Women In The Media

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How woman are portrayed in the media has changed over time. Although the view has gotten a little broader, there are still many flaws in the way women are displayed as flawless creatures. There are many levels of influence in our society and media plays a major role in dispensing influential images to us. Media comes in many forms, television, radio, newspapers, movies, and advertisements. The media is so intertwined in our lives that we do not truly comprehend on a conscious level how much influence it really has over us. Not all women are tall skinny and always put together as if just walking out of the salon. The media is becoming a lot less stereotypical and opening its horizon to embrace the everyday working women.

 Back in the 50’s when a women’s place was in the kitchen and all advertisements showed women how to do their housework in a glorified manner. Magazine ads and television commercials offered ways to get the dishes extra clean and hair the shiniest. Along with T.V. and film, women were portrayed as men’s second in command with the job of homemaker and primary caregiver for the children. Very simple keep the house clean, dinner cooked, children kept and look good while doing it. While this image still applies to some it is not the ideal situation for today’s modern woman.

In the 60’s things began to evolve and women were moved from the kitchen into the bedroom says Professor Tina Piercinni (p.544). This was about the time when media images started to have a sexual undertone. Very mild compared to today’s standards, but none the less they are there. Such shows like “I Dream of Jeannie” and “Gilligan’s Island” that showed a different take on women altogether. One was a submissive Jeannie would pranced around with her bare midriff showing waiting on her master to order a command. The other showed a scarlet sex kitten wondering around an island in her high heels for no apparent reason but to have the men on the island lust over her. Even in the earlier times the viewers were shown these examples to look up to for entertainment but also as representations of women.

Then in the 70’s women are almost completely removed from the kitchen and thrown into action with swimsuits and knee high boots. Shows like “Charlie’s Angels” and “Three’s Company” portrayed women as independent self-sufficient creatures. The image of women being dependent on men was out and self-governing was in, although this was a major step up for women as a force to be reckon with, the fact that they were in very provocative clothing was a step back. It seems like the 70’s was about when the image and need to be tall, thin and flawless were implicated to audiences of all ages. Tight clothes, lots of makeup and very thin bodies seemed to be the theme for the 70’s. Of course this glamour would attract the young girls that watched these shows and want to follow in the image that was before them. Who wouldn’t want to mimic the sexy looks of thee Farrah Faucet, but at what cost and at what age is this okay to follow. In magazines and advertising white women was the primary focus, which was another negative portrayal of women because there are a lot of different races. Another reason to make young girls upset that they are not only tall or thin but they lack blond hair.

Dr. Tina Peircinni wrote “In the 80’s there were improvements in network television programming.”(p.546). This was definitely the decade of the working women. When women where taken a little more serious but still struggle with putting out the idea that the ideal body shape is thin and tall.

The United States culture values thinness and beauty says Stanley Baran (2012). He says that it is embedded in the conscious and unconscious. This is why we strive mirror the images we see in the movies, magazines, and advertising and on the television. Most women are okay with being digitally altered and reduced to fit the perfect example. There are a few like Julia Roberts and Kate Winslett that were angered when they were digitally reduced. They stood up for themselves and express that they except their flaws and actually embrace them.

In this year’s list of People magazines most beautiful people. There was a list of women that ranged from young girls to older women. Out of the list of women there are a few with less than perfect body images. This is a really big step towards equality and embracing all body types. For curvy voluptuous body types like Christina Hendricks and Adele that made the list and are able to be positive role models regardless of their weight. These women are comfortable in their skinny and have publically made it known that they are not ashamed of their bodies.

In a 2010 Article by Larry D. Woodard he stated that Designer Jean Paul Gaultier featured a plus size model in his advertising campaign. The model was a known plus size model Crystal Renn that was chosen instead of any of her super thin colleagues. Woodard questioned if the use of such models is a start of a major shift in the way women are portrayed or just a way to get consumers attention in this down economy? He also goes on to say that a study at Arizona State University showed that ads with plus size models won’t work because of self-esteem issues. Even though this might be true with time and more exposure to all body types consumers will gain the confidence needed. Mr. Woodard believes that models will always be idealized but will be portrayed closer to reality (2010).

The media, especially television has changed over time and has started to embrace different ethnic groups and body types to make it easier for audiences with all backgrounds to relate to characters that they so look up to. So instead of striving to be that Barbie doll image that was for so long made to believe was what the ideal image is. Women can relax in their own image and embrace the diversity that is now displayed in their everyday viewing. Whether it is in a magazine or a movie, the variety of portrayals is a lot more assorted then it once was. When women look to the media for models they can achieve in the real world, they see newspapers and TV anchors talking about female politicians’ haircuts and fashion choices and then they turn to reality TV, where they’re told that the only route to power is through beauty and humiliation. My type is usually the stronger female lead, so it’s kind of scary that there aren’t many of those roles, but looking towards what people and movies like Amy Poehler or Bridesmaids are doing in creating funny female leads, I think it’s hopefully going to get a lot better.

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