

# Media, Power, & Violence

Wood - Chapter 11: Gendered Media

# Media

- Advances representations of
  - Gendered identities
  - Racial identities
- Tendencies
  - Progressive
  - Regressive
- Content
  - Challenged
  - Changed

# Media Saturation

- Kinds - Designed for
  - Mass - Large sets of people
  - Social - Connecting in virtual communities & networks
    - Allows creation & exchange of user-generated content
      - Produce & Consume
  - Personal - A specific person, or person-to-person
    - Mobile phones, email, messenger, blogs, etc.

# Media Influences

- Survey:
  - Most think it affects others but not themselves
- Media:
  - Provides models of what it means to be male/female
  - Advances ideals of what is desirable in women and men

# Media Influences

1. Gendered Media Use
2. Tells Us What's Important
3. Tells Us What Women & Men *Are*  
What Women & Men *Should* Be
4. Tells Us How Women & Men Relate to  
Each Other
5. Motivates Us to Consume

# 1. Gendered Media Use

- Boys/Men:
  - Instrumental purposes
    - Gets news/gather information
      - More newspapers
    - Accomplish tasks
      - Short phone calls
  - Source of entertainment
    - More video games
    - More posting videos online

# 1. Gendered Media Use

- Girls/Women:
  - Build relationships
    - More phone conversations
      - Massage relationships
  - Express themselves
    - More social media use
    - More likely to blog
      - Construct identities & get responses from others



# 1. Gendered Media Use

- We can ALSO use media to:
  - Challenge gender expectations
  - Reinvent culture
- Media = Platform



## 2. Tells Us What's Important

- Traditional Analogy
  - Media :: Hypodermic needle
    - Message is injected into passive audiences
  - Too simplistic
- Sophisticated Understanding
  - '**Agenda Setting**' = media set our agenda by telling us what is important
  - Ability to direct & focus our attentions on issues
  - Not *what* to think, but what to think *about*

## 2. Tells Us What's Important

- **'Gatekeeper'**
  - "People and groups that control which messages get through to audiences of mass media"
    - Editors, owners, producers, advertisers, etc.
  - Shape perception by selectively regulating what's shown
  - Strategy: Bias exclusion, selective focus, story location, pejorative labels, & disproportionate judgment
    - Example: **Mommy Track** = front page articles which cited "proof" that women's place really is in the home, retraction of proof got little-to-no coverage
  - Result: Influences perception of political movements about gender and gender itself

### 3. Tells Us What We Are/Should Be

- Media present us with images of what women and men:
  - Are
  - Should be
- A. Underrepresent women and minorities
- B. Men portrayed stereotypically
- C. Women portrayed stereotypically
- D. Gendered images in advertising

## 3A. Underrepresentation of Women

- Males outnumber females
  - TV: prime-time, children's programs, newscasts, & talk shows
    - 10% guests are women  
(some shows ask no women to appear)
    - Females less time to talk
  - Newspapers:
    - More stories about men
    - More photos of men
  - Films: More male major characters
- Reality: Women outnumber men

# 3A. Underrepresentation of Minorities

- Underrepresented similarly to women
- When represented, usually:
  - Supporting roles (in predominantly white cultures)
  - Negatively = reinforcing negative racial stereotypes
    - Dangerous or trouble (Reality TV)
      - Black males - subordinate, athletic, lazy, criminal, or exotic
      - Asian & Native American males - villains or criminals, females - highly emotional & sexualized
- Result: Their culture & views are obscured and/or devalued

## 3B. Portray Men Stereotypically

- Men = independent, aggressive, & in charge
- Mostly white heterosexual men
  - Serious, confident, competent, & powerful
- Sometimes - '**extreme masculinity**'
  - Hard, tough, sexually aggressive, unafraid, violent, & in control of emotions
  - NOT feminine
- Always sexually active
  - But *not* responsible for consequences



## 3B. Portray Men Stereotypically

- Reality TV shows the '**macho man**' =
  - Proves his manliness by degrading women
  - Makes himself desirable by being rich
- Result:
  - Advances degrading images of women
  - Portrays men negatively - immature & insensitive



## 3B. Portray Men Stereotypically

- How Men are NOT Portrayed:
- Absence of nonwhite men
  - Exception: Hip-hop & rap music
    - Black men = independent, aggressive, & focused on sexual conquests
    - Reinforces stereotypes of black men = angry & violent

## 3B. Portray Men Stereotypically

- Absence of men nurturing others or doing housework
  - Men = incompetent at homemaking, cooking, & child care
  - Exceptions:
    - 'Complex portrayals' = combine masculine & feminine characteristics
    - 'Contradictory portrayals' = uphold traditional images of men, women, & relationships but *claim* to be alternatives
      - Examples: Rock & rap artists & music

## 3C. Portray Women Stereotypically

- Women = traditional stereotypes
  - Young women = shopping, grooming, being emotional, & doing domestic activities
    - Men = working, building, fighting, & thinking
  - Young women also shown as highly sexualized
- Ideal & norm: white heterosexual women
  - Black women = mammies, jezebels, matriarchs, & welfare queens
  - Asian & Latin women = exotic & sexualized

## 3C. Portray Women Stereotypically

- Most traditional stereotype:  
Women (of all races) = sex object
- Result: **Feminine ideal** =
  - Young & thin
  - Preoccupied w/ men, children, & shopping
  - Subservient & less outspoken
- Ideal = Impossibly perfect
  - Images digitally altered

## 3C. Portray Women Stereotypically

- '**Pornification of Mainstream Media**' = Media's sexualization of women & girls
- Double Standard:
  - Boys are taught to be sexually active & are *not* held responsible for the consequences of sexual activity
  - Girls are taught to be sexually attractive & *are* held responsible for the consequences of sexual activity

## 3C. Portray Women Stereotypically

- Makeover reality shows
  - Reinforce traditional views of women & what makes them desirable
  - Praise unhealthy body images
  - Condemn normal looking women
- Message:

"Your worth is based on your attractiveness. If you aren't gorgeous, then it's your job to make yourself over until you are." (Wood, 270)



## 3C. Portray Women Stereotypically

- Media portrays women & girls as passive
  - Watch males do things
  - Enjoying being dominated (sometimes abused)
  - Women = dependent, ornamental objects who exist to:
    - Look good, please men, care for children, be sexually desirable & available



## 3C. Portray Women Stereotypically

- '**Madonna/whore Dichotomy**' = Media favors two opposite portrayals of women:
  - Good = pretty, deferential, faithful, focused on home & family, subordinate to men
    - Usually cast as victims, angels, martyrs, & loyal helpers
  - Bad = witches, bitches, whores, & iron maidens (torture devices)

## 3C. Portray Women Stereotypically

- Even allegedly nontraditional portrayals of women are only desirable & successful if they meet traditional stereotypes of femininity:
  - Beautiful
  - Compassionate
  - Identified with men

## 3C. Portray Women Stereotypically

- Women's power only shown through her exertion of sexuality
  - Use sexuality to gain power & get ahead
- Women's ambitiousness only shown through passion for clothes shopping, money, & men
- Conclusion: Sexual identity is the only way to get ahead & the only way to create such an identity is to maximize their potential through consumption

## 3D. Gendered Images in Advertising

- Influence of advertising is VERY powerful
- How?
  - Repeated multiple times - constant exposure
  - Emphasize visual images - less subject to conscious analysis than verbal claims
  - We think that we are immune - unaware it's happening

- Result:

Unrealistic images → Negative self-images

Negative self-images → Dangerous behavior

## 3D. Gendered Images in Advertising

- Men & masculinity =
  - Independent, successful, active, strong
  - Angry - rebels against authority
  - Muscular bodies, perfect hair & skin, white teeth
- Products *linked* to hypermasculinity & violence
  - Product names (Example: condoms)
  - Athlete spokesmen (manly products)
  - Dominant positioning
- Men = Incompetent - cooking, cleaning, caring for children
  - Home - lazy, care only about cars, beer, & sports

# 3D. Gendered Images in Advertising

- Women & femininity =
  - Competent homemakers
    - Men still = authorities (man's '**voice-overs**')
      - Reinforce the cultural view that men are authorities and women depend on men to tell them what to do
- Products *linked* to sexual appeal
  - Objectification of women
    - Minimal clothing
    - Highly sexual poses
  - Perfect faces, bodies, & hair
- Women = Inadequate - need to change
  - Fix, improve, repair, rejuvenate, disguise, & correct themselves



## 3D. Gendered Images in Advertising

- Advertisers send these messages by controlling the content of the products they are selling
  - '**Complimentary copy**' = when an ad is placed in a magazine, the magazine might print one or more articles to increase the market appeal of the product
  - '**Product placement**' = showing or mentioning a particular brand of or product in some form of media
  - '**Immersive advertising**' = incorporates a product or brand into actual storylines in media so that the characters' identities are defined by that particular product, brand, or service



## 4. Tells Us How We Relate

- Media tells us that men and women relate to each other in traditional ways:
  - A. Women are dependent & men are independent
  - B. Women are incompetence and require men's authority
  - C. Women are the primary caregivers and men are the breadwinners
  - D. Women are victims & sex objects and men are aggressors

## 4A. W=Dependent/M=Independent

- Think of examples in:
  - Film
  - TV
  - Books
  - Magazines (Beauty > Health)
  - Music Videos
  - Video Games

## 4B. W=Incompetent/M=Authority

- Think of examples in:
  - Film
  - TV
  - Books
  - Newspapers (Appearance > Power)

## 4C. W=Caregivers/M=Breadwinners

- Think of examples in:
  - Film
  - TV
  - Books
  - Newspapers
  - Magazines
  - Video Games

## 4D. W=Victims/M=Aggressors

- Think of examples in:
  - TV
  - Newspapers
  - Music
  - Music videos
  - Video Games
- Result: encouraged to see violence as erotic

## 5. Motivate Us to Consume

- Primary purpose of media = convince us we need to own more things, by more products & services, and spend
- How? '**Insecurity factory**' =
  - Making us think that owning the right things will make us sexy, cool, & desirable
  - Play on our insecurities
  - Make up problems so that they can provide the solution
  - Make normal seem unacceptable or defective



## 5. Motivate Us to Consume

- **'Medicalizing normal conditions'**

- Normal

- Puberty
- Male body size
- Changes in sexual vigor
- Body weight
- Gray hair
- Facial lines
- Body hair
- Breast size

- Problem

- Sexually undesirable
- Deficient
- Inadequate sexual vitality
- Abnormal
- Getting old
- Unattractive
- Unsightly *Read p. 283*
- Not right

- Solution

- Beauty products
- Work out, steroids
- Take Viagra, Levitra, or Cialis
- Diet
- Cover it up
- Botox
- Remove it
- Augment or reduce



# Hair Removal Campaign



## ALL UNDER-ARM HAIR Gone in 3 minutes

If you want to look glamorous all summer, make Veet cream a beauty "must". For Veet gently *creams away* every trace of superfluous hair. Veet is the modern way to remove hair. With Veet there's no risk of razor cuts or scrapes. No stubble! Not even a shadow. No coarse re-growth. Skin is

left velvety-smooth and hair-free, as if ugly hair had never existed. Remember, ugly, unwanted hair is a definite *charm killer*. So get Veet. Successful results are guaranteed with Veet cream or money refunded. At all chemists, price 2/2d. and 3/3d. per tube, including tax. (The double size saves you money.)

## VEET hair-removing cream

# Implications of Gendered Media

## 1. Assess Ourselves Unfairly

- Unrealistic images encourage us to see ourselves , by comparison, as inadequate
- Unrealistic relationships create expectations which cause us to be dissatisfied with real, normal ones