

Gender Representation Issues in Media

Posted on September 12, 2018

Historical Foundations of Gender Representation in Media

Gender representation issues began in the past when feminists began fighting for their rights to equality. As we all know, women have been under-graded in our societies, with men being superior in most cases. Studies on gender-based issues began in the 1950s when gender portrayal in the media led to the launch of the Second Feminism Wave (Bagdikian and Ben, 10). Mass media was topping the list of Second Wave Feminists because of their oppressive representation of women in different genres. Researchers, however, began to address the issue almost two decades later.

Despite all that, the subject remains a contemporary issue in relation to media studies. Jennifer Siebel wrote a documentary about stereotypical roles of women in the mass media, [Miss Representation](#) (Bagdikian and Ben, 15). It revealed how media develops images and certain contents that shape the perception of gender roles simply by reestablishing stereotypes.

Internationally recognized TV programs like *The Wife Swap*, global excellent sellers like *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus* plus many other Hollywood blockbusters, for example, *Avatar*, do not only reflect on our understanding but also gender and even sexuality. Media is a very important influence in all these, even though most people do not understand such kinds of influence since the majority do not instantly absorb the content of whatever they read, see, and even hear (Baitinger, and Gail, 580). They only get the sense when critically engaged in a discussion touching on what they are watching. Media representation of both men and women is changing rapidly though not in a straight forward. Some people argue that despite media reflections of the changing diversity of society concerning the changes in society, such as women's movement from their traditional domestic nature to the public hemisphere, the changes are not liberating or empowering.

Gender Stereotypes in Television and Popular Culture

The media's negativity on gender representation has been seen in some of the latest TV shows and mainstream media, where regressive representation of female characters is clearly shown (Baitinger and Gail, 586). The term post-feminist cultures of the media is used for feminist scholarship checking on the contemporary mainstream media where feminism is acknowledged and, at the same time, dismissed in the same movies. Critical analysis of gender-based issues shows that there is a sense of

gender inequality shown in TV shows and other mass media events. TV shows such as *Sex and the City*, *Ally McBeal*, and *Desperate Housewives*, plus other magazines, suggest feminism in the movie's mainstream media representation is narrowly focused on empowerment and choice becoming a matter of the outfits to put on, whether sexy-looking clothes or affection girlish or rather laddish characteristics. Again, in the rise of celebrity gossip in different sites and media sources plus makeover shows, we see some kind of punitive surveillance of women celebrities and characters (Duggan et al. 22). Shaming of women's physical and bodies is particularly a major issue for the working class of women. Men have continuously shown their lack of respect for women in all these ways.

The changing men's representation in the media and TV shows, especially the movies, to women, is not justified since the difference in men's and women's responsibilities is still evident, including how they look or rather feature. Young independent women smartly dressed in the films we see and the TV shows like *the pictured Veronica Mars*, *Hit Girl in Kick-Ass Plus*, and *Olive Prendergast in Easy A*, the women characters remain sexualized in certain ways that male characters are not (Duggan et al. 27). The act of sexism spans the whole Mass media ranging from Televisions and the films we see through up to the newspapers and magazines we read. Some reports in the recent past clearly bring out the endemic levels of sexism in which the British press and the sparked campaigns trying to challenge the sexist media representations like the popular website www.everydaymediasexism.org.uk

There has been an emerging category of dramas mainly focusing on women's importance in the public. They are women who have done one or more things in the public and have gained the public attention. Examples of these women are Birgitte Nyborg, currently the prime minister of Norwegian drama, and Borgen and Carrie Mathieson, both intelligence officers in *Homeland* drama (Kian et al. 899). The relationship between public and private dramas is very important, but that is not all that happens realistically. Female characters in these dramas are always complex and hard to reduce to stereotypes. American show *Girls*, authored by Lena Dunham, is one of the most popular dramas that has ignited debate worldwide concerning women's representation in the American media. Some people have praised the show as the more authentic picture of contemporary Western womanhood. It is celebrated for attending most feminist issues. Despite praise from people, other groups have tried to criticize the show because it lacks both ethnic and class diversity in the entire America.

Digital Media, Industry Participation, and Gender Equality

On the other hand, the internet has been experiencing a series of changes in how people engage it, where, in most cases, we feel more able to write texts back and send them to the authors on our own. This all, in turn, changes the ways how we do gender-based things. Sites like Facebook, though, still force people to try to fit themselves in rigid groups that are gender and sexuality based. The role of game playing invites cross-gender play and certain interventions, such as Wikigender, addressing

women's relegation in Wikipedia.

The key issue as to why we lack women on the other side of the cameras or newspaper writing desks and the newsrooms is that women are under-represented across all platforms of the mass media and creative industries, specifically creative roles. Recent research indicates that men dominate many other fields and are likely to handle expert jobs in social issues, including factors affecting women like abortion and reproductive rights. A website by the name, The Women's Room, was set up to provide comprehensive data for female experts to ensure they are represented well and their issues in the media counter-measured (Kian et al. 904). Even though men still continue to dominate, important women directors with little stories about some women astronauts who were close to taking Neil Armstrong's place. Many female filmmakers also try to support females across the globe.

In summary, men have continued to dominate women in various fields from industries, media, and even research institutes. This should change to make our women believe in themselves. Such films as *The Wonder Woman* are the kinds of things we want to see these days since men and women are equally human beings. Ladies have to be given chances, especially in the media sector. When they get such opportunities, they act as encouragement to other women, inspiring them to become tomorrow's heroes. The *Wonder Woman* movie is what we want to see in the media; through this, we will have a completely diversified world where men and women are both the same.

References

Bagdikian, Ben H. *The new media monopoly: A completely revised and updated edition with seven new chapters*. Beacon Press, 2014. Pp 10-20.

Baitinger, Gail. "Meet the press or meet the men? Examining women's presence in American news media." *Political Research Quarterly* 68.3 (2015): Pp 579-592.

Duggan, Maeve, et al. "Social media update 2014." *Pew research center* 19 (2015). Pp 21-31.

Kian, Edward M., et al. "Sport journalists' views on gay men in sport, society and within sport media." *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 50.8 (2015): Pp 895-911.