Topic 5 - Representations of the body

Connell (1995) - argues that cultural expectations about gender roles in the 20th century were dominated by hegemonic definitions - dominant ways of defining masculinity, femininity and sexuality.
These cultural ideas stressed 2 traditional ideas to do with gender:

1. **Men's identity/Masculinity was defined by:**
   - paid work
   - being the breadwinner/head of the household
   - individualistic, competitive, ambitious and aggressive.
   - Were not expected to show emotion
2. **Female's identity was defined by:**
   - Home makers/carers/mothers-
   - Confined into life defined by family
   - Expected to be less rational and more emotional and neurotic than men

- Connell argues that these ideas about gender was a patriarchal ideology which assumed masculinity was dominant and femininity was subordinate because males they had social and economic power over females.

- Almy (1984) - the media representations not only stereotype masculinity and femininity into fairly limited forms of behaviour, but they also provide role models that members of each gender are encouraged to aspire to.

HOWEVER: GAUNTLETT (2008):
- points out that sociological analysis of media representations needs to be cautious, because of the sheer diversity of media in Britain. It is also highly likely that as a result of media and audience diversity, media messages about gender will be contradictory.

MEN AND THE MEDIA:
The Masculine myth:
- Easthope (1986) - argues that the variety of the media, particularly Hollywood films and computer games transmit the view of masculinity based on strength, aggression, competition and violence is biologically determined and therefore a natural goal to aim for.
- However this is an ideological myth as the majority of men are unable to reach this goal of true 'hegemonic masculinity'.
- RESEARCH - Children now (1999) - asked boys between 10-17 about what they thought about males they see on TV. They said
  - Attention focused on girls
  - Violent and angry
  - Leaders and problem solvers
  - Funny, confident, successful
  - Rarely cry

The 'New Man':
- The 1980's saw the emergence of a new breed of glossy magazines aimed at m/c men. E.g. GQ mag
  - They are emotionally vulnerable
  - Men shouldn't be afraid to get touch with their feminine side
  - They should treat women as equals
  - They should care more about their appearance
  - Active fatherhood is important

Postmodernist view - ' The metrosexual male':
- Mort (1988) - rise in male fashion magazines reflects the change in social attitudes of men and the emergence of the metrosexual man
- Edwards (1997) - argues the new man was simply a product of advertisers so they can sell their products to males and females.

Feminist View:
- Gauntlett (2008) - Studied the content of FHM magazine, extremely positive as it encourages men to be caring, considerate lovers, useful in the home, fashionable and funny. E.g. Phil from Modern Family - new man, PLL Ezra -

fatherhood

Retributive masculinity:

- Collier (1992) notes that men's magazines contradict their representations of masculinity, they continue to define success in traditional terms (in terms of salary/materialistic items).
- Rutherford - Retributive masculinity is an attempt to reclaim traditional masculine authority by celebrating traditionally male concerns in media content. This is the opposite to the new man
- Whannel's (2002) - David Beckham - mass media stories and images of David Beckham are contradictory as he is represented as both a metrosexual and retributive masculinity. His identity is fluid - his good looks, football skills, competitive spirit. He keeps changing.

Ideological ideals: FEMALE

Magazines have increased in popularity amongst women and feminist writers have concerns over their content. They argue that they encourage women to conform to patriarchal ideals and to be the subordinate to women.

Cult of femininity:

- Research into women's magazines suggests that they strongly encourage women to conform to ideological patriarchal ideals that confirm their subordinate position compared with men.

- **Ferguson** (1983) conducted a content analysis of women's magazines from between 1949 and 1974, and 1979 and 1980. She notes that such magazines are organised around a **cult of femininity**, which promotes a traditional ideal where excellence is achieved through caring for others, the family, marriage and appearance. They tend to focus narrowly on 'him, home and looking good (for him).

- Criticism of Ferguson - Winship (1987) - argues that women's magazines generally play a supportive and positive role in the lives of women. She argues that such magazines present women with a broader range of options that ever before. Winship argues that such magazines present women with a broader range of options than ever before and that they tackle problems that have been largely ignored by the male-dominated media, such as domestic violence and child abuse.

The sexual objectification of women:

- **Wolf** (1990) suggests that the images of women used by the media present women as **sex objects** to be consumed by what **Mulvey** calls the **male gaze**. According to **Kilbourne** (1995), this media representation presents women as mannequins: tall and thin, often US size zero, with very long legs, perfect teeth and hair, and skin without a blemish in sight. Wolf suggests that the images of women used by the print media and advertising present a particular beauty ideal - the idea that women should strive for beauty, through which they transmit the strong ideological message that women should treat their bodies as a project in constant need of improvement.

Slimness = happiness?:

Content analysis of teenage magazines in Britain indicates that almost 70% of the content and images focus on beauty, fashion and slimming, compared with only 12% focused on education or careers. Many encourage the idea that **slimness=happiness** and consequently **Orbach** (1991) suggests that such media imagery creates the potential for eating disorders by:

- Constantly exhorting females to be concerned with their weight, size, looks etc..
- Using pictures of size 0 models
- Running features that criticize overweight celebrities
- Running adverts encouraging dieting and cosmetic surgery

Media empowering women:

- Gill (2008) - women are no longer the passive objects of the male gaze. Now represented as active, independent and sexually powerful. She examined billboards - showed 3 trends:

1, Using her sexuality to control a man
2, Heterosexual women punishing her ex lover
3, 'Hot lesbian' with another women.

- Sociologists have noted the increasing positive female roles emerging.

- Women are more likely to have aspirational attitudes, a positive attitude towards education, careers and an independent income.

- Westwood - claims we are seeing more transgressive female roles on British TV as a result - going beyond gendered expectations. E.g.. Hunger games Katniss

PROBLEMS WITH THIS EMPOWERMENT -

- The tones, beautiful, heterosexual women in these media areas replicate the most predictable male fantasy and represent very narrow ideas about beauty and sex appeal.

- The images are therefore very contradictory . They may have the side effect of encouraging women to strive for the impossible.

- Consequently, women feel dissatisfied with their bodies and have low self esteem.

Positive role models?

- Wilkinson (1994) - genderquake - aspirations have dramatically changed for women and education and career have replaced marriage and family. (1950s - women aspired to be a housewife, now they want careers, encouraged to take on 'male' jobs and degrees such as engineering and physics STEM - WISE CAMPAIGN UK

- Series and soaps are also following this trend with more assertive female leads. Sargent Benson SVU.

Assertive female characters -

-Gossip girl - Blair and Serena , really confident and stand up for themselves, control the upper east side, role models.

-Law and Order SVU - Sargent Benson - someone everyone looked up to

-Hunger Games - Katniss

CONTRADICTIONS:

- Fiske (2003) - Contradictions for women where they try to assert feminine values within a society where patriarchy dominates.

- Soaps focus on domestic issues and women are o–en found within these settings. E.g with a job but not pursuing the career and if they do, failing at it. E.g. working mum but family life is seen as neglected

- Gauntlett (2008) - magazines are determined to encourage women to do their own thing and be independent whilst maintaining their looks.

Theoretical explanations for representations of gender - different feminist approaches

Liberal feminists:	Marxist feminism:	Radical feminists:	Popular feminism:	Postmodernism:	Pluralism:
• They believe that media representations lag behind the reality of social and economic conditions. However, they acknowledge that representations of women have changed significantly for the better in the last thirty years. • They are concerned about the media representation because they believe the mass media plays a major role alongside education and family. • The media emphasis on females as domestic goddesses and sex objects is a problem because it is believed to have a limiting effect on young females' behaviour. • Some liberal feminists have noted that women's progress as media professionals has slowed down in recent years. • The majority of media owners are male and influential positions within the media such as media executives and newspaper editors.	• They believe that the root of all stereotypical images of men and women in the media are economic. They are a by-product of the need of media conglomerates to make a profit. • The male dominated media aim to attract the largest audience possible, this leads to an emphasis on the traditional roles of men and women in sitcoms/soaps. • The alternate images of women encouraged by feminism do not fit easily into this type of media content and consequently such women are ignored, devalued or treated critically.	• Radical feminists feel very strongly that the media reproduces patriarchy. • The media deliberately dupe women into believing in the beauty myth. - they should conform to what is a male image of what it is to be a proper woman in terms of good looks, sexiness and ideal shape. • Women are strongly encouraged by the media to see these goals as central to their personal happiness rather than competing with men for their positions of power. • This creates a form of false consciousness - describe the way in which people's values are manipulated by capitalism - in women and deters them from making the most of the opportunities available to them.	• McRobbie (1999) argues that much of young women's media today constitutes a form of popular feminism expressed through young women's magazines that promote the concept of girl power. She argues that young women in the 21st century are promoting a new form of feminism that looks like it is a rejection from the feminism of previous generations that focus on patriarchal forms of exploitation. • She argues that the key difference in popular and traditional feminism is the language, the latter is now in the mainstream of commercial culture, whereas the traditional was marginalised and often ignored by the mainstream media.	• Gauntlet (2008) focuses on the relationship between the mass media and identity. He argues that the mass media today challenge traditional definitions of gender. They encourage a diversity of masculine and feminine identities. • Instead of the traditional views of women as housewives or low status workers have been pushed aside and they are now successful and feisty business women. • There has also been an emphasis in men's media on men's emotions and problems, which has challenged masculine ideals such as toughness. • As a result, the media are now providing alternative images and ideas, which are producing a greater diversity of gender identities.	• Pluralists claim that the critiques of the media representations found in modern media underestimate women's ability to see through gender stereotyping and manipulation. • They say that feminists are guilty of stereotyping - they say all females are easily influenced. • They also say that there is no real evidence that girls and women take any notice of media content.

Disability - 2 views:

1. Disabled people are disabled by their physical/mental impairment. They need constant care and are dependent on the able bodied
2. Disabled are disabled by society itself. Institutions and services are created with the able bodied in mind. Prejudicial attitudes and stereotypes are result in discriminatory practices.

Barnes (1992) - recurring stereotypes of disabled people which regularly appear in media representations of the disabled:

- Pitiable and pathetic - grown in recent years because of Children in Need. It is also a staple in dramas and news which often over focus on children and the possibilities of miracle cures.
- Object of violence - when disabled people are in TV shows, they 3 times more likely to be killed than able bodied people. This reinforces the notion of the disabled as victims.
- Sinister and evil - portrayed as criminals and monsters.
- Atmospheric or curio - disabled people might be included in drama to enhance an atmosphere of menace, unease, mystery or deprivation. They are therefore added for visual impact.
- Super-cripples - disabled are portrayed as having special powers e.g. blind people might be viewed as visionaries with a 6th sense. e.g. coverage of the Paralympics - shown as disabled people doing extra-ordinary things
- Object of ridicule - disabled people are often laughed at in comedies
- As their own worst enemy - the media sometimes portrays the disables as self-pitiers who could overcome their difficulties if they would only stop feeling sorry for themselves and think positively
- As a burden - television documentaries and news features often focus on carers rather than the disabled
- As sexually abnormal - it is assumed by the media representations that the disabled do not have sexual feelings or that they are sexually degenerated
- As incapable of participating fully in community life - aka stereotype of omission, he notes that disabled people are rarely shown as integral and productive members of the community. They are conspicuous in their absence from media representations.
- As ordinary and normal - he argues that the media rarely portray disabled people as normal people who just happen to have an impairment. They consequently fail to reflect the real, everyday experience of disability.

Ross (1996) - surveyed disabled media audiences. They objected to a number of ways that they were represented in media. They particularly objected to:

- Making disabled people into babies (infantalization)
- Unrealistic and sanitised portrayal of disability.
- Persistent use of wheelchairs, white sticks and guide dogs to signify a disabled character
- The fact that disabled roles were often associated with anger, bitterness and are not able to come into terms with their disability
- The restricted repertoire of character types - not able to perform
- The lack of first hand experience of disability by media practitioners
- Failure to present disabled people as capable of running homes, bringing up families, having loving relations

The effect of telethons

Roper (2003) - suggests that the mass media representations of the disabled on telethons can create problems for the disabled. They over-rely on 'cute' children rather than the disabled, they are often not representative of a range of disabled people in the UK. E.g children in need, comic relief.

The charities imply that charities are more responsible than the government to provide funds for disabled people. This consequently makes people question very rarely why they are disadvantaged in the first place. She argues that telethons are aimed at encouraging the public to alleviate their guilt and their relief that they aren't disabled by giving money rather than informing the general public of the facts about disability.

Karpf (1998) - argues that there is a need for charities, but telethons act to keep the audience in the position of the GIVERS. Telethons are about entertaining the public rather than helping us to understand the everyday realities of what it's like to be disabled.

Representations of people with mental disabilities

GUMG found that TV and press reporting of people suffering mental disabilities often only focus on violent incidents even though only a small majority of people with mental health problems are potentially violent. A high proportion of

able bodied people felt fear and anxiety when near people with mental health problems because media coverage convinced able bodied people that mental illness was associated with violent behaviour.
This type of media supersede - take the place of (a person or thing previously in authority or use) personal experience.

Representations of sexuality:
Moral Panics and sexuality:
The news reporting about aspects of sexuality has resulted in the social construction of social anxiety/moral panics. Society learns to fear or be critical of particular social groups.
- 1980s - Homosexuality was a moral panic. It was supposedly unnatural and was blamed by the media for the spread of HIV and AIDS (Aids referred to as the gay plague)
- 1990s - alleged promiscuity of teenage girls who were supposedly getting pregnant for benefits and council housing

However, it has become very accepting to be gay or lesbian, especially since many celebrities are coming out. E.g. Tyler Oakley, Caitlin Jenner... people are coming out on social media and are getting positive responses. There is little stigma in western societies like there was in the last few decades.

Young people's media and representations of sexuality:
Batchelor et al (2004) - argues that mass media plays an important role in shaping the knowledge and attitudes of young people with regard to sexuality. A content analysis took place to see how sexuality is represented. They discovered:
- **Some aspects were represented in a positive way**
  - Publicized sexual health information
  - Consent is important
  - Whether couples were ready for sex
  - The right of girls to say no
- **However, some negative limitations in media coverage would be**
  - It was assumed that if young people were over 16 years, they were sexually active
  - Contraception and managing how far to go sexually were clearly female responsibility, their responsibility to have a form of contraception was emphasized in reference to pregnancy
  - No examples of how people might raise concerns such as safer sex (how to avoid STDS)
  - There were distinct differences in terms of how young men and women felt about, talked and acted in terms of sex. E.g. female media characters discussed sex with their friends but males boasted about it. Girls were interested in emotions but guys were more interested in sex. Basically, men were pursuers and women as the pursued
  - There was a lack of positive images of lesbian and gay teens
  - Failure to represent sexual diversity

Representations of homosexuality:
Batchelor (2004) - being gay was not generally integrated into mainstream media representations. But when it did appear, it was the source of anxiety or embarrassment, or the target for teasing and bullying. Also, lesbianism was completely invisible.
1. What was the aim of this research? - Examine how sexuality is and the level of sexual health information provided in some UK magazines and TV programmes targeted at young people.
2. How was the idea of sexual content operationalised? - The idea of sexual content was defined as any depiction of sexual behaviours, discussion of sex or sexuality, sexually suggestive behaviour, sexual health or sexually related issues.
3. How did the researchers use content analysis in their research? - Each item was coded according to its content, type of discussion and/or reference, and its format, teen drama, magazine articles or newspaper feature.

Lesbians -	Gays -
Girly	Gossipy
Butch	Over exaggerated body language
Masculine	Hairdressers
Tattoos	Well groomed
R-ships are crazy/psychotic or like best friends	Emotional

Craig (1992) - suggests that when homosexual characters are portrayed in the media, e.g. in popular dramas, they are often stereotyped as having particular amusing or negative psychological and social characteristics.

- Campness - this is one of the most widely used gay representations, found mainly in the entertainment media. The camp persona reinforces negative views of gay sexuality by being somewhere in between male and female
- Macho - a look that exaggerated masculinity and which is regarded by heterosexual men as threatening because subverts traditional ideas of masculinity.
- Deviant - gays may be stereotyped as deviants, as evil or as devious in television drama as sexual predators or as people who feel guilt about their sexuality. In many cases, gay characters are completely defined by the problem of their sexuality and homosexuality is often constructed to appear morally wrong.
- Responsible for AIDS - Watney has illustrated how British news coverage of AIDS in the 1980s stereotyped gay people as carriers of a gay plague. He argues that news coverage of AIDS reflected mainstream society's fear and dislike of the gay community.

Soap operas...
Gauntlett argues that lesbian, gay and bisexual people are still under represented in much of the mainstream media, but things are slowly changing for the better. Gauntlett suggests that tolerance of sexual diversity is slowly growing in society and images of diverse sexual identities with which audiences are unfamiliar may assist in making population generally more comfortable with these alternative sexual lifestyles