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Meghan Shain
Santa Clara University

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Finding Common Ground: Abortion, Television, And The Changing American Culture

Meghan Shain
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As Oscar Wilde once said, “life imitates art far more than art imitates life”, but there is a reciprocal relationship between the two. The more society talks about an issue, the more we are going to see that issue present in television, which then spurs even more discussion on that topic. Today, we use the media to understand what is important and popular in our society. Conversely, the media uses society to capture polarizing topics, such as abortion, to attract viewers. Media critics often argue that television has too large of an impact on developing societies perspectives. However, the viewpoint could be the opposite. I am making the argument that as societies understandings and viewpoints on abortion have evolved over the past decades with changing regulations, laws, and attitudes, the portrayal of abortion in the media has reflected that development. With studies done to find that three in ten women will have an abortion by age 45, we see how prevalent abortion is in our society, with about 21% of pregnancies ending in abortion¹. By showing how the media’s portrayal of abortion has reflected the transformation of societies views, we can see how the media and society have created a symbiotic relationship and how television mimics our reality. The media reflects societies current thoughts, and when portrayed equally this generates a greater understanding and discussion for both views on the issue. By knowing this relationship, we can use media as a way to produce healthy dialogue and explanations on certain topics that are currently significant to society.

Abortion Before Legalization

The illegalization of abortion did not stop the demand, need, and desire of the procedure. Before the early seventies brought the legalization of abortion, women were left with the options of turning to “back-alley” abortions or even leaving the country in order to

¹ "Abortion." Gallup.com. Accessed September 01, 2015.
<http://www.gallup.com/poll/1576/abortion.aspx>.

undergo the procedure. The illegal and immorally perceived action of an abortion in this time resulted in the procedure being extremely dangerous. They were hastily conducted in unsafe and unsanitary conditions, “done with crude methods, few antiseptics, [which led to] high mortality rates” due to either infection or malpractice². Also, the treatment by the doctors did not help the already harmful situation. They often rushed the procedure because they could not be caught performing illegal abortions, they often were only in the business for the money, and sometimes forced the women to perform sexual acts in exchange for their service.

Not only was abortion not to be performed, it was also not to be a topic of conversation. Beginning in 1930, films and shows were required to have a “seal and a number” from the Motion Picture and Production Code Administration, this was called the “Hay’s production code”, which forced television writers and networks to comply with certain moral requirements. The Hay’s production code eliminated all topics on or relating to rebellious behaviors, such as drugs, prostitution, kidnapping, abortion, or anything of the like. This essentially caused television to ignore current events and political issues because they could have been seen as too provocative. As a result, most shows focused on “the ideal American family life”, presenting us with “White middle-class families with traditional nuclear roles (mother in the home, father in the office)”, as evidenced by *Leave it Beaver* or the *Donna Reed Show*³. However, with the expanding television culture by the mid-1950s,

² Boston Women's Health Book Collective. *Our Bodies, Ourselves For The New Century: A Book By And For Women*. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1998).

³ Lule, Jack. *Culture and Media*. (Stockholm: Department for Democracy and Social Development, 1998), 415.

most filmmakers were calling for the ban's removal and were ready to portray the controversial issues of the day.

Taking into consideration the role that abortion played in society at this point, it is of no surprise that there are not a lot of instances of abortion in television. But, 1951's *A Place in the Sun* is a good place to begin this discussion. Due to the Hay's production code the word "abortion" is never actually said in the movie, however, the characters are still put in certain settings and converse in a way that the viewer could easily tell that they are implying abortion. Because of the way that abortion is portrayed in this movie, one could tell that it was not a commonly talked about topic. In the movie, when the female character is with the Doctor who is to perform her abortion she does not use her real name and she fakes that she is married. Catching onto her lies, the Doctor denies her the procedure. I believe that this could be a common interaction between patient and doctor in this timeframe regarding this issue. I am sure many women would not want to use their real name, and I am sure the doctors were very careful with who they allowed to get the procedure. Both parties were involving themselves in illegal activity and they needed to protect themselves in case it was an undercover set-up or if they other person back out and were to say something to authorities. After not being able to receive the abortion, her boyfriend is terrified that his fiancé will find out about his love child, and he concocts a plan to drown his pregnant girlfriend by pushing her out of a boat. Once on the water though, he cannot go through with this idea. However, as cosmic punishment would have it, she falls out of the boat while trying to exit to mainland and ends up drowning anyway.⁴

⁴ Dirks, Tim. "A Place in the Sun (1951)." *A Place in the Sun (1951)*. Accessed September 01, 2015. <http://www.filmsite.org/plac2.html>.

Although this movie does not actually address any radical ideas on abortion, it very much so follows the status quo, especially with the fact that they were able to do all this without even speaking the word “abortion”. We see this patchy and unfriendly relationship between the doctor and patient, which is not an interaction that we would typically see, but under these circumstances it is understandable. The desperation of need for abortion is also heavily portrayed when one character contemplates murder, as if this was the only choice left and that someone was willing to go that far to not have a child.

As we shift into the 1960s, Kennedy’s assassination, the Vietnam War and the threat of the Cold War hit America. These events sparked many civil rights and anti-war movements. Women joined in on the fight and began to rally for more of their rights as well, with gender equality being a central issue. Although the rallies mainly focused on equity in the workplace, a women’s choice on what she can do with her body was not to be left out of conversation and America began to reform. A few states liberalized abortion laws, which allowed abortions to be performed under special cases, such as a woman being raped, an incestuous pregnancy, or if the girl was under 15 years of age⁵. However, in the end it was up to the doctor and the hospital if they were to go through with the procedure. With the high abortion costs and the limited states that allowed the procedure to be done very few women actually had access to get one, leaving illegal abortions to still be very common and in high demand⁶.

Television at this time had taken quite with the advent of news television, and with all the current disastrous events that were taking place a lot of stress and tension were brought into the homes of Americans. This lead into the creation of what is known as

⁵ Boston Women’s Health Book Collective, *Our Bodies, Ourselves For*.

⁶ Ibid.

“escapist comedies”, shows that provided no political unease that “provided audiences with a welcome diversion from real life”, such as: *I Dream of Jeannie*, *Bewitched*, and *Gilligan’s Island*⁷.

Although most shows followed the trend of staying away from controversy in order to not upset the people more, there were a few shows that felt it necessary to change their shows to reflect the small changes that were being made in society. In 1962, the hit law show of the time *The Defenders* aired one of their most controversial episodes. The Preston’s took the case of and defended a Doctor Montgomery, who was found guilty of performing abortions. The Doctor had been approached by 20,000 women who wanted abortions, however, only 1,500 women passed his interview process, where he deemed them mentally suitable for one and also wanting one for the right reasons. Taking on an issue such as abortion in this time was very risky as “three regular sponsors pull[ed] their support from the episode”⁸. Although this episode received positive feedback from the viewers, no other television shows wanted jeopardize losing their sponsors or sparking too much controversy. Until 1966, when the film *Alfie* came out. Alfie gets a married woman pregnant, and then helps her get an abortion. The abortion scene is portrayed in a very serious manner. The color in the scene is subdued, unlike the other scenes, the camera cuts to rain falling outside, and the characters are all very silent. Without words we still see the

⁷ Lule, *Culture and Media*, 417-418.

⁸ Alvey, Mark. "The Museum of Broadcast Communications - Encyclopedia of Television - The Defenders." The Museum of Broadcast Communications - Encyclopedia of Television - The Defenders. Accessed September 01, 2015. <http://www.museum.tv/eotv/defendersth.htm>.

sorrow that Alfie feels for the loss of this child as he weeps. He mentions later in the movie that he “murdered” the child by getting an abortion⁹.

Both of these portrayals began to spark discussion of abortion although they were still framed as being an illegal action. *The Defenders* reflected the change in law that had occurred, as the Doctor was only doing the abortions under the special circumstances, which is what some states were allowed to do. However, the doctor was still performing them illegally because he was not in one of those states. It is a great example of how far we have come, yet how far we still need to go as the viewers can look at what the doctor is doing as being half-legal. Depending on what state a viewer is in, may alter their way of watching this episode. However, with the exit from sponsors this shows that this topic is still something that is not to be conversed because it still carried a lot of stigma. *Alfie* portrays the seriousness of an abortion and that doing so is not an easy decision, while also shows how an abortion would to take place in a state where it is not legal to go to the hospital to get one.

Abortion very much show played a backstage role in society before it was legalized. It was a something that people wanted and needed however, it was not to be talked about which we can see through the ban on incorporating it into media. Once women began fighting for their rights is when we see the change in law regarding abortion, which is also the same time we see it involved in the television a bit more, however, compared to how prevalent it was, it was not covered enough. We still see writers and advertisers holding back from this issue because it was still new to openly discuss this.

⁹ Koloze, Jeff. ""Cinematic Treatment of Abortion: Alfie (1965) and The Cider House Rules (1999)"" Lifeissues.net. June 03, 2006.
http://www.lifeissues.net/writers/kol/kol_21cinematic1.html.

The Legalization of Abortion: Roe V. Wade

In 1970, New York passed a law that allowed abortion to occur if the procedure was done before the 24th week of pregnancy and in a proper medical facility. This generated other states to pass similar laws. Feminist organizations tried to help women who wanted abortions by providing loans or referrals, and also fought to keep the price of abortions low. However, because of limited facilities not all women could afford to travel to New York and also pay for the abortion, so illegal abortions were still very common¹⁰. This small taste of legalization on abortion created an even larger fight for “the repeal of all restrictive state laws” with many cases being brought to the Supreme Court¹¹. Finally in 1973, in the case of Roe V. Wade the illegalization was overturned with a decision that stated:

“this right of privacy, whether it be founded in the Fourteenth Amendment’s concept of personal liberty and restrictions upon state action, as we feel it is, as the District Court determined, in the Ninth Amendment’s reservation of rights to the people, is broad enough to encompass a women’s decision whether or not to terminate her pregnancy”¹²

Understandably, there were still restrictions on when a woman can have an abortion that had to do with what trimester of her pregnancy she was in. Even with these restrictions though, this was considered “an important victory for women” because the “legalization and the growing consciousness of women’s need brought better, safer abortion services¹³. In a study done by the Gallup poll in this decade, it was found that 77% of Americans

¹⁰ Boston Women’s Health Book Collective, *Our Bodies, Ourselves For*.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

supported abortion at any time or under certain circumstances¹⁴. Even with a majority of people supporting legalized abortion, the Roe V. Wade decision sparked major political controversy and stances on abortion became a forefront for political candidates¹⁵.

Along with the major changes in the political realm, television culture had begun to take off. The Hay's Production code was abolished in 1968 and television writers were itching to introduce debatable topics into their storylines. With the removal of the Hay's production code television was able to evolve into a platform to spark discussion about controversial issues and it "illustrat[ed] the changing tastes of the viewing audience, who had come of age during the era of the civil rights and Vietnam protests and developed a taste for socially conscious television"¹⁶.

With the changing culture of television and the now vital aspect that abortion played in society we see the occurrence of abortion in television begin, although it was only slightly, it was still very pivotal. The first legal abortion occurred on the TV show *Maude* in 1972, only months before the decision on Roe V. Wade was made. The show was set in New York, one of the few states that abortion was legal in at the time. The main character gets pregnant at the age of 47, and decides to get an abortion because of her age. This issue was not taken lightly and plays out through two episodes. The episodes follow the characters thought process, showing both the pros and the cons of abortion and really showing the viewers how one might think through a big decision like this, and shows the characters distress over making this decision. The episodes also ran without commercials because no advertisers wanted to buy time and support an episode with such a controversial topic

¹⁴ "Abortion." Gallup.com.

¹⁵ Hout, Michael. "Abortion Politics in the United States, 1972–1994: From Single Issue to Ideology." *Gender Issues*, 3rd ser., 17, no. 2 (1999).

¹⁶ Lule, *Culture and Media*, 415.

because they did not know how the viewers were going to react. The writer, Susan Harris, assumed that since abortion was now legalized in New York that the issue would not cause such a controversy, however, she was very wrong and most networks still wanted to stay very far away from this topic¹⁷. After nationwide legalization, the TV show *All My Children* was the first to air an episode of an abortion. One of the main characters, Erica, chooses to have an abortion because having a child would be detrimental to her modeling career. She does not want to gain weight and lose her job, so she goes through with the procedure. After receiving the abortion though the show takes an interesting spin, which could be seen as a way to keep the viewers who did not necessarily agree with abortion or only supported it under certain circumstances. Erica develops toxoplasmosis from the procedure, which is a potentially fatal infection¹⁸. Many viewed this as “poetic justice” and the show was able to air an episode with such a controversial issue without actually supporting or not supporting abortion. Surprisingly, this controversial episode did not hurt ratings, it actually increased them. After *All My Children*, it took until 1979 and *Quincy M.E.* for another television show to feature an episode with abortion. In this instance a seventeen-year-old girl goes in for an abortion and dies moments after getting off the operating table¹⁹. This was another instance of “poetic justice” and a show being able to

¹⁷ Dawson, Greg. "Television's Taboo Against Abortion." *Tribunedigital-orlandosentinel*. April 23, 1989. http://articles.orlandosentinel.com/1989-04-23/lifestyle/8904235295_1_abortion-taboo-maude.

¹⁸ Lenhart, Jennifer. "Soap Opera Abortions - Feature - Soap Opera Digest and Weekly." *Soap Opera Abortions - Feature - Soap Opera Digest and Weekly*. Accessed September 01, 2015. <http://web.archive.org/web/20060615071915/http://soapoperadigest.com/features/special/lasttaboo/index.html>.

¹⁹ "Physician, Heal Thyself." *IMDb*. February 02, 1979. <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0681820/>.

create the discussion on abortion without angering viewers who were against abortion. Was a harmful outcome for the mother who had an abortion the way to steer clear of dispute? The safety of abortion had dramatically increased when it became legalized but that does not mean the support had increased, so punishing those who had them was a way to show that abortion still had a long way to go in society before it was to occur without any negative consequences.

Groundbreaking work had been done with abortion both in society and in the media. As it was becoming a more discussed and important issue, television shows started to bring in different views and plots to create a discussion, however, they seemed to still carry the stigma that a portion of society felt into how they incorporated abortion into their storylines. Abortion still had not been framed as a normalized or completely acceptable thing to do, and television stories showed that by the way the characters acted and what was to happen to them once they got the procedure. Advertisers were still scared of the way society would respond and a majority of networks still held back in showing these episodes. Even with legalization and major strides toward incorporating it in media related discussion, why was America still hesitant towards abortion?

Backlash of Legalization

As abortion became a growing political topic, people were really beginning to create a division on opinions, causing a huge lash out from those who were antiabortion. Approximately 80% of clinics or providers that handled abortions were the targets of violence from protesters, including "death threats, clinics [were] subject to chemical attacks, arson, bomb threats, invasions, and blockades" which would in turn result in

thousands of arrests²⁰. It is not that the support for abortion was wildly decreasing, as only 21% of Americans did not support abortion, which is close to decades past, but these groups were very outspoken²¹. The violence continued throughout the eighties before it hit an all time high in the early nineties. More than 200 clinics had been bombed, and about 5 people who were involved in clinics that performed abortions were murdered, whether that being a doctor or a receptionist²². Oddly enough, the support for abortion was increasing due to many different factors such as: “more people had a college education, more women were working in the labor force, fewer women were married, and the more traditional cohorts were dying out”²³; 83% of Americans supported abortion under any or some circumstances²⁴. But what was creating this deadly divide was that with “abortion politics...people [were] more likely to align their stance on abortion with their other political view or reconceive their political views to make them consistent with those of others who share their stance on abortion”, so the fight was becoming more that just an abortion issue, it was now a political battle²⁵. In this we see the emergence of pro-life and pro-choice.

Although society had not quite accepted abortion yet, a large majority of the television shows did accept this heated topic. With the deregulation in the cable industry, competition in the industry was rising. Cable services came out with specialized channels and programs that were exploding with new options, like CNN, ESPN, and MTV²⁶. Viewers

²⁰ Boston Women’s Health Book Collective, *Our Bodies, Ourselves For*.

²¹ “Abortion.” Gallup.com.

²² Hout, *Abortion Politics*, 6.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Abortion.” Gallup.com.

²⁵ Hout, *Abortion Politics*, 6.

²⁶ Lule, *Culture and Media*, 419.

were able to watch only the content that they wanted to their specific interests, even specifically to their political opinion. This led the networks to more easily voice their opinions on current issues, although that was not always without thinking about the consequences. Even our 'family sitcoms' that had been around for decades now "featured a new take on modern family life, with the mothers working outside of the home and the fathers pitching in with housework and parental duties, such as *The Cosby Show* and *Family Ties*²⁷. The television writers understood that society was changing and they were ready to reflect our lives.

We see instances of abortion multiplying in all different television series and in all different cases, but one cannot help but notice that the shows were still not fully incorporating their thoughts and their stances. In *Degrassi High*, a teen girl gets pregnant and goes through with having the abortion. In the original airing of this episode in Canada as the character walks into the clinic she is harassed by protestors, however, when this episode aired in the States the network decided to cut the majority of this scene and "[edit] out a strong fetal icon from an open-ended narrative designed to confront television audiences with the moral and physical complexities facing teens who seek abortion"²⁸. These rallies were something that was going on in everyday life, but keeping that scene in would admit that this was something controversial and an issue that people needed to create a stance on. This was their way of just getting involved in the debate. In the show *Anything But Love*, one of the characters has an abortion, however, the network fought very hard to cut this scene. Although the producers were able to persuade them to keep it, they

²⁷ Lule, *Culture and Media*, 419.

²⁸ Nicks, Joan. "The Museum of Broadcast Communications - Encyclopedia of Television - Degrassi." The Museum of Broadcast Communications - Encyclopedia of Television - Degrassi. Accessed September 02, 2015. <http://www.museum.tv/eotv/degrassi.htm>.

had to cut down a majority of the episode and they had to make the abortion issue a side plot. Before the episode aired, the actors were asked to not speak publicly about the scene or mention that there was an instance of abortion in the episode because the network was in fear that advertisers would drop out and also that the viewers would stop watching²⁹.

With the introduction of reality television, we had our first reality TV abortion on *The Real World: Los Angeles*. The question can still be made as to how 'real' reality television is, or if a majority of what occurs is scripted, but this episode entailed an in-depth discussion between all the cast mates about their view on abortion, and although some people differed on their thoughts, everyone was able to express their opinions and beliefs. The show did a very good job with handling this delicate situation and showing different sides of the debate. Before the show aired, the network felt that it was important to flash an advisory that read:

"This is the real world where sometimes we face life's serious and sobering struggles. This episode examines one of the most complex, controversial and painful of these struggles. VIEWER DISCRETION IS ADVISED³⁰."

We see a slew of other television series who want to join in on the debate by having characters consider an abortion, mention previous abortions, or have "convenient miscarriages" after they decide to have an abortion.

Because abortion was such a hot topic in society, how could television shows not play out cases of abortion, no matter what was happening. However, with the competition within cable services, networks really did have to incorporate abortion in the safest and

²⁹ Magnuson, Ann, and Henry Rollins. "Antihero." *SPIN*, June 1992.

³⁰ Beard, Lanford. "'The Real World': 20 Years Later, Seven Strangers Who Made Their Mark." *Entertainment Weekly's EW.com*. May 21, 2012. <http://www.ew.com/article/2012/05/21/real-world-20th-anniversary>.

least controversial way possible because viewers could easily find something else to watch that reflected their thoughts more. With the protests and violence occurring abortion was still a very difficult topic to discuss. America could not show the same scenes as Canada because we were not fully ready to face what was really going on. Cutting out scenes from shows and trying to portray abortion, as a side story was a way to get viewers thinking on their own, but not telling them exactly what to think. It is a way to say they are talking about abortion, without actually talking too much on the topic, essentially just to protect themselves because when bombings and death threats are occurring, anyone could be too scared to be too much of an advocate for abortion. By just incorporating abortion into the plotlines, anti-abortion believers could think that this is the network or writers way of supporting abortion, which is why it was so important for the shows to take a neutral stance and just play the role to create discussion.

Where We Are Now...

Abortion rallies and protest are still to be seen in America over the past decade, however the violence that came with them at a time are not prevalent now like before. Although the statistics have not changed much regarding abortion, with 41% of people being pro-life and 80% of people supporting abortion under some kind of circumstance, people seem to have a better understanding and tolerance for the other side³¹. In the most recent announcement by Pope Francis he stated, "the forgiveness of God cannot be denied to one who has repented...he has met many women scarred by the agonizing and painful

³¹ "Abortion." Gallup.com.

decision to have an abortion” and that they are to be forgiven³². This is an unbelievably huge step for abortion rights and religious anti-abortion believers.

People are now less hesitant to portray abortion in media, whether that being a network, writer, advertiser, or actor. Society is still far away from resolving this issue on abortion but “society is full of disagreements and it is only through disagreements that consensus, or at least tolerance, can be achieved”, which is the platform that television is trying to create today³³. Every television series creates a different perspective on why an abortion is needed or what the character thinks about abortion, so viewers are able to think and discuss on so many different cases of abortion and that can better provide them to make their own thought out decision on abortion.

One of Netflix’s hottest television shows, *Orange Is The New Black*, provides a beautiful, innovative (yet vulgar) explanation on abortion when a character says,

*“My point is that you were a meth-head white trash piece of sh*t and your children, had they been born, would have been meth-head white trash pieces of sh*t. So, by terminating those pregnancies, you spared society the scourge of your offspring. When you think about it, it’s a blessing”³⁴*

Before then explaining that,

³² Burke, Daniel. "Pope: All Priests Can Forgive Those Who've Had Abortions - CNN.com." CNN. September 01, 2015. <http://www.cnn.com/2015/09/01/europe/pope-francis-abortion/>.

³³ Justice, Scott. "A TV Break With Convention." *Nursing Standard* 24, no. 41 (June 16, 2010): 28-29. EBSCOhost.

³⁴ Yoder, Katie. "OITNB Justifies Abortion: A 'Blessing' Ending 'Miserable F*cking Lives'" NewsBusters. June 13, 2015. <http://newsbusters.org/blogs/katie-yoder/2015/06/13/oitnb-justifies-abortion-blessing-ending-miserable-fcking-lives>.

*"I mean, what does a good mother do? A good mother does what's best for her children. And maybe what was best for your children was wiping 'em out before they have to live miserable f*cking lives"³⁵.*

If anything is going to create a backlash, this would have been a great episode for that with this explanation, but she backs it up with science beforehand and a compelling argument while also being sympathetic to the other side. Another popular television show, *Grey's Anatomy*, took on the issue of abortion over multiple seasons. After suffering from an ectopic pregnancy in the second season, the character Cristina Yang went through with an abortion in season eight. The writer of the show Shonda Rhimes, admits that when it came time for the first abortion scene in the earlier season she "sort of panicked a little bit in that moment and thought maybe this isn't the right time for the character, [viewers] barely know her", however, after many successful seasons Rhimes felt that *Grey's Anatomy* "had earned all of the credentials with the audience...[they] were in a very different place even politically, socially" and nobody questioned her plan for the abortion in the show³⁶. She did not feel concerned about losing viewers and advertisers or that there would be some huge backlash on the show for incorporating this. That is something that writers did not feel in decades past. In the episode when the character gets the abortion it actually shows her in the doctors chair, in her gown, with her husband by her side. There is not just an implication that she is going in a room to get the procedure done; the show actually shows the character during the procedure.

³⁵ Yoder, *OITNB Justifies Abortion*.

³⁶ Stampler, Laura. "Why 2014 Should Be The Year We Talk About Abortion On TV." Entertainment Weekly. January 23, 2014. <http://entertainment.time.com/2014/01/23/why-2014-should-be-the-year-we-talk-about-abortion-on-tv/>.

Along with these two groundbreaking episodes with abortion, they are many other television series that host the discussion on abortion in episodes, with different scenarios ranging all over the board. As society has become more tolerable on the abortion debate, television has been able to create a more centered platform on abortion to create and spark discussion and even help explain and show examples. As we see more statements from leaders, like the Pope, come out with ideas and statements on abortion then society will change even more. But these are the statements and ideas that have occurred and reformed in order to allow television to air something that had been so controversial and off limits before.

Conclusion

Our shows today now take on more of the role as a discussion board as the issue of abortion has become better settled into our society. Instead of continuing to be a taboo topic, the public can become informed on all different occurrences of abortion. Media has to follow certain societal guidelines in order to remain a success, which is why it has taken so long for abortion to be a forefront issue in television, but as abortion evolved in society, it also did in the media. We have seen that with each shift change in society regarding the law or general impression about abortion, comes that same transition in television. Writers and networks would not be able to write the same kind of episodes that they do today and air them when abortion was first legalized, and vice versa. If shows go too radically on issues then there are repercussions, however if shows do not provide people with enough political consciousness then viewers become uninterested and cannot relate back to the show. Television walks a fine line when it comes to portraying controversial issues, but as they continue to parallel reality both sides benefit and create a reciprocal relationship.

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