

Barney miller essay example

[Sociology](#), [Women](#)



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Introduction

Walter White, Steve McGarrett, Gregory House and many others are amongst the most favorite fictional anti-heroes from the television series shown in today's 21st century. They are not heroes because they do not possess the traditional heroic characteristics like perfection, brilliance, strength, etc but they are not villains either because they are not evil, immoral and diabolical. Anti-heroes first look like very wicked, uncaring, selfish or immoral but as their stories progress, viewers get to learn how twisted their personalities are and what are the reasons behind it. They seem to pursue adverse actions but their hearts are good. They seek ways through which they can get rid of their bad behaviors and become good people. This is what attracts viewers the most; they find their own reflections in the anti-hero's complicated personalities. They do not follow rules but viewers still see goodness in them. Men like to be them and women like to be with them .

Stephen Garrett also argues that modern heroes in television programs are more conflicted and therefore more fascinating than their earlier counterparts. Gone are the days when viewers wanted heroes like Superman

that would fight for justice, truth and welfare of the people. Now such heroes seem boring to the current audience. They want anti-heroes who, despite doing many bad or mad things, are likable because their aim is to protect others, eliminate injustice or avenge wrong. They are humans who are motivated to reach their goals or attain happiness even if it means going outside their moral boundaries. If they are doing anything bad then they are justified for their actions .

The concept of anti-heroism became first visible in the comedy sitcom ‘ Barney Miller’ that ran on air from 1975 to 1982 and won several prestigious awards. Captain Barney Miller is a sensible sergeant working with his other counterparts and each of them has different kinds of personalities. Daily they deal with different crimes and personal issues. The series is almost entirely shot in the office of Captain Barney Miller .

- Analyzing motives of criminals rather than solving the mystery

The series was more about the characteristics and motives of the criminals rather than how they detectives solved the cases. In the episodes Quarantine, part one and part two from season three the office of Barney Miller is put under Quarantine because of having a suspect who was infected with smallpox. All the workers are forced to spend the night at the police station. A criminal named Marty is arrested, who has been arrested several times before for committing crimes and who is also gay. He along with his partner is arrested for crimes such as stealing, fraud, etc. Although Marty is a criminal but he is still liked by the officers at the station except for Wojo. Wojo feels uncomfortable in the presence of Marty; however, because of spending time together at the station with Marty, he becomes friendlier to

him. Detective Wojo is shown to go through a personal change that reflects the transformation in thinking styles the audience at that time .

- Emotional insight into all of the major characters

Throughout the 173 episodes, the characters of Barney Miller underwent through lots of personality changes and that was the main reason why the audience loved this sitcom. One of the detectives like Sgt. Arthur Dietrich was a man who had huge knowledge and from whom other counterparts were really annoyed; however, later on they accepted the fact that Det. Arthur's knowledge proved to be very useful in solving few cases and so Det. Arthur continued to develop friendlier relations with his other co-workers instead of outsmarting them in different ways.

- Developing emotional bond between audience and show

The audience was never shown in any episode that the characters of Barney Miller were perfect in every way; in fact they portrayed the pictures of real people dealing with real life situation. The crew of this series showed people how the detective's personal lives issues affected their professional lives. People developed emotional bonds with these characters as they saw their own reflection in them. Moreover, the show was never a slow-moving, serious and boring but it was humorous; realizing people that problems need to be dealt with team work and positivity.

- Body Paragraph #2: Steve McGarrett

Steve McGarrett, from Hawaii-five-o, is another anti-hero much loved by the audience. Hawaii-five-o tells a tale about a Lieutenant Commander Steven 'Steve' McGarrett whose family has been part of United States Navy. In the show Steve searches the murderers (Wo Fat) of his parents and tries to

punish them severely. Steve also has a partner whose name is Detective Sergeant Danny Williams.

- Building hostility between McGarrett and various crime lords

Steve McGarrett is no merciful cop; in fact, he has great hostility towards his enemies. McGarrett is a man of great qualities because of his training at the Navy SEALs. He is an athletic man with great strength and pain tolerance that is why he easily fights harshly with the criminals. Besides that, Steve is an intelligent man who can work on any type of technology and with any type of firearms.

- Intricate crime plots for audience to consider

Although Steve is a military guy who fights crimes on daily basis but there are a lot of flaws in his personality; this is what brings him closer to every man in today's society. For example, the show Hawaii-five-o has a scene in which McGarrett has captured a criminal, Sang Min, from whom he is extracting some important information. Although the beating he gets from the cops is normal but what Steve does with him next is quite disturbing; he captured Sang Min's family and tortures them so that the criminal could provide the needed information. Obviously, Steve is not going to kill his family but he has no problem risking the family in a dangerous situation just to extract information. This is a typical act shown by an anti-hero; in which he is willing to be cruel in order to fulfill his duty.

- Extension of stories across several episodes to build interest

Hawaii-five-o is build around cases related to the national security breaches or intelligence because of Hawaii's location in the Pacific Ocean, which is very important strategically. Each case in this show is completed in two or

three episodes and this is what keeps the audience interested in the show. However, Steve main aim is to capture Wo Fat, who is a Chinese agent and who killed Steve's parents. Wo Fat abhors United States and so is always looking for ways to harm the country.

- Body Paragraph #3: Alfred Hitchcock Presents

- “Lamb to the Slaughter” – the anti-heroine

One of the most popular episodes from the Alfred Hitchcock Presents is the ‘Lamb to the Slaughter’. It was directed by Sir Alfred Hitchcock along with Roald Dahl. It is about an ordinary wife Mary, played by Barbara Bel Geddes, who murdered her husband and tried to get away with it. The twist in this episode was that this ordinary Mary was a much devoted and caring human being but there came a point when she could not tolerate her heartless, selfish husband and killed him to end her agony. The audience felt sympathetic for the poor Mary who suffered a lot and supported her decision to murder her husband. She was an anti-heroine who was tortured often by her husband and when he finally told her that he is divorcing because he is involved in somebody else even after knowing that Mary is pregnant. That is why the audience considers Mary's actions fair .

- “Revenge” – emotional insight into anger and revenge

Revenge is the first episode of the Alfred Hitchcock Presents that got instant popularity because he focused on issues that were not discussed in public in those times. Ralph Meeker plays Carl Spann and Vera Miles plays Elsa Spann in this episode. They live happily in their house in California; hence, the audience suspected that something unfortunate is about to happen that will affect their happily married life. One day Carl came from work and found

furniture scattered everywhere in the house and his wife being cynical. When he asked her, Elsa told her that a stranger broke into their house and assaulted her. Carl gives up his job to take care of her wife who was in great shock. However, one day when they were out on a drive, Elsa saw her assaulter and quickly told Carl about him. Carl became instantly angry when he saw that man; he went up to him and killed him. This is where the episode ends, leaving the audience in great awe .

- “ Don’t Come Back Alive” – financial worries and anxieties that motivate a couple to stage insurance fraud

Sometimes the ills of the society can force ordinary people to commit crimes that they never imagined that would commit. Similarly, in the Alfred Hitchcock Presents episode of Don’t come back alive, it is shown that a couple who is soon going to reach retirement are worried about their finances. In order to get more money, they decide to fraud their insurance company. Frank suggests that his wife Mildred should disappear for seven years so that he can declare her dead and claim the amount of money from the insurance company. The company has a detective who thinks that Frank killed Mildred and hid her body somewhere. So he investigates the case and search for Mildred’s body. The twist in this story is when Mildred appears after seven years, she is totally changed and does not want to live with Frank anymore. All she wants is the money. Frank, being enraged by Mildred’s actions, kills her and buries her body in the garden. Later on, the episode leads to an end which suggests that the detective found out the truth and handover Frank to the police. In every episode of Alfred Hitchcock Presents, there is one thing certain, which is that crime does not pay .

Conclusion

Anti-heroes seem to have acquired a special place in the hearts of people. They have become so addictive because viewers cannot help but crave to know what is happening in their lives. They want to know how these ordinary men or women fight with their selfish desires and become good people. Anti-heroes are much more fun than the traditional heroes that seem to be too boring .

However, anti-heroes seem to be too liberal because they abhor the societal expectations and constraints imposed on them. Fewer restrictions on content today mean that realism is elevated. The impact it has on the minds of people is far too dangerous because people are encouraged to walk on risky paths that can later cause them great deal of trouble. It is highly important to show that crimes cannot be hidden for long and that every criminal suffers for the crimes committed in one way or another. I respond that the power of suggestion in earlier programming can convey the same themes .

With the passage of time, people of this era have developed different kinds of moral issues and due to the liberty given to the media these issues are highly depicted in the television shows. People see these shows with great interest because they see their own reflection in the characters of the show. Today's shows have more moral complexity, with less of the black-and-white element in plots. I respond that there is plenty of room for the morally gritty in all of the examples I present.

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