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Gender then, gender now: surveying women's participation in Australian film and television industries

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Gender then, gender now: surveying women's participation in Australian film and television industries

Abstract

In the Australian audiovisual industries, women are a minority of the personnel in a large number of key creative roles and have considerably lower representation than in the Australian workforce generally. Despite the decline in their participation across several fields, the under-representation of women is not being addressed by these industries. Using findings from current research that includes a major survey of Victorian activity, this article engages with the urgent need for new approaches to thinking about the contribution and innovation of women: culturally, creatively and economically. Benchmarked against the last major study in 1992 (Cox and Laura), pivotal issues examined include barriers to progression, representation by job type, and workplace/organisational cultures, along with a consideration of the current successes (relative to other areas) of women in television. Business, cultural and social arguments are made for the importance of gender equity, and an understanding of the contribution and value of women to these industries.

Keywords: gender; female workforce participation; audiovisual; film and television; Australia; Australian cinema.

Subject classification codes: NA

Gender then, gender now: surveying women's participation in Australian film and television industries

The Australian film industry is full of talent and successful women, but this doesn't mean gender imbalance is a thing of the past. (Pearson 2011, 5)

Introduction

Women are a minority by percentage in a large number of key creative roles in Australian audiovisual industries (Screen Australia 2012a¹), and have considerably lower representation than in the Australian workforce generally (see ABS 2012). This is a significant problem facing the film, television and related industries. Indeed, in some fields, the participation of women has declined and, as I have written elsewhere, there is evidence of a global decline in the participation of women in audiovisual industries in the period after 1998 and up to 2007 (French, 2012b). While studies of media industries (e.g. Cox and Laura, 1992; French 2012a) have identified issues urgently needing attention (e.g., stereotyped assumptions, gendered ghettos, and a lack of success in improving female participation rates in many fields), gender inequity has failed to make it onto the agenda and the under-representation of women in this workforce is not being addressed.

The first part of this article discusses the findings from recent research that includes a major survey of Australian audiovisual industries based in Victoria. The survey was conducted in 2010 and published in 2012 (French 2012a)—henceforth referred to as 'the survey'. Benchmarked against the last major study by Cox and Laura (1992), pivotal issues examined in the survey include barriers to progression, representation by job type, and workplace or organizational cultures. The discussion here provides an outline of the shifts in the participation of women in the Victorian audiovisual industries, and the major changes and characteristics discovered over the twenty years since the last major survey was undertaken in 1992 (Cox and Laura). This article includes some conclusions made by the author about what these findings mean for Victorian audiovisual industries in relation to women. The paper explores business, cultural and social arguments for the importance of gender equity, and

examines the contribution and value of women to these industries. To date there has been little significant research undertaken on the status of women in the Australian audiovisual industries and this research begins to address this gap. The second part of this article explores the evidence suggesting that women are achieving greater success and participation in the television industry than in other sectors.

The case for gender equality

Despite anti-discrimination policies, gender inequality is a persistent feature of employment in Australia (Charlesworth 2010), and ‘many of the indicators of progress in equal opportunities for women appear to have ground to a halt’ (Australian Government/EWOA 2009, 9). While ‘[o]ccupational discrimination against women continues to be a serious problem in Australia’ (Braithwaite 1993, 109), over the last decade gender equality has largely vanished from the policy agenda (Thornton 2004). In Australia,

despite higher levels of educational attainment by women, they are still not equally represented in the labour market. For example in June 2009, the labour market participation rate for women in Victoria was 57.6 per cent, in comparison to 71.8 per cent for men... In terms of financial independence, as at June 2009, women in Victoria on average earned 16 per cent less a week than their male counterparts (Victorian Government 2008-09).

From this it is clear that gender inequality exists in Australian society with respect to equal workforce participation, pay and opportunity. The Australian Federal Government recognised this in 2012 with the passing of the ‘Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Amendment Bill 2012’ (Parliament of Australia, 2012). The bill aims to promote gender equality, achieve full and equal participation, eliminate discrimination on the basis of gender, foster consultation in the workplace between employers and employees on issues related to gender equality. Importantly, it requires employers with over 100 employees to lodge reports on gender equity indicators (e.g. pay equity), and this data is monitored for compliance by the newly created Workplace Gender Equality Agency (formerly the Equal Opportunity in the Workplace Agency). It should be noted that this bill will not affect large sections of audiovisual industries, given many media companies employ fewer than 100 people,

and a large segment of the workforce is comprised of freelancers; nevertheless, it is a significant acknowledgement and policy direction.

The first important task in relation to improving women's participation in Australian audiovisual industries is to get gender on the agenda as an issue. While gender inequality exists, the failure to address it in mainstream funding and production sectors indicates the low priority rank of gender equity. Making things worse, affirmative action initiatives that previously existed have been disbanded, e.g. the Australian Film Commission's Women's Film Fund (1976-1989). Recent Screen Australia statistics (Screen Australia, 2012a) confirm that women are a minority in producing, directing and writing roles for both feature and documentary. In feature production women held between 18 and 34 per cent of these key creative roles between 2006 and 2011. Screen Australia (2012c) reported a decline in directing by women between the 1990s and 2000s, but provided production investment in 2012 to thirteen projects, only two of which (15 per cent), had sole female directors. This suggests that while inequities are being reported, this data does not articulate into funding policy or programs. Screen Australia does not have gender based affirmative action programs, published targets to increase the participation of women, and gender issues/initiatives were not reported in the organization's annual report (Screen Australia, 2011/12). The key organization representing directors, The Australian Directors Guild, has no policy to increase women's participation, and has not lobbied to achieve this, or to have the issue raised in industry fora. In order to achieve change and rectify this imbalance, there first must be recognition that there *is* inequity, that the progress of women has been too slow, and change is overdue. Both quantitative and qualitative data will inform the design of policy initiatives to address and correct the inequities that persist.

The significant costs of gender inequity extend also to industry workplaces where, if the skills of *all* people, including women, are not fully utilised, the industry risks the loss of significant talent and experience. Increasing the gender balance of audiovisual workplaces may attract more women and arguably produce more productive workplaces. Producer Sue Maslin has observed that although filmmaking is hierarchical, 'women producers not only give orders but are possibly more attuned to listening to their crew and observing outcomes (Morgan 2004, 11). This points to a way that women might influence changes in workplace cultures to be more encouraging, focused on relationships and effective communicators. While men may

also adopt such approaches, organizational culture appears to be a significant barrier to women in audiovisual industries, as indicated by qualitative data and the following comments in the survey: ‘middle managers are not willing to listen’; broadcasting is ‘very male-dominated and blokey’; ‘male directors wanting to work with male editors’; ‘discriminatory supervisors’; ‘work/life balance being of constant concern’; and ‘an industry that is not very family friendly...[with] a huge divide for support for women with families’ (French 2012a). Many sectors within the industry are not female-friendly and women expressed dissatisfaction with workplace cultures (as did some men, who also reported ‘blokey’ cultures, indicating that men are aware of, and interested in changing workplace cultures, and in varied communication styles, including those that may be regarded as more feminine, e.g. less ‘blokey’). As Sharon Bell has observed, a lack of gender balance ‘impacts negatively on men as well as women by narrowing choice and reinforcing historic workforce patterns’ (2009, p.10). It is likely that where there are not co-operative workplaces, there will be more dissatisfaction, less ability to enact change, and potentially creativity may be inhibited.

Women as Innovators in Audiovisual Industries

In addition to being fundamental to civil rights, equity and social inclusion have significant consequences in economic, ethical, social, cultural and legal terms which make equal participation of women vital for global, Western industrialized audiovisual industries (French 2012b). Indeed, productivity and innovation depend on it. There is a business case that links diversity to innovation, because high quality human capital is critical both to innovation and productivity (Cutler & Company 2008, x-xii). Women are frequently *the* pivotal agents of change through initiating and driving reforms that may not otherwise occur (Crooks 2009).

There are good business arguments for improving the representation of women in key creative roles. For example, it has been reported that 9% of the top grossing U.S. films were from female directors (Geena Davis Institute 2013). Given that in 2011 women were only 5% among directors of the top grossing 250 feature films (Lauzen 2012), this is an even more impressive achievement. UK data has revealed that women write films that are as likely to gain a release, and that their films are marginally more financially effective (Sinclair et al 2006). Performing exceptionally well on the international stage, Australian women have played a

significant role in promoting the industry and increasing confidence in Australian creative talent. Their work has been internationally recognised and successful; something that has arguably contributed to an inflated perception of their actual participation. In the feature film industry women have achieved a greater proportional success than their numerical representation of between 18 and 33 per cent of key creative roles (see Table 1). Women have received significant accolades in a variety of film industry fields on the international stage, for example, in feature production: writer director Jane Campion (*The Piano*, *Bright Star*); producers Jan Chapman (*The Piano*, *Lantana*) and Jane Scott (*Shine*, *Mao's Last Dancer*); editor Jill Bilcock (*Muriel's Wedding*, *Red Dog*); screenwriter Laura Jones (*The Portrait of a Lady*, *Brick Lane*); cinematographer Mandy Walker (*Australia*, *Red Riding Hood*); and two-time Academy Award winner, production and costume designer Catherine Martin (*Moulin Rouge!*, *The Great Gatsby*). Many of these women have also made important contributions to global cinema through telling stories from female perspectives, often with central female protagonists. Their success is significant because it indicates that stories featuring female characters, brought to the screen by women in key creative roles, have strong business value, as evidenced by the success of the women in the list above, all of whom (except one), have a film listed in the top 20 on Screen Australia's box office web site for the 'Top 100 Australian Feature films of all time'. Therefore, from a creative perspective, women's moving image production adds value in offering gendered perspectives and aesthetics, and, if audiovisual industries fail to achieve a gender balance, they will arguably fail to capitalise on the full range of new interesting ideas, stories or innovative approaches.

The current industry in relation to women's participation

Screen Australia collects selected data on the participation of women in some sectors of audiovisual industries. Table 1 (below) offers a picture of the participation by gender of people working in the key creative roles of writer, director and producer in the feature film industry in Australia. This data provides evidence that the participation of women in key creative roles in Australian feature film production 1990/91-2008/09 was between 18 and 33 per cent. The data in Table 1, based on Screen Australia's analysis of 395 Australian features (shot between July 1990 and

June 2009) shows 431 people produced a feature (33 per cent of them were women), 290 people directed a feature (18 per cent women) and 445 wrote a feature (20 per cent women).

Table 1: Number and sex of feature filmmakers credited in various roles, 1990/91–2008/09

[Table 1 near here]

In order to consider the progress of women over time, I have compared Screen Australia's recent figures (Table 1), with two earlier industry surveys (Cox and Laura 1992 and Marsh & Pip 1987). Table 2 (below) indicates two critical trends:

a) women have not made significant progress in recent years in the feature film sector, and b) that within the industry there has been some decline in women's participation.

Table 2 reveals that from 1985, the participation of women began to increase in these three key creative roles in the feature film industry in Australia. Despite the gains made in 1985/6-1992, in the period 1990/91-2008/09 women's participation declined to the point that 18% of directors are women in the 1990/91-2008/09 data, which is an increase of 11% from 1985/6, but a decline of 4% from 1992. In the last two decades (since 1992), women's participation has declined in feature producing, directing and writing.²

Table 2: Comparison of Surveys

[Table 2 near here]

The Survey: 'Women in the Victorian Film, Television and Related Industries'

In November 2010 I conducted a survey to provide a comprehensive statistical and qualitative analysis of women's participation in audiovisual industries in Victoria (French, 2012a). One hundred and thirty-five people working in the Victorian film, television and related industries (including digital media and games) were surveyed. Data was gathered on issues affecting women, the progress of women in various

sectors, training, career pathways, employment security and mobility.

Survey Design and Sample

A key aspect of the methodology for the French 2012a survey was to use slightly updated versions of the same questions asked when the last major industry survey was undertaken (Cox and Laura, 1992). This was embarked upon with permission from Screen Australia, and was intended to facilitate a comparison, so as to establish what changes had occurred over the last two decades, and to provide some data to ascertain whether women had improved their participation in audiovisual industries. The Cox and Laura 1992 national survey had 148 responses from Victoria, which is a similar size to the 2010 survey (French 2012a), therefore making valid any comparisons between the results of the two surveys. There were 23 multiple choice questions asked and opportunities for respondents to provide qualitative responses (e.g. ‘Other—please specify’). Respondents were told that responses were required from both men and women, but that the survey was ‘of employment of women in the film, television and related industries (including digital media and games) in Victoria’, with an aim of understanding women’s participation in audiovisual industries. The total of 135 respondents was seen as statistically valid, as was the response by 114 women. The male sample, however, is small and thus indicative only males in audiovisual industries.

The French 2012a survey respondents were secured through industry partners including guilds, unions and representative bodies within the industries. These industry partners encouraged their members and stakeholders to complete the survey; they were Women In Film and Television (WIFT, Vic); Sue Maslin, Independent Film Producer (Film Art Media); The Australian Writers’ Guild (AWG, Vic.); The Australian Film Institute (AFI); The Victorian Women’s Trust; Film Victoria; and The Australian Teachers of Media (ATOM). The industry newsletter *Screen Hub* promoted the survey to the industry broadly. Supporting partners also assisted with survey design and testing, as did an experienced advisory board: Sharon Bell, Sue Maslin and Leonie Morgan. Consultant Jonathan Sargent (Stats On) was engaged to produce quantitative reporting, including tables, which appear in the final 62-page report (French 2012a).

While the survey was intended to cover all sectors of the Victorian audiovisual industry, including digital media and games, the respondents were largely (although

not exclusively) from the film and television sectors. The male sample mainly worked in the film industry (43%), while female sample were strongly drawn from the TV industry (40%). While the survey was broadly circulated, the strong representation from the film and television sectors is likely to be the result of having promoted the survey through the guilds and unions, whose members work in more traditional areas of employment across the audiovisual industries. Respondents self-selected to undertake the survey. The bulk of those surveyed had been in their industry more than 10 years (62% of women and 76% of men), indeed, many had been working 15–25 years (52% of men and 29% of women).

Some key findings

The survey (undertaken in November 2010) and related research comprised a pilot project to ascertain whether an Australia-wide survey of audiovisual industries should be undertaken. Given that the pilot revealed that many of the problems identified twenty years ago still persist, the primary recommendation is that actions to increase women's participation in audiovisual industries are urgently needed. The specific course such correctives will take may be better informed with further research to refine our understanding of the context and the mechanisms that will sustain the necessary change.

Female respondents to the survey observed that there had been greater improvement for women in the last ten years, but fewer advances over the past five years. Among the gains reported, a majority of respondents felt that attitudes to women had improved, and that there were more opportunities for women. The percentage of women working part-time in audiovisual industries was high at 35% by comparison to the Australian Bureau of Statistics 2004 census measure of women working part-time overall in the Australian workforce at 24% (ABS 2006). Also notable was the finding that workforce in audiovisual industries is largely self-employed (57% of women and 67% of the men). This suggests that an important skill in these industries is the ability to generate and manage one's own work/business. There was evidence that women had increased participation in jobs with management responsibilities, and they had a relatively high (increased) representation in commercial television (23%).

While two-thirds of women felt they weren't getting promoted at an acceptable rate, women in television were being promoted more often than in other sectors.

There was quantitative evidence that not all women support other women coming up behind them (a 'queen bee' syndrome also reported in the 1992 Cox and Laura survey). Discrimination is still an issue, notably women felt that stereotyped assumptions were being made about their abilities. 24% of women felt pressure to 'act like one of the boys' (men also reported a pressure to act like 'one of the boys'—indicating the prevalence of masculine cultures). Women testified to feeling excluded from groups and noticed an unequal division of tasks between the sexes. Sexual harassment was still being described by 16% of women (5% of the men surveyed also ticked a box indicating that they had been affected by, and experienced sexual harassment in the workplace). There was generally very poor awareness of affirmative action and EEO policies.

In relation to training, a significant number of women (69%) had undertaken courses; around one third held a Bachelor's degree, and 19% were undertaking, or had undertaken postgraduate degrees. Both genders achieved high participation in short or industry courses. The survey indicated that women generally undertook more training and education than men, confirming data from past surveys, but given the small number of men in this survey, more research is required. An interesting finding across all respondents (male and female), was that the third highest 'current/most frequent job' over the previous two years had been academic/teaching, a discovery that indicates a high preference for academic work where employment in audiovisual industries is unavailable (possibly because there is a large casual workforce in tertiary/post-secondary education). For both men and women, lack of opportunity was the main reason preventing mobility across jobs, but women also noted lack of experience, contacts or mentoring, indicating other perceived barriers to mobility.

As outlined in the survey report (French 2012a), family responsibilities were not found to be a significant hindrance for women attempting to find jobs in the industry, and 76% agreed family was not an issue. This was a significant shift from the previous survey (Cox and Laura, 1992), where family responsibilities were rated as hindering ability to work in the industry. However, in the French 2012a survey, 75% of women did not have dependents living at home with them. An absence of women with children is a possible explanation for the shift in opinion. The survey indicated that the female population in the industry had aged, and few women with dependent children are working in the industry. However, where women with families are

working, it is hard, and the difficulty may explain why women with dependent children appear to have left the industry: 'Family commitments are too much to take on long hours for more than a week or so. I also need to feel in control of my hours in case I need to take time off because of family commitments.'; 'The industry is not very family friendly, particularly for key roles not based in the production office. In my experience there is a huge divide in support for women with families ... It is virtually a career plunged into either a holding pattern or oblivion, to progress and develop simply isn't an option. Mothers don't get the support they need to develop professionally'.

Where women had families, they were perceived as a barrier to progression: 'Family commitments make it difficult to commit to high powered/high level jobs, which in turn means you don't have the experience for better jobs as time goes on. One tends to stagnate & you feel you've missed the boat in terms of advancing your career. You're lucky to have salvaged whatever you have of a career with children'. For the industries, the consequence of a career slowdown on the "mummy track" is a net loss of the perspectives, approaches and skills of this demographic. In addition, younger women reported being discouraged by stereotyping, discrimination, or negative assumptions about their abilities related to youth discrimination: 'I was was labeled with being unexperienced as I just came out of film school! This meeting really discouraged me from applying [to Screen Australia] again'. Combined, these findings suggest a future with decreased participation by women.

Consistencies with Cox & Laura's 1992 survey include gender segregation. Script and direction continue to be male dominated, and production management is female dominated, a finding confirmed by Screen Australia's research on gender breakdowns in various jobs (Screen Australia a & c). Qualitative data revealed that women believe they have different job opportunities to men, need more training to succeed, and have less secure employment, even though many of these women had been in the industry for a long time (62% had worked in it between 11 and 25 years or more). This, and other data indicate that many women are rewarded by, and gain satisfaction from their work in the audiovisual industries, despite the many difficulties they experience.

While specific gender inequalities persist, in 2010 there were economic conditions that affected the entire industry (French, 2012a). These included the generally diminished state of the industry which qualitative data indicated as having

been caused by an economic downturn, small budgets, lack of opportunities, low remuneration, declining working conditions, and a sense of stagnation. Indeed, the very low salaries in the industry were a significant observation of the survey; as shown in Table 3:

Table 3: Gross yearly earnings for the financial 2008/09 year

[Table 3 near here]

Sixty percent of women worked full-time and 35% part-time (5% were unemployed). Women reported lack of funding or income as a significant barrier, and as in other industries, the indications were that they were paid less than men (noting that many working across audiovisual industries are low paid and, according to EWOA data of May 2012, the Australian national pay gap is 17.4%³; however, the male respondents were too small a sample to substantiate this conclusively). The highest paid sector for both men and women was television.

Key recommendations—strategies for the future

It is important that moving forward researchers collect qualitative and quantitative data that maps the specific character and mechanisms of gender imbalance in order to provide overdue evidence for action. In order to tackle gender inequity, the problem first has to be recognized. Further research is needed to gather and analyse key issues, examine industry practices, and identify corrective mechanisms. A program of research would productively include work to achieve a greater understanding of the business case that connects diversity and innovation. This article has made an argument that women are a potential source of innovation, and this is worth further investigation because such an evidence base is likely to provide incentive for audiovisual industries to be more gender inclusive.

The survey raised many questions that need further inquiry, these include the question of why the audiovisual industries are aging, and younger women are not entering the industry. In areas where one gender dominates, questions include: what are the barriers to more equal participation, and what initiatives might change the gendered nature of particular fields? Recognition of what women contribute to the field, for example, via public awareness of contributions by women filmmakers

would also be significant in fostering women's belief in themselves, as well as developing a more accurate picture of women's work.

Support or strategies to turn around the minority participation of women might include initiatives such as more flexible workplaces and support for career interruption due to child rearing. Programs to encourage women to better plan careers and to understand their leadership potential is also important. Mentoring, including mentoring of women by men, particularly given that the survey found some evidence that women are not necessarily supporting other women, would also be significant. It is clear that initiatives are required to improve organizational cultures in developing a greater awareness of gender issues, discrimination, and EEO policies. Given that these kinds of initiatives are as much needed today as they were two decades ago, a key recommendation of the survey is that a national survey of audiovisual industries be undertaken and that ideally, this be linked to state and federal screen culture organizations and industry partners with an aim to influencing policy and industry practices.

Women in Television in Australia

Television has historically been a difficult area for women in Australia. As Julie James Bailey has observed (1999, 239), Australian television stations

have an organizational culture that was set up in the 1950s and 1960s when a woman's place was regarded as being in the home, and there are some men in senior positions who have difficulty thinking otherwise. There is still a very male culture....

This male culture has been extensively documented and evidenced in recent times (see Freeman 2011; Bodey 2011; Blonski 2001), but despite this, the survey (French 2012a) found a significant shift in that women appear to be having more success in television than in other parts of the Victorian audiovisual industries, and also greater participation.

The survey results indicate that women working in TV are more optimistic and less likely to believe conditions in the industry had deteriorated for women, or to report gender as a disadvantage. Women working in television have achieved promotion more often than in other sectors, and those working on serials/series television were more often earning around \$75,000 (and reported the highest salaries generally in the audiovisual industries).

Data published by Screen Australia (2012a) shows that between 1996 and 2011 there was a decline in women's participation in several fields (actors, television presenters, ticket ushers, TV equipment and broadcast transmitter operators); a slight decline in others (directors, art directors, editors, production assistants, sound technicians, theatre/cinema managers); while some fields remained static (lighting technicians and directors of photography). Women's participation in seven fields increased between 1996 and 2011 (artistic directors, camera operators, make-up artists, projectionists, program directors, technical directors, TV journalists). The areas achieving equal participation (or better) were artistic director (59%), make-up artist (95%), production assistant (70%), program director (53%), TV journalist (53%) and theatre/cinema manager (53%). These statistics, compiled by Screen Australia from Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data, provide evidence of women making progress in some fields, including in television (e.g. slight increases as camera operators, technical directors, television journalists), but also verify that progress to achieve increased participation by women in audiovisual industries has been slow; indeed in some areas there has not been progress over 15 years. Particularly concerning is that some rose in 2006 but declined again in the 2011.⁴ Therefore it is important not to be overly celebratory given the slow, or in some cases lack of progress, and a situation where gender segregation by job type still persists. For example women are still not achieving equal participation in technical areas: women comprised only 6% of both camera operators and directors of photography, 9% of sound technicians, and 12% of technical directors. In addition, women still dominate the job categories of production assistant and make-up artist.

Not all women support other women coming up behind them, but the evidence suggests that a critical mass effect operates: the more women there are in key creative roles, then the greater number of women are found in front of and behind the camera. Research undertaken in the United Kingdom confirms this finding: 'when women are involved in writing, production and directing, they create more female characters' (Bhavnani 2007, p. 12). A 2010 study undertaken in the US found that where women achieved equal representation as decision-makers behind the scenes, 'the number of female characters in a film increases', and 'the number of female actors grows' (Smith 2010). If one considers successes in recent Australian television, these trends are mirrored. For example, the majority of the series *Offspring* (2010+) was written and directed by women (Dirs. Kate Dennis, Shirley

Barrett and Emma Freedman, and writers Debra Oswald, Imogen Banks and Christine Bartlett). This was also the case for most of the ABC's 2011 *Miss Fisher's Murder Mysteries* (Dirs. Daina Reid, Kate Dennis and Emma Freeman and writers Kerry Greenwood, Debra Cox and Elizabeth Coleman). Moreover, women producers worked on all of these productions (Imogen Banks, Fiona Eagger and Deborah Cox). *Offspring*, the story of a 30-something obstetrician Nina Proudman (Asher Keddie), was co-created by Debra Oswald, Imogen Banks and John Edwards; *Miss Fisher's Murder Mysteries* was based on work from novelist Kerry Greenwood and brought to the screen by Deborah Cox and Fiona Eagger, it features a female detective in Phryne Fisher (Essie Davis).

There are a number of potential reasons for the current success of women in television. The survey revealed that attitudes towards women have improved, and it would appear that organizational cultures are shifting to better accommodate women in television (despite this sector having the lowest awareness of EEO policies). There are more women achieving management positions, which suggests both opportunity and striving (although the survey data does not confirm either with certainty).

In drama, female centered stories have performed well with audiences, not just in Australia, but internationally, and it may be that there is some positive discrimination towards women (something that would have to be tested with more research). In current affairs, including in front of the camera, older women are appearing more often on the screen, which would indicate more community and corporate acceptance of older women. In series and serials workers are, according to the survey, amongst the most highly paid in audiovisual industries (more likely to earn over \$75K), which may be why that group reported greater optimism and success than other sectors.

Looking at the performance of women in television in the 1990s, they achieved significant success and provided important role models who have arguably paved the way for the current success of women in television. For instance, Penny Chapman (in 2011 executive producer of *The Slap*), who in her role as ABC's Head of Drama 1989-1995 (becoming Head of ABC Television in 1995) made the decision to fund and be Executive Producer on female-centered programs like *Brides of Christ* (1991) and *Leaving of Liverpool* (1992). Sue Masters, who produced *Brides of Christ* and went on to be an executive producer on a string of shows centering on female characters, including *Correlli* (1995), *Simone de Beauvoir's Babies* (1997), and *Sea*

Change (1998-2000), later held roles including ABC's Head of Drama (1998-2000) and Drama Executive at Network 10 (2000-2009). Sandra Levy has been a successful Executive Producer on shows since the 1980s, including the more recent *McLeod's Daughters* (2006). These programs had strong and dedicated audiences, high ratings and caused industry people to think positively about both the skills of women and stories *about* women. Writing on women in Australian television, Leonie Morgan said, 'Every time a woman does well, it sends a signal to others. We really have to be optimistic' (Blonski 2001, 12).

Conclusion

Australian audiovisual industries are male-dominated in almost all fields. While there is 'widespread agreement that gender difference does make a difference in virtually all aspects of social experience' (Rhode 2003, 5), there has been little focus on gender in relation to workplace cultures in Australian audiovisual industries. There is an urgent need for these industries to attend to issues of discrimination, and to eliminate misconceptions and stereotypes about women both on and behind the camera. In order to increase the participation and retention of women in this cultural workforce, determined actions are required, strategies will need to be formed, and further research undertaken. Without the necessary change in culture and practice, Australia runs the risk of declining participation by women and an associated loss of creative productivity and capacity to innovate. As Mette Knudsen has observed, when

the products turned out by our media are mainly created by men, it's not only a pity for the women in the business, it's a pity for all of us. Because the consequence is that all of us - both women and men - miss out on a lot more multi faceted and much more interesting stories about our lives (2005, 7).

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Notes

¹ The data at the Screen Australia web site offering 'Proportion of men and women

employed in various occupations in selected audiovisual industries, 1996–2011’ shows that women are a minority in all audiovisual positions classified by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) in 2011 with the exception of 6 categories where women are the majority.

² Studies in other countries have also found there was a decline in participation during the 1990s, for example, Lauzen (2009) found a decline in the period after 1998 which did not start to improve until 2007.

³ According to an email to members from the group ‘Women on Boards’ (August 24, 2012), the EOWA data reveals that the gender pay gap in Australia has increased by 1.5 % over the last 18 years and therefore, women must work 66 days more than men in order to earn the same salary as their male counterparts.

⁴ Areas in television that showed progress from 1996 to 2006 but then declined at the 2011 count are production assistant, television presenter, TV equipment and broadcast transmitter operator.