

The modern family essay



In today's society the image of the family structure has drastically evolved from the traditional values of the 20th century in order to adapt to the social and economic influences that are shaping the 21st century. The sitcom on ABC, "Modern Family" satirizes the issues that families in America face in the 21st century. Compared to the traditions, values and beliefs that shaped the traditional family in the 20th century, family structures today are tremendously diverse. In the 20th century the "ideal" family had a mother, father, and a little boy and girl.

The father was the bread winner for the family while the mother took care of the house and the children. The father was the head of his house and his word was law while women had very little say in decisions. The family structure has radically progressed to take on a new look in today's day and age. There are "stay at home" dads while the women have acquired jobs and there are many single-parent families as well. Many social and economic influences are responsible for the evolution of families as we know them today.

Gay marriage, interracial marriage, single-parent families, and the practice of adopting foreign babies have influenced the creation of the modern family. Gay marriage has been an extremely controversial issue in the latter part of the 20th century and become even more contested and accepted in the 21st century. In the 20th century being homosexual was not tolerated and if one was gay, they kept it to themselves. However, in the present society being gay has become accepted and gay marriages are beginning to become the norm. Same sex marriages have led to families through adoption.

This is a controversial issue because it is debated whether or not homosexuals should be able to raise a family. Interracial marriage in the 20th century was basically forbidden, yet today's society has begun to accept these marriages as a normal thing. Single-parent families were extremely rare in the traditional family structure, nevertheless it is common for the parents to divorce and is not frowned upon like it was in the 19th century. Adopting foreign children has become something of a fad in America's culture today with famous celebrities setting the example. All of these important social issues have fashioned the family structure in the 21st century and the sitcom "Modern Family" attempts to address these issues through both satirizing them and taking a more serious tone with them as well.

Economic influences have played an important role in changing the traditional family. While in the past the husband went to work while the mother stayed home to tend to the house and children, today's society has seen somewhat of a flip flop in these roles. More women are going back to college and getting their degrees so that they can compete with their male counterparts in the workforce. Another economic issue influencing the modern family is that both parents are beginning to get jobs, leaving the household void of an adult and the kid's home alone. Children are beginning to grow up on their own without the constant presence of their parents to help raise them because both of them are forced to work. While influencing the adaptation of the family, economic influences have not played as big a part as the social changes in today's society have because social changes have a more direct impact on the family structure.

“ Modern Family” addresses some of these important social and economic influences by using satire and stereotypes to portray an accurate image of what the “ average” family has become. The show is based around 3 separate families that are all related by one person or another. There is the typical family with a husband, wife, and three kids. However there are also two gay men that have an oriental baby they adopted and another family where the husband is much older than his “ gold-digger” wife and her child. The show centers on the everyday life’s of these families and the challenges that one might expect them to face. Through using stereotypes of gender, race, age, homosexuals, and families “ Modern Family” conveys the social and economic issues that have formed the family structure in the 21st century.

Gender has long been a topic of controversy in the family, debating how large of a role the women should have in the household. In the show, the two wives’, Claire and Gloria, are both drastically different. While Claire is a typical urban mother who has 3 kids and a husband her own age, Gloria is an immigrant from Columbia and is married to a man who is much older than her and has a child from a previous marriage. “ Modern Family” satirizes the role that each wife plays in her respected household.

Gloria is portrayed as the typical gold-digger wife that is unaware to American customs and traditions while Claire is shown as being in charge of her home and an authority figure. For instance Claire has control over Phil, her husband. She forces him to do some of her dirty deeds such as helping her run for office in the city council. This satirizes the typical stereotype of the 20th century when the husband was seen as the head of the household

and was the commanding figure. Instead of being portrayed as an authority symbol, Phil is seen as a goofy, clueless dad who wouldn't be able to tie his shoes if it weren't for his wife, Claire. It is ironic because the husband is being shown as the foolish one while the wife is clearly the sensible and rational one.

Modern Family also chooses to stereotype gender further with the family of Jay, Gloria and their child Manny. Jay is a rich business man while Gloria is immigrant from Columbia and much younger than him as well. Gloria fits the label of a gold-digger and this is satirized by the way she acts around her husband, Jay and the other actors. In society today women can be labeled as gold-diggers when they date or marry older, wealthy men.

Race had been a big topic of controversy regarding families in the 20th century. However in the 21st century interracial marriages and relationships have been generally accepted more frequently. Modern Family attempts to address the controversy of race in marriages with Jay and Gloria who are married. In one episode Claire calls her father, Jay out on why he married Gloria.

The dispute over gay marriage is also satirized and stereotyped in Modern Family. Mitchell and Cameron are two gay men who live together and have adopted a Vietnamese baby. Mitchell is shown as the more masculine of the two and this can upset Cameron who is more sentimental and feminine in his character. In reality gay couples are stereotyped as to who wears the pants in the relationship. In the past, the male always was in charge; however with

the increase in gay couples there is usually one who is manlier than the other.

The show makes fun of this in different ways. Sometimes Cameron will be shown as feminine because he always dresses up their adopted daughter, Lilly, in ridiculous costumes. In different scenes still he is shown as more girly because he is very sentimental and emotional. Jay is Mitchell's dad and criticizes Cameron for always being so girly and Cameron starts to cry. This is parodying the stereotype that all gay men are sentimental and act like women. The gay couple is also depicted to seem very quarrelsome to represent something a teenage couple. This is to satirize the relationship that teenagers have and stereotype homosexual couples.

Finally families are stereotyped in this show to show what the average American family is thought to be. The Dunphy family consists of Claire and Phil and their children Luke, Hailey, and Alex. The family is seen as chaotic and problem-filled at times but this is mocking the stereotype that the American family has gotten: unorganized and rebellious at times but also resilient and loving. Often during the show there will be nasty fights between Claire and her daughter Hailey but in the end they make up and show how much they love each other.

Furthermore the Dunphy family is portrayed as chaotic to address the stereotype that American families are crazy and out of control. In one episode Phil tears the Christmas tree down because the kids won't tell him and Claire who was smoking cigarettes in the house. It looks like Christmas is ruined but the family comes together and everyone makes up with each

other. In reality most American families do not represent the Dunphy family and that is what makes this family so ironic.

Modern Family attempts to show reality in order to mock the stereotypes that have become associated with the new family structure. Through the use of carefully scripted screenplay and dialogue the show parodies many of the controversial issues in society. Modern Family emphasizes how the idea and values of the family in America has evolved. In the past the family was seen as organized around the father and the children were to obey their parents. However in the 21st century families are more disorganized and there is a more equal distribution of power through them.