

How do the media
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In addressing the question at hand, it is first necessary to understand what is meant by 'mass media'. Mass media is defined as "the means of communication that reach large numbers of people in a short time, such as television, newspapers, magazines, and radio" (Collins English Dictionary 12th edition, 2014). This thus suggests that any medium that conveys information to the public can be categorised as mass media.

The media has become an all-encompassing, inevitable part of modern life. From films and television shows and adverts to social media, the media is a constant part of our lives and its influence on our subconscious is unavoidable. We are fed this information at a relatively young age and it can shape our gender roles manipulating how we act, talk, think and dress.

Whenever we are exposed to advertisements, movies, T. V. shows, magazines or the media in general we often see gender stereotypes present within the content. Although over the last couple of years these stereotypes have been nullified they are still present in certain content accessed through the media. For example, the common stereotype within the media since the early 1800s has been that men are tough, emotionless, messy, unhygienic, lazy and are predominantly the dominant gender. However, women are portrayed as more domestic, they are represented as housewives and or if they are employed they have jobs of less significant role of those of men I. E. women as nurses and men as doctors, women are also supposed to always look pretty and be quilter according to the stereotypes of both genders through the media. It is clear that the media has a significant impact in shaping the mindset and expectations of a whole generation. As indicated by Durham & Douglas (2006). By looking at a couple of different forms of <https://assignbuster.com/how-do-the-media-shape-our-understanding-of-gender-gender-relations-norms-and-deviations/>

media, I will examine how the media shapes our understanding of gender, gender relations, norms and deviations within this essay. The forms of media in which will be examined within this essay is Advertising, magazines and films.

Advertising

One of the most important factors to examine within the advertising industry is the cultural effect that advertisements have on the public's perceptions of the norms in today's society. Gender roles specifically are given very clear-cut guidelines within many adverts in modern times and society. Men are constantly portrayed as being aggressive, strong, or are in the pursuit of power, speed, wealth or dominance physically and mentally. The advertisements that target men tend always show exactly what I stated. Products that are aimed at men are usually branded as maximising performance and skill at a specific task. The products names also usually reflect these traits. A majority of products add titles that have connotations of being stronger, faster or better. For example, impact, pro, elite, turbo, total and power. Products that are targeted at females take a different role within advertisements as they have defined the female gender role in a different sense (Brasted, 2010).

Women are shown on the completely opposite end of the scale compared to how men are shown within the advertising world. Firstly, instead of being portrayed as strong, powerful and or fast in adverts, they are usually represented within a domestic role. It is very common for the women to be put into the housewife or mother role within the advertisements. Women are

portrayed in a passive role that receives notice and praise from the dominant male figure. This ideology can often be seen in the product appeal for many items that are designed with the target audience of women in mind. The product packaging and image within the advertisements often puts a major emphasis on being cute and not aggressive. The advertisement of products targeting women push the subliminal messaging that women have to constantly look their best in order for to appeal to the opposite gender. The adverts also usually imply that women do not possess the ability to go out into the world and take charge of any situation (Brasted, 2010). Cleaning, cooking and other household products such as Mr. Clean target women and stereotype them as domesticated and or housewives through their advertising.

One example of an advert which displays clear gender stereotypes is the magic eraser Ad from Mr. Clean which was launched in 2011. The advert features text which encourages that ' this Mother's Day, get back to the job that really matters.' The advert features imagery of a mother and her daughter which links back to my point of how females are constantly portrayed as housewives or mother with the advertising world. The mother is shown to be using the Magic eraser which is a product made and sold by Mr. Clean while her daughter stands next to her appearing to show an active interest in her mother cleaning. This advert promotes and feeds off the negative stereotype that women are housewives and that they should do the cleaning and not the men. The user of the term ' Mother's Day' also implies that the product would make a perfect gift for a woman as they enjoy doing the cleaning. The mascot of the brand Mr. Clean also plays into the

stereotype for both genders as it is a muscular man who displays signs of power which is what the stereotype of what all men look like within advertising as well as it also shows dominance over women which is another stereotype. This advert uses the slippery slope fallacy (Walton, 1992) which is when a claim is made that if something occurs. Another unrelated occurrence will take place as a result. This advert claims that by gifting a mother or woman the Magic eraser product this will result in them cleaning more which is represented as a norm for the women.

Another example of an advertisement which portrays negative gender stereotypes of men is the diet coke 'Gardener' advert from 2013 which features a group of females sexualizing a man who is mowing the lawn. The advert features the soundtrack 'I Just Want To Make Love To You' by Etta James which further displays the sexualisation of the male figure within the advert. The females then proceed to roll a can of the soft drink down the hill in the direction of the gardener with the intention of getting his attention as well as drenching him with the drink which is shown when they celebrate when he is sprayed with the drink and proceeds to take off his soaking wet top. This segment of the advert creates major tensions and a rift in the gender relations as some men believe that there are double standards as it would be deemed socially wrong and objectifying. The advert also plays in many gender roles which have touched on prior for example the male is big, muscular and is presented to be doing manual labour which is another stereotype that men are the only gender capable of doing manual labour. This advertisement is created through the female gaze which is a theoretical term which represents the female viewer or female character.

Magazines

Magazines have always had segregation between males and females with both genders having their own separate magazines however both men's and women's magazines often follow the same general formula. both men's and women's magazine contents are based around heavily erotised images of women.

One example which clearly displays gender roles and stereotypes is the 2008 vogue magazine cover. It displays a man (LeBron James) holding the women in his arms which represents males as dominant and in control as well as the ruling figure, whereas the women is seen as weak obedient and reliant on the man. This is really intriguing as I believe that the media subconsciously serves certain interests while depicting what the perfect man and woman should look like abiding to societies image. We could agree that not everybody fits into this social construct of what the perfect man and woman looks like. For example, the perfect image of a man is depicted as muscular, strong and should be athletic however this is not the case with every man, the same goes for women with the perfect image of a woman depicted as slim with model like features. Magazines publishers make use of gender roles, gender stereotypes and hegemony to sell their magazines. Hegemony is best described by Antonio Gramsci. Gramsci's assertion was that the dominant classes present their view of reality in a manner that it is the only sensible way of viewing reality and is therefore accepted as common sense by other classes; This is something which is consistently found in the realm of mass media and its relation with gender, gender roles, gender stereotypes, gender relations and norms and deviations based on gender. <https://assignbuster.com/how-do-the-media-shape-our-understanding-of-gender-gender-relations-norms-and-deviations/>

Another example is the May 2012 magazine cover for men's fitness magazine which features an image of American actress Stacy Keibler who is in a tight workout outfit striking a sexual pose. This sexualisation of females is a common theme for the magazine but also quite strange at the same time with the magazines content having anything to do with women's fitness. Almost all magazines portray women through the male gaze which is a theory created by Laura Mulvey. The male gaze theory is all about the sexual objectification of women within media and how they are viewed through the eyes of a heterosexual male with these women being represented as passive objects of male desire. All audience members are forced to watch the film from this point of view whatever their gender or sexual preference is. The male gaze is most commonly portrayed within movies through medium close up shots with emphasis on the female's private body parts such as breast, over the shoulder shot which is usually taken over the male's shoulder and shots that pan and fixate on the female's body.

Films

The film industry as a whole within the western society has been the topic of major controversy within the last couple of years regarding gender issues. A very recent example is Martin Scorsese's film *The Wolf of Wall Street*. The movie's whole premise is based on the life of Jordan Belfort who is the lead role of the film played by actor Leonardo DiCaprio. He starts off his career as a young broker who has just started out on wall street at a white-shoe firm. The storyline of the film has no correlation with females however somehow there are still many scenes within the whole 3 hours of the film which portrays females in a derogatory manner. Although there is only a few female

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roles in the film they all represent all of the negative stereotypes that the media apply to females. The female roles within the film are always shown doing sexual acts with the male protagonists of the film. Another gender stereotype that is highlighted within this film is that women lack intelligence and are materialistic. For example, one of the female roles to whom we are introduced to is the co-worker of the male protagonist who is only at the company to fulfil the sexual needs of the male roles. The female shaves her head for money to fund breast implants which links directly back to the stereotype within the media that women have to always look pretty and do anything in order to fulfil this. All of the women are seen through the male gaze within the movie.

Overall I believe that the media shapes our understanding of gender, gender relations, norms and deviations through subliminal messaging and through the use of centuries old stereotypes. Firstly, the media has featured stereotypes of each gender that is on display from a young age which we all grow up with. We as society tend to believe in these stereotypes and believe that they are the norms due to how exposed we are to them on a daily basis throughout our whole lives. These stereotypes and gender roles portrayed within the media have also caused major strain on the relations between men and women. Theories such as the male gaze and female gaze have arisen as a result of this strain between the genders.

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