

American Women's History

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Many factors that influence the lives and perceptions of the society. The media plays a main role in providing influential images to us. Media comes in various forms; radio, newspaper, radio, movies, television and advertisements. The media is so intertwined in people's lives that they do not really realize how much influence it really has on them on a conscious level. Some of the messages and images we hear and see in the media have both positive and negative impact on people's lives. More often than not, we get exposure to unattainable and unrealistic images by the average person, making majority of the people discontented with their own lives.

Historically, women have been victims of media stereotyping and marginalization more than their male counterparts have. The history of the woman's usefulness started with being a mother, a caretaker, and a sexual plaything for men. Before the start of the 20th century, men saw women as caretakers of the family, people without a voice or objects of sexual desire. The media uses women in almost all advertisements making them the biggest selling points of the items on sale. At the same time, the media portrayed men as the strong leader of the family and the society. Although strides have been made in eliminating the stereotypes, they are still consistent in the media images (Grogan, 2008).

Media images have also had great impact on how women view and appreciate or detest their bodies. Before the media started telling the world that being fat was not ok, women got admiration for big bodies. People considered large hips and full breasts as attractive and men select such women for these body types, which according to them and the media were the ultimate bodies for child bearing. However, with time, this attitude changed and the media now portrays beautiful women as being skinny, tall and slender.



Many women get into painful tendencies as they attempt to lose the extra weight and attain the slender model bodies. In trying to achieve this, they develop destructive eating habits that do little than just limiting their lives (Grogan, 2008). However, this becomes a very painful process for women since statistics show that only 5% of the women across the globe have the capability of attaining the ideal fashion model body. This becomes very frustrating since these women do not understand that this is a fruitless task. The consequence in extreme cases is women get starvation related illnesses that lead to their death.

Over the centuries, there has been a consistent theme that women are the lesser sex, and have lesser intelligence than their male counterparts have. The situation was bad that it was only in the 1900s that women gained a right to vote and take part in political elections. Women were confined in the gardens and at home to take care of the families, while their men were the providers of the families. They would leave the house in the morning and come back in the evening with the meals for the day. Women would not take part in any leadership posts and decision making since men considered them voiceless. Unfortunately, this affected how many women view themselves and the society. Women still feel inferior to men and shy away from seeking any leadership positions. However, women started realizing that these were just stereotypes, gender biased roles, and in the 1970s, women began organizing movements that would advocate for women rights. Women took to the streets in protests, but the difference what the media portrayed and what was actually happening in the streets became clearly visible. The media's reaction to the movement was making fun of the leaders and their ideologies, objectifying the women involved and trivializing the feminism movement (Carilli and Campbell, 2012). The media had the powers and the ability to make an impact on the society by siding with the women and articulating for their views but they did not do so, since men, who probably felt



by the movements, dominated the media at the time. By dismissing and mocking of the activists the media was endorsing the notion female sexual objectification and subordination are not only acceptable, but also desirable.

Advertising has been a disciplinary force for many women across the world. Advertisers and the media at large create and dictate cultural styles at any point in time. In the modern change in gender roles, there is an emerging cultural rebellion against the rising power for women. This uprising is visible in advertising (Carilli and Campbell, 2012). The ever-dominating images of painfully thin women in adverts remain, according to the media, ideal not just for American woman, but also for all women across the globe. Consequently, as mentioned earlier, women develop dangerous eating habits in an attempt to attain that slender body. For the patriarchy to continue thriving, women's mobility need to be limited and there no better way of limiting a person than starving them.

It is no secret that the media has had a great impact on females' lives, most of which is harmful. Consciously and subconsciously, women compare themselves with the female images portrayed in the media, which in turn affects their behaviors at every stage and age of their lives and lower their self-esteem. The media and the advertisers know that most of the images are unrealistic yet they continue exerting pressure on females to conform (Thornham, 2007). Media images portray women as inactive, overcome by emotions, symbolically silenced by their men and as objects for others to gaze at desire. The media, on the other hand, portrays men as engaged, active and in charge of the situation, which reveals them as actors with professions and occupations.



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