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Project 1

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An Analysis of Gender Stereotypes in Media

Introduction

Our research is based off our research question “How does media use of St. Norbert students influence their perception of gender stereotypes?” We have found previous articles based off of media and stereotypes. We interviewed students from St. Norbert College to ask if media use can change the way people perceive gender stereotypes on campus. We will explain our methods of participants and procedures so you can have a better understanding on how we conducted our interview. We will compare similarities and differences from the previous articles and our research here on campus in the results and discussion.

Literature Review

“I Play So I Am?” A Gender Study into Stereotype Perception and Genre Choice of Digital Game Players is a research article conducted by Lotte Vermeulen and Jan Van Looy. This article looks into stereotypes in game culture that are still inhibiting the freedom of female players. The survey study aims to gain insight into these practices by looking at gaming stereotypes on two different levels (Vermeulen&Looy, 2016). This is an important topic to study because digital games are heavily used in our culture by teens and young adults so we can look at how stereotypes are formed when females use games when digital games are mostly used by men. Men that were high and low frequency players had higher stereotypes as female players but

also so did low frequency female players. High frequency female players had the lowest rating about their own stereotypes because they believe they fit the “norm” of gamers whether they be male or female. The main concepts are stereotypes, gender and digital games.

Combating gender stereotyping and sexism in the media is a popular press article released by the Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy. This article talks about Gender stereotypes in the media and how the media can undermine progress made on gender equality but also how the media is so powerful it can help promote social values and the shaping of opinions. The council of Europe has come up with standards to help eliminate gender stereotyping and sexism in the media. Here are a few of those standards; promoting a positive and non-stereotyped image of women and men in the media, promoting female leadership positions in the media as a tool for positive change, and strengthening self-regulatory mechanisms and codes of conduct to condemn and combat sexist imagery, language and practices. Main concepts are stereotypes, gender, and media.

Gender Roles in Media an article written by Allison Lantagne which was featured in Huffington Post. This article explains the gender roles on the media and how they pertain to individuals in which ways we think about our culture and stereotypes. In one advertisement talked about, a little girl is playing with sidewalk chalk and coloring while the little boy is rapping in the background. Are they sending a message that only girls play with sidewalk chalk even though this a gender neutral activity? Another example is the TV show *The Big Bang Theory*, where there was only one present female lead. Penny was the stereotypical female that was ditzy, attractive neighbor, who existed solely to create sexual tension between herself and one of the main characters.

Gender Stereotypes in advertising: a review of current research written by Stacy

Landreth Grau and Yorgos C. Zotos is an article that highlights the historical context of gender stereotypes in advertising. The study examines what stereotypes are being used to portray men and women, why they are being represented in that way, and lastly the consequences of stereotypes and advertising. The authors discuss how changing role structure in the family and in the labor force has brought significant variation in both male and female roles and also how it is reflected in advertising. The authors explain that because of some historical events, such as the rise of feminism in the 1960's, advertisers were being challenged which lead to more equal opportunities for men and women in the media. However, the article argues that stereotypes still exists in advertising today, which contributes to gender inequality by promoting sexism and misleading body images.

Gendered Media: The Influence of Media on Views of Gender written by Julia T. Wood

discuss media's misrepresentation of gender. The article talks about how powerful media is today, because of the way media communicate and represent gender through images of the sexes, which often times are unrealistic, stereotypical, and limiting perceptions. The author explains that women are underrepresented in media, which leads to false implications that men are the cultural standard and women are invisible. According to the article, men are portrayed as active, adventurous, powerful, sexually aggressive and largely uninvolved in human relationships, while women are seen as sex objects who are usually young, thin beautiful, passive, dependent, and often incompetent and dumb. The article also talks about how advertising reinforce these stereotypes in order to sell more products, for example through campaigns indicating that men and women need certain products to fit within the norms. One example discussed how media

persuades women that they need a medical source in order to have the “normal” body weight, cover up products that will help them hide their facial lines, and shaving products that will remove body hair.

Gender and media is an informational article written by the government of Australia. The article highlights the presence of gender in media and also provides examples of stereotypes seen in the media. Not only are there examples, but the article also lays out ways for the reader to change their attitudes and opinions about gender and the stereotypes it gives. The article also touches on gender roles. Women, who are underrepresented in media, are seen as homemakers, carers for the family, dependent on men, and objects of affection by men. Men are characterized as powerful and dominant which leaves little to no room for other forms of masculinity to be shown in media. These stereotypes are unfortunately heavily rooted in media and this article emphasizes the importance of breaking stereotypes.

Persistence of gender stereotypes in the media consumption habits of adolescents: drama for girls and humor for boys is a scholarly research article written by Maria-Jose Manset. The main point of this article is to highlight a study conducted by the author. The study took place in Barcelona and collected data from adolescence from the ages of 14 to 19. The study looked at the adolescents' internet consumption habits, TV consumption habits, TV content consumption preferences, serial fiction consumption preferences, preferences of consumption of serial fiction plots, and family attitudes towards adolescents' TV consumption. The results of the study were astounding and showed that media consumption lined up with the gender stereotypes. Females were seen using the internet for social networking and watching reality, gossip shows on television. Males were seen using the internet for more ludic purposes and watching sports or

cultural programs. This article does not aim to end stereotypes, but points out the consistency in media stereotypes all around the world.

Thin Female Characters in Children's Television Commercials: A Content Analysis of Gender Stereotype by Hyuksoo Kim, Jungsun Ahn, and Doohwang Lee outlines the concept of children's media consumption and its relation to the representation of women. The article analyzes what traits are highlighted in the female stereotype. These traits include physical appearance, role behavior, personality traits, occupation, and sexuality. In order for the female to be deemed "acceptable" to the audience, she has to have the correct balance of all of these traits. The article states that she must be thin, follow gender roles, be domestic, and have "kind features". The female must adhere to all of these traits in order to be a suitable role model for children.

What media teach kids about gender can have lasting effects, report says is an informational article written by Caroline Knorr that was also featured on the CNN Health+ website. This article seems to warn parents and guardians about stereotypes, how they appear in media, and how those stereotypes seem to be affecting children. The article breaks down the real damage that stereotyping does and also provides age brackets along with details about how children are affected at different ages. Not only does it provide examples, but the article provides solutions on how to break those stereotypes at all of the different ages. Parents are urged to break down gender-typical activities and encourage openness in the spectrum of gender to their child.

Media Gender equality regimes is a scholarly article by Claudia Padovani. This article outlines the events of the Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women and what impact the event had on media gender equality. It encouraged regulatory bodies to promote full participation

of women in the ownership, control and management in communication technology and media sectors. This article also points out the adoption of gender equality policies and support mechanisms in media in some countries. These countries include Sweden, the UK, Spain and Austria and South Africa. This article closes by highlighting other regimes that need to be put into place in order for gender equality to be achieved. Though, the article provides steps to take to increase equality, it doesn't provide a solution or end goal.

Research Questions

What are the main types of media that St. Norbert College students use?

Does the type of media change the portrayal of stereotypes that appear?

How do those stereotypes affect the day to day lives of St. Norbert College students?

Methods

Participants

Participants were 10 individuals from St. Norbert College, 50% identified as female and the other half identified as male. The ages ranged from 18-25, including 4 seniors, 2 juniors, 1 sophomore, 3 freshmen. Between these individuals some live in campus dorms, campus houses, and off campus houses. All participants are full time students at St. Norbert College.

Procedures

For this study, we used a sample technique called convenience sampling, meaning that we did our research on participants that were available to us, such as friends and people in our surroundings. We thought this would be an easy way to collect data, because these were people

that we had easy access to and was the most convenient for our research. We collected data through anonymous interviews including open-ended questions for our participants to answer. All the questions were related to our research question regarding the influence of media use at St. Norbert College and the students' perceptions of stereotypical gender roles. The interviews were structured, with a predetermined set of questions placed in a specific order. The participants were given the same number of questions and identical wording, which allowed for more standardized responses and less biased answers. The interviews took place in a face-to-face setting and we collected the data via note-taking.

Results & Discussion

Among the responses in our interview, we found a lot of similar responses to some of the questions. Our participants interacted with a lot of the same media platforms as on Twitter, Snapchat, Facebook, and Instagram. Interviewees expressed that women were not portrayed in the right manner on social media platforms. Most expressed women seen as fit, with edited photos, homemakers, healthy, and business women. A lot of times, women are seen expressing a more glamorized image of their lives. Meaning that women often times tend to portray their lives being more adventurous, happy, and fancy than it actually is. This is not an idealized portrayal of women because this is how many see them and believe that this is how all women should be. Women are not always seen as independent or athletes and leaders. Men are represented to be muscular, outdoorsy, athletes, and emotionless. In general, men do not tend to edit their pictures as much, and do not put as much time in caring on what they post. Also, the purpose of social media use differs depending on the participants' gender. Overall, our responses indicated that men use social media as a way to find specific content and gather information, for example about

sports. While women seem to use it more as a way to share personal stories, pictures, and to connect with others.

When asked if they agree with the stereotypes in the media, the interviewee's had differences in their responses. Some agreed that some of the stereotypes were accurate and others did not. The interviewee's that agreed, explained that women who are fit do appear as they do in social media. For example, on social media they are seen wearing tight clothes that show off their physique and that is what they wear in their daily lives. Also the women who are influencers on social media do work hard in their everyday lives to get them to that point on social media. They agreed that the stereotypes of men who are athletes are also true, being an athlete is their career and you can believe they are living a wealthy lifestyle. They also agreed that men are posting images portraying their real life and not editing their posts to make it seem better than what it is. Interviewee's that did not agree, explained that women who portray their life only as glamorous/happy are only choosing what to post. For example, they are only choosing to post the positive parts of their life and not their typical day to day life. When asked about men, they did not agree with men who are fit, posting pictures without their shirts, because you don't see them walking around shirtless in a public setting.

The interview ended with the question "Describe the portrayal of gender stereotypes on Campus. Do you agree with them? Why or why not?" SNC students agreed that our campus is accepting of gender stereotypes but because they are used to it from seeing it on social media. Now that gender and stereotypes are becoming more relevant in our daily lives, as a Catholic school students wish it was more talked about on campus through Title IX and other groups on campus. Interviewee's felt that because it is a Catholic school, people may have more traditional

views of stereotypical gender roles rather than being open minded with gender changing in our society.

These patterns help us understand our topic by showing us that media does influence individuals and the way they perceive gender stereotypes. Individuals look to social media to compare themselves with each other and whether they fit the “norm” of their gender. Our previous articles ties in with that media teaches us how to behave and express our gender according to the stereotypes. For example the articles read that women in the media should wear makeup, shave their body hair, be good caregivers, and fit within a certain size. They aren’t shown as much as men as leaders, main characters in shows/movies, gamers and independent. Our research findings are important because it provides individuals with factual knowledge that stereotyping is shown throughout the media and how it can get out of hand in certain situations that make others believe how certain genders should act. Research shows that people everywhere are influenced by the images and messages depicted in social media, causing more and more expectations. With this knowledge, it can help individuals look away from their typical stereotype and be themselves. Also as media platforms such as television and movies they can do a better job of decreasing these stereotypes and portray content as more gender neutral.

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Appendix

How does media use of St. Norbert College students influence their perception of gender stereotypes?

Hello, thank you for taking time out of your day to answer a few questions. Your answers to the following questions are intended to help us gain the perspective of St. Norbert College students when it comes to the relationship between gender and media. For your privacy, your full name will not be used, so do not be afraid to answer open and honestly. This interview is for Communication Research Methods and is not an official study. I will be recording your answers and once your interview is processed, your recording will be deleted. Thank you again for your time.

What is your age? Gender? Year in school?

Describe the types of media that you interact with on a daily basis.

Describe the way that women tend to be represented in the types of media you interact with.

How accurate do you believe these portrayals of women tend to be overall?

Describe the way that men tend to be represented in the types of media you interact with.

How accurate do you believe these portrayals of men tend to be overall?

How often do you see portrayals of gender that are not classified as strictly "male" or "female" in the media? What do those portrayals look like?

Do you agree with the gender stereotypes as they appear in media? Why or why not?

Describe the portrayal of gender stereotypes on campus. Do you agree with them? Why or why not?

This concludes our interview. For this project to be successful and accurate, we need the participation of St. Norbert College students. Thank you so much for your time and insight.