
GENDER ROLES IN THE MEDIA: A STUDY OF THEIR CONTENT

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ABSTRACT

Sex Roles has a remark on quantitative content assessments of gender roles in media. The broad range of data provided reveals a few patterns and several key takeaways. It's no secret that women are underrepresented in a variety of fields, from sports to the arts to the workforce in general. To make matters worse, women are often shown in a limited, unfavorable light. For the most part, women are specified by depicting them in lewd or sexually suggestive poses. Face expressions, bodily postures, and other variables show how women are treated as second-class citizens. Finally, they are portrayed in stereotypically feminine roles. Women are often depicted as stay-at-home moms, spouses, or mothers, as well as sexual gatekeepers. Despite the fact that most research back up these claims, several intriguing moderating variables including race have been discovered. Next stages should include the development of theory and a body of data on the consequences of exposure to under-representation of women. There is also a scarcity of information on the impact of sexualized or stereotyped representations on young audiences. It is also suggested that in the future, content assessments be conducted on new media, including those produced and disseminated by users. Conclusion: While expanding the presence of women in media may be beneficial, the way in which they are depicted must also be taken into account to prevent growing negative or stereotyped portrayals that may be especially detrimental to viewers. Conclusion.

KEYWORDS: *Content Analysis, Gender Roles, Homosexual, Media, Sex, Sports.*

1. INTRODUCTION

In terms of our knowledge of the way in which women are presently portrayed in media, the articles in these special issues of Sex Roles and the information they offer constitute a significant step forward. In terms of substance, the studies span a wide range of topics and examine a number of problems that fall under the overall subject of gender roles. It is maybe unexpected that the findings converge to such a high degree in the face of such variety. When taken as a whole, this body of study reveals several important insights, as well as some significant gaps in our understanding. However, although some of the contributions are theoretical or methodological in nature, I will focus on the substantive result that the majority of them reach: Women are underrepresented in media, according to the findings of the studies, and when they are present, they are typically scantily dressed and relegated to stereotypical roles. While these trends are obvious, the papers also point out certain variances in them that may serve as the beginning point for future study, such as differences based on ethnicity, sexual orientation, and country of origin, among other things. In the next section, I examine and explain the results, pointing out some important difficulties in understanding and implementing them, as well as pointing out where major gaps in our knowledge still exist and offering recommendations for future steps to be taken

in the area[1].

1.1 Media and Content Types:

There is one message that emerges from these special issues, and it does so with startling clarity: that women and girls are underrepresented across a broad range of media outlets. Nine out of the 18 empirical articles published in the issues measure the frequency with which women are portrayed in comparison to men. Female underrepresentation is seen in all of these studies in at least one of the topic categories. The fact that women appear on television seldom is not a new discovery in this field. However, it is worth noting that the difference in representations of males and females has remained for decades, despite the fact that the responsibilities of women in society have significantly increased over this time. Researchers discovered three decades ago that men outnumbered girls on primetime television by a ratio of 2.5 to 1 during the years 1969–1978. During that time period, producers and writers may have claimed that women did not serve in the social positions that television shows wanted to portray, therefore limiting their capacity to include them in their productions. Indeed, in 1950, there were 2.5 males for every 1 woman employed in the paid work force in the United States of America. Over the ten-year period under consideration, the ratio improved to about 1.66 males for every woman[2].

However, at the time of the latest count (in 2008), the ratio had dropped to 1.2 to 1. (males to females). As a result, although women have advanced to almost representative rates of participation in the labor force, the "reel" and print industries have continued to ignore their contributions. This is especially surprising in light of the changes that have occurred in the media environment throughout the course of this time period. The number of commercial television channels received by the majority of households has increased from three to well into the three-digit range, resulting in a much greater variety of content than in the past. However, the studies provided in these issues of Sex Roles show that this has not occurred, and that women are instead now missing from a wider range of settings as a result of these changes in the gender balance.

Research has shown that women account for 38 percent of the main characters that feature in health-related stories on popular primetime television shows. In addition, male sources appear almost three times more often than female sources in newspaper coverage of same-sex marriage and nearly twice as frequently as female sources in local television news coverage of a range of subjects, according to the study. When comparing music videos from five music-oriented television networks, male characters outweigh female characters three to one, according to the study. According to the findings of the study, the male to female ratio in the top-grossing G-rated (general audience) films is 2.57 to one[3].

The video game industry was the one in which women were least likely to feature. Female characters feature in just 70 out of 489 (or 1 in 7) of the best-selling console games, according to the researchers. It should be noted that none of these publications or studies demonstrate women's under-representation throughout all media, or even across a representative sample of any one medium. Their emphasis is on essential material that vast numbers of people are exposed to on a daily basis; the conspicuous absence of women from this varied collection of media, on the other hand, suggests a media universe more in line with the working-world realities of 1950 than with contemporary society.

1.2 Long-Term Effects of Under-Representation:

When doing content analysis, one of the primary goals is to determine whether or not media include traits that may affect users' views and actions, either adversely or favorably. Although there are other reasons to perform content studies, researchers point out that analyzing media for their possible impacts is the one in which society has the most invested interest since it involves the public at large. Women are consistently underrepresented in media material, which raises the

issue as to how this impacts women who are viewers or readers of the content. Is it possible that young girls' feeling of worth and self-esteem would be diminished if they do not see themselves represented in media? Will boys come to the conclusion that women and girls are as unimportant? Will there be a shortage of role models for girls? Will adult women have a sense of disenfranchisement? Is it true that women's underrepresentation in society has a significant impact on social views and information? The outpouring of outrage over the absence of minority representation in media sparked a social movement, while the paucity of female presence in media recently prompted the establishment of the See Jane campaign. See Jane is an initiative of the Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media, which collaborates with the entertainment industry to improve the representation of girls and women in media targeted at children and young adults. These initiatives are based on the idea that under-representation of women has significant and negative consequences in the workplace. While this seems to be a fair assumption, our theories offer little support for predictions regarding the implications of representation in the media, or the absence of representation in the media[4].

According to the findings of the study, being similar to people depicted in media is essential for learning from their actions. Another school of thought holds that identification with a character and transportation via story are essential to media impact on ideas and behaviour. These processes may need the presence of other females in order to function properly; in other words, girls may require the presence of other females in order to learn by their example. Although Black and White children are equally likely to connect with White television characters, according to the findings of the study, Black youth are much more likely than White youth to identify with Black television characters. The results of other studies have shown that girls are more inclined than boys to identify with male protagonists than with female protagonists. People who are underrepresented in media may adjust by more readily connecting with different people, enabling them to participate as viewers even when they do not see themselves reflected in terms of gender or color, for example. In order to better understand the processes of identification and transportation, as well as how they work (if at all) among people who seldom see themselves represented in media, further research is required[5].

When viewers perceive that they are not represented, further psychological processes may be activated as a result. It has been claimed, for example, that self-esteem may deteriorate as a result of this. In terms of empirical research, I am aware of just one study in which researchers found a connection between seeing material in which one's demographic features are not represented and detrimental behavioral or attitude consequences. Television programming featuring Black characters, according to the findings of one study, was associated with greater self-esteem among Black fourth and fifth graders. In spite of this, the research was tiny and preliminary in nature, and there are other data that seem to be in conflict with its findings, as previously stated.

Despite the fact that Black Americans consume more media than whites and are shown in those media much less often, their self-esteem tends to be greater than that of White individuals, according to a recent study. Of course, there may be other factors that contribute to one's sense of self-worth that outweigh any detrimental impact that under-representation in media may have on Black viewers' self-esteem. However, it is critical that we establish theory on the subject of under-representation and that research begin to test for impacts as soon as possible. This is as important for the underrepresentation of women as it is for minorities, according to the researchers who conducted the study, which they characterized as "acutely vital."

Although it is difficult to anticipate the consequences of overall under-representation of women in the media, it is much simpler to predict the effects of excluding them from particular categories of content, such as sports or entertainment. According to one research included in the special issue, a lack of female representation may have an impact on the character and quality of political debates around homosexual liberation. As an example of the overrepresentation of males in the media,

researchers demonstrate that this trend holds true for both men and women who served as sources for coverage of same-sex marriage that appeared in four different newspapers in the United States. A three-to-one male-to-female ratio was seen in the total sample. Male viewpoints, which are more hostile toward homosexual people than female perspectives, predominated in the opinions stated, and this may have contributed to a lack of support for same-sex marriage among the general public.

Only newspapers from places with lower numbers of homosexual men and women were found to have under-representation of females in the LGBT community, according to a selection of sources that includes gay men and women (Ohio and Oklahoma). It is my casual opinion that lesbian service members have been mostly missing from the debate about abolishing the United States Military's Don't Ask Don't Tell (DADT) policy, despite the fact that they are present in the military in numbers that are comparable to those of homosexual service members. Women are more accepted by the broader public than homosexual men, and their military service and marriage to one another may likewise be more acceptable than that of gay males. The inclusion of lesbians in news coverage may have an impact on public perceptions of these problems. In order to better understand when and how lesbians are portrayed in discussions on same-sex orientation problems, more study is critically required. When it comes to problems of gay rights in these and other areas, understanding how representation of women (or the lack thereof) affects views towards homosexual people is important[5].

Another particular area in which we may be able to make predictions about the effect of under-representation is in the field of health-related content and information. According to the findings of the study, women are less likely than males to feature in health-related stories from popular fictional television programmes. Less than 40% of the characters that played important roles in health stories were female, and this was true across all types of characters, including ill people, caregivers, and bystanders. Female and male characters were given similar importance and serious tone in the tales, and both were equally likely to include information on variables such as diagnosis, treatment, and prevention but female characters were featured less often than male characters.

It is possible that the less frequent appearance of female characters undergoing serious medical problems means that women are less informed about the health problems that may affect them, as well as how to detect and address them, among those who learn about health problems through entertainment television (a not insignificant portion of the population). Specifically, the authors point out that tales about women often center on ailments that are unique to women's bodies, such as breast cancer or reproductive problems. This is noteworthy in that it corresponds to the primary emphasis of health research for many decades before. Female samples were included in just a few heart attack research, for example, and as a consequence, women's risk for cardio-vascular illness was generally ignored for a long time. Fewer stories on women may be equal to less information for women in a media environment like this one[6].

Again, some testing of this theory is a logical next step in this situation. Do women get as much knowledge from seeing stories about males as they do from watching the same material presented about women? It is equally likely to motivate people to take action, such as being tested for an illness, taking preventive measures, or seeking more information about the problem. Given what we know about the significance of identifying with a character in the process of observational learning, it seems that this is a possibility, but additional research is needed to confirm this[7].

2. DISCUSSION

Despite the fact that the reports in these special issues are cautious in their conclusions, these ideas and discoveries have at times been pushed to the breaking point, and it is important to remember that there are limits that must be taken into consideration. Exposure to sexual material or women

who are only partly dressed does not, by itself, increase the likelihood of girls developing a negative body image or lowering their self-esteem. Boys will not necessarily view girls and women as objects based on their sexual content or nudity, either. Women's body types are idealized (i.e., "hypersexualized"), the absence of clothes is disproportionately typical of women, and the pictures or other material portrays women as subordinates, all of which are potentially expected to have such effects. Except for celibacy and virginity, sexual material in and of itself is unlikely to engender unfavorable views about anything else. Additionally, partial nudity may encourage viewers to dress in skimpy clothes, but whether this results in the objectification of women or oneself depends on how nudity is shown in the film[8].

Even when researchers are careful in their descriptions of the procedures involved and the limits on their empirical findings, these differences may be lost in discussions of outcomes. Reporters, advocacy organizations, and members of the public may interpret the findings of study as being more in line with the moral concerns that they are used to hearing, or they exploit the findings to argue for the banning of sexual material. For example, Fox News' storey on the conclusions of the American Psychological Association Taskforce on the Sexualization of Girls was headed "Report: Sexual Images Psychologically Damaging Young Girls." The study did not suggest that sexual pictures are harmful to children, but rather that images in which young girls are represented as sexual objects may have a negative impact on young girls who are exposed to such images. To be fair, the results were accurately stated in the following text; nevertheless, anyone who relied only on the headline would have been severely misled if they had done so[9].

More troubling was the use of the study to call for a boycott of Dove cosmetics, which was widely condemned. A television advertising campaign featuring naked older women and the tagline "beauty knows no age limit" had been launched by Dove's parent firm, Unilever, earlier that year. Because of the study's demand for less sexualized representations of women and girls, as well as the potential harm that exposure to these pictures may cause, the American Family Association interpreted the findings as though they related to the Dove advertising campaign. The campaign, on the other hand, failed to meet the report's definition of sexualization, which was quite specific. Rather than being a negative media image, the Dove ad might be considered a good media image in that it challenged a notion that was identified as problematic in the report that only young women and those with certain body types are beautiful.

In summary, it is important to emphasize the nuances that are involved in the process of secularization. In the first place, researchers' credibility is undermined if they overdraw or oversimplify results, or if they enable others to do so without their permission. And second, since if policy or practice is to be based on the findings of the study, it is essential that it targets the appropriate set of representations. Content analysis has the capacity to capture and make apparent some of the nuances that are present in a document. Many of the papers in these special issues serve as excellent examples of this, and future work should be inspired by and expand on them in same fashion[10].

3. CONCLUSION

Each of the papers in these special issues contributes to the growing corpus of scientific knowledge on gender roles in the media on its own. Some of the articles contribute to theoretical understanding, while others contribute methodologically, and some contribute to the general body of evidence by applying the findings to new arenas or by highlighting caveats regarding differences in portrayals by nation or race. Several of the articles are published in peer-reviewed journals. When taken together, these contributions represent a significant change in the current level of knowledge and stage of study in this field. The least unexpected of their results, that women are underrepresented and that women are sexualized, is so well documented across a wide range of media and situations that it is obviously time to go on to the next level of study, which

will examine the effect of this on television viewers. Despite the fact that there is some existing study on this subject, it is still in its early stages.

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