

Thesis for Research Paper

Thesis: The media distorts reality by creating and reinforcing gender stereotypes which subjugate women by portraying them as sex objects, victims, and as dependents of society.

Reasons to Support:

New Topic: Gender in the Media

- Three themes describe how media represent gender. First, women are underrepresented, which falsely implies that men are the cultural standard and women are unimportant or invisible. Second, men and women are portrayed in stereotypical ways that reflect and sustain socially endorsed views of gender. Third, depictions of relationships between men and women emphasize traditional roles and normalize violence against women (Wood, 1994).
- Research has investigated the content and implications of images of people in specific print and televised media, and has consistently found gender biases and stereotypical messages (Milburn, 2001).
- Humans use media images to form cognitive schemas, and these schemas can then have an effect on perceptions of ability and performance (Milburn, 2001).
- Media depictions of men and women are one of the fundamental sources of our gender identity. The “cognitive miser” theory proposes that humans rely on common images to create stereotypes, and then use those stereotypes as a decision-making aid in order to conserve mental resources (Milburn, 2001).
- Gender stereotypes influence individuals’ interpretation of their own achievement, so that females may evaluate their performance more negatively when engaging in male-typical activities such as math (Milburn, 2001).
- Feminist researchers have repeatedly reported on the significant role that the media play in the construction of the “beauty ideal” that society holds up to women (Malkin, 1999).
- The depictions of gender in the media create and reinforce cognitive rubrics that narrow the range of roles women may play in society. Depicting women as primarily passive individuals, sexualized, or shown in nurturing roles may encourage men to dismiss women in business settings. When business and educational institutions use stereotypical images, they are affecting the performance of women and minorities (Milburn, 2001).
- Representations of women in the media are more sexualized than those of men (Milburn, 2001).

New Topic: Gender Biases in Computer Software

- Clip art depicts Caucasian males more frequently and in more active/non-nurturing and desirable roles than any other group. Using these programs to make business and educational materials more interesting and engaging may inadvertently activate maladaptive cognitive schemas (Milburn, 2001).
- Educational software designed to teach mathematics in elementary school classrooms through the use of engaging stories and activities primarily contained male characters in the stories. The proportion of female characters decreased as the intended grade level of the game player increased (Milburn, 2001).

- The effect of clipart is more pronounced for children because research has shown that children retain more gender typical information than gender atypical information (Milburn, 2001).

New Topic: MISC.

- Textbooks for introductory psychology were examined and it is shown that they under represent women and ethnic minorities in both text and illustrations (Milburn, 2001).
- Postage stamps are more likely to depict men than women, and men are more likely to be depicted in more active roles, while women are portrayed in a limited number of traditional nurturing activities.

New Topic: Gender Roles in Magazines and Print Ads

- Analyses show that 78% of the covers of women's magazines contained a message regarding bodily appearance, whereas none of the covers of the men's magazines did so (Malkin, 1999).
- Twenty-five percent of the women's magazine covers contained conflicting messages regarding weight loss and dietary habits (Malkin, 1999).
- The positioning of weight-related messages on the covers often implied that losing weight may lead to a better life (Malkin, 1999).
- Men's magazines focus on providing entertainment and expanding knowledge, hobbies, and activities; women's magazines continue to focus on improving one's life by changing one's appearance (Malkin, 1999).
- For the majority of women, this ideal is impossible to attain and may lead to feelings of inadequacy. Feelings of inadequacy are also likely to be fed by cosmetic manufacturers and weight management programs whose ad campaigns focus on convincing women that they can ameliorate their bodily flaws and imperfections only by purchasing their products or taking part in their programs (Malkin, 1999).
- A strong emphasis has been placed on the bodily appearance of women that equates a thin body to beauty, sexuality, and social status; less focus has been placed on the bodily appearance of men (Malkin, 1999).
- The ten magazines most frequently read by women contained significantly more diet articles and advertisements than the ten magazines most frequently read by men. The ratio of diet articles in men's and women's magazines is 1:10, which is identical to the actual ratio of eating disorders in men and women in the general population (Malkin, 1999).
- When men's magazines focus on bodily appearance, the activities and advertisements center on changes in body shape (i.e., "bulking up"), whereas the women's magazines focused on changes in body weight (i.e., "slimming down") (Malkin, 1999).
- Instead of simply reflecting the weight and shape ideals of our society, popular media may be, to some extent, imposing gender-related norms, which then lead to sex-related differences in the frequency of critical behaviors.
- Women's magazines contain far more body-oriented articles than did the magazines that targeted male readers (Malkin, 1999).
- It is often the cover of a magazine that initially attracts the reader to the magazine. Titles, catch phrases and pictures displayed on the magazine covers are usually all that the

reader has time to look at in a store. It is these items that influence the reader to buy the magazine (Malkin, 1999).

- The cover is primarily a sales tool...the images selected and the way we describe the contents must be provocative, hard-hitting, and full of elements that sell (Malkin, 1999).
- Women's magazines are more likely to contain messages about diet, exercise, and cosmetic surgery to change body size than are men's magazines. The majority of the most popular women's magazines focus on changing and improving one's self, whereas most of the popular men's magazines focus on the outside world, news, politics, hobbies and activities (Malkin, 1999).
- On magazine covers, most women are young, thin and wear revealing clothing (Malkin, 1999).
- The visual images on both men's and women's magazine covers tend to portray what women should look like and what men should look for. There is minimal focus on the male body (Malkin, 1999).
- Messages on magazine covers such as, "Get the Body You Want," "Lose 10 Pounds," and, "Ways to Make Your Life Easier, Happier, and Better" give women the false idea that changing the appearance of their bodies will lead to better relationships, stronger friendships, and happier lives (Malkin, 1999).
- In men's magazines, the focus is on providing entertainment and improving one's life by expanding knowledge, hobbies, and activities. Women's magazines, however seem to focus on improving one's life by changing one's appearance, especially by losing weight (Malkin, 1999).
- Being thin means being happier, sexier, and more lovable (Malkin, 1999).
- Women's magazines contain conflicting messages about weight loss strategies and eating behaviors, including the placement of weight loss prescriptions next to recipes and pictures of foods that are extremely high in fat content (Malkin, 1999).
- The consequences of striving for these unrealistic ideals may be that an increasing number of women take aggressive means to control and reduce their weight (Malkin, 1999).
- Playboy magazine advertisements depict women on their knees at the feet of men worshipping them.
- Print advertisements depict females as shy, passive, and gentle where as males were depicted as dominant, and powerful (Milburn, 2001).
- Print advertisements show women, but not men, in predominantly domestic and dependent roles (Milburn, 2001).

New Topic: Gender Differences on TV

- Although the precise effects of television on individuals within our society are often debated, there is no question about television's central role within our culture (Sommers-Flanagan, 1993).
- Content analyses of network television consistently indicate that stereotypic sex role differences exist during usual programming. Specifically, men appear more frequently than women and are portrayed as older, more active problem solvers, higher achievers, and more powerful. In general, women on network television are continuing in their stereotypic roles (Sommers-Flanagan, 1993).

- With regards to media representations, we are still a very male-dominated culture (Sommers-Flanagan, 1993).
- On MTV, males are featured nearly twice as often as females. Males are statistically more likely to engage in implicitly aggressive behavior on the screen and they are depicted as behaving in an implicitly aggressive manner over four times more often than females (Sommers-Flanagan, 1993).
- On MTV, men and women are approximately equally subject to objectification during music videos (Sommers-Flanagan, 1993).
- Although women are more likely to act in implicitly sexual ways, men also behave implicitly sexual at an extremely high rate. Perhaps in this regard, the most salient MTV message is: whether you are male or female, act sexual (Sommers-Flanagan, 1993).
- In MTV music videos, men engaged in significantly more aggressive and dominant behavior, whereas women engaged in significantly more implicitly sexual and subservient behavior. Women were more frequently the object of explicit, implicit, and aggressive sexual advances (Sommers-Flanagan, 1993).
- TV shows often have more male than female characters (Lippa).
- Men on TV are portrayed in diverse occupations; often as heroes and problem solvers (Lippa).
- Female characters occupy a more limited range of roles: housewife, secretary, nurse, witch and teacher (Lippa).
- Women in TV are either portrayed as: young, sexy and attractive or older, asexual and comical (Lippa).
- Authority figures in commercials are often male (Lippa).
- Product users in commercials are more often female (Lippa).
- TV viewing fosters gender stereotypes, particularly in children who did not hold strong stereotypes to begin with (Lippa).
- In televised music videos, males appear twice as often as women, and engage in significantly more aggressive and dominant behavior. Women are significantly more likely to be depicted as the passive object of sexual advances than men (Milburn, 2001).
- Televised commercials depict women as sexual targets and men as active and dominant (Milburn, 2001).

New Topic: Sex-Roles and the Media's influence on children

- How children learn to perceive themselves is in many ways dependent on the role models they are given (Purcell, 1989).
- Sex roles are learned behavior and are not solely biologically defined (Purcell, 1989).
- Sex role definitions can be learned from role models including people resented in media such as picture books, storybooks, and films (Purcell, 1989).
- Role definitions that are too narrow or rigid can be harmful to a child's development (Purcell, 1989).
- Such narrowly defined sex-role definitions have been found in children's literature (Purcell, 1989).
- The concept that each sex should fill a different role is developed, and children understand this concept by age 3 (Purcell, 1989).

- As children get older, their definitions of “proper” behavior for their sex become narrower, and their inhibitions against breaking out of these defined roles become stronger (Purcell, 1989).
- One of the ways a child learns to define the sex roles is through the imitation of role models including those from media such as picture books, storybooks, readers, and television (Purcell, 1989).
- Sex-role stereotyping has restrictive, dysfunctional consequences for both sexes, the deleterious effects are more pronounced for females (Purcell, 1989).
- Magazines show differences by sex in areas such as social role, economic dependency, and attitude towards others (Purcell, 1989).
- Books have not changed their role models to keep pace with the changing social and political climate (Purcell, 1989).
- Books for preschool and early elementary-age children contain differences in both visual images and text descriptions based on characters’ gender. Males generally appear in illustrations more often than females and are more likely to be cast in central roles and to be cited in the titles than females. Females tend to be portrayed in passive or nurturing roles or both (e.g., mother, nurse, or secretary), whereas males are portrayed in active/non-nurturing, productive or aggressive roles or both (e.g., baseball player, construction worker, or scientist) (Milburn, 2001).
- Children who endorse gender stereotypes also prefer gender-congruent activities and preferred to interact with adults in gender-congruent professions (Milburn, 2001).

New Topic: How Video Games Objectify Women

- Men are significantly more likely than women to play video games (Ogletree, 2007).
- Female video game characters are significantly more helpless and sexually provocative than male characters and as less likely to be strong and aggressive (Ogletree, 2007).
- 72% of the most frequent players of videogames are boys/men (Ogletree, 2007).
- More video games seem to be male-oriented than female-oriented (Ogletree, 2007).
- The ratio of male characters or female characters in video game advertisements from video game magazines was greater than 3 to 1. Typically, video games do not include female characters; when games include female characters, they are most often portrayed as victims (Ogletree, 2007).

New Topic: Effects of Media on Women

- Dieting efforts can have serious implications, including inadequate nutrition, fatigue, weakness, irritability, depression, social withdrawal, loss of sexual desire, and even sudden death from cardiac arrhythmia (Malkin, 1999).
- Dietary restraint increases the likelihood of binge eating, which may initiate the cycle of bulimia in individuals at risk for developing eating disorders (Malkin, 1999).
- Dieting should never be considered a risk-free activity. Editors of popular women’s magazines need to be more aware of the implications of gendered messages on magazine covers and the physical and psychological consequences they may have for women (Malkin, 1999).
- Conceptions of women as sexual objects and maternal figures can lead to lack of respect on professional settings (Milburn, 2001).

- Stereotypes have been shown to affect performance (Milburn, 2001).
- Gender stereotypes influence employers' hiring decisions (Milburn, 2001).

Reasons to Doubt:

- TV has become less gender stereotyped in recent years.
 - There has been a decrease in the emphasis on weight loss in women's magazines over the last decade, however it is apparent that women are still receiving gendered messages from magazines regarding weight and bodily appearance at a fairly high rate (Malkin, 1999).
- The frequency of weight loss articles have increased over a ten year time period for men, but decreased for women, which indicates a gender related change in trends (Malkin, 1999).
- Some concern with the body is now being portrayed in men's fashion magazines (Malkin, 1999).
- There are other ways, not just TV, for children to learn gender stereotypes; for example: parents, teachers, older siblings
 - However, children watch more TV nowadays and they are very impressionable on cartoons and their favorite shows
 - My sister is six and she behaves like the pre-teens on TV. She wants to have a boyfriend and put on make-up.
- People may be overreacting. The media may not be as bad. People can be interpreting advertisements and other forms of media and twisting their message, making up reasons that for gender stereotypes. For example: the potato and Tabasco sauce add mentioned on the Killing Us Softly video.
 - The media knows what they are releasing to the public. It is their job to cover every angle of an advertisement, TV show, magazine, video game, music video, etc.... Before a certain advertisement goes to print it has to be approved. The media knows how certain ads can be interpreted.