

How Women Are Presented in the Media

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*Quels rôles la télévision donne-t-elle aux hommes et aux femmes?
Comment cette façon de nous représenter affecte-t-elle les téléspectateurs?*

We are concerned with the way the roles of women and men in our society are being portrayed on television and the cumulative effect of this portrayal on the thoughts, feelings, attitudes, beliefs and, ultimately, the behaviour of young people.

By far the largest number of television programs considered 'family entertainment', and the commercials that punctuate them, present outmoded, incorrect or prejudicial messages about how men and women behave. Beyond its particular plot, each program tells the child something about the way the world is and how the men and women in it relate to one another. The effect of these messages is, at least in part, the inevitable, natural consequence of observing and modeling behaviour in others. And for many children, television is *the* window on the world — the major vehicle for contact with the world beyond the family and home.

Advertising, which has to deliver its message very quickly, resorts only too readily to presenting clichéd views of women.

This portrayal is contrary to the growing recognition in law and education of the social, emotional and intellectual equality of men and women. As representatives of a committee from a Board primarily concerned with the development of children into fully capable and responsible adults, we bring to your attention the policy of the Government of Ontario that education be conducted so that each child may have the opportunity to develop abilities and aspirations without the limitations imposed by sex-role stereotypes.

- We would like to see more attention given, in public affairs programming and news coverage, to issues which are, at present, the concern primarily of women. This coverage should be available to prime-time viewers and includes such issues as day care, welfare, educational and health and social concerns.

- We recommend that advertising of personal care products used by both men and women be directed to their hygienic use rather than their use for sexual enhancement.

- With regard to the advertising of products unique to one sex, we note a continuing controversy over its appropriateness. We ask that

the CRTC look into the sensitive handling of this issue.

- We recommend that the CRTC avail itself of the large body of research that is already published on sex-role stereotyping in the media and develop a definite set of criteria against which to judge the stereotyping inherent in any individual commercial or program presented. We would like to see a permanent monitoring of both programming and commercials with frequent reviews of those previously judged acceptable.

- We would like to see immediate action taken on each of these recommendations.

- We would like to see women portrayed as competent, responsible adults, equally as concerned as men with society both inside and outside the family unit.

- Similarly, we would like to see girls and boys portrayed as equally vigorous, in both mental and physical activities; as equally curious and concerned about the world, both inside and outside the home; and as equally confident and sensitive human beings.

- Both men and women should be portrayed in the full range of occupational and professional pursuits outside the home. They should be depicted as equally responsible decision-makers. Women are successful senior executives and attend board meetings as other than secretaries, clerks and coffee-makers. Men teach nursery school and the primary grades.

- Men and women should be portrayed equally in the performance of all household and child-rearing tasks. They should appear interchangeably in sensitive and nurturing roles. Men can cook dinner and attend to their children's disappointments as competently as women. The variety of routines found in Canadian homes should be reflected on television, for example, the breakfast routine is not always solely mother's responsibility.

- Members of both sexes enjoy the rigorous challenges of outdoor life and each should be portrayed as capable of undertaking the planning and execution of any outdoor excursion.

- Women are already appearing as newscasters, reporters and hosts of public affairs programs in greater numbers and we would like to see this trend encouraged. ☺