

So we still have a long way in front of us, before we will be approaching something which would seem to be a 50-50 representation of men and women in TV.

The other problem which will be facing us in the years to come, is the problem of the impact of foreign TV-programmes, where we can expect a great number of foreign programmes to reach the Danish public. Many - and maybe even the majority - of these programmes will no doubt have another angle of approach to the equality question than the Danish public has been accustomed to. And I have a feeling that many of these programmes will be featured in a way so that they do not call for reflection, discussion and perhaps even anger, because many of the programmes will be influenced by commercial considerations - and that will often mean that you should not upset people and should certainly not try to change the accustomed images of men and women.

We in Danmarks Radio are very conscious of the problems, which foreign competition will present to us. We cannot - of course - change the foreign programmes, but we must do our best to give the Danish public a Danish alternative. And a good one. In the end it comes down to a question of quality. This is in itself a difficult question for a broadcasting institution with limited financial resources. But we are trying to mobilize all our strength in order to be able to give the Danish public a good quality-based alternative to the foreign programmes. I do hope that we will succeed, for in the end it is also a question of the position - and, to go to an extreme: the survival - of Danish culture. And our view on equality of men and women is part of this culture.

I shall not prolong my speech. You will, yourselves, discuss these problems and many others much more in depth during the next few days.

I shall therefore limit myself to welcome you once again. And with these words I hereby declare the Conference on Women and Electronic Massmedia opened.

Thank you.

Mass Media Fail to Inform Women

By Sissel Lund

Danish Summary: Der eksisterer store og tydelige forskelle mellem mænd og kvinders mediebrug. Kvinder forbruger flere underholdningsmedier end mænd, der typisk forbruger de prestigestærke medier som aviser og nyhedsmagasiner. Mange undersøgelser understreger disse forhold med det resultat, at det på overfladen ser ud som om kvinder er dummere end mænd, fordi kvinder søger mod de lettere underholdningsmedier. Et medie, der især udnytter dette er ugebladene, hvis form og indhold - og dermed salgs politik - er at skrive "om og for fru Jensen".

Foruroligende er det dog at alle hidtidige undersøgelser konkluderer de her beskrevne forhold, hvor ingen tidligere har spurgt, hvilke informationer kvinder får ud af underholdningsmedierne og hvad disse informationer bruges til.

I en undersøgelse fra 1980 blev forskellige personer spurgt, hvad de forskellige medier betød for dem. For kvinder var TV bedst, når de ønskede informationer om nye emner. Mænd foretrak aviser. Ugeblade var for kvinder gode til at give impulser til forskellige aktiviteter - mænd syntes aviser. Kvinder mente, at det at læse bøger var den bedste måde at slappe af på - mænd syntes aviser og endelig mente kvinder, at det medie de var mest afhængige af var radio, mens mændene også her svarede aviser.

Kvinder forbruger en lang række medier for at samle informationer og oplysninger, mens mænd blot har et, nemlig avis. Avisen er således et stærkt prestigeorienteret medie defineret af mænd.

Kvinder får altså informationsbehov relateret til hjem, børn og madlavning, hvorimod det medie, der handler om det offentlige liv er mandsorienteret.

NRK lavede en række informerende programmer om sundhed som blev set af flest kvinder. En undersøgelse viste dog, at mændenes interesse for programmerne var større end kvindernes, selvom mændene altså ikke var så ivrige efter at se dem. Det kan have noget at gøre med en mere feministisk præsentationsform. Hvis det er rigtigt, er det muligt at bekræfte, at der er en forskel på mænd og kvinders behov relateret til programform og -indhold. Dermed gives mulighed for at støtte programtyper, der har til hensigt at øge kvinders dækning af informationsbehovene relateret til det offentlige liv.

Måske kan det større udbud af medier i fremtiden blive en positiv faktor for kvinders informationssøgen.

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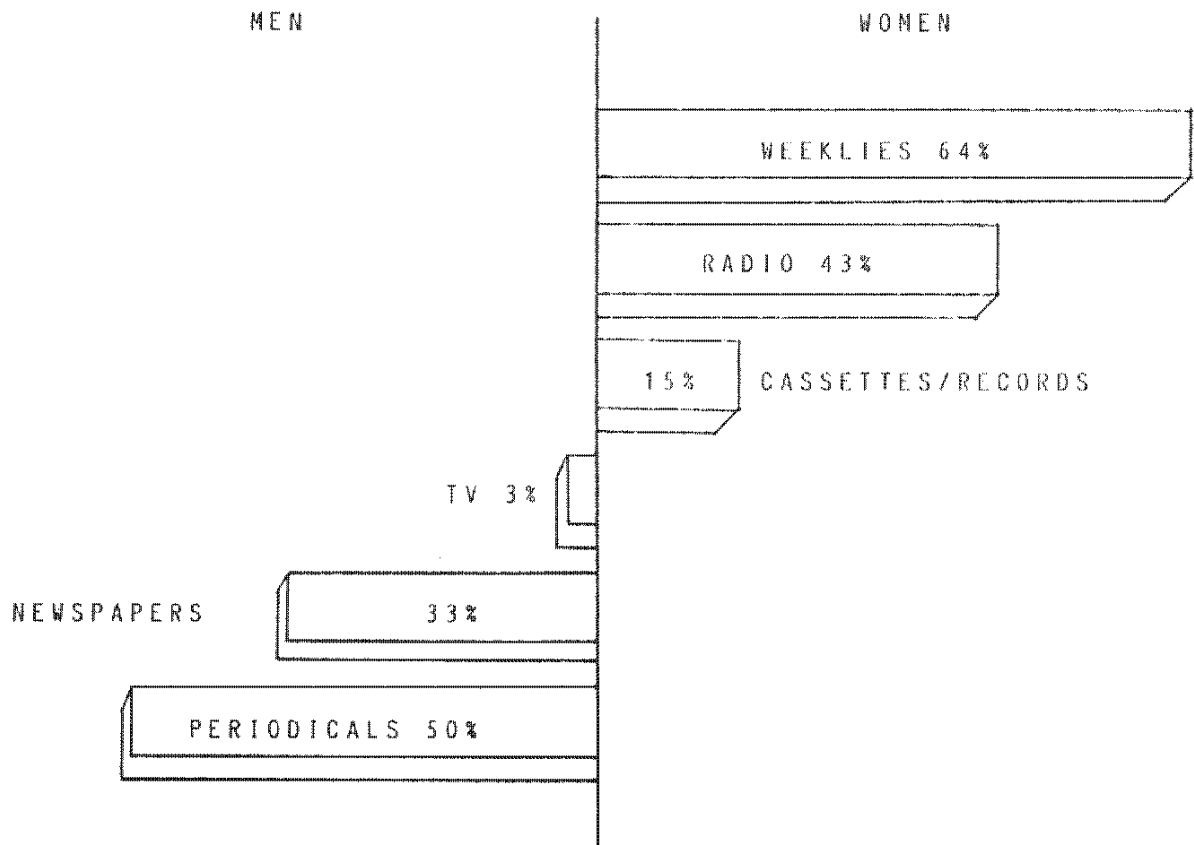
In my opinion, the suppression of women is not only caused by their position in the social structure. It is also due to our own passivity and unwillingness to take responsibility. We must admit that today many women are in positions where they can influence social development. It is important that we actually use these positions, and especially important that we take part in areas undergoing change. If we fail to do this, these areas of course will be formed by men from the very beginning. And we all know how difficult it is to alter structures afterwards.

Today this argument applies very well to the new electronic mass media. It must be an exiting challenge for us to form them according to our own demands. I find it particularly important that we make the new media better adapted to women's demand for infor-

mation. So far, the media have not fulfilled their obligations to women. And this is what I am going to speak about.

Women are more ignorant than men

As we all know, there are some distinct differences in the way women and men make use of the mass media. In Norway, the pattern can be illustrated by the following figure:



Compared to men, women spend 64 percent more time reading weekly magazines, 43 percent more on radio listening, and 15 percent more on cassettes and records. On the other hand, men spend 33 percent more time on newspaper reading, and 50 percent more on periodicals.

The consumption of television is about equal. This may surprise you, since it is common in many countries that even TV consumption is higher among women. In Norway, however, we have found that this applies to housewives only. Many of us feel embarrassed when we are confronted with comparisons of this kind. They indicate that women prefer the entertainment media, while men are more inclined to go for serious information. This becomes particularly clear when we look at women's use of weeklies on one hand, and men's use of the newspaper on the other. It is perhaps less evident when it comes to radio listening, since the radio in Norway holds a reputation for being relatively serious. However, it is also well known that the radio, just like the record or the cassette, often is used merely to provide background sound to dull and tiresome work - like for instance housework.

On the other hand, the most typically "male" media enjoy very high prestige. Reading newspapers and periodicals is generally considered a must for anyone who want to keep informed. The facts that women tend to prefer entertainment and avoid information, is also well documented in media research. The following table, which is taken from an unpublished work by a Norwegian sociologist, Helge Østbye (1984), makes the point particularly clear. Østbye has ranked the mass media according to ranking to the womens' share of total time spent on consuming these media. The results are as follows:

CONTENT	MEDIUM	CONSUMERS
Percentage informative content of the medium's total output		Average daily time consumption of women in percent of average for the population
100	Periodicals	80
90	Newspapers	87
45	Television	99
33	Radio	113
30	Weeklies	120
0	Records/cassettes	100

The table shows that the higher proportion of informative content, the less time to the women spend on the medium, compared to the men. In addition, it is also a well established fact that when women are seeking information in the media, the results are anything but flattering. For example, the Swedish researchers Olle Findahl and Birgitta Høijer (1985) have shown that women are less able to recall news broadcasts. In Norway, Finn Erik Vinje and Helge Østbye (1980) found that women understood fewer of the difficult words in the newscasts.

When figures are presented in this way, the inevitable conclusion is that women primarily look for the easier things and pure entertainment in the mass media. When they try to obtain more serious information, they don't get the message.

The medium which most clearly has taken advantage of this, is the weekly press. An interview with the managing director of a leading Danish publishing house is revealing: "Our family magazines are written for Mrs. Jensen, and almost only for her. Mrs. Jensen does not want to be provoked. Therefore she gets the soft stuff, what she feels concerns her - whether it is novels, knitting recipes, food recipes, or the story about Mrs. Olsen's operation for breast cancer - or when Mrs. Hansen met her sister again after 30 years of separation". He continues: "Our readerships studies are unmistakable, and the main conclusion is valid for Sweden and Norway as well as Denmark: We have to write about and for Mrs. Jensen. We know she is quite self-centered. She takes little interest in things that do not concern her directly. We must always write in a way that makes it possible for her to identify herself with what is written" (Aftenposten 5.2.83).

The circulation figures of the weekly press leave no doubt that the publishers are right in their judgement of what appeals to female readers. Their market research also shows that weekly magazines are read in all social strata. The judgement therefore seems valid for women in general.

There is no reason to believe that these figures and judgements are wrong. However, what should concern us more, is the fact that results of this kind often appear in research reports without any comments or attempts to explain them. This may well be done so in order to pay courtesy to the ladies. But the effect is clearly discriminating. When no other explanation is offered, the self-evident conclusion will be that women are more ignorant than men.

So far, it seems that researchers dealing with women and the mass media have ignored this subject. Perhaps they too feel a bit embarrassed, and therefore prefer to concentrate on media content - like counting women appearing in the news. However, to overlook it is rather serious. By doing so, we are actually substantiating the underlying explanation about women's ignorance.

The male and female way to finding information

My personal interest in the subject has grown gradually out of years of research on media consumption. It has become more and more important for me to obtain a better understanding of female media usage. This has brought me in contact with previous research of different kinds, I have tried to reanalyse available data, I have made my own empirical studies, and so on. Quite early in this process, I came across a piece of work that I felt put me on the track. In a market research report, I found evidence indication that newspapers are better adapted to male than female demands (Are Kværk and Bjørn Bull-Hansen 1980). In this study, people were asked what the different mass media meant for them. Women answered that they preferred television when they wanted information about new issues, men thought that newspapers gave the best service. Women thought that weeklies most often gave them impulses to do things, while men received their impulses from the newspapers. Women considered reading books as valuable pastime; men got much out of spending time on newspapers. When asked what medium they felt dependent on, the women chose the radio and the men the newspaper.

This told me that women must go to a number of mass media in order to get the same satisfaction as men obtain from the newspaper. It also told me that men have managed to give their newspaper reading higher prestige than it actually deserves. Much of the reading is far from serious information seeking.

Having become aware of this, I started to look more systematically for the ways women go about, when they want to obtain information. It appeared that women can be very inventive and use quite untraditional methods. What made the greatest impression on me, was the way women at the University of Oslo used graffiti as an information channel. This is so common that the toilet walls quite often look like medical columns. "How do I get rid of my catarrh of the bladder? How do I get an orgasm? I am hooked on drugs - HELP ME!", the women write. And they get answers - many answers, often illustrated with small sketches and followed by a word or two of consolation.

When I realised the impact of this, I found it rather shocking. After all, these graffiti writers were women receiving the highest education in the country, women who should be well trained in systematic information seeking. Still they preferred this untraditional method in order to solve relatively simple problems. I see only one reason for this: The information these women needed, is not easily available in the more traditional communication channels.

This drew my attention to the way we generally understand the mass media as disseminators of information. A central thesis in media research is that today the mass media provide us with most of the information we need in order to take part in the society.

However, it is obvious that the media for information have interpreted their task as concerning the public sphere only. The way women go about to get information, reveals that today it is also a heavy demand for mediated information even for the private sphere.

I find it surprising that the information media disregard this demand. Even more alarming, however, is the fact that media researchers have failed to inform them about it. This is particularly bad for women, because - whether we like it or not - the private sphere is still their responsibility.

When the serious media fail, women have to look for other sources of information. We know, for instance, that women say they are helped to understand daily life by watching soap operas and other entertainment programmes on television (Cantor and Pingree 1983). It is also well documented that women use the weeklies to a large degree as means for obtaining information. For example, Norwegian readership analyses show that:

- One out of three readers use weeklies as their main source for information on bringing up children
- Every second reader use weeklies as their main source for information on household economy
- Two out of three readers use weeklies as their main source for information on food and the family diet.

This indicates that reading weeklies is more than harmless entertainment for most women. However, since these magazines are made for profit only, there is reason to be worried about the quality of the information they offer.

NRKs experiments with new forms of health information

So far, we have seen that women use untraditional methods in order to get information about the private sphere. But women in modern societies also take part in public life, and public life of course requires just as much knowledge from both sexes. However, it seems that information about public life is easier to obtain for men than for women. For instance, we have seen that women are less able to understand and recall news.

We must assume that female participation in public life is hampered by these information problems. In order to overcome

them, we need to know the causes. If available research tells the whole story, it must be something wrong with the women themselves, and therefore very little to do about it. It seems more constructive, then, to look for possible causes in the media. As a point of departure, I will draw attention to the publishers of the weekly press, who maintain that the presentation form in itself is a major reason for their success among female readers.

The publishers of the information media have not made similar statements. But there is reason to believe that the form they have chosen, is a masculine one. We know that in these media, women are almost invisible. The information media are produced by men, and they show a male world. Their market research must tell them what the male reader would like to know, and how he wants it presented. In this respect, the information media behave just like the weeklies. They pretend, however, to be for people in general. It seems clear, then, that their interpretation of the word Man, is the masculine one.

Therefore, I think that further research on this matter should start by examining the impact of the presentation form. I have tried to do this in a study carried out for Norwegian television. The main purpose of this study was to evaluate a new way of presenting health information. What made the experiment interesting from my point of view, was an attempt to transfer the presentation form of the weeklies to the television screen. However, the obvious limitation is that the information had to do with the private sphere of life.

In the spring of 1984, Norwegian television sent a series of 11 programmes bringing health information to young people. A year and a half later, the series was followed by 8 programmes with similar information to adults.

The basic idea was to personify the information by gathering some persons who did not know each other, make them live together for a while or meet often, and shoot location scenes showing their unformal conversation on assigned topics. The

participants were as representative for the target group as possible.

The youth series was a great success among young people. In addition, it appeared that the programmes were more appealing to women than to men. The programmes for adults dealt with three social roles: 1. Being a male, 2. being parents for small children, and 3. getting old. Even this series had greater appeal to women, who watched more, got more information from the programmes, and were more inclined to regard television as a suitable medium for this type of information.

In this respect, I will draw attention to the fact that women were even more eager to follow the programmes about being a male. This had nothing to do with the content, since the men expressed great interest in the topic as such- in fact much greater than the women. Of course it does not prove anything. But it is possible that the lower male attendance had to do with a feminine presentation form that was unfamiliar to them. Evidence of this would support the view that men would take over the problems, if information had been presented in a feminine way.

What the two NRK series did tell us, however, is that it is still possible to develop television as an information medium. We learned that this particular form appealed to women and young people. Other forms might have been even more successful. Therefore, I find it discouraging that women often focus on the negative effects of the new media, and overlook the fact that these media are still in their infancy.

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Sissel Lund, Media Research Unit, Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation (NRK), Oslo.