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English 1A

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Two Steps Forward, Two Steps Back: A Social Critique of *RuPaul's Drag Race*

The spotlight is on; bass-heavy pop music is pulsing down the runway. Five minutes before showtime, performers are strapping on their heels, fixing their lipstick, and giving their gowns one last glance in the mirror. But this is not Fashion Week or Miss Universe. These performers are drag queens, and they are out for blood. Just another Monday on *RuPaul's Drag Race*, the reality competition series where 14 drag queens compete in weekly challenges for $100,000 and the chance to be America's Next Drag Superstar. *Drag Race*, which premiered in early 2009, has since gained mainstream popularity for its unique premise.

Most television viewers are unaware of the meaning behind drag performance, the impact it has made throughout history, and the issues that the community faces today. In this way, *Drag Race* shoulders the responsibility of presenting its audience with knowledge of a subculture they are likely unfamiliar with. While the show seeks to challenge social norms, it does not always fulfill that role. *Drag Race* is certainly an innovative series that has affected LGBT portrayal in the media and the perception of drag as an art form. Its influence is proven and, for the most part, positive. But even the most progressive shows are not infallible, and for all its merits, *Drag Race* is not above upholding social standards that are harmful and oppressive. Regarding the themes of sexuality, gender, and body image, *Drag Race* has both subverted and reinforced "the norm," for better and for worse.

It is hard to ignore the similarities between *Drag Race* and its forebears, namely *Project Runway* and *America's Next Top Model*. The realm of reality competition shows is small, and comparisons will undeniably be drawn between them. To the first-time viewer, *Drag Race*'s premise seems so different from its sister shows that one could hardly fathom how the three are related. After all, it only seems natural that a series about crossdressers in wigs and six-inch Louboutins would completely subvert those *other* reality shows, right? Not quite.

*Drag Race* embraces these campy, cliché tropes. It emulates the hypersexualized nature of trashy reality shows, the over-the-top manufactured drama of the competition show, and the tragic, inspiring backstory of the docuseries. The show alters these elements just enough to play to their target audience, which is primarily the gay community. Sexuality is central to the show. Instead of having women in skimpy outfits present prizes, *Drag Race* has scantily clad *men*, the aptly-named "Pit Crew," take up the mantle, complete with gratuitous crotch shots. They are a constant presence in every episode, serving no more purpose than to show some skin and make the occasional innuendo. While this is a cheeky take on a sexist social norm, that does not necessarily make it "progressive."

Does objectifying a different demographic somehow lessen the objectification factor? Is it less offensive to treat a man like a glorified prop than it is a woman? *Drag Race* is trying to promote the visibility of homosexuality on television, which is admirable, but that is not the way to go about it. Just inserting a gay man in place of a woman does not solve a social issue; it arguably creates a new one. Gay men are often depicted in today's society as promiscuous, shallow, and sex-obsessed. While it is not the responsibility of *Drag Race* to fight these social stereotypes, objectification like this, especially on a show that shapes many people's view of the LGBT community, just reinforces them in the public eye.

That being said, *Drag Race* does not put on airs or pretend to be more sanctimonious than it is. The show, its mononymous host RuPaul, and its contestants are all refreshingly self-aware of how irreverent it is. From blatant objectification to misogynistic slurs to questionable mini-challenges such as "Female or Shemale," it is evident that *Drag Race* is more problematic than one might anticipate, and yet the competitors take this controversy in stride. Drag queens are of course reviled in their own right, and they sometimes engage in transphobic and sexist behavior, defending it by saying they are also marginalized for not conforming to social norms. But the struggles of these groups are very different, and a gay man being invalidated for dressing in drag is not the same as someone being mistreated for the gender they were born with.

*Drag Race*'s relationship with the transgender community is a rocky one. On one hand, the show has arguably given trans individuals an unprecedented platform to let their voices be heard. Women like season three's Carmen Carrera, now a model and actress, and season five's Monica Beverly Hillz have used the program to raise awareness of trans issues, garnering mainstream media attention. On the other hand, *Drag Race* has repeatedly offended the trans community by imposing social standards of gender upon them. Queens on the show have used demeaning language to refer to women and their bodies, ridiculing them if they do not look "passable" or "feminine enough."

This controversy came to a boiling point after season six's "Female or Shemale" challenge, in which contestants looked at photos and tried to determine if the individual in question was "a biological woman" or "a psychological woman." Several queens protested, but eventually relented for fear of elimination. The episode caused massive online backlash, but an apology was never issued by the show. This challenge consequently upheld social ideals of beauty, implying that one has to look a certain way in accordance with their gender to be "acceptable." However, many queens on the program continue to have very androgynous drag aesthetics and see gender as a fluid concept rather than a hard line. These contestants, such as Vivacious from season six, The Princess from season four, and Pearl from season seven, have continued to assert the message the show as a whole should be promoting - that gender roles are merely a social construct and diversity in all forms should be celebrated.

*Drag Race* is undeniably a pioneer of industry when it comes to promoting this diversity. Just about every style of fashion, as well as every type of drag queen, has been represented on the show's hallowed runways. Yet for all its progressive intent, the show falls short when it comes to matters of body positivity. *Drag Race* regularly promotes solidarity, acceptance and self-love, but has been notoriously harsh towards bigger queens. Take Latrice Royale, for example. Royale, also known as Timothy Wilcots, was a contestant on season four of the show, as well as *RuPaul's Drag Race*: *All-Stars*. A versatile and promising queen, she was the overwhelming fan favorite [by nationwide voting] to take the crown, but never made it to the finals. Royale was chopped before the last round, receiving fourth place. Viewers at home were stunned, but this is nothing new on *Drag Race*, as a fat contestant has never made the final three in all seven seasons. Royale is less of an anomaly and more of a model of the show's own social "norm" - in which larger queens never really have a shot at victory. So what is it about plus size queens that makes the show dismiss them entirely?

It is not for lack of talent. Whether the contestant in question is Royale or season six's large-and-in-charge Darienne Lake (also eliminated fourth) or season three's curvy Delta Work, the "big girls" of each season have generally put out consistent, quality looks and challenges. Some could even argue that their looks have been superior to their slimmer peers. Yet it never fails that the top three in any given season are tall, tan, long-legged, and slender. Even for its progressive nature, *Drag Race* still conforms to society's narrow (pun fully intended) standards of beauty, whether this is acknowledged or not. Looks, especially having the "right body," are prized not only on the program, but in the drag community at large. By putting those who possess these ideal beauty features on a pedestal, and conversely putting down those who don't "have the look," *Drag Race* is reinforcing and endorsing harmful social standards. Often, a contestant who is heavier will wear more conservative outfits, and then will be encouraged to show some skin. When they do wear outfits that are normal for their slim competitors, they are critiqued for reading as "sloppy" or "too revealing." This sets a rigid standard for these queens; they must not try to hide their bodies, but if they try to dress like everyone else, they are the nail that gets hammered down. They cannot be proud of their shape, only make jokes about it. If being fat is not the central humor of a queen's persona, they too are criticized. By making their bodies this public forum to be mocked, they are trying to be accepted. After all, if they have to make fun of their appearance first, it seems fair that the other contestants can too, right?

Messages such as these not only discourage diversity, but rebuke those who dare to look different, and in a drag queen competition show, the message appears a bit more absurd. *Drag Race* should be a haven for these people who are ostracized from everyday society to feel understood and among kindred souls. Yet the strife these standards create only serve to cause fractures and dissension in a culture that should be practicing acceptance. It would be remiss not to mention what a service *Drag Race* has done for the LGBT community, and the representation it has given queer individuals on television is truly unprecedented. However, this should not mean that the show is above critique. The aforementioned issues and many more are real, and the standards they promote are a detriment to society. By encouraging an open dialogue with the minorities it caters to and giving equal treatment to all, *Drag Race* could be the groundbreaking program it has always aspired to be. But until that day comes, the show will be as hidebound and discriminatory as the society it is trying to defy.

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A Shameless Working Class

Shame has always followed being categorized into the “working class". This is for obvious reasons seen throughout history - a significant one being poor treatment from social and economic superiors. But in the United States today, it seems that shame stems equally from the ideas that surround it as it does from the actual consequences of being trapped in its rank (i.e. struggling to care for one's self and/or family, suffering social scorn, etc.). What can really be done, when the "fortunate" find comfort in convincing themselves that their neighbors are okay eating bread, when really they are scraping for crumbs?

Arguably, many common stereotypes are either developed or encouraged by television. False ideas have been pushed onto middle and upper classes - from the middle and upper classes - as though to convince themselves that the working class is not under any serious threat. This is typically accomplished by making a crude understatement of what life as a lower-class individual is like; rather than raising awareness for what's become a blaring issue, light-hearted humor is brought to represent a flawed portrait of day-to-day poverty.

*2 Broke Girls*, an American sitcom that began in 2011, follows the lives of two twenty-something women who are struggling to get by financially while trying to pursue their dream of starting a cupcake business. These women are supposed to represent working class life, one of them, Max, working two jobs. One of the jobs is babysitting the twins of a wealthy woman, to contrast their supposed hardship all the more. The other woman, Caroline, is a rich-girl-gone-poor, thrown into the Brooklyn poverty after her father goes to jail. Some of the show's comedy lies in her adjustment to the poor life, though the show's humor generally revolves around jokes about being poor. Nevertheless, these are jokes not entirely reserved for an audience that can find belonging to the working class relatable.

Despite whatever wittiness that fans may argue that *2 Broke Girls* has, it cannot be argued that their poverty is painfully inaccurate. Max and Caroline live in a relatively large apartment, fit with stylish furnishings straight out of a catalog. The wood on the walls and floor is supposed to appear dingy and worn, but it only gives the apartment more of an artistically modern look that I can only hope for in my future apartment. The clothes that Max and Caroline wear and accessories that they sport are trendy and lavish; and they somehow manage to afford to support Caroline's pet horse, which lives in the spacious garden of the apartment. Needless to mention, the show frequently throws in rather distasteful racist jokes, not supporting its case.

This misrepresentation of the working class is as illogical as it is misleading. Here we are led to believe, perhaps even subconsciously, that any claims made by the lower class are mere exaggerations. Alas, their protests against our nation’s economic inequality, their objection to continuing to submit to economic authority, any claims of their potential suffering due to what may *really* be economic injustice, are dismissed as needless nagging. Although a television show may seem on too small a scale to have such an effect, the few depictions of the working class that many Americans have seen include Max and Caroline. Having seen poverty with my own eyes, I refuse to associate its circumstances with an innocently humorous sitcom.

That’s not to say, however, that television is *completely* hopeless in illustrating destitution. I first saw *Shameless* in 2011, the year the first season was released. Based on a British series of the same title, *Shameless* is a comedy-drama set in Chicago, Illinois. It predominantly follows the Gallagher family, consisting of an alcoholic father and his six children. They struggle on an excruciatingly scarce income; almost none of it provided by Frank, the father. The eldest sister, Fiona, has been forced to raise her siblings since she was a child herself despite never having any parental guidance of her own.

Having been a naïve fourteen-year-old when I first watched this show, I didn’t care much for it for a while. That is, until high school matured me and I befriended others living in similar financial torment. It’s not untrue that children grow up believing poverty is a choice, and the only way to realize this that could be equally as painful as enduring it myself, is witnessing a friend endure it. Having witnessed the day-to-day battle, the worrying, the wondering, the burning effort to climb up a hill that only gets taller; I found myself in a much more eye-opening perspective. Consequently, I went from seeing *Shameless* as mediocre to seeing it as surprisingly underrated.

The original show’s creator, Paul Abbott, says that the writers did not intend to tag *Shameless* with conventional blue collar heartiness, but to reflect poverty as it is in all its darkness. This is done successfully, while still including decently realistic comic relief. The characters of *Shameless* have just as many innocent intentions as they have immoral ones, yet what makes the show particularly interesting is how oddly understandable each character and their stories become (despite how different we may think we are from them). Even among the car-theft, prostitution, legal scams, drunken brawling, drug-dealing and partaking – things that are definitely *not* meant to be encouraged, but their motives *better understood* – the characters only become clearer. Importantly, *Shameless* demonstrates that most of these characters (at least, the leading protagonists) are not in poverty because they commit these acts, but that they commit these acts because they are in poverty, jeopardizing their situations all the more. Thus, it is a vicious cycle that they are fighting their way out of.

The Gallaghers live in a dilapidated house that they struggle to keep and are still fortunate enough to have. Each of the children work together to pay the electricity bills, and at the beginning of the show they all share a single cell phone. During Thanksgiving, Fiona carves the shape of a turkey out of Spam. When Lip, the second oldest Gallagher sibling, finally makes it to college after painstakingly hard work, he finds himself in conflict over whether or not he should return home to continue to help support the crumbling family.

*Shameless* successfully exhibits how once trapped in poverty, it can be nearly impossible to escape no matter how hard one tries. No one is willing to help because most who are capable of helping have been fed the idea that the lower class doesn’t really *need* help. Bad luck is a continuous chain of events for the poor; a snake that follows and bites them with ruthless venom after they finally for once started to believe they’ll be okay. The good-humored, laugh-your-problems-off attitude can only last so long when their strength is getting them nowhere after years of false hope. Nevertheless at the same time, it’s the only thing that’s keeping them alive.

As much as I appreciate *Shameless* for its realistic qualities and profound message (appreciate, for lack of a better word – it’s personally my favorite show), the only aspects that I disagree with are its (albeit subtle) attempts to glamorize some of its characters. Although it’s not as severely obvious as in *2 Broke Girls*, I’ve noticed some of the younger characters inexplicably wearing trendy designer clothes. On the other hand this is my only criticism, and I say it for the sake of an unbiased analysis.

It may not be on point, as only those truly laboring in the working class are suited to judge its accuracy, but I see *Shameless* as television’s most representative portrayal of life in modern American poverty so far. While *2 Broke Girls* tickles the heart with humorous, artificial guilt-free reassurance, *Shameless* hits the heart with the shredding impact of reality. This impact is what needs to be accomplished in order for the working class to honestly be heard, and thus be one baby-step closer to understanding between the social and economic classes. Not everyone will be blessed with the pleasure of physically meeting someone from the lower class – I hate to generalize but the kindest, the most innocent and the most intelligent people I have ever known are slaves to poverty. For those who will not venture away from their T.V. to meet them, I recommend they get to know *Shameless*.

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*Life is Strange*: An Analysis of Moments

It's quite cool out tonight. There’s the dark sky, the striking contrast of stars, the yellow summer moon. Grass brushing on my neck as I stare up, I let my eyes close for a bit, drift my gaze upward, but to me, lying on the floor of a meadow, I see the arch of the world above me, and the sky below. I just lay there, gazing, wanting to stay in the moment forever, wishing it would never end. It's hard to believe to that moment that I experienced in the recent past has effect on how I see the world. It was a single moment of mine, that I brought it to life. I found myself in a park in the middle of night on a friday without a care in the world.

The world around us are comprised of moments like these. Some moments, we share; some, we keep private; some, we invest great amount of time and effort in. We want those moments to stay with us forever. I never wanted to get up from that green field. I wanted to stare at the sky. I wanted it all to stop: let all the pain and suffering that the world may hold melt away as I stay there forever. Unfortunately, there was something called time that I forgot about. Time doesnt like moments.

Moments of worry, moments of hardship, moments of strife and terror. Those are the moments that compose the world around us today. The ones that the gaze of humanity choose to see. We do not see the moments of love and kindness, or the obscure serendipities. There's something about us that appeals to anger, as if we are magnetized to controversy and destruction. So, if given the option to save all those around you from those moments of agony and terror; if you could capture the moments that you love, make them the only moments in the world; if you could make people forget about the hardships, the tragedy, the mistakes, even if those are the very mistakes that make us human, would you? Would you dare to change?

Most people, like Max Caulfield when given the power to do just that, would do so not by choice, but by instinct, especially when the first decision that you have to make, is to save your best friends life. You would continue to try to save another friend who attempts to commit suicide from depression. You would attempt to find and solve a mystery of a missing girl, and question what it means to be in your place in society. From clothes, to wealth, to sexuality, to stature, to indifference of all the people around you to those very issues. You would do any and all things that you could to save the world you know -- the world you hold to be your own. To do so, in being the perfect human being. To save everyone, it comes at a great price.

When the price to you, the player of the game, is just $20. It's your investment to this story, the game you just bought. The game knows this, and uses it to it's advantage. It poses serious questions on morality and ethics. Do you save a loved one, or dozens of other people. Would you choose the loved one if it was the only person who you cared for, who meant the world for you. Questions like these and many others are progressively asked throughout the story. The character development is indescribably realistic, and uses this to force you to care for the characters on the screen in front of you. These moments of morality are polarizing. You are forced to decide in the game, for progression dictates it. The worth of the game to you, the price you paid for entertainment, is used as a motivator in even the most controversial decisions.

Power and money has a great influence on what the player chooses to do throughout the story, and also affects the morality and viewpoints of not only you, but the characters in the game. The power in *Life is Strange* is distributed in a way to have weight on all decisions on what the character makes. You are given a power that is the most powerful of all, the power to go back in time and manipulate people's very moments that they hold dear or near to there heart do whatever you see fit to them. This power is controlled by both the player and by Max, who both have moral boundaries and a psyche. Max can not abuse this power, for she herself will suffer physically and mentally. For example, she eventually making decisions that have a lasting effect on her but no one around her, such as choosing to help your disfigured dying friend with assisted suicide in an alternate timeline, when it has no effect whatsoever on the main timeline.

Money, wealth and status are other modes of influence and power that noticeably affect the choices and decisions of the player and Max throughout the game. The power of the Prescott family, a wealthy family in Arcadia Bay that has great influence over the school in which Max attends, and the authorities in which max if forced not to rely on when she discovers the immoral actions of the main heir to the Prescott wealth, Nathan Prescott. Nathan Prescott is the perfect example of a character whose choices are not his own. A boy with a deranged psyche who is manipulated by people without power in order to gain such power. Nathan Prescott does not have a moral code or standing, it is given to him by the others around him, mainly Mark Jefferson, a man who is the epitome of a psychopath in any form of the classic definition. He uses the wealth of the Prescotts and becomes the main antagonist of the plotline. This of course, in the eyes of the player, and in the eyes of Max, influences the choices made throughout the game. Max has to resort to vigilantism to uncover plots and immoral actions done by the antagonists, for their tight grip on law enforcement prevents any deep investigation.

Bullying and mental illness dictates the actions and choices of several of the main characters, and affect everyone in the story. Kate Marsh is a vulnerable character driven to attempt at suicide. It is up to you as a character to choose to stop that, and you find yourself constantly battling the hate within your dorm directed towards other characters. Victoria Chase happens to be the main character who incites the hate of others, A character that is found to be nice to anyone who talks to her directly, but is mean and vicious behind everyone's back, even to her friends. You find your classmates, and others indifferent to any and all forms of bullying, even with the obvious signs in the characters. The administration prides itself with its vigilance, with posters calling to “stop bullying” while characters underneath those posters are beaten to a pulp.

*Life is Strange* is an extraordinary game that brings up questions about life, our own emotions, reality, indecision, and decision. It's a game of choices and their consequences that you'll have to live with, and the trial and error that goes with it. It's something that can only be done in a game, the choices, the statistics on who chose what after the fact, the relationship built to a character on such a deep and emotional level that you end up not only relating to your character in some scenes, but becoming them. When you save, you feel unrelenting joy. When you lose, when the world spins out of control, you find yourself in tears, watching the world around you contort in terror without form. You only have the uncertain future to gaze into, and your past choices to see what made the present. You feel grief, you feel sorrow, and you're forced to move on in this medium, it's a linear path from start to end. In the end, though all that chaos and emotion, all you can really do is just gap in awe, and wonder, life really is strange.

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Student

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English 1A

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Devious Maids: A Real Class Act

          American culture has been molded and shaped by mass media, particularly film and television. Film and television responds to, and directs, how viewers perceive timely social issues as well as directly speak to progressive changes. Some of the most entertaining television shows require writing that will encourage stereotypes, challenge them, and allow them to continue playing a role in our society. Devious Maids, for example, is one of the shows that best embraces and addresses such stereotypes. The writers of Devious Maids made great effort to demonstrate the existence of social standards, and norms in regards to ethnicity, class, power and age. Hopefully the experiences the characters in the show face will not turn into a real life society trend, but rather bring awareness to harsh norms within the show.

One such social stereotype that is explored is the caste system in which minority characters are portrayed as servient to affluent characters. Devious Maids, which is set in Beverly Hills, California, focuses on the lives of specific maids working for wealthy homeowners. To no surprise, Devious Maids conforms to the social norm of maids belonging to a stereotypical race and ethnicity, where each maid is represented as Hispanic or Latino character: Rosie Falta, Carmen Luna, Zoila Diaz, Valentina Diaz, and Marisol Suarez. On the opposite end, each of their employers also happens to be of one other race: White. The show carries out race and ethnicity as a significant plot element in which only White Americans are portrayed as the upper-class living a luxurious and glamorous life. As a result, the white characters are the only population who display success, fame, and happiness while others are shown to have little to nothing, busting it for survival.

At the end of the first season, Marisol Suarez’s true identity is revealed: rather than being a maid, she is actually a lawyer working undercover on an investigation in hopes of solving who killed a maid in the neighborhood. Once the wealthy community learns that she is a financially stable Latina with a law degree and not a maid, they have a hard time coming to terms with her true identity. She is not a maid, but a successful and educated professional. It is hard for the affluent characters to fully understand that Marisol, too, could have a well-respected career that generates a substantial amount of money. The writers of the show generalize the affluent characters as viewing all persons of another race or ethnicity as a lower class with less education and profession of anything other than what is known as the help, thus speaking to the stereotype of the caste system.

This stereotype is continued throughout the rest of the show, as the affluent characters are depicted as being unable and unwilling to engage in tasks which could be depicted as those engaged in by the less affluent, minority characters. For example, as the seasons progress, a wealthy, White American socialite, Evelyn Powell befriends Marisol through random series of events. During their friendship, there is never an encounter where Evelyn doesn’t make a comment about the fact that Marisol actually has money and isn’t working as the help. Even when Evelyn faces marriage challenges, including denial of financial access, Marisol recommends that she finds a job. Evelyn states that if her friends see her working, it will be the end of everything. Thus, the writers continue to encourage the stereotype that working, or engaging in tasks which are similar to the ‘help’s tasks, lowers social standing.

Class, the is perhaps the most significant plot element in this TV series: if a character is not in the same circle of friends or the same class, they are treated significantly different. Evelyn is terrified to ever become of the “lower-class” and has always treated people “below” her as someone with less importance. Out of desperation, she decided to take a job from her new best friend, Marisol, but begged Marisol keep her employment a secret, not allowing anyone to find out. Evelyn, due to her prior social standing, had never worked in the past and chose to hide from a lot of her wealthy friends because she was scared of what they would say when they saw her working as “the help” at an upper-class mixer.

Next, the writers explore the ‘Cinderella’ stereotypes, where an individual is able to break free of the caste system and temporarily engage in activities which he or she would not have otherwise been able to, due their position in the class. For example, Zoila Diaz, a maid, is living in a home whose homeowner is out of the country for a year. Her new neighbor comes by to introduce himself and he automatically assumes that she is the homeowner because she just happened to be wearing the homeowner’s clothing – playing dress-up. She decides to go with it and she is instantly invited to several social events that prior to being perceived as Beverly Hills homeowner, she was never invited to before. Now that she is seen in a high class circle, she dresses the part and plays the part.

Later on, Zoila becomes set up on a blind date with Evelyn’s husband, Adrian Powell. When Evelyn sees her separated husband on a date with the help, she giggles and points out that she is in fact just a maid and not one to become upset about. She teases her husband that there is no reason to be jealous of this poor woman going on a date with her husband because it is more embarrassing for her husband to be seen out with the help than for her to be seen alone. Evelyn, an affluent character who is caught up in her own class struggles, makes it very clear that the upper class treats only equal class in an equal manner.

Along with class, comes power: the more money a person has – the more power they have. Power is depicted in many ways, but the most used example of power is that if someone can write a check to blackmail another person, they can and they will. This show portrays that no matter how smart or how hard you work, at the end of the day, it only matters if you have money…otherwise you are not as important as others and might only be able to go so far. This scenario is played out through the character of Genevieve Delatour. Genevieve Delatour is a well-liked socialite in the wealthy community is able to control the lives of others when they are not respecting her wishes. For example, when Genevieve’s friend Marisol started dated Genevieve’s ex-husband, she attempted to exert her power over Marisol. Marisol was unaware of who he was until Genevieve informed her and politely requested that she stop seeing him in respect of her feelings. When Marisol chose to continue pursuing him, Genevieve chose to blacklist Marisol and create random complications in her daily life. Genevieve’s ability to carry out this task was directly related to the power she posses in the community, power which was created by money and enforced by the caste system, as the class reinforced her ability to blacklist Marisol.

Prior to Evelyn’s funds being frozen, she Genevieve made it clear that she, as a consequence of her position in the class, was in charge. One of her famous lines from the show, and perhaps a line that best summarizes the class system, is the following:

I think what you people do is heroic. You wash clothes you can’t afford. You polish silver you will never dine with. You mop floors for people who don’t bother to learn your last names, and still you dare to dream of a better life. I am in awe of your determination to succeed in this great country of ours. That said, if you don’t stop screwing my husband, I’m going to have you deported. Comprende?

Finally, one last element of Devious Maids is age inequities and conformity with social norms. Carmen Luna is a maid who is in her late 30s’ and who has hopes and dreams of landing a successful singing career. However, she struggles to get signed ecause of her age. Yet, she doesn’t learn that her age is the primary factor causing rejection until her daughter moves into town for a few months and attempts to pursue the same dreams. Her daughter instantly gets noticed by several companies because of her voice, looks, and – most importantly – her youth. Carmen chose to go to one of her daughter’s auditions for a music video and a producer immediately told her that she was too and not what audiences would enjoy. This further pushes the stereotypes the show attempts to portray: one can only be successful if they fit in with the social norms society thinks is important.

Age is also something the upper-class characters hide by supporting plastic surgery, facials, spa days, rest and relaxation for the goal of keeping young and youthful appearance. Genevive never announces her real age when asked. She believes that no man will want to be with a single, old woman. She fears that the old do not have a chance at happiness.

As film and television becomes more of a part of our daily lives, and of our culture, it continues to use stereotypes in its themes and story arches. Devious Maids has become successful by attracting and keeping viewers by directly speaking to cultural and social stereotypes, and embracing them. The show depicts the cast system where the minority characters are treated as inferior to their affluent counterparts, as well as depicts age inequities and social norms. As entertaining as Devious Maids has proved to be, and the writer’s ability to address these stereotypes, the show encourage the current generalizations and stereotypes in our society and does little to dispel them.

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