
The Gender Inequality Issues Depicted in “The Queen’s Gambit (2020) Serial Movie by Scott Frank

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Abstract: Gender discrimination refers to the unfair treatment of individuals based on their sex and often occurs in various aspects of social life, including the workplace, education, and media. The film **The Queen's Gambit** portrays the journey of a female chess player, Beth Harmon, who faces numerous challenges in a male-dominated world. This article explores the theme of gender discrimination depicted in the film and analyzes how the representation of Beth Harmon reflects the real-life experiences of women in traditionally male-dominated fields. Using a critical analysis approach, this study identifies and evaluates the different forms of discrimination faced by Beth, both structural and interpersonal, and their impact on character development and narrative. Findings indicate that while Beth Harmon manages to overcome gender barriers to achieve success, the film still reflects and highlights the systemic challenges faced by women in competitive fields. This article contributes to the understanding of gender dynamics in the context of popular media and offers insights into how gender representation in film can influence public perceptions and social norms.

Keywords: Gender Discrimination, *The Queen's Gambit*, Gender Representation, Film, Chess, Social Norms

1. INTRODUCTION

The representation of women in media has been a critical subject in academic discourse, with studies consistently demonstrating how women are often marginalized or stereotyped in film and television. **The Queen's Gambit**, a Netflix miniseries set in the 1960s, highlights these challenges through the story of Beth Harmon, a female chess prodigy navigating a male-dominated sport. This research examines the portrayal of gender discrimination in the series and its implications on societal perceptions of women in traditionally male domains.

Beth Harmon’s journey is a reflection of the systemic barriers that women face, particularly in fields that are culturally or historically associated with male dominance. By analyzing key scenes through Ferdinand de Saussure’s semiotic framework, this study explores the implicit and explicit forms of gender discrimination depicted in the series.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous studies have addressed gender discrimination in various media, particularly in sports and film narratives. For example, Ardiansyah (2020) highlights the marginalization of women in chess as depicted in **The Queen’s Gambit**. Similarly,

Rusdiani and Malau (2022) analyze the normalization of gender stereotypes through Barthes' semiotic approach. These studies provide a foundation for understanding how media perpetuates and challenges societal norms regarding gender roles.

The current study builds upon this scholarship by focusing on semiotic analysis to examine gender inequality in **The Queen's Gambit**. The research investigates both structural and interpersonal discrimination, emphasizing how these elements shape Beth Harmon's character development and the narrative.

3. METHODOLOGY

This research employs a qualitative approach with semiotic analysis as the primary method. Ferdinand de Saussure's theory of signifiers and signifieds is used to identify and interpret scenes that depict gender discrimination. Data is collected through scene observations and documentation from the series **The Queen's Gambit** (2020). Key scenes are analyzed to determine the various forms of discrimination faced by Beth Harmon, including marginalization, stereotyping, and subordination.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of **The Queen's Gambit** reveals multiple instances of gender discrimination experienced by Beth Harmon. These include:

Scene 1 [00:05:30 - Episode 1]

Beth asks Mr. Shaibel to teach her chess, but he dismisses her saying, 'Girls do not play chess.' This reflects the stereotype that women are not fit for intellectual pursuits.

Scene 2 [00:20:10 - Episode 2]

Beth's mother undermines her chess ambition by saying, 'The only girls your age who work are colored.' This scene highlights racial and gender bias simultaneously.

Scene 3 [00:33:15 - Episode 2]

The tournament administrator doubts Beth's abilities, stating, 'We don't have a women's section.' This marginalization excludes women from competitive participation.

Scene 4 [00:12:40 - Episode 3]

Benny Watts condescendingly compares Beth to a male prodigy, saying, 'Reshevsky was doing this younger than you, little girl.' This reflects how women's achievements are constantly belittled.

Scene 5 [00:25:50 - Episode 3]

During an interview, Beth complains, 'They didn't write about my game, only that I'm a girl.' The media emphasizes her gender over her skills.

Scene 6 [00:15:45 - Episode 4]

A Russian player mocks Beth in the elevator, saying, 'She doesn't always watch her back. Like all women.' This reinforces gender-based assumptions of weakness.

Scene 7 [00:41:30 - Episode 7]

Commentators dismiss Beth's abilities, stating, 'The only unusual thing about her is her sex.' This trivializes her success based solely on her gender.

Despite these challenges, Beth's resilience and determination allow her to break barriers and challenge gender norms. Her success serves as a critique of the systemic biases that limit women's opportunities in male-dominated fields.

5. CONCLUSION

The Queen's Gambit portrays the systemic challenges women face in male-dominated spaces through the journey of Beth Harmon. The series highlights various forms of gender discrimination, including marginalization, stereotyping, and subordination, while also showcasing Beth's ability to overcome these obstacles through her talent and perseverance.

This study contributes to the understanding of gender representation in media and underscores the importance of challenging societal norms that perpetuate inequality. Future research could explore similar themes in other films or series to broaden the discussion on gender discrimination in media.

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