

- ⦿ iv Increased media coverage of women = Successful presenting women as active subjects
- ⦿ v The improvement of media representation of women in 1990s
- ⦿ vi Extensive social and political change --- ultimate resort
- ⦿ vii Ten issues covered by Global Media Monitoring Project
- ⦿ viii Ten years of ineffective conversion of the media content regarding women
- ⦿ ix Female powerlessness vs. Male privilege in daily social life

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Media Representation of Women

- A. Since the 1960s the women's movement has been engaged in a systematic and constant critique of media institutions and their output. In a world in which the media increasingly provide the 'common ground' of information, symbols and ideas for most social groups, women's representation in the media helps to keep them in a place of relative powerlessness. This mediated invisibility is achieved not simply through the non-representation of women's points of view or perspectives on the world. When women are 'visible' in media content, the manner of their representation reflects the biases and assumptions of those who

define the public – and therefore the media agenda. More than twenty-five years after the international community began formally to recognize the scale of gender inequality in every aspect of life, and despite the adoption of many measures to redress gender imbalances, the power to define public and media agendas is still mainly a male privilege.

- B. At a global level the United Nations International Decade for Women (1975-85) was an early catalyst for both activism and research. Since the late 1970s this work has revolved round two central axes: a critique of the ways in which media content projects

- ⦿ *Please choose the most suitable headings for paragraphs listed below.*
- ⦿ *NB There are most headings than paragraphs, so you will not use them all.*

⦿ List of Headings

- ⦿ i The impact of politics and national economy on media content
- ⦿ ii (the) First multi-national media projection (survey) of women
- ⦿ iii Increased media coverage of women \neq The attainment of presenting women as active subjects

- women as objects rather than as active subjects, and an analysis of the institutional and social structures of power through which women are systematically marginalized within media organizations. The link between media content and the individuals who produce it is of course greatly attenuated by countless factors including institutional policies, professional values and advertisers' demands. So although in most countries more women are entering the media professions than ever before, it would be unreasonable to imagine that this will result in a radical transformation of media content.

- C. It is difficult to assess accurately the extent to which these factors are universal, and the extent to which they might be changing. Studies spanning more than one country are rare. In 1995 the first extensive cross-national quantitative study of women's portrayal in the media ever carried out – spanning newspapers, radio and television, and covering seventy-one countries – found that only 17 percent of the world's news subjects (i.e. news-makers or interviewees in news stories) were women. The proportion of female news subjects was lowest in Asia (14 percent) and highest in North America (27 percent). Women were

- least likely to be news subjects in the fields of politics and government (7 percent of all news subjects in this field) and economy/business (9 percent). They were most likely to make the news in terms of health and social issues (33 percent) and were relatively well represented in arts and entertainment news (31 percent).

- D. Global Media Monitoring Project, as it became known, also looked at the extent to which the news stories covered ten broad issues which have been traditionally of particular concern to women' (for example, violence against women, women's work or health). Overall, just 11 percent of stories dealt with such issues, an only 6 percent in Latin America.

- E. Another review of research since 1990 – covering all media – in nineteen European countries concluded that the overall picture of gender portrayal is no longer monolithic stereotyping of the kind described in content studies of the 1970s and 1980s (European Commission 1999). In Latin America, too, some positive changes can be detected.

- F. Media representations in general, and of women in particular, are deeply embedded in political and economic contexts. For instance, in Asia the media in many countries have recently seen a spectacular transformation with the arrival of new commercial cable and satellite channels, and the privatization of old state-run media has led to new market-oriented content. Current studies from this region highlight the tensions and conflicts that such changes introduce into representations of women. The findings are in line with much of the European data, indicating a greater diversity in women's roles and a move away from the subordinate

housewife-mother image. Studies from India and Singapore point to the often contradictory ways in which the media and advertising are accommodating to women's multiple identities in contemporary society. Images of the 'new woman' as an independent consumer whose femininity remains intact, or as a hard-headed individualist whose feminine side must be sacrificed, illustrate new stereotypes of women whose 'femaleness' is always the core issue.

- G. Studies by the Media Monitoring Project in South Africa have shown that while coverage of women's issues increases dramatically in the run-up to National Women's Day (9 August), most of it failed to represent women as active participants in society.

- H. These findings, and those of countless other studies, illustrate clearly that despite the small shifts noted in retrospective analyses, by and large media content still reflects a masculine vision of the world and of what is important. What it actually requires is a wide-scale social and political transformation, in which women's rights – and women's right to communicate – are truly understood, respected and implemented both in society at large and by the media.

- I. This is the starting point for media monitoring and advocacy. Whether or not a critical mass of women working in the media can make an imprint on media content is a secondary question to the need for wider and deeper social change.