

The Role of Dignity and Humiliation for Myths, Stereotypes, and Controlling Images in Film

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Myths, stereotypes and controlling images are imbedded in the cultural textbook of cinema. Women are disempowered, marginalized and humiliated by these images and it is important to explore the existence and prevalence of these images in order to set the stage to explore the impact this medium has on women and society. A feminist content analysis of the themes present in 81 films was conducted as a means to explore the possibilities for change through this medium. The review of the 117 lead female characters in the 81 films was done through the use of a video review sheet which was developed by the researcher through the use of prior research and previously used review sheets in studies using the same research design. The analysis revealed themes including but not limited to the idea that relationships women are secondary to men in the workplace and often in life; women in power are depicted in isolation and often humiliated and dehumanized by the men in the films; women are often depicted in a negative light and women of ethnicities other than White are not adequately represented in mainstream media, in any area. Through film women are learning that they are secondary to men and that, in essence, there is nothing wrong with this perception. Additionally, humiliation is often used as a “humorous” technique and as one of the mechanisms of movement in the film with regard to both men and women. By understanding, the humiliating images and representations that are present in film, viewers can become enlightened witnesses which paves the way for social change.