

# Popular culture and gender equality

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Popular culture continually mutates and occurs uniquely in place and time. It represents a complex of equally interdependent points of view and values that influence society and its organizations. It also influences people in various ways: this is important because it creates balance between certain societies in our everyday lives, but can also have a negative impact as it creates inequality which may lead to conflict. A good example of this is gender inequality in decision-making at all levels. Despite the widespread movement towards democratization in most countries, women are largely underrepresented at most levels of government.

They have made little advancement in reaching political power over the years or in achieving the target certified by the Economic and Social Council of having 30 percent women in positions at decision-making levels by 1995 (image 1). Inequality in the public can often begin within the family when power relations between men and women are unbalanced with unfair attitudes and activities (image 2). The unequal division of labour and responsibilities within households based on unequal power relations also limits women's potential to find the time and develop the skills required for participation in decision-making in wider public environments.

Power and knowledge is not the same thing, however they are both very dependent on one another. Therefore without knowledge, power cannot be initiated. Feminists theorize that it is man that holds the key to knowledge in society today; therefore, power naturally follows. As for the entertainment world, the opinions of screenwriters and producers become implanted into our culture and present a base for gender roles. Traditional female roles are

still being presented in the mass media, and as feminism takes the spotlight, more viewers are taking notice and little films are presenting equality.

A good example of this is Sandra Bullock in the movie called *Miss Congeniality* (image 3). As a woman with many masculine qualities, (image 4) Gracie somehow becomes the last resort for a F. B. I. assignment as undercover Miss New Jersey in the Miss United States Pageant. Gracie follows the path to a cuter, mannered woman, but still keeps many characteristics of her masculine personalities by the end of the film. Another common area of popular culture where gender inequality takes place is the PC gaming world. The awful sexist plot of *Starcraft 2* is not at all a secret: it is widely mocked and insulted (image 5).

The single-player campaign storyline for one of 2010's best-selling PC games stands between bad writing and extreme social politics as it comes across to be very offensive. Not many people like it, although in the testosterone-filled world of hardcore PC gaming, most people haven't taken too seriously just how sexist it is. In everyday life, people are forced to deal with gender equality in their workplaces (image 6). Some believe that gender inequality persists in the modern world because men and women are different in behavior and preferences in so many ways.

Social institutions know that, and some try to work around it in ways that don't disadvantage women unreasonably. That is why most employers don't pay women less than men for the same occupations, but acknowledges that women choose different occupations than men, usually occupations paying less (image 7). One of my favourite examples of promoting change in society

is the song called Cant Hold Us Down by pop artist Christina Aguilera in which she creates a female empowerment anthem, expressing her disgust with the double standards of society (image 8 and 9).

She feels that male stars are respected and worshipped for bragging about their wild sex lives, but when women like Aguilera try to express their sexuality, they get labeled as whores. Although it may sometimes be challenging to live in a world filled with inequality, it is important we realize that nothing in life is easy and woman all need to stand together in order to change the society in positive ways that promotes complete equality.