rights to because they don't want to put any money on the table to get the rights until they know they can sell it. In a sense the network acts as a bank for the production company and the bank can tell you how to spend your money.

A vice president in charge of prime time programming described his network's reasons for giving creative guidance to the program suppliers:

The goal is to have every show and every script be as strong as possible. That always isn't possible. Not the producers' fault but the creative community in Hollywood hasn't been able to turn it out and it is amazing that they do turn out the amount of product that they do every year. Some writers are better than others and you will find some scripts are better than others and that is a fact of life so we have to deal with that fact for a particular period, one episode of a series, maybe a couple. It may be good and average in what we expect in the show and it may be weaker than average and therefore that is when the current department goes in and works closely with the producers giving them the input that we have all arrived at after reading the script as to what our feelings are about how the script could be better.

If the network does feel very strongly about the changes and the creative team disagrees, the executive above indicates how the network approaches the situation. His account is an excellent illustration of the relationship

between the network and the program supplier:

You attempt, it is very rare that you will order someone because we are paying the license fee, there are cases when that is necessary and when it isn't necessary. The producers either decide to agree with us, do what we ask or they can be removed. But that is most rare in this business and it would be hard to think of when that happened. We don't want to say this is what has to be done; go do it, goodbye. What happens most I would say is that when a producer disagrees, most of the time we say, okay fine, but we just wanted you to know this information and know what we thought. If you choose to disagree with us, go ahead but it is your risk in not following the path that we suggest to do the show. I have enough respect for the producers that we work with that they care so much about what they put on the air that they will, even if they disagree, they will work their hardest to make it work. It's not like we make them do things that are harder or impossible for them to do their show. That is not it at all. It is just a change, a small change of direction or possibly some character development or character removal or something like that or story approval or stories denied. If we say no, we don't want to do that story, that means yes, they have to come up with another story. It is our way of trying to get them to work their hardest to get the best possible story for the show. That is all we are interested in.

For a series, the script is looked at for each episode but in legal terms we can approve story, once we approve a story, a script is written. If we don't like that script we cannot kill that script, we cannot say you can't produce this script because we have already seen the story. If we want to, we could kill the script but then we still have to pay for it. So that is where the network's input really comes, at the story level, where we say okay, we don't like the story, or we like the story but we would like you to make these changes or we love the story, go do it as is. If a script comes in and it is horrible, current can suggest changes in the script and that is what they do all the time but you are limited in how much can be done because you are talking about a show that is going to be shooting. There's a limited amount of time to make changes.

We don't pretend to produce the shows. We do though get, we probably get more actively involved in my area, in current programming. I think in all areas at our network but in current, we are actively involved in working with the producers. Our aggressiveness, I would be lying to you if I said to you--hey, sometimes aggressiveness can be directed against individuals--but that is not our philosophy, that is not what we are trying to do.

I communicate my philosophy and the philosophy of this network all the time. And when I am not doing it the people that report to me are doing it, the directors or the program executives, constantly. And I also believe there should be no surprises. The thing that I object to the most from a producer is when I get a script that was either not pitched or totally changed from the concept that we had approved. That makes me crazy, I don't like that at all. And conversely, I try to treat the producers with the same respect that I expect from them and that is I don't like to surprise them so I am very up front to the best of our ability as is this department with what it is that we expect.

Sometimes we have to take really staunch positions in order to get what we want, what we are paying for, that is, what the network is paying for. Sometimes it has to be done. We carefully supervise scripts, we have first, second, third drafts, we give extensive notes depending on the need for extensive notes or not, at every level of every draft. We have an executive assigned to the series who attends the dailies each day to see that the episode is executed as successfully as it has been written and hopefully even better than it has been written and then I definitely attend as does the director, the rough cuts of each of these episodes, to give further notes.

We are not producers, we are broadcasters. We have a strong influence over what we want over what we are paying to be done. We are the client, and therefore, by right, we should have an influence and impact on that which we are broadcasting and we do.

There is no doubt that the producers and creative community have control over their own product. You know, that we push them towards a promotable arena only helps them in terms of the broad-based market

that we are all trying to reach. It's a collaborative effort.

We do not produce the shows for them. We get more involved with those series and those producers who need, in our judgment, greater involvement. For those producers who are, who have demonstrated to us on a weekly basis that they are capable of running the show without the need for a lot of involvement from us, we hold back. A good producer controls his show. Look, those producers who are not in control, they should look to themselves for the problems and not to the network as the source. I believe that very strongly.

Another executive indicated that the network's input varies with each production company and with each project.

Our note giving on scripts varies from company to company with the stature of the production company, with the individuals involved, with the ease of communication and so on. Sometimes there will be one network executive in a note-giving meeting on a first draft, sometimes there will be three people from the network, it really depends on the individual case. And that number of people rarely has to do with the idea, it usually has more to do with ego. Sometimes the director in a department is totally capable, prepared, ready, an excellent communicator, totally able to present all notes but the producer is an individual who happens to have a track record and a tremendous amount of involvement in television and so on and so forth and that person's ego is damaged if a vice president isn't sitting in the meeting with him.

At times the meetings may be very difficult. The first draft may come in and is just an abject disaster from our point of view and so the meeting may be very tough. It may be a meeting where you decide to restructure a project entirely or take a writer off the project and put another writer on. Disasters are dismal, dismal writing. When you have paid perhaps anywhere from \$40,000 to \$80,000 for a script and it has come in as I have seen, almost unreadable, characters who have no life, the plot is full of holes, we do series here so the only thing we are looking for is how you are going to keep this kind of show going for five years.

Those disasters, it's just a tremendous amount of money and energy and time on the part of people who work here to put into something and when you have set out, very carefully structured in your initial meetings to have a show that is a romantic comedy and it comes in like a late night thriller, if it is a good thriller it is not an abject disaster, if it is a horrible thriller you are so far, you are not getting anywhere near what you were trying to find to fill a place on your schedule. That can be very frustrating. You only get so many shots, a limited budget, and as a consequence each script becomes terribly important and the ones that are failures are deeply felt.

An executive in charge of casting discussed a situation where the network chose to exercise the right of approval when they became concerned about an actor's ability to perform his role.

The production company really did come in and they did have a choice for one particular actor. The network said we really have our reservations about this but they [production company] really insisted. Sure enough, we let them go with it, three days into the show, we shut it down. We had to replace the actor that they wished to star and that was an enormous expense. After the third day of looking at the dailies we all, our concerns really grew to the point where we said we must have an emergency meeting on it. That is a very expensive situation; you shut down a show and it is \$50,000, or \$60,000, \$70,000 a day, depending on the show.

According to this executive, the network can offer guidance about casting, even if the ability of the performer is not in question.

The casting of the actors really didn't fit the concept of the character. The two lead actresses played their parts the same and it was very hard for the audience to discern the difference in these two women. So the network asked for a change after several episodes aired.

Creative guidance is perceived as a way of ensuring that both the network and the program suppliers have the same creative vision of the show.

It is wonderful when you have a series that the writers write and the producers produce and we strengthen but it doesn't always work that way. You can get a shitty story editor and you find that you are story editing and then they don't want it that way, it takes too much time. And they [production people] make a hell of a lot more money than you do. They make beaucoup more bucks. So we are more aggressive in our development and current departments at this network. It is important to make sure that both the production company and the network are working on the same show.

The following executives describe a give-and-take relationship between the network and the production company.

R₁ It is not a standoff position. It is people wearing mutual hats because they are out for the same good. It is very rare when we get into one of those ego battles because we are not there to see who can win such a prize, we are there to see, we are spending all that time just to get the best show possible so we try to be as mutually open as possible.

R₂ I don't think the networks interfere too much and I never felt that way when I was on the other side either. Because the truth of the matter is if you disagree with them and you have a very strong reason for why and you can articulate it clearly, I have never been in a position where the network executive didn't say, "Okay," unless they had a more important reason. Then they would come back and say, "I understand your point; however, what I am looking at is this," and then you go, "Okay." People rarely act capriciously. There is usually a reason for somebody doing what they do.

One head of mini-series works very closely with the creative team as this account illustrates:

In mini-series when the script comes in or when the bible comes in, I sit down, I go through it and I basically beat it out with the producer and the writer in terms of what the problems are and only at the point where I have a script that is good do I usually ask anyone else here to read it. There are usually nothing but problems with the script, either with characters or plotting, with storylines, with pacing, structure, believe me, there are a million things that go wrong in a script and in some cases we've had to change writers. You start with other writers when you see that you really are not going to get anywhere. So where there is a difference here than a lot of other places in television is there really is not much room for fallout. We don't develop fifteen projects and hope that four of them work out. You are dealing with too much money, so we really place our best bets as we go along, the best writers, the best directors and the best producers. Because you want to see it on the air. Yeah, we work very closely with all of them.

According to a senior programming executive, network guidance is variable and dependent on the ability of the creative team.

On certain shows the producers really have such a strong fix on what the shows really should be that you pretty much let them do, your job is to give, to help them wherever possible with promotion, scheduling, you know, those kinds of things. If they need money for guest stars, get them the money. On other shows, where sometimes it takes the producers a longer period of time to get a handle on the show, you have much more input.

On one show last year, a show that we basically handed to the producers and said, "Here, this is what we want. We have a star. We'd like to do a certain type of a comedy." The producer, who did an excellent job, had trouble breaking stories. You know, coming up with the story lines. So we came up with things. We gave them about three or four other story lines which they ended up using and now they've gotten along and they don't need to be helped anymore. The other way is sometimes on a show that's been on for a while they start

repeating themselves and it's your responsibility to say, "Listen, I think we don't need to see the same disease three times in the same year." I mean, you try to keep them on the track. I think there's a difference between keeping somebody on the track and taking over as the engineer of the train, which is sometimes what you have to do and usually the cases where you have to become so involved in the content of the show, those are the shows that ultimately are the first cancellation. You just cannot produce a show from the network. If you end up controlling that much of the content of the show, it really is telling you that either the show isn't working or you've got the wrong person producing. What you're trying to do is you're trying to keep all your shows going and healthy and you're doing everything possible. Because they are all important, they're all connected to whatever night they're on and one bad show in a night can ruin a whole night just like one great show in a night can make a whole night.

Another vice president agrees that creative guidance by the network is variable and dependent upon the clarity of the idea and the abilities of the creative team.

Our input varies from show to show. Once again, if the idea is crystal clear, the producers are very talented, they don't need me to tell them how to do the show and I would prefer not to. The good shows run themselves. In those cases, I can help the producer get the show through the maze of the network and get it on the air and give it its fairest shot. It is my job to make certain that we are all going down the same road together and that we are all doing the same show that we agreed up front that we were going to do. Sometimes the producers will come to you and hopefully, if you have developed a good relationship with them, you don't become the dark sinister figure that is "the network." You are their partner in this and the producer will say, "What do you think, should we do this or should we do that?" And you'll say, "If I were you, I would do this." Sometimes they will take your advice and sometimes they won't but they can use you as a sounding board. You know, for a network executive to go to a producer and say, "That's lousy" or "That stinks," that doesn't help the producer any. I mean, if it doesn't work,

tell me how to fix it. That's what I try to do when I work with producers and it's worked out pretty well.

The ability of the creative team is again emphasized by the following programmer:

If you are getting a lot of strong creative input to begin with, then you don't have to get feedback as much, so it really depends on who you are dealing with.

In contrast, one senior executive believes the network should offer support to the creative team rather than guidance.

There shouldn't be a phrase called network interference. There should be one called network support because that's really what the network should do. The business should be to recruit the best people and then to give them whatever help that you can. Now there have to be some controls that have to do with content, broadcast standards and obvious things but in terms of the creativity, we're watching and should be watching and praying and hoping and cajoling and supporting and helping but not supervising or certainly not interfering. That is the kind of arrogance I have absolutely no patience with and I think because I've been on the other side and been the victim of some of that, the recipient, it's a no-no. It's probably the power of the buying function that goes along with the network job that causes some people to abuse it and to tell, as opposed to discuss or persuade, and it really shouldn't be. It's not black magic, it shouldn't be hard to master the trick. If a network is operating as I think it should, the network is just there to support, to help, to cheer on, to encourage, to block for the runner who is the producer. The outside guy, the guy who brought in the show, the producer is doing the work and should be allowed to develop the show and produce it as he wishes. I mean the whole idea is you go out to get good people to come and produce shows for you and to the extent that you try to tell them how to do their jobs, either you're obviously not letting them do the job themselves or good people won't even stay with you. The point is I think you

can overemphasize the role and importance of those of us at networks. It's okay for them to say they enjoyed the process and that they liked watching it from beginning to end but don't ever confuse it with them doing it, because network people shouldn't be doing it and if they want to be producers they should leave the network and go produce. Eventually, a lot of them do but they shouldn't change roles while they're here. Our job is to buy--to select and to buy and to encourage, etc., not to produce.

The following interview excerpt deals with a show that was "fixed" by the network starting right after the pick-up to series. Testing indicated that the show had problems and network executives set out to find solutions. The solutions included creative input as well as a new slot in the schedule for the program.

At that point we sat down with the producers and we said, "We got to fix this show. We have to make these people likeable, no matter what the story is, it does not matter what the story is about, the important thing in series television is the characters are, you know, somebody that you want to invite back into your living room every week." So the first place we started was the characters. We had to approach the male lead and show that even though he had a larcenous heart that he cared about the female lead and then we had to make her competent in her job as a detective. For the first half season we played the show as a mystery where there are suspects and we don't know who the suspects are and finally our characters solve the case. The show was doing good. At mid-season we sat down before we picked them up and said, "Okay, we are going to do the next stage of trying to work with this show" and the second stage of fixing the show came in mid-season when we asked them to put in that the client had a credibility and he had a real problem and they wanted to solve it for him. They did nine shows and we still felt the show was getting better and around four shows to go, four original shows left, we moved it behind our biggest hit and we slightly changed the form. We wanted to

make it into a mystery form where the villain was revealed to the audience by the end of the second act. Since we wanted to attract more men to the show, it gave a chance for the male lead to play off against the villain, we could see our hero up against somebody. We also asked that in the second year that since this guy had a year of detective work under his belt, that he would be more daring, do action, again to attract the male audience and that's where we are now.

Government regulations were cited as one reason for the networks to provide guidance to suppliers.

Certain types of supervision is necessary because our stations are licensed by the Federal government and we are responsible for what we put out on our network, so we do have to get into that gray area of censorship which is called program practices or standards and practices.

An executive in the area of television movies is very involved with the creative team as this interview excerpt illustrates:

I had a very active hand in this film because the project had originated with me. I went through the script page by page with the writer. The network really holds all the cards during the script period. Once the project goes to film, the control lessens. If I had one concern during those watching of dailies, it was that we weren't establishing enough of the house as a personality. At one point when there was something in the script that would call for, that related to the house as a personality and they did not shoot it, I said, "I really feel we have contracted to the script and that scene is essential to the film" and they had to go back and shoot it again and so I have that right within reason to ask and I certainly have that right when it's something within the script. Once you contracted for a script you know, you may have a night scene which is more expensive to shoot than a day scene and a producer may come and say, "Look, I want to do it in the day, it's going to save me money, I've got financial problems." We may or may not agree with that. We have that right. I had a film where I felt all the secondary

performances were dreadful and I felt the film was not scary and I sat with the producer and the editor and I really, what I tried to get them to do working hand in hand was to cut the film of the secondary characters who stunk and just play out all the scenes on the principals and just finding bits and pieces of the film to sell the suspense. The ideal situation is for me to sit here and say, "You folks are terrific, you have got it all down perfectly, go and do it." But I feel that I am a safety valve, in many ways I am the executive producer's executive producer. If it doesn't work for me, based upon experience, my taste, my background, my knowledge, if the characters don't work, if the construction doesn't work, the themes don't work, if the jokes don't work, I will get into any and every aspect. So many writers are just draftsmen who map out other people's stories, other people's thinking and characters, that they don't want to think, they want to be told what to do every step of the way.

Discussion

Creative guidance by the networks is pervasive and very much a part of program production in the television industry. The type of advice given to the creative teams by the network executive is diverse. It includes objective concerns such as the script or economic requirements of the project. Affective concerns, which include providing emotional support for the creative team, are also considered by the executives.

The amount of guidance the executives offer to the creative teams varies and is idiosyncratic. What emerges from these accounts of creative guidance is the amount of role involvement, the depth of interactions, that exists

between the network executive and the creative team.¹ For the programmer, intense relationships in his role-set appear to occur with members who are located in another organizational domain. This fact may present some interesting consequences for the way network executives perceive themselves and select their reference groups. For example, this high degree of involvement with individuals outside his organization may affect the way the programmer views himself in relation to his own organization as well as the way he perceives others in similar jobs in the television industry. The way the network executive views himself can indicate if there is a kind of professionalization associated with his occupation. This professionalization would bear directly on the kinds of values and expectations programmers hold and would affect the behaviors they exhibit in their role of influentials in the communication process and their decisions as gatekeepers.²

¹The widely discussed conflict between network executives and the creators of television programs may be related to the structure of the interpersonal interactions as well as to the question of the right of the artist to have creative control over his work. The appearance of conflict in the role-set is linked to the degree of involvement among role-set partners. The higher the degree of involvement between partners, the greater the chance for conflict to occur. See R. K. Merton, Social Theory and Social Structure (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1957), p. 371.

²The reference here is to Merton's idea of local and cosmopolitan influentials and will be discussed in subsequent chapters. See Merton, Social Theory and Social Structure, pp. 387-420.

CHAPTER VI

RESEARCH

This chapter will cover the manner in which network program executives use research in their jobs as well as the function of research in the programming process. However, before we discuss the research methods currently used by the networks, a brief review of the development of audience research in the United States as well as its relationship to the study of mass communications seems appropriate.

Development of Audience Research
in the United States

Audience research in the United States developed from market place requirements; the mass media in America are primarily supported by revenues from advertisers. Sponsors want to know if their message has reached the intended audience and whether the desired effects have been attained. Consequently, the competing broadcast and print media, in their efforts to draw advertiser support, created a demand for objective instruments which could measure the size and describe the composition of their respective audiences.¹

¹R. K. Merton, Social Theory and Social Structure (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1957), p. 451.

According to Lazarsfeld, the development of radio as an advertiser-supported medium was nearly coincidental and a consequence of the ownership structure of the first radio stations.² Many of the first radio stations were started by individuals to advertise their own services or products and these station owners soon began to accept fees for advertising a range of consumer goods and services provided by others. Thus, radio was established as an advertising medium and when television emerged as a part of broadcasting, the model of radio as an advertiser-supported enterprise was followed.

This market place pressure for technically objective measures to identify audiences in terms of their attitudes and beliefs as well as their size and demographic composition has had an effect on the development of mass communications research in the United States.

Merton has compared the American and European sociological approach to mass communications research. Both approaches are concerned with the relationship between ideas and social structure, however each viewpoint focuses on distinctive and different concerns. The European approach is based in relations which occur in logic, the focus is the social roots of knowledge and the creation of intellectual viewpoints by society. It centers on esoteric doctrines

²See P. F. Lazarsfeld and H. Field, The People Look at Radio (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1946), p. 13.

and the intellectual elite. The paradigm is specific and limited; consequently, it is subject to distortion when it is applied to the popular culture. In contrast, the American perspective in mass communications research is based in empiricism; it relies upon experience, emphasizing observation or experimentation to understand social relationships and viewpoints. The American approach is concerned with public opinion and mass beliefs, what has come to be called "popular culture." Knowledge in the American variant becomes information and American research focuses on the aggregates of information bits which have been available to masses of people. The European approach is more concerned with knowledge in the sense of systematically related facts or ideas which allows for systems of doctrines to develop. The American perspective is interested in relationships which can be demonstrated and not assumed.³

Additionally, this economic influence in the American perspective has linked audience research to market research, affecting the conception of the audience. Although the idea is of communication to a mass audience, the unit for analysis remains the individual.⁴ Thus, it would appear that market place factors have had a bearing on the

³For a full description of the comparison, see Merton, Social Theory and Social Structure, pp. 439-55.

⁴M. Brouwer, "Mass Communication and the Social Sciences: Some Neglected Areas," International Social Science Journal 14 (1962):303-19. This article also includes a section on European Theories in Mass Communications research.

social organization of mass communications research in the United States.⁵

Program Research

The purpose of program research is to help the networks identify the entertainment programs which have the most chance for success, that is, which programs will have the widest audience appeal. The research departments of these organizations act as support systems to program executives. The goal of research is to aid the executive in decision making by attempting to provide an objective analysis of proposed properties.

The research departments at both NET Y and NET Z use outside companies for field studies of program concepts but the resulting data are interpreted in-house. The information is disseminated to program executives through the network's research department. Research executives point out that their reports take the form of a recommendation or a suggestion. They do not see research results as a determining factor in a yes or no decision regarding the selection of

⁵For example, The People Look at Radio, a survey report conducted by The National Opinion Research Center and analyzed and interpreted by The Bureau of Applied Social Research of Columbia University, was a project commissioned by The National Association of Broadcasters. The NAB wanted to assess the public's acceptance and understanding of radio in the United States and to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the radio industry. The information from the studies was to be applied to a plan of action for the future of broadcasting in the United States.

a property to be either developed, selected for a series, scheduled or cancelled.

NET X purports to have a unique system of researching properties and no executive interviewed touched on the specifics of that organization's research procedures. However, in the children's area, NET X also relies on outside consultants, specialists in social science and child development, as do the other two networks.

Many of the executives interviewed discussed the way they used research in their jobs and the function of research in the programming process. Clearly, network executives perceive research as having some value (92 percent) to them in conducting their jobs. Overall, almost three-quarters (74 percent) indicated that research was regularly utilized. NET Y and NET Z responded similarly at 40 percent each, while only 20 percent at NET X indicated that research was a useful tool.

In a little over half the cases (52 percent) the value attributed to research is qualified by a statement concerning its reliability. These persons said that a program executive cannot rely excessively on research in decision making. It is interesting to note that those responding to the reliability component of using research as a tool were executives at NET Y and NET Z; no executive at NET X indicated that research could not be relied upon to make decisions.

The following statements are representative of the way program executives perceive the role of research as a tool.

Information from research testing helps one executive improve a program.

You will always look at how a show can be better and we will do research testing to help us.

Another executive uses research data to identify problems in a show.

I take the test result and try as best I can with the research department on the basis of collective information, to see what went wrong, how can we solve the problem?

According to this executive, research findings can be manipulated to support certain views. Consequently, executives should be careful in their assessment of research material.

You can only use it as a tool. But you certainly have to be careful not to be intimidated by it because research is something that can be played with a little bit so I think you have to use it in a way that is constructive. I think we have to be really careful and understand that research is only one out of a lot of different factors that you should consider.

An experienced and senior programming executive perceived research as a useful tool but cautioned against making judgments based exclusively on research information.

You do have some yardsticks, some tools to work with like research, which you can't overuse by the way. You better, better not make the mistake of thinking that whatever you hear from research is Gospel, totally valid and reliable, cause it isn't.

A vice president agrees that judgments cannot be passed solely on research and he indicates that research is useful in identifying factors that can be helpful to the programmer in decision making.

You can't rely exclusively on research, I don't think. What you can do and what we try to do is to use it as a tool. Research tells me this particular quality or this particular character is scoring. So what we should try to do in each episode or every other episode is to try to embody that quality in a particular scene or a particular episode. If research though ever became the sole tool for our programming, we would be in big trouble.

Only executives from NET Z (21 percent) responded that they thought research could be helpful to future decisions indicating that:

Research is valuable in the area of what should be put on next year. It is better with trends.

Some respondents from NET Y (17 percent) and NET Z (7 percent) said that they don't use research at all in coming to a decision, while no one from NET X answered in that way. However, only executives from NET X (38 percent) indicated that research can determine the type and fate of a property citing that:

Research figures deeply and importantly in what goes on.

In regard to the testing of a pilot episode or a series, NET X executives agreed that:

In many respects, based on that information [pilot tests], the show either makes the air or it doesn't, or it is refashioned.

Executive Use of Research

All entertainment programs are tested to some extent. The testing procedures and elements reviewed are determined partly by the program genre. The most frequently mentioned properties for testing are in the prime time series area, the comedy and drama pilots, followed by episode testing of established series, also known as maintenance testing. In the series area, the elements most frequently scrutinized are characters (37 percent), scripts (22 percent), concepts (6 percent) and production features (7 percent). In one-shots (movies, miniseries and specials) title testing is mentioned as an important element to be researched (11 percent). Executives in the sample are evenly distributed among the three elements of scripts, production features and titles. NET X respondents (57 percent) indicate that characters are most frequently tested, in contrast to NET Y (40 percent) and NET Z (20 percent). NET Z executives (50 percent) indicate that concepts are most frequently tested in comparison to NET Y (10 percent) and NET X (0 percent).

To illustrate the process, a development executive explained what happened to a pilot that was picked up to series although research suggested that the show was not strong.

We sent the pilot to testing. It was an extremely weak tested show. The audience did not like it that much. While the show was on the air, the

first season we kept testing the shows, we kept sending them out there to the audience and every time it would come back that the shows were a little bit slow, that we still, the characters were a little better liked but we still had not fixed the main character.

The network continued to "fine-tune" the show and the series is now beginning its fourth season.

For the shows which have been established:

Once an episode has aired, we may try and get some research in it if we tried something different, to see if it was a mistake or if it turned out real well.

According to one research executive:

The network tries to test all series once every two or three years whether there is something new or not, just to see if any changes have taken place that we don't know about.

In their discussion of how research is used, 65 percent of the executives indicated that research is most helpful to the program executive in determining audience requirements. Executives in prime time series accounted for 67 percent of the response, long form (movies and mini-series) 13 percent, daytime 13 percent, and children's programs 7 percent.

R₁ Our research department tells us which tracks, the demographic make-up of all the shows, and why things are doing what they are.

R₂ Research now will tell you the exact percentage of women that are available to you at 9 P.M. on Wednesday night on this network.

Promotional use was mentioned by executives in the movie and mini-series area and variety and specials and was thought to be extraordinarily helpful to these areas.

There is very sophisticated research done when the project is completed about marketing it; what are the elements to promote, what aspects of the story the audience responds to and that is played up in the promotion. We use research for title testing [of one-shots]. In other words, we have different titles for a special and they have groups that will come in and they have testing methods that will tell us which title is preferred by an audience and which title the audience feels is more descriptive of the show. Research is not the final judge but it is certainly a valuable tool.

Research plays a role in scheduling decisions.

When I schedule things, I'm trying to figure out what the make-up of the audience is from the research and then try to counter program and things like that. We do a hypothetical test (competitive), we take a show, and say it is in a certain time period which is presently a failure time period. We describe a show to people and say it will be seen at x time period and ask people if they would watch that show in that time period, vis-a-vis the competition that exists in that time period.

Research Methods

Now that we know what the networks test, what methods are used and how is the subsequent research applied?

Only executives from NET Y and NET Z discussed methods. Preview house screening, cable testing and focus groups were the methods described. More executives at NET Z (84 percent) mentioned cable testing as a primary procedure in comparison to 17 percent responding from NET Y. According to this sample, the preferred method of testing pilots and episodes for NET Y is the preview house and for NET Z cable feed testing. NET Y does cable testing to a limited degree and in some instances, NET Z will use preview house facilities for a test.

At the preview house, the pilot, which sets up the premise of the series by explaining the basic situation of the show and establishing the characters, or a series episode is shown to an audience of approximately 400 people. Those individuals have been recruited by the company in charge of the facilities and not by the networks. Each person is supplied with a meter or dial which they can manipulate as they watch the show, turning the indicator to the right if they like what they are viewing, to the left if they dislike what they see or center point if they are neutral.⁶ Subjects are instructed to perform the task continuously during the viewing period. From this minute by minute reaction of the subjects the appeal of a show is plotted, indicating, for example, where parts of the episode drag or build. Extensive norms or standards have been established based on tests of previous comedies and dramas so there are points of comparison for each show.

NET Y follows the screening with a questionnaire which contains scalar and open questions. They might ask:

How did you like the show? Did you think it was excellent, very good, good, or poor? How interested would you be in watching it on a weekly

⁶This technique is rooted in the Lazarsfeld-Stanton Program Analyzer, a device which was initially used for radio tests but can be applied to any communication which develops along a time-dimension. It allows the audience to record approval, disapproval, or neutrality as they are responding to the material. For a fuller description of the instrument as well as its use in studies of propaganda, see Merton, Social Theory and Social Structure, pp. 523-24.

basis? Very interested, somewhat interested, not interested. What did you think of character A, character B? Open-end response. What did you like about the show? Open-end response.

They also include some element ratings concerned with the comedy, drama, pacing and dialogue of the piece. NET Z does not use a questionnaire with this particular audience.

Both NET Y and NET Z follow the screening by inviting some of the audience to participate in focus groups. There are usually several groups of approximately fifteen individuals who are then asked questions about the episode. In focus groups, a leader directs the discussion to gain information. The focus groups are for texture and not quantification. By using this technique it is thought that insight can be gained into the reasoning process of the viewer, thus understanding why individuals reacted the way they did to the episode.

One executive discussed the value of the preview house test and focus group in the following way:

The pilot tests in a preview house up on Sunset. We hear what audiences in L.A. think. We get written data and I also go and sit in on the groups. At the preview house they have a big theater which people sit in. Then, after that they will break down into what is called discussion groups. There are usually three or four groups and I will either sit in the room or I will sit in a room where there are four TV screens and I can listen in and listen to the groups and hear what people are saying. To hear the objectivity of somebody saying, "I don't like this aspect of it or that aspect of it" can turn your head around. It can make you think about it again in a different way. Hopefully, when you hear an idea you haven't thought about you have enough distance to then sort

of ruminare over it and figure out whether that works or not for you.

In cable testing, the network has an arrangement with different cable systems that operate in cities of varying sizes. There is a large pool of cable systems which is rotated regularly. Normally, a given test might be in five markets (sometimes four markets) and five different markets, one used for each program. Consequently, both the area of the country and the cable system are rotated. The sample audience is recruited from the cable subscriber list and the telephone interview is the means by which information is gathered. The network is not directly involved in recruitment of the sample or in the field work. A company specializing in these services is hired. The subscriber is telephoned and told that a sneak preview will be shown at a particular time on a specified day on their cable channel. The viewer is invited to watch the show. After the program, the same individuals are contacted again and if they did view the show, they are asked questions about the program.

The sample groups are structured according to age, sex and various demographic characteristics. The telephone questionnaires are extensive. The subjects are read the questions. There are some scalar questions (very much, not at all), some agree/disagree statements, and several open-ended response statements. NET 2 supplements cable testing with discussion groups in order to help interpret the quantifiable results obtained by the cable tests. The focus

groups which are shown the pilot are not from the cable sample. Theater or preview house testing is used when a pilot has just become available and there is not enough time to go through the cable testing procedure.

Testing and research actually come in rather late in the process and are not usually a part of the initial and early stages of development of a property. Since the network is interested in attitude towards the program, towards the key characters, the series premise, action, and humor, the preview house and cable tests are concerned with obtaining information about a finished product, that is, a pilot, an episode, a demo (half the length of a pilot) or a presentation clip. The network is also interested in determining intention to view future episodes and estimates of how the property would fare in a variety of competitive situations. The goal of this type of testing is to obtain quantifiable data about both the audience and the property.

Focus group testing is concerned with qualitative information, often referred to by these executives as the "texture" of the show. The data gathered from this process can also be used to refine a primary test instrument, the questionnaire. The focus group method is not as precise a testing procedure and consequently, when it is used as the primary method, the element tested is in a more amorphous form and the result is usually referred to as a gross indicator. An example of this is the use of concept testing.

In concept testing, one or two paragraphs about a particular idea are presented to a focus group and individuals are asked their reactions to the subject. Concept testing is considered more useful for movies or one-shots because the decision to view in that instance is often made on a TV Guide description of a few lines but executives still question the usefulness of the procedure. In general, all program executives are reserved in their view of the value of concept tests. The limitations of a concept test are expressed by one respondent:

You don't get the tone of the show, that's not clear from some paragraphs. For example, we had a tongue in cheek western with women as the main characters. It tested high with older audiences because westerns are sacrosanct to them. If they really saw it, they wouldn't watch it.

Another executive adds:

I think concept testing is not very meaningful at all. I don't understand concept testing because everyone has a different concept of the concept you are testing, so what are they really responding to? You are not giving them a pilot or something, a common experience, to respond to. I don't understand concept testing frankly. I don't like it and probably because it takes away from why you hire executives, why you hire people. You hire them because you want to go with their instincts. If you are going to test every single idea and just develop according to that, for me it is a little scary.

However, some executives say they really benefit from observing the focus group process:

I get loads of research but I love the dynamics of live [focus groups] because often when you get research reviews you worry about who was really in that, who did they check and what were the

questions they asked, and were they asked in the right way. One can load a question just by weighting words and we get to make sure they are very flat about that in the groups.

Ratings

The Nielsen rating represents a special kind of research because more than any other form of research or testing, its reports are directly linked to the generation of revenue by the networks. The Nielsens determine pricing of advertising time. The rating is simply the estimate of a television audience in relation to the total group sampled. This could be the percentage of all television households or of people within a demographic group in the survey area who are watching a specific program or station. As one executive put it:

The Nielsens play a very large role in everyone's life. As imperfect a system as it is, it's the only one that we got. So that if I see that people want to see something, that something does well and something doesn't do well, of course that influences me.

Positive responses to the ratings system were expressed by 82 percent, negative responses by 18 percent and 64 percent said that ratings can determine the type of program developed, its placement in the schedule, and its life span. Twenty-seven percent of the sample actually referred to the ratings as a report card. However only 27 percent of the sample answered that the Nielsen ratings were a factor in their programming decisions.

- R₁ We are one of the few businesses in the world that gets a daily report card that tells us this morning if they liked it last night. We have a better idea than most people who turn out products.
- R₂ Ratings let you know what kind of audience has been watching and they let you know your competition.
- R₃ Ratings help development to analyze the schedule, look for weaknesses, improve those problems in the schedule. We need to know the competition and what are the more dynamic things that you can use to go up against the competition.

To demonstrate the importance of the ratings, one top-level decision-maker discussed their usefulness in indicating popular themes to be expanded in other program forms or for identifying competitive situations.

You get all sorts of feedback and I mean the computer [brain] is always whirring, you know, and you're always listening to what other people are telling you. But the Nielsens, above anything else, the Nielsens, if you just, if you were locked up in Antarctica and you were a network programmer and you were in a little way station up in Antarctica, they give you three meals a day that are flown in and you had just television sets and the Nielsens, you could almost do your job with the Nielsen ratings. Because every week they give you a clue as to, you know, what they measure. Certain shows start--take advantage of violence or crime--it may indicate a trend. Other shows pick up popularity. You do a theme on one show. You'd do better maybe, if you take that theme and make it into a movie of the week. You know, if you really pay attention to the Nielsens you can really learn something. You can see what somebody across the street does on a given night and a given competitive situation and if you just lock it in over here. You know, having done this job for x years, the same exact situation will re-occur seven months down the line, fourteen months down the line, somewhere on a given night. If you just remember that on this given night they ran a football game over there, we were running a

movie and they did z and they cleaned up. I, you just remember that, that same exact situation will turn up, you know, you never know when, but you'll be looking at programming plans and you'll see that NET A has a football game over here and NET B has a movie over here and all of a sudden you're the odd man out and you say, "Gee, when they did z it worked." You do z again, you have a very good chance of being right.

On the negative side of the ratings system one executive offers this observation:

Look, ratings aren't people. As a matter of fact, ratings don't even necessarily measure out--go to the statisticians on that one, but it ain't real, is it? You work for a year on something, it goes on the air, the numbers come in. You know what it means, it means out of 1,200 television sets, 1,200 television Nielsen sets, you got 400 of them. Wait a minute, do you mean to tell me that we just worked for a year and spent umpteen million dollars or whatever it is, putting this thing together so that 400 television sets could tune in? What other business, but show business, could exist on this kind of premise?

In comparing the three groups of network executives in their views towards the ratings, 45 percent of the executives at NET Z gave a positive response compared to 27 percent for NET X and 9 percent for NET Y. In regard to ratings determining programs, 36 percent of the executives from NET Z answered affirmatively, while only 18 percent at NET X and 9 percent at NET Y expressed that view. NET Z also accounted for two-thirds of the response that ratings were perceived as a report card.

Only one respondent mentioned tabulations of viewer mail and phone calls. Ratings of the popularity of acting talent are provided by Q scores. However, the executives

in charge of talent at NET Y and NET Z referred to Q scores negatively, stating that they do not use those lists. As one vice president said:

I don't need a Q score to tell who is popular on television and the people who are popular on television are already on television and are not available for series. And no one has to tell me that it would be lovely, it would be terrific to get star A in another television series or if star Y were available, to have him.

Children's Programs

Children's programming presents a special case for the use of research and is one area where social research, which is evaluative in nature, plays an important role in the development of a property. The network also relies on audience research which centers on field studies.

Complete Saturday morning shows are not usually tested because most of the programming in this area is animated and the cost for a full pilot episode is quite high. Consequently, presentations, short segments and story board drawings (animatics) are tested. These are shown on cable to audiences of children and the test procedure is the same one as for adult viewers. The children are members of a family where the parents have agreed to participate in the testing of programs. The child is interviewed over the telephone. Focus groups and discussion groups among children are also conducted although they are not done extensively as for prime time shows. In these groups, characters are being tested rather than plot line. Because cartoons

are little segments, it is thought that characters are more important to test than the other elements. The cable tests and focus groups are an attempt to get an idea of the audience appeal of the property.

The social research aspect plays a much more important role in children's programming. Social science research plays a very important role because it provides an evaluation of the desirability of the characters, the impact of these programs or proposed characters, what images children will form after exposure to the program, and whether the show has a social or a minority bias. The head of children's programming at one of the networks explains the use of the social research specialist:

Our outside consultant is with a major university and he deals in child psychology and family counseling and things like that. He has the analytical point of reference and if I need a specialist he will refer me to specialists because if I am dealing on certain things, like if I am doing a story about a retardate, I would not rely on just him because I would go to a specialist to make sure that what we indeed intended in a script comes across in an honest, accurate way. We don't want to be misrepresenting any subject.

Although children's programming is geared for the two-to-eleven-year-old viewer, research concentrates on the six-to-eleven-year-old group. In terms of a show,

We figure if a six-year-old can understand it, then we are okay. We do research testing, focus groups, that maybe have twelve children per group in two different age group levels, 6 to 8, 9 to 11, and we will talk about our development as well as our returning shows to see what they think, what they like, what they don't like.

NET Z calls on experts to help make the difficult decisions.

We have a group of social scientists who work with us over the past ten years who help us reason out from the child's point of view.

Social scientists can "give us a lot of creative suggestions, read the script and say, 'Do it this way or do it that way.'"

In one instance, where the problem centered on the death of a pet, advice from these experts helped the network and the production company: "We ended up with a pretty positive episode about how to deal with it."

Daytime Programs

The program form in the daytime area is primarily the soap opera and the game show. Because of their nature, daytime serials cannot really be tested before they go on the air. It is believed that a real involvement with the characters by the viewer is a necessary criterion before a test can be conducted. In daytime soaps, the network does after the fact concept testing, using focus groups made up of women who are familiar with the serial to be studied. Cable tests are also conducted by recruiting daytime soap opera viewers to watch on a particular day and then using the telephone interview to ask questions similar to those included in the pilot tests, questions about the characters, the story and the viewers' attitudes. For established serials, the networks usually do this kind of research on a continuing basis to see which stories are attractive, which

pairs of lovers are popular and whom the viewers want to watch.

Game shows are tested because it is very important to see how the game will work. Run throughs are a first step and are done for the benefit of the executives in charge at both the network and the production company to see how the game is working. Pilots and demos can be tested by both the preview house and cable method. Concept testing for a game show is really difficult to do and according to one executive "is actually of no value."

Although the executives in all program areas find research helpful, the majority remain ambivalent about the importance of research in decision making. The following statement seems an accurate summation:

It always tells you wonderfully about everything after it happened. And any time you want research to help you predict the future, I will put money on the table to say you will always find after a statement is made by research that there will always be a comma followed by a but, whereas, or wherefore and then they give you equally the other side of the coin. So the decision is always going to be back here anyway.

The Programmer and the Audience

Is research the largest contributor to the network programming executive's perception of the audience? Is audience taste, preference and viewing behavior inferred solely through the interpretation of research data and the Nielsen Ratings?

The hesitation of programmers to rely exclusively on research in decision making indicates that there are some other factors which mediate the decision process. In our discussion of gatekeepers, it was noted that communicators often structure their messages in terms of their beliefs about the audience. However, there is some evidence to suggest that messages are rarely directed to one primary intended audience and that secondary audiences or reference groups enter into the communications process, affecting the type of message the communicator sends.⁷

Network executives often responded that they relied on non-rational factors or "gut instinct" to make their judgments. What does "gut instinct" represent? Often, the term was used to mean relying on experience, on what the individual had come to know and this included invoking familiar images associated with various reference groups with which the individual could initially judge the

⁷This use of reference groups is the one used by R. A. Bauer which includes positive and negative reference groups. He expands the concept of reference groups which "have usually been treated as groups whose acceptance is sought or who are used as positive yardsticks for self-assessment" to include negative reference groups and that "reference groups should be regarded as groups which one wants to influence in any fashion, whether it be to gain their approval or to persuade them to one's own position." See R. A. Bauer, "The Communicator and the Audience," Journal of Conflict Resolution 2 (March 1958):67-77.

According to Cantor, the viewing audience may be the least important reference group for the producer of television programs. See M. G. Cantor, "Producing Television for Children," in Television and Social Behavior, Vol. I, ed. G. Comstock and E. Rubinstein (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1971), pp. 259-89.

appropriateness of the decision. Thus the programmer additionally conceptualizes the audience in the context of his reference groups, thereby expanding the information provided by audience research and the Nielsen ratings.

CHAPTER VII

SCHEDULING

The term scheduling is used in two ways in television: (1) to denote the primary list of programs that each network will carry; and (2) to indicate the time period and day of the week in which a show is placed. The television process is seasonal, with specific phases that occur at certain times of the year. The fall schedule is the main register of programs that sets forth the game plan for the networks. It lists the shows to be available to audiences for viewing. At one time, these schedules were fixed or stable for the season. However, in today's television, once the season starts, the prime time fall schedule becomes the "living schedule" that can be revised at short notice. After just a few weeks, shows are moved into different time periods and days or placed on another night. A show can be cancelled after as few as two to four episodes have aired and new programs with a limited run can replace these failures.

Although the decision to list a program on the schedule is made by a small group of executives, probably from four to eight persons, each network has a senior specialist in program planning and scheduling. Although the

job title and additional responsibilities of that person vary from network to network, that functionary concentrates on the creation and the mechanics of the schedule. He or she determines the kinds of programs needed, numbers of hours required for various types of programming (movies, mini-series, specials) and the day-to-day scheduling of shows which also includes when a particular movie, special, or series episode will air.

Scheduling decisions incorporate both the ordered roster of programs and the element of time in the context of competitive activities. The following discussion of the process is limited to the evening or prime time schedule of the network. Descriptions of the scheduling process are provided by the three executives primarily responsible for this function at each network. From their accounts, we can determine the factors that interplay in the process. We shall then look to the larger sample of the executives for their perceptions of the most important dimensions in this process. Additionally, the organizational status of the individuals who are involved in these decisions will be identified.

The Scheduling Process

NET X

In terms of the airing of original product, the television season is approximately thirty-five weeks long and the network must determine the number of hours needed

for original programming in each of the various entertainment genres. NET X uses two movies per week in its schedule, so that it needs seventy movies per season. A certain percentage of them will be theatrical films that were originally produced for movie house exhibition. Series failure is also taken into account in determining the network's movie requirement because movies can fill in temporary spaces in the series schedule. Per season, NET X needs between forty-five and fifty made-for-TV movies and three to four mini-series that run from four to six hours each, to make up the equivalent of seventy movies.

The failure rate of series is relatively constant and is proportional. The more program hours replaced, the higher the failure rate for the replacements. One reason for failure is that new shows are usually placed in time periods where their predecessors have failed. The competition of shows on the other networks in the same time slot is often too strong for the series to survive.

The executive at NET X believes in keeping strong shows in their established time period and building a whole evening around them by placing compatible shows on the same evening as the successful program. When strong programs are used defensively and moved to another time period and evening as anchors for other programs, the successful program often loses its hit status.

The program planner at NET X comments below on determining the number of hours of programming, factors in program failures, and strategy.

Determining the number of hours of programming

In determining the number of hours of programming I need, it is separate things. In movies, I know how many hours I have to put in movies, going in we usually have two movie nights per season. Now the season is, in terms of original product, say roughly, thirty-five weeks long into the May sweeps. So, thirty-five weeks and two hours per movie and it is four hours per week, so therefore what you do is multiply so that it's seventy films, roughly, that you need. Then what you do is that you have a certain amount of theatrical films, you work off that, and then you also know, you also anticipate a certain amount of failure from the new series you put on the air. So, you can then figure out roughly and when you do it season out of season it becomes automatic but I know usually I need anywhere between forty-five and fifty made-for-TV movies and I will usually need three to four mini-series each running the same amount, four to six hours average so that is basically how it is done.

Factors in program failure

Now, the failure factor for new series is a constant. Four out of five shows fail. Sometimes, if you are lucky, you bring the odds down a little but the more new shows you put on the air, the higher the failure rate becomes. It is proportional and you are dealing with, even though people would like to delude themselves, that is what you are dealing with. That is why one network this season really sort of went against the odds and put on nine new shows and unfortunately for them, all of them are failing. Now they will obviously keep some of them but they are failing by historical standards. And by historical standards, I mean ratings. So, that is what it is and as I said, when you put these things on you have to be prepared for failure. It is very hard to get a new show off the ground unless you have it well positioned and what happens is a new show also goes into a time period that a

show previously scheduled had failed. Otherwise, it wouldn't be going in there. The time period is very tough and in addition to that, not only do you have the networks to compete with nowadays, you have the independent stations, the cable channels, and all those, so the fragmentation is very high. And as a result of it, it is very difficult to get a new show off the ground and you have to be prepared for failure. If you delude yourself and say this is a wonderful show and it is not going to happen, then you are in a mess.

Strategy for building strong program nights

If shows are succeeding where they are positioned, you are not going to change it, usually, because why jeopardize their success? I don't subscribe to using your good shows as building blocks, my predecessor used to do that. My philosophy is different. What I believe in doing is building a strong night and I don't believe in using one of my strong pieces, moving it somewhere else and building off that. I believe that you just take your strongest pieces, put them together and just hope that the cumulative effect builds you into a strong evening and then you just keep on trying that on your other nights until you're successful. Because once you start using your strong pieces defensively, you just quicken their demise. So, my philosophy is quite different. But it all comes down to going with what you feel are the best shows, those that can work and then you try to position them in a place where you feel you have your best opportunity.

NET Y

At NET Y, the executive starts by analyzing the ratings of the previous season to determine the network's programming needs prior to the screening of pilots in April. The most important factor here is the competition of NET X and NET Z. Every week the scheduling board at NET Y is updated to indicate the strengths and weaknesses of the other

two networks and to compare the performance of NET Y to the competitors. Data from the network research department, the Nielsen ratings, and consumer information are used to analyze the schedules of the three networks and to determine the kinds of shows the audience likes. Based on that information, pilots are selected as series and a new schedule is set. The new schedule is introduced to the public by a "promotional blitz."

Sometimes, the premiere episodes of series, both established and first season, are scheduled in advance of the official start of the season, in order to get an edge over competitors. Decisions to renew series are made in November because the production company must have appropriate lead time to provide the ordered episodes. Thus, the performance of a series in the first four to six weeks is crucial to its renewal.

Shows are cancelled at NET Y if the expectations of the pilot film have not been met by the series episodes, or if the network thinks the show will never gain audience acceptance, or if the time period competition faced by the program is too strong for the series to build an audience.

Mid-season series replace cancelled shows. Pilots for mid-season development are ready in November and December. Additionally, back-up shows had been ordered at the time the fall schedule was set. Back-up shows are usually pilots that were made for the Fall development, appeared

to have merit, but did not get in the schedule because there was no available time period. They were held over contractually to be used by the network in the schedule, as needed.

The interview excerpts that follow present comments from the chief program planning executive at NET Y on determining program need, meetings, factors in scheduling, and program renewal and cancellation.

Determining program need

My colleagues and I are the ones who spend the most time with the president working on the schedule, analyzing the ratings and talking about what is working and what isn't working.

The meetings

What happens is, the fall season pilots are screened in April. At that time, all the mucky mucks gather and the people fly in from New York. So, the senior management of the television division comes in, the chairman comes in, the head of sales, the president of the network, research, business affairs. It's senior management of the television division and of the corporation. It's a lot of people. So there is a big room and we sit there and we screen the pilots all week. There's a realistically small number of the L.A. people who screen the pilots. Sometimes we break into two rooms, sometimes senior management is in one room and the rest of us are in another room, but basically what happens is a crowd of people, around twenty people, screening a lot of comedies and dramas for one solid week and then there is a large meeting where the research department makes a presentation of what they have learned in the past year and past season, how the present time current shows are performing both in quantitative terms, what the Nielsen numbers say, and what qualitative research shows and very quickly it drops down to a very small group of people of senior management that go and spend a lot of time and decide our schedule.

Factors in scheduling

The factors that go into scheduling, it is not that tough. It is not an exact process, so the factors are most importantly competitive. We check our schedule, on the board here, these are the squares, this is where everything is. And I update every week what the networks are doing. Reports come to me about what we learned about what the other networks are doing. I fill in and think what they will do and what we do with scheduling, we put up what we have against what they have. Any data you can get, you try to analyze what our potential and perspective is. You will get the research department to come in and look at the Nielsen numbers, you look at the episodes and try to see as many of those as you can so it is a lot of instinct as to what our personal analysis of the shows is combined with the consumer information and research in terms of quantitative and quality.

The research provides us with the demographics and what the audience is watching. Actually in many cases the Nielsen rating is not the most important number; it is what is put in a show to try to attract a specific demographic audience and whether or not the show is delivering the demographic. That must be taken into consideration. So you set a Fall schedule, you do a promotional blitz and try to show who is in the series, and then it is a horse race and you get the numbers every day and what is doing well and what is not. So the gory details are, well, this season I think we were kind of crafty and got a few of our series on earlier than the premiere week and we premiered on Friday night, Tuesday night, Wednesday night and Thursday night, and Sunday night some of those shows earlier because they were up against repeat competition so we were able to get our pilots, initial episodes of some of those series, seen by more of the public. The key is to get the audience to watch those shows, like those shows. If you put them on when the other networks do, then you're head to head and it is very hard so you try to get there ahead. We were able to establish a couple of our shows against the competition.

Program renewal and cancellation

So what happens is that when you get into the season you evaluate the data you have to make a

decision, usually in early November, for those new series. You have to decide whether or not you are going to tell the producer we are picking you up for the back nine, or we will give you a full order, you will be on for the whole season. So you have to make some pretty tough calls on shows, that is one of the problems. The typical things, you have to make a rather quick assessment about whether or not you want to stay with the show or if it will be cancelled. And so we usually only have, you can't even see all thirteen shows before you make a decision. For instance, if you want to get the fourteenth show on the air, you have to tell them long before the thirteenth show goes on the air, you have to go back into production so the show will be ready by the time episode fourteen is on, which is sometime in January. So you have to tell them in late November to be on in early January. So what you basically have is your performance of the show in the last week of September and all of October and maybe a couple of weeks in November before you have to tell the producer "good job, you have done well, stay on," or "you haven't done well" but you think it is a good show, "keep on going," or "sorry, it didn't work out."

I guess what it really comes down to when we cancel a show is we don't think the execution of the show is what we expected, the characters or the writing or all the elements that make up a show are not what we were hoping for, or we feel that there is no long-range potential that this show would ever catch on no matter how well executed. Now, sometimes the show is maybe in too tough a time period and against tough competition and that is very hard to call because it does not deserve to be cancelled because of that and maybe it should be moved to another time slot. But it is very hard to move a show to another time period and be successful.

Example of program failure

A short history without a happy ending. We had a show that was doing extremely well for us and we thought it was strong enough to move it to another night and be an anchor for that night. It went on and then the new competition went against it and after the first quarter it really began to fall down in the numbers and the decision was made not to bring it back. But I will still maintain we

made the right decision. We needed a strong show on that night and if we would have put a new show there, I don't think we would ever have had a chance. So, if a show has dropped from the schedule, we use our mid-season development, pilots ready around November and December, for replacements for the shows that have dropped. We also have back-up shows we order when we make the fall schedule. They may be very good pilots that didn't get on the air because we didn't have room for them and we have the ability to hold them over for another site should we need them.

NET Z

At NET Z, the scheduler starts to assess the network's needs in February. He looks at the shows that have failed, those that are marginal, the programs with a potential to increase their audience, and those that need to be replaced. The scheduler is kept informed about potential projects. Consequently, as he assesses the current schedule in preparation for the fall line-up, he thinks in terms of the program choices available to the network. If the scheduler thinks that the fall line-up needs a particular kind of program to challenge the competition, he will make his views known to the development department.

Time period is crucial to the success or failure of a program and new series are usually placed in time periods where others have failed, thus increasing the competitor's edge.

A hit schedule that has high Nielsen ratings is probably the most valuable element in the placement of new series. Placing new shows near established successes in the

schedule usually increases their chances of surviving the season.

At NET Z, programmers play an active role in the first stage of deciding the fall schedule. They propose their version of a revised schedule, indicating which pilots would probably fare best as new series. Their proposal forms the basis for the scheduling discussions and the selection of potential series.

During the scheduling meetings, program research, ratings, past audience histories, the competitive schedules of NET X and NET Y, the past season's failures, survivors, and successes are all taken into account.

All shows on a schedule are interdependent. The placement of new shows in the schedule must be compatible with the show preceding or following it in terms of audience demographics. Compatible programming is essential, since the goal is to have the audience cumulate over the evening rather than to lose viewers to the competitors.

The NET Z programmer below discusses program need, time period, the value of a successful schedule, and demographic compatibility of programs.

Determining program need

If you try to break our business down into seasons, which used to be the case and still is to a great extent, that is, the television season usually starts after the summer is over and the kids are back to school and television viewing gets back to a kind of normal pattern, usually around the end

of September is when that happens. So that really is the start of our season. I guess I start to get very involved about that season, in about February of the previous year, that is, about the time that our pilots start to get delivered, that I start to hear a little bit about how our development is going. I am constantly aware because everybody gets copies of the development reports, so I am involved in knowing what is available. I get somewhat involved in making sure that we have the right kinds of shows in development to fill the time periods that might not be working whether they are more early evening problems than late evening shows. So that is a certain kind of show that may be needed; either half hours or hour dramas, how many movie nights we might need, how our inventory looks. In February, I have to start thinking about looking at our schedule, seeing what shows have failed and what shows need replacements, what shows are on the fence, start thinking about what our development looks like. Now, by the time April rolls around, we pretty much decided which of the new shows are, we think, viable.

Time period

Time period is very important. First of all, the problem with new shows and the reason for their high rate of failure is that new shows go into time periods in which programs have failed. Generally, you are facing probably entrenched, strong competition. If you failed, you either made the other guy successful or the other guy has been successful because he has a very strong show in there and so in scheduling you are generally putting new shows into failure time periods and sometimes you move things around to try to help that out. But more often than not, that's where the new show ends up.

The value of a successful schedule

Now, if you have a hit schedule, a hit schedule is of such value in putting new shows in because then you have something to build in back of. If you've got one hit on the night it's not too hard to schedule the rest of the night.

In deciding the fall schedule, the programming people generally go into the meeting with a pretty

good idea of what the planning should be and we try it out. We allow people to give their input and it's sort of a give and take thing and sometimes it takes a couple of days and sometimes it takes a little longer depending on what your problems are, whether your development is, fits to a T. Usually you end up with wishing you had done one more of these and one more of those. But that sometimes determines how tough it is to come up with the final schedule.

Demographic compatibility of programs

We have a number of shows to consider in each of the time periods. Some are obviously 9 P.M. shows and some are early shows and some fit into comedy blocks and so forth. But there must be a thousand computations that we could come up with in a scheduling session of different schedules for those slots but there is a fairly long process of trial and error of looking at research, looking at past audience histories, of competition, of shows that failed as well as the ones that are working and looking at the shows that are working and making sure at least from the testing reports that we've gotten about the new shows whether that's going to be compatible with the programming on the schedule, in the context of a lead in or a lead out.

Primary Factors in Scheduling

The two dimensions that emerge from these descriptions as key factors in the process are time period and ratings. The larger sample of executives agreed; 61 percent saw time period as the critical element in scheduling, with ratings and ratings potential (35 percent) as another important element. Time period, as used by these executives, is a construct which breaks down into three elements: demographics (45 percent), competition (31 percent) and program flow (24 percent). Ratings, which represent a

performance measurement, are to a large degree dependent upon the interaction of the composite elements of the time period construct. Thus, they represent a product or an output of that function.

Demographics and knowledge of the competition are very important in developing a schedule. These factors give an indication of audience characteristics and availability that can be applied in varying degrees to all stages of the program process, from the development to the selection and placement of a program. The following excerpt from an interview with a senior level programmer demonstrates the interaction of those factors and is an excellent account of the dynamic process which is characteristic of scheduling decisions:

By schedule, all I mean is that every show is on a schedule; there is a lead in and a lead out. There is no show on a schedule that operates independently from the other shows on a night that it's on. So, if we put a new show on Tuesday night at 8 P.M. and that show premieres in September, that might look like the only guidelines you're going for. However, we know that for thirteen weeks in September until December, that we're playing against movies on NET X and sports on NET Y. Tuesday night sports is predominantly male and therefore our movies, in order to compete in that time period, have to be predominantly female because the only available audience is women. I don't care what movies you have, if a man wants to watch sports you're pretty much going to have to compete for the other available audience. So, therefore, the show on our network that goes before Tuesday night sports has got to be female. You've got to feed a female audience into the Tuesday night movie because even if you get a 30 share with a show you may be only feeding in about 18 share of women so the movie is starting with an 18 share lead in. Am I talking too scientifically?

Audience demographics determine program characteristics. For example, if a network assesses that women, teenagers and children are the available audience for a specific time period on its schedule, research has shown that half-hour comedies appeal strongly to this group and would be considered for placement.

So you want to have a show that feeds in. The perfect show that goes before our movie is one that attracts only women. Obviously, it can't be perfect, you're going to get some other kind of audience along the way but you try to maximize your audience or a lead into your movie by the characteristics that you want to have in the movie, so you know what the movie is going to skew to. So then you say, "Now I've got an opening at Tuesday night at 8 P.M. and I want to appeal to women and to kids and to teenagers because that's all the people who aren't going to be watching the sports at 9 P.M." And that gives you a whole universe to work in. You can develop--I mean half-hour comedies would be a perfect kind of show to do. While you can't create hits, you can create shows that even if they are lousy quality, whoever they appeal to will be those people. So you design shows that fit the characteristics for Tuesday night at 8 P.M.

A successful show determines the characteristics of the programs that will be scheduled before or after the successful show.

The other side of it is if you have a hit at 8 P.M. on Friday and you're looking for a show at 9 P.M., you do it in reverse order. In the first case, I was building a show because I knew what my movies were gonna be. Now, I know what my hit is, I know who it appeals to because I had it researched down and we tested it with audiences and I know exactly who is watching it, who likes it the most, who thinks it's just okay--they watch it but they're not crazy about it. I know the demographics and I know the competition. I know that there's gonna be a comedy on NET X and a movie,

which is a constant, on NET Y. I know who likes the comedy a lot and who thinks it's so so and they are the most vulnerable to get away from that comedy and over to us. So, again, design a show that is predominantly male in appeal, something that can also appeal to kids and teenagers.

A highly successful program can positively affect the ratings of programs which precede or follow it on the network's schedule.

Now, sometimes by what I call skin grafting, you put a show close to a hit and it starts to take off over time. If you just leave it on long enough, on any given Friday, a man might say, "Geeze, I've seen that episode of the comedy and the movie is lousy," so they start getting caught up in your show, even though they may not be the natural audience for it, you begin to get an unnatural audience watching your show and they find out that they like it better than they thought and the show ends up succeeding for you which is somewhat of what's actually happened.

Setting the Schedule

All the respondents reported that scheduling decisions, as well as decisions for pilots and scripts, were made by a committee. The respondents referred to the method as a collective, committee, or group process through which they sought a consensus solution. All reported that the fall schedule meetings, which take place in the spring, consisted of several phases, originating with a group of approximately twenty-five individuals. The group included several levels of management and the very top level of division and corporate executives. The upper echelon of division and corporate management consists of four to eight persons, depending upon the network.

Fifteen percent of the total reported that there was a degree of irrationality to scheduling decisions because of the importance of "gut instinct." Twelve percent specifically stated that no women are involved in the final decision making. All respondents reported that they believed that the representative from the entertainment division carried the most weight in the final decision making process. The corporate representatives were perceived as providers of consultation and guidance.

The following comment shows the power of the president of the entertainment division in determining the schedule.

The schedule is essentially the president's. Of course, the chairman must agree with it but he tends to go with the president's instincts. So long as the chairman sees there's enough quality on the schedule. He just doesn't want to be embarrassed by it. Now, the president's immediate boss [corporate vice president] gives his input but he defers to the president.

The individuals involved in the decision making from the entertainment division may include some combination of the following: the president of the division, the executive vice president in charge of programming and one or several of the senior vice presidents. On the corporate level, the chairman, the president, and representatives from the various arms of the corporation are present. When the final decision is made, corporate areas of research, sales, business affairs, broadcast standards, the owned and operated

stations, the television network and affiliate relations are represented by their organizational superior as the president of the entertainment division also represents his programming staff.

Without really wanting to get into the specifics of who is in the final decision making, you got people at very high levels who a number of people report to that represent all of these various areas so that in fact you may have one person or two people who are in those meetings where a number of areas report and they know that point of view and they represent it.

Scheduling meetings occur in successive stages with the number of participants decreasing at each meeting. Participants in the smaller meeting have a higher status in the organizational hierarchy. Final decisions are made by the corporate elites. The representative from advertising sales is included in almost every meeting.

We generally start with a group of maybe 25 to 30 people. The shows are presented to that group and then we go through what are called scheduling meetings. Scheduling meetings basically are, it is like the wonderful Alan King routine, huge magnetic board and all the shows being pushed here and there and everywhere and it is truly, it is not unlike that at all. It is very interesting. You try to figure what are your best shows, what do you have the most faith in and then where do those shows belong and frequently the show everyone likes the most, not infrequently, that show is not scheduled. It's like the script you loved the most that never got made. Now, by the second or third day you are down to about maybe 14 or 15 people, they peel off by echelons. They sort of make presentations and then they peel off and by the last few days, when the decision is really made, there is about no more than 12 people in the room. The people in charge of sales are there for quite a long while. Ultimately, the final decision is made by as few as three or four people.

At one network, the final schedule was set by six persons who formed the elite group of the corporation. Area specialists, such as the program scheduler and the senior researcher, were called into the meeting as consultants on specific issues. The following first person account demonstrates the reliance on the group process in scheduling decisions and stresses the aspect of consensus attached to the decision process.

I was there, the vice president in charge of the entertainment division, the owned and operated stations, and finance. The vice chairman. The president of the entertainment division. The scheduling guy was not there because the president was representing the program department. As we got down to the finish, the president invited him to join us and the head of research and that was it. It's the senior management of the company plus two or three specialists from programming and research, including, importantly, the president of entertainment. And it works here in a pretty democratic way. I guess I do have the right of veto or even absolute program selection or scheduling but I don't exercise it. I do tend to discourage something I think is a terrible mistake and I did do that maybe once yesterday. But mostly it's a group process that becomes a consensus and ultimately the schedule represents input from everybody.

Program Failure and Cancellation

The variables impinging upon the programming process are sometimes difficult to control. A network can be positive and enthused about a project but other considerations arise that impede the project. For illustration, one network was very pleased with the pilot script for a potential series. Based on that script, a pilot was ordered. The network and the production company cast the lead in the

pilot film with an actor who was already in a series on another network. However, the latter series appeared to be failing and everyone, including the actor, was sure the show would be cancelled. Instead, the series was rescheduled in another time period and became a hit. Consequently, the actor was no longer available for the pilot. Because that particular actor seemed so important to the projected series, months were spent trying to recast the role. When the role was recast, the actor who took over was killed in an accident. Yet, the network and the producers would not give up; there was a commitment to the series, right up to the president of the division. Eventually, the pilot was recast, filmed, and the show was ordered to series. The show was placed in the fall schedule, performed poorly in the ratings and the decision to cancel the series was made after the fourth episode.

The circumstances surrounding the failure of this project seem both fortuitous and ominous, neglecting logical explanations for the poor performance of the show. In order to assess the factors associated with program failure, executives were asked the reasons for cancellation.

Reasons for Program Failure and Cancellation

Executives cited time period, competition, poor program implementation, audience rejection, and a medium-specific problem related to technology. In addition, the data suggest that an organizational problem within the

production company which is not caused by the network, can also affect a program's survival. Each of these dimensions is discussed below.

Time period and competition

The time period competition could obliterate the program. Even if the series is exactly what the network wanted and is well implemented, the competition may prove too strong for the show to survive. There are, however, cases when a show will be retained despite low ratings because the competition is so strong. In this instance, the lower rating is acceptable to the network in the context of the competitive situation.

Program implementation is below expectations

The execution of the show may not be what the network expected. The show could be below par in execution and not meet the needs of the network. For example, the pilot film might misrepresent the type of episode that the production company could actually supply. The pilot might be "loaded" since it included elements not easily replicated in a weekly series and used by the production team to influence testing or catch the eye of the programmers. As one executive said:

Those pilots were loaded with elements that won't necessarily be in the series or that maybe they can't even afford to do on a series basis but they put in there for purposes of impressing the

audience and maybe even influencing the testing. For example, if somebody is going to make a pilot and they have a big star as a guest in that pilot and will never have him in the series again, that will unduly influence the testing and the effect of the pilot. That is loading it with an element you can't deliver in series. It could be an incredible car chase or crash or stunt that would be hugely expensive to stage and film that you couldn't possibly afford on a regular basis, something that is out of the ordinary. As a programming person, you know that it is a loaded pilot but you can sometimes sort of forget to stop and make allowance for it or the pilot will come back and it's tested through the roof. And so you think, maybe they'll do something else and you kind of just forget it. There have been cases where shows got on the air because the pilots were so loaded and then didn't deliver in series because they were substantially less.

Lack of audience acceptance

There can be a lack of acceptance by the audience and the network may see no long-range potential for the program. Despite excellence in program implementation, the executives may decide that the show would not increase its share of the audience.

Medium-specific problem

Several executives cited a medium-specific problem related to technology: the way individuals or action translate to film or tape. Actors may be wonderful in live auditions but have little appeal in their screen test. The presentation of situation comedies before a live audience is modeled after theater production. Sometimes, comedy techniques which work in a live setting fail to translate to the medium of television. The theater audience views the

action in the context of the entire set and players in the scene while television concentrates on a series of camera shots to indicate the relationships in the scene. Often, audiences respond simply because of the experience of viewing a live presentation. One executive noted:

What is difficult is that what works in a pitch may not work in a script. What works at a run through may not work when they shoot. The most astounding lesson I learned when I started this job is that what works when they tape a comedy is not necessarily funny on the television because it just doesn't translate to the tape and to the framing. Suddenly, what you see on television is two dimensional, it is framed by the outer perimeters of the screen and sometimes you react funny because it is live and there's an immediacy to it, it is happening in front of you. But it just doesn't make it from the stage to your TV screen.

A problem in an organization external to the network and not caused by the network

An organizational problem in the production company that is not caused by the network can lead to program failure. For example, a highly rated and firmly established series suffered when changes were made in the organizational structure in which the show was produced. The original producers turned the show over to another production company to oversee the day-to-day operations. The new producing organization had different financial priorities than the original producers that affected the presentation of the episodes and ultimately the ability of the series to maintain its success. To accommodate the lower budget, the series formula was changed. This affected the original

premise and style of the show. With less money allocated to the production, the series lost the elements of action adventure and the setting of wealth. Although the love relationship between the principal characters was essential to the premise, relying on the relationship alone was not enough to sustain the series with the audience.

One executive noted:

We're in the fifth year of JACK & JILL, a series that for the first three years of its life was produced exclusively under the aegis of Jones-Smith, produced at EEE Studios. In the fourth year, the company disbanded, Jones moved his operation under the umbrella of FFF Studios, Mr. Smith moved at that time to GGG, and now at HHH, I believe. They were still executive producers of the show but entered into a deal with JJJ Films. So, essentially, JJJ became the online, daily producing entity of JACK & JILL. Jones-Smith was still involved in an overseeing basis, you know, they were the executive producers, but the day-to-day responsibility of JACK & JILL shifted most primarily towards JJJ in the fourth year. We underwent a tremendous change. What should have been a relatively easy year, a series whose formula we had found, whose success we knew--we knew what to go for in each episode. We had a new staff, a new producing entity, we found ourselves with a formula change so that was a year we thought would be really easy that turned out to be very difficult.

The formula change happened because JJJ had, in the first three years of JACK & JILL, one of the reasons for the success of the show is the glamour and the wealth, a true wish builder. Then the relationship, the relationship, is what everybody wants from a mate, everybody. That is wish fulfillment.

What you want from a mate is love and passion and also wealth, you know--comfort--that you never have to worry. And with wealth, in order to demonstrate successfully, episodically, you have to spend money, you have got to have the pronouncements of wealth, the props, and the look. JACK & JILL should be able to wing off to Africa one week and Peru another.

In the first three years, Jones and Smith, who are very smart producers, realized you have to spend money up front and in fact, even deficit in order to create a success. Hopefully then, in the back end, in syndication, you make some money. Initially, they spent a lot of money to give you all the wealth you need to be enjoyable to the audience. In the fourth year when the series was picked up by JJJ and produced by JJJ, first of all, there is an overhead situation with the studio that doesn't exist to a large degree with an independent producer and so immediately you get less for your dollar on the screen.

Additionally, in the fourth year, it was JJJ's position, their feeling, that the series had so firmly entrenched itself in the viewer's mind that they didn't have to go to the wealth as much; that all they needed to do was have relationship scenes I was told, I won't mention the source, "All JACK & JILL need is to be alone anywhere talking about how much they love each other and that is enough." And that is not enough because the series was a combination of many elements. It was an action-adventure, glamorous, wealthy, wish fulfillment series. We lost the action adventure, we lost, again, that pronouncement of wealth, and that had a serious, I think, negative impact in the fourth year. In the fifth year, to their credit, they are reversing that trend. Jones and Smith paid JJJ to go to Europe for a number of episodes and those episodes have a very strong bearing on the audience's likeability quotient. So the point of the story is, in the fourth year, which normally would be seemingly a very easy year, it turned out to be not so at all.

After the inauspicious fourth year, the series ratings began to slip and the program was cancelled at the end of the fifth season.

Summary

The term "scheduling" is used in television to denote the primary list of programs that each network broadcasts as well as to indicate the time period and day of the week in

which a program is placed. Scheduling decisions incorporate both the ordered roster of programs and the element of time in the context of competitive activities.

The primary factors in scheduling decisions are time period and ratings. Time period is a construct which represents three factors: audience demographics, competitive information, and program flow. Ratings are used as program performance measures and indicators of audience preference.

Scheduling decisions are made in stages with each successive meeting including a smaller number of participants in the decision process. The smaller the meeting, the higher the status of members in the organizational hierarchy. Final decisions are made by a small group of corporate elites. No women are part of the final decision making. The views of the presidents of the entertainment divisions of each network are weighted heavily in the final process. Scheduling decisions represent group endeavors to problem solving. They are characterized by consensus among participants.

The failure rate for new series is a constant and is directly proportional to the number of television hours replaced. Factors in program failure and cancellation include: time period and competition; program implementation was below network expectations; lack of audience acceptance; a medium-specific problem related to technology; an organizational problem in the production company which is not caused by the network.

CHAPTER VIII

ORGANIZATIONAL DIMENSIONS OF THE NETWORKS

The network entertainment divisions that have been discussed are part of conglomerate organizations to which broadcasting properties contribute their revenues. Each conglomerate has a subsidiary corporation which is concerned solely with broadcast interests and the entertainment divisions are in those subsidiaries, as are the television network, owned and operated stations, and radio, news, and sports divisions. Generally, it is these subsidiary corporations and their component parts which are referred to as "the networks."

The networks most resemble an enterprise with a mediating technology. The term "technology" in organizational analysis implies more than the means used by the organization in production. It is a way to understand organizational processes and relationships. For example, technology has been found to have structural consequences for the organization. Management forms are shaped by the technology utilized by the organization to achieve its goals.¹

¹J. Woodward, Industrial Organization: Theory and Practice (London: Oxford University Press, 1965); T. Burns and G. M. Stalker, The Management of Innovation (London:

Thompson created typologies to describe the technologies used by complex organizations. A mediating technology is one which links participants who are or want to remain independent. Banks are an example of this kind of technology; they link depositors and borrowers. Telephone companies link those who initiate phone calls with those who receive phone calls. Television networks, too, fit this mode; they link several parties. A few are the individual station owners, the program producers, the advertisers and the audience.

One property of mediating technologies is that they operate in standardized ways. These technologies are extensive; they operate with multiple clients or customers which are distributed in time and located in different places. Standardization is necessary to insure that each segment in the process is operating in compatible ways with other segments. Another characteristic of organizations with mediating technologies is that they seek to expand their domains by increasing the population they serve.²

This study concentrated primarily on the perceptions of network entertainment division program executives on selected topics. In this section we shall discuss the

Tavistock Publications, 1961); J. D. Thompson, Organizations in Action (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967); C. Perrow, Complex Organizations: A Critical Essay (Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman, 1972).

²Thompson, Organizations in Action, pp. 16, 17, 42.

respondents' views of their companies with respect to the organization: philosophy, leadership, communication, recruitment, selection, training and promotion.

Sixty percent of the respondents discussed the philosophy of their organization. At NET X and NET Y, each subject identified a similar organizational view for their company. Reports at NET Z indicated that, in some cases, there was concern that the organization did not have a clear philosophy or management structure. However, analysis of the data revealed that there was indeed a type of philosophy in operation at NET Z. When all respondents were asked to discuss how they perceived the other networks, outsiders classified the three organizations in the same terms as did insiders.

NET X

Philosophy

NET X is described by its executives as being a people-oriented and concerned company, apolitical, and characterized by stability, continuity and a slower pace.

For example, NET X is perceived as having

. . . a commitment that goes right up to the top, to the founding father in fact, of doing things that have positive human value. NET X is the leader in that.

That positive attitude carries over into the treatment of employees.

The attitude at NET X is that we are people, it's like they've said, the most valuable asset they

have walks out the door every night. I mean, how valuable or how good is a company without the people and they recognize that here. We are treated very specially in many ways that go beyond the pay check because you feel good about what you do because they make you feel good. The people at the high level are just people. There is no arrogance about them, no politicking that is noticeable.

The recognition by management of good job performance was mentioned by one executive:

There is acknowledgement by your management on even the most miniscule thing that something has been accomplished.

At NET X, all respondents believed that they were given the autonomy to carry out their job responsibilities, a situation they found rewarding. As one vice president explained:

The people to whom I report provide me with the right kind of creative atmosphere. They give you the responsibility as well as the authority to do your job. Too often there are jobs you are held accountable for but without enough authority. That's not how they think about it here.

The stability, continuity and slower pace at NET X that characterize the organization and lead to a sense of relative well-being for its executives also have some other effects. Some executives would agree with the vice president who said:

I just find the ability to get a decision made much slower. I spent many years at NET Y and two at NET Z and it's different.

Although stability adds to the attractiveness of the organization, this executive reported:

When I first came here, you know, I am not a political person, I was told this has the longest tenure of the three, nobody ever leaves NET X.

Stability can present some drawbacks. A vice president in his early thirties stated:

I would characterize NET X as the least overtly political of the group. Someone told me, "You don't join NET X, you pledge it," and it is very true. It requires a lot of luck to move forward in the company. There are times that executives, including myself, have been held back while they wait for the mantle of maturity to sweep over.

Leadership

Forty percent of NET X respondents identified one strong leader in the organization. Interestingly, the perceived leader for the division was a senior vice president and not the president. A majority of the respondents stressed that NET X was a company formed by one strong man and although he had retired, his presence was felt with almost a mythical quality.

Among the executives at NET X, there was a sense of management being supportive. NET X executives frequently mentioned that the company provided any kind of material or help that the executive needed to perform his or her job.

Communication

All respondents reported that within their own departments, communication was good. Overall communication for the division was rated as not good by 38 percent and good by 62 percent. Physical separateness of a department,

located in another building or part of the city, was not a factor in rating communication. Memos or department status reports were the most frequently mentioned way of getting information about other program areas.

Sixty-three percent said that they socialized a great deal with their co-workers at the workplace. Ten percent indicated that these relationships carried over to the outside and this outside socializing was seen to occur more among the men than the women.

NET Y

Philosophy

Sixty-seven percent of NET Y executives identified a philosophy for their network. Aggression, achievement and teamwork were the key words used to describe the motivating guidelines for NET Y executives. For example, one vice president stated that:

We have an aggressiveness about the job that we do as broadcasters. The aggressiveness is trying to grab hold of our own fate and our own sense of victory and success. That manifests itself in being aggressive towards the work that we do.

In turn, that aggressiveness carries over into contact with the creative community as well as in technical advancements for the medium.

I think we are generally involved more than the other two networks in every phase of production. I don't know it for a fact and it is presumptuous of me to say that, but I know how involved we are and I can't imagine any other network as involved as we are. And again, that is both consistent with

the corporate philosophy of the network and it is absolutely consistent with my personal philosophy.

Another vice president reported that NET Y's policy of involvement with program suppliers was a demonstration of corporate responsibility.

NET Y does have the reputation of being more involved with the producer because it is a policy that has been in existence for a long time and it is a policy only because, well, while it is the producer's show, it is the NET Y network and we do have to be responsible to our management for what we do put on the air and, therefore, if we had a hands-off attitude, I don't think that is being as responsible as we can for the millions of dollars we spend on the product. It is just how we decided to do our business. That doesn't happen as much at the other networks as it does here.

Another vice president continued to delineate the NET Y position, indicating that an unconventional strategy and a good offense were part of a NET Y philosophy.

I still see, to this day, NET Y as having a kind of "Dead End Kids" attitude towards things. We can be tougher, we can surprise them, we can make moves that are unconventional and I think a great deal of the decision making process here is very much an attitude that the unconventional is often the best way to go. That the best defense is a good offense.

With regard to the technical aspects of television:

Again it all comes down to the philosophy of being more aggressive, reach out and go for it, try that which is different, go for the unexpected, try to be a leader. I think that is the philosophy that permeates all phases of the corporation. You know, the broadcast operations and engineering gets credit for brilliant innovation of closed caption, that is fabulous, that is truly innovative, and that is a leadership position.

Being a team player is a very important component of the NET Y philosophy.

Our president works totally in team effort and that is the way it is done here. We have development meetings where we have people from other areas in, we have promotional meetings where people from other areas are in. He believes very strongly in team concept and that is the way he does it.

Another respondent described the team spirit:

Our president is a real team player and he instills in all of us a sense of teamwork. And so more than ever before I find myself in meetings that I had never been invited to and my counterparts are invited to. He encourages that to a large degree and I think to that extent we are closer as a network.

One reason a new executive gave for taking a job at NET Y was because:

I felt that they were a very unique team and that is what appealed to me; it is a very team-oriented department. And that attracted me.

However, one executive at NET Y had a startlingly differently perception of the use of team management in television. He saw the team as a way to catch mistakes in an area where risk is very high.

The team gives you more checkpoints, more perspectives. Well, if you don't catch the fatal flaw at level one, you will catch it at level two or level three or level seventeen and I think that is why there are more network executives because there is less trust. And there is less trust because there is more danger, and there is more danger because there are greater risks.

Just as all respondents in prime time programming discussed the concept of team at NET Y, an interesting loyalty phenomenon appeared among these executives that was not as clearly expressed at the other networks. NET Y respondents assumed that internal politics were a fact of

life and some talked about being tied to other executives as a way to rise in the company. The following account is representative of such disclosures:

Another dimension of decision making process--talk about networking--it is not quite networking, it is, like a string. How can I describe this? You cannot--the only way that you can really get places in corporations like this size, you have to be good but you also have to have someone above you to support you, that brings you along and hopefully that someone supported you before you were good and helped you become good and then when he or she moved brought you along and each time there is like a string of people.

It is not quite mentoring, only because, like I am tied to CDE, that was a deal he and I made three years ago. CDE is tied to FGH and that was a deal made a long time ago. As FGH goes, so goes CDE, fortunately for both of them. And if CDE goes so go I. CDE brought me into this programming department and promoted me to this job and you develop loyalties. I have a loyalty with the man I hired three years ago who I hope to bring along with me as I move up. Hopefully, he will soon be in a position where he can bring in people underneath him. You got to have someone above you who you can be loyal to and you got to have someone beneath you that will support you and you've got to sometimes create those surroundings for yourself.

How I got into this job is like this. I was in a staff position at NET Y, programming is on line, staff is everything else, and I was trying to explain something to a producer and CDE was there and he tells me that he saw in me the potential for someone he would like to work closely with and bring along and we met shortly thereafter and he said: "I want you in programming when you are ready." And I wasn't ready, I was enjoying being in a staff job, learning a lot. As soon as I decided I was ready, I called up CDE and said: "I am ready, as soon as the next opening comes up I want to apply for it." Well, the first opening that came up happened to be in a different program area. And I went to CDE and said: "Should I apply for it or not, because if I get it I won't be working for you," and he said, "The important thing

is to get into programming; let's not worry about who on paper you are reporting to, get into programming." So I applied for the job and got it. Shortly thereafter CDE said there was a plan in the works. I was not on the job for six months and he said to me, "There is a plan in the works and ultimately you will be working for me." I waited another six months and that is what happened. That happens all the time around here.

Several months following the acquisition of this network by a larger organization, the entire string, which transcended four levels of management, ceased to exist. The managers have been tracked to four separate organizations which supply programming to the networks.

Leadership

Twenty percent of NET Y executives identified a strong leader. However, four individuals were mentioned as that leader. They were the Chairman of the parent corporation, the President of the parent corporation, the President of the subsidiary company and the President of the entertainment division. In most cases, regardless of who was named as leader, respondents indicated that the Chairman, who also founded the network, was perceived as an inspirational force for anyone in a leadership position, although his input had gradually diminished over the years.

Communication

Seventy-three percent of NET Y executives discussed communication within the organization. With regard to overall communication between program areas as well as other

departments such as Business Affairs and Broadcast Standards, 18 percent rated communication as not good, 45 percent said it was good, 36 percent said it was excellent. In the good and excellent group, respondents were very positive about yearly meetings which kept program executives informed about current events, social research, new findings in science and where they have a chance to interact with other executives or "brainstorm" about these ideas.

Thirty-six percent said they had strong personal relationships with co-workers at the workplace. Eighteen percent said they had outside friendships with co-workers. Men rather than women were identified as having these friendships.

NET Z

Philosophy

Seventy percent of executives at NET Z identified a philosophy for the organization and that philosophy had more to do with programming than management. In general, executives characterized NET Z as an organization that is trying to produce very well-executed shows, that allows shows time to build an audience and that tries to do shows that are a bit different. As for management style, executives feel they are pretty much left on their own to approach their jobs as they see fit. In regard to an organizational philosophy, one respondent said:

I'm not saying that NET Z has a clear direction as to where they are going. I think NET Z is an organization trying to do very well-executed shows in whatever genre they are and we probably try something a little different than your standard fare and still maintain a balance and try to get the best numbers.

According to another executive, in the series area, NET Z wanted to hire creative talent that would stay with the program for the entire on-air run. They were not keen on producers or writers who developed projects, then turned them over to other creative talent for implementation once the programs made it to series.

If there's any difference in the way we do business, the big difference is that we are looking for who is going to stay with the show, who is going to write the show, who is going to produce the show week to week. We are not looking--a lot of the other networks sign big name writers to write the pilot and then they are gone.

According to one respondent, NET Z had begun to rebuild a positive image of the network with regard to the creative community. This was in sharp contrast to the capricious image previously associated with the company under the prior administration.

Now we have a reputation for being professional and being good at what we do. Producers know if they come to us we will evaluate it on a professional level--that's what acceptance or rejection of their script will be based on. If the show goes on, it will be given a fair shot rather than yanked after six, thirteen weeks, which used to happen. Our schedule was considered a revolving door. Now we maximize the show's chance for success. We leave it on, we get them money, we get them the promotion. I think that sense of stability as well as the sense of we want you to do something wonderful and crazy and inspirational, made NET Z a better place to be.

According to one vice president, managers are given freedom at NET Z:

Top management is seen as "hiring you and letting you do your job."

Another vice president added that top management was aware of all programming endeavors and allowed managers to pursue projects according to their own styles.

They tend to know what projects we are into and they just give us a lot of latitude.

But 20 percent thought there were management problems and 30 percent felt that women executives did not get the same treatment as men executives. For example, NET Z had gone through a very difficult and unstable management period where there was constant turnover not only in leadership but within the ranks.

There is a vertical problem at NET Z. Everything reports up--there is nothing that reports horizontally. It's like, by the time you get to a level where there is someone who can make a decision, you are way too high up and that causes problems.

Although this period of mercurial management was approximately two and a half years prior to this study, some executives thought certain policies continued to linger.

The negative view at NET Z was expressed as follows:

R₁ There are occasions here where I've seen executives given a responsibility and not the power, due, I think, to the youth of the executive corps. Due to that youth, a lot of people did not have the jobs of the people who report to them--it's hard for them to understand the goals and needs and resources necessary for their staff to be successful. I think that is one of the

reasons here at least, there has been a reputation in the past of executive mistreatment and fast hooks, things like that.

- R₂ When I came to NET Z I was older (early 30s) and a lot of the young turks were here. I don't think they understood the marketplace that well and the audience. NET Z never had a management setup that was laid out very carefully. Things got changed and switched because of personalities and I think it was harmful. We have less delegation here partially because the people in senior management here are so young they try to do everything themselves.
- R₃ When you bring a network a hit you are making millions of dollars for them and you are worth something to them. NET X has always recognized that and they treat people with a great deal more respect. It's just reaching that here. At NET Z there is no system of respect for the people who made up the company. Now, with this network head, we are getting to that point. There's more concern.

On the surface, women appeared to have problems at NET Z.

Several executives agree that:

Women have to fight to be heard at NET Z, it's a real problem. This spring there were 29 men and only one woman in the scheduling meeting.

Another executive stated that:

The old boy network is still the corporate thinking for NET Z.

No respondent at NET Z discussed being part of a team or the presence of office politics.

Leadership

Fifty-three percent of the respondents at NET Z identified a strong leader. All of those respondents named the Chairman of the subsidiary company as the person who set

the tone and guidelines for the division. The division President was mentioned by 43 percent of those answering as the person who set the tone for everyday operations.

Communication

Eighty percent of NET Z executive discussed communication between various departments in the organization. Thirty-eight percent said that communication was not good, 62 percent said that communication was good. No one thought that communication was excellent. In fact, NET Z was characterized as being very departmentalized.

Sixty-one percent said that there was a general feeling of friendliness at the workplace and that they socialized somewhat with their co-workers during the course of the day. Twenty-five percent felt that executives in the prime time area were closer and had more personal relationships. Sixty-seven percent said that they did not socialize with colleagues after work while 33 percent said that they did.

Several executives felt that there was no effort on the part of the organization to keep employees informed.

You are on your own at NET Z. They don't do anything to help you prepare for your job.

The one organizational meeting per year was viewed as a positive step but too little.

We only have one meeting a year. We discuss sources but it's not like at NET X where they keep you informed. If someone here wants to know something, then they can call up the research department but it's all on your own initiative.

Another executive says:

The kind of interaction that sparks more creativity and a synergistic effect within programming really does not exist very often. We had a meeting where everybody in programming got together and I think that got some things cooking and moving and there's been some follow-up on some of that but it's not much.

Recruitment and Selection at the Networks

The recruitment and selection process for entry level jobs in programming appears to be the same at the three networks. The most frequently cited method of choosing personnel was from the program production sector (40 percent), followed by personal recommendation (32 percent), internal management trainee program (20 percent) and luck (8 percent).

Jobs in programming are coveted and according to these executives the competition to get them is fierce. For example, one vice president stated:

Where do the people come from? They are circling the building at this moment. These jobs are the best jobs you can possibly have as a training ground for whatever it is you might end up doing in this industry. They are phenomenal jobs and people in the industry understand that and as a consequence people fight for the opportunity to get these jobs, whatever they are, whatever level they can start.

An executive at another network gave a similar account:

There is phenomenal competition. There is nowhere else, I mean, I can go to the production community and go to work as a studio executive and make a lot more money than I make here but I can never have the experience of doing as much with as much input as I will have here. These jobs are in real demand

and I'm sure if I leave there will be no shortage of people who will be dying to get it.

The following account by a network vice president indicates how choosing personnel from the production sector and personal recommendation often go together:

When I was looking for a director I got on the phone and I said to agents, to the studio people, "I am looking for a director; who do you know that is terrific?" And in addition to that, I've got all these people coming in here so I see who is good and smart and who I think is interesting. So if a studio brings in their manager or I hear over lunch that there is a terrific person in current at studio HIJ, then we talk to each other. But it is through knowing somebody. I have a friend over at NET Z who is looking for somebody and she said to me, "Who do you know?" I said, "God, there's a cute guy who calls me every three months from this production company; why don't you check him out?"

Another executive said people get into programming jobs by working with the network. People with comparable jobs in the production sector are desirable candidates.

How do people get into the program department? Well, it's by working with us. The people I would most likely want to hire to work with me are people that are doing comparable jobs at a studio or production company because you have seen how they think, what their taste is, how they deal with people and they presumably have the skills and knowledge you are looking for. But really, it's like a catch 22. Once you're in the club, you can move through the club. Getting your foot in the door and into the club is the most difficult.

Although the executives mentioned the management trainee programs (also referred to as interns or associates), they did not describe this track as a likely prelude to executive status.

A small number of executives thought that luck was involved and one gave this account:

I've got to tell you something. I think a big part of it is luck. I've got to be honest with you. I shouldn't say luck, but generally I think a big part of it is being in the right place at the right time. It is luck, it is walking in at the right time, it really is.

According to senior executives, in practice the selection process is a rigorous one. Candidates are interviewed and given sample scripts to read and instructed to give comments on those scripts. Based on the personal interviews and notes a decision is made.

We recently hired someone and had maybe 75 or 80 applicants that we actually saw and interviewed. They had to read scripts, comment on scripts, come back for an additional interview, read more scripts, come back for an additional interview--I mean the process was tough and I, we think we have the best combination of people in one person available right at this moment.

Training

Training for this group of program executives has occurred in both the network setting and in program production organizations. Values and beliefs have been learned from interactions with others who have had greater experience. The past jobs that the executives held provided their basic training in television. Much of the learning is through practice and observation. The small group meeting is a main source of learning the values of the organization. This is similar to the process described by Breed³ in the way that journalists learn the policy of their newspapers.

³W. Breed, "Social Control in the Newsroom," Social Forces (May 1955).

Epstein, studying workers in the television newsroom, reported that they were socialized to the values of their superiors and the policy of the newsroom in a similar way. They learned through interaction, observation and practice.⁴

The advantage of selecting individuals from the production community is that, to a degree, they come to the network pre-trained in the sense that they understand the television process and basic mechanics of the industry. Within the program department, the lower level jobs (the titles vary from network) are on-the-job training and these jobs are viewed as training positions for a higher level job in programming. For example, one director of programming explained that the more scripts he reads, the more familiar he becomes with story and character elements.

I get all the extra reading to do. It is a learning caste system. I think it's something like that. The more you read, the more you're familiar with characters and structure and plot.

A vice president indicated that lower-level program department personnel need the practice of reading scripts and making notations.

The two other people in the department under the director are basically training and they need the exposure to give comments on any scripts they can. Sometimes they can and because of time problems, sometimes they can't. But it is basically a learning process for them.

⁴E. J. Epstein, News from Nowhere (New York: Random House, Vintage Books, 1973).

Higher level jobs in programming are seen as an excellent method of preparing to become a television producer, a role many network executives wish to assume.

Promotion

No criteria for promotion within the programming departments could be identified. It appears that executives in programming are never quite sure how they advance. That may be a contributing factor to the number of network executives who leave the organization and go to the production community for advancement in addition to the anticipated financial and psychic rewards gained by being part of the "creative" sector. If they do return to the network from production, it is to a better job in programming, one which increases their visibility both within the network and in the television community, and again increases their opportunities for career advancement.

Respondents were very clear about how people got fired--if they don't have hits, they are dismissed. However, no objective criterion could be established from the respondents' data about the relationship between executive dismissal and number of program failures. The amount of failure accepted by management before an executive is dismissed appears to be variable. One top policy-setting executive said promotion at the networks reflected the individual's ability and performance.

I don't think we are as clearly defined as most businesses, as U.S. Steel or Chrysler Motors, or whatever. I think ours is sort of a bastard business but I think most people know how you get ahead. You get ahead like you do in any other business. By working hard, by showing some aptitude for what you do, and eventually if you just keep your nose to the grindstone, somebody notices: "Geez, that son of a bitch is a hard worker and pretty good at it" and they promote you. I don't think there is any mystery to it. I will admit that it's a little looser in a structure sense than most businesses. In this industry, a network, probably, is the closest we come to running it in an adult, organized fashion. Production companies tend to be sort of, like topsy.

Comparison of the Networks

In general, the perceptions of the three organizations by outsiders, those executives employed at other networks, were congruent with the descriptions provided by insiders at each network. NET X was perceived by executives at the other two networks as having more respect for their employees than the other networks.

I think that NET X has a tremendous advantage in terms of treating their executives. People are given a longer period of time to prove their competence and for the most part do. When that happens, you create a marathon style of growth through management and when you do that, you encourage growth from within. You create a situation where two or three levels above you, you have someone who had your job before and when that happens people give you realistic goals and you meet them--or you don't.

NET Y is seen as dealing with only a limited amount of suppliers and being a more competitive and political organization. In fact, the fragmentation in identifying a leader by NET Y executives and the intense personal

loyalty system present in that organization are both congruent with the characterization of NET Y as a highly competitive, political, and aggressive company. However, this competitive stance may have an advantage for one group of workers. Women, at all three networks, perceive NET Y as having a greater opportunity for job advancement and input into decision making. For example, a woman vice president said:

Women are not heard in the same way that men are at NET Z. It's similar at NET X. NET Y is different. They put women in more positions.

The greater numbers of women in management at NET Y may be an indication that the organization in its quest to reach a leadership position among the networks, is looking for as many talent resources as possible. Thus, qualified women may have a better chance for employment as programmers in that organization.

NET Z is perceived as lacking a direction and switching ground rules every few years. Executives at the other networks thought:

NET Z is a network trying to find its own identity at this point.

The three networks are perceived as having different programming styles.

I think you will see, for instance, NET Z taking shows that have not been doing well and staying with them because they believe in them creatively. They are also trying to go for the same audience as NET Y and I think that this season you will see a few shows on there that could just as well be on

NET Y. There's more of a difference between NET X and the other two. NET Y is faster paced, has a very glossy and very pretty look and it looks very attractive to the audience. NET X has shows that are much slower paced and has a tendency to attract an older audience.

A useful way to demonstrate organizational differences among the networks is through the programmers' descriptions of program quality.

Network executives were asked to define their perception of quality television programming. The concept of quality television proved to be an elusive one for the respondents. Only 28 percent of the executives addressed the issue. Executives from NET Z accounted for half the respondents who were able to define program quality.

Quality in television programming appeared to have four dimensions: good implementation (50 percent); a good Nielsen rating (17 percent); nothing embarrassing to the network (17 percent); good entertainment value (16 percent).

The majority of NET Z programmers paired program quality with good implementation. For these executives, quality meant that an idea had entertainment value, the script was well written and produced, and there was an emotional involvement for the audience with the characters and the story. A counter description of programs which lacked quality included shows in which the idea was a "rip off"; there was no uniqueness to the form, the writing was weak and the implementation was below par.

NET X executives assumed that all their network's programs were quality shows and that nothing embarrassing to the network was ever placed on the schedule.

Entertainment value was equated with quality programming by all the executives from NET Y. Nielsen ratings as an indicator of program quality was also mentioned by NET Y programmers.

Although the number of respondents is small, the data seem to reflect the difference among the networks' philosophies. The heavy representation of NET Z in this area is congruent with the findings regarding the programmer's perception of NET Z's philosophy which is primarily concerned with programming considerations rather than managerial or organizational issues. The use of the Nielsens as indicators of quality reflect the competitive stance of NET Y. The assumption by NET X executives that all their programs were quality programs reflects the concept of organizational integrity and a long time leadership position in the ratings.

Although all three networks are part of conglomerates, there is the perception among all groups (X, Y, Z) that characteristics such as lack of women executives, lower pay, and less respect for the worker, are related to NET Z's being a subsidiary of a conglomerate. There is a failure on the part of all network executives to perceive the implications that the three networks are, in fact, all subsidiary

corporations of conglomerate organizations. However, this lack of recognition may be due in part to the fact that two of the networks are part of media conglomerates while the third network is part of a larger organization with diversified holdings.

Programmers at each network thought that there was a qualitative difference between the work atmosphere in the entertainment divisions, located in the Los Angeles area, and the broadcast company headquarters, based in New York City. The entertainment divisions were perceived as having a looser, less restrictive management style; the company headquarters were referred to as "corporate" and viewed as more formal in management policy. According to the respondents, the differences in atmosphere between the west and east coast offices of the networks were reflected in the business manner and dress of the executives. The west coast programmers tended to be casual in manner and attire while the east coast executives tended to follow standardized business behaviors and dress. The programmers also thought that entertainment division executives were relatively free to pursue their jobs according to their own style as long as they were successful.

Discussion

Despite organizational differences, programmers share many similarities in their orientation to their job. The role of a programming executive is a specialized managerial

position within a complex organization. This kind of role specialization has been associated with the notion that management positions are experiencing professionalization.

The ideal type of profession is characterized by the development of a separate body of knowledge acquired through special training, a professional ideology, recognized authority based upon a superior knowledge limited to the professional's sphere of competence, guidelines for professional behavior, and the right of the profession to autonomy, that is, to regulate the occupation and its members. Although it is difficult to classify modern management as a profession using the ideal model, the argument has been made that professionalism can be viewed as a continuum and for several decades the trend has been toward a greater conformity to the elements of the professions. For example, there is an increasing body of systematic knowledge about the management and administration of complex organizations; the culture has legitimated the authority role of the manager, professional management associations are on the increase, and there is the beginning of the development of self-control.⁵

According to Parsons, there has been an over-emphasis on the difference between professionals and managers based on the perception that the motives of business are "self-

⁵F. E. Kast and J. E. Rosenzweig, Organization and Management (New York: McGraw Hill, 1979), pp. 44-46.

interest" whereas the motives of the professional are "altruistic." Technical competence of the professional and the recognition by society of that competence is the essence of the professional role.⁶ It is in the technical competence of the manager and society's recognition of managers as authority roles that the idea of the professionalization of management is based.

One way to approach the question of professionalization of network programming jobs would be to extend Merton's study of influentials to this group.⁷ As gatekeepers in the communication chain that provides entertainment programming, network programming executives can be considered influentials.

Merton's concepts of "local" and "cosmopolitan" are used to describe an individual's orientation to a social structure.⁸ In an organizational setting, those with a local orientation limit their interest to their own organization. They have greater role involvement with members within the company and low visibility in terms of the

⁶T. Parsons, "The Professions and Social Structure," Essays in Sociological Theory, rev. ed. (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1964), pp. 34-49.

⁷Gouldner applied Merton's concept of influentials to university teachers. See A. W. Gouldner, "Cosmopolitans and Locals," Administrative Science Quarterly 2 (1957-58): 281-306, 444-80. Hage suggests that the studies of cosmopolitanism versus localism frequently represent indirect indicators of professionalism and of information search in the environment. See J. Hage, Theories of Information (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1980), p. 184.

⁸R. K. Merton, Social Theory and Social Structure (Glencoe: Free Press, 1957), pp. 387-420.

organizational environment. They have a strong allegiance to the company and want to remain employed there. In contrast, cosmopolitans are oriented to reference groups outside of the organization. They have greater visibility in the larger environment, they are more mobile, and have little allegiance to the organization. Cosmopolitans have specialized skills and experience.

Network programming executives are cosmopolitans in terms of their orientation to the organization. The basis for this cosmopolitanism is in the boundary spanning quality of their function, the high degree of involvement with role-set partners who are located in other organizational domains, and the status-sequence in jobs that these executives hold with experience becoming associated with expertise. As a consequence of these factors, programmers have greater contact and a substantial connection outside the network domain to production companies and others in the industry. This enhances their visibility and increases their job mobility.⁹

The production community is an important reference group for programmers. By their own account, many executives want to go into program production and view network programming jobs as vehicles to that end. A consequence

⁹For example, at one of the networks, in a period of two years following the interviews, at least seven executives left for jobs in the production area. The best example of interchangeability of network positions is Fred Silverman's exchange of jobs. He sequentially held the top programming positions at CBS, ABC, and NBC.

of this is that the programmers tend to view themselves as different from executives in general. They tend to think of themselves as "creative" executives, a perception which links them to an artistic community rather than a business culture. For most of the executives, their training has occurred in both the program production company and the network setting. To a large degree, their values and beliefs regarding their work have been shaped by the past jobs they held in the industry. Additionally, substitution, which is the degree of substantial correspondence in jobs and work required on both sides of the production line, is high in the television industry. As we have discovered from the data, network programming jobs are virtually interchangeable. As a consequence of these factors, the programmers' loyalty to their own skills, expertise, and advancement is strengthened.

The organization has been considered as a culture-bearing milieu and each network appears to have distinctive characteristics which provide the backdrop for members' actions; they have assumptions, beliefs, meanings, and values that are shared by members about their own organization. For example, NET X was perceived as conservative and concerned for people, NET Y as aggressive, and NET Z as committed to producing a good product. Organizational culture addresses the informal system at the workplace, the norms and conduct that are not planned but arise spontaneously out

of the interactions of the members. Culture deals with the climate, ideology, and image of a company.¹⁰

It is apparent that some type of informal systems are in operation in these companies and throughout the industry. This is evident in the selection process where there is a reliance on personal contacts for referrals to fill jobs. The string-like loyalty phenomenon indicated that there were informal coalitions which were created by members within the organization to gain power.¹¹ The informal system was also demonstrated in the integrating interactions between the prime time development departments and the on-air series departments.

Although organizational culture is important, in the case of the networks, particular culture seems to have less to do with the programmer's job performance or with his self-perception as a specialized manager than the formal organizational goal. Each network shares the same primary goal: to provide programming which will attract and hold the audience that advertisers want and will purchase air time to reach. This shared goal has more of an effect in shaping the program process and the way the individual interacts with role-set members than any network's particular culture.

¹⁰M. R. Louis, "Perspectives on Organizational Culture," in Organizational Culture, ed. P. J. Frost et al. (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1985), pp. 27-29.

¹¹For a discussion of coalitions see Hage, Theories of Organizations, pp. 150-52.

According to Dalton, no matter how pervasive the informal system, it is constrained by the formal or explicit organizational system. The formal system largely determines the direction that the informal one follows and whether the rules of the formal system are clear or ambiguous, members are required to overtly conform to its precepts.¹²

Because the emphasis is on successful performance and goal achievement, the system at the networks is similar to a meritocracy in that other statuses that an individual may hold in life have very little bearing on the assessment of his performance in the workplace. For example, marriage to the right partner to help one's advancement in the organization does not seem to apply. In some organizations in other industries, marriage partners played an important role in the career ladder of the individual.¹³ Although personal recommendations are used to obtain positions in programming, only performance keeps the individual in the job. Contacts are part of the "informal" information system among individuals but in the case of programming executives, the primary status for entry into that information network is occupational. The salient tie between individuals is based on work rather than on statuses associated with an

¹²M. Dalton, Men Who Manage (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1959), p. 237.

¹³C. F. Epstein, "Institutional Barriers: What Keeps Women out of the Executive Suite," in Bringing Women into Management, ed. F. E. Gordon and M. H. Strober (New York: McGraw Hill, 1975), pp. 7-21; R. M. Kantor, Men and Women of the Corporation (New York: Basic Books, 1977).

individual's personal life and background. Friendships may develop over time but it appears that the work role is the main binder in relationships in television. This emphasis on successful performance, which is readily identifiable by program ratings, also acts to strengthen the programmers' ties with others outside of the organization and to maintain cosmopolitanism.

One consequence for the organization that arises from the programmers' cosmopolitan orientation centers on the control that the organization has over members. Programmers can be considered specialists and it is more difficult for the organization to exert influence over or maintain the services of those who have other opportunities. Although there is no shortage of people to fill the jobs, the networks do want to keep their most successful program executives, those associated with the development and maintenance of popular and profitable programming. This is usually accomplished through monetary compensation and in some cases, through agreements which are known as "back end deals." These represent a commitment by the network to do a certain amount of production business with the executive over a specified period of time after he fulfills his obligation to the network. It is one way the network acts to keep valuable executives for a certain period of time rather than lose the executives to the other networks or the program production companies.

The cost of training programming personnel may be greater than perceived. The personnel costs in the entertainment divisions are probably higher than the total salary and benefit figures because of the nature of the training procedures at lower level programming jobs and the use of higher level programming jobs by incumbents as both training and as a vehicle to jobs as producers or executive heads of production for program supply companies.

Turnover is substantial in these jobs. Training costs can be perceived as not recovered by the company because people trained at the network leave the organization with skills and expertise paid for by the network. Back end deals, which may result in buy outs, become further network sunk costs--investments not recoverable.

In summary, network programming executives tend to think of themselves as different from executives in general. They tend to view themselves as "creative" executives, a perception which links them to an artistic community rather than a business culture. Because these jobs are boundary spanning positions, executives have high contact outside the network domain. As a result, programmers have high visibility, high job mobility, and high involvement with others who share their specialized interest. Their allegiance is to their own skills, expertise, and advancement rather than to one organization. It would appear that a cosmopolitan orientation does seem to indirectly reflect a trend towards professionalism among this specialized managerial group.

CHAPTER IX

NON-OBJECTIVE CRITERIA IN DECISION MAKING

In previous chapters we have looked at the objective criteria that these executives reported they use in their decision making. The use of objective criteria suggests that there is a rational process to their decisions, a process based on reasoning and logic. However, the term "gut instinct" is freely used by programmers to describe problem solving and 87 percent of the executives reported that they also relied on "gut instinct" to make decisions.

"Gut Instinct"

Intuitive decision strategies rely on "soft" data such as gestures, facial expressions, voice tone, general hearsay and personal feeling.¹ These strategies are considered subjective or particular to a given individual. The concept of "gut instinct," as it is used by these programmers, appears to have two distinct components. Based on respondents' definitions, gut instinct signified an affective reaction which sometimes had a visceral or physical aspect and could be interpreted to mean "good" or "bad"

¹"What Managers Really Do . . . and Why They Do It," Training (October 1976), p. 92.

in the sense of a value. Fifty-four percent defined gut instinct as reliance on one's personal assessment of program material. Gut instinct seems to represent an institutional sanction to rely on or take responsibility for one's own judgment when a choice must be made.

The typical affective descriptions of this concept are as simple as "it feels good"; as one executive describes the physical aspect of the feeling:

I can only go by what used to be called visceral reaction. That you do those projects that you viscerally feel good about.

In the category of personal judgment, the explanations follow this course.

A senior programming executive describes the term as personal judgment rather than one based on objective sources.

Well, it's [gut instinct] personal. It is not, it's from the inside out, not from the outside, research, whatever, in. It's just a personal reaction, that's all I mean by a gut instinct. It's probably, it's kind of an overly dramatic way to put it. It's a judgment, a personal assessment.

A similar view is expressed by another participant:

The gut instinct is just your ability to take all those other things that you know are out there, the research and everybody telling you what the, how good the show is or how bad it is. Just saying forget it and believing in your own judgment in a show when you see it, as to whether it's commercial but sometimes not commercial but whether it's good or not. You have to use your own personal belief.

Because too many discrepant factors have been presented to the programmer, he may be unable to make a decision based on objective sources. He relies on his own interpretation of the problem.

You also get to the point where you can be afraid to make decisions. You have to go with yourself and you really get into problems when you try second guessing yourself. That's what we really try to do and it's a very serious problem. So you have to get on the line and stop second guessing. So it is gut to a degree.

Thirteen percent of the sample said that gut instinct could not be defined. The idea of gut instinct was rejected by 6 percent. These respondents did not think it applied in the decision making process. (They were interpreting the term gut instinct in the feeling sense which it connotes.) For example, one vice president said:

Feels all right isn't enough for me. I feel, I am not saying to you that I don't feel things. I will, as a matter of fact, be more responsive to an emotional reaction to material than probably 90 percent of the people working at networks based on what I have seen in any event, and I am not saying that they are insensitive. I am saying I will be more responsive to it as a function of decision making because if I am moved by it, then there is something there. I get analytical as the decision process takes over. Having a good story isn't enough, I have to be able to market it successfully. I think gut instinct is a term invented by people who aren't very analytical. I don't know what it is. I don't think it communicates anything. What I am interested in doing whenever I look at material is touching basic human emotions; I don't work with gut instinct. I try to fuse the audience with an emotional touchstone. If I can tell you a story about family or sex, then I can touch your emotions. I got you, I don't care who you are, I don't care where you are. I don't care what your socio-economic profile is, I got you. This is how I decide.

A seasoned vice president said:

I don't believe much in instinct. I think that instinct is wrong. It's experience and experience helps you only in judgment. Experience is judgment.

Another executive offered this explanation:

I think gut instinct is when you can't make a decision and don't want to flip a coin, you find all the available data and make a decision and if it works, you call it your gut and if it doesn't work, you know, you're on drugs.

Of all the executives who believe in gut instinct, 47 percent answered that this response could be learned while 19 percent said that gut instinct was intrinsic, a quality that the individual either had or lacked.

Those who believed it could be learned offered these kinds of explanations:

- R₁ I think it is something you can learn. After having been around a long time, you learn a little bit.
- R₂ I think it is an accumulation of the years of different kinds of experience.
- R₃ I think that gut instinct is something that is based on experience and knowledge. A gut instinct in terms of what material would work and would not work is something only from my living through this area every day, listening to so many projects, seeing what works and why it works and why I think other things don't work. It's a gradual process from being there basically.
- R₄ You can learn a golden gut. I understand a lot about what works and what doesn't work just through exposure, participation and I have a number of years' experience doing this job and that's probably more than anything else--that's experience.
- R₅ I think the more you claim you use your gut it's usually the less experience you have in which to make a decision.

It would seem that experience, job experience in particular, and learning play a large part for some in developing this intuitive element.

The group which believes that gut instinct is an intrinsic quality of the individual that is not learned offered these descriptions of their stand:

- R₁ I think it is there or not there, truthfully. How do you learn an innate quality? Gut instinct or golden gut is a tenuous quality that is a slightly different aspect of your personality make-up that allows you to either be a successful programmer or not.
- R₂ I think that gut instinct can be nurtured and honed. I don't know that it can be developed, frankly. I think if you really are not a person who thinks in terms of ideas, which is basically all this job is, it is hard to show somebody how to do that. I think there are certain instincts that go with being an executive in television aside from managerial skills, which is a whole other issue. So that I believe that there are people who have better creative instincts not just as producers and writers but even on a level as executives.
- R₃ The person who has a golden gut is a person who has the tempo of our culture and I think there are people who have that and they have it all their lives or they have it for five minutes. I don't think you get it; I think it is there. I think in people it is there or it is not there.
- R₄ I don't know what gut instinct is. I mean that people are born with a gift and the gift may last a year, it may last ten years, it may last a lifetime. I don't know why John Doe was hot for a while and knew what shows would work where, or why Jim Smith was hot for a while picking shows and then he could not pick one if you put a gun to his head. I don't know. It's like falling in love.

Although 94 percent of the respondents indicated that they used gut instinct in either the sense of a feeling or a personal judgment, only a small number mentioned

reliability. Sixteen percent said that it was unreliable but that "you are right as many times as you are wrong." These odds were sufficient to allow those individuals to continue to rely on the "gut" as one of the elements in their decision making behavior.

Personal Subjectivity

When asked how they dealt with their own subjectivity in making decisions, 74 percent said they tried to detach themselves from their "gut" or personal view when coming to a decision. One individual responded that he always goes with his gut, no matter what the circumstances.

In all cases, the strategy they use to limit their personal influence centers on the audience. For example, a male executive in a "woman's area" such as daytime said:

I'm a male in a female area. Obviously, there are certain adjustments I have to make in trying to figure out what the hell I am doing. I try to listen to women's reactions to shows and what they want in concepts. I've started to think a little differently. People tell me a story and I sit there and say, "No, that's a male fantasy." You get a little identity crisis, but nothing serious.

Another vice president stated:

You have got to detach yourself and think of the total audience.

And many of the executives would agree with a colleague's statement:

Personal taste does enter into it but it's the taste of the public as well as mine. Even if I dislike it, there are some stories which will do well so I go with it.

Sixty-three percent of the sample said that there were definitely stories or programs that they would not do because they personally objected to certain things. One top program executive stated:

There are series episodes that you turn down all the time, where I think the subject matter is, I mean you don't want to do something in a show where a lot of children are watching if the subject material is going to raise more questions than answers. We don't want the parents to feel that if they just let their kids, I mean, there is a degree of trust between the viewer and the network. You want the parents to be able to feel that our network is responsible. There is a giant responsibility obviously, but you've also got to entertain. So, I mean, we're not going to be the Christian Science Monitor here. But on the other hand, I think you have to put out responsible programming.

Fifty-eight percent of responses that there were certain types of stories or shows that as executives they would not pass on came from NET Z, 17 percent from NET X and 25 percent from NET Y. The high representation of NET Z on this dimension may be related to the strong programming philosophy characteristic of that organization in contrast to NET X and NET Y, companies with philosophies concentrating more on the aspects of organizational climate and management practices.

Personal Background

Since many of the respondents thought that the decision making process in television was a very subjective one, they were asked to describe their personal backgrounds and how their backgrounds related to performing their jobs.

Some of the executives could only talk in terms of skills or job-related characteristics rather than personal characteristics. The responses included the variety of jobs held in the industry (22 percent); production experience (21 percent); sensitivity and compassion (17 percent); education (10 percent); love of television (7 percent); ambition and determination (5 percent); Jewish background (5 percent); being a woman (5 percent); being from the middle class (4 percent); starting young in the industry (4 percent).

Of those who responded that their experience in production was an important contribution to their present job, less than half (46 percent) were actually producers. Production experience, then, consisted of being either a development or current executive for a production company.

The following account by a young network executive who claimed production experience describes the job tasks performed while working at a major studio supplier of program fare.

What you try to do as a studio executive is you try to work with those producers and writers and go over their ideas and get them into shape and try to get them to kind of play what I always thought of as a dry run. You know, they come in and talk to you about the idea and hopefully you are aware enough of what the networks are interested in and your own sense of story and your relationship with the producers allow you to tighten up the idea and to do a little bit of homework and to polish it up so that when you come into the network it is in a very presentable form. And then I would accompany the writer or producer to the network. Then I moved into a position which is called current programs. I was a director of current programs and

what that means, and that is a very difficult job, is that you are supervising shows that are already on the air, the series shows, prime time series shows. What that meant was that you were in contact with the producers who were on the lot and the network's current programming department. Current programming is a very fast-paced department because you have air dates that you must meet and you are on the air and have delivery dates and when you are making twenty-two episodes it is a very hectic and very high pressured situation because you don't have the ability to slow down, you must proceed. It doesn't matter what the circumstances are, you must constantly go forward. So, you are a kind of a vehicle between--everybody in current has a different interest. The network has an interest in putting on the best show possible as do all the parties. The producer is the creative force that's on the line every day and out there trying to work with the show and the studio is trying to keep cost factors within reasonable bounds. So they are all working towards the same goal but coming at it from a slightly different point of view.

Independent production companies structure the jobs a bit differently from the studios. With the independents, executives often handle both aspects of the program process as do network executives in areas other than prime time series. According to a senior network executive who has had extensive experience as a producer, production companies treat the job in the following way:

Normally a production company, unless it's huge, like the studios, doesn't have current or development. It is one and the same person or persons, initiates projects so he's development and when the shows get on, he is supervising them for the production company, too, so he is current. Normally, therefore, in almost every production company, people are interchangeable back and forth. It's only networks, with the volume of business they do, who separate the categories.

Unless you have an awfully big and continuing volume of program business, it really wouldn't

be efficient to do it. And in truth, my own feeling is that a person, I've done this obviously when I was in the other business, who participates in development of something is probably going to be better and/or more interested in following it when it becomes a current project.

It is apparent that the job functions of network and studio executives share many of the same characteristics and although the executives sometimes report that the difference is the supplying executive is selling and the network is buying, we know that development executives have described part of their job as "selling" their projects to their management. It is also apparent from the young executive's account that executives in production companies also provide creative guidance to talent. Thus, we can see that the production community does provide a pool of talent for the network executive corps as described in the section on recruitment and training and those individuals from that sector perceive their experience as a competence that they bring to their network position.

The following statement from a seasoned executive gives a good description of the factors from personal backgrounds which were perceived as important by this group:

What I bring is an enormous amount of experience. I was an art director. In the Golden Age of Television I worked for almost every director available and know what it takes to put out a show. I was a producer in two major shows, one was an incredible major show and one that was good. I have gone through the ritual of not only designing but wondering about the production and lighting and costumes, I have done it, but also working with writers and cast, editing, doing music, the

complete show. So when I come in now I know the process. I carried all that experience to this job. What has happened is that people in the network job are now going out getting the experience but that is what I am doing here. I reversed the procedure. And I find that I attract a lot of creative people because I understand what is happening. They can talk to me on a level because I have been there before and they have said this to me. What is relatively important is that I care a lot about the writer, the producer who is sent to me. That he doesn't mind being rejected by me because I leave him his dignity. I don't know how that applies to the rest of the building, but I can imagine what happens in this building. It is very important to not dehumanize a person, because it is not always yes. There are a lot of nos involved in the process.

The self-portrait of another executive includes the importance of education to the job.

I've got about twelve years' experience. I come from a production side which is rare for the network. I've been a producer, writer, director. I've made films, I can cut films, shoot it and direct it, which is good experience. I am a woman and I am very well educated. I read a lot, I have a creative background and I have worked well with creative talent because I am pretty open, I am verbal, I give a good support system and I nurture their talent.

Other executives discussed their religion and social class background as impinging on their decisions:

There are other things about my background in addition to being a woman that count. Like Jewish. There are not a whole lot of Jewish people in the audience but that is part of my reaction. I grew up in the middle class. That is a good one to tap into because there are a lot of people in the middle class.

The executives who responded that they brought a love of television to their jobs were very firm in their conviction and quite obviously sincere. In this group,

there was no age difference; all ages from twenty-eight to sixty were represented. One young vice president confided:

The real answer about my personal background is a total obsession with network television, as opposed to be able to brag about a whole bunch of experiences in other jobs because I don't have any. I started out with this network right after college and have been here pretty long and, of course, it's gone well but I think that is because of hard work and an almost ridiculous obsession with commercial television. My affection for television is my life. I just became a junkie at age nine and by age eleven, when I first learned what a network executive was and what he did, I decided that is what I wanted to do.

At the other end of the age range another executive said:

I can cry watching television. I really love television. I mean, I don't love every minute of it but that's one of the problems, I think. There's a lot of cynicism, some of the people who are workers in our vineyard are a bit jaded about it and some of them are quite young and jaded. And they should get out and it would probably be a little better if they did and just those of us who love it would stay in it and work.

Discussion

It appears that the use of "gut instinct" by programmers represents a reliance on their experience, particularly their past job experience. It is a mechanism which integrates past knowledge of people and events with objective information. The use of logical-analytical strategies, which are rational and objective, and intuitive-conceptual strategies, which are subjective, are not mutually exclusive processes in decision making. Both strategies are important

and their relevance depends on the type of problem involved.² Television executives must program appeal for a mass audience. There are risks and uncertainties that surround their decisions. Consequently, the decisions they face are those which require an integration of a rational and an intuitive approach to problem solving.

The importance or weight of each decision strategy in the decision process has not been established. However, programmers report that they attempt to limit their subjectivity in decision making. They temper their subjectivity by comparing their personal assessments of programs to judgments they believe the audience will make regarding the same shows. The executives' conception of the audience is based on objective data. Research provides demographic descriptions of the kinds of people who are attracted to and watch particular genres of programs. Demographics supply information about the viewer such as age, sex, economic status, marital status, and geographic location. Since demographics provide information about the various groups which comprise the viewing audience, programmers can use the concept of reference groups to learn about audience taste. As previously discussed, in communications an individual can initially judge the appropriateness of a message intended for one primary audience by using a secondary audience. The individual invokes images associated with various

²F. E. Kast and J. E. Rosenzweig, Organization and Management (New York: McGraw Hill, 1979), p. 344.

reference groups which are familiar to the communicator so the decision can be explored. The reasoning for the decision can then be extended to the primary audience, in this case the television audience. This process also applies to small groups; groups use the collective images of their members to reach decisions.

Of interest to the sociologist is how external social constraints influence observable patterns of conduct, in this case the job performance of the network programming executive. One way to address that question is to look at the structure of role relations which all individuals have. Every person occupies multiple statuses such as son, daughter, Protestant, Republican, and each status has a defined role. Thus, individuals hold multiple roles. The concept of multiple roles looks at the ways individuals cope with the diverse and sometimes conflicting demands made on them by the various statuses they occupy.³

Network executives were asked to discuss their personal backgrounds in an attempt to discover if the other statuses they held exerted an external and perhaps unanticipated influence on their programming decisions. The most salient finding is that the executives had difficulty in discussing personal qualities and statuses and roles not centered around their job.

³P. M. Blau, "Structural Constraints of Status Complements," in The Idea of Social Structure, ed. L. A. Coser (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975), pp. 117-38.

This finding is significant in several respects. The high degree of involvement that these individuals have with their work is emphasized. They are centered on performance, on their skills, expertise, and advancement. This supports the idea of cosmopolitanism as a characteristic of network executives. These jobs seem to require a great deal of the occupant's time. They are absorptive in nature and shape the individual's private life and leisure time.⁴ Some executives confided that they had very little time to spend with their spouses and children. Single respondents mentioned that they had no time for dating and wondered why there were not more divorces among the married executives than actually occurred in that group. Executives reported spending little time with friends outside the television industry, though a few said they made a point to keep in touch with friends not involved in television. Their leisure time was at a premium and most of that time was spent in job-related activities such as reading scripts.

The networks have reward systems which are based on individual merit. The other statuses that an individual may have in life have little effect in determining the rewards

⁴For a discussion of absorptive occupations see R. M. Kanter, Work and Family in the United States: A Critical Review and Agenda for Research and Policy (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1977), pp. 25-30. The concept of the "greedy institution" can also be applied to occupations which require an enormous role involvement for the incumbent. See L. A. Coser, Greedy Institutions: Patterns of Undivided Commitment (New York: Free Press, 1974).

within the organization. High performance or a job well done, which means developing and maintaining highly-rated programs, is the primary concern for the organization. According to Merton, the dependence of all rewards on one performance criterion in a status system induces the cumulation of motives around that performance.⁵ Consequently, the networks' emphasis on performance and success strengthens the executives' commitment to their own abilities, expertise, and advancement, which in turn acts to reinforce their cosmopolitan orientation to the organization. The emphasis on objective performance may also explain why executives tended not to discuss personal roles or discussed them briefly. They were perceived by the group as irrelevant to work performance since the organization pays little attention to those aspects of their lives.

Although 63 percent of the programmers reported that certain stories they personally found objectionable would not be approved, it was difficult to establish a relationship between the executives' multiple statuses, roles, and the development of a personal value system with an effect on programming decisions. The most salient non-job status seems to be the sex status of the individual which will be discussed in a separate section.

Religion was mentioned by just 5 percent as having some bearing on the development of their perspectives.

⁵R. K. Merton, "Behavior Patterns of Scientists," American Scientist 57 (Spring):1-23.

Those respondents all briefly referred to their "Jewishness" and one could not distinguish whether the descriptions were more related to ethnic group membership or to deep religious convictions. The difficulty in ascertaining the nature of the interaction between personal variables and the respondents' roles as gatekeeper and manager can be illustrated by the following situation. One programmer professed a high commitment to including characters with disabilities in series scripts whenever possible. However, despite probing by the interviewer, the reason the executive developed the attitude was never revealed.

In summary, it appears that network executives use decision strategies which include both objective and subjective criteria. Experience is a significant factor for the executives in decision making. They judge themselves in terms of their experience, just as they assess creative talent in terms of "track record" which represents the cumulative experience of the creative individual. Programmers consciously act to temper their personal subjectivity in decision making. They do this through the use of objective materials such as audience and program research. The audience acts as a significant reference group for programmers in reaching decisions about entertainment shows. The work role appears to be of central importance to programmers and values and beliefs associated with the occupation rather than other life statuses seem to dominate decision making.

CHAPTER X

MEN AND WOMEN IN THE JOB

In 1980, women represented 33 percent of the full-time employees in broadcasting. The majority of these women were clustered in clerical and support work with few women in policy-making positions or managerial jobs. With regard to ownership of commercial broadcast properties in the United States, less than 2 percent are controlled by women.¹

The television industry is dominated by white males and women still have little influence in decision making.² Although the number of women executives in network programming positions is continually increasing, in the past, women tended to be located in talent, daytime programming, children's programs and mini-series. Prime time programming had the fewest women holding executive jobs.³

The scarcity of women in media elites is a phenomenon that appears in a variety of countries for which data

¹"Careers Behind the Screen," National Business Women (December 1981/January 1982), pp. 14-16.

²"Six Women TV Station GMs Recount Diverse Paths to Top," Television/Radio Age, June 15, 1981, pp. 50-52, 81.

³A. Chambers, "Prime-time for Careers in TV," Working Woman (February 1978), pp. 29-33; D. Kaufman, "Women Are on the Rise in Television's Executive Suites," Variety, February 4, 1982, p. 99.

are available.⁴ Findings regarding the status of women in managerial positions in television in Great Britain are similar to those for the United States. In a study of women at the BBC, the researchers found that up to a certain point in the organizational hierarchy, women had the appearance of equal opportunity to men. The consensus was that women were at a disadvantage when the jobs began to include some elements of managerial responsibility. Significantly, the more important the job in the managerial hierarchy, the greater the disadvantage for women.⁵ This practice is most likely related to the sex structuring of organizations. Sex structuring exists when there is a differentiation of male and female jobs in the company and the order of these jobs in the hierarchy places men in positions that are higher than women. Consequently, men give the orders and have more power than women in the organization.⁶

Sex typing is also prevalent in occupations. Merton describes an occupation as "sex-typed" when one sex constitutes a very large majority in the occupation and there are

⁴R. Smith, "Women and Occupational Elites: The Case of Newspaper Journalism in England," in Access to Power, ed. C. F. Epstein and R. Coser (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1981), pp. 237-48.

⁵M. Fogarty et al., Women in Top Jobs: Four Studies in Achievement (London: Allen & Unwin, 1971).

⁶H. Acker and D. R. Van Houten, "Differential Recruitment and Control: The Sex Structuring of Organizations," Administrative Science Quarterly 19 (June 1974): 152-63.

normative expectations that this is natural.⁷ Consequently, certain occupations become associated with either male or female members. Sex typing makes the sex status of the minority members as important or more important than the occupational status. In the case of the network television entertainment divisions, we are looking for evidence of sex typing in the occupation of programmer as well as the assignment of women to program areas. For example, Smith's study of newspaper women in Great Britain found that women journalists were most likely found in departments associated with specialties such as fashion, beauty, home interests, and food. Female journalists most easily succeeded in the occupation by entering the women's specialties or by transferring to women's magazines.⁸

In 1975, sex discrimination was found to be "pattern and practice" at one of the networks by the New York City Commission on Human Rights. After an investigation, the Commission found that the network in question had developed a strategy which operated to exclude females from all managerial positions and promotions, to consistently place females in clerical positions regardless of their qualifications, and to deny them the same opportunity given to men regarding upward movement in the organization. This was

⁷C. F. Epstein, Women's Place: Options and Limits in Professional Careers (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970), p. 152.

⁸Smith, "Women and Occupational Elites."

accomplished through particular practices of recruitment, hiring, assignment, and promotion.

The background variables of gender, socialization, and extra-organizational status relationships have been thought to cause significant variation in the individual's perceptions and responses in the work role which influences the various structural relationships within the organization.¹⁰

From the study data, we attempted to discover if the respondents identified any practices at the network entertainment divisions which excluded women from programming jobs and whether they perceived that management applied different criteria to appraise the performance of male and female programming executives. We were also interested in the programmers' assessment of their colleagues in terms of any perceived relationship between sex status and job performance.

Women and the Organization

Women have traditionally played a subordinate role to men in both personal and public spheres. The cultural image of women's subordination to men has been reflected in the structure of work organizations. Simply stated, jobs have been ordered in the hierarchy so that men give orders

¹⁰R. M. Kanter, Men and Women of the Corporation (New York: Basic Books, 1977); M. Hennig and A. Jardim, The Managerial Woman (Garden City: Anchor Press, 1977).

to women and so a power differential exists. Women's subordination has been a persistent social form and consequently women have faced barriers to their equal participation in social structures.¹¹

Studies of the entry of women in the professions, such as medicine and law, and management positions, illuminate the barriers to women's participation. There are many forces which act to constrain women's entry into elite structures. Cultural views of women as subordinate to men have resulted in a socialization process that emphasizes dependency and sex orientation for women in contrast to independence, work and career orientation for men. This has resulted in different opportunity structures for the sexes which is reflected in their educational chances, thus affecting their recruitment, selection and training for the professions and management positions.

Historically, these occupations have been dominated by men; they are sex typed.¹² Consequently, even when women gain entry to elite structures, mechanisms operate to control their positions within the profession or the organization. Task assignment is crucial to one's career potential. For example, task assignment affects visibility within the

¹¹C. F. Epstein, "Women and Elites: A Cross National Perspective," in Access to Power, ed. C. F. Epstein and R. L. Coser (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1981), pp. 3-15; Acker and Van Houten, "Differential Recruitment and Control."

¹²For a comprehensive view of women in the professions see Epstein, Women's Place.

organization and the opportunity for mobility. Many jobs in which women managers are placed have no line of progression to top management positions. The cultural image of women has fostered the view that women are less committed to work and tend to be temporary workers rather than career-oriented individuals. Recruitment and selection practices reflect this assumption by tending to favor males. Opportunities for promotion and development are also directed to men rather than to women because of this cultural view.¹³ Historically, the women who did achieve placement in top management have followed alternate routes. They attained their positions due to chance or crisis, such as manpower shortages during wartime, or they inherited the job following the death of their husband or kin.¹⁴

Informal networks are valuable to career development. The pattern has been to exclude women from informal interaction systems. Studies of the professions have addressed this issue since contacts within the professions provide the basis for increasing the professional's resources.

¹³M. Fenn, "Female Dimension: Barriers to Effective Utilization of Women in the World of Work," Journal of the Society of Research Administrators (Winter 1976), pp. 19-25.

¹⁴Hennig and Jardim, The Managerial Woman; C. Bird, Enterprising Women (New York: W. W. Norton, 1976); J. Lipman-Blumen, "Role De-differentiations as a System Response to Crisis: Occupational and Political Roles of Women," Sociological Inquiry 43 (2):105-29. For an excellent overview of women managers in the United States see C. A. Finkelstein, "Women Managers: Career Patterns and Changes in the United States," in Access to Power, ed. C. F. Epstein and R. L. Coser (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1981), pp. 193-210.

contacts provide a greater knowledge of the field and personal recommendation of ability which aids the professional in mobility.¹⁵ According to Epstein, there is a high degree of informality associated with interaction among professionals and much of it occurs in exclusive, clublike settings. The male professionals prefer to conduct their business with colleagues in spheres typically seen as male domains: the private club, men's bars, the golf course, or athletic clubs. Women have traditionally been excluded from these settings and thus developing contacts in the informal communication system is problematic for the professional woman. A professional social scientist has recently sued the Century Association, a leading private club in New York City, on the ground that its policy of excluding women has denied her access to significant people in her field. Although men may not actively exclude women, the image of the profession as a male domain often results in the woman professional practicing self-exclusion; she limits her interaction with her male colleagues in informal situations such as not joining male peers for lunch.¹⁶

¹⁵S. Albrecht, "Informal Interaction Patterns of Professional Women," in Women in Management: Proceedings of the Conference, Women and Men--Colleagues in Management? (Austin, TX: Center for Social Work Research, University of Texas at Austin, 1976).

¹⁶C. F. Epstein, "What Keeps Women out of the Executive Suite?" in Bringing Women into Management, ed. F. E. Gordon and M. H. Strober (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1975), pp. 7-21.

Informal interactions have been associated with selection patterns for managers and promotion has been linked to the manager's participation in the informal network.¹⁷ Access to top management positions has been linked to training acquired through the informal system. In the professions, this informal training is usually referred to as the protege system; in management it is called either mentoring or sponsorship. The mentor provides coaching and feedback which allows the individual to avoid pitfalls while learning. Women are often excluded from this relationship because a female may not be seen as a suitable candidate. When mentors are male, there is a potential for difficulties to arise out of the male-female relationship.¹⁸

The numbers of men and women holding similar jobs has been found to be significant for organizational behaviors. The concept of the token, anyone who is numerically rare in a social structure, has been used to illustrate the consequences of a difference in numbers of males and females in the workplace. In an organization, tokens stand as a representative of their minority group and the dominant group is more likely to stereotype the token.¹⁹

¹⁷M. Dalton, Men Who Manage (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1959).

¹⁸M. Williams, "Women and Success in Organizations," in Women in Management: Proceedings of the Conference, Women and Men--Colleagues in Management? (Austin, TX: Center for Social Work Research, University of Texas at Austin, 1976).

¹⁹Kanter, Men and Women of the Corporation, pp. 206-242.

We have reviewed some of the barriers which face women in the professions and management. This framework should help us evaluate the position of women in programming jobs at the entertainment divisions of the television networks.

Presence of Women in the Occupation

The television industry has been described as a male-dominated business. Our respondents were asked if they thought there was a lack of women executives in programming jobs at the networks. Sixty percent responded that the proportion of women in network jobs was about what it should be. However, they all modified their position somewhat by indicating that there were no women involved in upper, upper management and thus involved in the final decision making process concerning program selection and scheduling. Thirty-eight percent of the sample said that there was a lack of women executives in network television at all levels of management and program decision making.

Most respondents felt that network television had enough women. A related comment was that there soon would be plenty of women because it takes time to become established in the industry and the female network program executive was a new phenomenon. The following comments, all from separate individuals across the three networks, are representative of that point of view.

According to one respondent, the television industry has offered more opportunity for women than other industries.

I think this industry probably more than any other industry has put women over. I don't think there is a specific lack of them here.

Another executive sees time and experience as playing a part:

The executive level is a small one. The people who are there in those jobs now have spent years getting to them. Women have only recently, relatively recently, been mainstreamed into executive level and management positions and I think it is only a matter of time. It is just that to do this business, well you got to pay your dues.

A vice president of casting said women were in the majority in that area.

There's no lack of women in my area, most people in casting are women.

The sole male executive in one program area praised women's abilities.

In my department, I am the only male in the department. These women are absolutely and quite clearly into everything as they should be and they are so good that people listen when they say something.

The vice president continued his evaluation of women in network jobs by stating that time was also a factor which explained any discrepancy in the number of men and women in programming positions.

A lack of women executives? I think in any job there are a lack of good people, you know, it is also historical in points of time.

The following two comments are related to the job level women have been able to attain in the entertainment division of the networks. As one programmer observed, their

positions are in middle management.

There's not a lack of women executives. There are lots of women middle managers, women vice presidents. But there's no women who really run the show.

The above remarks are confirmed by the comments of a senior vice president which reflect his view of senior management as a male domain.

There is no lack of women at this network. If you go around, you see women. Obviously a guy is president, but there are female vice presidents.

The following views were expressed by the minority who believed that there were too few women executives in network television. According to one respondent, the presence of women in the job of vice president was not sufficient. Program scheduling decisions and the allocation of resources are the province of top management, an area where there are few women.

There is, I think an absence of women executives in television. If you consider real decision making jobs, like senior, senior management, that's what I call them, there aren't any females up there. So, yes is the answer.

Another executive mentioned the lack of all minority groups in programming jobs.

Not only is there a lack of women, there is also a lack of black and Spanish people, too. Look around you, you tell me if there is a lack of them, you have been here for awhile. The comedy department has none. In development, Jane A is in drama, the mini-series has Jane B. Yeah is the answer.

Some executives were hesitant to admit that women were a minority.

Not for attribution, but I think it is true that there aren't enough women around in these jobs.

A female vice president questioned if the small number of women executives reflected a corporate policy.

I think that it is definitely true that there aren't enough women. I can't say it is corporate policy; but I am sure that it is sexist.

When a high-ranking and well-respected female vice president was asked about the number of women in the occupation and if they held the same jobs as men, she answered:

No, look at the profiles of the three networks and that is not a question to be asked. It is obvious.

Another vice president expressed the view that women don't make policy decisions at the network.

I do think that there are women in jobs where they are making decisions and decisions that are meaningful, but the decisions that run the company are made by men.

Organizational Differences for Women and Men

Organizations often apply different standards to judge men and women. For example, a certain amount of male failure rate is routinely accepted by top management while female failure acts as an argument to prevent future promotions for women.²⁰

Women programmers were perceived as having to be smarter than their male colleagues to succeed in programming

²⁰"Up the Ladder, Finally," Business Week (November 24, 1975), pp. 58-68.

jobs by 28 percent of the sample. At NET Y, 47 percent of the executives described this as the existing situation in comparison to 20 percent of the executives at NET Z and 10 percent of the executives at NET X. NET Y had the largest number of female managers; respondents from the three networks perceived NET Y as providing greater opportunities to women.

Sixteen percent of the sample thought that the old boy network existed within their organization. The need for women programmers to possess superior job skills and the presence of an old boy network are conditions which appear to be related in this case. Generally, the respondents to these questions noted that women must exhibit more competence than their male colleagues. Women programmers are unlikely to be corporate survivors because there is no informal network to carry them along or to minimize their misjudgments. For illustration, four typical comments of male (2) and female (2) respondents holding this view are presented below.

Male

I don't think that women hold the same kinds of jobs as the men do at the networks. As in most businesses, they don't. Not yet anyway and there's less reason for it in our business than down in your local factory 'cause the women actually, that I'm thinking about now as I answer this question, who do hold comparable jobs, are better than men for the most part. That's why they are there, that's why they cracked through. Over time, I'm sure that will take care of itself. There's a little bit of the old boy network or club or what-

ever thing happens in our business as it does in others, I suppose. There are a lot of women in the business. There just aren't quite enough and probably, as usual, they don't get paid the same dollar for the same work.

Male

With my experience at NET Y, the women who attained these levels of responsibility and there have been many, obviously had to be quite unique to break into areas which before them had been predominantly male. So they had to be, I guess, special people therefore, I just have to put it bluntly. It is easier to get along with special people than it is to get along with hacks, male or female. In any company you have a lot of hacks, a lot of people around who are not as good as their job says they should be. That is not the case with the women I deal with at NET Y.

Female

I think that women are, I think we have in general to do a little bit more to prove ourselves. I think you find a lot of men who survive in this business having had some pretty questionable circumstances, not always a great deal of success but because they have a certain panache and they are good with the guys, they survive. I think few women in this business would survive without being good at what they do. Because like anything else, it is still basically a man's world and it is a boys' club. Just as boys felt more comfortable with other boys when they were six years old, they still do. You can't blame them for it but you also can't fight it. You just have to deal with it.

Female

I think many women like myself who have had to come up through the ranks after many years end up with the best of both worlds because we have learned the commercial aspects by taking our hard knocks and struggles to get ahead but at the same time we have maintained that which makes us women, a sensitive side. We also don't have the protection of the old boys' network. We are not survivors, we have to be doers. I think men get by on surviving and we can't. We can't afford that, we have to always be doing. I think that when you hire a woman you get

150 percent because the woman has to give that to be competitive. It is still very much a male's world, although it is a lot better than it was when I started. I think it made me stronger but I just want my daughters to have a better or more equal situation when they grow up.

At NET Z there is a sense among some of the executive corps that women are not heard in the same way as men are by upper management. NET Z respondents accounted for more than half of the group that indicated that old boyism occurred at the networks; a quarter of the respondents at NET Z believed that the old boy system operated within their organization. Additionally, NET Z executives accounted for almost 75 percent who responded that women had a special knowledge of the audience which was related to their sex status and accompanying roles such as wife and mother. Thus it would follow that some executives at NET Z may perceive that the opinions or judgments of women are not accepted in the same way as are the contributions of male programmers. The comments of three programmers from NET Z are included to illustrate the situation. However, it is important to note that this number is small and does not represent the majority view at NET Z. A top-ranking female vice president stated that the old boys' club was still in existence both at the division and at corporate headquarters. Women and men were valued differently by management.

I think there is still a boys' club feeling, certainly at the top here and certainly corporately. I think there is a tendency to use the women as valuable but lesser.

Another female vice president, also a department head, was frustrated that her views were not considered as important as her male colleagues' views.

Women are just not heard the same way as men are and it's really true, like I want to sometimes stand up and scream here and I am very fortunate. I get along very well with our president, not all the women here do so. None of them have lasted very long and partially I've lasted because I do not have an abrasive style. Women have to fight to be heard at NET Z and it's a real problem. I would hire a woman in this department but it's so damn hard for one woman to be heard, to have two women in the department--it's like deaf! So I don't. I am included in the decision making to a point but there are times when I feel I'm not heard at all. For example, one of the negatives I've found is that the men tend to assume that because I'm a woman I am good with serials and things like that. I could be good with action adventure but I'm not heard.

A male vice president in charge of a daypart indicated that women's ideas were not considered as important as men's views by some people in the division.

There are some people at NET Z that don't hear something a woman says, but if I put my name on it they will listen to it. What I try to do is to force those guys to read it with the woman's name on it. It's the only way to effect change.

However, women at the networks did not report being hindered in their jobs by any of the traditional beliefs about women that some of their male colleagues held. The woman at NET Z who complained that her male peers assumed that she would be better with serials rather than adventure projects proceeded in her job and developed westerns and adventure series.

Only respondents from NET Y reported that women executives could exhibit corporate behaviors as treacherous as their male counterparts. Fifteen percent said that they had known women who would just as quickly stab a co-worker in the back to get ahead as would the stereotypical, aggressive male executive. This finding is not surprising since NET Y is the place where women have achieved a greater degree of parity with men. In fact, female executives at NET X and NET Z rated NET Y as the better place for a woman executive to work. For example, a female at NET Z who felt she was not taken as seriously as her male peers thought women at NET Y had a much better situation.

I know that my counterpart at NET X has had some problems similar to mine but not as bad. But Jane Doe at NET Y has had less of a problem than anybody. NET Y is different. The women there have the least problems. NET Y has probably put women in more positions than any other network.

The NET X counterpart, who was a pioneer in her organization, thought NET Y was more open to the advancement of women to top positions.

There is not an equal enough distribution of men and women in the decision making process. Now it is better than it was. I am the first woman who ever had this job at NET X and it is only a year and a half. As far as women moving up, I think that it's happening at NET Y. Jane Doe at NET Y has moved up. NET Y, I think, is more open to women. And before her at NET Y there was another woman who had extraordinary responsibility in programming decisions.

There is little doubt that some forces act to constrain women's entry into top management positions in the

entertainment divisions of the three networks. Every respondent indicated that there was a lack of women in upper level management. This situation is not unique to the television industry but is characteristic of all United States industries despite the twenty-year increase of women into management positions.²¹ However, women have made inroads into middle management and the majority of programming jobs in this sample fell into that category.

The data present little support for the idea that structural barriers exist within the networks to exclude women or to inhibit their access to programming jobs up to the level of vice president. There is even less support for the idea that management required better skills from women executives or that women executives were excluded from informal systems within the company which have been related to rewards and to career advancement.

The sum of the study data indicates that there is little difference among men and women with regard to recruitment, selection, training, placement, and promotion in programming jobs up to a certain level in the organization. There is no one path to programming jobs but there are accepted sequences of jobs held within the entertainment industry or related fields for all individuals entering programming. Men and women in the study held similar jobs

²¹K. Blumenthal, "Room at the Top," The Wall Street Journal, March 24, 1986, pp. 7D, 9D.

on their way to these positions. Training for both sexes is similar. They are trained through sequences of jobs; experience forms their basis of expertise and competency. Although there is the popular conception that women are confined to certain specialties in television, women were found to hold positions in all program areas. However, the occupation of programmer remains sex-typed as a male domain.

It was difficult to ascertain the extent of informal communications systems at the divisions and the relationship of the informal system to rewards and promotions to top management positions. Women programmers do have a degree of access to these systems within their organization and the industry. According to the respondents, the time demands of the programming job are enormous. Socialization with colleagues is more likely to occur in job-related activities rather than during leisure activities which may be in surroundings which tend to exclude women. Information is gathered in the halls, in elevators, and informal chatter before meetings or at industry-related functions such as luncheons held by professional associations. Executives share information about the creative community--the writers, producers, directors--on a daily basis. They all note that the industry is a small one and it is relatively easy to learn the latest news and gossip. Recommendations for potential recruitment to many different jobs within television, managerial and creative, are made during these exchanges.

Because such informal interactions mostly occur in settings which do not exclude women, women have the opportunity to participate and according to the respondents, women do share in the informal network. They use it for recommendations when hiring for their departments or when researching the credentials of creative talent. Like their male colleagues, their jobs give them extensive involvement with others in organizations outside the network and so they have developed ties which provide them with information. Within their own organization, many women had friendships or in some cases power alliances, with male colleagues which allowed them to tap into the informal communication system.

Some form of sponsorship was present among programmers at the levels of director and vice president and both men and women received guidance from mentors. Women were both sponsored and acted as sponsors. Many programming decisions are made in small groups, often dyads and triads, and sponsorships seem a natural progression of the interaction process. Sponsorships also provide power bases and women were not excluded from the opportunity to participate in this process.

Although a few programmers indicated that an informal system could carry a non-performer along, the vast majority believed that non-performers were dismissed. Even if an individual has attained a top management position via the informal network, successful performance is essential.

Absolute numbers of men and women do seem important for enhancing women's movement into top management as well as for acceptance into middle management. The relative number of men and women in the organization helps to clarify the difference which emerged between NET Y and NET Z in regard to women's acceptance within each network. Women were rare at NET Z and this may account for the somewhat stereotypical view of women that was attributed to male executives. In contrast, NET Y had more women in programming jobs. NET Y had been hiring women in programming for a number of years and thus there was a precedent established for the acceptance of women. As a result, male executives at NET Y had more contact with women and perceived them more as individuals rather than as a representative of "all women." They were aware of women's intellectual abilities and more likely to attribute a woman's success to her skill rather than to any gender-related trait. Men knew that women played office politics and were part of power coalitions. Women were seen as colleagues and competitors and a more realistic view of women in the workplace developed among the men.

Some of the pressures that women programmers felt, especially at NET Z, are probably related to their relatively small numbers. Like the professions and management positions in general, the job of network program executive is sex-typed as a male occupation. Although women are not

actually rare in the entertainment divisions, because of their numbers and distribution throughout the various program departments, some of the consequences of being a token apply to their situation. The lone woman vice president in a program area or department does occur. Tokens typically perform their jobs under scrutiny. They are highly visible and their mistakes are readily known by the dominant group.²² Because they feel they are in the lime-light, women may think that more is required of them than their male colleagues. However, the women in the sample did not perceive themselves as on display or isolated within the organization. They were confident of their abilities and felt that they had the opportunity to advance both at the networks and in the production sector.

Women did think that advancement into top management positions was possible but more time and more women in the entertainment divisions were needed to accomplish that end. However, not all of the women wanted to go into top management. Like many of their male colleagues, they wanted to go into the production sector. Several women who had been vice presidents of programming at the networks left for jobs in production and met with great success.²³

²²Kanter, Men and Women, pp. 206-53.

²³For example, two former network programming vice presidents who are now successful producers are Marcy Carsey, producer of "The Cosby Show," and Esther Shapiro, producer of "Dynasty." Barbara Corday, president of Columbia Pictures Television, was also a network programming vice president.

On the surface, women programmers seem to have the same opportunities as men including participation in informal communication systems so that identifying the barriers that operate to constrain women's mobility within the organization is difficult. In fact, it is difficult to determine succession for men into top management positions in the entertainment divisions of the networks. Once again, absolute numbers seem to make the difference. Many respondents thought that women would attain top management positions in the entertainment divisions of the three networks within the next few years. Women began to enter the occupation in a significant way in the late 1970s. Since then, the number of women in programming jobs has continued to increase. According to the respondents, everyone in the occupation has to pay their dues and time will bring acceptance of women in top positions.

Perceived Differences between Men and Women Programmers

The respondents were asked if they perceived differences between men and women programmers in decision making and job approach. According to 63 percent of the executives, women's decisions about programs used different considerations than their male colleagues and approached their work along other lines than did men executives. Twenty-five percent said that there was no difference in the way men and women made work-related decisions or approached their jobs.

The differences that nearly two-thirds of the sample perceived centered in four areas: women's nature, which refers to the sensitive and emotional qualities generally attributed to females; special knowledge of the television audience; superior executive ability; and men's nature which refers to the male preference for sex, aggression, and mechanical objects.

Women's Nature

Forty-seven percent agreed that women were inherently more sensitive and compassionate than men executives. Women were thought to bring another point of view to their jobs, a "female perspective," which allowed them to use different considerations in reaching decisions. The following quotes are examples of descriptions by male and female respondents of women's more sensitive natures and different approaches to their work. The main point is that women bring a compassion to the workplace; they humanize the business world.

- R₁ I think that being a female is a big factor because I bring a heart. I respond out of what I am. I just don't see how people can lead one life and another life professionally. I am what you see both on and off the job.
- R₂ Women being the softer species are much more compassionate in many ways and not afraid to show emotions and are more sensitive to the human condition than men are.
- R₃ From an intellectual standpoint men and women both have the same capacity but emotionally there is a different level. Women are more sensitive.

- R₄ A couple of things that are probably a little bit different is that with most women that I know in this business there is a strong caring, number one, probably for the work and for the projects and with most of the men at the higher levels, ego ends up being number one, his politics. It is ego, it is himself and maybe the work, then, is number two in terms of the caring for the project, for the quality of the project and so on.
- R₅ I think women do business differently. I like doing business with women. I think women do like to be more direct with each other and maybe don't get off as much on the game plan. I also think it is something that is very positive and it is in a way why a lot of men do like doing business with women executives.
- R₆ The women executives we deal with have a more compassionate way of dealing with people. A most positive approach that they catch more flies with honey than vinegar. They bring fairness and judge on merit rather than some of the old boy kind of stuff.

From the descriptions it seems that women are perceived as able to integrate the subjective with the objective in situations. Their perceived approach serves as an integrating mechanism between the emotional and the rational. That role is similar to the function that "gut instinct" plays in bridging the subjective and objective realm for the individual in decision making. Ninety-three percent of the sample reported that they included intuitive kinds of information into their decision process. Male executives discussed that one of their most important tasks was to give emotional support, understanding and nurturance to creative talent. Yet women are perceived as the "softer sex." The perceptions seem more related to the traditional

view of sex roles and sex structure of language rather than to fact. Not only are women perceived to have more emotional qualities, they are more likely to discuss them. Their emotions become public. The idea of "gut instinct" implies the physical rather than the emotional and men are traditionally associated with physical elements rather than affective ones. For men, gut instinct serves as a way to rely on non-rational criteria without public scrutiny of their emotional domain.

Special Knowledge of the Television Audience

Women represent the primary viewing audience in television. Twenty-four percent of the respondents stated that it was advantageous to have women executives in programming because the women had a special knowledge or affinity for the viewing audience which is largely female. This special knowledge was considered helpful in determining program appeal. The women's views were regarded as important in assessing characters, story ideas, and the tone of scripts that are largely designed to entertain a female constituency. In fact, the presence of more women in programming jobs was considered desirable. The logic of this position is not based on equal opportunity. Rather it is based on the belief that a woman can naturally understand the largely female viewing audience and make better judgments in terms of the appeal of a program directed to members of their own

sex. The following comments express the idea of "special knowledge" in more detail.

- R₁ I just think that since the multitude of women make up more of the viewing audience, there should be more women making decisions.
- R₂ I like to think that I can look at something and get some kind of feel again because of my past experience about what would appeal to women and what might not. Of course, a woman is probably more able to do that and that's very important since women watch television much more than any other kind of people.
- R₃ I think women are important to the decision making process. Women are the primary viewers in television. Women executives are important in terms of attitude, characters, ideas. The networks are working on hiring more women. In most programming departments, whether it is NET X, NET Y or NET Z, if a guy's running the department, he wants to have a woman working with him. A woman is usually the next one hired.
- R₄ We try to represent women on the writing staffs for our comedy shows, to make sure that there are some women on the staffs just because you're dealing with female characters and how can an all-male staff write for the show? Even an action adventure show should have women on the writing staff because the largest percentage of the audience is female and we want to make sure that we are doing things that appeal to them. Female writers and producers and executives are probably more aware of what female viewers want. They know what having a baby is all about and we can only get so close to it.

Two top officials from different networks both involved in senior management decisions concerning the final selection and scheduling of programs, believed that women, because of their gender, had an inside knowledge of the television audience. According to one of the top officials,

having a female head of mini-series made a difference in the projects selected. Motherhood, a female role, was also considered a plus for decision making in the area of children's programs.

There are an awful lot of female executives who are holding down very responsible and key positions. You know, our head of children's programming is a woman; our head of mini-series is a woman; our dramatic development is also a female. And there are changes due to women in those positions. I think that particularly in the area of mini-series. Since a large group of that audience is a female audience, I found that a lot of times material that I thought would be of much lower interest turns out, you know, if my head of mini-series, Jane Doe, gets behind a project, not that she gets everything through because nobody does, but she'll get behind something and the guys say, "Who's gonna watch it, just a bunch of little old ladies" and she'll say, "No, I'm telling you, I've seen it." You know. And the fact that my head of children's programming is not only a woman but also a mother, much more clued into what kids want, having been a mother and also being a woman, she's much more on target with that audience than I am personally, which is what I need, you know, to have that there.

The other top network official strongly believed in the thesis that women's sex status provided an inside view of the preferences of a female viewing audience and this knowledge that women programmers possessed was important to the network.

I think that women bring another dimension to the process and that is why they have been promoted. I mean, the point is, I think it is important because more women watch television than men, series television, and that is why it is crucial to have women in those jobs.

Some women executives feel, too, that being a woman is advantageous to them in programming for a largely female

constituency. However, most of the women expressing this view qualified their uniqueness by indicating that it was really a humanistic point of view and that many male executives also possessed those attributes. The following illustration is from a woman programmer who attributed her insight of the female audience to her gender:

I am a woman. I think I have a very good feeling for what women want. It doesn't mean I get what I want because I work with men and their concept is very different. It's like going into the cosmetic industry and if you have a woman who is doing cosmetics for women and one would assume she has a better feel for the consumer, and there are men who have the same feel for the women but those are rare men, I think. But some of the audience is male and some is children so you hope there is a combination of men and women executives who will get the perfect balance.

Superior Executive Ability

Women were labeled as better executives than men by 21 percent of the sample. Their superior ability was attributed to motivation, a willingness to start at the bottom and work their way up, a concern for the task and attention to details. Women were considered practical and less involved in office politics than their male colleagues.

- R₁ I tend to think women are usually better executives than men. My wife is also a television executive and she is an amazing executive. Usually, it is a lot of bullshit that goes on between men executives and women don't do that.
- R₂ Women just cover all the bases, being more certain. The women I work with are more detail-oriented than men I work with who go more on gut instinct.

- R₃ I find that women tend to deal with the matters at hand. They are very practical; they don't deal with office politics.
- R₄ Women are more motivated, especially when they first start. Men come out of school and they want to be president and later on they flop. Women learn and they learn to do good jobs. They are the brightest people in the world.

Men's Nature

While nearly two-thirds of the sample described women as having a distinct nature, only 9 percent addressed the belief that men possessed particular qualities which could be described as their "nature." The respondents holding this view thought that male programmers were more attracted to projects and shows which involved sex, violence, aggression, and action-adventure as part of the structure. Mechanical elements or "hardware" such as fast cars and guns, were also attractive to men. The group referred to men as "macho," a shorthand term to reflect the traits usually associated with men. The following is a typical description of the rough and tough image of men.

I think the male executives are rougher in their thinking. They go for the hardware. They tend to lean heavily on sex and violence in making programming decisions.

It is evident that the traditional view of women prevails for a large number of programming executives. To a degree, the job performance of women programmers is perceived in terms of the female gender status. Thus, gender was the most prominent non-job status associated with

performing the work role and it was applied more often to women rather than their male colleagues.

However, the stereotypical view of women did not detract from the assessment of women's performance as programmers by their peers. In fact, the traits traditionally associated with females such as emotion, nurturance, sociability, intuition, and a high orientation to detailed tasks were valued. Our analysis of programming jobs indicated that the above qualities are associated with the nature of the position and that men utilize these same skills in their work. Consequently, women programming executives should not experience a double bind in relation to their job. Women managers often find that if they display the culturally defined traits of a woman, they are rejected as unacceptable managers.²⁴

Women's numerical rarity at the networks may explain some of the stereotypical perceptions. Tokens, anyone who is numerically rare, can have a contrast effect on the dominant group. In this case, men tend to exaggerate both their commonality and women's difference.²⁵

However, there is an additional interpretation which is not exclusive from the assessment of women's rarity but can enhance our understanding of why stereotypes persist

²⁴L. Putnam and J. S. Heinen, "Women in Management: The Fallacy of the Trait Approach," MSU Business Topics (Summer 1976), pp. 47-53.

²⁵Kanter, Men and Women of the Corporation.

for women in this setting. A high degree of uncertainty is characteristic of the television industry; cause/effect relationships are ambiguous.²⁶ The uncertainty centers on the audience acceptance of programming and elaborate research techniques have been developed to judge audience appeal. However, most research gathers information after the fact and is interpretive rather than predictive. Additionally, the networks' reward system for programmers is tied to program success. Attributing to women an inside knowledge of the female audience seems to be an attempt to enhance decision making and limit the risk of program failure.

Men and women programmers apply the same criteria to their decisions. For example, when assessing potential projects, both sexes are concerned with audience appeal; when judging the ability of the creative team to implement a program, they are concerned with track record and financial factors. Both men and women use logical and intuitive approaches to decision making. Women's organizational behaviors are similar to their male colleagues' actions. Both sexes are characterized by a cosmopolitan orientation to their organization; their commitment is to their skills, expertise, and advancement. Women participate in office politics. They are part of power coalitions and sponsor

²⁶J. D. Thompson, Organizations in Action (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1967).

relationships. Although primarily for tutelege, sponsor relationships also form power bases.

According to Lirtzman and Wahba, traditional sex role behavior in organizations is replaced by situationally determined behavior which is illustrated by coalition-forming behavior.²⁷ For example, in organizations with a high degree of environmental uncertainty and norms of competition, the decision making and coalition behavior of men and women are similar. Traditional sex role behavior is replaced by behavior which is demanded by the situation. Consequently, under circumstances of environmental uncertainty and norms of competition, women can be expected to act in accordance with the situation: competitively, aggressively, exploitatively, and trying to maximize their chances of winning.

Yet for many in the sample, the perception exists that job performance and sex status are related. This is significant because it reflects the persistence of sex role stereotypes despite contrary evidence. In the business world, myths controlling organizational behavior and expectations remain to some degree. Although changes in behavior are accepted, as evidenced by women's greater participation in and access to elite structures, traditional attitudes

²⁷S. I. Lirtzman and M. A. Wahba, "Determinants of Coalitional Behavior of Men and Women: Sex Roles or Situational Requirements?", Journal of Applied Psychology 56 (October 1972):406-11.

remain. This is an indication of the strength of long-established social norms to maintain the status quo despite the establishment of a new set of expectations from social institutions, such as a government policy of equal employment opportunity. But the data also suggests that absolute numbers are very important in modifying any structural reflections of sexist beliefs within the organization. Increased numbers seem to mean increased opportunity for women to achieve powerful positions. However, the test of this is time.

Summary

Forces act to constrain women's entry into top management positions in the entertainment divisions of the three networks. However, there is little support for the idea that structural barriers exist within the networks to exclude women or to inhibit their access to programming jobs up to the level of vice president. Management does not require women to have superior skills for programming positions than their male colleagues. Women are included in informal systems and benefit from recommendations and sponsorship. Little difference was found among men and women at this level with regard to recruitment, selection, training, placement, and promotion. Although the occupation is sex-typed as male, women have been accepted and are found in all program areas. Traditional views of women prevail for a large number of the programming executives but this

view enhanced rather than detracted from the presence of women in the networks. Women were thought to have a special knowledge of the primarily female television audience and men interpreted this as positive.

The data indicated that men and women programmers apply the same decision criteria and use both logical and intuitive approaches to problem solving. The prevalence of traditional sex role attitudes in the workplace and women's absence from top management was related to the numbers of women in the organization.

CHAPTER XI

FINANCE

As in other industries, the networks adhere to yearly business plans. Each division and department participates in putting together plans that are, according to one network official, "extremely exact." The presidents of the entertainment divisions have to be accurate in reporting the way they spend their money both in forecasting expenses and accounting for costs.

The deals or contracts between the networks and the program suppliers are negotiated by the business affairs department of the network. The network seeks to acquire the rights to the television program as economically as possible.

The networks function in two areas: in house production, when the network owns the program (this represents a modest amount of activity) and outside supply of production. The latter is the main source of supply to the network and the programs are owned by the studios or by independent producers. Thus, the network must acquire the broadcast rights to the programs that the supplier owns. For example, in made-for-television movies, the network customarily acquires the rights to two broadcasts over a four-year

period. The acquiring of the broadcast rights is called the license fee.

Pilots are paid for by the network at the time of implementation. Payment covers only the production costs which had been agreed to by both parties prior to implementation. In the series area, the license fee is paid on a per episode basis. The episode fee, as well as specific annual increases, are negotiated at the time the pilot film is made.

Traditionally, a pilot program is done and the costs of the production of that program are reimbursed to the producer up to an agreed-upon maximum. If the pilot is picked up, the series is ordered, there will have already been negotiated per program license fees for that series with stipulated annual increases.

The financial considerations for a series, which have long-term implications, are worked out before the show may be selected. The deal can be made for 6, 8, 13, 22, or 24 episodes. Once the show has aired, even if the program becomes extraordinarily successful, increases for the following year have usually been predetermined. One network programmer explained that program success is rewarded by renewal.

The relative success of the program is generally rewarded by the exercise of the option for the following year, by the renewal of the program. If the program is not successful, it does not get renewed.

Because of the predetermination of prices, producers sometimes find that the license fee does not cover their

costs in series production. When costs exceed revenues, the difference created is a deficit which must be financed. Producers must seek other sources for funds besides the network.

The deficit financing that producers talk about means that producers have to spend money in excess of the network license fee of that revenue that they are getting for the production. Just to use numbers, if the network license fee is \$1.8 million and it costs them \$2 million to produce, they have a \$200,000 deficit.

According to one executive, it is only rarely that the networks will come up with the additional money and that would only be in the case of extraordinary circumstances.

A situation will occur that nobody contemplated, you know, if we are going to produce a show in Jamaica and it snows in July, somebody will come and say, "It snowed in July, we didn't count on this, we had to extend our schedule three days, we need some help." It is that kind of a situation that will involve the network perhaps coming up with the additional funds.

However, the reality of determining series prices and providing additional funds for production is quite different from the situation described by the business affairs executives and programmers in middle management. According to an experienced and top level network official, the following is more likely to occur. When series are successful, renegotiations in series prices usually occur. The network agrees to pay more for each episode than in the original contract. Additionally, enhancements are given to the supplier to cover costs which are meant to upgrade the episode. Producers often attempt to increase the series'

audience appeal by providing extra elements in special episodes. The network gives "enhancements" to the supplier to cover the production cost of special episodes which may include filming in a foreign location. Series prices for successful shows rarely remain stable. Costs for a successful series are constantly increasing despite carefully worked out price agreements.

There are three things that happen. One is that at the time you commit in the first place for a pilot, you do have series prices that are also agreed upon. Then, number two, let's assume that the show gets on and stays on and becomes successful, then there are changes that occur, renegotiations they're called, in the series price. Depending on the degree of success, the supplier comes back in and he screams about his deficits, et cetera, and what happens, since you want to keep him happy if it is a successful show that you want to keep on, is that you renegotiate the price upward. So that those carefully worked out prices that were agreed upon in the first place are no longer operative and now you have a new set of prices that go to whatever years, you know. Usually it escalates up each year. In addition to those upwardly renegotiated prices, there are enhancements where he comes in and he says, "I'm having to pay three of my actors more than I expected and so there are x thousands of dollars that aren't covered by our prices. I'll shoot two episodes in London so that will cost me x more" and he'll come up with two or three specific things that are going to cost him more than he expected and he'll say, "I know you'll want to pay for these things 'cause they will benefit you." So there are enhancements that are built in, too. In short, it's a constantly spiraling upward process. Program renewal is just the beginning. There are escalations built in for every successive year but they are not sufficient to keep everybody happy, so you wind up doing these other things, too.

Owen, Beebe, and Manning in their 1974 work on television economics have posited that escalating costs of television production are inevitable and continuing. According

to these economists, when a show first becomes popular the network's net revenues increase because of the show's success and the program is renewed.¹ Consequently, the suppliers of the continued series will begin to bargain for part of the extra profits of success. Thus, the suppliers of a successful series charge the networks a price that increases over time. The interaction of this price inflation of a successful series with viewer response (ratings) in part determines the life span of a program. Nearly a dozen years later, the top executive's discussion of series prices and enhancements does indeed support the proposal of Owen, Beebe, and Manning.

An area in which producers generally do not use deficit financing is represented by specials which are referred to as "one-shot deals." According to a network vice president, the network generally provides a license fee that covers the production costs as well as providing the producer with a profit. Unless the special is particularly expensive, or if the producer believes that profit from foreign sales is possible, they will not accept a license fee from the network that is lower than the projected cost of the program.

Since the studio or production company enters into a contract with the network, all deals between acting talent,

¹B. M. Owen, J. H. Beebe, and W. G. Manning, Jr. Television Economics (Lexington, MA: D. C. Heath and Company, 1974).

writers, and directors are between the studios or production companies and the talent involved. Since these negotiations occur outside of the network, the network may or may not know the details about these agreements. For example, when the network contracts for a script, that usually includes a story, either written or verbal, a first and second draft, and a set of revisions on the script. The union minimum for a first time writer is in the approximate range of \$28,000. Depending upon the stature, experience and success of the writer, the cost increases up to the range of \$65,000. But the producer, who actually makes the deal with the writer, may agree to pay in excess of that amount or the amount the network will pay the producer to cover the script cost.

In fact, the smart producer is going to contract for additional sets of revisions along the way. We [the network] won't pay more. But the producer will because what will go to the network first will actually be a revised first draft. The producer will have already gone over it, worked with the writer.

According to one executive, the development phase is speculative for the producer.

There is no money in it for the producer. It is a gamble on their side, a speculative venture.

A financial arrangement called a "step deal" is often followed as a means of payment for services during the development period. Payment is made after each creative step or series of steps (story, outline, script) is completed. This gives the network the flexibility to continue or to abandon a particular project.

With new production companies, the producer may have a strong personal history but the company may not be established as a solid business. Consequently, when the network enters into an agreement with the nascent program supplier, the business affairs department may request that the producers provide collateral. This provides a guarantee for the network investment in the event that the program supplier is unable to deliver the product. The collateral takes the form of a bank guarantee or a mortgage note.

The network can also request that the new production entity make an "umbrella" deal with an established studio or one of the large independent production companies. Although the new production company retains creative control of the project, the studio provides certain organizational elements which help keep the production process smooth and on schedule. Studios are organized for series, they provide the on-air series executive, the production executive, and work with the new company to guide them through the process. The umbrella deal becomes a joint venture. The network pays the license fee to the new production company while the studio takes a percentage of the production company's distribution and syndication fees.

Commitments

Whenever you hear or read the word "commitment," just substitute the word "money" is the way one respondent described the use of the term

"commitment" in the television industry. Commitments are financial agreements which are usually made to creative talent. They place the services of the talent under contract to the networks in various forms and for differing amounts of time. Commitments come in various forms. Often they are made with star acting talent to do a series. With writers, the commitment can be to develop a script, to do a pilot film, or to make an on-air series. Commitment means the network is prepared to follow through with the agreement or if the projects falls through, the network pays the talent under the terms of the contracts.

Network commitments are usually to creative people. Occasionally they can be to production companies but more likely you make a commitment because of some talent. It can be on their talent, like you can make a commitment to a star and then people chase around and get the writers and what not and make a show. Or you can make a commitment to a writer who has a hit show and if you think he does that very well and you want him to do another show, he may ask for more than just a script commitment or a pilot, he may want a series commitment and so you may do that. Commitments come in those various sizes, the least is usually a script, the next would be a pilot. By the word commitment, it means that the network is committed to go through whatever point that is; a series commitment means you are going to put it on the air and see whether it works.

With commitments, if for any reason the deals do not go forward, the party is reimbursed under the terms of the agreement. For example, an actor held for a six episode series will be paid a per-episode fee for all six episodes.

Normally, if you made a deal with an actor to do a series and committed to him and then for whatever reason you didn't go forward, then you would owe

him his fee per episode times the number of episodes you'd committed to, anywhere from 6 to 8 to 13.

Because talent is considered a scarce and highly desirable resource by the networks, commitments are made on a regular basis. In the case of an exceptional talent, the network may make a special kind of a commitment. This is referred to as a "blind commitment." The network enters into this type of agreement to insure that their organization will have the benefit of a product from the best sources in the creative talent pool.

Exceptional talent is in great demand by the three networks. The blind commitment is a device to get the talent to the network by a commitment that the network will pay for a pilot film, or in some cases a series, some time in the future. At the time of the agreement, the network does not know the theme of the pilot or the series. The blind commitment is meant to indicate to the creative individual that the network places a high value on his or her talent and wants to do business with the individual, even if the network must wait for another calendar year.

Generally a pilot commitment that is made in a positive sense, let's say you are a writer, my favorite kind is to make them with a writer rather than a producer but you can make them with either a writer or a producer--my least favorite kind is with the production company or studio. Let's say you are a writer who has a really good background and we're very excited about working with you but you are very busy and your talents are in demand everywhere and the only way we can get you to pay attention to us, basically, is to say to

you, we want to work with you and we believe in you so much that we will say to you that in the calendar year of 1985, 1986, we give to you what we call a blind pilot commitment. That is yours, you know that you have a pilot that we will go to film with us in the calendar year 1985-86. Now, that may have nothing to do with any existing script at all, it is just that we want you to know we want to be in business with you and as a consequence, we are willing to do that. That is very positive and open. It's an expensive gesture but a statement that we believe in your talent and want to work with you.

Pilot commitments are very valuable to creative talent. They confer status on the individual and allow the individual a bargaining power within the industry. Pilot commitments can help a writer get a position in a studio where most of his costs will be covered. Series are central to the studios and pilot commitments can lead to series. Consequently, the studios are eager to enter into financial agreements with the holders of network production commitments.

Now you can take that pilot commitment and you can say to your agent, "I want to go work at Studio XYZ. So I want them to pay for my secretary and I want them to pay for my office and I want them to put me on a baseline salary of some sort so I don't have to worry while I am writing." Because you have the pilot commitment, your agent can go to Studio XYZ and say, "We have a commitment to film, would you like to be a part of that, and if you would like to be a part of that my client wants this." And you will get a much better deal or situation at Studio XYZ than you would get without it. Okay, that is the positive way of thinking.

Commitments are also given to writing and producing talent, following series cancellation. This is an expensive and unpopular situation at the networks. It represents a

buyout of the series agreement. Instead of paying for the remaining episodes in cash, the networks agree to pay the production company for a certain number of pilot films over a specified period of time.

My least favorite way, which happens very logically, sometimes, and I totally understand but it is my least favorite, is when a series is cancelled. And cancelling a commitment can be so outrageously expensive for everyone involved, for the networks, for the production company, for the studio involved, it can be horrendous, and we hope we are not doing it as much as we were, but sometimes, what happens is a buy out. Which is the network saying, "It is not working, we're having a terrible time and so are you, no one is watching the show, it is costing us a million dollars an hour to put on, let's get out of this deal. We know we have a commitment to you for thirteen episodes, how can we stop that?" At which point the studio may say, "Give us another try, make us a certain number of pilot commitments so that we know we are back in the ball park next year."

The potential to have a financial interest in a series is so vital to program suppliers in the industry that a writer or a writer-producer with a pilot commitment is more valuable in the marketplace than a writer, or writer-producer, with an established, solid record in series.

Series television is the bread and butter of the industry. So those pilot commitments are like gold and they are much more valuable to a studio than are the movies of the week. Movies of the week have little outside potential for them because of private distribution. A pilot commitment could actually lead to series and series is the single most valuable thing that a studio could have beyond a block buster feature. So, in other words, it is very good for the studios to recruit writers with pilot commitments because then they get in on the whole deal. The value of production commitments in the marketplace is extraordinary. A writer with a production commitment--any production commitments

are phenomenal and helpful. Any writer or writer-producer who has a film commitment is an extraordinarily valuable commodity. Even more than a writer, writer-producer who has a track record in series.

Another kind of commitment that can be made is one done within the network organization with executive talent. This practice used to be more common than it currently is. Production commitments to executives were put into their contracts as inducements to continue with the organization or as a way of recruiting top executives from other networks. The practice has fallen out of favor because it is seen as a way of rewarding departure rather than really keeping people since, according to most interviewees, network executives do want to go into the production area.

Program Packaging

Agents play a role in the financial arena in television both in representing their clients and in providing programming to the networks. One vice president in charge of prime time programming commented:

The strong agents are the most harmful people in the industry.

The reason for this adversarial perspective centers not only on the reality that the large agencies control talent--the writing, producing and star talent necessary for the network's product--but that the large agencies are also program packagers. According to one executive:

They'll put together anything so they can get into syndication and reap money from that.

The packaging agents are not creators; they consider themselves neutral in regard to program content and claim no creative disagreements with the networks. The packager's job is to assess the networks' needs in programming and to implement the program packages that satisfy the networks' needs. The strength of the packaging agents is in their control of most of the writing, producing, directing and star acting talent that the networks want. According to packaging agents, they put together as many elements of a television show as they can, supplying the writers, producers, directors and actors. They choose from among their clients although the agency forfeits the individual client fee. Instead, the network is charged a packaging fee. The agency also receives monies from current charges to the production company actually implementing the packaged series and deferred fees from the syndication rights of the series. When the package is done in conjunction with an independent producer, the agency handles the business affairs process and represents the independent with the network. However, the large studios continue to handle their own business affairs with regard to the packaged series.

The packaging agents claim that the package technique of programming provides a benefit to all parties involved. Creative talent benefits because they keep their entire fee without giving the agent a commission for the project. The network benefits because it gets the talent

it needs and since all or most of the elements of the series are presented together, the network knows exactly what it is getting. According to the agents, when the networks develop scripts, they never know who will write the series or if they will ever be able to cast the series. Consequently, program packages eliminate the uncertainty in the development process and serve the networks' needs more completely. Additionally, the packaging agent services the series by handling the interests of the creative individuals attached to the project, which are separate and distinct and must be coordinated.

A top agent connected with a prominent agency provided this account of program packaging. In the example, Jane Doe is the prominent actress seeking a television series and John and Jean are scriptwriters.

I wish there was an absolute definition of packaging but what one attempts to do is to put as many of the elements together as one can, and then take it to the network and sell it and continue working on and servicing it while it is on the air. I guess the best way I can describe it is to follow through a typical package that happened this year which would be the Jane Doe Show.

He proceeded to describe the way the talent for the package was assembled.

We have some writing talent, John and Jean, we put them at a production company to write scripts and at the same time that was happening, we made a deal at one network for Jane Doe to do her own series. She had wanted to do a half hour series and they, John and Jean, wrote an hour script. The hour script they wrote was perfect for Jane Doe so what we did was we put the two together. First, we gave

Jane Doe the script to read and then we, Jane, John and Jean, sat down in a room and they talked and agreed to do it. So we began to put together all of the elements that made that show. The next thing was to find the male lead, which was Jack, our client. Then there is the continuing servicing that goes on for a show like that, to handle all of their interests separately and distinctly because each one has separate desires, so it is a continuing servicing job.

When selling to the network, the packager can represent independent production companies or the major studios.

If we do the project with a pure independent, you represent the pure independent. Then you go to the network to sell the project for him, put together all of the elements and then continue on and do all the production accounting, the business affairs work for the project. The business affairs work is done in conjunction with an outside lawyer but most of the forms used by all of the entertainment lawyers are our agency forms.

Now when you do it with one of the studios, a studio will do their own business affairs work and their own accounting so that part of the servicing we do does not apply to studios. Rarely would they ever want us to do the accounting.

According to the respondent, the packaging fees charged by the agency are reasonable since the service the agency provides benefits all participants in the program package arrangement.

In packaging there is a benefit to all. Studios today will pay a packaging commission. They don't like to pay a packaging commission because when a packaging agent goes in, they make sure that the studio does not charge a 10 percent network sales fee so they lose their 10 percent network sales fee they could collect by not having the package agent go in. Now the package fee depends on the agency. They charge, agents charge anywhere from 1.5 to 5 percent current and 1.5 to 5 percent deferred, as their fee for packaging the project. That is based on the license fee.

Now the talent is not commissioned in a package. There is no double commission so the advantage to talent is that if the talent received \$30,000 an episode, they receive the full \$30,000 an episode. They don't pay a commission.

Let's assume that a half hour situation comedy gets \$300,000 for a half hour, we would collect 5 percent a half hour. We would collect 5 percent or \$15,000 now. We would defer an additional \$15,000 until such time as there are profits and if there are profits, and the production company, whether it be a studio or an independent, would have in fact collected their overhead, their production costs, everything, when they get to profit, then we collect as part of our deferred commission 5 percent out of 50 percent of the profits. So, if a dollar came in we would get 5 percent of 50 cents of it. In addition, we collect 5 percent of the gross from additional sales that are made so in that instance, if the sale was made to Canada for \$10,000 an episode we would get 5 percent of that \$10,000, that would be our commission.

Packaging is a speculative venture and has risks. However, the agencies can afford to do packaging because they understand the needs of the talent and the networks.

But packaging is also very risky because we don't get anything up front, we don't get anything for doing anything. In fact, if we put our writers on a project, Jean or a writer who is doing something, we can't commission them so anything that is a package starting from the beginning is not commissionable for the office. The writer, who might get \$50,000, again, gets his full \$50,000 and that show may never go beyond the writing stage. It may go to pilot but if it goes to pilot we still don't get any commission. It is only if it goes to series. So we will spend, we could spend five years developing shows and none of them go on or have one go on for thirteen weeks or six weeks and go off. So we could be in a tremendous loss position, it is a very risky business and it is not a business that every agency would be in, could afford to be in it.

But I think we can afford to be in it because we are very good at what we do. And we have been successful in getting shows on the air. I think

we do know the art of packaging, we do have an incisive and probably from the information that we can obtain from the network, knowledge of what they are looking for, so that we can develop and have our people develop the kinds of projects they want. We also have talent that they want. So the networks will come to us and tell us if they are interested. For instance, in Jane Doe, we were able to develop for her. It makes it a lot easier than just writing a script and then going out and trying to find someone who can do it, to put in it, and they say, well this doesn't go because you can't find the right casting.

The ability to supply the talent is the strength of packaging.

So, the advantage to the network of a package is they know what they got. They don't know when they start out in the development process whether they will ever be able to cast it, they don't know whether they are ever going to be able to find the writers for the show, they don't know if any of this is going to happen, so they have a wonderful script and they say now what are we doing with the script.

The independent production companies are usually hooked up with a package agent and the reason is that they look for the talent. I mean, if they have terrific ideas but you can't execute those ideas unless you have the writers and the performers so they need the help of the agencies and basically, large agencies are in the package business. That is why if you go through the board, I would say that out of the entire fall schedule, 60 percent or better were packages.

To gain a fuller view of program packaging, the various themes of the above interview were related to a network executive who had been a very successful independent producer prior to his present position. He responded that he thought the service provided by the packagers was not worth the fees charged to the networks or production companies. The fees paid to agents takes money out of the

production process and away from the most important element, which is the program episode. In his view, the role of the agency is a limited one and as such, its compensation should be limited.

Program packaging, okay, I'm an expert in that area. I'm a long-time critic of that role because I think in almost every case the packaging agency does not earn its hefty fees. When I was a producer I didn't do that, I didn't make deals where I had to pay a package commission. Because to use dollars, if you sell a half hour comedy show say for \$300,000 an episode and it has come to you from one of those three agencies, they literally would like to get 10 percent ideally. And then they will say, okay, I'll take 5 percent in front and 5 percent in back, meaning later on, when the syndication money comes in. But no matter how you add it up, that's still \$30,000 an episode for doing nothing, maybe making a couple of phone calls. And so I have always thought it is money that doesn't get on the screen and I would like to stamp it out as a practice.

It's not so that all independents are hooked up with packagers. Well, the very small ones maybe. A guy, I'm trying to think of one--let's say a writer or two writers who go into business together. In order to have any chance in the ball game of dealing with talent and others and getting through the right doors they enlist the clout of one of those three agencies. But the independents, anyone with any substance, doesn't need them and in fact as I just said, it takes out of the equation too many dollars. What I am saying to you is that if you have an agent packaging a show and getting anywhere from 2.5 percent to 10 percent in series that goes on for years, oh, it's hundreds of thousands, sometimes millions of dollars.

When asked if the agency services the show during the on-air run, the executive answered:

Service, what does that mean? It doesn't mean anything. It means cashing the checks. As you can tell, I have a specific and sort of adversarial view of it because some agents, on some occasions, do indeed perform a useful service. And should

get paid. An actor's agent should get a percentage of the actor's fee. But it's when you package it, when you get, when everybody's fee is lumped in together and you get a percentage of the whole thing which means above the line and below the line and all the costs of production that it becomes inordinate and there is no service that an agent can perform that is worth that kind of money. Their role is a limited one and their compensation should be correspondingly limited.

Discussion

Although entertainment series prices are predetermined at the time of the pilot film, with a successful television series, the network must renegotiate the per episode price upwards as well as provide economic enhancements to cover special costs of production. Successful series are a desired goal of the networks and they must meet these demands to keep a successful series functioning smoothly and reaching its potential. Consequently, program costs are constantly increasing for the networks.

Production commitments are a form of control for both the buyers and the sellers. The network uses them to limit their programming risk by obtaining the best talent for projects. Creative talent uses production commitments to bargain for increased status and power within the television industry. The large program suppliers, such as the studios, are amenable to creative talent with network production commitments because the studios' opportunity to provide the networks with weekly series increases.

Through the provision of production commitments, the networks become a source of status conferral for creative talent. By giving production commitments to talent, they increase the value of the talent and consequently, the status of the talent. Conversely, the networks can sanction creative talent by not entering into business agreements with them or by decreasing the quality of rewards given to the talent.

The large talent agencies play a significant role in the financial structure of the program production process. They control the majority of the writing, producing, directing, and star acting talent. Because talent resources are readily available to them, they often act as program packagers, entering into the domain of program supply traditionally associated as the province of the large studios and independent production companies.

CHAPTER XII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Network Programmers

Generally, occupations in communications organizations are characterized by status fluctuation, involving frequent changes of employment and of specific occupational activity. Such movement usually involves related occupations. Individuals in communications organizations appear to engage in occupational change to a relatively high degree in comparison to other fields.¹ Occupational change is a major contributor to upward mobility.²

Many media occupations can be described as gatekeeper positions. Gatekeepers are individuals who select, process, and organize various types of information for the access of an audience. Research in this area has studied the subjective nature of selecting information, the constraints of the production process on selection, the way gatekeepers learn the policy of their organization, and

¹T. Caplow, The Sociology of Work (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964).

²P. M. Blau and O. D. Duncan, The American Occupational Structure (New York: John Wiley, 1967).

the degree to which the gatekeeper has a perception of the audience for the communication.³

Mass media products are usually determined by a group and the production processes of the mass media emphasize quantity, speed, and marketability.⁴ There is also some indication that work roles within television organizations are not clearly defined or formalized. The lack of definition leads to role ambiguity, which is often a source of tension or conflict for the incumbent.⁵

Descriptions of network executives are diverse, and often judgmental in tone. They are usually derived from anecdotal accounts or secondary sources. One reason for the diversity in the descriptions is the degree to which the network executive is thought to intervene in the creative process of production for television. According to Levinson and Link, the element of criticism evident in the descriptions is based on the fact that in their relationship with creative personnel, network executives are bosses. Because

³See D. M. White, "The 'Gatekeeper': A Case Study in the Selection of News," Journalism Quarterly 27 (1950): 383-96; W. Breed, "Social Control in the Newsroom," Social Forces (May 1955); W. Geiber, "News is What Newspapermen Make it," in People, Society and Mass Communication, ed. L. A. Dexter and D. M. White (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1964), pp. 173-82.

⁴F. Newton, The Jazz Scene (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1961).

⁵M. Gallagher, "Negotiations of Control in Media Organizations and Occupations," in Culture, Society, and the Media, ed. Gurevitch et al (London: Methuen & Co., 1982), pp. 151-73.

of their function as executives, this group is generally perceived as lacking in so-called "creative" skills yet they provide artistic guidance for shows which are being developed by creative personnel. Programmers' intervention into the creative domain is perceived as a source of conflict.⁶

Reports on the degree to which network executives intervene in the creative process are inconsistent. Barnouw, writing as an outside historian, believes that network executives maintain very tight controls over the content of program scripts.⁷ Stein, an insider and script writer, views the networks as having minimal input into the production and creative processes. According to the Stein account, the producers and writers are the creative authorities and operate with little interference from the network people.⁸

Cantor's account of network intervention in the creative process is somewhat mixed. She states that the final decisions about which shows will be broadcast are made by a few people at the networks who are removed from the

⁶R. Levinson and W. Link, Stay Tuned (New York: Ace Books, 1981).

⁷E. Barnouw, The Image Empire: A History of Broadcasting in the United States since 1953 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970).

⁸B. Stein, The View from Hollywood and Vine (New York: Basic Books, 1979).

production process. Yet she asserts that the networks are involved in every step of the production process.⁹

Others view the role of the network executive as an administrative manager, supervising and encouraging the producer or production team in a particular direction.¹⁰

Reports by industry insiders regarding network programming executives and their functions are not often complimentary. According to one source, these managers try to sustain the myth that programming decisions are based on factors other than maximizing the network's profits.¹¹

The individuals who make these decisions are for the most part well-educated, well-read, well-fed, and well-meaning men who love their children and their country--but they are also people who have risen to the top of a highly competitive industry that still believes that the ability to get a reservation at the latest restaurant is worth as much as good character, in fact may even be good character.

Another insider account stresses the desire for power among network programmers.¹²

Typically, they are not pioneers, nor are they fired by an intensely personal conviction.

⁹M. G. Cantor, "The Organization and Production of Prime Time Television," in Television and Behavior: Ten Years of Scientific Progress and Implications for the Eighties, ed. D. Pearl, L. Bouthilet and J. Lazr (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1982), pp. 349-62.

¹⁰A. V. Hannah, "In Conversation with Lucy Johnson," Television and Children (Summer 1982), pp. 5-8.

¹¹F. Mankiewicz and J. Swerdlow, Remote Control (New York: Ballantine Books, 1978), p. 287.

¹²L. Bergeen, Look Now, Pay Later (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1980), p. 159.

Instead, they are men who ardently seek power and are occasionally strangled by it.

According to Gitlin, network executives reported to him that they did not know what the process of making television shows was and that they did not know how it works. Gitlin asserts that "real doubt exists about what it is a TV executive knows." He further claims that there is uncertainty about how one proceeds in the television industry because it "offers so little firm grounding in ethics, aesthetics, or rationality."¹³

The data indicate that there are prescriptions both for a process of development and supply of programs and for managerial behaviors and decision making that are recognized throughout the industry by all participants as standard practices. Our respondents were able to describe their jobs and provide criteria for their decisions. There is evidence in this study that decision making occurs in a systematic way and is not capricious.

Network program executives act as gatekeepers for entertainment program ideas. Their roles are structurally determined by their respective communications organizations. The characterization of the gatekeeper as a passive individual who relies heavily on subjective assessments in selecting ideas does not correspond to the role played by network programmers. The factors which are important to

¹³T. Gitlin, Inside Prime Time (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983), pp. 21-22.

the selection of ideas in the program process appear to be related to organizational goals and needs rather than to personal characteristics of the gatekeepers. Consequently, audience needs and the requirements of the program production process are important variables to the programmers.

The data indicate that programmers do hold an idea of the audience while they are selecting ideas and are concerned with audience preferences. This is contrary to the view that the gatekeeper has little idea of the audience to which the message is directed or that the audience is not used as a reference group in these decisions. Mechanical pressures of work do play an important function, as Geiber has proposed.¹⁴ The ability of the creative team to supply the network with programs on schedule and within the constraints of the budget is a factor in decisions.

Program ideas are restructured to fit the needs of the network. Scheduling concerns that include the available time period for a program and audience factors are primary shapers of program ideas regardless of the type of role--initiator, negotiator, evaluator--that programmers reported taking in selecting ideas for entertainment programs. The network's schedule of programs is a significant factor in determining program need and affects the selection of ideas for potential programs. Thus, executives who are continually watching their network's programs and are constantly

¹⁴Geiber, "News is What Newspapermen Make it."

assessing the schedule are socialized to the requirements of their organization, just as Breed's sample of newspaper reporters was socialized to their organization's values by daily reading of their newspaper.¹⁵

In the networks, the gatekeeping process does not adhere to the chain type described in the literature. At the networks, ideas come into the system through multiple channels. Ideas come into the entertainment divisions at different levels of the hierarchy. The level at which the ideas enter the system appears to be related to the relative position of the supplier in the overall status system of the industry.

Audience, the existing schedule and program time period are the factors most frequently mentioned by the programmers in making decisions. By their account, the Nielsen ratings, research, and general financial concerns play a lesser role. Network executives use objective criteria in selecting program ideas which center on organizational factors; creative dimensions meshed with the procedural elements of the job. The elements assessed included: the audience, the program schedule, economic requirements, product marketing, script, character, acting talent, and production values.

Programmers hold jobs which require them to interact with persons who are in other organizational domains. In

¹⁵Breed, "Social Control in the Newsroom."

the course of his job, the programmer interacts with role partners located within the network setting and within outside production companies. Positions of this type are called "boundary spanning" jobs.¹⁶

Much of the job activity occurs in small group meetings that take place both internally at the network and between the network and the program supplier. Much of the executive activity focuses on role definitions and expectations in relation to the "product" or entertainment program. Members of the group discuss what they expect from others in terms of the project and they attempt to establish behaviors that will result in a successfully completed task. Conflict can result for those holding boundary positions since they are at the juncture of two organizational domains with different expectations. The goal of the meeting between the networks and the program suppliers is to arrive at a consensus decision which satisfies both the requirements of the network and the creative supplier. By establishing consensus, the group meeting appears to operate as a mechanism to establish congruent and clear expectations among role partners, resulting in a mode of action that diminishes role conflict.

Despite organizational differences, programmers share many similarities in their orientation to their job.

¹⁶R. Kahn et al., Organizational Stress: Studies in Role Conflict and Ambiguity (New York: John Wiley, 1964).

The role of a programming executive is a specialized managerial position within a complex organization. This kind of role specialization has been associated with the idea that management positions are experiencing professionalization.¹⁷

Network programming executives are cosmopolitans in terms of their orientation to the organization.¹⁸ The basis for this cosmopolitanism is in the boundary spanning quality of their function, the high degree of involvement with role-set partners who are located in other organizational domains, and the status-sequence in jobs that these executives hold, with experience becoming associated with expertise. As a consequence of these factors, programmers have greater contact and a substantial connection outside the network domain to production companies and others in the industry. This enhances their visibility and increases their job mobility.

The production community is an important reference group for programmers. Many executives reported that they wanted to go into program production and viewed network programming jobs as vehicles toward that end. A consequence of this is that the programmers tend to view themselves as different from executives in general. They tend to think of

¹⁷F. E. Kast and J. E. Rosenzweig, Organizations and Management (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979), pp. 44-46.

¹⁸For a description of cosmopolitans, see R. K. Merton, Social Theory and Social Structure (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1957), pp. 387-420.

themselves as "creative" executives, a perception that links them to an artistic community rather than a business culture.

For the majority of the executives, their training has occurred in both the program production company and the network setting. To a large degree, their values and beliefs regarding their work have been shaped by the past jobs they held in the industry. The data support the view that network programming jobs are virtually interchangeable. Additionally, substitution, which is the degree of substantial correspondence in job and work required on both sides of the production process, is high in the television industry. As a consequence of these factors, programmers' allegiance is to their own skills, expertise, and advancement rather than to one organization. It would appear that a cosmopolitan orientation does seem to indirectly reflect a trend towards professionalism among this specialized managerial group.

The data indicate that network executives use decision strategies which include both rational and intuitive criteria. The frequently used phrase "gut instinct" actually represents experience and is a significant factor for the executives in decision making. Programmers judge themselves in terms of their experience, just as they assess creative talent in terms of "track record," which represents the cumulative experience of the creative individual. Programmers consciously act to temper their personal subjectivity

in decision making. They do this through the use of objective materials such as audience and program research. The audience acts as a significant reference group for programmers in reaching decisions about entertainment shows.

Statuses other than the occupational one have little impact on decision making. Programmers have a high degree of work involvement, and are concerned about their performance, skills, expertise, and advancement. Programming jobs require a great deal of the occupant's time. They are absorptive in nature and shape the individual's private life and leisure time. The work role appears to be of central importance to programmers and values and beliefs associated with the occupation rather than other life statuses seem to dominate decision making.

An informal communications system exists among this group. Programmers share information about the creative community--the writers, producers, directors--on a daily basis. They all noted that the industry is small so that it is relatively easy to learn the latest news and gossip. Recommendations for potential recruitment to many different jobs within the television industry, managerial and creative, are made during informal exchanges.

Programming jobs remain sex-typed as a male occupation. Various forces act to constrain women's entry into top management positions in the entertainment divisions of the three television networks. However, the data give

little support for the idea that structural barriers exist within the networks to exclude women or to inhibit their access to programming jobs up to the level of vice president.

Management does not require women to have skills that are superior to those of male colleagues in order to get and keep programming positions. Women are included in informal systems and benefit from recommendations and sponsorship. Little difference was found among men and women at this level with regard to recruitment, selection, training, placement, and promotion. Although the occupation is sex-typed as male, women have been accepted and are found in all program areas. Traditional views of women prevail for a large number of the programming executives but this view enhanced rather than detracted from the presence of women in the networks. Women were thought to have a special knowledge of the female television audience and men interpreted this positively.

The data indicated that men and women programmers apply the same decision criteria and use both logical and intuitive approaches to problem solving. Both men and women form coalitions and seek to enhance their relative status within the organization and in organizational domains external to the networks. The prevalence of traditional sex role attitudes in the work place and women's absence from top management appears to be related to the number of women in the organization. Respondents thought that as the number

of women increased, more women would achieve top management positions.

The findings support past observations that the networks do provide creative guidance in the production process of entertainment programs. As buyers, the networks have the prerogative to approve all phases of program production, which includes the creative and operational elements of the process. However, programmers indicated that the amount of creative guidance was a function of the degree of clarity of creative vision on the part of the program supplier. The findings support the idea that degree of creative guidance is personalized and not uniquely associated with any one network. The individual accounts indicated that each executive defines the degree to which he or she becomes involved in the creative process. Consequently, the networks allow the executives to have a range of discretionary behaviors in performing job tasks.

Programmers reported that to some degree, their work roles were fluid and less defined than jobs traditionally associated with managers. This was apparent in their perception of the difference between east coast network executives who represented a "corporate" style and executives located in the west coast entertainment divisions who represented a "creative" style.

The findings substantiate Hannah's report that network executives describe themselves as providing encouragement and

support for the creative team.¹⁹

Job patterns of the executives showed that they have been employed in related or parallel types of jobs. With regard to how their personal backgrounds affected their job performance, the most frequent response was their experience in production work in the television industry. Programmers also listed holding a variety of different occupations within the industry as a contributor to competence in their present position. Data obtained through a written questionnaire pointed to a short duration in jobs, typically two to three years, and frequent changes. Although there is no single status sequence for these jobs, there are acceptable sequences of jobs for programming positions which constitute the training and socialization of individuals with regard to the job and the television industry.

Gitlin's observation that the television industry is characterized by a paucity of ethical, aesthetic, or rational guidelines is challenged both by the present study's data and in the management literature.²⁰ According to Kast and Rosenzweig, all contemporary American industry shares a similar constraint regarding ethical, aesthetic, or rational guidelines. In today's society, one universal or monistic ethic does not guide the business executive throughout industry. Kast and Rosenzweig offer the view that the

¹⁹Hannah, "In Conversation with Lucy Johnson."

²⁰Gitlin, Inside Prime Time, pp. 21-22.

business enterprise operates under varied value systems, a contemporary ethical pluralism which provides general guidelines for managers but does not provide specific answers. A consequence of this phenomenon is that in all industries, the role of manager is more ambiguous for the individual job occupant.²¹ However, there are various means to resolve ambiguity and programmers utilize several of these. For example, their cosmopolitan orientation and the trend towards professionalization of the occupation can resolve the conflict or tension between organizational and individual goals that arise when jobs are structurally imprecise and contain elements of ambiguity.

A Discussion of Economic Determinism
in Network Programming Decisions

Scholarly research in mass communications has focused on the production of program content and has concentrated on organizational and interorganizational constraints on content production in the context of the economic imperative. Cantor's studies of Hollywood television producers provide an example of this perspective.²² By focusing on these constraints in this way, the belief that commercial network television does not take risks or dare to be

²¹Kast and Rosenzweig, Organizations and Management, pp. 41-44, 47, 48.

²²M. G. Cantor, The Hollywood TV Producer (New York: Basic Books, 1971); M. G. Cantor, Prime-Time Television (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1980).

innovative is reinforced.²³ Emerging from this line of research is a perspective which views the creation of television programs as being tied to an economic determinism, relying on financial elements to define the limits of acceptable programming and acceptable programs.²⁴

It has been proposed by Tuchman that the desire for corporate profits through the selling of audiences to advertisers dominates the programming activities of the three television networks. The search for profits affects the content and design of programming and results in programs which appeal to the lowest common national denominator. As a consequence of the profit motive, "individual programmers are shackled and prevented from introducing new forms and new ideas." The legitimacy of existing institutions is not challenged and the status quo in American life is maintained.²⁵

²³J. Turow, "Unconventional Programs on Commercial Television: An Organizational Perspective," in Individuals in Mass Media Organizations: Creativity and Constraint, ed. J. S. Ettema and D. C. Whitney (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1982), pp. 107-29; Gallagher, "Negotiation of Control."

²⁴G. Tuchman, "Introduction," in The TV Establishment, ed. G. Tuchman (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1974), pp. 1-39; G. Murdoch and P. Golding, "Capitalism, Communication and Class Relations," in Mass Communication and Society, ed. J. Curran et al. (London: Edward Arnold, 1977); J. Curran and J. Seaton, Power without Responsibility (London: Fontana, 1980).

²⁵Tuchman, The TV Establishment, p. 5.

Within the framework of economic determinism, the Nielsen ratings, which are essential to the amount of money the network can charge advertisers for commercial time periods during a broadcast, are the major factor in programming decisions. The ratings act as a feedback mechanism for the networks, giving programmers an impression of society based solely on viewing behaviors. This leads the executives to believe that if a show receives high ratings, it must be the type of show the public wants and should get. The patterned repetition of television shows based on formulas and past successes are the result of this system.²⁶ Innovation and creativity in programming are perceived by network executives as too high a risk in an industry geared towards profits and where the profits are substantial. These managers cannot afford to deviate from the perceived proven path and consequently, innovation and creativity are stifled.²⁷

Some researchers have questioned the assumptions and implications of the idea of economic determinism in television programming. For example, the reliance on past successes and formulas in programs is not always viewed as a criticism of television. According to Gallagher, formula styles do not necessarily mean a standardized, trivial

²⁶B. Cole, Television Today (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981); Mankiewicz and Swerdlow, Remote Control.

²⁷L. Brown, Television: The Business Behind the Box (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971).

product. The ability of the individuals performing the creative functions may have more to do with the quality of the finished program rather than the organizational and technological constraints of the medium.²⁸

Newcomb and Alley add that too many studies assume that organizational limitations thwart creativity and Pekurny's research follows a similar view.²⁹ In the case of the television producer, Newcomb and Alley propose that the individual is aware of the constraints provided by the organization and that the individual has chosen television as the arena in which to create special forms and means. As in any occupation, not all succeed in achieving their creative goals. They maintain that the status role of the producer in television is as open as any role in the arts to creative manipulation by an incumbent.³⁰

Our findings indicate that network programmers do use economic factors in making program decisions. However, they are not the primary criteria used. For example, the Nielsen ratings are directly linked to revenues for the

²⁸Gallagher, "Negotiations of Control."

²⁹R. Pekurny, "Coping with Television Production," in Individuals in Mass Media Organizations: Creativity and Constraint, ed. J. S. Ettema and D. C. Whitney (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1982), pp. 131-43.

³⁰H. M. Newcomb and R. S. Alley, "The Producer as Artist: Commercial Television," in Individuals in Mass Media Organizations: Creativity and Constraint, ed. J. S. Ettema and D. C. Whitney (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1982), pp. 69-89.

networks, but the importance of the ratings as a factor in decision making varies with the type of problem: the development of programs, the selection and scheduling of programs, the maintenance of programs, and the cancellation of programs. Only 27 percent of the sample indicated that they relied on ratings in their program decisions and the weight given to the ratings factor varied with the individual. However, it appears that executive use of the ratings in programming decisions is rarely an independent criterion except in respect to program cancellation. Ratings were considered as a part of research and were perceived to function as a tool, a feedback mechanism which provided an objective piece of information to include in the decision making process. The majority of the respondents said that the program executive cannot rely solely on research and the Nielsen ratings in making decisions.

Financial variables other than the ratings as well as risk factors come into play in all phases of programming decisions. Considerations of time and budget constraints in the production process are factors which are seriously assessed. However, economic reasons for intervening in the creative process were not weighted as heavily by the network executives as those elements connected to improving the show artistically or to the programmers acting as a support system to meet the needs of the creative team. The availability, control, and competence of talent are other factors

which interact on program decisions. For example, when network executives assess creative talent in terms of track record, a concept which represents the cumulative work experience of the individual, they are attempting to limit the risk attached to the decision.

Audience concerns were essential to decision making in all phases of the program process. The concept of ratings implies that programmers perceive the audience in terms of viewing households. The data indicate that programmers conceive of the audience in terms of the different segments of the population which constitute television viewers. Thus, demographics, which include sex, age, marital status, social class, and geographic location, supply information to the programmers that is useful in forming an image of the viewing constituency. Audience demographics, in the context of a network's existing schedule, and competitive factors are significant in program management.

Ultimately, all these factors can be viewed as financial determinants of programming decisions, since they are tied to the creation of a product to obtain audiences which are sold to advertisers by the networks. But financial reasons cannot be viewed in a direct relationship to every phase of decision making regarding entertainment programs. Rather, financial factors become operationalized and represented by other variables, such as program time period and the track record of the creative individual.

Each element has a different degree of importance in the various stages of programming and carries a different weight in the decision equation. For example, when a program idea is presented to the network, need and potential for the program may be weighted more than the ability of the creative team to implement the idea. However, as an idea is realized, the importance of implementation increases. When a script is made into a pilot film, the ability of the creative team to implement the script is important; when the pilot film is selected to air as a weekly series, the ability of the creative team to implement the project is crucial.

The proposal that the content of television programs is economically determined is open to discussion. When addressing the character of television programs in terms of their content and the degree of innovation and creativity they reflect, the nature of the production process should be considered.

The production process in the mass media has been compared to mass manufacturing procedures in industry.³¹ According to Newton, the mass media organize their production processes for quantity, speed and marketability.³² Innovations in mass production concentrate on improving the production technology rather than creating product change. Innovation means a change, not just a modification in a

³¹Gallagher, "Negotiations of Control."

³²Newton, The Jazz Scene.

technique or a product. True changes in products can have consequences for organizational structures since a change in product may necessitate a change in the goals of the organization. Additionally, innovations and improvements in product quality are difficult to detect for consumers and resistance to these changes by the public has been underestimated.³³

The so-called lack of innovation and creativity in commercial television can be related to factors of production as much as to economic goals. Programming which appeals to the largest audience of a nation is also a consequence of the mass nature of the medium and not solely determined by the search for profits. Whether or not the television public wants a true change in entertainment programs or will accept innovation in commercial television remains an empirical question.

The assumption that economic determinism shackles and prevents network executives from developing new program ideas and forms is questionable. Our data provide no evidence that network programming executives perceive themselves as encumbered by their organization in regard to program decisions. The assumption that individuals who work in media organizations and specifically in programming positions at the networks oppose esoteric concerns and organizational goals is one that should be challenged.

³³J. Hage, Theories of Organizations (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1980), pp. 174, 238.

All business enterprises seek to maximize profits and the factors they include to accomplish that goal are significant. Thus, when network executives, whether they are developing a program idea or selecting a pilot film for an entertainment series, act to control and reduce risk to maximize profits, they are acting as rational managers, since profits are essential to the long-term survival of the business enterprise.

Economic determinism reduces decision making in television entertainment programming to one variable. It is proposed that decision making in entertainment programming is more complex and includes variables pertaining to financial, bureaucratic, production, and creative requirements. Since environmental uncertainty is high in the television industry in which the networks operate, the control of risk is an essential element in programming decisions. Factors associated with these variables are differentially assessed at the various stages of decision making in the program process. The weight of each factor varies with the type of decision and with the hierarchical position of the decision-makers in the organization.

Analysis of Programming Jobs and Problem Solving

Network programming executives occupy a type of role which is called a "boundary" position. Programmers interact

with role partners located within their own organization and within other organizational domains.

When the network executive is attending to the development task, he is acting as a purchasing agent, taking in potential inventory which may or may not be used in production. The executive in this capacity can also be compared to a research or development engineer who makes a prototype, in this case a pilot film, which the organization may or may not decide to manufacture. In economic terms, the pilot film is a one-shot demonstration good. The development phase is similar to creative marketing jobs in the sense that these executives are evolving the broadcast market for potential categories of shows to develop.

In the current or on-air programming phase, the network executives perform in a way similar to production executives in a variety of industries. They supervise the product assembly and get the product into the marketplace.

Programming jobs in the prime time area have the least amount of complexity in comparison to programming in mini-series, movies, daytime and children's programs. Jobs in prime time are specialized. This is related to the way job responsibilities are structured. In a sense, it is also related to the wholeness or completeness of the task. It could be said that an individual in prime time holds a specific, segmented job in contrast to an individual in the other program areas, where the executive oversees the entire

project, from inception through development, all aspects of production, and promotional requirements.

Programming jobs have a relatively high degree of discretionary behaviors. According to March and Simon, when organizations place a greater emphasis on the goal rather than the means, the individual in the job can supply the means-end connection.³⁴ From the data, it is apparent that the goal of the organization, to have successful programs, is stressed. Thus, the range in executive behaviors can be explained. For example, programmers can choose to be initiators, negotiators, or evaluators when acting as gatekeepers. There are vast differences in the degree to which network executives offer creative guidance and this is self-determined rather than organizationally imposed. Additionally, when boundary spanning jobs are located in positions where the environment is uncertain, discretion allows the individual to meet contingencies. Consequently, uncertainty is reduced for the organization.³⁵

The decisions that are made by almost all of the programmers in the sample are operating decisions. Executives attending to the tasks of program development and maintenance are part of the operating subsystem of the organization. Although most in the group have the title of

³⁴J. March and H. A. Simon, Organizations (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1958), p. 148.

³⁵J. D. Thompson, Organizations in Action (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967), pp. 111-12.

vice president, they do not take part in the goal-setting, policy-making and strategic planning for the network or the entertainment division.³⁶

Decisions regarding the schedule are strategic in nature. The ordered roster of programs becomes the product line for the network. These decisions are made in the context of a limited number of competitors in a closed market situation and the goal of the decisions is to increase the market share of the network. As such, decisions of this kind, which are both strategic and determine whether or not a particular product will be made, are always made at the most senior levels of management in any organization. In this respect, television organizations do not differ from organizations in other industries.

The networks operate in an environment characterized by a high degree of uncertainty. The need to control for uncertainty and risk is a common element in decision making at each level of the organization and in each stage of the program process. Because of this uncertainty, it is difficult for the network to ascertain cause/effect relationships. For the network, cause/effect relationships mean determining which programs will be accepted by the audience and meet with success.³⁷ It is proposed that the high degree of

³⁶Kast and Rosenzweig, Organization and Management, pp. 111-14.

³⁷Thompson, Organizations in Action, pp. 134-36.

risk and uncertainty in the television industry in the context of financial considerations, shapes the way decisions are made at both the co-ordinative and operative levels of the organization. The high degree of risk and environmental uncertainty affect the organization's reaction to short-run feedback, the acceptance of suboptimal criteria in program decisions, and the degree to which non-rational or intuitive information is used in decision making.

It is suggested that networks and their decision makers act in a manner similar to that described by Cyert and March.³⁸ When confronted with a high degree of uncertainty, organizations employ a strategy to avoid that condition. One adaptation is to emphasize the short-run reaction to short-run feedback; that is, organizations solve the pressing problems rather than develop long-term strategies. Problem-solving becomes a series or occurs in stages; each problem is solved as it arises. This is apparent in the patterns of program development, maintenance, and continual refinement of the schedule. When decision makers refine the schedules after the television season has begun, they are adapting to environmental uncertainty.

Another aspect which allows the organization to impose a control on the environment is through negotiation with competitors. This is not to imply that actual agreements have been made but that certain behaviors become

standardized and conventions arise which all competitors in the industry follow. For example, ratings as measurement of program success represent one way of attempting to organize and systematize industry relationships among the networks, the advertisers and the program suppliers.³⁹ From our reports, very little difference occurs among the networks in terms of operations and approach to strategic decisions such as scheduling.

It is proposed that program decisions are characterized by teleological thinking in that a desired future outcome, a successful entertainment program, determines decision making in the present time. This goal-oriented thinking allows decision makers to operate under conditions of certainty with regard to the desired outcome of the decision, but in programming decisions the cause/effect relationship for the decision outcome is uncertain. This is characteristic of the situation which is present in all stages of the program process. Because of this uncertainty in cause/effect relationships, optimal decisions are extremely difficult to attain. Optimal decisions approach a utopian ideal because complete knowledge is implied. Under the conditions of uncertainty in which the network operates, it is more likely that in a choice situation a suboptimal alternative will be selected. Decisions of this kind are

³⁹Pekurny, "Coping with Television Production."

satisficing; an alternative falls within the realm of criteria which describe minimally acceptable alternatives and the chosen alternative meets or exceeds those criteria.⁴⁰

Information is essential to decision making. It is a means for evaluating alternative courses of action. Any increase in information to the decision making can alter the degree of uncertainty in a particular circumstance. The organization learns through planning, implementation, and feedback systems. Feedback systems provide the information that allows the organization to evaluate their choice and course of action. The main source of objective data to these decision makers is audience research and the Nielsen rating. The accuracy and the reliability of audience research and the ratings system have been questioned, both in the literature and by the study sample group.⁴¹

When a feedback system is weak or imperfect, the quality and quantity of information is affected and the organization decision makers must look to other sources for knowledge. It is proposed that the use of the group process as the major mode of decision making and the inclusion of non-rational or intuitive-conceptual approaches are methods of obtaining additional information to be used in the choice process.

⁴⁰March and Simon, Organizations, pp. 140-41.

⁴¹Pekurny, "Coping with Television Production."

Decision Groups and Intuitive Conceptual
Reasoning in the Network Setting

The group process plays a number of parts in decision making and in defining the work role of the network executive. Research on group decisions has indicated that two types of effects impinge on the problem solving process. One is based on the pooling of individual judgments and the other concerns social influence. Both aspects of group decision making apply to our data on network executives within the organizational and environmental context in which they are situated.

In groups, error can be controlled since not all members will make the same mistakes while seeking information or solutions. There is a belief that the majority judgment is superior to the average judgment of any one member of the group. The aspects of the problem can be divided among the participants, thus speeding up the solution process. Group members can collectively provide more options towards solutions than can any one member of the group, and because ideas must be openly communicated to others, the members express their ideas with greater clarity.⁴² The group process for network executives becomes a source of information gathering for input into

⁴²G. Lindzey (ed.), Handbook of Social Psychology (Cambridge: Wesley Addison, 1959). The discussion of group characteristics is essentially Lindzey's summary of work by H. H. Kelley and J. Thibaut; J. G. March and H. A. Simon, Organization (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1958), pp. 180-82.

decisions. And this applies in both the process with suppliers as well as in internal group meetings.

A number of methods are used by groups to arrive at decisions. One of these methods is consensus. In consensus, members agree on the most acceptable solution. This does not mean that the solution is the optimum one. Research has indicated that the consensus approach is a strong one since differences in judgments are used creatively. These differences are sought and encouraged and taken into account. Thus, a wide range of information and opinions emerge and, according to Hall, there is a greater chance that the group will reach a more adequate answer to the problem. Groups are actually thought to open the decision system by providing more information and as such the process becomes a more effective and efficient mode of problem-solving.⁴³

Research does indicate that groups usually make conservative decisions. They have been criticized for reaching decisions which have the "lowest common denominator." In a sense, they do tend to arrive at what is considered standard and they may do this in an attempt to diminish risk. Although another solution may appear to bring larger gains, the risk of a loss carries a greater weight, so the status

⁴³J. Hall, "Decisions, Decisions, Decisions," Psychology Today (November 1971), pp. 51-54.

quo is often maintained.⁴⁴ Group process also spreads the risk involved in any decision. One individual no longer has to be solely responsible. The responsibility becomes diffused. In some cases, this may actually allow the group to break away from a status quo type of decision.⁴⁵

Rationality in decision making is a function of the amount of knowledge on the part of the participants. Ideal rationality assumes complete knowledge. When groups come to solutions using the consensus technique, the decision may actually be one that approaches the traditional concept of rationality. Members have contributed more information, accepted the alternatives as best in a given situation and participate less in second guessing.⁴⁶

The executives in our study reported that most decision making takes place in groups. The groups use the consensus approach both in situations within the network organization and in creative meetings with suppliers. In view of the literature on group decision making, it would appear that the group consensus approach is an adaptive and effective technique for problem solving in the context of the television environment. It provides information and

⁴⁴Kast and Rosenzweig, Organization and Management, p. 405.

⁴⁵J. A. Stoner, "Risky and Cautious Shifts in Group Decisions: The Influence of Widely Held Values," Journal of Experimental Social Psychology (October 1968), pp. 442-59.

⁴⁶Kast and Rosenzweig, Organizations, pp. 405-06.

acts as a way to diffuse risk and individual responsibility in a setting where uncertainty in cause/effect relationships is high and information is imperfect.

Intuitive Conceptual Approaches

The traditional approaches to problem solving have emphasized that decisions should proceed using rationality and logic. It is assumed that the decision maker has complete knowledge of all the alternatives and through logic can plan, organize, and control.⁴⁷ However, there is research to indicate that management decisions may, in fact, depend on intuitive strategies. Use of intuitive strategies, that is, relying on "soft" data such as gestures, facial expressions, voice tone, general hearsay and personal feelings, is often found among top level managers and thus use of this kind of strategy has been related to organizational level. However, there is also evidence to indicate that reliance on the intuitive-conceptual approach is also connected to the type of problem and that both the traditional logical-analytical and the intuitive-conceptual strategies are important to decision making. They are not mutually exclusive methods.⁴⁸

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 368.

⁴⁸See H. Mintzberg, "Planning on the Left Side and Managing on the Right," Harvard Business Review (July-August 1976), pp. 49-58; Kast and Rosenzweig, Organization and Management, pp. 343-44.

Relating the major characteristics of group decision making to the use of the intuitive-conceptual approach can provide insight into the way network executives make decisions. The executives in the study reported that decisions were made in groups and that the groups used the consensus approach both in situations within the network organization and in creative meetings with suppliers. We also know that, to a large extent, these executives used the term "gut instinct" as one factor they applied in decision making. From the characteristics of the group process, it is apparent that the group acts as an information pool for these executives. It also diffuses the risk involved in both arriving at and implementing a solution. The group process is one adaptation to the high degree of uncertainty which exists in the television environment.

The use of "gut instinct," a non-cognitive and intuitive element, can be viewed as an attempt to include another piece of information into the decision process. The feedback and information systems available to the executives --the Nielsen ratings and program research--are considered weak. They are excellent in de facto explanations, but as instruments which help predict they are clearly not accurate and, by design, they cannot be. Thus, the executives come to rely on intuitive materials as a source of guidance in reaching decisions. As recent research on non-traditional approaches to problem solving has indicated, the network

executives' reliance on intuition does not have to be perceived as an attempt to mystify or as concealment to protect their power as proposed by Gitlin.⁴⁹ Rather, we can interpret this behavior as an adaptive attempt to deal with a particular kind of problem solving, one which occurs in the context of great uncertainty and risk as well as an inadequate information system relating to success. This occupational group is not unique in their use of an intuitive strategy; managers in other industries also include non-cognitive elements in the decision process.⁵⁰

But can group consensus provide the decision with an element of rationality, as suggested in the literature, when the information is basically of the subjective kind? Intuitive conceptual strategies are confined to the individual. Once the information is imparted by the individual to the group, the nature of the material changes. The information is modified by the process; it becomes public and subject to question, interpretation and change. Thus, it becomes more objective in character. This, in turn, allows the decision to approach the logical-conceptual type.

By looking at the characteristics of the logical-analytical and the intuitive-conceptual approaches, it becomes apparent that the idea of gender-based differences

⁴⁹Gitlin, Inside Prime Time, p. 22.

⁵⁰Kast and Rosenzweig, Organization and Management, p. 344.

in decision making or leadership styles in management is actually a misconception. What had been termed as masculine and feminine approaches to decision making are actually gender-neutral logical processes that are not mutually exclusive designs but that interact and are utilized according to the type of problem under scrutiny and the context in which the problem is situated.

The logical-analytical approach is parallel to traditional views of men as decision-makers. Rationality becomes equivalent to the all-knowing male, emotion does not enter into the process, and the decision is made by the individual, not the group. The intuitive conceptual approach is parallel to the way women are characterized as decision makers. Women rely on soft data; they utilize their emotions as well as nonverbal cues from others when assessing a decision. Women exhibit more cooperative behaviors and are likely to work in groups when solving problems.

However, it is evident both in the literature and the data provided by this sample of network executives that men and women use both decision strategies interchangeably. It is clear from the discussion of "gut instinct" that both men and women draw on their emotions and personal experiences in decision making. What does vary is the experiential material of the individual which acts as an informational input when either strategy is selected. Men

and women do have different experiences based upon gender. However, it is within the realm of the individual's ability to control for those experiences by modifying the known information. Consequently, by seeking more and various kinds of information, the individual provides a correction factor and the ability to reach a gender-neutral decision is possible. For example, both male and female respondents stated that they actively try to control for their own subjectivity in decision making. According to the data, they rely on the same sources to temper their subjectivity. Both male and female programmers seek additional inputs of information to objectify their decisions.

The patterned process of development, the interactions between the networks and the creative suppliers, the criteria in selection of ideas and talent, are all ways of structuring the industry, and through structure there is an attempt to impose order and control. For example, the data indicate that program development is sequential and that patterned sequence applies to all creative suppliers doing business with a network. Even the A group, the most coveted producing and writing talent, deal in a procedural way with the network. They may be guaranteed a series commitment and be dealing with the president of the division rather than a director or vice president of development, but certain steps with the network are followed. One senior programming official reported that every creative individual follows the

same process with the network regardless of their status.

The A group of people go through the same thing. The system works best when they talk out the things they're going to do. They may be talking them out with the president as opposed to somebody two steps down but they should not be working in a vacuum. When it works best it is because there is a process.

Contrary to other accounts, the executives in this study discussed an identifiable program process. They were cognizant of the way the television industry operates and the method by which entertainment programs are realized. They presented criteria for decisions pertaining to the various stages in the life cycle of a program. What the programmers did not know was which show would be a ratings success--and that is something that is difficult to know because the key variable involved is too difficult to control. Audience behavior is the key variable and one factor that is extremely difficult to predict. And predicting consumer behavior and acceptance of any product in any industry is not an exact science. In this respect, the television industry is not alone.

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