

# Portrayal of Sexism in Various Forms of Media

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**ABSTRACT:** *The quantitative content assessments of gender roles in media released in the two special issues of Sex Roles are discussed in this article. The broad range of data provided reveals a few patterns and several overarching insights. For starters, women are clearly underrepresented in a variety of media and situations. Second, when women are shown, it is often in a limited and unfavorable light. Women are often sexualized, most commonly by depicting them in revealing or provocative attire. Women are also subjugated in a variety of ways, as shown by face expressions, bodily postures, and other variables. Finally, they are shown in roles that are typically feminine (i.e., stereotyped). Women are stereotyped as stay-at-home moms, spouses, and mothers, as well as sexual gatekeepers. Despite the fact that the research usually corroborates these findings, several intriguing moderating variables, such as race, have been found. The development of theory and a body of empirical data on the impacts of exposure to underrepresentation of women are recommended as future stages. There is also a scarcity of information on the impact of sexualized or stereotyped representations on young audiences. Finally, as a further step, content assessments of new media, including those produced and disseminated by users, are suggested. While expanding female presence in media may be beneficial, it is equally important to examine the way in which they are depicted in order to prevent creating negative or stereotyped portrayals that may be especially damaging to viewers.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Gender, Media, Sexualized, Stereotyped, Video Games.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The articles in these special issues of Sex Roles, as well as the material they offer, constitute a significant step forward in our knowledge of how women are portrayed in the media today. The studies span a wide range of topics and examine a wide range of problems related to gender roles. It's maybe surprising that the findings converge so substantially in the face of such variety. When looking at this collection of work as a whole, several important themes emerge, as well as some obvious knowledge gaps. The paper has a range of different contributions: some are philosophical or methodological, but I'll concentrate on the significant point that was supported by the bulk of the papers: Women are under-represented in the media, according to the research, and when they are there, they are usually barely clad and confined to stereotyped positions. While these trends are obvious, the papers also point out certain variances that may serve as a springboard for future study. Researchers analyzed the results below, highlighting some significant difficulties in understanding and implementing it [1].

According to a recent study, women are the primary protagonists in health-related tales on popular nighttime television programmes like Dr. Phil. Male sources appeared almost 3 times as often as women sources in newspaper articles of the same marriage, and male sources feature nearly twice as common as female sources in local television coverage of a wide variety of topics, according to a recent study. In pop songs from five tunes television networks, male characters outnumber women protagonists by a ratio of three. By a proportion of 2.57 : 1 among the highest G-rated films, males outweigh females. Women were the least likely to appear in video games, according to the study. A further point to note is that just 70 from out 489 of the protagonists in the most popular game consoles are female. A lack of female representation across all media, or in a sample group of any single medium, is not demonstrated in the papers and research that have been published so far. It is worth noting that they concentrate on material that a large number of people are revealed to on a daily basis, as well as the relative lack of female representation in this diverse collection of media is noteworthy, suggesting that the world of media is more akin to 1950s having to work reality than 2010 society [2].

One of the main goals of content analysis is to see whether there are any features in media that may have a detrimental or good impact on users' attitudes and actions. There are other reasons to undertake content studies, but the one in which society has the most at stake is analyzing media for their prospective consequences. As a result, the widespread underrepresentation of women raises the issue of how this impacts media content consumers. Will young girls' self-esteem and feeling of significance suffer if they don't see themselves represented in the media? Will boys come to the conclusion that women and girls are as unimportant? Will there be a shortage of role models for girls? Will adult females feel marginalized? Is it true that women's underrepresentation in society limits social views and knowledge in significant ways? The absence of ethnic

representation in the media sparked a social movement, while the lack of female representation lately prompted the establishment of See Jane. See Jane is a Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media initiative that collaborates with the entertainment industry to improve the representation of girls and women in children's media. These initiatives are based on the idea that female underrepresentation has significant and negative consequences. While this seems to be a fair assumption, our theories provide little support for predictions regarding the effects of media portrayal, or the lack thereof [3].

The ability to learn from the actions of people who are represented in the media depends on their resemblance to those in the media. Others believe that identification with a character and narrative conveyance are important factors in media impact on beliefs and behaviour. These mechanisms may need similarity to function. Greenberg and Atkin found that although Black and White children are equally likely to identify with White television characters, Black children are much more likely to identify with Black ones. According to previous studies, female characters are more closely associated with than male protagonists are with. Women of color and people of color who are underrepresented in the television may adapt by more easily identifying with individuals who are unlike themselves, allowing them to remain engaged viewers despite the fact that they do not see themselves reflected in terms of gender or race. Identification and transportation procedures, as well as how they operate in general, must be better understood by people who are underrepresented in the media, and this is especially true for minorities [4].

### *1.1 Are Women Sexualized?*

When it comes to predicting effects on media consumers, while the articles in these unique problems provide more reliable data on women's lack of representation than with any other subject, how males and females are portrayed may be much more important than whether or not they are included. When women can appear inside the media, according to the findings of the Sex Situations research, they often appear in sexualized or submissive positions.

Much of what is presented in the unique problems on this topic is concerned with the territory where sex and gender intersect, such as in gender sexual screenplays and sexual gender scripts. When Downs and Smith conducted a content analysis of the best-selling console video games, they discovered that 41 percent of female characters wore revealing clothing and an equal percentage were partially or fully nude in their findings. And many of these ladies had bodies that were unnaturally proportioned. The portrayal of masculine characters did not have any resemblance to these results. Notably, the researchers discovered little depictions of sex discourse or sexual activity in 60 video games with 489 characters—only six instances of each were identified. The games were about attractive ladies rather than sex [4].

A second study that compared Blacks and Whites music videos discovered that sexuality is a frequent subject in both groups. Turner found that black movies are more likely than white videos to include sexual content and female characters that are dressed provocatively. In 43 per cent of the videos, there was explicit sexual content. Despite the fact that the vast majority of a people did not dress suggestively, some who did were much more likely to just be Black women.

Because of these findings, it is reasonable to question whether it is wise to advocate for more female representation and African-Americans inside the media without simultaneously addressing other issues of content. Studies have demonstrated that exposure to sexual objectification media has a detrimental effect on women's as well as girls' self-esteem, self-image, and mental well-being, among other things. According to socialization as well as other theories of media use, these kinds of portrayals may also affect viewers' sexual attitudes and behaviour, particularly during adolescence, when teenagers are constantly trying to come to terms with their identity and sexuality. Content which sexually vilifies or degrades women, according to empirical research, has the potential to influence adolescents' sexual views and behaviour [5].

### *1.2 Sexualization Isn't Just About Sexual Content:*

Although the conclusions in these special issues are cautious, these ideas and results have sometimes been pushed too far, so it's worth emphasizing that these effects are subject to limitations. Exposure to sexual material or partly dressed women is unlikely to cause girls to have a negative body image or lower their self-esteem. Boys will not necessarily view girls and women as objects based on sexual content or nudity. According to the theory, if the body types portrayed are idealised, if the lack of clothing is disproportionately characteristic of women, and if

the images or other material subordinates women, such effects are likely to occur. It is doubtful that sexual material, with the exception of celibacy and virginity, would lead to negative attitudes about anything. Partial nudity may also lead to the wearing of exposing clothing by spectators, although whether this results in the sexual objectification or oneself relies on how nakedness is presented to the public.

Even when researchers are meticulous in their explanations of the techniques they used and the limitations of their empirical results, these distinctions may be lost in discussions of the outcomes they discovered. Reporters, advocacy groups, and the public at large often understand the results in terms of morality, or they use them to advocate for the prohibition of sexually explicit content on the internet. One such item was the conclusion of the Psychological Association Commission on Girls' Sexualization, which was covered by Fox News and was led by the phrase According to the report, sexual images are psychologically damaging to young girls. The research did not assert that sexual images are harmful to children; rather, it said that images portraying young girls as sex objects may be harmful to young girls who really are exposed to such images in the first place. To be fair, the text that follows provides an appropriate explanation of the findings, and those who relied solely on the title were badly misinformed. Using the study to call for a boycotting of Dove cosmetics products was even more troublesome than the report itself. With the slogan "Beauty knows no age limit," Unilever, the parent company of Dove, has launched a television advertisement showing nude elderly women. The American Association highlighted the study's demand for decreasing sexualized representations of women and girls, as well as the possibly negative consequences of access to these images, as though it related to the Dove ad. The advertisement, on either hand, did not satisfy the standards of sexualization set out in the study. Although the Dove commercial was controversial, it may have served as a positive public relations campaign for the company since it addressed a concept that was highlighted as harmful in the study: that only young females and those with particular body types are attractive [6].

It is critical to highlight the subtleties of sexualization, to put it another way. In the first place, overdrawing and simplifying findings, or allowing others to do the same, undermines the credibility of the researchers who have conducted the study. Secondly, if research is to be used to inform policy or practice, it is critical that the right collection of representations be used. Some of these subtleties may be collected and made visible via the use of content analysis techniques. This is shown in many of the articles in these special issues, and future study must follow in their footsteps, as they have done.

### *1.3 Positive Interpretations:*

In none of the articles was there much discussion of material that could portray women in a particularly favorable light. Are there any representations of women in the media that are good or that contradict conventional gender roles or stereotypes? If that's the case, where do they call home? Given what we know from the articles in these issues, there are likely to be few such depictions, making it difficult to hunt them down and much more difficult to collect enough for a quantitative study. However, figuring out where they live and why they're there may be just as essential as identifying harmful depictions.

### *1.4 Connecting Content to Effects:*

The emphasis I have put on exposure outcomes in this review may indicate that my own research has concentrated on evaluating the impacts of media. Collaboration with people who know much more about the science of content analysis than I do, as well as techniques that combine content analysis with survey research, has been critical to my effort. Those who research media impacts are increasingly coming from other fields than those who study content, and the two groups often have distinct views, ideas, and methods. Many media-effects researchers lack the necessary tools to perform robust, scientifically valid gender content assessments. As a result, they tend to concentrate on examining relationships between the usage of a medium (e.g., hours of television watching) and outcomes—an approach that is insufficient in a varied media universe, and that can only offer indirect evidence of content impacts under the best of circumstances. Many people who conduct content analyses, on the other hand, are just as interested in the effects of the content they're describing as they are in the content itself, but they lack experience with the types of large-scale surveys that are used to test associations between media exposure and outcomes. Interdisciplinary research that combines these methods has advanced our knowledge of media impacts in areas such as sexual content and drug depictions. Such methods are uncommon, according to their review, but I think we will see a lot more of them as multidisciplinary cooperation grows in the sciences. By

establishing connections between survey and experimental research and content analysis, it is possible to maximize the potential of both disciplines and have the most significant and informed effect on media practice[7].

### *1.5 Sexist Representations in Traditional Media:*

To explain how more conventional forms of sexist media (e.g., TV, magazines) promote sexist reactions, many theoretical models have been employed. According to the Cultivation Theory, continuous exposure to media messages develops beliefs that are similar to the messages. The viewer's perspective becomes more compatible with the media's skewed depiction of reality than with reality itself, according to this theory. People who are regularly exposed to sexist media messages, according to this idea, will eventually adopt these sexist views as their own. Similarly, social–cognitive theory claims that individuals acquire information through watching others in the setting of social interactions and media impacts. Observing others' actions, according to social–cognitive theory, has an effect on how individuals think, and the media is a significant source of such socio-cognitive changes. As a consequence, the media has the power to influence an audience's ideas, attitudes, and actions on any subject.

Finally, objectification theory examines the impact of sexist media portrayals more directly. According to this idea, women are often shown in the media in ways that highlight their sexual and subservient characteristics, and these representations may affect society members' attitudes and actions in ways that reinforce strict gender norms and convey women's inferiority.

These theories all agree that sexist media does not always represent reality; rather, it may shape perceptions by sending messages that perpetuate sexist views and strict gender roles. A plethora of research has investigated how more conventional types of sexist media affect gender-relevant reactions to support these theoretical theories. Frequent exposure to sexist television, for example, has been related to increased acceptance of gender stereotypes and objectification of women. Even when the sexual picture is of an agentic woman in control of her libido, same impact occurs. Experimental study also shows that males who are quickly exposed to objectifying pictures of women from movies are more likely to accept gender role stereotypes than men who are not. Sexist magazine advertisements, music videos, and primetime TV shows have all been shown to have similar experimental effects. Finally, several of these research indicates that the influence of sexist media on sexist views is greater among male viewers. Exposure to conventional types of sexist media is linked to increased sexist attitudes and gender stereotype reinforcement, according to this study. However, it is unclear if similar effects would be applicable to video games[8].

### *1.6 Video Games Sexist Depictions:*

Video games have been accused of including some of the most overtly sexist portrayals of women in today's popular culture. As a result, it's remarkable that so few empirical research on this possibly detrimental feature of video games have been performed. Only a few research has comprehensively investigated the impact of sexist video games on gender-relevant reactions to date.

The showing of a link between sexist representations in video games and men's support for violence against women is one notable result from this literature. Males who often played violent sexualized video games had greater rape propensity and rape myth acceptance than men who did not frequently play such games. They also discovered that males who played a sexualized video game subsequently evaluated a rape victim more adversely than men who played a non-sexualized video game in a follow-up research. Males who saw pictures of sexualized male and female video game characters were more tolerant of sexual harassment than men who saw photos of actual U.S. senators and congresspersons. The media exposure conditions had no effect on women in both study programmes[9].

Three video game studies recently looked at the connection between short-term exposure to sexist video games and sexist reactions, which is more relevant to the present debate. The sexually explicit video games affect sexual and objectifying ideas' cognitive accessibility. When compared to males who played a control game, men who played a sexualized video game had faster reaction times to sexual terms and were more inclined to view women as sex objects. Researchers investigated how gender-relevant beliefs and stereotypes are influenced by playing a video game featuring sexualized female characters. When compared to men who portrayed a non-sexualized female role, men who played a sexualized female character were more inclined to evaluate a woman's cognitive skills as inferior[10].

## 2. DISCUSSION

Aside from the role of sex object, a large portion of the research presented in these unique problems is concerned with stereotypical representations of women. A total of nine studies included in this special issue code for a stereotypically feminine role and discover evidence that it is often encountered in the media. In Indian television advertisements, there is no statistically significant difference between the percentage of women and men. Female characters accounted for 43 % of the 627 personalities found and categorized in their research, while male characters accounted for 57 percent. A study found that women were more likely than men to be portrayed in relational roles, and also to be represented by products for the physique or clothing. Men also represented things that are stereotypically male, such as automobiles and electronics. Increasing the number of women in leadership positions, for example, would not result in more fair or accurate portrayals of women in leadership positions. Indeed, according to the findings of a cross-national survey of television advertisements conducted by certain researchers, the only nation where women just weren't under-represented was South Korea, and the positions in which women were highlighted were ones that were traditionally associated with them. Girls were much more likely than men to represent housekeepers, while men were more likely to depict professional and even office workers.

## 3. CONCLUSION

In and of itself, each item in these unique problems adds to the body of information on gender norms in media and the media's representation of women. While some of the documents contribute to academic concepts, other papers contribute theoretically, and still others contribute to the overall body of data by trying to apply to new locations or going to mention cautions regarding variations in depictions by country or ethnicity, the majority of the papers make a contribution to the theoretical knowledge. This collection of papers represents a major advancement in the level of knowledge and study in this area when considered collectively. The least surprising of their findings, that women are underneath and sexualized, has been widely documented across a broad variety of media and settings, and it is time for us to move onto next phase of research, which will investigate the impact on media viewers, according to the researchers. Despite the fact that considerable research has been done on the topic, it is already in its infancy.

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