

Media and the quality of television

The phenomenon of Big Brother has conquered the entire world, and in Italy the fourth edition has started. The most curious thing is that everybody criticizes it and at the same time everybody wants to watch this program. The success could derive from the fact that it shows normal people doing normal boring things; this is the "Reality Show" and people can identify themselves in one of the characters. Furthermore, the opportunity to see people in private situations allows people gossip about events in the house. Actually, BB is a symbol of how and why media quality is disappearing.

The quality of television's programmes is plunging increasingly due to the fact that they depend on economic interests rather than cultural reasons. There are too many shoddy programmes based on formats bought in foreign countries and one of those is, in fact, the BB. It is an Aran Endemol programme, who also produced "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire" and others.

Furthermore, there is too much vulgarity, too many naked women, too many violent scenes for the simple reason that this kind of things are easy to understand, to perceive. Media in general, television in particular, are now the background of our life, we have always a lot to do and we can't spend time trying to understand something aired on tv; therefore, programmes, movies, quizzes are quick and easy.

In the same way, media usually are not able to avoid stereotypes. For example, it's still difficult in our media, and I don't think only about Italian television, to have programmes or films really interested in the lifestyle of the homosexual community or the ethnic minorities.

In fact, gays and lesbian are "hot" themes that it is better to avoid, in order to not offend the morality of a large portion of the audience. But, I strongly believe there is no need to talk in this way; for example, they are often linked to deviant or criminal behaviour. Even though we have to admit that now something is going to change; I refer to shows or movies such as "Will & Grace" or "In & Out", which portray stories and experiences of gay couples in the first one and of a man who

discovers he is a homosexual in the second one. Critics argue that the visibility of gays and lesbians is not an indication of the increased social acceptance of homosexuals, but simply an attempt by network executives to access an untapped market.

As far as the minorities shown in television are concerned, we could say that they are depicted in a way that is far from reality, and usually they depend on stereotypes again. A 2001 study by the U.S. organization Children Now, entitled *Fair Play -- Violence, Gender and Race in Video Games* examined some of the most popular games to assess the extent of stereotyping: it has been proved that heroes are usually white men, whereas villains and violent people are black or Asian men. This is really biased and not right since it causes the continuous survival of stereotypes.

To sum things up, stereotypes, caused by prejudice and discrimination, and economic reasons are causing what is happening around us. Everybody can realize the low quality of the programmes on television.

For this reason, we should think of the past of television which has played an important role in the growth of the culture, and try to transform media into a brand new way to teach and communicate.

References:

<http://www.media-awareness.ca/english/issues/stereotyping/index.cfm>