

# Media through Gendered Lens – Representation Matters

Tippabhotla Vyomakesisri

PhD Research Scholar, Osmania University

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**Abstract:** The media, as an industry, is the fourth pillar of democracy that seeks to introduce fundamental social changes. The (mis) portrayal in the media of multiple gender identities has a huge impact on how society perceives these representations and unconsciously insinuates them into our consciousness. Modern media, which come in diverse forms such as print, television, and digital, play an important role by rapidly transmitting information and potentially becoming a viable tool to promote and disseminate a gender-biased culture that reinforces and perpetuates negative stereotypes of gender.

We exist in a world where the default societal settings are set by and for heteronormative men. It is then probable that the default gender-related stereotypes underlying our thought remain invisible or blurred, and therefore they can confuse us, even without our realization, unless we bring them to attention, clearly challenge them, and critically look at exactly what lies before us.

This paper, therefore discusses how there is an all-pervading gender misrepresentation across the broadcast media i.e., Television and advertisement and how media must facilitate a shared commitment to continual improvement in representing the gender biases without further misrepresenting them thereby leading to a gender-inclusive/neutral society.

## I. INTRODUCTION

*Josephine Casserly, Governance and Rights Adviser at BBC Media Action said, "When politics is portrayed in the media as a man's game, it's no coincidence that progress towards women's equal participation in politics is slow".*

News and political programs, show men speaking to men about men everywhere. Just 10 percent of news coverage reports on minority issues and only 4 percent of news stories are considered to address gender stereotypes, according to the Global Media Monitoring Project 2015.

What we see on-screen matters because of what happens off-screen. It's a proven fact that whom we see in power impacts how we see ourselves. When politics is depicted as a man's game in the mainstream media, the movement for an equal representation of women in politics is then expected to be painfully slow.

But it is not easy to make programmes that defy the trend. The tradition of telling stories and stimulating conversations, representing a political arena dominated by men, is both deep-rooted and extremely subtle. It's just half the fight to bring women in front of the camera; we will need to radically modify the way we communicate and let not the discourse and language politics play a part in making way for sexist language.

## II. WHY GENDERED LENS?

The Personal is Political is a powerful and controversial feminist protest by feminists from the second wave of feminism, it is often called "The Private is Political.". Gender-based topics may be taken out of the private domain by the media and put on the political agenda. We need to go beyond this as well. In the women's rights circle, applying a gender-based lens is a common issue, but this lens is hardly used by the media in a manner that represents the lives and experiences of all gender groups. Development practitioners can help cover all stories in the media and gender will certainly be an agenda for everyone.

It was a proud moment when shame and social stigma were opposed, leading to fostering of value of self, dignity, equity and inclusion of **LGBTQ+ community** individuals as a social community. In influencing political attitudes towards gender and sexual minorities, the media has played a transnational role. Through the flow of information between different social groups and political leaders, the media is able to encourage dialogue and collaboration, which has helped to increase representation. The media, television, and film industries started to recognize the importance of these social groups from the 1990s onwards internationally, but still played a limited role in mass media. Media may facilitate and accelerate the changes under way or, on the contrary, may impede their implementation.

If we were to divide the mass media into two categories, such as fiction and news-reporting, women are frequently identified with the household or sex-objects in the former, and they lack positions in the latter group.. The need to challenge public stereotypes by reforming media practices has been articulated and publicized by a number of international conferences and conventions. However, the mass media continues to reproduce and express racist stereotypes about women in sexist ways. As a rule, in the mainstream media, women are depicted in restricted range of characters.

### III. REPRESENTATION OF WOMAN ON TELEVISION

When it comes to the Broadcast media i.e., Television and Advertisement, Television has promoted stereotypical gender roles, and these assumptions have still tended to be presented as natural. The TV industry is dominated by men, so much of what is produced seems to have a male viewpoint. Women are made to internalize through these productions that this is a man's world and should therefore alter themselves accordingly. TV is an efficient and highly influential way to establish and express gender equity and a culture of empowerment. Through gender politics, the portrayal of various social groups and their beliefs, the mass media can influence law and ideology.

Since the 1960s, when Betty Friedan exposed and criticised the portrayal of an ideal woman in post-war America in her book *The Feminine Mystique*, media representations of women have been the focus of critique in Feminist Media Studies (1963). Friedan calls this image "the happy housewife heroine." [1] The patriarchal position of women's images in advertising and films was explored and highlighted by various organisations, feminist organizations and publications after her. The disturbing results of their study were behind the reason for UNESCO's 1979 declaration on mass media, namely:

***"Taking into consideration that TV programs give information and reflect on gender roles in real life, it must be stated that women's images are distorted and unrealistic in these programs. All kind of entertainment programs portray women in a dual image. On one hand, they are decorative objects. Yet, at the same time, they are passive individuals in the household and in marriage who are dependent on men for financial, emotional and physical support."* [2]**

In the shaping of femininity, sexuality-informed features continue to play a dominant role, despite the fact that femininity is increasingly correlated in the media today with autonomous and powerful women. The fragmented display of the female body and the fragmentation of the female body in ads promotes the objectification of women's bodies. On the TV screen or an advertising poster, when slim long legs, prominent breasts or thighs are seen, it is difficult to perceive the body holistically and as having a personality.

In addition, the depicted female characters are mainly influenced by the myth of beauty. They have radiant skin, slender stature and reflect all components of beauty, as seen in culture. As a result of globalization, this myth is increasingly being generalized across cultures and economies. However, beauty ideals, as portrayed in the media, are difficult to attain because the models have been transformed by a variety of technical means into these images.

The fact that the media was solely dominated by men in the initial period of its life is one of the reasons for the discriminatory representations of women in the media. Male and female media photos have been tailored to the tastes of men. In other words, men produced media representations of men and women they really wanted to see.

### IV. REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN ADVERTISEMENTS

It seems that gender stereotyping is at its height in ads. In occupations that are wider and more dominant than females, men are seen. Women are commonly seen as home builders, daughters and wives, in general. Men are seen mostly as car advertising companies or advertising products, while women are seen mostly as household advertising products. Men are more likely to be seen outside or in large and wealthy workspaces, while females are seen in home environments or doing household chores. Men are seen to be serving power more frequently. While the number of female voice-overs has gradually risen in recent years, women are still primarily involved in the positioning of feminine and domestic voices.

### V. WHY REPRESENTATION MATTERS?

Why is the study of women's media representations and attitudes important for social scientists? Femininity and masculinity are both not biological, but rather social constructs. Representations and forms of femininity differ across cultures, times and communities. Culturally and socially, femininity is created by the family, education, the public and, to a greater degree, the media. In this sense, the long-term shift in women's media coverage will further change the attitudes and prejudices of women in society.

To investigate the role and image of women in the media, significant research has been carried out. The portrayal of women in advertising, film, and the inclusion of women in the press were explored in these studies. Both studies confirm that women's portrayals are stereotyped.

While there is a lack of a clear and universal way to change how men, women and non-binary individuals are seen, one such way is to question media coverage based on gender. The latter is strong and reaches millions and has the potential for women and non-binary individuals to encourage and question rigid gender norms.

*Quoting James Wallman from the 'Future of Gender Equality Report' with the expectation that things will change very quickly and we will see a revolution, – "In the future, we're going to break today's norms, we'll create norms that are much better. We'll be living 50/50 lives, we'll be sharing the responsibility, we'll be part-time caregivers and part-time entrepreneurial breadwinners."*

## V. CONCLUSION

We definitely see this change and are working towards an inclusive society. In order to provide various social groups and gender identities with an improved work environment, constructive trends from political discussions can be identified. The internet, advertisement and film industries provide us with role models behind the scenes and on-screen to look up to. Realizing their needs and potential and fighting for gender equality, young people, especially women, are making the world a better place to live.

### References:

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3. <https://www.mediasupport.org/the-crucial-role-of-media-in-achieving-gender-equality/>
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## VI. Gender Construction through Toys

Regardless of the roots of gender-specific toy preferences, it's clear that toys and toy advertising have a strong impact on how children construct their gender identity. Girls between the ages of five and eight who were exposed to Barbie dolls felt worse about their bodies than girls who are exposed to dolls with a more realistic physique. This emerges from a study recently published by the University of Sussex psychologist Helga Dittmar and her colleagues in *Developmental Psychology*.

In a recent article, *Sex Role*, Jennifer Pike, and Nancy Jennings reported that the gendered aspects of television advertising particularly influenced boys. If boys watched an ad in which girls were playing with a particular toy, they were much less likely to play with that toy when given the opportunity. Whether children play with boys' or girls' toys has important implications for the nature of their play, says Isabel Cherni, a developmental psychologist at Crabton University. Cherni and her colleagues have found that toys with female stereotypes promote the most complex play in children of 18-47 months. But as they get older, their gender stereotypes about toys grow stronger. Boys, in particular, are more likely to avoid playing with "girl's toys", owing to the fear of social consequences from their peers.

A toy wouldn't disrupt decades of socializing, which has led us to believe boys wear blue, have short hair, and play with trucks, while girls like pink, have long hair and play with Barbie dolls or kitchen sets. In particular, it doesn't change the way boys learn that masculinity is good and femininity is weak. But research shows that it is linked to sexual abuse.

<https://www.psychologicalscience.org/observer/toy-stories>

<https://theconversation.com/how-toys-became-gendered-and-why-itll-take-more-than-a-gender-neutral-doll-to-change-how-boys-perceive-femininity-124386>