

# Prejudice and discrimination

Psychology



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When watching TV these days we can still observe stereotyping of certain groups of population. Even though TV has come a long way trying to be politically correct and avoid any type of stereotyping that may lead to prejudice or discrimination, the stereotyping itself became more sophisticated and subtle. Nowadays, American nation has become more attuned to stereotyping. From the early age children are taught at school about the diversity and the negative effects of stereotyping. College trainings usually include a component of diversity training. Finally work places provide trainings on diversity and cultural competence. Additionally, all throughout our lives we are more exposed to diversity. Segregated schools are a thing of the past. College campuses as well as work places have people of various backgrounds. The media reflects this diversity we see in life. We may no longer see a sitcom that depicts Italian-Americans as mafia, or African-Americans as gangsters and criminals, but by watching closely we can still see that stereotyping has not disappeared completely. In this paper, I want to specifically address the topic of gender stereotyping. In the previous years, TV might have depicted women as a “weaker” gender. Women were either housewives or occupied only a limited number of jobs, usually those in service, such as waitresses, nurses, or secretaries. As women’s status has changed over the years, as they became more involved in the society, started getting better education, received more rights, and started having equal opportunities for jobs and careers, so has their depiction on TV changed. One good example is a film series called Sex and the City. The show aired from 1998 to 2004. It is fairly recent. It depicts the live of four successful middle-aged women. All of them have made great

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careers, from a famous writer to a Harvard-graduate lawyer to PR professional to the director of art gallery. The show focuses on the personal lives of these women, specifically their struggle to find a soul mate and build strong intimate relationships. What I find stereotypical is the perception of successful women. I think this film series reflects real life perception of women who are successful in their careers, i. e. women successful in career are unhappy and unaccomplished in their personal lives.

I think shows like Sex and the City send a wrong message to American public, especially our young generations who watched it so fascinatingly without really questioning and analyzing the plot. In it unfortunate, that these types of show not only present stereotypes, but they may also lead to the development of prejudice and discrimination among the general public. A good example is the TLC reality show “ Jon and Kate Plus 8”. Even though I am not a fan of the show or any of the characters on it, the wide-spread media coverage of the divorce and familial conflict of the two main characters has attracted my attention. Kate, the divorced mother of eight has been depicted as “ monster mother” for putting her children through the sufferings of camera and for working too much and not spending much time with her children. I think this is a good illustration of the successful woman stereotype that led to the prejudice. When poor mother work three jobs and leave their children with neighbors or relatives to provide for their families, they are being sympathized for hard work and hard life. One can see a lot of these examples on the news these days, especially due to economic recession in the country. “ This mother is a hero, she worked night shifts to provide for her child” is a message one can often hear on TV. However, when a successful woman spends as much time at work, she is being scolded.

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These examples of the shows and real life situation just prove that stereotyping has not disappeared either from our lives or from the TV. Instead it became more subtle and sophisticated. Still stereotyping in the media reflects the stereotyping in real lives, but at the same time it has far more negative and devastating consequences. TV stereotyping also leads to prejudice and discrimination and shapes people's views and behaviors outside of the TV world.

#### References

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