

Television's Use of Stereotypes

More work necessary for accurate portrayals

BY C.A.SCHNEIDER

IN THIS DAY AND AGE, THE easiest and most-used form of socialization is television. Television is a constantly available forum of role models for young children-- or is it? Children need to see how people and families behave, but is T.V. the proper way to show children this?

For the impressionable minds of young children, the stereotypical families and people we see on T.V. are what families should be. These portrayals, however, do not reflect the way things really are in society. Real families do not experience the purging of all wrong-doings at the end of each episode. Seldom do you find a real mother going through the old "whatever happens it will all turn out for the best, and we'll all live happily ever after" routine. Nor do we see the Bundy clan out shopping, taking the best goods out of everyone else's carts. These images, although entertaining (sometimes), are not

reality. Children who watch T.V. do not necessarily realize that, though, and this can cause problems. A child may, for example, use Grandmother's (from Dinosaurs) infamous line "Watch it Fat Boy" towards his or her father and be punished for it. Children may find such punishment inexplicable because this is the type of thing they have been taught to do by the shows they watch.

The socialization performed by television not only alters the way children see family, but also the way they see individual people. Television also uses stereotyped characters, and these stereotypes are often adopted by a child as what he or she should aim to be. Children pick role models to follow, and a lot of the role models picked from T.V. are unrealistic and possibly also harmful.

Women are particularly

stereotyped on television. The stereotypes are usually either sexual or professional. The sexual stereotypes prevalent in TV assume that a woman is either frigid or loose. There is seldom a middle ground in the matter of a woman's sexuality. Women who

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enjoy their sexuality are portrayed as sluts, women who hide their sexuality are the characters who succeed. This generality seems to send the message to young girls that sexuality is bad, and will get you nowhere in life. Similarly, up until a few years ago it was very rare to see a professional woman on television. Now, thanks to shows such as Murphy Brown, we see women taking charge. Unfortunately, these shows seldom show the struggles a woman experiences trying to take charge. We see women who have hit

the top and those who have barely started out, but the struggle to get out and start is seldom explored. We still see the stay-at-home-mom who is perfectly miserable there, but cannot escape. Though we also see the stay-at-home-mom who wants to be there, and loves her job as such. The women we see on fictional T.V. shows today have started to become a bit more realistic, although there is still a long way to go. New shows like Grace under Fire show the more realistic view Tv is taking, and shows like Murphy Brown give young girls a role model who is not stereotypical, a powerful woman who is also a mom. With all the improvements that have been made in recent years, one wonders why stereotypical characters are still so appealing to T.V. producers and audiences. The characters who are original and realistic are so much more interesting to watch and their shows are better able to deal with the relevant issues in society today.

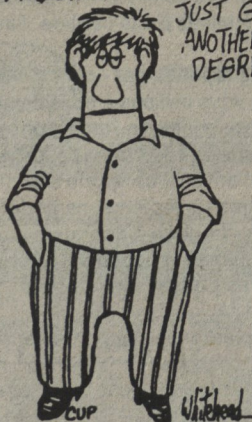
CEREBELLA

By RYAN FEELEY



"YEAH FRANK, I'M COMING OVER... I WANNA TRY SOMETHING"

I DON'T KNOW WHAT I WANT TO DO WITH MY LIFE! I HAVE NO GOALS, NO DIRECTION... I GUESS I'LL JUST GET ANOTHER DEGREE!



MENTAL BLOCS BY JAY MCCALLUM



MILLIE THE COW'S LIFE LONG AMBITION TO JUMP OVER THE MOON WAS SUCCESSFUL... ONLY SHE DIDN'T PLAN FOR RE-ENTRY.