An Insight into Gender Stereotyping: A Perspective Study in Popular Culture

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Abstract

This paper provides an insight into gender stereotyping in Popular Culture. The stereotypes often contribute negatively to the gender roles. The Popular Culture blends gender roles in such a way that people make assumptions on stereotypic roles by constructing an image of what is acceptable and unacceptable in society rather than discounting the need to challenge it. This paper highlights everyday media, sports, movies, advertisements and music that construct stereotypic gender roles. According to traditional gender roles, males are especially high in masculine traits that are agentic whereas females are high in feminine traits and are feeble. This analysis of gender stereotypes in Popular Culture exemplifies the representations of gendered roles that mirrored through the different genre of Popular Culture.

Key words: *Popular Culture, Gender Stereotype, Television, Sports, movies, music, advertisement*

Introduction

Popular Culture is one of the major agents of the modern world. Urbanization is an important aspect in the formation of Popular Culture. The term 'Popular Culture' holds different connotation depending on whom defining it and context of use. It can be aspect of social life most actively involved in by the public and is set on by the interlinkage between people in their everyday activities. The fashion, food, sports, media, movies, advertisement, etc. of a person comes under the Popular Culture. Popular Culture had heavily influenced the modern lives by mass media, which permeates the everyday lives of people in a given society.

Gender and Popular Culture

Gender and Popular Culture has long been conceded by the public. We have multifaceted framework to assess gender stereotyping of both men and women in Popular Culture. Stereotypes are superficial generalization about categories of people. It had emerged from dominant groups to assert dominant credo. Gender Stereotypes have descriptive components, or beliefs about how males and females typically act, as well as prescriptive components, or beliefs about how males and females should act.Youngsters as well as adults are equally a part of Popular Culture. In Television, film,

music, cyber culture, magazines, advertisements etc. we can see stereotyped gender roles.

However, while considering gender in Popular Culture the delineation of gender is a result of combination of what the media or public circulates and what we make of it, both accepting or resisting different messages. In Popular Culture men are characterised as more agentic than women, taking charge and being in control, women are expressive and sensible. These fundamental tenets of social perception have been considered fundamental to gender stereotypes. People in the modern world considering the traditional perspective become adaptive to consider and simply categorize what they observe and take predictions and stance on it. The new generation learns about gender stereotyping from the immediate surroundings and the media which is a part of Popular Culture.

Moreover, the role of Popular Culture in mediating discourses of gender and sexuality has long been acknowledged. For an instance, Laura Mulvey's *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* (1975) and Janice Radway's *Reading the Romance* (1984). Mulvey had examined the cinematic forms and narratives of one of the classic Hollywood films and had made the viewers into a 'spectorial positions' that reinscribe dominant ideas about gender and sexuality. Janice Radway's work laid the foundation for studying the role of a specific genre of texts, romantic fiction in the constitute of discourses of gender and sexuality.

In recent years digital media have been developed

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into further transnational Popular Culture. Assorting of gender roles can be discerned in advertisement, movies, television, sports and other mass media. The image created by digital media help to disseminate different information to the public. For instance taking advertisements as a major part of Popular Culture, they exhibit stereotypical gender roles and displays. Thousands of advertisements contain messages about physical attractiveness and beauty, which includes clothes, cosmetics, weight reduction, and physical fitness. Women accounts for almost eighty five percentage of such consumer purchases. Advertisements connected with protein drinks, vehicles etc. men are a part of it and they are displayed as alert and conscious, eyes open, physically active and soon. It is argued that these images would be teaching the viewers a vast array of social cues and even the most subtle ones makes an impact on the viewers.

Men and women are portrayed in advertisement according to the constructed definition of feminity and masculinity. The stereotyped notion of gender roles in Popular Culture make the audience to think that a woman is to be feminine and be a man to be masculine and they could categorize themselves within the so called constructed approach.

Some observations are most discernible when comparing advertisements with one another. Most people who produce ads do not think along these gender lines. They scrutinize themselves with executing schemes and creative briefs. But those who study the inculcation of gender in it, argue that repeating gender difference in ads through costumes male – female attributes, hoardings, visual ads, printed platforms enhance the perception of the public towards the gender roles which provide powerful models of behaviour to emulate against it. This is simply used by advertising companies because they are known to drive results for the company. Most common example for this is the advertisement of cleaning supplies where we are likely to see a female playing the lead role, 'the housewife' gender role that were already existing in our norms.

Movies have also become a part of stereotyping the gender roles. It influences the people to a great extent from generation to generation. Movies clout people and depict a variety of discourse which is common to public and in which public wants to get associated with. The very notion of societal constructed stereotypical roles can be seen in numerous movies, for instance the recent popular Malayalam movie 'The Great Indian Kitchen'. It tells about what we already seen in a patriarchal society were women are confined to houses and do all the household chores. But when we evaluate the film within the feminist discourse, we realise that the nuances are what make the film stand out. Once we spot the binary-codified bodies of men and women and the autonomy accorded to each gender, it is difficult to unseen it. Thus this movie studies on the gendered bodies and accorded autonomy. Movies present a wide range of content ranging from the relationship between mother and son, parents and children, ideal son, ideal family, social realities, beauty of women, ideal personalities or a macho man and so on. Media have mostly a positive impact and it plays an important role in shaping the public and Popular Culture. Through movies it gives a visual treat on one hand and on the other hand it invokes the people to find gender roles as well.

Popular Culture allows large heterogeneous masses of people to identify collectively. It serves an inclusionary role in society as it unites the masses on ideals of acceptable forms of behaviour. One example of Pop culture is sports, which is played and watched by members of all social classes, and the masses are responsible for the huge popularity of sports. Showing adherence to different games as a means of self-identification is a common demeanor. Gender roles can be attributed in sports games as well,which is a part of Popular Culture. Males are more likely than females to participate in masculine sports while females are more likely than males to participate in feminine sports. Due to the very notion of gender stereotyping individuals may be filtered out from participating in certain sports. Women in sports is emphasised continually with cosmetic fitness and they still threats of homophobia and being labelled as lesbian due to athletic participation. On the other hand men in sports gave a sport image and language often exalts valorous manhood based on being a warrior.

Television is another most important mode of Popular Culture which is arguably a media that assort gender roles. Children, adults and youngsters equally spend more time watching television. The very stereotypic notion of gender is portrayed in television which gives a cue to children from their childhood itself. The image created in television through movies, music, advertisement and entertainment we can see people are being socialized through viewing these Pop culture. Since television viewing contributes to the learning and maintenance of stereotyped perception, it is important to strengthen viewers' defences against the effects of gender stereotyping when watching different channels. There are indications that specific gender targeted genres like soap, teenaged scenes which showcase both a more equal distribution of men and women as well as less stereotyping in its gender portrayals.

Popular Culture persistently evolves with the time and all around in daily life. Among the Popular Culture genre which we mentioned above, popular music

is also a part of it. With the quick development of technology people are able to listen music easily and it is a part of entertainment of the public. It has been known to cross the barriers of language, space and time. But the question lies in whether it has been able to cross the barrier of gender. In many genres of music, the researchers have found that 37% of songs depicted women as just objects of male desire and pleasure. Males on the other hand are displayed on the screen with expensive cars and so on as for marketing tactics. Bollywood item songs are one good example. Actually on closer inspection in any genre of music exempt from making gender biased lyrics and videos.

Conclusion

Gender stereotyping and Popular Culture is thus having a close connection and it mirrored throughout the different genres of Popular Culture. Despite the reasons that people who still believe in the relevance of gender roles present, they believe these are innate and occur naturally. It has been observed that gender roles develop as a person grows. Children develop gender based beliefs, largely on the basis of gender stereotypes. However, gender stereotyping in Popular Culture is mainly influenced by the society.Overtime the stereotype may alter or completely dissipate but still remain influential within everyday life of both men and women.

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