

Coming Soon to a Station Near You?: The CRTC Policy on Sex-Role Stereotyping

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Après des années de demande des groupes de femmes, le gouvernement canadien a décidé en 1979 de s'attaquer aux stéréotypes féminins dans les médias électroniques. Il demanda donc au CRTC de former un groupe de travail composé de représentants des radiodiffuseurs, annonceurs et groupes de femmes et de s'assurer que des directives quant à la représentation des femmes soient produites et mises en place. Après un certain temps, ce groupe de travail décida que le secteur s'autoréglementerait sur une base volontaire. Le CRTC évalua cette expérience après deux ans et mis de l'avant (en 1986) sa politique sur les stéréotypes féminins dans les médias électroniques. Ce texte examine la raison d'être et les objectifs de cette politique du gouvernement fédéral et évalue son efficacité dans l'atteinte de ses objectifs.

After years of pressure from women's groups, the Canadian government, in 1979, chose to address the problem of stereotypical portrayals of women in the broadcast media. The Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) was asked to form a Task Force composed of representatives of broadcasting, advertising, and women's groups and to ensure that guidelines on the portrayal of women were written and implemented. Eventually the CRTC Task Force decided that the industry would apply self-created guidelines on a voluntary basis. After two years of industry self-regulation the CRTC evaluated this method of implementation, and in 1986 the Commission formulated its policy on sex-role stereotyping in broadcasting. This paper examines the rational for and goals of the federal government's sex-role stereotyping policy initiative, and evaluates the success of the policy in achieving its goals.

Introduction

The Canadian women's movement has been attacking the image of women in broadcasting for many years. In the 1970s, feminists protested the stereotypical portrayals of women on radio and television. The women's movement viewed the mass media as a malleable agent of social change and asked government to require the broadcast industry to promote egalitarian and progressive images of women. In 1979 the federal government addressed some of

the concerns of the women's movement, including the gender portrayal issue. The Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) was asked to create a Task Force to draft sex-role stereotyping guidelines and decide on a method for their implementation. This paper describes the reasons for the sex-role stereotyping initiative and analyses the Task Force process, which settled on industry self-regulation as a means of dealing with the problem. The subsequent CRTC policy on sex-role stereotyping in the broad-

cast media is examined and the effectiveness of the self-regulatory process is evaluated.

Attacking the Image

Canadian women have been criticizing their depiction in the broadcast media since the early years of radio programming.¹ During the 1970s women's groups began to protest in earnest. They argued that media images of women seriously constrained their integration into the public sphere of business and government. Women's groups were supported in their attack on the mass media by a body of academic research on television content and its effects which found that women were poorly represented and stereotypically portrayed, and that these portrayals helped reinforce traditional attitudes about gender roles.

Sex-role stereotypes are rigid and oversimplified generalizations of masculinity and femininity based on the assumption that males and females, by virtue of their sex, possess distinct psychological traits and characteristics (Basow, 1984:4-5). Stereotypes are manifested in broadcasting by portrayals of men and women which differ in terms of appearance, abilities, personality, power, occupation, and status. Content analyses conducted in the United States and Canada in the 1960s and 1970s showed very clearly that television images painted stereotypical portraits of women and men (Busby, 1974; Cantor, 1977; Caron, 1978; Courtney and Whipple, 1974; Greenberg, 1980; McNeil, 1975; Seegar and Wheeler, 1973; Tedesco, 1974; and Turow, 1974). According to television programming and advertising, women were young, attractive, married with children, working in the home or in 'pink collar' occupations. Women's attitudes and activities were focused on the home and family. Femininity was equated with dependence, nurturance, the performance of menial tasks, emotional volatility and relative powerlessness. Males were portrayed as young to middle-aged (usually older than the women), generally

attractive, independent, career-focused professionals. Men were in control of the action, wielding the power outside of the home. Masculinity was stereotyped as strong, active, authoritative, powerful (to an extreme of violence) and rational. Moreover, broadcast programming and advertising implied that men were more important, as there were many more of them. Male characters generally outnumbered female characters by a ratio of three to one.

In the mid-1970s, Canadian feminists began to lobby the government and the CRTC. Women's groups identified three problems with broadcasting: the unrepresentative and stereotypical portrayal of women; the underemployment of women by the broadcasting industry; and the industry's derisive treatment of the women's movement (see McDonald, 1980 and NAC, 1974). Lobbying took two forms. Informal protests included letters of complaint and telephone calls and articles in feminist publications. Formal protests included interventions at network licence renewal hearings. Women's groups appeared at the CBC's network licence renewal hearings in 1974 and 1978 and at the CTV's hearing in 1978 (NAC, 1974; NAC, 1978).

Tuning in: Creation of the CRTC Task Force

In 1979 the Government of Canada drafted a 'plan of action' to raise the status of women (Canada, 1979:9). The plan, called *Towards Equality for Women*, identified specific areas within federal jurisdiction for government action, and included a proposal to address the concerns of women with respect to sex role stereotyping in the broadcast media. The CRTC was asked to assist the broadcasting and advertising industries in developing guidelines for the elimination of sex role stereotyping and the Department of Communications was instructed to form a monitoring group which would publish its findings and thereby 'empower the public to bring pressure on

broadcasters and advertisers' (Canada, 1979:28). However, in April, 1979, the Minister of Communications, Jeanne Sauvé, delegated responsibility for all aspects of the initiative to the CRTC. She asked the Commission to form a Task Force representing industry and women's groups.

The Commission did so, albeit reluctantly. There were several reasons for its hesitance. First, the request represented a government directive to an 'independent' regulator, and was construed as interference in the Commission's regulatory agenda.² Secondly, some Commissioners and high level staff were 'dead set against' the Task Force, as they felt it would lead the Commission down a slippery slope toward censorship of broadcasting content.³ Also, senior staff did not believe that the pursuit of gender equality in broadcasting was within the CRTC's legislative mandate.⁴

Although other Commissioners and staff felt the Task Force was important, their support could not compensate for the fact that the sex-role stereotyping initiative was antithetical to the CRTC's 'managerial' approach to regulation. This approach emphasized management of industry structure and avoidance of interference in programming content (Salter, 1986:5) and was adopted in response to the Commission's escalating administrative burden and its new responsibility for telecommunications (Johnston, 1980:29). At the time of the Minister's request, the Commission was facing the demand for the licensing of pay television as well as coping with the rapidly expanding cable television industry.

The Commission's reluctance to take on this issue was illustrated by its approach to the Task Force; it was constituted as an independent study group and all of the CRTC appointees to the Task Force were part-time members of the Commission. The six public representatives were selected by the Minister of Communications and included the President of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC),

Lynn McDonald, Stella Baudot of the Fédération des Femmes du Québec, Beth Percival of the Prince Edward Island Advisory Council on the Status of Women, Sylvia Spring of Vancouver Status of Women, and the Editor of *Homemaker's* magazine, Jane Hughes. Industry representatives were chosen by industry groups in consultation with the CRTC and included CBC's Coordinator, Portrayal of Women in Programming, four representatives of the private broadcasting industry and four representatives of the advertising industry.⁵

The Task Force was expected to write a set of guidelines for the portrayal of women in broadcasting and to decide upon the best method for enacting the guidelines: industry self-regulation, CRTC regulation, or government legislation (CRTC, 1982:96). It became clear from the first meeting that these goals would be difficult to achieve as both sides held widely divergent perceptions, beliefs and objectives. The public representatives said advertising and programming was strongly sex-typed, thus playing a significant role in maintaining the discriminatory environment against women in Canadian society. Representatives such as Lynn McDonald believed that the tendency of the broadcasting media to overlook or trivialize the women's movement and its concerns severely compromised the ability of the movement to pursue its political agenda.⁶ The solution was twofold said the public members of the Task Force: equal employment of women within the industry and regulation of advertising and programming content. However, the former was ruled out from the very beginning, as the CRTC does not have the legislative authority to regulate employment practices within the broadcasting industry.

Private broadcasting and advertising representatives on the Task Force expressed incredulity with the public members' request for regulations. While the CBC, which had sex-role stereotyping programs in place, maintained that the problem was being dealt with, the private industry's initial stance was to deny the

existence of a problem. This stand-off between the public members and the private industry groups led to considerable animosity and even a resignation.⁷ The industry felt public representatives were not reflecting the views of Canadian women. The Association of Canadian Advertisers, for instance, said most Canadian women did *not* feel insulted by the portrayal of women on the airwaves and that the public members of the Task Force represented a 'singular feminist' point of view (*Financial Post*, 16 February 1980, p.14).

This perceptual impasse was breached in part by a series of public meetings held early in 1980. The public response clearly indicated that many Canadians were aware of and disturbed by the existence of sex-role stereotyping in the broadcast media (CRTC, 1982:10-28). The advertising representatives in particular were quick to see the implications of consumer dissatisfaction, and began in spring of 1980 to formulate a proposal for industry self-regulation.⁸ This proposal, along with agreement that there was a legitimate concern among the public about sex-role stereotyping and that the problem required action, allowed the Task Force to proceed, although members still disagreed about essential issues. On the one hand, the public members contended that sex-role stereotyping could best be dealt with by means of regulations imposed and enforced by the CRTC.⁹ On the other hand, the industry wanted the problem to be addressed internally. Regulations would represent unreasonable levels of interference in program content, said industry groups (*Financial Post*, 5 April 1980).

The compromise was industry self-regulation. The three industry groups (the CBC, the Advertising Advisory Board and the Canadian Association of Broadcasters) each developed self-regulatory guidelines and plans for their implementation. (See Appendix I for texts of the guidelines.) Although the public representatives originally expected the Task Force to produce a set of regulations to be administered by the

CRTC they felt compelled to compromise in light of the insistence by other Task Force members that self-regulation be given a chance. Public members requested a two-year trial period for self-regulation after which the CRTC would assess its effectiveness, and the Commission agreed. (CRTC, 1982:72-77).

Voluntary Industry Self-Regulation

The two-year trial period involved implementation of the industry plans, which had been ratified by the Task Force as a whole. This period represented a process of voluntary industry self-regulation, as there were no CRTC penalties which could be applied to those who breached the guidelines. Each segment of the industry formulated its own guidelines and plan of action for self-regulation. The latter entailed industry education and 'sensitization' (making members aware of the guidelines and of public concerns), and mechanisms for evaluating public complaints (see CRTC, 1986a). Material was distributed, seminars held, and complaints were received and tabulated.

The CBC's Office of the Portrayal of Women implemented CBC policies on gender portrayal and the Coordinator distributed documents and communicated with management (CBC, 1984). The Canadian Association of Broadcasters' (CAB) Standing Committee on Sex-Role Stereotyping circulated information about the Task Force and co-ordinated regional seminars in conjunction with the advertising industry (CRTC, 1986a:30-64). The Advertising Advisory Board (AAB) produced a video entitled 'Women Say the Darndest Things' and distributed the advertising guidelines to advertisers and their agencies (CRTC, 1986a:65-78).

The public representatives were also active during the trial self-regulatory period. A national lobby group, MediaWatch, was created to educate the public and act as a thorn in the side of the industry and the CRTC. MediaWatch developed a one-step

complaint form which facilitated public complaints, conducted a monitoring study of television and radio programming and advertising, produced a video on sexism in the media called 'Images of Women,' and lobbied the federal government for changes to the *Broadcasting Act*.

In September, 1983, the CRTC put out a public notice requesting all licencees to submit a report detailing their sex-role stereotyping initiatives. Licencees were asked to respond by 1 September 1984, but the deadline was extended to September 30, 1984. Only 66 per cent of eligible stations responded by 31 January, 1985 (CRTC, 1986b: 7). The CRTC outlined few parameters for reporting and responses ranged from that of a co-operative radio station in Vancouver, which stated that it had been aware of the issue of sex-role stereotyping since its inception and had drafted programming policies designed to avoid stereotyping, to replies of stations which refused to implement any aspect of industry plans for self-regulation (CRTC, 1986a:51-63).

CRTC Policy-Making

The Commission's role at the end of the self-regulatory period was to assess the efficacy of self-regulation and to render a policy decision based on this evaluation. The amount of time the CRTC took to come to a decision indicates that it was a difficult one. The self-regulatory period ended in September, 1985. Public hearings were held in Vancouver, Hull, and Montreal in April, 1986 (CRTC, 1986c; 1986d; 1986e). Finally, on 22 December, 1986, the Commission released its policy decision (CRTC, 1986b).

The Commission was faced with a dilemma. In a climate of deregulation, the CRTC was pressured by women's groups to flex its regulatory muscle. Women's groups, led by MediaWatch, were unanimous in stating that self-regulation had been ineffective and that stricter measures were required (CRTC, 1986c; 1986d; 1986e; King, 1987). Yet the Commission was hesitant to

invoke regulations. There was great concern about exercising undue influence and interference in a manner which threatened freedom of expression (CRTC, 1986c:249-50; CRTC, 1986e:30). Some Commissioners believed that if the CRTC regulated in the area of gender equality, the Commission would be expected to take responsibility for the portrayal of all minority groups identified by the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (CRTC, 1986e:174-5). Also, regulations must be written in precise language so that the Commission can take offenders to court; the sex-role stereotyping guidelines were much too vague to serve as regulations.

The actual evaluation of voluntary self-regulation was also difficult because the CRTC did not monitor progress and measure change successfully. When the period of self-regulation began, the CRTC Internal Committee on Sex-Role Stereotyping announced that it would be conducting a monitoring program, and this generated considerable concern on the part of some CRTC Commissioners and the private broadcasting and advertising industries. One of the three CRTC members who had refused to approve the report of the Task Force told the *Globe and Mail*, in confidence, that he was opposed to the recommendation that the CRTC monitor the industry: 'It's insidious and the principle is dangerous,' he said, 'Big Sister will be watching the media.' (*Globe and Mail*, 22 Nov. 1982).

The CRTC decided to undertake a comprehensive content analysis of programming and advertising at the end of the self-regulatory period, thus precluding ongoing analysis and any measurement of change (CRTC, 1985a). The CRTC commissioned ERIN Research to conduct content analyses in 1985, then released a report summarizing the effort of the industry and the research results (CRTC, 1986a). The ERIN data, which measured the industry as a whole, not individual broadcasters or networks, indicated that women were still underrepresented on the airwaves, in all

Table 1

Proportion of women and men in broadcast material, 1984 benchmark data

Type of broadcast material	% Female	% Male
<i>English Television Programming</i>		
Characters in children's cartoons*	16	74
Characters in adult drama	41	59
Program staff in news and public affairs	29	71
Persons interviewed in news and public affairs	21	79
<i>French Television Programming</i>		
Characters in children's cartoons*	16	61
Characters in adult drama	37	63
Program staff in news and public affairs	32	68
Persons interviewed in news and public affairs	21	79
<i>Television Advertising</i>		
Characters in English television ads	43	57
Characters in French television ads	46	54
Voice-overs in English television ads	11	89
Voice-overs in French television ads	18	82
<i>Radio Programming</i>		
Announcers on English radio programming	12	88
Announcers on French radio programming	14	86
Persons interviewed in English newscasts	14	86
Persons interviewed in French newscasts	14	86
<i>Radio Advertising</i>		
Characters in English radio ads	38	62
Characters in French radio ads	44	56
Voice-overs in English radio ads	9	91
Voice-overs in French radio ads	14	86

*Some cartoon characters do not have a clearly identifiable sex, thus the sum of females and males is less than 100%.

areas of television and radio programming and advertising (see Table 1). Particular problem areas included television news and public affairs, children's shows on television and radio programming and advertising.

The CRTC data also showed that women were portrayed differently, especially on English television programming and advertising, and radio programming (CRTC, 1986g). As the ERIN research report summarized:

In television news, for example, women are generally interviewed in a non-expert capacity while men are generally interviewed in the role of expert. In television drama, women are more often associated with home and family roles and

men with paid employment roles. In television and radio advertising, men are more often cast as salespersons or experts while women are more often portrayed as consumers. (CRTC, 1986a:109)

In other words, gender roles were still strongly stereotyped on Canadian radio and television. Both CRTC staff and ERIN Research analysed the data and both concluded that none of the CAB and only one of the AAB guidelines had been met to any reasonable degree (CRTC, 1986f; 1986g).

During the 1986 evaluation hearings, industry groups argued that considerable progress had been made. In particular, they cited a new awareness of the issue, and stated that this was all that could *rea-*

sonably be expected after a two year period (CRTC, 1986c:180,395-6). The CAB said the ERIN study did not measure 'sensitization' and thus overlooked the progress made by the industry (CRTC, 1986e:343). Industry groups also focussed on employment, arguing that the proportion of female employees had increased since 1982 (CRTC, 1986e:342,347,500,522). In general, industry organizations said progress had been made behind the camera or microphone, and the results would be evident on the airwaves in the future. Finally, the industry spoke out strongly against mandatory measures (CRTC, 1986c:266,315, 371,422; CRTC, 1986d:275).

In its policy statement, the Commission agreed that the industry did demonstrate sensitivity and commitment to the sex-role stereotyping problem, noting however that this commitment declined at the end of the self-regulatory period and was only revitalized during the hearings (CRTC, 1986b:36). Because the Commission found that awareness and 'sensitivity' did not result in measurable progress it decided to add some 'teeth' to the implementation process. (CRTC, 1986b:43-44). Adherence to the sex-role stereotyping guidelines was made a condition of licence (CRTC, 1986b:52).

Mandatory Self-Regulation

By imposing a condition of licence the Commission was ostensibly saying to the industry 'we've got the teeth necessary to make self-regulation effective'. However, in reality the teeth are like ill-fitting dentures which sit in a glass of water because the user finds it more expedient to go without. Clearly, the Commission could not apply the condition, as its own data showed that the guidelines were not being met. Also, the condition of licence represented an anomaly for a Commission which was moving towards deregulation. Finally, the response of the CAB directly challenged the policy.

The imposition of the condition went against the grain of the CRTC's deregula-

tory approach, which began in 1984 and was clearly evident at the time of the sex-role stereotyping decision. In fact, shortly after the sex-role stereotyping policy was announced, the CRTC stated its intention to 'streamline' its regulatory procedures (CRTC, PN 1987-9). The Commission invited the industry to formulate standards which would take the place of CRTC regulations and would be administered by the industry. The sex-role stereotyping policy stood in clear contrast to this deregulatory trend.

In fact, the CAB challenged the condition of licence on that ground. In its response to the CRTC's call for self-regulation, the CAB stated that it '... wholeheartedly supported ... [the] objective of moving from a regulatory to a supervisory mode of operation' (CAB, 1987:1). However, self-regulation must be purely voluntary, said the CAB. By imposing self-regulatory standards as a condition of licence, the CRTC was pursuing a contradictory strategy which could put both the CRTC and the CAB in an insecure legal position:

[W]e have been advised that, in the event of a ruling of any governing body charged with surveillance of compliance to the standards led to a disciplinary action by the CRTC on a broadcaster such as to cause the licensee financial loss, the governing body (the Association) could be subject to substantial civil liability. (CAB, 1987:2)

The CAB concluded its response to the Commission's notice by stating that it would not co-operate with the CRTC unless the self-regulatory process was purely voluntary: '... in those cases where compliance to a standard is made compulsory by the CRTC through conditions of licence on the industry or on individual licensees, the CAB will withdraw from any voluntary administration and enforcement of such standard' (*Ibid.*). In fact the CAB did not officially act on its threat to withdraw from the sex-role stereotyping initiative. It did attempt to rewrite the guidelines in con-

sultation with women's groups, as was requested in the CRTC policy statement.¹⁰ Yet all other aspects of the sex-role stereotyping plan were abandoned while the CAB lobbied for CRTC adoption of its Broadcast Council proposal.

In its response to the CRTC's call for industry self-regulation, the CAB proposed the creation of a Broadcast Standards Council, which would be composed of a national and five regional bodies, each including public representatives. The Council would enforce the standards by requiring stations found to be in violation of a code provision to broadcast the Council's decision. The CAB said the Council would administer various voluntary codes, including the sex-role stereotyping guidelines, when removed from the condition of licence of CAB member stations. The CAB suggested in its proposal that the CRTC remove the condition when the Council is established and public service announcements have been running on all stations for 60 days (see CAB, 1988).

The Commission did accept the CAB's proposal, despite the protests of Media-Watch, but did not agree to a blanket lifting of the condition. In September, 1988, the CRTC issued a public notice (CRTC, PN 1988-159) stating that, once the Council is set up, member stations which are broadcasting public service announcements and which have previously supplied satisfactory reports on sex-role stereotyping to the Commission, can apply to the CRTC to have the condition of licence lifted.

While these critical decisions about policy implementation were being made, licensing decisions proceeded on the basis of the CRTC policy statement. The evidence indicates that the Commission has not had the staff or the political will necessary to use the condition effectively. While a condition of licence is a blunt instrument – rarely does the Commission use its licensing powers to enforce compliance with regulations or conditions – the Commission has other more subtle tools at its disposal. The CRTC can require broad-

casters to supply detailed information about compliance on licence renewal forms and at renewal hearings, and it can monitor licencees.¹¹ In other words, it can make it very clear to licencees that the Commission is concerned about the issue and is willing to scrutinize their actions and make the renewal process uncomfortable for those who show an unwillingness to comply.

The Commission has done none of the above. Licensees are asked a few, vague questions on licence renewal forms.¹² Individual station monitoring is not conducted, although a second ERIN study was carried out in the fall of 1988 and will indicate whether the industry as whole has improved its performance.¹³ Recent television licence renewals clearly indicate that the Commission is unwilling to assess industry actions in any depth. Individual television stations were renewed en masse in the Fall of 1988, and an analysis of the renewal hearings found that few questions on sex-role stereotyping were addressed to licencees (usually only one), that the question asked was of an extremely general nature, that follow-up questions usually were not asked, and that the Commission was satisfied with assurances that the licensee had some sort of mechanism in place to educate staff or monitor programming and advertising.¹⁴

Coming Soon to a Station Near You? Evaluating the CRTC Policy

The Commission recently concluded that the sex-role stereotyping initiative has shown success. In its public notice evaluating the 1988 television renewals, the Commission said, 'In the last decade important progress has been made to eliminate the most offensive forms of sex-role stereotyping and to ensure that women have equal access to all sectors of the television industry' (CRTC, PN 1989-27). The CRTC cited five reasons for this conclusion. First, few interventions raised sex-role stereotyping as an issue during the hearing process.

Secondly, MediaWatch 'reported good relationships with most broadcasters'. Third, 'all stations now report internal mechanisms to review and resolve public concerns or complaints and most licencees have formed internal committees to handle such matters or pre-screen programs and commercials'. Fourth, many licensees reported increased representation of women on staff. Finally, although some licensees indicated a condition of licence is no longer necessary, all said they would adhere to the CAB guidelines.

The Commission's statement implies that the women's movement is satisfied with the implementation of the policy. This is not the case: MediaWatch is opposed to the Broadcast Council model, and the removal of the condition of licence. MediaWatch recently stated that '[t]here is at present no evidence to substantiate an improvement in the broadcasting environment that would support a ... roll-back of the condition of licence' (MediaWatch, 1989:5).

While it is correct to say that few interventions addressed the issue of sex-role stereotyping, this overlooks the fact that MediaWatch was in a state of organizational flux at the time. It was undertaking a thorough re-evaluation of goals and strategies and thus concentrating on organizational renewal rather than lobbying and participation in CRTC hearings (Media-Watch, 1988). As a result of this renewal, MediaWatch gradually shifted from its anti-self-regulation stance and eventually decided to work with broadcasters and advertisers to create effective educational programs. This was apparent in Manitoba MediaWatch's strategy during the television renewals. The Manitoba group was one of the few branches which participated in the hearing process, and it supported the renewals of two Winnipeg stations because these stations had been receptive to collaboration with MediaWatch.¹⁵ It is on this basis that the CRTC concluded that the relations between industry and MediaWatch were now of a 'positive' nature.

The other points made by the Commission (that mechanisms were in place to implement sex-role stereotyping initiatives, that more women were employed by the television industry, and that all stations said they would adhere to the guidelines), are important indications that processes are in place, but these points do not address the fundamental question: has the representation and portrayal of women improved? Individual station compliance with the guidelines has not been assessed by the Commission, thus the effectiveness of the policy in achieving the original goals has not been addressed.

Results from the 1988 content analysis, which replicates the 1984 study conducted by the CRTC, will indicate whether the broadcasting industry as a whole has shown improvement. Unfortunately, the data are very slow in coming. The report was originally scheduled for release in January, 1990, but analysis of the data was suspended for several months in the fall of 1989 and, as a result, the report will not be issued until December, 1990. The Commission put the statistical analysis on hold while it decided on a technique for comparing the 1988 data with the 1984 results. According to the CRTC's Director of Radio Policy, the Commission asked ERIN Research to change its approach to the manipulation of the data so as to measure change most accurately.¹⁶

In lieu of the comprehensive CRTC study, data collected by ERIN Research for the CBC and for the Alliance of Canadian Radio and Television Artists (ACTRA) offer some preliminary evidence (CBC, 1987; ACTRA, 1986). A sample of television broadcasting (both regional and network programming) was collected by the CBC in the fall, 1987 season. These data, along with a 1986 study of CTV news and public affairs programming conducted by ERIN, can be compared with the CRTC benchmark data collected in 1984. Table 2 summarizes the data.

Table 2 shows one area where improvement is remarkable: the number of women

Table 2

Comparison of CRTC benchmark data (ERIN) with CBC and CTV data

Type of broadcast material	ERIN 1984	% Female CTV 1986	CBC 1987
<i>English Television Programming</i>			
Characters in children's cartoons	16	-	22
Characters in adult drama	41	-	42
Announcers in news and public affairs	31	18	-
Reporters in news and public affairs	26	16	39
Persons interviewed in news and public affairs	21	6	24
<i>French Television Programming</i>			
Characters in children's cartoons	16	-	16
Characters in adult drama	37	-	36
Reporters in news and public affairs	32	-	30
Persons interviewed in news and public affairs	21	-	20

reporters on English-language CBC news. The CBC average in 1987, 39 per cent, is significantly higher than the 1984 benchmark figure of 26 per cent. The comparable CTV figure, from 1986, is 16 per cent, which is significantly lower than the benchmark. In fact, the representation of women in CTV news and public affairs programming in 1986 (as reporters, anchors, and interviews) is much lower than the industry average in 1984. There was also a noteworthy increase in the number of female characters on English-language children's cartoons broadcast by the CBC. Other than these indicators of progress and a slightly better representation of women as persons interviewed on news and public affairs, the CBC record is consistent with the benchmark level of representation recorded in 1984. It should be recognized that the CBC has had sex-role stereotyping initiatives in place since 1979, and the CRTC has higher expectations of the CBC, as stated in the 1986 CRTC Policy on Sex-Role Stereotyping: 'The Commission expects the CBC ... because of its size, importance and special role in the Canadian broadcasting system, to show leadership in providing a more equal reflection and a better portrayal of women in the media' (CRTC, 1986b:46).

Conclusions

The CRTC Task Force initiated a dialogue between feminists and the broadcasting and advertising industries and this led to awareness of the problem on the part of industry groups. Unfortunately, once the members of the Task Force agreed on a set of recommendations, the meetings were discontinued. The conflict-ridden relationship between industry groups and the public representatives continued in the absence of a forum for airing views and managing the conflict. They stopped talking to one another and channelled views through the Commission.

In a sense, the CRTC set up a 'no-win' situation for itself as regulator. By granting the industry voluntary self-regulation and by conceding to the public representatives that this was a trial only, the Commission exacerbated the underlying conflict. Each side began the evaluation phase determined to prove the other wrong. The public representatives and MediaWatch attempted to prove that self-regulation was ineffective, and the private industry groups mustered arguments against mandatory self-regulation and CRTC regulation. MediaWatch in particular was in the position

of critical outsider; it had no role to play in the implementation of voluntary industry regulation and as such had no stake in the effective implementation of the policy.

Industry self-regulation can follow a voluntary or a mandatory model. The CRTC tried to compromise between the two, and in doing so failed to send a clear message to industry and women's groups. Moreover, the Commission ultimately chose a mandatory approach which it was unwilling (and perhaps unable) to implement. When the condition of licence was imposed, the industry groups recognized that the CRTC's sword was made of *papier-mâché* and were able to call the Commission's bluff.

The CRTC is now in a difficult position. It has declared, by approving the Broadcast Council proposal and by commending television stations on their progress, that industry self-regulation is working. If results from the 1988 content analysis indicate that this is not the case, the efficacy of industry self-regulation as a mechanism for achieving important social goals will be called into question. This would be unfortunate, as this case merely illustrates the muddled and indecisive application of a potentially useful and efficient instrument.

Notes

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- 1 For instance, see submissions by women's groups such as the National Council of Women to the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences (1949-1951) and to the 1955 Royal Commission on Broadcasting.
- 2 Interview with CRTC staff members Monica Auer and Sjeff Frenken (Hull, 17 February 1988).
- 3 Interview with former CRTC Chair, John Meisel (Kingston, 26 November, 1987).
- 4 *Ibid.*
- 5 Industry representatives were as follows: Dorianne Wilson-Smillie of CBC, replaced by Louise Imbeault; Marge Anthony of the CTV Network; Claude Blain of TVA, later replaced by Jean-Paul Ladouceur; Edward Billo of the CAB and Ernie Steele, President of the CAB; Suzanne

Keeler of the Advertising Advisory Board; Camille Bachand of the Publicité Club de Montréal; Michael Kennerly of the Association of Canadian Advertisers; Keith McKerracher of the Institute of Canadian Advertising, later replaced by David Morley of the Grocery Products Manufacturers of Canada.

- 6 Interview with Lynn McDonald (Toronto, 14 May, 1988).
- 7 The representative of the Institute of Canadian Advertising, Keith McKerracher, resigned from the Task Force on February 7, 1980, due to the initial confrontations between the industry and the public members.
- 8 Interview with Michael Kennerly (Toronto, 23 February, 1989.)
- 9 Interview with Sylvia Spring (Hull, 14 February, 1988.)
- 10 This process was begun in April, 1987. To date, the CAB has not produced a set of guidelines acceptable to the CRTC.
- 11 The Commission does this to enforce the only other blanket condition of licence, adherence to the CAB Code regarding broadcast advertising to children. During the 1988 television licence renewals the Commission conducted monitoring and found instances of failure to adhere to the Code. In its public notice (CRTC, PN 1989-27) the Commission announced that it would increase its monitoring and discuss its concerns with broadcasters.
- 12 Television licencees are asked whether they 'Accept, as a condition of licence, to adhere to the industry code on sex-role stereotyping, as amended from time to time'. Television stations are also asked to 'specify the mechanisms you propose to introduce to avoid sex-role stereotyping' and are queried about complaints. Radio licencees are only asked whether they undertake to 'adhere to the CAB *voluntary code on sex-role stereotyping*' (emphasis added). See CRTC, Television and Radio Licence Renewal Forms, Part II (January, 1988).
- 13 The results will be published in December, 1990.
- 14 CRTC, Transcripts of Public Hearings: See for instance, Edmonton, 17 November, 1988; Vancouver, 26 October, 1988; Vancouver, 27 October, 1988; Hull, 22 November, 1988; and Winnipeg, 12 October, 1988.
- 15 MediaWatch Intervention re: Renewal of the Licence of CBC Television, October 12, 1988; and MediaWatch Intervention re: Renewal of the Licence of CKND Television, October 12, 1988.
- 16 Telephone interview with Sjeff Frenken, CRTC Director of Radio Policy, 26 March, 1990.

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Appendix A.

CBC Policy on the Portrayal of Women in Programming

The CBC accepts as part of its mandate the need to reflect in its programming the role of women in Canadian society and to examine its social and political consequences. The CBC believes that its programming should also contribute to the understanding of issues affecting women.

In applying this policy, CBC programming should:

1. avoid the use of demeaning sexual stereotypes and sexist language;
2. reflect women and their interests in the reporting and discussion of current events;
3. recognize the full participation of women in Canadian society;
4. seek women's opinions on the full range of public issues.

B. Advertising Industry (AAB) Guidelines¹

1. Advertising should recognize the changing roles of men and women in today's society and reflect a broad range of occupations for all.
2. Advertising should reflect a contemporary family structure showing men, women, and children as supportive participants in home management and household tasks, and equally as beneficiaries of the positive attributes of family life.
3. Advertising, in keeping with the nature of the market and the product, should reflect the wide spectrum of Canadian life, portraying men and women of various ages, backgrounds, and appearances, actively pursuing a wide range of interests – sports, hobbies, business – as well as home-centred activities.
4. Advertising should reflect the realities of life in terms of the intellectual and emotional equality of the sexes by showing men and women as comparably capable, resourceful, self-confident, intelligent, imaginative, and independent.
5. Advertising should emphasize the positive, personal benefits derived from products or services and avoid portraying any excessive dependence on or excessive need for them.
6. Advertising should not exploit women or men purely for attention-getting purposes. Their presence should be relevant to the advertised product.
7. Advertising should, without going to artificial extremes, employ inclusive, non-sexist terms, for example, 'hours' or 'working hours' rather than 'man hours'; 'synthetic' rather than 'man-made,' 'business executives' rather than 'businessmen' or 'business-woman'.

8. Advertising should portray men and women as users, buyers and decision makers, both for 'big ticket' items and major services as well as for smaller items.

9. Advertising should reflect a greater use of women, both as voice-overs and as experts and authorities.

C. Broadcasting Industry (CAB) Guidelines

1. Broadcast programming should reflect an awareness of and sensitivity to the problems related to sex-role stereotyping.
2. Broadcasters should recognize the changing interaction of men and women in today's society.
3. Broadcasting should reflect a contemporary family structure, showing all persons as equal supporting participants in home management and household tasks, and as equal beneficiaries of the positive attributes of family life.
4. Broadcasters should reflect the wide spectrum of Canadian life, portraying people of various ages, backgrounds and appearances, actively pursuing a wide range of interests.
5. Broadcasters should refrain from the exploitation of men and women, and reflect the intellectual and emotional equality of both sexes, in programming.
6. Broadcasters should exercise their best efforts to use language of an inclusive nature in their programming, by avoiding whenever possible expressions which relate only to one gender.
7. Broadcasting should reflect a realistic balance in the use of men and women as voice-overs and as experts and authorities.
8. Broadcasters should attempt to increase the visibility and involvement of women in broadcasting, both on and off the air.
9. Broadcasters should exercise sensitivity to and be aware of the problem of sex-role stereotyping in the acquisition of programming material or rights.
10. Broadcasters should support the voluntary initiatives of the advertising industry in relation to the issue of sex-role stereotyping, to the Advertising Advisory Board, and that wherever possible, broadcasters should cooperate with locally organized and nationally conducted campaigns of the Advertising Advisory Board (AAB).

Note to Appendix

- 1 These guidelines, which were in place during the two year trial period, have since been revised.