

*Stereotypes in 1920s
America*



An Introduction

The 1920s were a period dedicated towards celebration after the great war in which dramatic change occurred concerning stereotypes within society.

During the great war, African Americans were treated as somewhat equal, however, once the war ended it was hard for them to return to a society where they were stereotypes characterized them as opposites.

The urbanisation of major cities such as New York and Chicago began to take place at accelerated rates since more people started to migrate towards cities contributing to the further growth of them.



Racial Stereotypes

The racial stereotypes that exist now were created by white people who wanted to entertain people with something funny, so they came up with a comedic show that discriminated the African race and created the 'black stereotype' that is still around today.

The first 'Ham and Sam The Minstrel Team' shows were performed in 1830s New York by white performers with blackened faces (most used burnt cork or shoe polish) and tattered clothing who imitated enslaved Africans on the Southern plantations.

The stereotypes from this show carried on through the years and became the truth to many people who knew no better. This stereotype was on going all through the 1920s, so black people were offered less jobs and less pay.

These performances characterized Africans as lazy, ignorant, superstitious, and prone to thievery and cowardice. Thomas Dartmouth Rice made the first famous blackface character, "Jim Crow" in 1830. By 1845, the popularity of the minstrel had spawned an entertainment industry, manufacturing songs and sheet music, makeup, costumes, as well as a ready-set of stereotypes upon which to build new performances.



Social Stereotypes

The year 1920 was a very changing age, with the stereotypes of women staying at home and raising the children and men handle business and politics. When the Nineteenth Amendment passed in 1920, women got the right to vote, but the widespread stereotype of women only concerning themselves with home, children, and religion. The social stereotype of women staying at home has only recently been fading, replacing it with the idea that women can be independent. In the 1920's language was another thing that had either changed or evolved to the times, people would swear in the home around their family and considered it rude to do in front of others.

But this era had evolved to one of 'partying', so naturally this particular stereotype was changed and people no longer considered it strange to swear in public.

The fashion of women changed slightly as well, dresses became shorter and shorts were starting to be introduced to both genders. The stereotypes that came from clothing changes included women half expected to wear something short. Men were expected to be intelligent and take on harder work than women, taking care of the big decisions and political matters.



Gender Stereotypes

Before the Great War, many expectations were set upon women regarding their appearance and behaviour. Women were expected to stay in the house, take care of the children, cook, clean etc. However, after the men went off to war large numbers of women were recruited into jobs that were previously occupied by men who had gone to fight in the war. With the additional new jobs that were created as part of the war effort, the number of employed women in the workforce drastically increased from 23.6% to 46.7%.

Nearing the end of 1918, the men returned home from war and women were either sacked to make room for the returning soldiers or continued to work alongside the men but with lower wages. In the early 1920s men were expected to work and provide for their families. Despite men being the authoritative figure of a household, women spoke up about their rights and began to get more involved in politics allowing women the right to suffrage. Although some women in the 1920s supported more conservative and traditional lifestyles

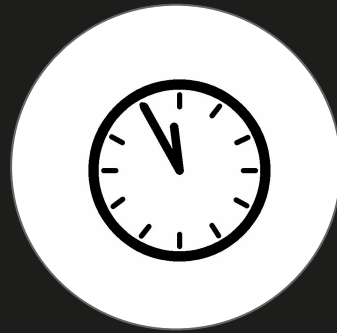
like previous generations, an abundance of women were able to escape many struggles and by shifting the gender roles and expectations set for society at the time. The 1920s became a decade where many people rejected traditional standards, indulged in new styles of clothing and dancing and defied prohibition. New styles were introduced including skirts raised to the knees, long scarves, beaded sleeveless dresses inspired by flappers, bobbed hair, stockings below the knees, and hats.



Cultural Stereotypes

The 1920s was a progressive decade characterised by economic prosperity, leisure, consumerism and significant shifts away from traditionalism. As large masses of people relocated to cities, society dramatically changed compared to rural locations. This urban culture became the stereotypical symbol of the decade. By 1920 over 50% of the population lived in urban areas such as New York and Chicago. When the automobile was first invented, it was only possessed by upper-class society. However, in 1908, the Ford Motor Company produced a more affordable vehicle available to middle and lower-class Americans. The Ford model T and similar variations allowed middle and lower-class society to travel farther distances.

This led to the creation of significant industries such as gas stations, hotels and repair services. Affordable automobiles created a whole new way of life for Americans. The consumption of alcohol became a significant part of American culture in the 1920s. Although the prohibition of alcohol came into effect in 1920, laws were not readily enforced, and often police officers were bribed to disregard the production of alcohol. Throughout the 1920s, alcohol was readily available through the black market, illegal bars called speakeasies, and other means. One of the most significant icons of urban culture in the 1920s is the flapper, a young woman who challenged the morals of traditionalism instilled amongst society. They often smoke, drank and danced in public settings. Cut their hair in bobbed hairstyles and wore beaded form-fitting clothes. This urban culture became the stereotypical symbol of the decade.



thank you

For Watching