

<b>Institution: University of Warwick</b>
<b>Unit of Assessment: 35 Music, Drama, Dance and Performing Arts</b>
<b>Title of case study: A History of Television for Women in Britain, 1947-1989</b>
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b> (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>The research has mapped an unwritten history of women’s television making and viewing in Britain, 1947-1989. By showing how assumptions about gender preferences and the presumed inferior quality of women’s programming affected what is produced, broadcast and archived, the research has preserved and made accessible important programmes from Britain’s television history. The research has re-presented women’s television history by showing that genres not typically considered to be ‘women’s’ (e.g. music programmes, sport) were just as important to the identity formation of young women as were dramatic programmes (e.g. <i>Compact</i>) which dealt with working women in the 1960s. The research has brought an increased awareness of a new history of women’s television in Britain to media professionals, archivists and the general public, especially women viewers from the period 1947-89.</p>
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b> (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>The research was conducted as part of the AHRC-funded project which ran from 2010-13 led by PI Dr Rachel Moseley (Associate Professor, Warwick, 1999); Co-Is Dr Helen Wheatley (Associate Professor, Warwick, 2005) and Dr Helen Wood (Professor, De Montfort, 2007); Post-Doctoral Research Fellow Dr Mary Irwin (Warwick, 2010-13) and PhD student Hazel Collie (De Montfort).</p> <p>The project researched programming made for and watched by women viewers, from the re-start of regular television programming after World War Two in 1947 until the introduction of satellite in 1989. Available glimpses of programming from the period have suggested interesting shifts in content, modes of address and representations of gender. However, the ways in which the British television industry conceptualised the female audience, or how, when and why programmes were made specifically for women has been largely absent from key histories of television (Briggs (1985) <i>The BBC: The first fifty years</i>), and in broader histories of British broadcasting (e.g. Crisell (1997) and Hilmes (2003)). Further, there has been little exploration of women’s memories of television viewing despite prevailing assumptions about the feminisation of the medium. This project has filled in some of the gaps in the history of British television, outlining significant moments in the period, specific programme types, genres and scheduling slots which have become significantly marked as feminine, emphasising the connection between industry, programme and audience histories.</p> <p>Research conducted at Warwick explored the production culture, policies and decision making which produced television programming for women in Britain using the BBC Written Archive at Caversham and the Incorporated Television Company (ITC) collection held at the British Film Institute (BFI). Work by Irwin on the BBC’s early period revealed that the contribution of high-level women working in production, such as Doreen Stephens, has been excluded from previous histories of British television. Irwin also documented the factual and dramatic programming that was addressed to a female viewer, and surveyed the programmes surviving in the archives, producing an analysis of key archival texts. Wheatley’s research has examined how the display of television at expos such as the Ideal Home Exhibition figured television as an object of domestic modernity. Moseley’s work has examined how romantic television dramas of Cornwall (e.g. <i>Poldark</i>, <i>The Camomile Lawn</i>, <i>Coming Home</i>) from the 1970s to the 1990s addressed and were received by a female audience.</p> <p>A parallel strand of research conducted by DMU was based on interviews with female audience members, exploring their memories of television in the context of their personal narratives and how the programmes made ‘especially for them’ resonated with their lives. While drama has been a common theme, the research also revealed that female audiences viewed less typically ‘feminine’ genres such as sport, music programming and natural history as being ‘for them’. It has also demonstrated the embedded-ness of television for women in their relationships with and in the home, for example through their discussion of television in relation to their roles as wives and</p>

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mothers, and their interactions with the television set and its associated objects (chairs, remote controls, listings magazines). By revealing an unwritten history of women's television production and consumption, this project has contributed to a fuller understanding of the production, texts and reception of women's media culture in late twentieth-century Britain.

**3. References to the research** (indicative maximum of six references)

- Mary Irwin, 'What Women Want on Television: Doreen Stephens and BBC Television Programmes for Women, 1953–64', 'Media for and by Women: A Historical Perspective', special edition *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture* 8:3 (Dec., 2011), 99-122. [Peer reviewed journal article]
- Hazel Collie, Mary Irwin, Rachel Moseley, Helen Wheatley and Helen Wood, 'Researching the history of television for women in Britain, 1947-1989', *Media History* 19:1 (Jan., 2013), 107-117. [Peer reviewed]
- Vicky Ball, Hazel Collie, Julia Hallam, Aniko Imre, Mary Irwin, Rachel Moseley, Lynn Spigel, Helen Wheatley, Helen Wood, 'Dossier: Television for Women', *Screen* 54:2 (Summer, 2013), 238-243. [Peer reviewed journal dossier]
- Rachel Moseley 'Women at the Edge: Encounters with the Cornish Coast in British Film and Television', *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies* Special Issue 'This is the Sea', 27: 5 (2013), 644-662. [Peer Reviewed]

Research Grants:

AHRC standard grant, 'A History of Women's Television in Britain, 1947-1989', PI Moseley, Co-Is Wheatley and Wood, £422,138 for 3 years, September 2010-3.

**4. Details of the impact** (indicative maximum 750 words)

The research has mapped an unwritten history of women's television making and viewing in Britain, 1947-1989, showing how assumptions about gender preferences affected what is produced, broadcast and archived. The key impacts arising from the research are:

- 1) Preserving and enabling access to archival footage of early women's television programmes.
- 2) Highlighting the gendered nature of past and present production culture, broadcasting and archiving practices to media professionals and archivists.
- 3) Raising awareness and knowledge about the important place of women's programming and female audiences in the history of British television 1947-1989 amongst media professionals and the general public, especially with women viewers from the period.
- 4) Enabling women to explore their own relationships with television in light of its important social and cultural influence on identity formation.

Impact on Media professionals (Impacts 1 & 2)

Irwin's research on women's programming in the 1950s and 1960s brought to light the BBC afternoon arts programme *Wednesday Magazine* (1958-61) which has been omitted from histories of British television and unavailable in any publically accessible archive. Through discussions with archive curators, the research uncovered whole episodes and several extracts in the BBC archive, as well as over 30 surviving production files. The discovery of this overlooked programme led the BFI's Television curator to acquire extracts of the series for the national collection and for a viewing copy to be produced which is now available to researchers. Such a discovery has raised the question as to why *Wednesday Magazine*, produced with a female audience in mind, has disappeared from television history, while its near contemporary, the arts documentary *Monitor* (1958-64) considered to be 'masculine' or 'neutral' has left a distinguished legacy. The project research directly impacted upon the preservation and availability of archival holdings of women's television and illuminated previously neglected areas of broadcasting history. Further, by highlighting the impact of gender categories on archival decisions the research has encouraged archivists to think about what sort of television we choose to preserve for future historians and audiences. (Item 1, Section 5)

Wheatley and Wood presented initial findings about professional women in early television production and their struggles to produce good 'television for women' to c.25 senior women in film and television at a seminar hosted by Women in Film and Television (WFT) UK, an organisation for

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women working in the creative industries (21.09.11). The discussion provided WFT members with a fuller understanding of gendered television history, and about the experiences of their predecessors in the industry. The organisation's Chief Executive has said that 'learning about the work of women like Doreen Stephens in television in the early years of the medium, and her struggle to produce good television for women at the BBC in this period, connected with the experiences of our members working in the industry both in the past and today in a variety of ways.' As a direct result of this meeting, Irwin's interview with women's television pioneer, Hazel Adair was lodged in the Broadcasting Entertainment Cinematograph and Theatre Union (BECTU) archive as an important resource for learning about women in early television. (Item 2, section 5)

### Public Impact (Impacts 3 & 4)

As television viewing is an important social and cultural activity with significant impact on the identity formation of young adults, the researchers sought to re-connect female audiences with their memories of early television viewing. This involved sharing the research with the broader public through screenings of archival television footage, talks and discussions, and a free exhibition.

### *Events*

The research revealed that issues relevant to female viewers, such as finding a balance between relationships, family and work, were explored in television produced in the 1950s and 1960s, well before contemporary shows such as *Sex and the City* and *Mad Men*. Based on this finding, the project team organised 'Career Girls on the Small Screen' a public event at the Phoenix Arts Centre, Leicester (8.10.2011). The event consisted of short talks, a screening of Irwin's interview with Hazel Adair, creator of British soap operas *Compact* (1962-5) and *Crossroads* (1969-85), and screenings of episodes of archive television from the 1960s featuring working women: *Compact*, *Rag Trade* and *The Liver Birds*. By presenting the research findings which show that the roots of much contemporary television content and format (such as audience engagement) lay in the 1950s and 1960s rather than the 1980s as commonly assumed, the event raised awareness about how early programming designed for women dealt with what are often considered to be modern concerns (Items 4 and 6, section 5).

A second public event was held at the BFI Southbank (20.6.2012) featuring a presentation by Moseley and Wheatley about representations of women in the workplace since the 1960s and a panel discussion involving prominent women in the media – Abi Morgan, writer of *The Hour*, BBC Executive drama producer Hilary Salmon and actor Amanda Redman – and chaired by Kate Kinninmont, Chief Executive of Women in Film and TV. Attracting an audience of 112 (exceeding the BFI's expectations of an audience of c.85), the event encouraged participants and the audience to think about the history of women's television and its relationship with present-day programming in new ways (for example, the importance of costume in representation, the question of ethnicity in representations of working women, and the limited stories told about working women) and to relate it to their own life experiences (Items 4 and 6, section 5). The BFI's TV programmer (who attended the event) reported that it provided 'a greater understanding of the way women have been represented historically at work on TV' and that Moseley and Wheatley offered 'new critical tools of analysis to better understand patterns across television history'. The media industry participants also expressed that the event had made them think differently about the ways in which television represented working women (Item 5, section 5). The event was featured in 'The Cultural Highlights you have to see' section of the 'i' newspaper (20.6.2012).

### *Exhibition*

As a further means for engaging broad audiences with the research, the team set up a 'pop-up' exhibition in an empty shop in Coventry City centre in collaboration with ArtSpace and Coventry City Council. The exhibition, open May 2012, consisted of archival publicity material (such as posters), television related pop memorabilia and archival footage of pop music shows. Open to the public 3 days a week and staffed by the research team and student volunteers from Warwick and DMU, the exhibition offered visitors the opportunity to explore the important role television pop music programming played in the developing identity of teenagers and young women in the period. Admission was free and attracted 158 visitors. The window display, decorated to look like a 1960s

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living room, including a television playing 1960s pop programmes, was visible for the entire month, making the research accessible to passers-by the whole time.

The exhibition allowed members of the public to share their memories of early television viewing and to discuss with the researchers the programmes they felt were 'for them'. Feedback via postcards and a visitors' book showed that visitors gained a better understanding of British television history and also valued the opportunity to revisit their own memories of television. The 'pop-up shop' attracted media coverage locally being featured in the *Coventry Evening Telegraph* (27.4.2012; daily circulation 31,000) and on BBC Coventry and Warwickshire radio (30.4.2012, average 86,000 weekly listeners, BBC figures). As further evidence of the exhibition's significance Moseley and Wheatley were awarded the Warwick Arts Impact Award (2012) for commitment to engaging the public with research.

*Media*

Wheatley was consulted for the second series of the BBC drama on early television *The Hour* by a programme researcher in November 2011. Based on the project research, she informed the production team about the kinds of cookery programmes the character Marnie Madden would have made for commercial television in the period. Information supplied by Wheatley fed into the production design and directly influenced the setup of these scenes. The fact that Wheatley was contacted by the production team resulted from the public profile of the research (on the strength of Wheatley and Moseley's interview in the *Guardian*) (Item 3, section 5). Further indications of the impact's reach and significance are shown by national media interest: Moseley appeared on BBC Radio 4's 'Woman's Hour' (19.8.11; average 4 million listeners, BBC figures) to discuss the research findings and the project was featured in the *Guardian* (6.9.2011; daily circulation 232,566, Sep 2011). The project's social media pages include Facebook (150 likes and 61 friends) and Twitter (138 followers) have enabled participants to share their memories of and thoughts about women's television programming (Item 8, section 5).

**5. Sources to corroborate the impact** (indicative maximum of 10 references)Media Impact

1. Letter from the Television Curator at the National Film and Television Archive about the important rediscovery of *Wednesday Magazine* as an impact of Irwin's research.
2. Letter from the Chief Executive of the Women in Film and Television Network about the impact of our research findings on WFT members.
3. Emails between production personnel and Wheatley and clip from *The Hour*, television drama series on which Wheatley acted as consultant. First and final contact was via telephone.

Public Impact

4. Recordings of discussions with public audiences at engagements events listed in section 4.
5. Statements from the TV programmer, BFI Southbank and Phoenix Arts Centre, Leicester about public talks and screenings.
6. Feedback postcards, emails, questionnaires and visitor's book from public engagement events/exhibition.
7. Interviews with members of the public who came forward via the *Guardian* article, showing the impact that the article had in encouraging readers to think about their own relationship with television.
8. Facebook and Twitter pages which show the engagement and participation of the public with the research and its findings: [@TVforWomen](http://www.facebook.com/pages/Womens-Television);
9. Media Coverage: *Guardian*; *Coventry Evening Telegraph*; the *I* culture section.
10. Radio programmes: BBC Radio 4 Women's Hour, Coventry and Warwickshire radio.