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Sex and the City: A Promotion of Modern American Feminism

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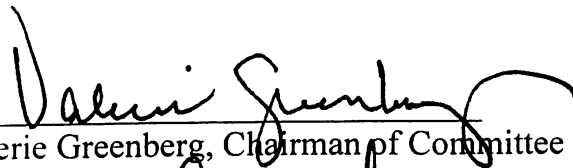
SEX AND THE CITY: A PROMOTION OF MODERN AMERICAN FEMINISM

A Thesis

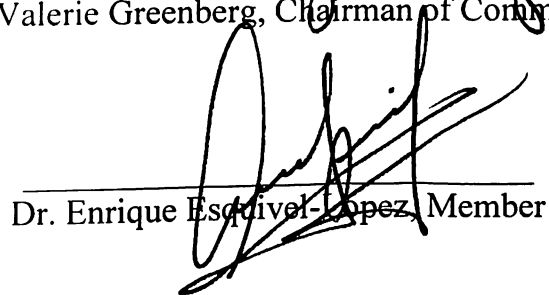
by

CAMERON MICHAEL TUFINO

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SEX AND THE CITY: A PROMOTION OF MODERN AMERICAN FEMINISM

A Thesis

by

CAMERON MICHAEL TUFINO

Presented to the Graduate Faculty of

University of the Incarnate Word

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

May 2012

Major Subject: Media Studies

"I am someone *who is looking for love.*

Real love.

*Ridiculous, inconvenient, consuming,
can't-live-without-each-other* **love.**

- *Carrie*



Dedication & Acknowledgements

Well, here it is, a moment of reflection where I can sit down with a large Iced Vanilla Coffee and consider... you. Ya know, if someone told me that day I began at Incarnate Word I would be graduating with my Masters “6 whole years”(Lady GaGa, You & I) later...I wouldn't have believed them. But here I am. And there are many amazing people I'd like say “thank you” to.

To my Mother, JoAnn, you are a woman of magnificent qualities. I think of your beauty, your intelligence, your courage, your love...I couldn't ask for a better Mother.

To my Father, Carlos, there are so many moments when I catch myself realizing: I am my father's son. You've been the most incredible support, listener, and inspiration a son could ask for.

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To the 40 female participants of my *Sex and the City* survey, thank you for engaging in the dialogue of my study. Your voices were important to me...and they are powerful and beautiful.

To my Family, I love each and every single one of you.

Arianna, Sarah, Blanca, my Karebear, Tonantzin, Roxann, Hannah Leigh, Brittany, Abigail, Magda, Elise, Christina, Krysta, and most essentially, Hannah, you all are the loves of my life. You're just like the women of *Sex and the City* in some way: strong, beautiful, amazing, intelligent. and simply stunning. I am so happy to have each and every 'single' one of you in my life.

And Finally, this thesis is dedicated to my Brother, Christopher Aaron Tufino. Someday, Chris, I hope we will be together having our *Sex and the City* marathon, just like we planned.

Love,

Cameron Michael Tufino

ABSTRACT

Sex and the City: A Promotion of Modern American Feminism

Cameron Michael Tufino, B.A. University of the Incarnate Word

The television series *Sex and the City* (*SATC*), has left a significant impact on American society. The show displays this revelation: American women today have many established cultures of equal worth in male dominated discourses. This thesis explains how the shows narrative represents and expands feminist ideology in America. By modernizing feminist discourses, *SATC* challenges televisual female representation on subject matters including motherhood, sexuality, marriage, gender identity, and family. Investigating its four protagonists – Carrie, Charlotte, Miranda, and Samantha – demonstrates how the narrative contributed to the social movement of feminism. Furthermore, with analyzing its construction and display since the show began airing, an evaluation of *SATC*'s realistic influence on American women may be considered.

Key Terms: culture, women, feminism, gender identity, relationships, sexuality, family, first wave feminism, second wave feminism, third wave feminism, marriage, fashion, television history, HBO, *Sex and the City*, Carrie Bradshaw, Charlotte York, Miranda Hobbes, Samantha Jones

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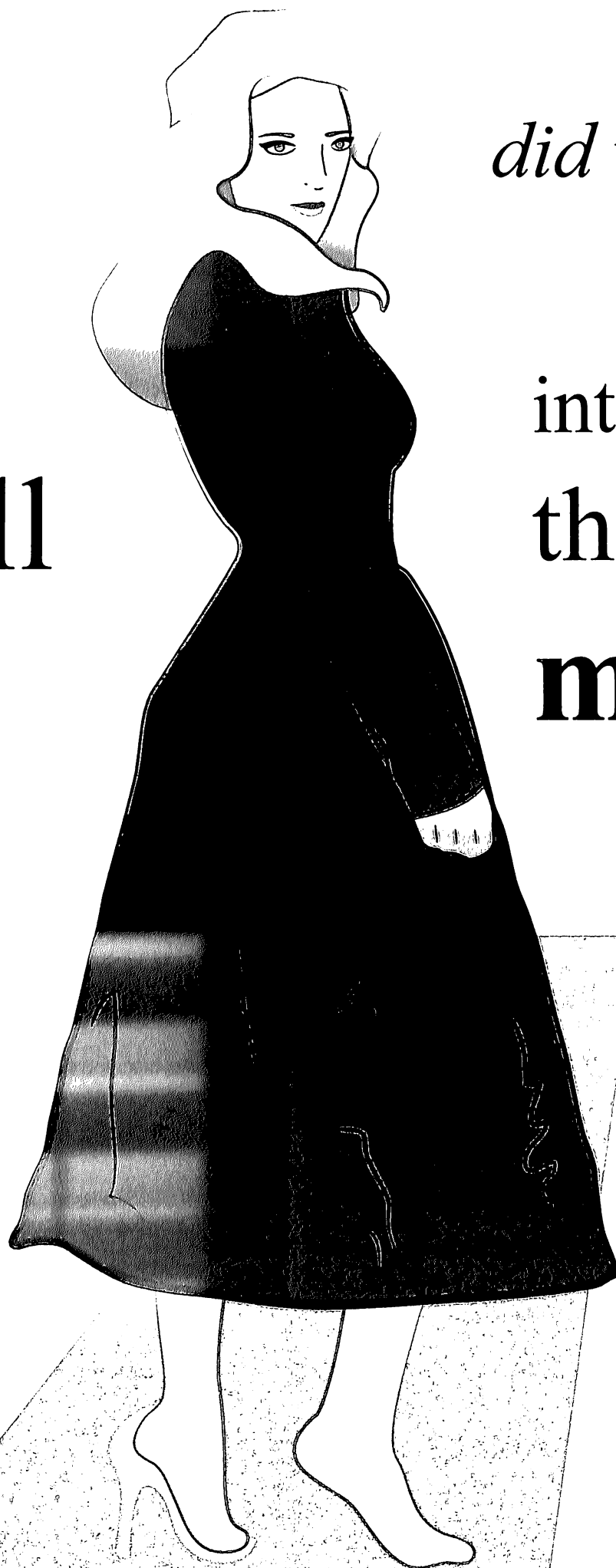
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“How
the **hell**

did we get

into
this
mess?”

- Carrie



Introduction

In *Sex and the City*'s first scene, a woman through voice over narration tells a story. She narrates about an English woman just arriving to New York City. Promising ventures are at hand in her new environment. She meets one of the city's most handsome bachelors. So far, the narration reminds one of fairy-tales. The woman has fallen deeply in love, and experiences magical moments that only conjure from true love. However, her handsome companion decides not to call her back in upcoming days; those days turn into weeks. Finally, she realizes this "perfect" man shall never call again. This tale ends with a heart-broken woman left hurt and alone. Did she cause this turn of events in their relationship? The story ends with the disparaged woman sharing coffee and telling a girlfriend (the voice over narrator) of such feminine wrongdoing. And finally, the camera reveals the narrator. The beautiful woman, smoking a cigarette and listening to her troubled girlfriend's circumstance, shows no sign of surprise.

Upon its debut in 1998, the HBO series *Sex and the City* (SATC) delivered a new **constructionist approach**¹ to American television with a bold protagonist four decades in the making. Carrie Bradshaw is the woman narrating the unjust story. Carrie (played by Sarah Jessica Parker) works as a "sex columnist" in New York City. Her column's narrative revolves around Carrie and her three girlfriends dating lives. She discusses and examines not just literal sex, but many ideological differences between genders. The column works as more than entertainment in creator Darren Star's fictional world, for it considers the criticism of female sexuality, oppression of women, and the distance women are from equality in modern times. In this series, Carrie and her friends do not search for solution to female inequalities; they become opinion leaders and activists for real American women in discovering the solution.

Sex and the City exemplify how television impacts society. In the pilot (first) episode "Sex and the City," Carrie bluntly asks, "How the hell did we get into this mess?" (1:12). A

profound question she raises indeed to consider in a sexist nation which underwent several waves of the American feminist movement. Not only is she commenting on her own discourse, but she is looking at the viewers and wants them to consider an answer. Candace Bushnell, original author of the *New York Observer* column which began “in the fall of 1994” (Bushnell, IX) and later became her anthology of columns asks a different question: “why are we still single” (IX)? The book offers narrowed perspectives that leave the audience associating their thoughts to that very question. Through the transformation – column to book to television show – of this narrative, *SATC* journeyed to more expansive themes, expanding the forum of questions relating to female paradigms.

The many questions from Carrie depicted in its episodes challenge female representation. Historically, representations of women in the media apply gender-biased positions, consistently favoring men. Topics concerning female representation in the media include sexuality, motherhood, career world, friendship and family. Carrie, through **voice-over narration**², chronicles each episode. These 23-44 minute episodes depict the lives of four women in collective and individualistic capacity. Along with Carrie, the conservative Charlotte York, durable Miranda Hobbes, and promiscuous Samantha Jones project diversified points of view indicating how *SATC*’s discourse presents separate female identities. This storyline **quest**³ links the content of *SATC* to the American feminist movement.

Assumptions exist within the subject of men and women’s balance in society. Gerda Lerner argues in her book, *The Creation of Feminist Consciousness: From the Middle Ages to Eighteen-seventy*, men procure a higher political status. They are “‘naturally superior’, stronger, and more rational, therefore designed to be dominant.” Such a discourse “follows that men are political citizens and responsible for and represented the polity.” She concludes women in this

male dominated reality naturally weaker and “inferior in intellect and rational capacities, unstable emotionally and therefore incapable of political participation.”(4) Women take no interaction in the political world. Hence, small female impact contributed to history.

Lerner notes such beliefs never found incorporation in natural or societal law. Historians located “the development of feminist consciousness in the 19th century, coinciding with and manifested through the development of a political woman’s rights movement” (Lerner 14). However, Lerner also notes women participated in the imbalance. “In the period when written History was being created, women already lived under conditions of patriarchy, their roles, their public behavior and their sexual and reproductive lives defined by men or male-dominated institutions” (Lerner 249). Only in the late 18th century did women begin impacting history. Efforts contributed from women to establish rightful equality created interesting discourses.

Multiple definitions of feminism circulate in American society. Common attributes lie in word usage, yet no agreeable definition may be truthfully expressed. Dependent elements such as culture, socio-economic status, and location create individualistic meanings among people. Estelle B. Freedman’s book, No Turning Back: The History of Feminism and the Future of Women, offers a definition fitted to American society. She writes:

Feminism is a belief that women and men are inherently of equal worth. Because most societies privilege men as a group, social movements are necessary to achieve equality between women and men, with the understanding that gender always intersects with other social hierarchies (7).

Freedman’s definition proposes any type of contribution, which equalizes women in society, conveys activism. For change to proceed, the people of today must act in this social movement. Contributing to social movements usually mean “people marching in the streets or

rallying around political candidates. but it may also mean individual participation, such as enrolling in a women's studies class or engaging in artistic or literary creativity that fosters social change" (8) Accordingly, *SATC*'s many "authors" engage in the feminist social movement. And without historical feminist writers, theorists and activists who came before, *SATC*'s opportunity to impact society would be limited.

Theorist Charlotte Perkins Gilman serves as an example of contributing to America's feminist social movement. A writer of the early twentieth century, whose work features the "utopian novel" (Freedman 68) *Herland*⁴ (1915), she interpreted "an all-female world that was close to nature, balanced, and nurturing, in contrast to men's violence, competition, and jealousy" (69). The depiction of what Gilman saw as gender difference proved innovating. Influence from such feministic works generated young American radicals of the day, who "chained themselves to the White House fence and survived hunger strikes in jail" (82). Such activism found results in 1920 when the Nineteenth Amendment passed, and the National Woman Suffrage Association "confined almost all of its activities to gaining the vote for women" (Tong 23). By possessing voting rights, the fight for equality seemed over. However, that fight had only just begun.

After forty years since achieving voting rights, the generation of the 1960s sought after more liberation, beginning the second wave of feminism in America. "In order to be fully liberated, women need economic opportunities and sexual freedoms as well as civil liberties" (23). Half-way through the decade, organizations formed such as the Women's International Conspiracy of Hell (WITCH) to "increase women's consciousness about female oppression" (24). Even with efforts growing, gender equality maintained little accomplishment. Women's rights still offered little change among the general U.S. population.

To confirm the little change of gender equality in America during the prominent second wave feminist era, one may look at the televisual discourses of women. Generalizations of female roles in society depicted on television limited the expansion of gender equality. An either-or existence surrounded women in television's discourse. Beginning as causalities to a "stay-at-home-mother" (Kutulas 51) and eventually disassociating the role completely into career-oriented women, the diversity of female representation during the second wave of feminism experiences backlash in not properly showcasing women's diversified role. Third wave feminism, however, broke characteristic flaws of female depiction, and expanded roles for women. *SATC*'s episodes were created and originally aired at a critical change in third wave feminism.

Kristin Rowe-Finkbeiner argues in her chapter "Signs of the Times: Defining the Third Wave" of her book, The F Word: Feminism in Jeopardy, "real social change is achieved indirectly through cultural action, or simply carried out through pop-culture twists and transformations, instead of through an overtly political, electoral, and legislative agenda" (88). Rowe-Finkbeiner's argument of pop-culture's ability to actualize social change helps to explain the impact of *SATC*'s discourse on society.

Sex and the City abided by and broke many rules in its representation. The semiotics, the "general approach to the study of signs in culture, and of culture as a sort of 'language'" (Hall 36), varied the perception of women by challenging the televisual representations of gender aided from the feminist social movement, which now appear as ancient and outdated. As Julie D'Acci suggests in her article "Television, Representation AND Gender," television creators "[tried] try to unleash the multiplicities in gender that are bound up in the conventional binaries of male/female, masculinity/femininity, man/woman" (380). *SATC*'s four leading protagonists

support D'Acci's assertion that "innumerable possibilities for individuals and for relationships" (380) emerge through the lens of theory.

Feminist analysis of representations uniquely positions television in an important role to changing the way people perceive ideas of women. Rosemarie Buikema suggests "feminist analysis of representations makes use of the tools of semiotics" (80). She argues: "In short, if a boy or a girl has had the opportunity to of being someone, she/he has been gendered via the interpretative frames of symbolic order, that is, the functioning of discursive and visual signs" (80). These gender differences are "historically constituted" and are "fixed for a determined period and place" (81). Feminist analysis, according to Buikema, strives to deconstruct the relationship of signifier and signified, with potential for new relations and understanding of gender discourses being obtained. In conjunction with this feminist analysis, *SATC*'s narrative actively deconstructs the discourses presented of women in the past, and pushes for the expansion of female roles. Each woman presented in *SATC* springs from different perspectives, and that enables semiotic diversity in female representation.

Different identification exists in *Sex and the City*'s four leads, often conveying distinct messages regarding female sexuality. The shows "interest in female sexuality, the very aspect that connects the show to a history of single women, is also the feature of the show that connects it to a different, and at times competing, way of representing sexuality and liberation" (Gerhard 41). As Gill notes, "the particular mix of styles and their codes of sexual behavior are characterized by an attitude that places emphasis upon sexual freedom but shies away from vulgarity and poor taste – profoundly classed attributions" (246). Thus, "many critics and viewers initially believed that the sex talk was the aspect of the show that was most innovative and had the most potential to disrupt confining gender constructions" (Gerhard 45). Hence,

examining Carrie, Charlotte, Miranda and Samantha's individual content affirms how the show affects women's culture.

Sex and the City's characters display traditional female identification, with a twist.

Charlotte York (played by Kristin Davis) represents a classic "quasi-1950s female persona" (Lorie 45) dressed in modern day high-fashion whose main goal involves finding the right man in hopes of marriage. "Although Charlotte is frequently portrayed as a hopeless romantic, she, too, partakes of many recreational sexual encounters" (Markle 52). In the show's first season, an episode six titled "Secret Sex," "she meets Schmeul, an Orthodox Jewish painter, and they engage in spontaneous sex on the floor amidst paintbrushes and canvases" (Markle 52).

Traditionally, girls in waiting never venture to sacred realms of satisfaction, but Charlotte modernizes her classic mentality. Charlotte, even though traditional, empowers herself in well-timed discourses because of social movements appropriately situated through feminism. She may be a woman of conservative origin, but the third wave world in which she grew up made her very aware of women's history, and she makes no mistake in choosing her prince-charming carefully. In fact, choice largely informs these women's actions.

Miranda Hobbes (played by Cynthia Nixon) conveys strength and less vulnerability, a trait not usually seen in female characters without suffering from a traumatic situation. She demands equal worth, both in her job and personal life. Interestingly, the show acknowledges a woman's struggle in the workforce. Miranda, even as a hard working successful lawyer, finds imbalance. Yet, a chance to negotiate these terms arises, "because negotiation contains within it a basic form of competition, both males and females in our culture may make the connection that this consequently cannot be a woman's domain" (Babcock and Laschever 103). In the series third season, in an episode titled "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," Miranda tells a potential boyfriend

that she is a flight attendant and “men respond to her far more enthusiastically than before, concisely demonstrating the pressure women feel to downplay their accomplishments in order to protect men” (Babcock and Laschever 104). Abiding in this sexist domain, Miranda victoriously uses this established identity to her own advantage. She plays with the stereotype of a silly flight attendant to generate a fair result. Women, unexpectedly, began to see “they” too could benefit from such stereotypes. Miranda’s realistic portrayal of a woman engaging in a stereotypical male action of lying about her profession offers viewers a seldom perspective in a weekly TV show.

During the show’s airing, huge audiences followed the girls’ journey because they chose lives outside stereotyped female destinies. This fact is even more evident in the character of Samantha Jones (played by Kim Cattrall) who defies all stereotypes associated with women. Her character majorly influences ways women view handling sexuality. Samantha “represents the quintessence of recreational sex. ‘I’m a tri-sexual,’ she announces, ‘I’ll try anything once’ (“Sex and the City” 1:1) (Markle 52). Helping her up to such standards, Samantha’s sexual partners included “a Black man, a Brazilian woman, numerous younger men, and her boss...in classic gender role reversal, Samantha clearly treats her partners as sex objects and openly disdains the prospect of emotional commitment” (Markle 52). Samantha’s virago lifestyle is essential in *SATC* fashioning multiple female identities.

Charlotte, Miranda, and Samantha help the show’s main protagonist, Carrie Bradshaw, discover the overall nature of men and women, and why differences exist. Carrie plays the key role in seeking out answers, a rarity in a television series. Almost like a complicated mathematical problem, Carrie works to differentiate gender roles, believing women can exemplify power forcefully like men. As Lorie notes, “Carrie’s career as a newspaper columnist reporting on dating habits of single women in New York City establishes that both her

professional and her personal life revolve around heterosexual relationships” (44). In many episodes, “she freely admits that her life has been dedicated to ‘obsessing’ about men by deciphering their mixed messages and terminology, and interpreting their overall nature” (44). Her character does not emphasize gender differences as highly as Samantha, but “Carrie’s analytical and somewhat skeptical nature greatly reinforces an ‘othering’ effect” (44). As the show’s main character, Carrie’s adventures in romance and how she interprets situations give direction to a new type of television heroine.

The construction of *Sex and the City* works to navigate change of women’s roles in society because of its channel distributor, Home Box Office (HBO). According to Gary R. Edgerton, “HBO transformed the creative landscape of television during the first decade (1995-2004) of TV’s current digital era,” (8) accounting for *SATC*’s attentive choice of storyline, production, and character arcs. The channel’s direction derives from network shows, because “most of the content appearing on HBO draws upon existing television forms, narratives, aesthetics, themes, and economic and institutional practices in order to articulate HBO’s difference” (Santo 24). To indicate difference from other networks, a “branding strategy” offering “something fundamentally different” from free networks like NBC was needed (31). HBO established “larger production budgets than its commercial counterparts...because it depends on subscribers rather than ratings...yet overall, in spite of its economic constraints, when placed side-by-side with the commercial networks, HBO’s structure and philosophy seem to promote an environment in which creative individuals can collectively express their talent and inventiveness can flourish” (Kelso 52,53). *SATC* played an essential role in this branding strategy, exemplifying how great television series are made. In the process, *SATC* redefined televisual discourses of women.

Considering televisual discourses prior to *Sex and the City*'s representation of women, the achievement becomes visible. Through explaining the three waves of American feminism and the evolution and backlash of its portrayal in television, this thesis will demonstrate how *SATC* help produce positive change for women in U.S. culture. The objective here is to convey how these television portrayals of women are an essential component of the social movement of feminism. However, what makes *SATC*'s so relevant today in establishing more equal representations of women is its popularity. The show "generated enough frenzied interest from paparazzi, fans, advertisers, and gossip blogs to prove that *Sex and the City* is still more potent than one of Samantha's Flirtinis" (Schartz 24). The phenomenological interest women (and men) carry in *SATC*'s narrative will push to more and more significant gender equality in America.

“When
real people

fall down

in *life*,



they get
right back up

and
keep

walking.”

- Carrie

Conceptual Framework

Over -Arching Construct

Studying *Sex and the City* through an interpretive dimension creates gargantuan discussion. An interpretive exploration “acknowledges the limitations of enquiry and does not aspire to be all-knowing” (Stokes 21). Researchers rely on “insight” and “judgment” to determine their theory (21). Additionally, observing through televisual content, an “understanding of ideological codes or variables” and “insights into the political use of fantasy within the context,” *Sex and the City* successfully “transmits messages concerning female empowerment” (Lorie 37). Darren Star, the show’s creator, explains one aspect of this empowerment: the show reminds “that women could not only enjoy sex as much as men, but talk about it as crassly as men, with lines like ‘is it okay to fuck one guy when you’re pregnant with another guy’s baby?’” (Weinman n. pag.). Thus, examination of the show from the interpretive dimension will facilitate a continued analysis of the different messages emerging with *SATC*.

In this thesis’ literature review, a survey of first, second, and third ‘wave’ feminism in America will initiate the study. Televisual representation of women in America shall be discussed also to position its historical relationship to feminism. Moreover, in discussing the importance and aftermath of HBO’s television series *Sex and the City* as the primary subject, this report will analyze how the four protagonists (Carrie, Charlotte, Miranda, and Samantha) essentially characterize third wave feminist representation in its narrative. Through this explanation, a justification of the importance in producing diversified and realistic female portrayals in American television shall be established.

The methodology in this thesis shall consist of a *Sex and the City* episode analysis to verify how the aesthetics in this televisual narrative represents and modernizes American

feminism. Furthermore, analyzing results of a survey conducted by the writer will provide feedback from viewers whose comments will bring these implications of *SATC*'s impact to a full circular declaration.

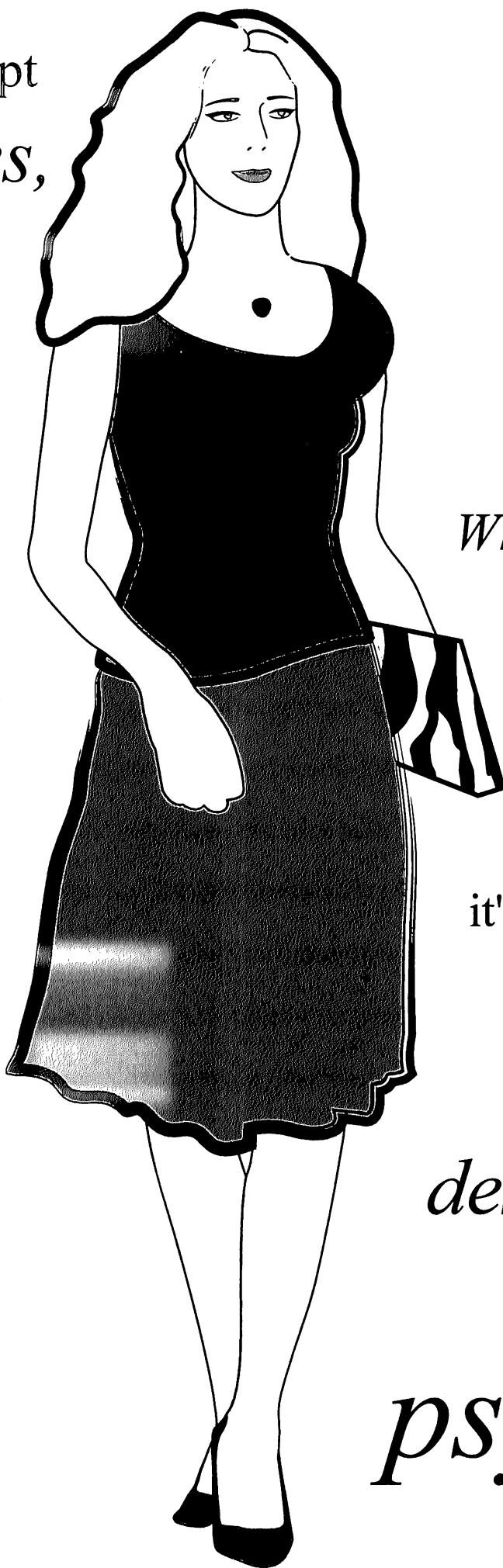
Researchable Question

In what ways do the four protagonists of *Sex and the City* initiate a social commentary on the expansion of feminism in the United States?

“When men attempt
bold gestures,

generally it's
considered

romantic.



When women do it,

it's often considered

desperate

or

psycho.”

- Carrie

Literature Review

First Wave Feminism

From the birth of our nation, according to Kristen Rowe-Finkbeiner, a consultant and researcher in the field of Environmental Policy and Political Strategy, “women pressed for equal rights...Abigail Adams famously requested that her husband, John Adams, ‘remember the ladies’ while he was drafting the Declaration of Independence in 1776” (20). Still, women “weren’t considered in that legendary document” (20); more than fifty years would pass before the first wave of feminism in America began.

Estelle B. Freedman, a founder of the Program in Feminist Studies at Stanford University, discusses feminist origins. She argues the beginnings of feminism developed with the rise of capitalism. Described as an enhancement to men’s economic opportunities, women became defined as their dependents and “new political theories of individual rights and representative government that developed alongside capitalism extended privileges to men only” (2). Feminist origins emerged primarily in Europe and North America after 1800 because “capitalism, industrial growth, democratic theory, and socialist critiques converged” (2). Overtime, feminist movements emerged globally, and in some way aimed to empower women.

The term, feminism, originated in France as *feminisme* in the 1880s (Freedman 3). Combining the French word for woman, *femme*, and *-isme*, which referred to social movements, “*feminisme* connoted that women’s issues belonged to the vanguard of change” (Freedman 3). Considered a “controversial” term for correlations with radicalism, the term spread to North America by 1910 (3).

Iris van der Tuin, a Lecturer in Gender Studies at the Department of Media and Culture Studies at Utrecht University, argues feminist history is “often characterized as a succession of metaphorical ‘waves’” (qtd. in Buikema and van der Tuin 10). A “radical position with respect to

inequality between men and women” (11) links each wave, however, commonality disappears when “seen in generational terms” (11). As van der Tuin claims “it is a mistake to believe that one wave’s strategy is better than the other, because equality did not disappear from the scene when the first wave came to an end and because there is a radical variant in line with the ‘new’ notions of the 1970s” (12).

First wave feminism was “created around 1900 and was mainly concerned with women’s right to vote” (qtd. in Buikema and van der Tuin 10). In the beginning stages of first wave feminism, philosophers John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor noted “women needed suffrage in order to become men’s equals” (Tong 21). According to Rosemarie Tong, a Distinguished Professor of Healthcare Ethics and Director of the Center for Professional Applied Ethics at the University of North Carolina, these two thinkers claimed that “the vote gives people the power not only to express their own political views but also to change those systems, structures, and attitudes that contribute to their own and/or others’ oppression” (21). The early suffragists, “the name given to advocates for women’s rights that stemmed from the Latin term *suffragium*, or ‘vote’” (Rowe-Finkbeiner 21) found influence from early activism in pushing for voting rights for African Americans. Tong’s research explains how the nineteenth-century U.S. women’s right movement ties to the abolitionist movement.

Tong claims “when white men and women began to work in earnest for the abolition of slavery, it soon became clear to female abolitionists that male abolitionists were reluctant to link the women’s rights movement with the slaves’ rights movement” (21). She adds, “noting it was difficult for whites (or was it simply white *men*?) to view women (or was it simply *white women*?) as an oppressed group, male abolitionists persuaded female abolitionists to dissociate women’s liberty struggles from black’s liberty struggle” (21).

U.S. women attended the 1840 World Anti-Slavery Convention in London and “thought that women would play a major role at the meeting” (Tong 21). This was not the case at the convention. Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, “two of the most prominent leaders of the U.S. women’s rights movement” (21), were not allowed to speak. However, this exclusion motivated them and “vowed to hold a women’s rights convention upon their return to the United States” (21).

Eight years after, in 1848, “three hundred women and men met in Seneca Falls, New York, and produced a Declaration of Sentiments and twelve resolutions” (Tong 21). The Declaration of Sentiments was modeled after the Declaration of Independence, which expressed the “need for reforms in marriage, divorce, property, and child custody laws” (21). The twelve resolutions conveyed the need for women to “express themselves in public” (21). Of these twelve resolutions, the only one “the Seneca Falls Convention did not unanimously endorse was Resolution 9, Susan B. Anthony’s Women’s Suffrage Resolution: ‘Resolved, that it is the duty of the women of this country to secure to themselves their sacred right to the franchise’” (22). The convention delegates feared all resolutions would be rejected if they demanded such a request. However, with the help of “abolitionist Frederick Douglas,” (22) all proposed resolutions passed to submit to the White House.

Significant time passed before the feminist suffrage movement reached desired results. Many activists “suffered for the cause – some were jailed, fined, and endured hunger strikes – and many participated in marches on Washington” (Rowe-Finkbeiner 22). The movement was ground-breaking for women of the 1800s, when “proper women were supposed to be home ‘minding the children,’ women took to the streets for the right to vote” (22). In 1872, Susan B. Anthony even had issues with the law, casting “a legendary (and illegal) vote in New York, and

was promptly arrested and fined” (22). Gaining voting rights proved difficult. From 1878, an amendment for the vote was introduced and defeated each year. Finally in the twentieth century, the movement acquired desired results.

Alice Paul, a suffrage activist and founder of the National Women’s Party, “organized a demonstration ten thousand strong at the 1913 inauguration of President Woodrow Wilson to protest his opposition to women’s voting rights” (Rowe-Finkbeiner 22). After Wilson’s reelection in 1916, Paul organized picketing outside the White House. Eventually she and other suffragists were arrested. Paul intensified matters going on a hunger strike. She then “emerged from jail to picket the White House again – actions that many credit as helping the effort gain momentum toward final victory in 1920” (22). Thus, the 1920 voting victory becomes a highlight of first wave feminism.

In summation of this wave, Rowe-Finkbeiner writes: “The first wave of the women’s movement is significant, however, not only because women obtained the right to vote, but because their work helped change the perception of women from voiceless dependents to independent thinkers with a valid voice in shaping the country” (23). However, “women’s roles in American culture were still restricted” (25). In fact, Rowe-Finkbeiner notes that still circulating by email today is “The Good Wife’s Guide,” originating in May 1955 (25). Rowe-Finkbeiner argues the text’s perspective, whether satirical or realistic, “expresses the tone of the time” (25), beginning with: “Prepare yourself. Take 15 minutes to rest so you’ll be refreshed when he arrives. Touch up your make-up, put a ribbon in your hair and be fresh looking. He has just been with a lot of work-weary people” (25). This paradigm, clearly illustrates that “there was still much work to be done for women’s equality” (25). The next step for women involved

“securing access to a career outside of the house, and pursuing economic independence” because “the doors to professional success and reproductive control had yet to be blown open” (25).

Second Wave Feminism

Freedman claims the American second wave feminist perspectives were viewed from “race, class, and gender” (84). The U.S. women’s movement experienced “growing pains in the decades after suffrage victory” (84). 1930 saw women organizing as “consumers, pacifists, professionals, and workers” (84). During World War II in the 1940s, they assembled support, and did not “necessarily demobilize” (84) after. More and more women worked for wages, and they expanded their union memberships. What furthered the feminist movement, according to Freedman, related to racial equality movements as well. She writes: “Above all, a movement for racial justice insisted that white supremacy had no place in the postwar democratic world. When the U.S Supreme Court struck down the legality of public school segregation in 1954, it ushered in a revolution in race relations in which women played a central role” (84).

Kristin Rowe-Finkbeiner, who studies women’s activism of 1960s, ‘70s, and early ‘80s defines second wave feminism, with examples such as Betty Friedan,

who through legislative action and electoral engagement championed many of the successes we still enjoy today: increased gender equality in the workplace, access to reproductive health care and sexuality information, and civil-rights legislation that made discrimination on the basis of sex or race illegal, to name a few. (26)

The 1964 Civil Rights Act showed no improvement for women’s rights. The Act, “amended with the Title VII provision to prohibit discrimination on the basis of *sex* as well as race, color, religion, or national origin by private employers, employment agencies, and unions,” (Tong 25) failed in gaining gender equality. The act had “established the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) to hear complaints based on either race or gender” (Freedman 85); however, the EEOC failed in responding to “sex discrimination complaints” (85). Feminists

then decided “they needed a political lobby akin to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People” (85).

The formation of the National Organization for Women (NOW) in 1966 was “the first explicitly feminist group in the United States in the twentieth century to challenge sex discrimination in all spheres of life: social, political, economic, and personal” (Tong 25). Betty Friedan, a founder and first president to NOW reflected on the court’s refusing to take Title VII seriously, stating: “The absolute necessity for a civil rights movement for women had reached such a point of subterranean explosive urgency by 1966, that it only took a few of us to get together to ignite the spark – and it spread like a nuclear chain reaction” (25).

Friedan, whom also wrote the famous 1963 book, *The Feminine Mystique*, “touched a nerve among educated suburban white women” (Freedman 85). With many women who fitted Friedan’s novel description engaging in NOW, “the organization pledged ‘to bring women into full participation in the mainstream of American society, now, assuming all the privileges and responsibilities thereof in truly equal partnership with men’” (85). And while this wave indeed was fighting for “fundamental rights,” (Rowe-Finkbeiner 26) much criticism came along. “Many allege that the second wave represented mainly the concerns of middle- and upper-class white women, and did not focus on the voices, and many issues, of women of color and lower-income women” (26). When examining Friedan’s highly influential classic, *The Feminine Mystique*, she “seemed oblivious to any other perspectives than those of white, middle-class, heterosexual, educated women who found the traditional roles of wife and mother unsatisfying” (Tong 28). Essentially, the evaluations of Friedman’s paradigm of women in the novel “are not enough for a certain kind of woman” (28). Furthermore, “*The Feminine Mystique* misjudged how difficult it

would be for even privileged women to combine a career with marriage and motherhood unless major structural changes were made both within and outside the family” (28).

Nevertheless, NOW’s 1967 Bill of Rights for Women aimed to “secure the same rights men have,” (25). NOW demanded:

- I. That the U.S. Congress immediately pass the Equal Rights Amendment to the Constitution to provide that ‘Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex,’ and that such then be immediately ratified by the several States.
- II. That equal employment opportunity be guaranteed to all women, as well as men, by insisting that the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission enforces the prohibitions against racial discrimination.
- III. That women be protected by law to ensure their rights to return to their jobs within a reasonable time after childbirth without the loss of seniority or other accrued benefits, and be paid maternity leave as a form of social security and/or employee benefit.
- IV. Immediate revision of tax laws to permit the deduction of home and child-care expenses for working parents.
- V. That child-care facilities be established by law on the same basis as parks, libraries, and public schools, adequate to the needs of children from the pre-school years through adolescence, as a community resource to be used by all citizens from all income levels.
- VI. That the right of women to be educated to their full potential equally with men be secured by Federal and State legislation, eliminating all discrimination and segregation by sex, written and unwritten, at all levels of education, including colleges, graduate and

professional schools, loans and fellowships, and Federal and State training programs such as the Job Corps.

VII. The right of women in poverty to secure job training, housing and family allowances on equal terms with men, but without prejudice to a welfare legislation and poverty programs which deny women dignity, privacy, and self-respect.

VIII. The right of women to control their own reproductive lives by removing from the penal code laws limiting access to contraceptive information and devices, and by repealing penal laws governing abortion (qtd. in Rowe-Finkbeiner 26).

This list of demands from NOW “pleased the organization’s liberal members but made both its conservative and radical members angry” (Rowe-Finkbeiner 26) for different reasons. Conservative members “objected to the push for permissive contraception and abortion laws,” (26) while radical members “were angered by NOW’s failure to support women’s sexual rights, particularly the right to choose between heterosexual, bisexual, and lesbian lifestyles” (26).

Such differing opinions of women, Rowe-Finkbeiner argues, “are representative of the rifts of that time”...

as a movement, the second wave generally focused on specific goals relating to women’s issues, and by large didn’t demonstrate fluidity in looking at other issues of social hierarchy (race, class, nationality, sexual orientation) through a feminist lens (27).

Culture has changed because of these efforts. With “severe either/or binary issues, the perceived modeling on men’s freedoms and expressions, the rejection of labels and the generational (and racial and class) tensions,” (Rowe-Finkbeiner 31) all have

contributed in turning feminism “into the ‘f-word’ for many young women” (31). Still, gender equality was a need in American society.

Third Wave Feminism

Today in American society, feminism is in its third wave. Kristin Rowe-Finkbeiner's compacted explanation of defining this wave simplistically says: "there are many ways to be a woman" (31). She suggests that America "today lacks a broad-based women's movement because we are in a time of 'postfeminism,' with the fight for equality and respectful treatment over and done" (32). Difficulty exists in the broad defining of third wave feminism.

However, to position the third wave in a feminist historical context, an oversimplified timeline might say that the first wave won the right to vote; the second wave won the right to enter the professional workforce; and the third wave combines previous efforts, modified by a woman's right to choose what works best for her – either 'traditional' female roles, 'nontraditional' roles, or a combination of the two (Rowe-Finkbeiner 90).

Third wavers appear to be "feminist sponges" (Tong 284), with willingness "to absorb some aspects of all the modes of feminist thought that preceded the third wave's emergence on the scene" (284).

Interest in understanding how "gender oppression and other kinds of human oppression co-create and co-maintain each other" (Tong 285) is part of the third wave paradigm. However, "third wave focuses more on female empowerment than male oppression, and it's a more sexually and racially diverse movement than its predecessors" (Rowe-Finkbeiner 90). Third wave feminists emphasize "that women and feminists come in many colors, ethnicities, nationalities, religions, and cultural backgrounds" (Tong 285). And while third wave feminists thought attention to female difference was now on the "right track," (285) "it is also empirically and conceptually challenging" (285).

A separation of “specific issues” (Rowe-Finkbeiner 93) rather than defining “a full movement” (93) has geared third-wave direction. Julie Shah, Co-Director of the Third Wave Foundation, claims: “It’s a group of women and men who are concerned about social justice for women, and social justice in general. Third-wave feminists tend to not want to separate out from other social struggles. In the U.S. we’re looking at labor, welfare, environmental justice, and other issues from a feminist prospective” (93).

Additionally, in “being open to women’s different social, economic, political, and cultural differences, third-wave feminists are open to women’s sexual differences” (Tong 287). Earlier feminists “wondered about the appropriateness of women working in the sex industry as porn models, call girls, lap dancers, exotic dancers, and prostitutes” (287). “These earlier feminists asked if these women were the victims of sexual objectification or dire economic conditions or if they instead were cagey entrepreneurs who realized they could make far more money selling their sexual services than working as waitresses at local diners” (287). Clearly, third wavers are “less prescriptive about what counts as good sex for women” (287). They are also “comfortable about women enhancing their bodies to suit social norms and cultural expectations about what counts as beautiful” (288). Third wavers believe women should feel free to do as they please.

While first and second wavers may have serious issues with the third wave direction, some do not find the evolution to hurt this social movements progression. Second wave feminist, Anne Braithwaite, for example, has been more sympathetic to third wave’s positioning, commenting:

An engagement with ... practices of seemingly traditional femininity does not necessarily carry the same meanings for young women today or for the culture they live in than they

might have to earlier feminists periods, and thus cannot be the point upon which to write off specific cultural practices as somehow apolitical and therefore 'post' - or 'anti' - feminist (Tong 289).

A significant critical concern of third wave lies within the need to list core values – “an agenda that rallies women to ally themselves with a goal that goes beyond just being oneself, doing what one wants to do, or being a person whose identity is almost overwhelmingly hyphenated and multicultural” (Tong 289). Third wave also only seems to represent the women in social equalized societies such as America, negating many realms across the world:

Women in the United States and many other developed nations may be more equal and free than they were fifty or even twenty-five years ago. But women in other nations, particularly developing nations, live in conditions more oppressive than even those conditioned that challenged first wave U.S. feminists at the turn of the nineteenth century (Tong 290).

And for those societies capable of third wave discourse, the question remains according to Rowe-Finkbeiner: “What happens when cultural change doesn't include political, legislative, and electoral advocacy to support the agenda of the third wave? What happens when women stop voting” (105)?

Televisual Representation of Women through Four Decades

Julie D'Acci, a Professor of Media and Cultural Studies at the University of Wisconsin, examines the construction and representation of gender in television. Her article, "Television, Representation And Gender," defines television as "technology, and as a social, economic, cultural, and ideological institution" (372). Viewing television gives audiences a sense of who they are. "Television's schedule, its information, and its stories" (373) have "active roles in shaping the ways TV viewers think about themselves and feel about themselves and their worlds, including how they think and feel about themselves as gendered human beings" (373). However, TV's relationships with viewers exist "within a range of different relationships to the countries in which it is produced and/or consumed, and to the economic, religious, and ideological frameworks of those countries" (373).

In regard to the discussion of representation, D'Acci argues, "television representations of gender (like television representations of nation and other categories) indeed have very profound effects on very real human bodies, societies, and economies" (374). She claims TV is not a mirror reflecting the entirety of societies, rather, TV is "selective about what it chooses to represent and how" (376). "The reasons it is selective have everything to do with the countries or regions in which it is produced and the types of institutional arrangements (government, public, community, commercial, religious, local and so forth) that fund or support it" (376). In our "commercial US system" (376), she asserts the possibility "to trace direct relationships between television representations and television's economic imperatives" (376) may occur.

D'Acci's example concerns the representations of women. According to D'Acci, "US television in its early history (1950s-1970s when US TV was dominated by three commercial networks), repeatedly produced representations of young, white, middle-class, heterosexual,

conventionally attractive (according to US standards), domesticated women, as the norm of femininity” (376). She considers this a “distortional fun-house mirror to society” (376). This selective interpretation of feminine representation supports the concept of gender imbalance.

D’Acci uses Judith Butler’s works *Gender Trouble* and *Bodies That Matter* to affirm how early research “studied the depictions of male and female fictional characters or personalities (such as news people), and perpetuated (inadvertently, perhaps) the binary divisions of gender into the hard and fast categories of male/female, masculinity/femininity” (377). Butler’s work argues, according to D’Acci, that over the past few decades, “the term gender has been used to designate the social and cultural construction of sex; and the term sex has been used to designate the seemingly obvious and uncontested biological difference between males and females” (377). A “maintenance” (378) of gender norms in television proves crucial for “more thought and study” (378).

Studies of television and representations of gender began “in the worldwide second-wave feminist movements, and initially (primarily in the early 1970s) focused on representations of femininity – images of female characters or personalities in television fiction or news programs” (378). D’Acci notes while studying gender representations over time, research must address what television excludes in its depictions. Additional study concerning representations of gender should take into account these exclusions:

...the categories masculinity and femininity depended on such exclusions and repressions, the ways, for example, that normative femininity on early United States television was not only represented as white, middle-class, young, maternal, heterosexual and American, but was utterly dependent on the excluded categories of black, ethnic, working-class, old, non-maternal, lesbian, and non-American as its repressed others. It became clear, in other

words, that scholars could not continue to speak of the category gender without recognizing its dependence on its formative exclusions. (379)

For a way to research and analyze televisual representations of gender, D'Acci claims an "integrated approach" (380) works well. The process involves "four interrelated sites or spheres: television production, television reception, television programming, (or overall content), and television's social/historical context" (380). Production "has everything to do with the historical distribution of jobs, money, and power – with the functioning of the industry as an economic and social sector" (381). The ways "it may produce variations, differences, and innovations in the representations of gender and sexuality" (383) indicate its relevance for study. Reception "involves the gender dimensions of the actual viewer/ program interactions" (383) Televisual representation of gender must also be studied through the programming itself, which "cannot be analyzed in isolated images alone, but must be seen as it is produced in all of its specificity, in and through all the formal dimensions of television" (384). Finally, social/historical context "is the major sphere that demarcates the ways general social events, movements, beliefs, and changes, produce or represent particular notions about gender in and for the society at-large" (385). Through "social and cultural institutions like television," (385) specific representations of gender become generated to "millions of viewers" (385). Thus, representation, gender, and television must be studied together.

Many representations of American women emerged throughout the decades. Judy Kutulas, Professor of History and American Studies and Director of Women's Studies at St. Olaf College, discusses various depictions of women. Her article "Who Rules the Roost?: Sitcom Family Dynamics from the Cleavers to the Osbournes" posits that the 1950s depict an 'idealized family' as "a secure, consumerist, conformist bulwark against Communism" (51). June Cleaver

(Barbara Billingsley), from *Leave It To Beaver* (1957-1963), embodied the “stay-at-home mother” (51). Laura Tropp, in her article “‘Faking a Sonogram’: Representations of Motherhood on *Sex and the City*” from *The Journal of Popular Culture*, wrote, “having it all meant managing a household and family while making it look effortless” (862). In the “successful 1950s television families, members worked together, understood their individual roles, and did what was expected of them” (Kutulas 52). Mrs. Cleaver, however, would not continue dominating female identification in television.

Phyllis Scrocco Zrzavy, a Professor of Mass Communication at Franklin Pierce College whose research focuses women in media representation and media literacy, asserts in her article “Women, Love, and Work: *The Doris Day Show* as Cultural Dialogue,” that *The Doris Day Show* (1968-1973) “progressed from conservative values affirmation to sociocultural liberation” (206) and claims the ‘series’ value as a chronicler of changing gender expectations toward work and intimate relations” (206). The series “emphasized the processual aspect of female identity formation and the articulation of complementary, polyvalent identity iterations in response to variable conditions” (214). The cultural expectations of women shifted, “both in personal relations and in the workplace” (215), and Doris Martin (Doris Day) visually produced those shifts in its narrative.

In early seasons, “Doris Martin [portrayed] simultaneously in terms of filial innocence and of widowed asexuality, but as the series progressed, the heroine was granted different aspects of mature sexuality, including negotiations of workplace- related liaisons” (215). She had multiple relationships in the last two seasons, but she “narrowed” (215) to two prospective companions, and eventually “accepted Jonathan’s [Patrick O’Neal] wedding proposal” (215). Thus, Doris Martin chronicled “what Ella Taylor has called ‘prime-time feminism,’ the transition

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of the typical portrayal of the single woman from that of sexless widow (*The Lucy Show* [1962-1968]), husband-hungry spinster (*Our Miss Brooks* [1952-1956]), or unmarriageable career woman (Sally in *The Dick Van Dyke Show* [1961-1966]) to a 'popular feminist' representation that allowed 'the viewer to identify with the 'new woman' while hanging on to older ideals of femininity'" (qtd. in Zrzavy 215).

Similar developments were made with Doris Martin's career. She became employed in the second season "in the media industry" (215), starting out as a "secretary" (215), and ending up "higher on the corporate scale, as the editor-in-chief of *Today's World*" (215). Her "occupational world mimicked the real-world workplace as a site for the creation and reproduction of gender difference and gender inequality" (215). According to Zrzavy, "added dimension" of "comparative worth" distinctly separated *The Doris Day Show* from its counterparts (215). Several occasions "Doris Martin was courted by different organizations and executives," (215) while other episodes "showed Doris going to work as press secretary and all-night radio talk-show host, respectively, thus underscoring the multidimensionality of the character's talents and ability to handle diverse work assignments" (215). Zrzavy concluded "viewers of this episodic media narrative were treated to weekly explorations of how fluctuant social roles could be negotiated, contested, or affirmed with variations over the course of time" (216). New models of female depiction began to amplify.

Deborah Jermyn, in her book Sex and the City, part of the TV Milestones Series, claims early American sitcom's faced the "struggle to position women in the domestic sphere, with critical debate focusing on the extent to which it articulated resistance to, or endorsement of the era's patriarchal culture" (42). The late 1960s indicated the "social struggle was gaining momentum, and it was at this time that two of the most important precursors of *SATC* emerged,

both of them endeavoring to take their women protagonists more concertedly out of the home, namely *That Girl* (1966-1971) and *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* (1970-1977)" (42). Both show's centered on the "adventures of working women living alone in the city" (42). *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* (*The MTM Show*) is "credited with having constituted a landmark moment in the representation of women on television" (42).

Author and scholar, Naomi Wolf, whose journalism, poetry, and book reviews have appeared in the United States and Britain, points out in her book *The Beauty Myth*: "In the two decades of radical action that followed the rebirth of feminism in the early 1970s, Western women gained legal and reproductive rights, pursued higher education, entered the trades and professions, and overturned ancient and revered beliefs about their social role" (9). Her claim that women's transitional position in America display articulation through the narrative structure of televisual representations, which is particularly seen in *The MTM Show*.

Susan Faludi, a former *Wall Street Journal* reporter and Pulitzer Prize winner, discusses *The MTM Show* in her groundbreaking book, *Backlash*:

Moore's Mary Richards was not only unwed, she was more than thirty years old.

Marriage panic did not afflict her. She had real male and female friends, enjoyed a healthy sex life, turned down men who didn't appeal to her, and even took the pill – without winding up on a hospital bed in the final scene. (169)

The Mary Tyler Moore Show's narrative and success supports how the next three decades (1970s/80s/90s) of female representation remodeled constantly because of its audience generation shift. "Young women, particularly, became a desirable audience, not as wives and mothers, but as single women pursuing education, independence, and careers" (Rabinovitz qtd. in Kutulas 54). Moms represented authority figures in 1970s sitcoms, and because of the feminist

movement, young women avoided their mothers domesticity, devaluing the role. “There was a constant tug of war on shows like *Rhoda* between those mothers and their daughters, who were more attracted to the single, childless career woman modeled by Mary Richards (*The MTM Show*)” (Kutulas 55). The 1970s emphasized women’s “economic options other than marriage, and the swinging singles lifestyle tempted both men and women” (55). A backlash to this progressive development of female representations in television undoubtedly reigned over 1980s content.

Sustaining the idea of equalization and female diversity, “having it all” in the 1980s became a recurring theme in women’s televisual discourse. Show’s like *The Cosby Show* (1984-1992) exemplified the “Super-Mom ... who usually has a job but whose energies are largely directed to furthering the progress of the baby from the moment it is born” (Tropp 862). Clair Huxtable (Phylicia Rashād) of *The Cosby Show*, for example, displayed many amazing attributes. She held a successful career as a lawyer while remaining the head of the household, and making Cliff (Bill Cosby) believe he was actually in charge. However, this representation unrealistically personifies women. Clair “may be the first attorney to hold down a full-time job without leaving home; when she does ply her trade, it’s only to litigate domestic disputes in the family living room” (Faludi 166). Faludi insists that “these women are the same old TV housewives with their housecoats doffed, their ‘careers’ a hollow nod to the profound changes in women’s lives” (166).

These 1980s protagonists “have it all” too easily, and thus a defragmented version of real women remained. The expansion of identity showed reoccurrence of women again being misrepresented, for the ability to “have it all” combined the idea of successful careers, home-life, and social life. Televisual discourses expanded female realms; but, eventually a backlash of female polysomic representations formed in the 1980s. The identity of the empowered single girl

attenuated. “In 1986, a decade after her previous triumph, the networks returned Mary Tyler Moore to prime time – as a burned-out scowling divorcee whose career is only an object of derision” (169). In *Mary* (1985-1986), the heroine writes for a “trashy tabloid” (169), and “has no confidantes on or off the job, a fact that heightens an already bleakly drawn existence” (169). A struggled representation of single women was very alive during this time. Joining the televisual backlash was *thirtysomething* (1987-1991), in which “a complete pantheon of backlash is on display – from blissful homebound mother to neurotic spinster to ball-busting single career woman” (174). “The show even takes a direct shot at the women’s movement: the most unsympathetic character is a feminist” (174).

By the 1990s, the female discourse took one step further into this social movement. With the opportunity to negate the false representation of the 1980s Super-Mom, a new kind of heroine arose: the self-centered career woman. With the exception of the hit television series *Murphy Brown* (1988-1998), “the 80s prime-time lineup offered almost no shows centered on a single woman in the working world, much less, one deriving pleasure or pride from her vocation” (171).

Susan J. Douglas, Professor of Communication Studies and chair of the department at the University of Michigan, in her book, Enlightened Sexism: The Seductive Message that Feminism’s Work is Done, discusses career women. The primary example derives in *Murphy Brown*. Murphy Brown (Candice Bergen) portrayed the anti-nurturing figure. “The humor in the show, driven by excellent scripts, lay in the contrast between how women, even successful career women, were supposed to act and Murphy’s utter violation of and often outright hostility to those norms” (Douglas 38). The show displayed advantages of female liberation. Also, with acknowledging negated elements, for Murphy, achieving success in her job remained the sole

priority. With no personal life, no female network of friends, no knowledge of how to cook, and no regrets, her characterization took liberation to an angry extreme. While many viewers acknowledged her self-empowered demeanor as progression, this representation negates other forms of female identity.

When Murphy becomes pregnant, she lacks the nurturing attribute most women are expected to possess. This nurturing concept challenges the idea that motherhood comes naturally to women. “There were many jokes about her total absence of maternal capabilities and she was not fazed by the prevailing (and escalating) demands of the times to indulge in intensive, perfect mothering” (40). Murphy undertook influential steps into an equal society domain of depiction, yet still shows limits.

Sex and the City helped repress the backlashes seen in television history. According to author Amy Sohn in her book Sex and the City: Kiss and Tell, what really got Darren Star thinking about adapting Candice Bushnell’s column and later novel into a television series, he says, ““was the idea of a single woman in her thirties writing about relationships and using that column as a tool of self-discovery about her own life, sometimes unbeknownst to herself” (14). This crucial reason was influenced by the representation of women seen throughout the past four decades before *SATC*’s televisual creation.

HBO... It's not TV... It's Challenging Reality

Robert C. Allen, a professor of American Studies, History, and Communication Studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, reviews the history of cable, stating: “Originally developed in the late 1940s as a way of delivering broadcast signals from a community antenna through cables to homes in areas too remote from television stations to receive a clear picture, cable television expanded into more and more urban US television markets in the 1960s and 1970s” (13). Throughout that time cable was adopted continuously in areas “in order to receive high quality broadcasting signals” (13).

After the FCC (Federal Communications Commission) approved “domestic communications satellites” (13) in 1973, “cable’s appeal was based upon more and different programming options not available via over-the-air broadcasting and provided to cable operators via what we would now call ‘B2B’ (business-to-business) satellite transmission” (13). “In 1975, Home Box Office (HBO) became the first ‘television’ programmer to deliver its product entirely by satellite – usually to local cable operators for routing to their subscribers” (13). Cable operators, being distributed via satellite and “delivered to customers by wires rather than over radio waves, were not subject to public service, advertising, or program content regulations imposed upon terrestrial broadcasters by the US Federal Communications Commission” (13). The attempt to gain subscribers was to differentiate itself from broadcast television “by offering program content not allowed on broadcast television: nudity, strong language, etc.” (13). This kind of content would separate cable from traditional network programming, but not in every way.

Avi Santo, an Assistant Professor in the Department of Communications at Old Dominion University, contemplates on the culture and noticeable televisual design of HBO in his

article, "Para-television and discourses of distinction: The culture of production at HBO." "On a fairly simple level, pay cable must appear to offer something that subscribers cannot get either on free TV (the networks) or for the price of basic cable, and which viewers believe is superior to those cheaper alternatives" (20). HBO must then constantly "promote discourses of 'quality' and 'exclusivity' as central to the subscription experience" (20). In the channels early development, "HBO's programming strategy throughout the late 1970s and early 1980s relied heavily upon showcasing previously exhibited theatrical features" (21). This approach was amazingly successful: "the pay channel's subscription rate grew from 2 million to 11.5 million households from 1977 to 1984" (21).

Santo asserts HBO would develop distinctive shows, however, its "foray into original programming has had an explicit connection with standard broadcast television" (23). He defines this programming as "para-television, purposely dialoguing with existing television forms and practices in order to call attention to the variations HBO introduces into otherwise familiar television experiences" (24). HBO's "production practices and programming choices" (24) are "purposely situated alongside recognizable television forms in order to confer particular meanings upon them" (24). Network television, thus, was HBO's "working model" (30) in challenging the type of content seen in television.

Created by Richard Ellenson, "the first introduced slogan 'It's Not TV, It's HBO,'" (31) came in 1995. This effected branding change during the mid-1990s "realized that it was already in the majority of pay cable subscriber homes and needed to focus on gaining new pay TV households" (31). HBO would now begin the journey into a successful distinction from other programming channels with strong followers. "This shift put HBO in direct competition with network and basic cable television as opposed to other pay cable stations and required a branding

strategy that would effectively convince potential subscribers that HBO offered something fundamentally different than what they could already get for free on other channels” (31).

Deborah Jermyn addresses HBO’s televisual significance:

... it has nevertheless gained a reputation and channel identity associated with producing quality, cutting-edge television; taking risks with subject matter and language that the networks wouldn’t entertain; letting shows with relatively low audience figures continue their run (where the networks would be compelled to take them off the air); giving their personnel a degree of creative freedom rarely heard of in network television (20).

Sex and the City, according to Jermyn, “would have been unimaginable anywhere Else” (20).

Her verification comes in an excerpt from an interview with *SATC*’s creator Darren Star:

Going to HBO was basically a real attempt to do a non-network show and to try to basically think outside of the box of television and not follow formula...it’s sort of the best creative experience I think you can have in television right now... [I] was glad that there wasn’t a typical network process at HBO where for instance, you’ve got to pitch a show in the fall and write it by January and have them pick it up.... [With] HBO the process was, write the show in your own time frame. When it’s ready go out and find a director, find the director you want, find the cast you want... [and] that was fantastic.

(Star qtd. Jermyn 20)

Amy Sohn recognizes the *Sex and the City* pilot episode’s value, which aired in 1998, as a “comedy about sex from a female point of view, which was a totally uncharted arena on TV” (14). Star had early discussions with “ABC, but felt that the network couldn’t fulfill what he had in mind” (14). Star recalled “they weren’t even sure if they could call it *Sex and the City*” (Star

qtd. in Sohn 14). He also “didn’t like the way networks tended to handle adult sexuality: in a wink-wink, nudge-nudge style, euphemistic and adolescent” (14). Star “instead wanted to create a true adult comedy in which the sex could be handled in an up-front and honest way” (14). Not in the “traditional sitcom format, with a live audience, a set, and four cameras,” (14) *SATC* “would be single-camera (like a film), similar to *Melrose Place*, with no audience and no laugh track” (14). Star approached HBO in 1996 with the idea, and “they embraced the concept immediately and gave him a deal to write and produce a pilot” (14).

Candice Bushnell’s column was published in book format in 1996, and Star found his “core characters: Miranda Hobbes, Samantha Jones, and Charlotte Ross (whose last name was changed to York for the show), all of whom were featured in the book” (14). Originally Star thought of *SATC* as an “anthology series, with just Carrie and a different story each week” (14). However, according to Star, “when *Sex and the City* became a book, I decided to give her these friends and have her explore the issues with them” (Star qtd. Sohn 14). “The pilot was shot in June, over ten days” (15).

As Phyllis Scrocco Zrzavy affirms: “Even the most cursory look at the history of broadcasting confirms that the situation comedy has a long-standing tradition of mediating tensions and ambiguities in American culture, and women and their changing roles in society have found particularly pertinent representations in the genre” (205).

Thus, as Bambi Haggins (Director of Graduate Studies and Assistant Professor in Screen Arts and Culture) and Amanda D. Lotz (Assistant Professor of Communication Studies) from the University of Michigan confirm in their article, “At Home on the Cutting Edge,” “the breakout success of *Sex and the City* marks an important transition for HBO comedies and audience’s expectations of them” (164). They argue:

Like some of the preceding shows [*I Love Lucy*, *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*, *The Doris Day Show*, etc.], *Sex and the City* provided rich, character-driven comedy and defied broadcast standards in its characters' discussions and the show's depictions of their dating lives. By most other measures, however, the show differed substantially. Although the revealing and frank depiction of four attractive women enjoying their sex lives unquestionably offered voyeuristic pleasure for HBO's long-targeted male viewers, *Sex and the City* ultimately became a 'girls' show,' particularly as the characters evolved and the series negotiated a careful balance of exploring dramatic struggles while maintaining a comedic edge. (164)

As noted by Naomi Wolf, "the stronger that women grow, the more prestige, fame, and money is accorded to the display professions: They are held higher and higher above the heads of rising women, for them to emulate" (27). This beam of evolving female representation in television then supports HBO's innovative programming approach.

Janet McCabe and Kim Akass, coeditors of the book, *Reading Sex and the City*, maintain the notion in their article "What Has HBO Ever Done for Women?," that "HBO is doing something with gender and sexuality not seen elsewhere" (303). As they refer to *Time* magazine's inquiry of feminism's demise, they believe "it was being redefined by a generation who had always lived with the idea of female liberation, but had decidedly different perspective on feminist politics, sexuality, and lifestyle choices than previously" (304). HBO show's "tackle similar concerns and themes preoccupying those struggling to come to terms with the feminist inheritance at a time when we are told we have unlimited opportunities and no need for feminist politics" (304). The premiere of *SATC* "prompted the latest round of hand-wringing over constructions of women's lifestyle choices" (304).

McCabe and Akass contest:

Media commentators were deeply divided over Carrie Bradshaw and her chums. The quartet were attacked for being too feminist or not feminist enough; lauded for being smart, sassy, and financially independent yet condemned as dreadfully old-fashioned in their quest for Mr. Right; pilloried for appropriating the language of feminist empowerment only to bitch about men; applauded for talking candidly about sex while damned as sluts. (304)

The conclusion can be made that *Sex and the City* is not a feminist show, but rather a dialogue about feminism. “In this sense, HBO gives representation to our complex age of troubled emancipation – and may in fact offer more realistic female characters – fallible, inconsistent, complicated, virtuous, troublesome, and both emotionally strong and fragile” (312). By “steering clear of feminist agendas, but valuing individuality, these women have much to tell us about the contradictions we live with each and every day” (312). The paradigm of HBO arranged the launching of *SATC*’s impactful discourse.

Sex and the City

Susan J. Douglas states simply of *Sex and the City*'s discourse, "it's based on the lives of four successful, beautiful, white, upper-middle class heterosexual single women in New York who have active and often very uninhibited sex lives" (170). Jane Gerhard, a professor at the Program for History and Literature at Harvard University and the Women's Studies Department at Wheaton College, links in her article "Sex and the City: Carrie Bradshaw's queer postfeminism" from the *Feminist Media Studies* series, the show's title paying "direct homage to Helen Gurley Brown's (1962) classic novel *Sex and the Single Girl*" (38). "Brown's story is essentially that of Carrie Bradshaw thirty years earlier: girl comes to city, finds a niche for herself dating married and unmarried men, enjoys the attention, sexual and romantic, and decides to write about her experiences" (38). Buckley and Ott agree: Carrie, Charlotte, Miranda, and Samantha are "all single at the show's inception and living Helen Gurley Brown's dream life [with] independence, money, and sexual freedom" (214).

Cara Louise Buckley (a Lecturer in Communication at Emerson College) and Brian L. Ott (an Associate Professor of Media Studies at Colorado State University) explore in their article, "Fashion (able/ing) selves: Consumption, identity, and *Sex and the City*," the "cliché that television is society's principal mode of storytelling today" (210). They claim "stories and their characters are a way of rehearsing prominent cultural themes and concerns" (210). They refer to the "famous twentieth-century literary critic" (210) Kenneth Burke, who acknowledges this process. Burke believed "any discourse could provide the symbolic resources or stylistic medicines for confronting and resolving the challenges and difficulties of everyday living so long as it named (i.e. summed up) a situation with which an audience could identify" (210). Because their concern lies within the "contemporary moment" (211), Buckley and Ott "are

interested in how *Sex and the City* and the character of Carrie specifically addresses itself to the real-life situations of postmodernity, namely concerns about consumption and identity” (211).

Sharon Marie Ross, an Associate Professor at Columbia College in the Television Department, similarly discusses in her article, “Talking Sex: Comparison Shopping through Female Conversation in HBO’s *Sex and the City*,” how the series strives “to position female sexual desire as preferably finite and comprehensible [which was once] incompatible with the many goals of feminism as a political movement” (112). Ross’ perspective perceives *SATC*’s discourse to “situate female sexual desire and agency along a spectrum of choice – a spectrum that demands ‘comparison shopping’ and ‘informed decisions’” (112). “In a standard episode of the show, the narrative links a specific sexual issue to larger sociocultural issues of concern for (primarily, but not exclusively) heterosexual women” (114). Ross claims “a recurring motif of consumerism emerges as one of the primary connections between female sexual agency and desire, sometimes positioning the purchase of consumable goods as analogous and substitutable for sexual fulfillment and at other times positioning as the same as the site of power relations” (114).

Buckley and Ott contend the “United States society has long been described as a ‘consumer culture’” (211). The postmodern world finds “consumption has shifted from an overindulgence in durable goods (whose differential costs located one in a particular class) to an insatiable appetite for symbolic or soft goods in the form of images and styles (re)produced by the culture and fashion industries” (211). Likewise, “not only has consumption historically been associated with wastefulness, but fashion, glamour, and shopping have specifically been singled out as frivolous and shallow, particularly for women” (211).

Ross illustrates that the “episodes feature four friends coming together to exchange their points of view as a way of working through this quagmire of female sexuality and consumerism” (114). Buckley and Ott also add “in many episodes, the consumption of fashion can also be read as serving a resistive purpose within the show, allowing for traditional gender and sexual roles to be questioned and even **queered**⁴” (215). Ross asserts *SATC*’s position of “shopping as a functional activity” (117). “In much the same way that department stores work to manage women’s shopping through regular sales and competitive advertising, Carrie, Charlotte, Miranda, and Samantha manage their sexuality through regular comparison of sexual events and competitive perspectives on sexual issues” (117).

Aine F. Lorie, a professor in the Department of Social Sciences at Kaplan University, also comments on the fashion consumerist aspect in her article “Forbidden fruit or conventional apple pie? A look at *Sex and the City*’s reversal of the female gender” from the *Media, Culture, & Society* series, stating:

The voiceover [of Carrie] comments: ‘some take their promising partners to meet the parents; I take them to meet Prada.’ In a comical manner her narrative insinuates that Prada is a replacement for parents in contemporary times. This incident is just one of many that portrays how fashion-obsessed the character Carrie truly is. The three remaining characters, Samantha Jones, Miranda Hobbes, and Charlotte York, appear to be similarly fixated on fashion and for that reason shopping, particularly shoe shopping, is a bonding activity frequently engaged in by all characters. What’s more, during the entire series all characters are practically never shown wearing the same outfit twice. We thus have to consider the reasons for the show’s obsession with fashion in relation to its main female characters. Moreover, outside of the stereotypical ‘obvious’ association of

fashion with the female gender, it would be useful to consider how fashion might come to be linked with female empowerment. (41)

Lorie promotes the idea of high fashion indicating “not only a measure of wealth but also a greater sense of personal security and perhaps female advancement” (41). Ron Simon, Curator of Television at the Museum of Television & Radio and Associate Adjunct Professor of History of the Media at Columbia University and New York University, would agree *SATC* issues itself with female empowerment.

In his article, “Sex and the City,” Simon pronounces, “like its network, which promised something beyond TV, *Sex and the City* evolved into a weekly forum on American dating rituals and sexual semiotics, energizing the network’s upscale demographic into heated conversation at the water cooler in the bedroom” (193). The women “are not children of the sixties, but were children in the sixties, growing up in an era after feminism had taken root” (195). Even though “the lead characters represent the homogeneity of small-town America” (197), “the four are very much cut from the same quality fabric: white, upper-middle class, stable, with challenging jobs and values informed by postindustrial capitalism” (197). Viewers, however, were exposed to a new and different aesthetic in *SATC*.

As Gerhard states, “*Sex and the City* is structured by two major and overlapping themes:” (43) the first – “committed friendships between the women” (43) – and the second – the “bawdy talk the women engage in about their sexual partners” (43). The show “insists that these relationships are more lasting and trustworthy than those with men or potential husbands,” and “the talk is the true subject, the process by which the show’s narrative, its knowledge and its pleasures, are generated” (43).

These protagonists are very different, and that aspect strengthens the show, according to Cynthia Nixon. She comments:

It was exciting to do the fight scene with Carrie about Big at the end of the third season. You don't want it to be too safe and too lovey-dovey. These women love and support each other unconditionally, but they also have different points of view and are bound to clash. Sometimes their philosophies can run really deep, and when your philosophy is threatened, it can make you very impassioned in your fight for it. (qtd. in Sohn 86)

With Sarah Jessica Parker also listed as a producer, she too took notice of dialogue's significance, stating:

I was also concerned about language and choice of words. Carrie's a writer, and I didn't think it was a good idea for her to use a lot of profanity. I thought she should be thoughtful about her words and try to be as articulate as possible. Just because we can show women and men nude, use bad language, and be ribald and salty doesn't mean we always should. I knew the show could not be about four women going around using bad language and sleeping with a lot of men. The novelty of that would last twenty minutes. (qtd. Sohn 24)

Kathleen Rowe Karlyn, a Professor of English and Director of the Cinema Studies Program at the University of Oregon, notes in her book *Unruly Girls Unrepentant Mothers: Redefining Feminism On Screen*, the character leads of *Sex and the City* "have become iconic figures of identification for young women in the 1990s and early 2000s" (26). Simon agrees also, believing "the gals of *Sex* remade the locale, where talk is now of funky spunk, post-it breakups, and guys who look good on paper" (198). They are "building third-wave friendships based on intimate sharing and raucous laughter" (198). Finding a specific piece of academia setting a

framework of *SATC* as “third wave” is essential. The article from Astrid Henry exemplifies how *SATC* represents third wave feminism.

Astrid Henry, an Assistant Professor of Women’s Studies and English at Saint Mary’s College in Indiana, addresses in her article “Orgasms and Empowerment: *Sex and the City* and the third wave feminism” Time magazine’s 1998 question: “Is feminism dead?” This answer seems rhetorical to Henry, affirming Time magazine’s reassurance of “feminism’s demise precisely at the moment in which feminism was being re-energized in a way not seen since the 1970s” (65). However, beginning in the early 1990s, a new feminist movement had begun in the United States. These feminists referred to it as the “third wave,” (65) with this generation claiming feminism as its “birthright” (65). These women are living in a world without a women’s movement. This identification is claimed to distinguish these generations of women in both generation and ideology perspectives.

A few weeks prior to this Time article issue, *Sex and the City* premiered on June 6, 1998. Its creators (writers, directors, actors) refer to the show as ‘third wave,’ and they argue that *SATC* in many ways “functions as a forum about women’s sexuality as it has been shaped by the feminist movement of the last 30 years” (66). Henry proclaims feminism and feminist characters have been included in television sitcoms since the second wave feminist movement beginning in the 1960s. Since then, “programmes were thus able to offer anti-feminist perspectives through other main characters, allowing viewers a variety of political positions with which to identify” (66). *SATC* focuses on a group of women that represents an “archetype of contemporary womanhood” (66). The show “provides four different perspectives on contemporary women’s lives,” (67) and these “perspectives are all decidedly feminist, or at least influenced by the feminist movement” (67).

Sex and the City also redefined the traditional sitcom family, according to Henry. From biological families, work families and families of friends, *SATC* “is relatively unique in its focus on women’s friendships” (67). No matter what situations the four are faced with individually, the end of the episode constantly sees them together. Henry argues that the “platonic female friendships are more important than sexual and romantic love and that women can be each other’s life partners in a way that men cannot” (68).

The conversation presented in *Sex and the City* also represents feminist ideology. Feminist linguist Deborah Cameron states women’s talk “becomes subversive when women begin to attach importance to it and to privilege it over their interaction with men” (68). *SATC*’s talk is privileged in this way; “the conversations between the four women are the central feature of the show and are at the core of each episode’s storyline” (68). No matter the location of discussion, it “functions as consciousness-raising sessions where each character expresses her thoughts and the group processes them, often by challenging each other’s viewpoints” (68). And while these four women argue over issues and opinions, there is no personal competition between them or fighting over men, “as is the routine in most depictions of female friendships on TV” (69).

“*Sex and the City* suggests that the representation of feminism has shifted once again to portray a new social and political reality” (69). There is a restriction in representation found here in the shows discourse. As Bonnie Dow argued, “television’s representations of feminism are almost exclusively filtered through white, middle-class, heterosexual, female characters’, creating ‘a racially, sexually, and economically privileged version of feminism, that, for the American public, has come to represent feminism in toto’” (qtd. in Henry 69).

Sex and the City is no exception to this restricted discourse. The fact that each of the four women are white, thin, upper-class, etc. allows them the privilege of solipsism- “the hours spent examining their sex lives-” because “they have nothing else to worry about” (70). Henry argues if TV follows the changes in feminist thinking, then “*SATC* embodies what is now referred to as ‘third wave feminism’” (70). Sarah Jessica Parker “echoes this point” stating:

These characters, and the actresses playing them, reap enormous benefits from the women’s movement. The characters have sexual freedom, opportunity, and the ability to be successful... if you grow up with the right to choose, vote, dress how you want, sleep with who[m] you want, and have the kind of friendships you want, those things are the fabric of who you are. (qtd. in Henry 70)

Rebecca Walker, who is crediting for “coining” the term ‘third wave’ in her book *To Be Real: Telling the Truth and Changing the Face of a Feminism* proclaims that to be a feminist “in a way that we have seen or understood feminism is to conform to an identity and way of living that doesn’t allow for individuality, complexity, or less than perfect personal histories” (qtd. in Henry 70). Walker discusses this new generation of feminists seeking to change perceived “orthodoxies” (qtd. in Henry 71) of previous generations. To reverse representation of feminism, “third wavers have steered clear of prescribing a particular feminist agenda and instead have chosen to stress individuality and individual definitions of feminism” (qtd. in Henry 71). While there is a sisterhood bond in *SATC*, the show rarely acknowledges it, remaining true to the third wave movement.

Third wave feminism essentially relies on choice, and *Sex and the City* exemplifies choice well throughout its story telling. When dealing with the topic of abortion, for example,

each individual brings some perspective on the subject and “lacks a larger political agenda but rather is focused on the individual choices on individual lives” (72).

Henry insists one of *Sex and the City*’s main choices the women constantly face deals with opportunity to marry. She quotes from a collection on marriage and relationships titled *Young Wives’ Tales: New Adventures in Love and Partnership*:

Feminism’s messages of self-reliance and critique of heterosexuality...transformed the way we see relationships. We wrestle with marriage’s sordid social and economic history...We no longer see singlehood as some limbo to be rushed through headlong on the search for a mate. We no longer see those mates as necessarily male. We seek out romantic commitments for the personal and emotional satisfaction they can bring – not to avoid ‘spinsterhood.’ (73)

The discussion in regards to singlehood and marriage on *Sex and the City* represents this understanding of relationships. Many of the characters story arches defy traditional notions of these subjects pertaining to single women.

Sex and the City, according to Henry, shows its boldest attribute with the frank discussion of sexuality. An on-going debate between third wave feminists deals with the issue of sexuality being liberating or imprisoning. Third wave anthologies “focus on women’s pleasure with a healthy disregard for the accusation of selfishness that might have been in previous decades” (75). *SATC* does not highlight the dangers of sex, with Henry acknowledging sexual pleasure as a “fundamental right” (76). Given this right of pleasure, is a central entity of feminists “reclaiming” (76) heterosexuality. *SATC*, thus, diversifies the definitions of heterosexuality.

The heterosexual ideologies deal with marriage, heterosexual femininity, and female orgasms as a fundamental right. Henry concludes her framework with discussing the Times

article published four years later. “which chronicles the growing number of US women who remain single by choice, referring to these women as ‘the daughters of the women’s movement’ – women who have more independence, options and sexual freedom than any generation of women before them” (82). In using Carrie, Miranda, Charlotte, and Samantha as the face of this emerging demographic group, they solidify their status as representatives of this generation of third wavers. *SATC* “reflects an important – if limited- vision of female empowerment, a feminism that mirrors contemporary third wave attempts to celebrate both women’s power and women’s sexuality, to create a world where one can be both feminist and sexual” (82).

Gerhard summarizes *Sex and the City*’s discourse very well, stating “what made *SATC* different was that it regularly suggested that this family of four could be enough to make up a life, a life still worth living without the husband and baby, a life led outside the historic feminine and feminist script” (46). *SATC*’s “solution to the historic problem of sexuality for women simultaneously reaches backward to nineteenth century bonds of womanhood and forward to female independence based on those same bonds” (46).

The Four Heroines of *Sex and the City*

Jamie Bufalino, a reviewer for Entertainment Weekly, asked what do we have of *Sex and the City*'s four protagonists if we take away "their coital conquests, smutty confabs, and drop-dead gorgeous wardrobes" (92)? Her answer: "four perfectly pitched, subtly nuanced, damn good actresses" (92). They must be, considering "the personalities of the four women were all visible" from the very beginning (Sohn 15). "Samantha had an uninhibited, free-spirited approach to sex, Charlotte was a rosy-eyed idealist, Miranda was pithy and deadpan, and Carrie was inquisitive, smart, and yearning" (15). The roles Sarah Jessica Parker (Carrie), Kristin Davis (Charlotte), Cynthia Nixon (Miranda), and Kim Cattrall (Samantha) took on revolutionized the American representation of women in television.

Belinda A. Stillion Southard, a PhD in the Department of Communication at the University of Maryland, insists in her article, "Beyond the Backlash: *Sex and the City* and Three Feminist Struggles," she shows "polysemic construction of women allows viewers to simultaneously identify with the characters as individuals and as members of a collective force" (153). Furthermore, "the power lies in its focus on the interrelationships of four women, an element not prevalent in most other female situation comedies" (153). The media, according to Southard, "construct a condition of the individual woman whose private or professional gains earned by feminist strides have a distancing effect on her connectedness to women and the feminist movement as a whole" (154). She agrees that *SATC*'s characters may be charged with "rendering abridged representations of feminism and furthering the construction of white, elitist, heterosexual postfeminists, particularly as their elevated financial status allows them the freedom to be economically independent" (154). However, *SATC* using the narrating voice aesthetic and articulation of the importance of friendship "as a collective force challenges the postfeminist

emphasis on self-importance and disconnectedness”(154). To comprehend how they symbolize a strong collective force, an exploration of the women’s individual narratives and parallels to real American female themes should be acquainted.

Charlotte York

Amy Sohn comments, “when it comes to Charlotte, people tend to have strong opinions” (41). With her “traditional view of men, marriage, and commitment,” viewers who agree “cheer her on” – while the viewers whom take conflict with her ideologies “want to throw things at the television” (41). She is woman whose main characteristics define a conventional “idealism” and “perseverance” (41).

Over the first two seasons, Charlotte “struggled to find a man she could marry who would live up to the fantasy she had built for herself” (Sohn 41). In her search for the ideal Prince Charming, she came across many men such as “Up-the-Butt Guy, Fall-Asleep Guy, and Getting-in-Fights Guy” (41). She “left when she wasn’t satisfied, and never lost sight of her dreams” (41). In the middle of Season Three, she met Trey MacDougal (Kyle MacLachlan) “who seemed to be exactly what she wanted” (41).

Her marriage, surprisingly to Charlotte, did not reflect her happy ending dream. However, she made strenuous effort to repair her dilemma. “She suggested couples therapy, stuck by her desire to have a baby, yelled when she felt that Trey was being insensitive, stood up to his overprotective mother, Bunny [Frances Sternhagen], and finally said that she and Trey should separate when things weren’t working out” (Sohn 41). Realizing at the end of Season Four “that she and Trey couldn’t make it work, she was willing to acknowledge the truth and let him go” (41).

In Season Five, she met her “charmingly uncharming Prince Charming, Harry Goldenblatt [Evan Handler]” (Sohn 41). The polar opposite of Trey, Harry gave Charlotte “the best sex of her life, Judaism, and, ultimately, a ring” (41). Harry is in fact Charlotte’s unexpected perfect match. “Only such imperfect perfection could help Charlotte through a miscarriage and, ultimately, adoption” (41). Charlotte, by the end of the show, reached her goal: “completion” (41).

In an interview, Kristin Davis describes her character:

Charlotte doesn’t seem like she’s in charge, but in many ways she is. She has very high standards. She investigates men. My way of dealing with having her be with so many men is to say to myself, ‘Okay, yes, Charlotte does go to bed with all these guys, which I probably wouldn’t do, but then she is also very quick to say ‘Oh no, he doesn’t live up to my standards.’ It might take her a little searching, but Charlotte is hopeful in the face of horrors, and I really like that about her. (44)

Charlotte’s struggle to become a mother, the identity she yearns for most, displays an issue many women face. Estelle B. Freedman declares, “the scientific breakthroughs could make women feel inadequate if they do not become mothers” (251). As Davis says though, the women in the show purposely choose their own discourses to be “able to create your life in the way that you want to create it” (44). For Charlotte, motherhood is her personal choice and not a requirement to every woman’s life. Thus, she is a progressive representation of real women.

Miranda Hobbes

Miranda, according to Sohn, “represents the realist in all of us” (83). As a Harvard Law – educated lawyer, she is always the one “to point out the sexual double standard” (83). “Her favorite coffee-shop topics are sexism, power, and hypocrisy – and she is utterly unafraid to say

what she thinks” (83). In the first two seasons of the show, “Miranda was the most brittle of the women – until she met Steve Brady [David Eigenberg]” (83).

In Season Three, Miranda’s relationship with Steve endures many problems. “Although they complemented each other emotionally, other issues kept driving them apart – class differences, her pessimism, his childish qualities – and they broke up. Twice” (Sohn 83). By Season Four, she faced new challenges. When her mother died, she “allowed herself to accept the love of her friends” (83). Then she learned that Steve had testicular cancer, and “she gave him a ‘mercy fuck’ – and got pregnant with his baby” (83). Miranda decided to keep the baby, realizing there was no ‘right’ time to have a child. She “was such a non-traditional expectant mother that she made us wonder if she’d made the right decision after all” (83). Yet, “after spending Season Five as a single mom, Miranda began Season Six with the realization that her non-traditional little family *was* a family – and that Steve was an essential piece of that puzzle” (83). Near the end, “Miranda asked Steve to marry her” (169). By evolving into a mother first and a wife second, “Miranda expanded her world and became an adult in the true sense of the word” (169).

Regardless of Miranda’s final moments taken into her chosen married mother identity, Cynthia Nixon defines singlehood as the most unique discourse in *SATC*:

The show has made singlehood look more fun. Whether or not these women end up getting married, marriage is not the only measure of their lives. The show has moments that make you really pleased to be a woman or to be single, and then it has moments that make you really sad to be both those things. (86)

Laura Tropp, an Associate Professor in the Communication Arts Department at Marymount Manhattan College, accredits Miranda’s unexpected pregnancy to justify how *Sex*

and the City challenge “dominant discourses on pregnancy and motherhood” (861). Unlike Charlotte, “the desexualized ‘good’ woman and potential mother” (863) or Samantha, the “oversexualized ‘bad’ antimom,” (863) Miranda “struggles with definitions of what is a good mother and what she feels are her limited skills in achieving an ideal motherhood” (863) By representing different aspects towards the idea of motherhood, negated female identities become invisible. Tropp quotes Susan E. Chase regarding different perspectives of motherhood:

At different times, in different contexts and from differing social locations, feminists have treated motherhood as an oppressive *and* an empowering experience; a source of alienation from *and* connection to their bodies; a form of work that is enervating *and* rewarding; a relationship that constrains women’s autonomy *and* invites their personal growth; a cause for distance from *and* a bridge to other women; a motivator of conservative *and* progressive political action. (qtd. in Tropp 865)

This concept of different perspectives indicates, according to Tropp, *Sex and the City* as not assigning “any one feminist perspective on the subject of motherhood but uses its characters to reflect differing viewpoints” (865). She concludes, “by having Miranda balance her own desires with cultural expectations of what a mother should be, *Sex and the City* reveals an irony of its own: sometimes art can paint a more credible vision of reality than coverage of the real” (874). Miranda’s journey conveys how there is no simple way to balance family, professional, and personal life.

Samantha Jones

Sohn affirms: “Whether you love Samantha or are appalled by her, the one thing you cannot do is ignore her” (105). She is the “wildest of the four friends”: “Over the course of six seasons, she has slept with forty men, two women (including herself), and numerous vibrators”

(105). For a long time, she “saw monogamy as a disease she didn’t want to catch”; yet, despite her resistance to the concept, “each season she had a lover for whom she cared deeply” (105).

At the end of the First Season, Samantha met James [James Goodwin], who “was loving and accommodating – but, unfortunately, he had a penis the size of a pencil eraser” (105). Season Two saw her getting back in touch with an ex, Dominic (John Shea). “She hoped to get revenge, but he wound up leaving her first (again)” (105). By Season Four, she ventured to lesbian artist Maria (Sonia Braga), “and after deciding that relationships with women involved too much talking, Samantha ended the relationship – but not before a fabulous final night with a strap-on” (105). Later in the same season, “she met her match – a suave hotelier and new client, Richard Wright [James Remar]” (105). They refused “to conform to the expectations of polite society” (105). “And then one night Richard invited her to his rooftop for a midnight swim, and Samantha realized that she possessed something she didn’t want to acknowledge: vulnerability” (105). They agreed to become monogamous. However, she caught him in “a compromising situation with another woman” (105).

Even though Samantha’s “outer warrior would never die, she had discovered her softer core” (Sohn 105). Beginning in the Sixth Season, Smith (Jason Lewis) came into her life. Samantha “found that she liked having this guy around” (105). When she learns she has breast cancer, “it was Smith who took care of her as much as her girlfriends did” (105). Samantha surprised herself holding hands with Smith in the end of the show, “and liking every moment of it” (105).

Samantha’s position relates back to Susan Faludi’s discussion of the antiabortion movement of the 1970s. Where men against the movement “may have said they were just trying to staunch the runaway pace of abortions in this country” (Faludi 412), the reality was abortions

“promptly leveled off and was even declining by the early ‘80s” (412). The real change was “women’s new ability to regulate their fertility without danger or fear – a new freedom that in turn had contributed to dramatic changes not in the abortion rate but in female sexual behavior and attitudes” (412). By securing the “first mass availability of contraceptive devices and then option of medically sound abortions, women were at last at liberty to have sex, like men, on their own terms” (412).

Kim Cattrall assures this representation, aside from Mae West and Madeline Kahn, is “territory nobody’s really done before” (qtd. in Sohn 105). She argues the repression women face if they choose this reality. She explains:

Women who have been ‘sexually free’ or ‘promiscuous’ have been punished through the ages. Whether it’s *Looking for Mr. Goodbar* or Mata Hari or Sappho, whatever the scenario has been about a woman being sexual and being up front about her sexuality, each time she was punished, killed, or abused for it – until recently. The show has made it okay for women to talk about what they like and don’t like sexually. It’s raised the bar for honesty. I think the show is about the struggle to find intimacy and the struggle for wholeness and completeness. (105)

Furthermore, Jennifer B. Gray, a new PhD in the Department of Communication at the University of Kentucky, endorses in her article, “Interpersonal Communication and Illness Experience in the *Sex and the City* Breast Cancer Narrative,” the storyline dealing with Samantha’s breast cancer is a representation of edutainment, “the deliberate placement of educational media messages within programming to change behavior, attitudes, or knowledge about an issue” (398). She concluded the episodes dealing with Samantha’s illness “have the potential to educate and spark discussion of breast cancer and perhaps reach viewers that may

not be reached otherwise. The narrative enhances the understanding of illness among the myriad of communicative influences that face us all” (411). Samantha’s innovative discourse certainly does expand how women may or may not define achievable lifestyles.

Carrie Bradshaw

And finally, Sohn professes that “Carrie Bradshaw, gal-about-town and *New York Star* columnist, is the show’s heart, head, and – quite literally – its voice” (19). Her “search for a man while she struggles to maintain her independence has always been the show’s central emotional story line” (19). Carrie is not like other “television heroines,” (19) for she “does not see marriage as the be-all and end-all of life” (19). “This tension – a longing for connection, coupled with an innate instinct to stay her own course – is what makes Carrie so intriguing to watch and her story so fascinating to follow” (19).

Carrie’s relationships with Charlotte, Miranda, and Samantha “are always strong and vibrant” (19). “She is supportive, a good listener, and seldom judgmental – which enables each of her friends to confide in her in ways that they might not confide in one another” (19). Because of her complexity, “not just any man will do” (19). And so viewers root for her in finding “a soul mate for the woman who is the heart of the show” (19).

Much of her growth comes from her relationships, according to Sohn. “With [Mr.] Big [Chris Noth], Carrie was at her most extreme, yet somehow at her most real – belligerent, pained, posturing, and caring” (19). Aidan [Shaw] [John Corbett] “appealed to Carrie’s more self-assertive instincts” (19). As a “stable, down-home good guy, he forced her to examine her own commitmentphobia” (19). And after two attempts to make a successful relationship work – “one that led to Carrie’s affair with Big, and one that led to their engagement – Carrie remained conflicted, and Aidan left her” (19).

During the entire Fifth Season, “Carrie dated her city and experienced a soul-searching loneliness that, as difficult as it was, made sense” (19). She needed a “cleanse” (19). Carrie, ready for love again, “thought she’d found it in Jack Berger [Ron Livingston]” (19) but “this time it was the man who wasn’t ready” (19). Almost to the end of Season Six (*SATC*’s last), one last romantic interest came along: the Russian Aleksandr Petrovksy [Mikhail Baryshnikov], “an older man who opened Carrie’s world in ways she never could have imagined” (19). However, “Carrie learned that she didn’t want to live in someone else’s world [Paris]” (19). “And then there came Mr. Big again, a man who had finally grown as much as she, the one who clearly lets her be herself” (19). In the series last twenty minutes, “Big, in the grandest of gestures, jetted to Paris to get Carrie, bringing her back to him, back to New York, and, most importantly, back to herself” (Sohn 169).

Darren Star noted when casting Parker for the role: “I felt Sarah Jessica would bring a sense of romanticism and humanity to the character. I needed the combination of her and the role” (15). Cara Lousie Buckley and Brian L. Ott show interest in “demonstrating how Carrie, in fashioning her own identity affords viewers the symbolic resources for (re)fashioning theirs” (210). Critics Michele Byers from St. Mary’s University of Halifax and Rosalin Krieger from University of Toronto, argue in their article “From Ugly Duckling to Cool Fashion Icon: Sarah Jessica Parker’s Blonde Ambitions,” “that certain identities must be marginalized or sublimated in order to attain universality, [and] television producers actually set a very clear boundary around what can be considered a universal (or universalizable) identity, and what must remain outside that boundary (and hence outside the universal) within a particular socio-historical moment” (51). They wrangle that Carrie is actually Jewish, but this identity stays ambivalent

within *SATC*'s content to expand universality to the character so audiences can relate to her.

Darren Star affirmed this claim, stating:

Yes. I feel that definitely, Carrie Bradshaw in many ways can be considered a Jewish character. She wasn't specifically written as a Jewish character, because there was a universality to her, but a lot of qualities people would attribute to someone who is Jewish. But it wasn't necessary to define her as any religion. (52)

Carrie's unacknowledged religion arguably created the opportunity for her discourse to relate with more audiences. Jonathan Bignell, a Reader in Television and Film in the Department of Film, Theatre, and Television at the University of Reading, recognizes in his article "Sex, Confession and Witness," how *SATC*'s sitcom format enables engagement "with questions of feminine identity," (171) but also dissipates them into "physical comedy and verbal wit" (171). He continues, "the sophisticated character comedy, witty phrases, moments of insight and minor revelations that Carrie's voiceover presents distance the viewer from the issues that are the subject of the narrative and instead focus attention on the TV form in which they are communicated" (171). Audience attention then focused on the women's ability "to cope with emotional and social problems rather than their inability to analyse them or to change them" (171). The female voice-over, according to Susan B. Douglas, represent "interior monologues"(102) of "the true, authentic female: what women and girls really thought, really hoped for, really wanted" (102).

Returning back to Southard, "Carrie's first-person narration provides the viewer with one women's perspective and also gives voice to the lives of three other women, which disrupts the postfeminist sense of individuality" (155). Moreover, Carrie's voiceover narration "universalizes this discussion of female dependence" (155). This narration provides "symbolic voice to the

complexity of women's experiences by simultaneously drawing attention to the experience of one, single woman and to the power of women's collectivity" (157) Southard acknowledges the show's restricted ability "to portray diversity along race, class, sexuality, and nationality lines" (164). However, the four protagonists "ongoing feminist struggles offer alternative meanings within a postfeminist climate" (164). Thus, those alternative meanings "expand television's renderings of feminism, which may help produce positive change for women in U.S. culture" (164).

The Impact of *Sex and the City*

Results of a national survey done by Susan Faludi insists women embrace the feminist movement. In her words,

Women themselves don't single out the women's movement as the source of their misery. To the contrary, in national surveys 75 to 95 percent of women credit the feminist campaign with *improving* their lives, and a similar proportion say that the women's movement should keep pushing for change. Less than 8 percent think the women's movement might have actually made their lot worse. (7)

Faludi's results of how women really feel about feminist movement campaigns concern both scholars and critics, especially when analyzing the discourse and implications made from *Sex and the City*'s narrative. Amy Sohn claims "audiences knew they were witnessing television history" (26) when *Sex and the City* premiered in June 1998. With "its deconstruction of sexual and social conventions, mixed with a healthy dose of screwball comedy, [SATC] seduced [viewers] from the beginning" (26). However, this seduction received mixed reactions.

Imelda Whelehan, a feminist critic currently teaching at the University of Tasmania, argues in her book, The Feminist Bestseller: From *Sex and the Single Girl* to *Sex and the City*, post-feminism suggests "feminism is no longer required because women are already finding success in their careers," (162) which is "associated in the popular media with self-absorption, summed up by the television successes of *Ally McBeal* and *Sex and the City*" (162). Whelehan continues, "all these women capitalize on the greater freedoms available to them and are, to varying degrees, successful in the careers they have chosen" (162). However, Whelehan insists these women are not happy with their lives "and there seems to be a huge chasm between the aspirations of their personal lives and those of their professional lives, with the result that their

successes are portrayed as contributing to their misery rather than demonstrating that they have moved beyond the constraints under which their foremothers worked” (162). Furthermore, she also takes issue with *SATC*’s “straight endorsement of the classic romance” (207).

Deborah Jermyn, a Senior Lecturer in Film Studies at the University of Surrey Roehampton, points out in her article “In love with Sarah Jessica Parker: Celebrating Female Fandom and Friendship in *Sex and the City*,” that “one particular line of criticism has regularly surfaced, a rebuke that seems motivated by a desire to ‘expose’ the programme’s perceived hypocrisy by arguing that for all its post-feminist consciousness, *Sex and the City* ultimately amounts to a tale of fixated women who just want to settle down” (208). However, she discovered in her two focus groups, which “provide an account of some of the recurrent themes, debates, and exchanges that emerged” (208) a “sheer delight in a programme where the primary focus and narrative core lies in a set of female friendships, an appeal which evidently crosses the boundaries of age” (208).

Still, many critics see difficult predicament for *SATC*’s women in its narrative, explaining it as negative discourse for other classes of women. Rebecca Brasfield, a Counselor in the Education department at Northeastern Illinois University, contends in her article, “Rereading *Sex and the City*: Exposing the Hegemonic Feminist Narrative,” that “Carrie, Miranda, Samantha, and Charlotte represent a continuum of women’s views and dilemma when it comes to sex, love, and dating” (132). However, “the women’s identities place them within a certain location in our social stratification – the television show centers their perspective” (132). This is a reflection, according to Brasfield, of “the perspectives and values of white, middle-class, heterosexual women who define themselves primarily as oppressed victims of patriarchy” (132). She believes *SATC* has “allegiance to hegemonic feminism,” (133) carefully employing “plotlines promoting

limited and racist depictions of persons of color” (133). With this said, Brasfield concludes, “when we fail to critically read and reread media presentations, we run the risk of internalizing and reproducing our own oppression” (138).

A counterstatement may be established regarding the positive message of the series’ narrative because *Sex and the City* certainly challenges forms of oppression, which are acknowledged in the show. As Gail Markle from the Department of Sociology at Georgia State University states in her article, ““Can Women Have Sex Like a Man?”: Sexual Scripts in *Sex and the City*,” “what is different about *Sex and the City* is the portrayal of committed friendships between the main characters. The highly valued relationships the women have with each other are the foundation of the series. Their conversations with one another are often more intimate than the sex they have with men” (49). Ron Simon also adds that “the four are very much cut from the same quality fabric: white, upper-middle class, stable, with challenging jobs and values informed by postindustrial capitalism” (197).

Even with the backlash criticism, *Sex and the City* is arguably one of the most influential shows for American women today. In the paradigm of fashion, the characters have excelled in representing a model discourse with which American women want to associate. Belinda A. Stillion Southard asserts, “while critics argue that the appearance of these women and their Hollywood-hyped fashion sense may naturalize constructions of femininity, the issues they confront and their public behavior add depth to constructions of women in television and help bring the multiple issues of feminist/femininity struggle to the fore of the feminist agenda” (161).

Meeta Agrawal, a reviewer for Entertainment Weekly, notes that “the only thing hotter than the women of ‘*Sex*’ is “their clothes” (32). In regards to Carrie, she asks “what made the sex columnist a trendsetting icon? Six seasons’ worth of fearless fashion and haute looks” (34).

Agrawal concludes that “Miranda Hobbes’ satirical evolution – from plain and frumpy to chic and fabulous- is as smart and sharp as the lawyer herself” (36), and “a romantic at heart and in style, Charlotte York channels her inner preppy no matter the occasion” (38). Finally, Agrawal proclaims that “from power publicist to sexy man-eater, Samantha Jones’ wardrobe is always in control” (40).

Cara Louise Buckley and Brian L. Ott would also concur that the fashion of *Sex and the City* holds much significance to its popularity with audiences:

The bond that Carrie shares with fashion on the show and her own assertion of identity through the consumption of fashion gives *Sex and the City* moments of uniquely resistive character that rupture the show’s place, nestled firmly in the dominant culture and dominate ideologies of gender, class, race, and sexuality. In watching Carrie literally fashion her identity, viewers are taught how to (re)fashion theirs. They are shown how to use fashion to create their own sense of personal style... [Furthermore] “she provides actual symbolic resources in the form of styles and fashions that viewers can (re)appropriate and put their own personal stamp or spin on. (224)

Simone Werle, lifestyle journalist and author of the book Fashionista: A Century of Style Icons, also sees Carrie’s position as an actual symbolic source for *SATC*’s viewers. She lists Carrie in The Candy Girls category, stating:

Carrie Bradshaw, a.k.a. fashion revolutionary, global fashion phenomenon, and first style icon of the new millennium. And that despite the fact the New York columnist doesn’t really exist. She was born in 1998 on the American television series *Sex and the City*, gestated by actress Sarah Jessica Parker, and dressed with bravura by stylist Patricia

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Field. The New York costume designer's secret behind Carrie's look: a great appetite for fashion risk. (136)

The clothes are fantastical and almost at times seem unreal for any person to have in their own wardrobe. However, Patricia Field declares, "I'm here to entertain. The show is not a documentary. Its success is that it elevates itself a bit above reality" (Sohn 67). Sarah Jessica Parker also noted the significance of the fashion saying; "I knew the clothes were important because I knew women in the city looked a certain way. They don't look like women in other cities, and that doesn't mean they all look like each other" (67). She continues stating, "the clothes are fun, exciting, and intentionally provocative, and they tell a story" (70).

The fashion of *Sex and the City* remains famous. Moreover, *Sex and the City* commemorates much more. For example, Carrie's Mac laptop "is part of the permanent collection at the Smithsonian museum in D.C." (Soll 48). Ron Simon also characterizes *SATC*'s notable prominence summing up its successful impact:

Ninety-four episodes of *Sex and the City* were produced over six years (1998-2004), and the show engaged an audience of almost 6.5 million households on a regular basis, a strong showing for a premium cable channel. Its impact was even greater, as the series helped to establish HBO as a dominant force in the industry. In 2001, *Sex and the City* received the Emmy Award for Outstanding Comedy Series, making it the first cable program to win the Academy of Television & Science's major prize in comedy or drama. Illustrating the show's international appeal, the Hollywood Foreign Press Association awarded it the Golden Globe for Best Television Series: Musical or Comedy for three consecutive years (2000-2002). (202)

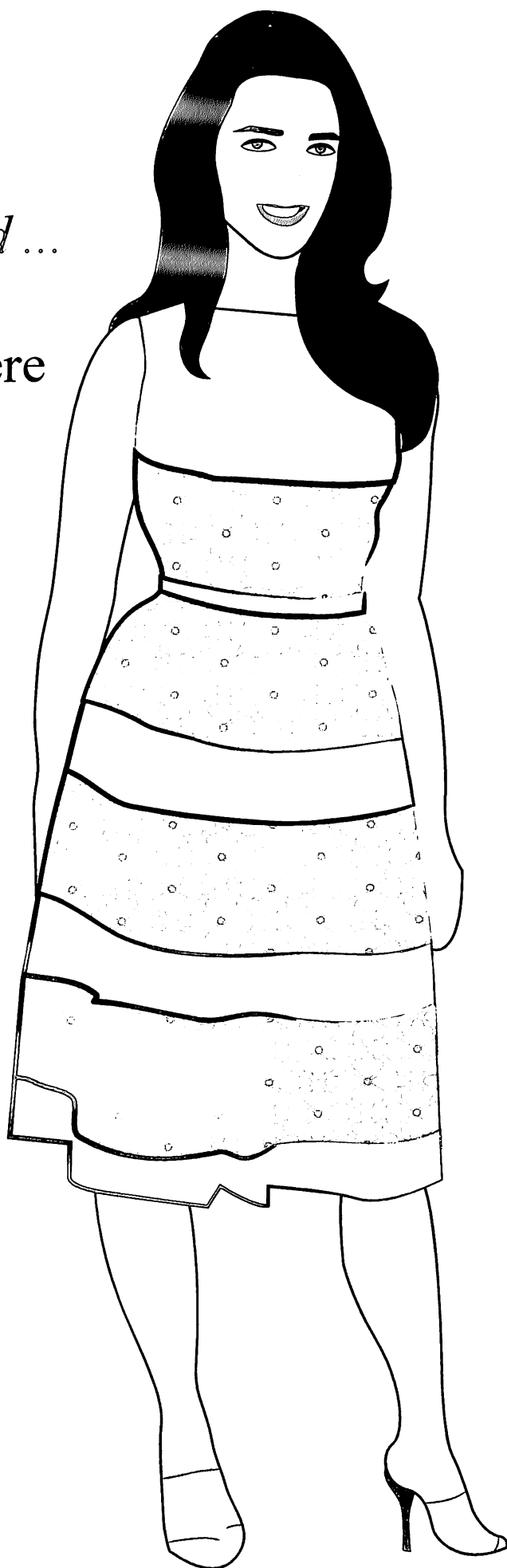
Sex and the City, with its mainstream popularity, communicates a lot of messages to many different kinds of people. Carrie, Charlotte, Miranda and Samantha will always remain a constant representation of women. The legacy they created and bequeathed to those who follow them remains unquestioned and, so far, unchallenged.

“Wait a second ...

I thought you were

serious

about
this guy?



you can't

*sleep
with
him*

on the
first date!”

- Charlotte

Methodology

The research of scholars and critics based on the ‘waves’ of feminism in America, female televisual representation, HBO’s distinctness, *Sex and the City*’s discourse, the four protagonist’s atmosphere, and the effect since its inception, sanction how the researchable question of this thesis characterizes phenomenological research.

John W. Creswell, a Professor of Educational Psychology at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, defines phenomenological research as “a strategy of inquiry in which the researcher identifies the essence of human experiences about a phenomenon as described by participants” (13) Phenomenological research according to Creswell is a qualitative research strategy; “a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (233). Additionally, this method includes in survey research – a strategy of quantitative research – that “provides a quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population” (234).

The survey developed for this thesis (see Appendix for sample) was conducted among 40 female participants who attended the University of the Incarnate Word in San Antonio, Texas. They answered a twenty-one-question survey via email. The questions concerning race, relationship or marital status, and the percentage of *SATC* episodes seen were collated to determine the type of categories these women represent. Furthermore, questions regarding opinions of *SATC*’s narrative, *SATC*’s four protagonists, *SATC*’s significance, feminist identity, and whether or not *SATC* changed or reinforced ideologies of sexuality, femininity, or womanhood were also asked.

With this survey data, the researcher connected respondent's replies to various scenes from *Sex and the City* episodes. This process will demonstrate how *SATC*'s four main characters, especially Carrie Bradshaw, may or may not cultivate third wave identity. Thus, analyzing *SATC*'s narrative and the survey results in this manner may determine if these fictional women act as progressive opinion leaders of the current American paradigm of feminism.

“Everyone else is
GLOWING

about my
pregnancy,

why can't I?”

- Miranda



Data Analysis

The survey administered among 40 women generated enlightening results. Percentage data tallied up the general demographic of these participants, and more open-ended questions interrelated to how they feel about *SATC* and its women. The data analysis from the survey results verifies how these women think and feel about the show, but more importantly, it establishes how the third wave feminist American paradigm currently exists.

The participant's Race (see Figure 1) was categorized into four types: Black, Hispanic, Caucasian, and Mixed. The Hispanic demographic, with sixty percent, produced the highest type. There is little shock with this outcome; the population of San Antonio, Texas consists highly of a Hispanic demographic.

Participant's relationship status's (see Figure 2) fill into three types: In a Relationship, Single, and Married. Results indicate a fair balance between women in relationships (47.5%) and those who are single (42.5 %). Married women comprised ten percent, however, women who identified as married should be considered in more established permanent relationships. The respectable balance in this relationship dichotomy supports how the opinions of this small research group personify two different perspectives well of 'single girls' and the taken.

In the *Sex and the City* Episodes Viewed (See Figure 3) section, results were mixed. Fifty-seven and a half percent watched all ninety-four episodes. Twenty-five percent had seen some (1-46) episodes; seven and a half percent had seen none at all. And finally those who viewed more than half (48-93) or half (47) of the total episodes divided equally into five percent. These results indicate a diverse group of exposure to *SATC*'s narrative.

Another relevant category describes the participants' Years of Watching *Sex and the City* (see Figure 4). Three types of viewers emerged from this question: Heavy (5-10 years), Medium (1-5 years), and Light (0 years). With a staggering fifty-five percent, the amount of heavy viewers displayed the highest percentage. Thirty-two and a half percent fell into medium viewers, while twelve and a half percent of participants were made up of light-none viewers. Diversity of different types of viewers is important, but moreover, with a high percentage of these participants in the high viewing category, better conclusions of *SATC*'s discourse support the effectiveness of this study on the series.

The next question categorized the participants' Favorite *Sex and the City* character (See Figure 5). Results created six different answers: Carrie, Charlotte, Miranda, Samantha, All, and None. Carrie and Samantha both tied with thirty-three percent. Charlotte followed with sixteen percent, while Miranda garnered seven and a half percent. A noticeable seven and half percent answered none of them as a favorite. And only two and half percent claimed all the characters as favorites. The relevancy in these results affirms how the participants, just like the characters of *SATC*, represent different lifestyles and choices – another indication of the third wave paradigm.

Two final questions measured if participants identified as feminist (See Figure 6) and whether *SATC* changed or reinforced their beliefs on femininity, sexuality, or womanhood (See Figure 7). An astounding seventy percent of participants identified as feminist while thirty percent did not. Inquiry concerning if *SATC* changed or reinforced views on femininity, sexuality, or womanhood showed forty-seven and a half percent felt *SATC* changed their views while seventeen and a half percent of participants showed unchanged views. Furthermore, thirty-five percent of these women claimed *SATC* reinforced their beliefs on these themes. Results from these two questions establish that *SATC* does produce impact among women who have seen the

show. These final questions offer a general picture of respondents both as a group and in large categories.

Figure 1

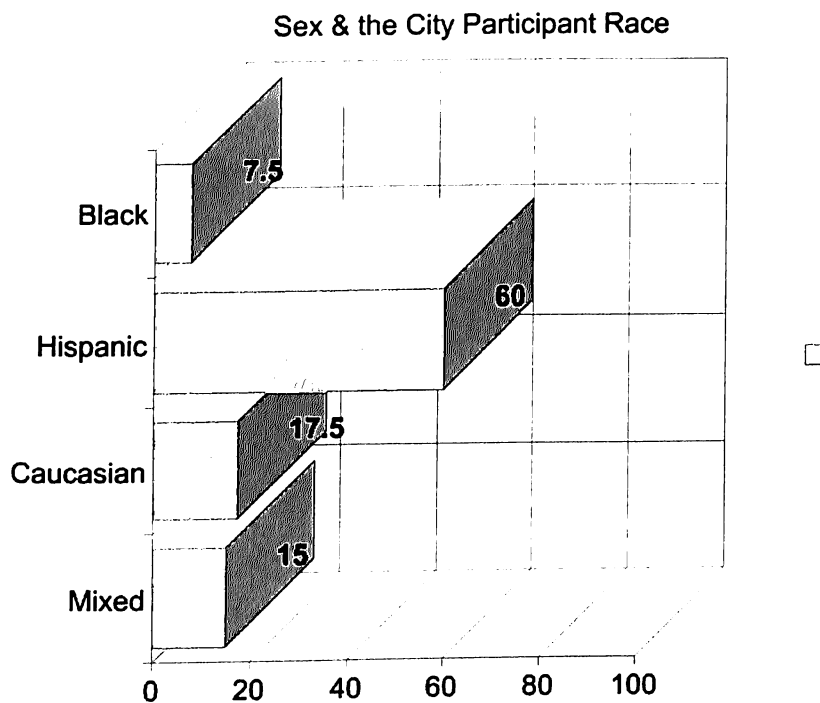


Figure 2

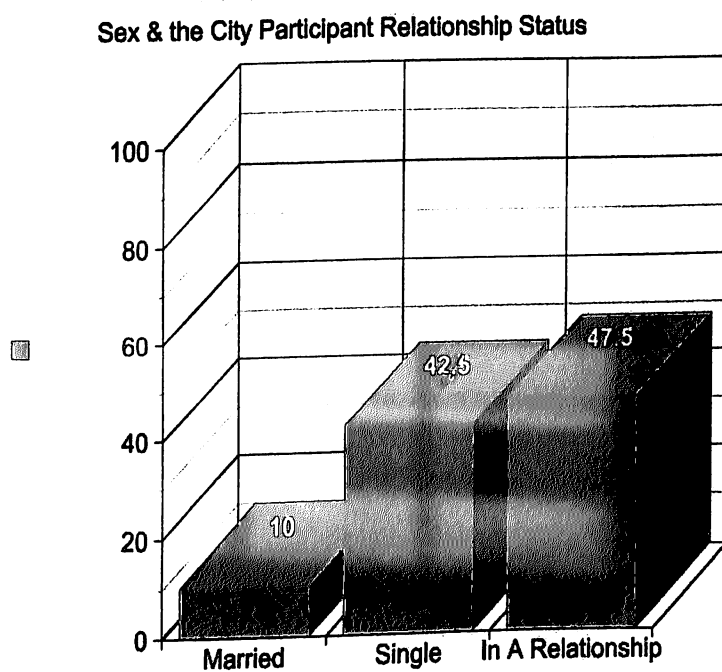


Figure 3

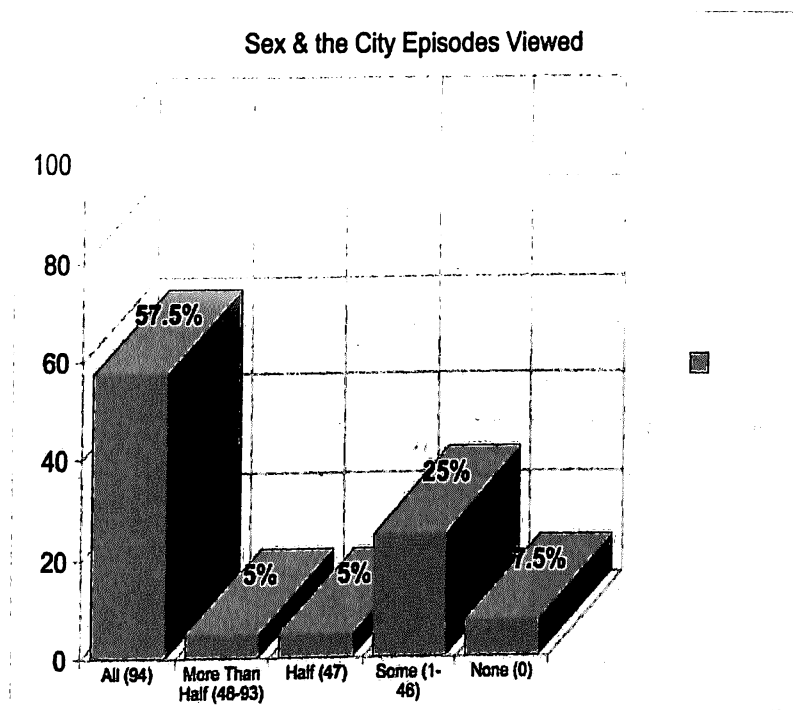


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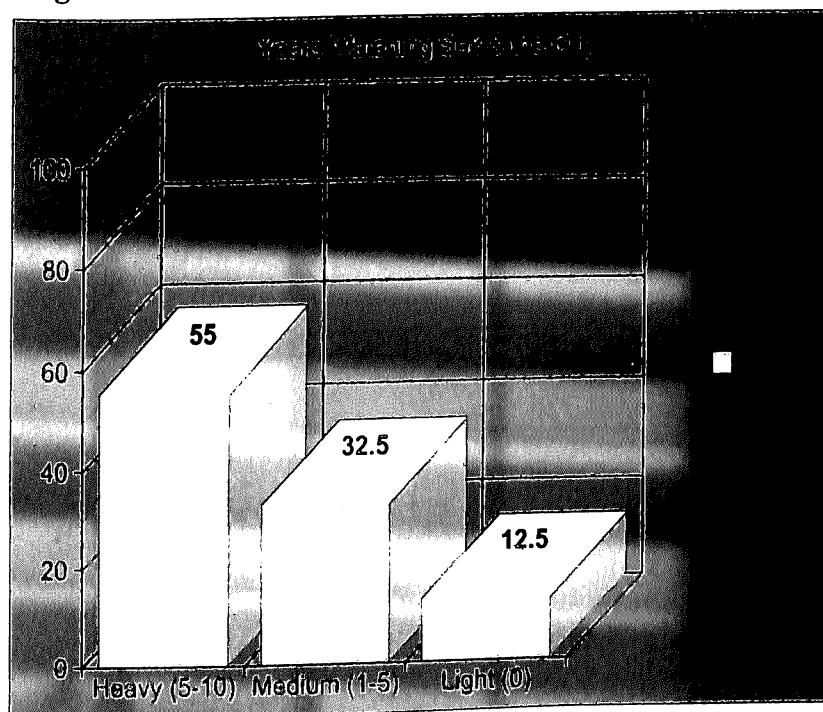


Figure 5

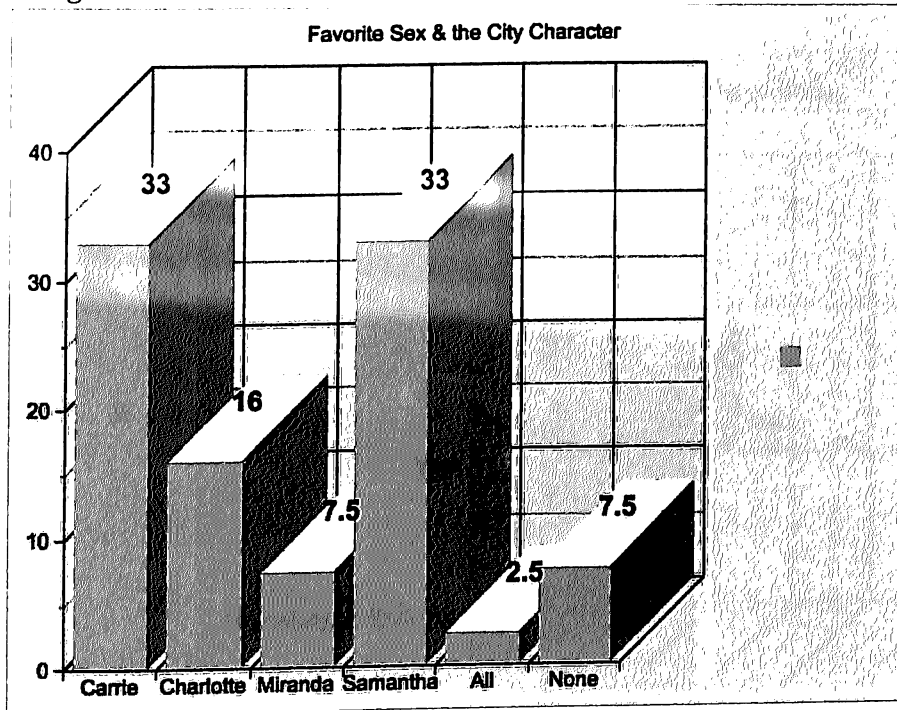


Figure 6

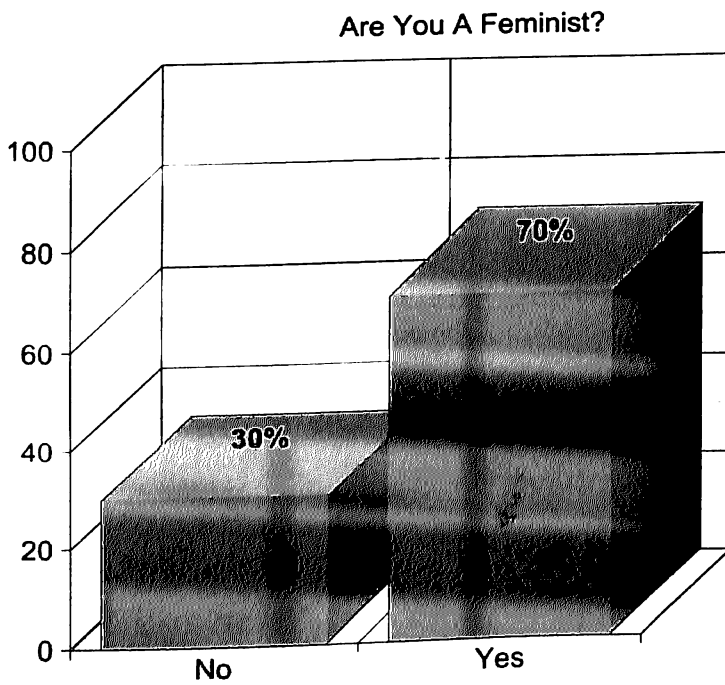
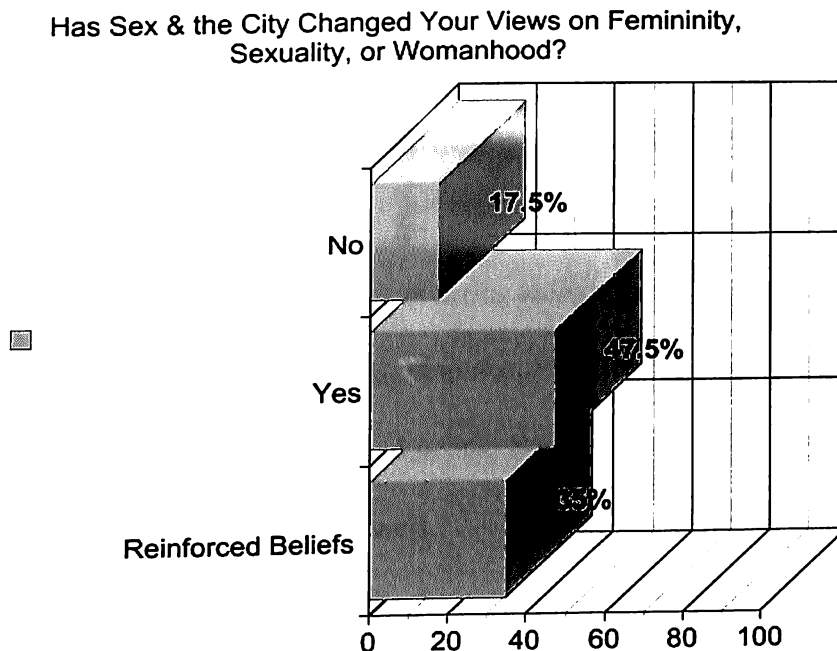


Figure 7



The latter questions of the survey gave opportunity for the participants to express their personal opinions of the show, the four women, and feministic beliefs – which showed various outcomes. Interestingly, their explanations of what they value in the characters and series supports how they themselves are third wave associated. Examining respondent's open-ended answers shows how *Sex and the City* viewing aesthetically promote the third wave feminist paradigm that defines how women individually choose their own identity.

The pilot episode “Sex and the City” introduces the protagonists in a very new light not seen in other shows. Carrie boldly describes the current imbalance between women and men. The atmosphere in New York City, a place where the ‘single girl’ has multiple opportunities, still displays men in control. *SATC*’s narrative never directly acknowledges it, but it seems even though first and second wave feminist movements granted women the ability to embody the life they choose, they still encounter endless shortcomings. Instead of implying this uneven reality exists, Carrie certifies it and breaks the fourth wall, looks directly to the camera (you) and asks:

"How the hell did we get into this mess" (1:1) With Carrie articulating the current inequality status, it became clear *SATC*'s women were displaying a truer representation of reality.

Participant 3 claims:

I think that *Sex and the City* is great because it shows an honest portrayal of women.

Throughout history (*I Love Lucy*, *The Mary-Tyler Moore Show*, and *Designing Woman*) female characters in various series were still oppressive in their presentations of women.

I think when I started watching the show it was refreshing to see women that weren't afraid to fulfill their sexual needs, honest about their lives, were a little vulgar, but also showed their failures as well.

This claim of realism articulated in *Sex and the City* was not a rare one. Many of the participants affirmed how televisual representations of women were limited before its airing.

Participant 16 believes:

It's just interesting, nothing like that was really on TV before. It pushed the envelope and it showed the different aspects of women and how they have no shame in revealing intimate details about their lives with best friends. Just because it had sex in the title didn't mean that's all it was. It was about the lives of women and the different experiences they can have while trying to find Mr. Right.

Clearly, *SATC*'s women were presenting innovative identities of the American 'single girl.' In the final scene of the pilot episode, Carrie is taken home by Mr. Big. Their flirtatious conversation left Carrie feeling curious and even nervous towards him. Upon arrival at her apartment, she walks out of the car and says goodnight. However, in an effort to understand him, a man who defines the typical American male representation, she rushes back to the car and asks, "Have you ever been in love" (1:1)? Big then responds, "Abso-fuckin'-lutely" (1:1). Carrie then

turns around and the screen image of her freezes, concluding the first episode. An affirmation is made in this final scene: men can love. But the question left here is: what kind of woman does a man want to love? Carrie, and her friends, will now embark on a journey, and the viewers have not only the pleasure to watch, but learn from their experiences.

Carrie, Charlotte, Miranda, and Samantha exhibit different personalities. The dialogue of the narrative primarily pertains to their love lives and the relationship issues they currently face. This dialogue, because they are different women, presents a balanced American female perspective. More specifically, these four perspectives in the beginning represent single girls. Participant 1, who classifies all of them as her favorite, agrees with this balanced perspective, claiming:

I think of them as the four elements: Miranda represents earth (steady, strong, grounded, practical), Carrie represents air (quirky, imaginative, creative, adaptable), Charlotte represents water (nurturing, emotional, maternal, a dreamer), and Samantha represents fire (assertive, temperamental, loud, uninhibited). I relate to each of them in different manners, so they are all very close to my heart.

Moreover, Participant 12 also acknowledged the perspective balance in the women's storylines, stating:

I feel the show has a good balance of characters/personalities. In my opinion, they each have their own flaws: Carrie is hooked on Big enough to think irrationally; Charlotte is too much of a romantic that it leaves her vulnerable to heartbreak; Miranda's overly pessimistic outlook on the dating realm prevents her from fully enjoying her own; and Samantha's reckless sexual exploitation may lead to her love life's demise. But generally speaking, these characteristics are of the norm (whatever that means). Nobody's

perfect—not even the hip New Yorker’s who drink high-end cosmos as casually as my Valley self drinks cheap, Mexican beer. And love takes no hostages. I believe *SATC* depicts that reality well.

Indeed, the four women are elements of balance, and they do influence viewers. However, Carrie centralizes the entire *SATC* universe, hence; her character possesses extreme capability to influence American women.

Carrie is structured as the collective voice. She provides voice over narration that connects her experiences with her girlfriends, thus, she centers the narrative structure of the series. From her friendship with the girls, to her relationships with Mr. Big and Aidan, and most uniquely, her extreme love and use of fashion, Carrie introduced the positive televisual representation of the American ‘single girl.’ Not only did she critique sexist domains; she loudly stood up to the injustices they were placed in. She refuses to be ignored and often times she executes brave verbal actions to confront antagonism. For example, in episode eighty-one, “The Post-It Always Sticks Twice,” Carrie explains why it is fundamentally wrong to break up with a woman on a post-it. She blatantly proclaimed:

You can have the guts and the courtesy to tell a woman to her face that you no longer want to see her. Call me crazy, but I think you can make a point of ending your relationship in a manner that does not include an email, a doorman or a missing persons report. I think you could all get over your fear of looking like the bad guy and actually have the uncomfortable break-up conversation because here's what: avoiding that is what makes you the bad guy. And just so you know, Alan... **Andrew:** Andrew. **Carrie:** Uh huh. Most women aren't angry, irrational psychos. We just want an ending to a relationship that is thoughtful and decent and honors what we had together. So my point,

Billy. is this. There is a good way to break-up with someone and it doesn't include a post-it! (6:81)

Many survey participants connected mostly with Carrie. In her answer to favorite character, Participant 8 stated:

Carrie, of course. She's the main character who completely lets us into her life and lets us be a part of her friendships and relationships, which we grow to love. I believe since the show is seen from her perspective I've grown attached to her the most. Plus, I am a huge fan of her and Mr. Big's on and off again relationship. She's a wonderful woman with a good head on her shoulders who loves shoes and has great sense of style.

Carrie's voice over narration also, according to several participants, permits viewers' connection because they hear her inner-thoughts. They could relate more with her. As Participant 17 claimed,

I think it's great that we get to see and hear Carrie's thoughts and points of view through her writing. We see all these other shows that has the main character struggling with money, boys, and friend troubles but we never get to experience how she copes with it and her thought process. I think as a female and a growing person, it's very important to get all kinds of views on how to handle situations.

The discourse of Carrie would not be fulfilled without one last important element: fashion. Not once in *SATC* did Carrie wear an outfit a second time. Her fashion persona helped to carry the story. Fashion, arguably, is a commodity that women, especially single women, love to embrace. Of course, Charlotte, Miranda and Samantha promote their fashion sense as well. Still, Carrie's love and admiration for fashion, particularly her Manolo Blahnik shoes, produced

more connection with women. Participant 10 discussed how Carrie's fashion helped change her views of femininity, sexuality, and womanhood, stating:

Carrie was a great character because she contributed to fashion trends. Women tried to emulate her style, which in turn made Sarah Jessica Parker a style icon as well. The show created four strong women, but showed their insecurities as well. Carrie's outlandish fashion made me want to be daring in my own fashion and realize it's ok to continue to be that way well into your 40's.

The survey results clearly suggest Carrie, of the four characters, influence real women in the US. She is a role model for the American 'single girl' trying to find her place in the world. And whether that placement involves finding a man to share her life with or gliding down the runway solo, she asserts that no matter what discourse women take, they should be proud, comfortable, and happy in that paradigm. Furthermore, in the hypothetical idea that a woman might end up single forever, Carrie, Charlotte, Miranda, and Samantha offer an alternative to the hegemonic discourse of family.

The friendships of the women in *Sex and the City* display a paradigm never seen in television before. Carrie, Charlotte, Miranda, and Samantha compose a family. This family redefines traditional televisual representations. Throughout the series, only one relative, Charlotte's brother Wesley, interacts with the characters. However, once the 'authors' used a relative, they decided to stay away from them for good. These women did not need support from the family they were born into. *SATC*'s women were completely capable of happiness within their self-made family. This new approach re-arranged how people can look to their friends for support. The significance of the *SATC* family produces more lifestyle options, which is important to portray in popular television. Participant 4 affirmed the strength of this friendship stating:

Sometimes, we fight and call it quits to friendships. *SATC* ladies valued their relationships, even during the most difficult times.

A backlash, however, has been observed by some survey participants. Participant 6 displayed concern with the women's family, stating:

SATC has forced me to recognize the limitations of contemporary women; we are so consumed by the little things that we forget about the bigger pictures. For instance, I have always wondered why women on *SATC* (almost all of them), had no families—mothers, fathers, siblings—at their weddings. I think that this is problematic. Yes, they choose to become mothers (possibly), but other than Miranda, we never hear of family. I believe that *SATC* equates women's rights with a 'woman's right to shoes.'

This is a relevant point made. However, if *SATC* had conformed to television ideologies of what defines a family, there would have been no crucial significance in this discourse. These women truly care about each other. Like all families, they experience many moments of happiness and discomfort with one another. For example, in episode forty-six, "Frenemies," Charlotte and Samantha heavily argue about sexual relationships. They both treat sex differently, and each one stands hard ground on their beliefs. Charlotte eventually yells, "Oh my god, you're such a..." (3:46) until Samantha interrupts asking boldly, "A what? What am I, Charlotte?" (3:46) The implication at this moment is that Samantha is a slut. A doubtful moment lingers on the friendship of Charlotte and Samantha at this moment. Charlotte then decides to reacquaint herself with her old college sorority sisters of Kappa Kappa Gamma. Carrie narrates in her voice over, "She knew they would understand her. After all, they were all married too" (3:46). When her sorority sisters begin to mildly discuss their own marriages, Charlotte (who is slightly drunk) feels secure to confess her marital issues:

Charlotte: My husband can't get it up. I'm so frustrated. I mean don't you ever just want to be pounded really hard you know? Like when the bed is moving all around, and it's knocking up against the head board and you feel like it might just blow off? Dammit I just really want to be fucked, ya know, just really fucked!

Sorority Sister 1: Charlotte, this is really inappropriate.

Sorority Sister 2: We're eating.

Sorority Sister 3: What's wrong with you, Charlotte? You such a...

Charlotte: A what? What am I, Sydney? (3:46)

Carrie's voice over articulates Charlotte's thoughts as she gets up and walks away saying, "Her friends had become frenemies. And to them, she had become...Samantha" (3:46).

The crucial moment of Charlotte being defined as a slut by someone else who is not a true friend made her realize she was wrong, and Samantha truly cares about her. The episode concludes with them commencing their friendship. These family defining moments continuously run through SATC's narrative.

The strength of the friendship in *Sex and the City*'s women also dealt with more serious matters like finances. In episode sixty-four, "Ring A Ding Ding," Carrie needs to find a way to buy her apartment back. Otherwise, Aidan, with whom she just broke up with, will sell it, leaving her homeless. Miranda and Samantha offer to help Carrie. However, Charlotte remains silent during this conversation, and offers no financial support. Carrie, infuriated at the thought of losing her home, goes to visit Charlotte and tells her she would have helped her if she were in such a predicament. After they argue about the matter, Carrie leaves, still in a financial dilemma. In the final scene, Charlotte and Carrie rekindle their friendship over dinner. Then, Charlotte pulls out her engagement ring from her failed marriage with Trey and offers it to Carrie, who

accepts the ring with the agreement that she will pay her back the money in time. Carrie narrates at the end, “Charlotte had taken her painful past and turned it into my hopeful future, and that made the ring priceless” (4:63). This moment defines how close the women truly are with one another. The women are not substitutive roles for boyfriends or husbands; they are truly sisters who can rely on each other for support. Participant 5 agrees with this family strength, stating:

What was significant to me was that there was a group of women with different views of life and sex and they were all close loving friends. They all had different stories going on in their lives and views on how to deal with the ups and downs, but they still managed to sit down and be caring loving people.

SATC’s portrayal of a family establishes how the ‘single girl’ may live a happy and fulfilled life. There is no need to evaluate one’s accomplishments based on motherhood and wedding rings. The concept of the ‘single girl’ has progressed with the help of this family theme.

Not only does *Sex and the City* promote a different kind of family for its characters, the series empowers the ‘single girl.’ They find themselves in questionable situations that give them concern to their identity. For example, in episode fifty, “The Real Me,” Carrie participates in a fashion show. Throughout the episode she thinks in dual roles as a ‘real’ person and model. This conflict makes her afraid of being criticized when she walks on the runway. She wants to be taken seriously as a professional writer and admired as potential model. When the moment arrives for her to walk, the song “Got To Be Real” by Cheryl Lynn begins to play; she enters the stage, only to trip and fall in front of the crowd. She then narrates:

I had a choice; I could slink off the runway and let my inner model die of shame, or I could pick myself up, flaws 'n all and finish. And that’s just what I did. Because when real people fall down in life, they get right back up and keep on walking. (4:50)

She proceeds down the runway in only one shoe, smiling the entire way. The symbolism of Carrie losing one shoe shows how there is no true form of perfection, and one must accept themselves and others for who they are. The emphasis of Carrie's realism is catapulted by Cheryl Lynn's disco anthem because the track loudly professes lyrics ("Ooh, your love's for real now. You know that your love is my love. My love is your love. Our love is here to stay. What you find-ah. What you feel now. What you know-a to be real.") defining a true human. Carrie provokes a new powerful message here. However, people do not always accept what is different.

In episode eighty-three, "A Woman's Right to Shoes," Carrie attends a baby welcoming party of a former 'single girl,' Kyra (Tatum O'Neal). Because Kyra believes people bring in germs and dust with their shoes that could make her children sick, she makes everyone take them off before entering the party. When Carrie is on her way out, she discovers that her shoes have been stolen. Interestingly, Kyra is not bothered at all that Carrie's \$485 Manolo Blahnik shoes have suddenly been taken. Throughout the episode, Carrie inquires to Kyra about finding the shoes. Since they cannot be traced, Kyra offers to pay only \$200 to her, explaining how the price for shoes as expensive as \$485 is absurd. They debate this issue:

Carrie: You know how much Manolo's cost. You used to where Manolos.

Kyra: Sure, before I had a real life.

Carrie: I have a real life.

Kyra: No offense, Carrie, but I really don't think we should have to pay for your extravagant lifestyle. I mean, it was your choice to buy shoes that expensive.

Carrie: Yes, but it wasn't my choice to take them off. (6:83)

The conversation at hand symbolizes the mother and wife versus the 'single girl.' Kyra

decides to judge Carrie instead of celebrate her choice. The idea infuriates Carrie, and rightfully so. If Carrie can support a former 'single girl' in her choice to get married and have children then why shouldn't Kyra support Carrie's choice to remain single? The episode ends with Carrie leaving a voicemail message to Kyra. Carrie says she is getting married...to herself. And she is registered at Manolo Blahnik. The episode ends with Carrie walking around the city in her new replaced shoes once more. She concludes in voice-over narration:

The fact is, sometimes it's hard to walk in a single woman's shoes. That's why we need really special ones now and then to make the walk a little more fun (6:83).

Participant 15 agrees with this paradigm of Carrie's defense, stating:

SATC was not shy at exposing women's sexuality and it really changed my view as to not being ashamed of sexuality and being a single woman. I believe there is a stigma with women over a certain age that have not gotten married and this show is almost breaking this stigma letting woman know that you can be selfish and focus on yourself. Happiness can be found in different aspects of your life—there shouldn't be a norm.

The end of the *Sex and the City* narrative eventually came to a full circular close. In the series finale, "An American Girl in Paris: Part Duex," Carrie, Charlotte, Miranda, and Samantha all find themselves not single, but in committed relationships. Carrie realizes what she wants, claiming, "I am someone who is looking for love. Real love. Ridiculous, inconvenient, consuming, can't-live-without-each-other love" (6:94). Mr. Big in the grandest gesture rescues Carrie in Paris. When they arrive to New York back in front of Carrie's stoop, she asks if he wants to come up. He answers: "Abso-fuckin'-lutely" (6:94). Carrie and her friends inevitably found the kind of relationships with men that were suitable for them. They began as 'single

girls.’ and over the course of the show each one discovered how to love herself. And once self-love was achieved, they became committed to men who loved the kind of women they are.

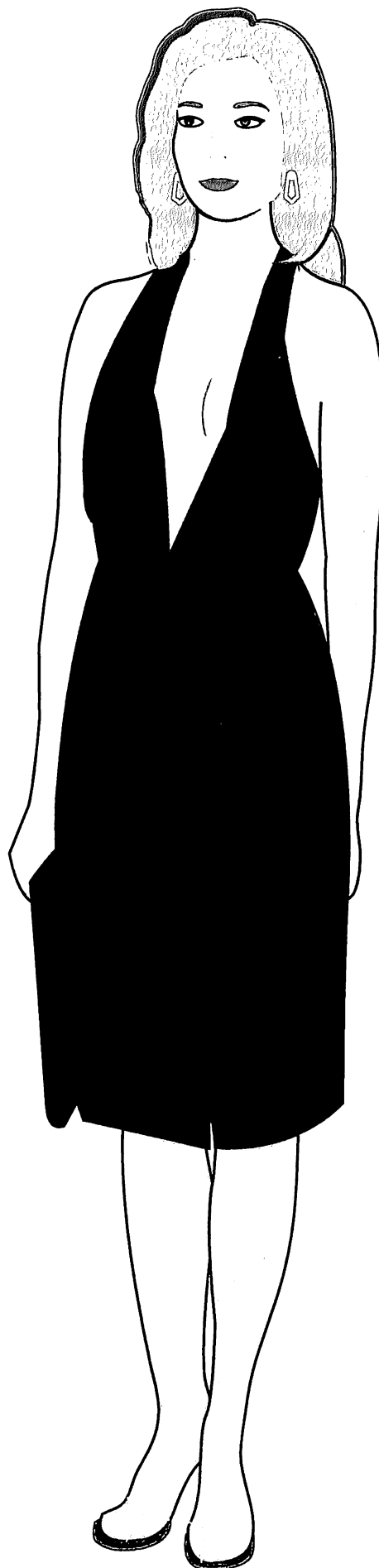
The survey results indicate that American women primarily have been influenced in their view of feminism from the discourse of *Sex and the City*. These results are significant considering the series finale originally aired eight years ago (2004). In 2004, most participants were around sixteen years old. At the very least, influence of *Sex and the City* seems to have significant effect among women on college campuses.

*“Honey,
my vagina*

*waits
for*

NO man.”

- Samantha



Conclusion

Sex and the City's discourse contributes symbolic functions with the capability to cultivate women's perspective. The series certainly is limited in depicting all women of the world; these women affirm the superiority of a certain type of woman: thin, upper middle-class, educated, etc. We continue to witness popular beauty myths of the American aesthetic. However, given this traditional aesthetic that people are familiar viewing, the paradigm of *SATC* reconstructs family into a less narrow frame, feminist classification into third wave, and female identity in televisual representation. Carrie Bradshaw evoked empathy to its viewers. The sex columnist, the adulteress, and the fashionista conveyed and still does, according to this research, a reposition of this type of woman in a positive portrayal, cultivating the acceptance of the 'single girl.'

Cultivation Theory certifies how *Sex and the City* influences positive representation of the 'single girl.' The theory was "developed to explain the effects of television viewing on people's perceptions, attitudes, and values" (268). Theorist George Gerbner explains the "effect of all this exposure to the same messages produces what these researchers call cultivation, or the teaching of a common worldview, common roles, and common values" (268). If this theory is valid, "television could be having important but unnoticeable effects on society" (268). The analysis of the writer's survey research provides substantial evidence that *SATC* indeed is a demonstration of cultivation.

The redefining of the 'single girl' in America is important in expanding female identity. Not every woman represents a character from the show. However, these portrayals of single women give an opportunity for a woman to be associated in the paradigm with no disgrace. Hence, society is actualizing the paradigm defined through a fictional narrative.

Suggestions for Further Research:

In future studies, research may be done on the influence of *The Carrie Diaries*, a new series based on the novels narrating Carrie Bradshaw's high school years. The show is set to air on the CW Network. If success follows, then this new audience will certainly seek out the original HBO series *Sex and the City* to follow Carrie's adult adventures. The potential success it may endure all over again with new audiences may affirm how *SATC* continues to better and diversify women in American society. Further research on *SATC* may concern itself of how women, who don't identify as feminists, may in fact be feminists without knowing so. Thus, it may be established how the American feminist social movement is still alive.

Additionally, in the future, *Sex and the City*'s protagonists themselves may still live on. HBO's new television series *Girls*, which follows the lives of four friends in their twenties in New York City, presents a new generation of being young and single in the Big Apple. Creator and star Lena Dunham states:

We acknowledge that this show couldn't exist without *Sex and the City*. These are girls [the four protagonists] who were raised on *Sex and the City*. It's a part of why they're all moving to New York... But maybe it's something you save for the series' finale. You know, it's this amazing moment where they're [*SATC*'s protagonists] just sitting at a table in the background. (qtd. in Malkin)

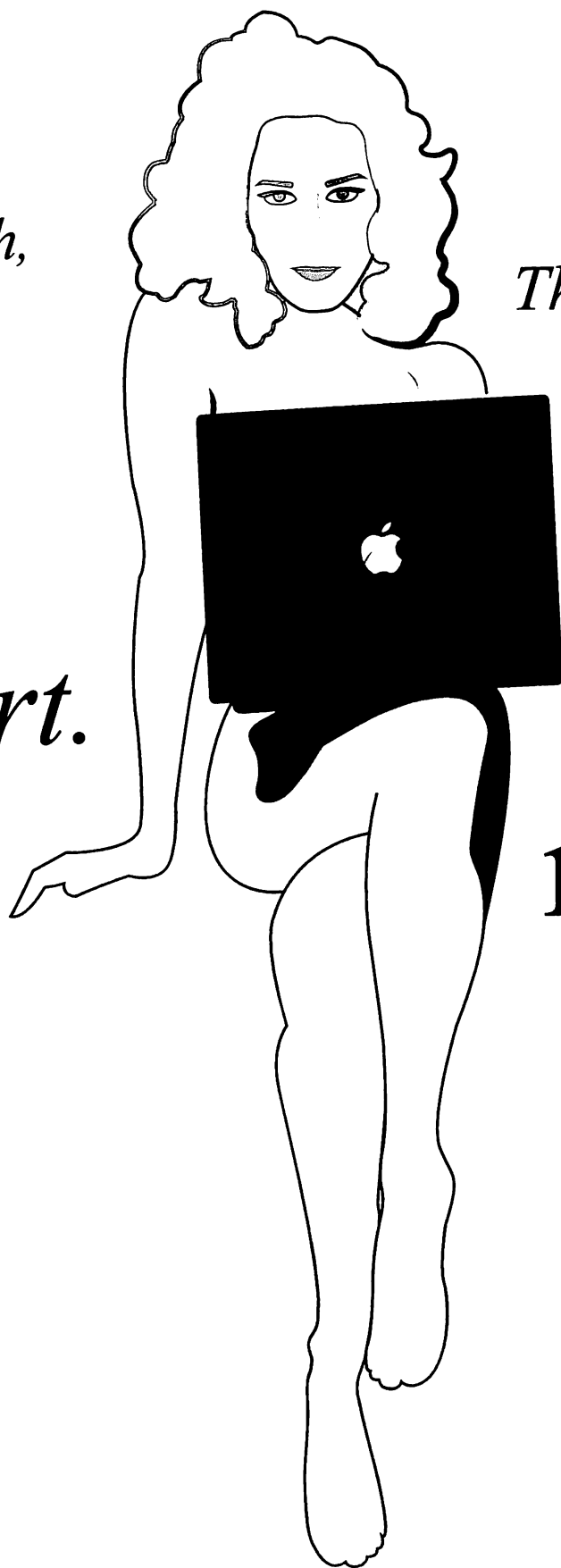
The presence of these fictional characters still living through newer forms of televisual representation certifies their impact on American society.

In concluding this study on the 'single girl' and how *Sex and the City* advances this role in American society, we must examine Carrie Bradshaw's final quote of the series:

“Later that day I got to thinking about relationships. There are those that open you up to something new and exotic, those that are old and familiar, those that bring up lots of questions, those that bring you somewhere unexpected, those that bring you far from where you started, and those that bring you back. But the most exciting, challenging and significant relationship of all is the one you have with yourself. And if you can find someone to love the you you love, well, that's just fabulous” (6:94).

Carrie is proclaiming the importance of a woman's love to herself. To obtain happiness, one must be satisfied with oneself. *Sex and the City* above anything else, promotes the need for women to be comfortable with who they are. American society has room for all kinds of identities, even for the ‘single girl.’

“After all,
computers crash,
people die,
relationships
fall apart.



The best we can do
is breathe
and
reboot.”

- Carrie

Notes

1. Theorist Stuart Hall explains, “things don’t mean: we construct meaning, using representational systems – concepts and signs” (25). This method is called the constructionist approach. *Sex and the City* abides to this theory of representation. Hall says:

It is social actors who use the conceptual systems of their culture and the linguistic and other representational systems to construct meaning, to make the world meaningful and to communicate about that world meaningfully to others. (25)

2. According to film and television writer and lecturer, Robert McKee, voice over narration is another form of exposition. Exposition defines the facts of the story – “the information about setting, biography, and characterization that the audience needs to know to follow and comprehend the events of the story” (335).

3. McKee also affirms all stories take the form of the quest. He define the quest as:

For better or worse, an event throws a character’s life out of balance, arousing in him [or her] the conscious and/or unconscious desire for that which he [or she] feels will restore balance, launching him [or her] on a Quest for his [or her] Object of Desire against forces of antagonism (inner, personal, extra-personal). He [or she] may or may not achieve it.

This is story in a nutshell. (196)

4. Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s novel, *Herland*, illustrates “an all-female world where that was close to nature, balanced, and nurturing, in contrast to men’s violence, competition, and jealousy” (Freedman 69). The subtext of the novel positions women in empowerment. Freedman states:

Appropriating Darwinian ideas in the service of women’s rights, Gilman argued from biology that life-giving women were naturally superior to men, whose behavior reflected a primitive aggression. By crediting women with the advancement of civilization, she

reversed evolutionary theories of natural male dominance. Yet she retained evolutionary racial hierarchies by charging African civilizations with primitive barbarism toward women while praising Teutonic cultures for the strength of their women. (69)

5. The term queered, according to Cara Louise Buckley and Brian L. Ott, is a term “closely aligned with a critical sensibility and represents a break with the dominant desire to categorize and normalize” (213). The term acknowledges the “exclusionary potential of ‘normal’ and seeks instead to find a space upon which the maximum amount of inclusion can be enacted by continually staying in the space of the abnormal” (213).

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Appendix I: Sex and the City Survey

My name is Cameron Tufino. I am conducting research to obtain my Masters Degree in Media Studies at the University of the Incarnate word.

This survey is to discover women's opinions of *Sex and the City* and views on feminism.

If you agree to this research you will be asked a series of short questions. Your answers will remain anonymous and are confidential. You will be provided a copy of this form if you so desire. Your answers will be kept securely stored in a private place and no one will have access to this but me.

Please, answer these questions as truthfully and thoroughly as possible. Take your time in reading and answering questions. Consider looking over the questions once before writing to prevent repetition in answers. Thank you for your time.

Name:

Race:

Age:

Married?

Single?

In A Relationship?

Parent?

1. **How many years have you watched *SATC*?**
2. **How many *SATC* episodes have you seen?**
3. **How often do you watch *SATC*?**
4. **Did you watch *SATC* on HBO, TBS, E!, Netflix, or DVD?**
5. **What is important/significant to you about *SATC*?**
6. **What do you think is right, wrong, good or bad about *SATC*?**
7. **What do you think is right, wrong, good or bad about Carrie?**
8. **What do you think is right, wrong, good or bad about Charlotte?**
9. **What do you think is right, wrong, good or bad about Miranda?**
10. **What do you think is right, wrong, good or bad about Samantha?**
11. **Who is your favorite character of *SATC*? Why?**
12. **How do you define feminism?**
13. **Do you consider yourself a feminist?**
14. **In what ways has *SATC* affected your ideas about feminism?**
15. **Has *SATC* changed your views on sexuality, femininity, or womanhood?**

VITA

Cameron Michael Tufino, was born in San Antonio, Texas, on January 9, 1988, the son of JoAnn Tufino and Carlos Tufino. After completing his work at Central Catholic High School, San Antonio, Texas, in 2006, he entered the University of the Incarnate Word at San Antonio, Texas. During the summers he attended both UIW and San Antonio Community College. He received the degree of Bachelor of Arts from the University of the Incarnate Word in December, 2011. During his years of study, he was employed at UIW as a Public Relations Assistant. In January of 2011, he entered the graduate program in Communication Arts at the University of the Incarnate Word.

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This thesis was typed by Cameron M. Tufino.

“...but the most *exciting, challenging*, and *significant* relationship of all
is the one you have with yourself.

And if you find someone to love the you you love,
well, that's just *fabulous*.”

- Carrie

