Gender, Sex, and Sexuality

Gender roles have always been the center of television shows throughout history and continue to play an important part in the media industry to date. There are more and less progressive shows with regards to gender roles as some are successful in portraying an unbiased version of gender roles and some shows show the traditional gender roles that existed sixty years ago. Like the shows of the 1950s which had very traditional gender roles and the roles that were attributed to women and men were stereotypical. Father is supposed to be the leader of the family who has the authority to rule over his family because he is the one who works and earns money to fulfill the needs of his family. While the mother is more of an oppressed figure who is supposed to take care of her children along with other members of the family. Her life revolves around the house. One of the surprising yet shocking elements of the 50s was people were not allowed to use the word “pregnant” because it demonstrates stigmatization of natural aspects of womanhood. The Honeymooners is a 50s classic American television sitcom created by Jackie Gleason. It is a type of show that tends to make fun of women who try to do anything outside of the home and the behavior of Ralph with his wife is so disgusting. He threatens her with violence in some of the episodes which show the superior nature of man of 50s. Kramden is portrayed as a big and clumsy oaf but his wife is an intelligent, craftier partner. The patriarchal views of Ralph and his obsession with masculinity earned him a temporary separation from his wife (Murray, n.d.).

Deep cultural changes can be observed in gender roles during the 1960s. More women in America entered the paid workforce and started working in different areas of life outside their houses. It was a decade of change because the act for the Civil Rights was passed in this era and thus women were given equal rights as men. They started working outside but in return, they became victims of sexual harassment in the work environment. Women were allowed to make their own decisions regarding birth control which gave them more power and freedom. However, the male did not face any sexual harassment as women did in this era. As the era of the 50s, they were the main figure of the family who supported their family after facing little or no difficulties. They were expected to protect their family which ultimately made them superior over women.

The American show Bewitched twisted the 60s gender roles and became the first feminist sitcom. It advocated freedom for women to do whatever they want and this war advocating freedom came in the form of Endora, an unmarried old witch who enjoyed her powers. Her daughter, on the other hand, is more of a conservative kind who likes to live inside the house. This sitcom is aware of its complicated place because it falls in both the categories of feminism and conservative society (Jones, 2018).

The roles of men in the 70s change completely because women are side by sidemen. They were still men who supported their families and earned for them but as women get their rights and worked outside the home, men did not remain men anymore. Women achieved more rights during this era than they had in the past and were assigned new and independent roles in society.

 All in the Family is a sitcom that dealt with cultural issues like no other show had dared before because it focused on everyday concerns that affected a middle-class family of that era. It talks about women's right to control their bodies and have the authority to decide whether they want an abortion or not. The issue like divorce, breast cancer, rape women liberation, and gay rights were considered taboo but this show was successful in tackling all these issues.

Reference:

Jones, M. (2018, May 9). Bewitched and the evolution of ’60s gender norms. Retrieved November 9, 2019, from SYFY WIRE website: https://www.syfy.com/syfywire/bewitched-and-the-evolution-of-60s-gender-norms

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