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Representing Female Professionals in Media:

From the fictional set of the *Boris* TV series to the experience of female professionals working on real sets

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INTRODUCTION

The goal of our paper is to **trace, through a pilot research, the experience of female professionals working on movie sets**, starting from how they are represented in the Italian TV series Boris -that parodies life on set- to how they are living and working on real sets

The research is focused on the **dialogue between the on-screen and off-screen dimensions:**

- ***on one hand***, the study of narrative paradigms and values through which the series narrates female professionalism
- ***on the other hand***, the real experience emerging from interviews with female professionals (producers, story editors, script supervisors, etc.) engaged on Italian sets.



METHODOLOGY

WORKSHOP

**DESK
ANALYSIS**

**20 IN DEPTH
INTERVIEWS**

MARCH 2022

APRIL 2022

MAY 2022



BORIS and its female characters

BORIS
LA FUORI SERIE ITALIANA

3 seasons (42 episodes)
2007-2010

2011: film adaptation
on late 2022: fourth season

ARIANNA

Assistant director



ITALA

Script supervisor



CORINNA

Leading actress



THE CREATOR OF THE ORIGINAL IDEA

«We never had a specific focus on the experience of women. But now, thinking back, even in that case we told the truth: we represented the role of the “actress”, with all the clichés; then the “assistant director”, the type of woman who in order to be accepted and have the esteem of her colleagues takes on masculine attitudes about herself; and finally, the “script supervisor” who plays a very functional role, without any actual emotional or creative investment»

LUCA MANZI




FROM FICTION TO REALITY

POSITIVE ASPECTS

- An increasing presence of women in different roles;
- open access to the labor market and to different roles;
- positive influence of laws and internal rules promoting gender balance

NEGATIVE ASPECTS

- Stereotypical gender roles attribution;
- women feel greater pressure in terms of evaluating their personal and professional skills and behavior.

A woman with dark hair is shown from the chest up, looking intently at the viewfinder of a professional video camera. The camera is a RED PRO 5.0, as indicated by the text on its side. The scene is dimly lit, with a strong red tint, suggesting a film set environment. The woman's hands are visible, adjusting the camera's controls.

Film sets are still perceived as «male-dominated environments»

DIFFICULT WORK-LIFE BALANCE: WHY WORKING ON SET MIGHT BE INADEQUATE FOR LONG-TERM LIFE PLANNING

WORKING HOURS AND WORK PACE

ABSENCE OF
WORK-LIFE BALANCE

STRESSFUL
WORKING CONDITIONS

TYPES OF CONTRACT

HEAVY INVESTMENT OF TIME IN CREATING AND KEEPING RELATIONAL RESOURCES



WORKING CONDITIONS ON SET THAT MAY AFFECT WOMEN

*SEX-RELATED
FAVORITISM*

*COMPLIMENTS AND
SARCASM*

*UNWRITTEN
RULES*

*PROMISCUITY
ON SET*



SPECIFICITY OF WOMEN ON THE SET

Alongside some specific jobs, female professionals on set are stereotypically associated with these skills:

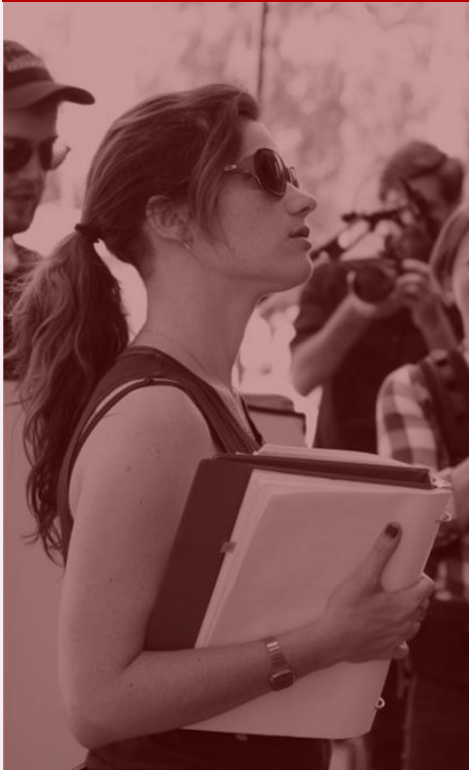
ORGANIZING

PROBLEM SOLVING

NETWORKING

LISTENING

CARING



SPECIFICITY OF WOMEN ON THE SET

The recognition of such skills
often becomes a barrier
to accessing roles of
a more creative nature



Female creativity is often not
recognized
or valued properly

*«We are more
precise, more
organized, more
multitasking.
Sure, that's fine, but I
also want to be
considered for my
creativity»*



Possible areas of intervention to improve gender balance on set

