ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: SCREENING DIVERSITY: WOMEN AND
                                WORK IN TWENTY-FIRST
                                CENTURY POPULAR CULTURE

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Screening Diversity: Women and Work in Twenty-first Century Popular Culture

explores contemporary representations of diverse professional women on screen.

Audiences are offered successful women with limited concerns for feminism, anti-

racism, or economic justice. I introduce the term *viewers* to describe a group of

movie and television viewers in the context of the online review platform Internet

Movie Database (IMDb) and the social media platforms Twitter and Facebook.

Screening Diversity follows their engagement in a representative sample of

professional women on film and television produced between 2007 and 2015. The

sample includes the television shows, *Scandal, Homeland, VEEP, Parks and

Recreation,* and *The Good Wife*, as well as the movies, *Zero Dark Thirty, The

Proposal, The Heat, The Other Woman, I Don't Know How She Does It,* and

Temptation. Viewers appreciated female characters like Olivia (*Scandal*), and Maya

(*Zero Dark Thiry*) who treated their work as a quasi-religious moral imperative.

Producers and viewers shared the belief that unlimited time commitment and

personal identification were vital components of professionalism. However, powerful

women, like *The Proposal's* Margaret and *VEEP's* Selina, were often called bitches.

Some viewers embraced bitch-positive politics in recognition of the struggles of women in power. Women's disproportionate responsibility for reproductive labor, often compromises their ability to live up to moral standards of work. Unlike producers, viewers celebrated and valued that labor. However, texts that included serious consideration of women as workers were frequently labelled chick flicks or soap operas. The label suggested that women's labor issues were not important enough that they could be a topic of quality television or prestigious film, which bolstered the idea that workplace equality for women is not a problem in which the general public is implicated. Emerging discussions of racial injustice on television offered hope that these formations are beginning to shift.

SCREENING DIVERSITY: WOMEN & WORK IN TWENTY-FIRST-CENTURY
POPULAR CULTURE

by

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Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
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Table of Contents

Introduction

> Eli Pope (Joe Morton): Did I not raise you for better? How many times
> have I told you? You have to be what?
> Olivia Pope (Kerry Washington): Twice as good.
> Eli: You have to be twice as good as them to get half of what they have.[1]

I began this project in an allegedly post identity (post-racial and post-gender)

moment in U.S. history: Barack Obama was our first black President, and Kerry

Washington was the first black actress to star in a network television show in a

generation.[2] Shonda Rhimes's[3] *Scandal* put Olivia Pope on screen as a successful, black,

professional woman. *Scandal* introduced the topic of race cautiously, at first, although,

the novelty of interracial romance was an undeniable part of the show's appeal.[4] On

October 3, 2013, Eli's lesson to his daughter, "you have to be twice as good as them to

get half of what they have," set off shock waves of recognition among black fans. The

father-daughter exchange was familiar to anyone who grew up black in the United States.

Suddenly, I was unable to keep up with *Scandal's* live Twitter feed.[5] Few people really

expected television to offer such "a scathing indictment of white privilege," as Tara-Lynn

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[1] *Scandal,* "It's Handled," written by Shonda Rhimes, directed by Tom Verica (ABC, October 3, 2013). Many audiences did not watch on the original air date. Some watched an international broadcast. Some audiences used technology like Digital Video Recording (DVR) to delay their initial viewing. Others relied on subscription services such as Hulu, Netflix, and the network-sponsored ABC-Go application.
[2] Diahann Carroll starred in *Julia,* created by Hal Kanter (NBC, 1968-1971). Teresa Graves starred in *Get Christy Love* (ABC, 1974-1975).
[3] Shonda Rhimes also created the hit series, *Greys Anatomy* (ABC, 2005-), *Private Practice* (ABC, 2007-2013) and *How to Get Away With Murder* (ABC, 2014-).
[4] *Scandal,* "Defiance," written by Shonda Rhimes, directed by Tom Verica (ABC, November 29, 2012). White house chief of staff, Cyrus Bean (Jeff Perry), suggests that the American public will not approve of the President's relationship with Olivia because of her race.
[5] Twitter is an interface that allows users to post a brief, 140-character comment, on its site. Users also chose whose 'tweets' to follow, which allows them to control what appears on their customized interface. Unless a user modifies the standard security options, their 'tweets' are searchable for all users.

Pixley, called it.[6] In the midst of an allegedly post-identity era, frank discussions of social inequality were strikingly rare.

Television audiences were rarely offered such direct testament to the real inequalities in opportunity in the United States. Instead, Hollywood award shows presented an image of progress. Professional women were on screen, both in front of and behind the camera: Shonda Rhimes, Kathryn Bigelow, Melissa McCarthy, Sandra Bullock and Amy Poehler all brought in dollars, at the box office, or in the ratings. Audiences had an appetite for strong female characters, and our critical mass in film and television was building. Facebook CEO Sheryl Sandberg's *Lean In,*[7] a book of advice for professional women, sold two million copies by the end of the project. *Scandal*'s Facebook fans numbered over three million. Olivia Pope, and other successful women characters on screen, became meaningful role models for women in the United States and around the world.

There is a new version of the standard myth that hard work creates equal opportunity for all. The working-class existence and associated poverty are always temporary, no matter your race, gender or class origins. Success is now merely a matter of an individual adopting the right attitude. According to the updated myth, while it is true that America's past was shaped by gender and racial oppression, everyone now has an equal chance at success regardless of identity. The current version is not entirely new, but its application is broader than at any time during its history. Now, all are equally responsible for their own success and equally liable when they fail.

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[6] Tara-Lynn Pixley, "Trope and Associates: Olivia Pope's Scandalous Blackness," *The Black Scholar 45,* no. 1 (2015): 29.
[7] Sheryl Sandberg, *Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013).

In reality, the demand for women and people of color to succeed on equal terms with white men places a thin veneer of equality on top of a system where class differences remain linked to gender and racial oppression. One of the important interventions of my dissertation is a critique of "diversity" that disallows discussions of social class. What is visible in popular culture is a neoliberal conception of diversity. In *Respectably Queer,*[8] Jane Ward notes that corporations, now joined by non-profit organizations, value diversity only to the extent that it enhances the bottom line, and seek to minimize aspects of diversity that are not profitable.[9] Duggan argues that contemporary U.S. society practices a "nonredistributive form of 'equality' politics"[10] in which multiculturalism is reconceptualized, narrowed and depoliticized. It follows, then, that the representations of women available on screen are largely images of women succeeding in professions, rather than struggling with poverty, racism and sexism. The reality of the intersection of multiple forms of oppression is erased in favor of a system where class can be ignored, in a way that supposedly enhances, but in actuality hinders, gender and racial equality.

The dissertation works against the *disarticulation*[11] of analyses of class and class-based movements for social justice from issues of gender and racial justice. Each has been disarticulated from the other, eroding group-based claims to public policy remedies in favor of liberal individualism, and ignoring inequality. Part of the problem with the

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[8] Jane Ward, *Respectably Queer: Diversity Culture in LGBT Activist Organizations* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press), 8.

[9] Ward, *Respectably Queer,* 2.

[10] Lisa Duggan, *The Twilight of Equality? Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics, and the Attack on Democracy* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2003), 44.

[11] Angela McRobbie, *The Aftermath of Feminism* (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2009). Kindle edition, 508. McRobbie traces postfeminism as an ideology that has brought about a denial of connection of individual women to feminism and of feminism to a broad base of linked social movements, a phenomenon she labels "disarticulation."

postfeminist and postracial ideologies that permeate contemporary popular culture is that they embrace only middle-class versions of racial and gender inclusion, rendering an impoverished vision of social justice. Critics such as Bonilla-Silva,[12] Mukherjee,[13] McRobbie,[14] and Radner[15] have noted how postfeminist and postracial ideologies discourage continued focus on race and gender, and portray race or gender conscious remedies to systemic inequality such as affirmative action as outdated. The literatures on postfeminist and postracial ideologies are often separate, although they both denote a re-articulation of race and gender in an era questioning the lasting legacy of movements for social justice.

My dissertation examines texts that feature professional women while rarely calling attention to issues of gender and race in the labor force. Today, the way in which professional women are represented on screen emphasizes work and success as the most important cultural values and professional failure as the worst fate possible. On one hand, women of all races are now eligible for representation as professionals on equal (or nearly equal) footing with white men. On the other hand, work, itself is relatively untouched by movements for social justice that once advocated for changes like shorter hours, an equal distribution of wages, better working conditions, and an increase in worker power and ownership. I will argue that contemporary representations of professional women tend to offer viewers individual success stories, while only very occasionally presenting social critique or representations of collective action. From the

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[12] Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, *Racism Without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in the United States* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003).
[13] Roopali Mukherjee, *The Racial Order of Things: Cultural Imaginaries of the Post-Soul Era* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006).
[14] McRobbie, *The Aftermath of Feminism.*
[15] Hilary Radner, *Neo-Feminist Cinema: Girly Films, Chick Flicks and Consumer Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2011).

mid-twentieth century until at least the 1980s, the prototypical representation of a professional woman took as its starting point the fundamental contradiction between her status as a professional and as a woman. Many plotlines highlighted the conflicts between the duties of a given profession and the womanly duties of the potential or actual wife and/or mother. In contrast, contemporary representations of professional women portray no inherent conflict in duties, but rather occasional personal failings of the woman to live up to the allegedly neutral standards of professionalism.

The goal of this project is to understand what meanings audiences make out of a cultural landscape in which television and film largely support neoliberal conceptions of diversity and represent professional work as emblematic of an allegedly postracial and postfeminist moment in US history. Watching fictional women at work seems an extraordinarily strange way to spend precious leisure time. Yet, representations of women striving for success in professional careers permeate contemporary popular culture. Popular culture is a site of struggle over collective memory, and contemporary social experience. Therefore, the dissertation asks: How do representations of professional women inform interpretations of lives and public events? What discussions do they provoke about issues of class, gender and race? Do they offer avenues of resistance to American models of striving for success?

About Screening Diversity*:*

Screening Diversity explores the ways in which film and television sell audiences on work, and simultaneously exploit their dissatisfaction with their own working lives.

From Katherine Hepburn's feisty career women in films of the 1940s and 1950s[16] to

Mary Tyler Moore's Mary Richards[17], images of professional women in popular culture

signaled heightened anxieties about the role of women and feminism in their times.

According to Katharina Glitre, Hepburn's career woman characters contrasted with the

highly variable entrance and exit of women in the work force as demand oscillated in

response to World War II.[18] Twenty-five years later, Mary Richards' single lifestyle and

position as an associate producer responded to the cultural and economic changes brought

about by women's liberation, as described by Bonnie Dow in *Prime Time Feminism*.[19]

Since the post-war era, the number of professional women characters on TV has

increased significantly. As discussed below, professional women in film shifted from

being problematic gender-bending curiosities to women whose career ambitions are

unremarkable. On the one hand, women of all races are now eligible for careers imbued

with the same societal and personal importance as white men's work. On the other hand,

the way in which professional women are represented on screen frequently

underestimates the continued challenges faced by women in the workplace. In

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[16] Examples include: (1) *Adam's Rib*, directed by George Cukor, written by Ruth Gordon and Garson Kanin (MGM, 1949); Hepburn plays an attorney whose husband (Spencer Tracy) is the opposing counselor in a murder trial. (2) *Woman of the Year*, directed by George Stevens, screenplay by Ring Lardner Jr. and Michael Kanin (MGM, 1942); Hepburn marries a fellow reporter (Tracy). Both co-star Spencer Tracy, with whom she also had an off-screen affair.

[17] *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*, created by James L. Brooks and Allan Burns (CBS, 1970 – 1977). Mary Tyler Moore's first major role was on *The Dick Van Dyke Show*, created by Carl Reiner (CBS, 1961-1966). She began a new series about Mary Richards, a single woman in her thirties, working as an associate producer for a news network in Minneapolis. It was the first of many television shows to depict independent working women as a way for advertisers to access the growing market of single women. Throughout this prospectus, I will refer to the actress as Mary Tyler Moore, and the character as Mary Richards.

[18] Kathrina Glitre, *Hollywood Romantic Comedy* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2006), 96.

[19] Bonnie J. Dow, *Prime-Time Feminism: Television, Media Culture, and the Women's Movement Since 1970 (*Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), 25.

contemporary television shows, such as *Scandal*,[20] *The Good Wife*[21] and *Homeland*,[22] and

movies such as *Zero Dark Thirty*,[23] *Temptation*,[24] *The Proposal*[25] and *I Don't Know How

She Does It*[26] what is visible is largely a neoliberal conception of diversity, in which the

participation of women and people of color is valued only as long as it is profitable.[27]

They must remain exclusively committed to their careers rather than families and take

care not to disrupt existing workplace values and practices. Comedies, such as *Parks and

Rec*,[28] *VEEP*,[29] *The Other Woman*[30] and *The Heat*,[31] sometimes resist these values of

neoliberal capitalism, offering viewers occasionally rich opportunities for critique.

Generally, the research highlights the continued importance of work and success in

American culture, the formation of classed subjects, and the important role occupation

plays in shaping identity.

Yet, previous theoretical and empirical work on audiences suggest that women

audiences are not so easily disciplined by media producers[32] and that they will react to

these texts in unpredictable ways, partly based on the ways in which class, gender and

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[20] *Scandal*, created by Shonda Rhimes (ABC, 2012-). See Appendix 1 for plot summary and detailed character descriptions for each of the eleven texts that form the core of the study.

[21] *The Good Wife,* created by Michelle King and Robert King (CBS, 2009-).

[22] *Homeland*, created by Alex Gansa and Howard Gordon (Showtime, 2011-).

[23] *Zero Dark Thirty*, Blu Ray, directed by Katherine Bigelow, written by Mark Boal (USA: Columbia Pictures, 2013).

[24] *Temptation: Confessions of a Marriage Counselor*, directed and written by Tyler Perry (Lionsgate, 2013).

[25] *The Proposal,* directed by Anne Fletcher, written by Peter Chiarelli (2009; *Amazon Instant*, 2015).

[26] *I Don't Know How She Does It*, directed by Doug McGrath, screenplay by Aline Brosh McKenna, novel by Allison Pearson (Weinstein Company, 2011).

[27] Ward, *Respectably Queer,* 8.

[28] *Parks and Recreation*, created by Greg Daniels and Michael Shur (NBC, 2009-2015).

[29] *VEEP,* created by Armando Iannucci (HBO, 2012-Present).

[30] *The Other Woman*, directed by Nick Cassevetes, written by Melissa K. Stack (Twentieth Century Fox, 2014).

[31] *The Heat*, directed by Paul Feig, written by Katie Dippold (Twentieth Century Fox, 2013)

[32] Ien Ang, *Watching Dallas: Soap Opera and the Melodramatic Imagination* (New York: Methuen, 1985); Dorothy Hobson, *Crossroads: The Drama of the Soap Opera* (New York: Methuen, 1982); Janice Radway, *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Literature* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984).

race operate in their everyday lives.[33] *Screening Diversity* approaches the problem from

two perspectives. First, it explores the formation and maintenance of collective memory

through ready access to certain historical moments in film and television. Through a

critical reading of corporate digital archival projects by streaming services like Netflix

and HuluPlus, I examine the version of the historical record available for contemporary

audiences. Second, I include an investigation of audiences' use of the social media sites,

such as Twitter and Facebook,[34] as well as online rating sites, such as IMDB (Internet

Movie Database), capturing the innovative ways in which audiences now engage with

media products.[35] As such, these review and social media sites offer unique cultural fora

on women's work in the twenty-first century. For some users/viewers, the texts offered[36]

models of professionalism for them to emulate in their own quest to navigate their

workplaces as "diverse" workers. Others saw attempts to represent the problems facing

women at work, such as discrimination, higher performance standards, work-family

balance, and sexual and race-based harassment. Therefore, this project purposely

illuminates the meaning these texts produce in their audiences' everyday practice. Its

main research question is: How did the online reception communities made possible

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[33] Jacqueline Bobo, *Black Women as Cultural Readers* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991); Miriam Hansen, *Babel and Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 7; Janet Staiger, *Perverse Spectators: The Practices of Film Reception* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 44-51.

[34] Facebook is a platform in which users create their own profiles and select reciprocal friendships. Once two users become friends they are able to share photos, news articles, and extended comments. As with Twitter, user created content is available to the public, unless users modify their privacy settings. Content and meta-data are also sold to corporations for marketing purposes.

[35] Nico Carpenter, "New Configurations of the Audience? The Challenges of User-Generated Content for Audience Theory and Media Participation," in *The Handbook of Media Audiences,* ed. Virginia Nightingale (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 190-212; Nick Couldry, "The Necessary Future of the Audience…and How to Research It," in *The Handbook of Media Audiences,* ed. Virginia Nightingale; Laurent Jullier and Jean-Marc Leveratto, "Cinephelia in the Digital Age," in *Audiences: Defining and Researching Screen Entertainment Reception,* ed. Ian Chritsie (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2012), 150.

[36] Throughout this dissertation, the present tense is used in discussions of diagetic elements of the screen texts and for contemporary socio-cultural phenomena. The past tense is used in reference to the online comments, or historical and production details surrounding a film or series.

through social media use this group of television series and films as fora for discussions of women's working lives? The project also seeks to answer the related questions: How did audiences compare the narratives on screen with their own lives? When did they take notice of inconsistencies between the texts and their own social realities? Which films and movies from prior eras shaped their perceptions? What did they believe was the intended meaning of the text? What did they believe was missing/omitted from the texts?

Screening Diversity traces the American cultural imperative of success as it comes into contact with feminism and anti-racism. It demonstrates that popular culture now articulates a new kind of subjectivity for women of all races, where they are legible as complete persons only in so far as they succeed at work. I argue that an examination of representations of women in the professions is central to any scholarly understanding of women and work. The project investigates not only how professional women may be read in their workplaces, but also the ways in which the emphasis on professional success as a path to social justice affects the meaning of work for all women. *Screening Diversity* critiques those limited visions of social justice and makes clear that the status of work in our culture needs to be reevaluated. It examines how the changing representations of gender and race are arranged so as to minimize the challenge to class relations, and asks why the primary cultural importance of work persists despite shifts in the representation of gender and race.

This dissertation is organized as follows: Chapter 1, "The Politics of Work, Feminism and Representation" introduces the theoretical and political commitment to feminist anti-work politics as a basis for coalitional feminism that is class, gender and race conscious. It brings together the classic sociological literature on the American

work ethic and early film studies' concern with the mediation of capitalism. Taking into consideration the dramatic shifts brought about by deindustrialization, as well as the critiques of feminist and anti-racist scholars, the chapter points out the ways in which classic analyses of media and capitalism are still relevant and necessary. Chapter 2, "Introducing Contemporary Viewsers," situates *Screening Diversity* within the field of audience studies, and details the methodology of the investigation. It offers an extensive discussion of the logistics, ethics and limitations of the project. Chapter 3, "Career Women on Screen: 1940-2007" offers readers an overview of the texts that shape the collective memory of professional women in film and television for contemporary audiences. It also examines the politics surrounding access to these texts, identifying corporate efforts at increased availability through digitization as political acts.

Beginning in Chapter 4, the focus shifts from detailing the contours of contemporary viewing practices to the content of online reviews and conversations. Chapter 4, "For G-d and Country: The Moral Imperative to Succeed," explores identification with female professionals on screen, and seeks to understand the ways in which work is presented and interpreted as a moral duty for women and men alike. Chapter 5, "#BitchBoss/#BossBitch: Love/Hate Relationships with Unruly Women," examines the contradictory reactions to women in power, and asks how women's leadership both is and is not serving women across race and class. It also highlights the heightened standards for women's behavior within organizations. Chapter 6, "Other Women: Comparing Experiences and Creating Solidarity," examines stereotypes that contrast career women with housewives/stay-at-home moms, and the potential for solidarity among women engaged in productive and reproductive labor. Finally, the

Epilogue revisits the larger questions of feminism and the lasting legacy of social justice movements and suggests agendas for feminist cultural production, political activism, and future directions in scholarship.

1. The Politics of Work, Feminism and Representation

> Remember that *time* is money. He that can earn ten shillings a
> day by his labor, and goes abroad, or sits idle, one half of that
> day, though he spends but sixpence during his diversion or
> idleness, ought not to reckon *that* the only expense; he has really
> spent, or rather thrown away five shillings besides.[37]
> – Benjamin Franklin

To Max Weber, Benjamin Franklin epitomized the spirit of American capitalism,

an ethos of living to work rather than working to live. Franklin articulated a national

mission for (white male) Americans: the accumulation of wealth through continuous hard

work. Rather than a medium of exchange, money stood as a monument to the hard work

of the individual. The only legitimate purposes of money were reinvestment and

continual accumulation; he counseled young men to avoid the trappings of wealth,

comfortable lifestyles and material goods. The foundations of American culture,

represented by Franklin's philosophical writings, emphasize paid work as the defining

characteristic of citizenship and personhood in the United States.

Screening Diversity analyzes representations of work as technologies for

reinforcing class, gender and race, based on the scholarly traditions of anti-racist,

socialist feminism. In her book, *The Problem with Work,* Kathi Weeks introduces anti-

work politics, which proscribes dis-identification with work, and the refusal of its

expansive demands on individual lives.[38] Work creates collective wealth, and thus has

the potential to improve the lives of individuals and their communities. However, the

distribution of resources among individuals is based on pre-existing power relationships.

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[37] As quoted in Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Stephen
Kalberg (Los Angeles: Roxbury, 2002), 14-15.

[38] Kathi Weeks, *The Problem with Work: Feminism, Marxism, Antiwork Politics, and Postwork
Imaginaries*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 26.

Weeks argues that the problem is not simply that work infrequently lives up to that set of idealized standards. Rather, the problem is the existence of a pro-work ideology itself.[39] She argues that, "dreams of individual accomplishment and desires to contribute to the common good become firmly attached to waged work, where they can be hijacked to rather different ends: to produce neither individual riches nor social wealth, but privately appropriated surplus value." Marx's concept of surplus value has a corollary concept of surplus time. In *Capital: Volume One*, he writes that there is a minimum amount of work time that is necessary to support the worker's basic needs. Under capitalism, the additional or surplus time is appropriated for profit.[40] Workers are quite literally robbed of hours, months and years of their lives. Thus, Week's concludes, "the willingness to live for and through work renders subjects supremely functional for capitalist purposes."[41] For women who disproportionately engage in unpaid and underpaid reproductive labor, it is vital to reclaim surplus time. Because of the dynamics of gender, race, and class-based exclusions, the cultural constructions of work offer a key site of resistance. Thus, the optimistic political goal of this dissertation is to offer a coalitional feminist politics with attention to the complexities in the relationship different groups of people have to labor, enforced, unpaid, or underpaid.

This chapter includes four broad subject areas. First, I review classic sociological approaches to work and success in the United States, based in the Weberian tradition. Next, I review early film scholarship based in Marxist and socialist intellectual traditions that first introduced the idea of the screen as a disciplinary tool of capitalism. Finally, I

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[39] Weeks, *The Problem with Work*, 14.
[40] Karl Marx, "The Concept of Relative Surplus Value," in *Capital: Volume One*, transcribed by Hinrich Kuhls, html by Stephen Baird, https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/ch12.htm.
[41] Weeks, *The Problem with Work*, 12.

will discuss the relevance of both of these intellectual traditions in post-industrial US society. The new myth of equal opportunity, visible in contemporary popular culture, offers individual rewards and limits the possibilities for feminist critiques. However, as *Screening Diversity* will demonstrate, contemporary popular culture also offers opportunities for audiences to resist work, its routines, disciplines, and demands.

American Work Values

In U.S. cultural mythology, the reverence for success is exceeded only by the fear of failure. A job is supposed to do more than fill a role in society and bring home a paycheck; it is treated as a reflection of the soul. Thus, money is considered the ultimate arbitrator of personal worth. The mythology naturalizes differences in wealth and income, with a moral inflection. Whether they work for low pay, or no pay, women's personal worth is, therefore, limited.

In *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Max Weber traces the genesis of the modern era's middle-class work ethic to a confluence of Protestant religious thought and the material, historical development of capitalism. Writing at the turn of the last century, his intellectual history explains how the daily activity of work became its own moral good for Western societies. Weber argues that "people do not wish 'by nature' to earn more and more money. Instead, they wish simply to live, and to live as they have been accustomed and to earn as much as is required to do so."[42] However, the capitalist economy had little use for those still clinging to that type of economic traditionalism.[43] Internal devotion and a sense of duty to a vocational calling

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[42] Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, 23.
[43] Ibid, 20.

were the gold standard for workers under modern industrialism.[44] Thus, acetic forms of Protestantism that emphasized daily productive efforts as beneficial for the soul, rather than as a means to an end, took hold in Western societies.[45] Further, as the relevance of religion declined, work, itself, became "the very foundation of existence."[46]

In *Born Losers: A History of Failure in America*, Scott Sandage points to Emerson's writings as representative of American work values and the myth of meritocracy. According to him, it was in the early 1800s that failure in business acquired its status as a personal fault leading to moral disgrace.[47] Quoting Emerson's State Street proverb, "there is always a reason, *in the man*, for his good or bad fortune, and so in making money,"[48] Sandage points to the emergence in the nineteenth-century of the ideology that success and failure originated in the character of the individual rather than market forces. Adam Smith's invisible hand of the market place and the hand of G-d were thinly differentiated. Sandage argues that success, or at least continual striving for success, was then and remains today an absolute moral and cultural requirement in the U.S..[49] Failure and downward mobility still provide a source of fascination and anxiety.[50]

Historically, in the United States, citizenship was firmly attached to white manhood through work. Dana Nelson argues that, in order to differentiate citizens from non-workers like women and slaves, the activity of working for pay became foundational to capitalist citizenship in the United States. According to her, ever since the framing of

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[44] Ibid, 37.
[45] Ibid, 106-107.
[46] Ibid, 31.
[47] Scott Sandage, *Born Losers: A History of Failure in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 11.
[48] Ibid, 46.
[49] Ibid, 265.
[50] Ibid, 201.

the Constitution the "political psychology of capitalist citizenship"[51] meant that "the process of identifying with national manhood blocks white men from being able efficiently to identify socioeconomic inequality as a structural rather than individual failure, thereby conditioning them for market and professional competition."[52] Hard work and striving as a road to success was an ideological bond among white men. White male workers were falsely considered free agents selling their labor, who could, given the right moral character, become capitalists themselves.[53] Moreover, their free labor contrasted to the unfree labor of slaves and women's exclusion from the productive sphere, as discussed by Evelyn Nakano Glenn in *Unequal Freedom*.[54] If success and individualism were integral to the "political psychology of capitalist citizenship,"[55] and women and people of color were excluded from those forms of labor, then women and people of color were non-citizens, as argued by Glenn.[56] While I agree with Nelson and Glenn in their analysis of the way that labor informs citizenship, I suggest that those ineligible for the U.S. models of successful capitalism risked not just citizenship, but, in fact, personhood.

In *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Weber issued a warning about overextending his conclusions: "If one can discover at all an object for which the phrase *spirit of capitalism* is meaningful, then it can only be a specific *historical case*."[57] Indeed, the American work ethic as articulated in the nineteenth century, is only the predecessor of the American work ethic in the twenty-first century. This American

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[51] Dana D. Nelson, *National Manhood* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), xii.
[52] Ibid, ix.
[53] Evelyn Nakano Glenn, *Unequal Freedom: How Race and Gender Shaped American Citizenship and Labor* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 58-60; Sandage, *Born Losers,* 64.
[54] Glenn, *Unequal Freedom,* 56-57.
[55] Nelson, *National Manhood*, xii.
[56] Glenn, *Unequal Freedom,* 18-23.
[57] Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and The Spirit of Capitalism,* 13. Emphasis original.

cultural value, traceable back to a narrow group of white men in the United States in its first hundred years or so, is now promulgated to diverse groups throughout the world with vastly different histories and cultures. Emerson did not have women in mind when he argued that the foundations of success and earning power were "in the man."[58] As long as women's fortunes were in the hands of their husbands or masters, they could neither succeed nor fail. The true nature of their souls was unknown, and, frankly, unimportant. Thus, it is no surprise that scholarly discussions of the culture of capitalism often disregarded the experiences of women.

Mass Media and Capitalism

Patriarchs of the Frankfurt school, Horkheimer and Adorno argue in their classic essay "The Culture Industry" that the screen functions to support capitalism. According to their theorization, mass culture produces mass deception through the standardization of cultural products, for which the public then develops a taste. Their essay extends Marx's critique of classical economics to the arena of culture. The crux of their argument is that movies are one part of modern industrial society's mechanism for producing consent for capitalism. They write: "the technology of the culture industry confines itself to standardization and mass production and sacrifices what once distinguished the logic of work from that of society."[59] In other words, the screen is a mass cultural product, and a tool of capitalism, rather than an art form. Over seventy years ago, their concern was that, despite its stated mission to entertain, in fact, the screen's primary function was selling people on the importance of hard work in an industrializing European society.

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[58] Sandage, *Born Losers,* 46.
[59] Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments,* ed. Gunzelin Schmid Noerr, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 95.

Their disciple, Jürgen Habermas, took an optimistic view of mass media as a public sphere in which citizens could exert influence on political decisions through rational debate. Under his model, the media is a potential space for rational public debate about the meaning of work. In *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere,* he contrasts the individual's role in the public sphere to her/his role as an owner of private property. Habermas argues that people participate in the public sphere either as property owners or as human beings plain and simple.[60] Much like household property, work is experienced and conceived of as a private, contractual relationship between the employee and employer. As this dissertation will demonstrate, the employer/employee relationship in the private sphere is now one of the primary relationships contested in the public sphere. The power of the citizens in the public sphere poses the strongest threat to the power of employers in the privatized employer/employee.

These Frankfurt school doctrines require a number of revisions to incorporate the experiences of diverse groups of women, explain variations in resistance, and account for the contemporary post-industrial class system. Though the screen operates on audiences in ways that often perpetuate existing social relations, it does not operate on all audience members in exactly the same way. Miriam Hansen argues that for each film there is a "horizon of reception...a suggestion of constellations in light of which the film assumes a complex historical significance."[61] Hansen continues her critique, writing that members of different groups bring a different intertextual experience to each piece.[62] Here, intertexual experiences include both media diet and life experience. Her negotiation of

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[60] Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989), 56.
[61] Miriam Hansen, *Babel and Babylon* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 130.
[62] Ibid, 7.

these theoretical dilemmas accounts for difference in social identity as an important factor in the screens' ability to manufacture consent. She also explains the ways in which those multiple perspectives allow for what Stuart Hall labeled "oppositional readings."[63] Neither the idea of manufacturing mass consent[64] or the free articulation of opposition from a non-differentiated public are sufficient to explain the complex operations of the screen in maintaining social hierarchy and oppression through work.

American cultural products reflect the historical, political, and cultural circumstances of the contemporary United States, now with an international audience that participates in social media alongside their U.S. counterparts.[65] Furthermore, the opposing forces of capitalist discipline and worker resistance are embedded in an entirely different class system from the industrialized European model that was the basis of Marxism and, subsequently the Frankfurt school. However, revisions in the class system have not alleviated the need for class analysis. Instead, an analysis of class that departs from orthodox Marxism, and recognizes the role race and gender play in exploitation, is as necessary as ever.

Global Neoliberalism and the Revival of Class Analysis

One notable recent scholarly intervention is the naming and critique of "neoliberalism" as an ideology. Political economist Colin Crouch defines neoliberalism as government collusion with and support of large corporations, increasingly monopolies, accompanied by a hollow free-market rhetoric and a promise of increased consumer

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[63] Stuart Hall, "Encoding, Decoding." In *The Cultural Studies Reader*, ed. Simon During, 90-103. (New York: Routledge, 1993).
[64] Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*.
[65] That process and the methodology of the dissertation will be described in detail in Chapter 2, "Introducing Contemporary Viewers."

welfare.[66] He locates its origins in the economic policies recommended by Milton

Friedman and the Chicago school, adopted and globalized by Ronald Reagan and

Margaret Thatcher.[67] Radical scholars such as Lisa Duggan and David Harvey add that

this economic model is accompanied by the calculated destruction of the welfare state,

creating a system for the upward redistribution of wealth.[68] According to Duggan, a key

feature of neoliberalism is the contradictory placement of economics in the private

sphere, the charade of separation between economics and the state making the economy

unaccountable to democratic control.[69] J.K. Gibson-Graham adds that the system is

bolstered by "the representation of the capitalist economy as extradiscursive, as the

ultimate real and natural form of economy."[70] Thus, our political economic system and

the large corporations that control it have become impossible to regulate or even critique.

As factory jobs in the U.S. continue to disappear, the working class shifts to

predominately service occupations.[71] Women in service occupations are often underpaid

relative to the skills they use on the job, because those skills are considered natural to

women, as discussed in Hochschild's groundbreaking work in *The Managed Heart*.[72] In

The Managed Hand, a study of Korean women manicurists, Milian Kang points out that

women of color are often undercompensated because the skills required for service

[66] Colin Crouch, *The Strange Non-Death of Neoliberalism* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2011), 17.

[67] Crouch 2012, 15-16.

[68] Lisa Duggan, *The Twilight of Equality? Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics, and the Attack on Democracy* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2003), xii; David Harvey, *The Enigma of Capital: and the Crisis of Capitalism* (New York: Oxford, 2010), 10.

[69] Ibid, 5; Lauren Berlant, *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City: Essays on Sex and Citizenship* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 5.

[70] J.K. Gibson-Graham, *Postcapitalist Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 55.

[71] Mary Gatta, Heather Boushey and Eileen Applebaum, "High-Touch and Here-To-Stay: Future Skills Demands in Low Wage Service Occupation," *Sociology 43*, no. 5 (2009): 970; Mignon Duffy, *Making Care Count: A Century of Gender, Race, and Paid Care Work* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2011); Arne Kalleberg, *Good Jobs, Bad Jobs: The Rise of Polarized and Precarious Employment in the United States, 1970s to 2000s* (New York: Russell Sage, 2011), 117-119.

[72] Arlie Hochschild, *The Managed Heart* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983).

occupations are considered an inherent cultural trait.[73] While the U.S. has the largest

proportion of low-wage workers among developed countries,[74] U.S. working women

mostly lack access to collective bargaining.[75] For women who are undocumented, the

problems of access to collective bargaining are even more acute, and the availability of

legal remedies are decreased.[76] For both groups of working-class women in the U.S.,

economic security is far from their daily reality.

      This allegedly untouchable system demands flexibility and additional labor from

individuals to make up for dislocations and cuts in social services. A now global division

of labor transfers manufacturing to the Third World, in efforts to reduce wages paid by

corporations.[77] The disempowerment of Third World governments and economies

through these global processes, bolstered by structural adjustment programs imposed by

the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, ensures that they follow a

neoliberal approach that includes corporate tax breaks and cuts in social services. In

industrialized countries like the U.S., cuts in services like health care and education leave

a deficit in reproductive care.[78] Across the globe, the response to increased working

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[73] Milian Kang, *The Managed Hand: Race, Gender and the Body in Beauty Service Work* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010). Kindle edition, 2709.

[74] Eileen Applebaum and John Schmitt, "Review Article: Low-wage Work in High-Income Countries: Labor-Market Institutions and Business Strategy in the US and Europe," *Human Relations 62* (2009): 1908.

[75] John W. Budd and Brian P. McCall, "The Grocery Stores Wage Distribution: A Semi-Parametric Analysis of the Role of Retailing and Labor Market Institutions," *Industry & Labor Relations Review 54,* no. 2 (2011): 484-501; Bruce Western and Jake Rosenfeld, "Unions, Norms, and the Rise in U.S. Wage Inequality," *American Sociological Review 76* (2011): 516.

[76] Shireen Ally, "Caring about Care Workers: Organizing in the Female Shadow of Globalization," *Labor, Capital and Society 38,* no. 1-2 (2005): 184-207; Juanita Elias, "Struggles Over the Rights of Foreign Domestic Workers in Malaysia: The Possibilities and Limitations of 'Rights Talk,'" *Economy & Society 37*, no. 2 (2008): 282-303; Joy M. Zarembka, "America's Dirty Work: Migrant Maids and Modern-Day Slavery," in *Global Woman: Nannies, Maids, and Sex Workers in the New Economy*, ed. Barbara Ehrenreich and Arlie Hochschild (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2002): 142-153.

[77] Helen Safa, *The Myth of the Male Breadwinner: Women and Industrialization in the Caribbean* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995); Seung-kyung Kim, *Class Struggle or Family Struggle? The Lives of Women Factory Workers in South Korea* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

[78] Hester Eisenstein, *Feminism Seduced: How Global Elites Use Women's Labor and Ideas to Exploit the World* (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2009).

hours imposed by corporations and the growing care deficit is a private global market for

care work, which often dislocates women from their families.[79] The additional care gaps

left around the globe fall disproportionately to women to fill with their unpaid labor.

The dramatic realignment of wealth, labor and lives under neoliberalism produces

a class system that no longer resembles the one visible at the height of industrialism. The

ideologies of professionalism and striving for success sustain many of the disciplinary

techniques that encourage workers to identify with allegedly neutral standards of

behavior. Orthodox Marxist conceptions of class, which emphasize the structural divide

between ownership and wage work, are inadequate to describe the situation of

contemporary U.S. workers. Ownership structures of corporations are increasingly

complex as new financial instruments develop, while control over wealth is concentrated

in the hands of a tiny global elite. Multiple layers of class distinction exist below the

global elite, from the professional middle class to the working poor. Racialized and

gendered opportunity structures limit mobility. Immigration status restricts access to

legal protection and economic privileges. These distinctions are meaningful; they

structure people's access to resources and control over their lives.

One scholarly approach to these shifts is to revise Marx's structural analysis to

include additional variation within a structural analysis that still emphasizes ownership of

the means of production as the primary factor. John and Barbara Ehrenreich, for

example, argue that with the expansion of the professional-managerial class (PMC) in the

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[79] Rhacel Salazar-Parreñas, *Servants of Globalization: Women, Migration and Domestic Work* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001).

post-war era a three-class system emerged in the U.S..[80] According to the Ehrenreichs, the PMC constitutes a distinct class within monopoly capitalism, whose interests conflict with both capitalists and the working class and whose function is one of reproduction, control, and education[81] without ownership.[82] The professional middle class mediates and directs the production as well as the consumption of the working class.[83] In the same volume, Stanley Aronowitz disagrees, arguing that the professional-managerial employees constitute "a strata (sic),"[84] not a class, whose difference with the owning class is merely strategic rather than historical.[85] These arguments both maintain a severely limited structural approach to class. The approach assumes that human behavior is the result only of material circumstances, without considering the dynamic cultural meanings of class.

James Scott's classic anthropology, *Weapons of the Weak*, offers a framework for understanding how stories about work function as a site for class struggle. He begins with two cautionary tales from a small Malay village: the tale of Razak, the shiftless beggar, and the tale of Haji Broom, the miserly landlord.

> The tales about Razak and Haji Broom—suitably embroidered, elaborated, and retold—have far more than mere entertainment value. They amount to an exchange of small arms fire, a small skirmish, in a cold war of symbols between the rich and poor of Sedaka.[86]

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[80] Barbara and John Ehrenreich, "The Professional Managerial Class," in *Between Labor and Capital*, ed. Pat Walker (Boston: South End Press, 1979), 5-45; Scott Lash and John Urry, *The End of Organized Capitalism* (Cambridge: Polity, 1987).
[81] Ehrenreich & Ehrenreich, "The Professional Managerial Class," 8.
[82] Ibid, 12.
[83] Ibid, 16.
[84] Stanley Aronowitz, "The Professional-Managerial Class or Middle Strata," in *Between Labor and Capital*, ed. Pat Walker (Boston: South End Press, 1979), 213-242.
[85] see also Michael Lind, *The Next American Nation: The New Nationalism and the Fourth American Revolution* (New York: Free Press, 1995).
[86] James Scott, *Weapons of the Weak* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 22.

Scott opens by describing the stories of their excesses, and the ways in which they reaffirm the social contract between rich and poor villagers. Yet, as Scott points out, the tales of Razak are more effective in creating sanctions for the village poor whose material circumstances make the consequences of violation too dear.[87] Razak is a pariah and a very public example of how the rich may penalize the non-compliant poor. In contrast, the poor tell tales of Haji Broom only amongst each other, insulating rich landowners, whom they fear offending.[88] The material advantages of wealth translate into greater power and control over public representation of the ideal social contract. Yet, resistance at the level of thought, symbol and culture, emerging from the subjectivities of the dispossessed, explained everyday forms of resistance that effectively limited capitalist control.[89]

Contemporary screen culture offers opportunities for both oppression and resistance to existing ideologies of class and work. In *Love and Money*, Lisa Henderson writes that class is constructed through the process of cultural production, as cultural products elicit class recognition and differentiation.[90] Sherry Ortner conceptualizes class as unstable, and actively produced through culture. She understands class as co-constructed with other forms of oppression/inequality. Many scholars note that, as women are normally expected to derive their class status from their husbands or fathers, women have a problematic relationship to the class system.[91] Ortner argues that as a

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[87] Ibid, 24.
[88] Ibid, 25.
[89] Ibid, 43-44.
[90] Lisa Henderson, *Love and Money: Queers, Class and Cultural Production* (New York: New York University Press, 2013), 70-100.
[91] Sherry Ortner, *New Jersey Dreaming: Capital, Culture, and the Class of '58* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 242; Carolyn Kay Steedman, *Landscape for a Good Woman: A Story of Two Lives* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1991).

consequence of women's liberation, women now act as their own "class agents."[92] She

also emphasizes the extent to which race and ethnicity "function as sites of displacements

of class."[93] Therefore movements for racial equality are often indivisible from "class

projects."[94] Henderson adds that the social distinction and hierarchy of the class system is

bound to heterosexual family reproduction and transmission of class status.[95]

Together, Scott, Ortner and Henderson point out that class relationships are

actively produced AND that they are not the sum total of all human relationships. J.K.

Gibson-Graham adds that class relationships are multiple and shifting and are constructed

in the interaction between individual actors. Furthermore, they argue that not all

relationships fall within the capitalist system.[96] In fact, Gibson-Graham claims that in

suggesting that they do, leftist academics have aided and abetted the logic that capitalism

is ubiquitous and untouchable.[97] Every story on screen can be read as "a small skirmish

in a cold war of symbols"[98] between the powerful and the powerless. As Scott argued,

battles over meaning are not simply revelatory of real power relationships; they are

constitutive of those relationships.[99] The screen currently fills much of women's

unclaimed time with instructions in post-industrial capitalist citizenship. However,

screen viewing is also a leisurely practice, one that women use to avoid work, and to

critique its meaning in their lives.

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[92] Ornter, *New Jersey Dreaming*, 239.
[93] Ibid, 51.
[94] Ibid, 51.
[95] Henderson, *Love and Money*, 22, 154.
[96] J.K. Gibson-Graham, *The End of Capitalism (As We Knew It): A Feminist Critique of Political Economy* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1996), 52-65.
[97] Gibson-Graham, *Postcapitalist Politics*, 5-7, 55-77.
[98] Ibid, 22.
[99] Scott, *Weapons of the Weak*, 44.

The ideology of hard work as a moral and spiritual duty permeates U.S. cultural mythology. Despite the rhetoric of Benjamin Franklin, workers themselves are rarely the beneficiaries of this ideology. Instead, it supports a system of exploitation. If hard work is its own reward, then it partially substitutes for adequate compensation, and negates other types of claims to collective wealth. Frequently, women are excluded from accessing personhood through the institution of paid work. Thus, hard work, itself, provides potentially greater rewards for women in that it gives them access to full personhood. The result is that women are further disempowered in their efforts to lay claim to the wealth they produce in the post-industrial global economy.

On-screen stories about women's work are vital components in the struggle for access to collective wealth. Movies and television are constitutive of class, race and gender relations. In the era of industrialism and mass culture, they participated in manufacturing consent in the working class. In the post-industrial era of social media, the meaning of work is produced through active struggle among producers and participants. Sometimes, the texts offer women dubious proof that it is only their own working lives that fail to live up to the ideal. Occasionally, they might provide insight into the shared struggles of women in the global economy.

The following chapters examine the battle over representations of women's work. Chapter 2 explores the landscape of contemporary film and television culture in online fora. It focuses on the evolution of media viewing practices, and the challenges and rewards offered by technological change. Finally, it details the logistics of the primary research for *Screening Diversity*.

2. Introducing Contemporary Viewers

The goal of this project is to understand how film and television now mediate women's working lives. *Screening Diversity* takes a two-pronged approach that embeds professional women of the contemporary screen within a larger arc that includes their predecessors. It begins with an historical overview of the representations of women's work within mid-to-late-twentieth century American film and television that form a collective cultural backdrop for contemporary audiences. It examines the incorporation over time of feminism and social justice in the pre-digital era of mass or broadcast culture. The bulk of the original research examines the ways in which online viewer communities, on consumer and social media sites, operate as forums for contemporary social issues related to women and work. Ultimately, this research seeks to contribute to conversations about the screen's continued role in mediating capitalism.

The Changing Media Landscape

Screening Diversity brings together the fields of film and television studies, reflecting the changing landscape of media consumption. Changing technologies of production and exhibition are a perennial issue (e.g. introduction of sound). However, over the past twenty years, the most significant technological changes were in the technology of delivery. No longer is it the case that film is consumed primarily in purpose-made theaters while television is consumed only through mass

broadcasts into the home.[100] The evolution of VHS,[101] DVD and now digital

streaming technologies (i.e. Netflix, Hulu Plus, Amazon Prime) are radically

changing the way spectators experience film and television. Barbara Klinger noted

that with the introduction of the DVD, film and television can now be purchased as

physical goods, collected and showcased in the home as part of the individual's

consumer-based identity.[102] The revolution in spectatorship lies in the possibility to

re-watch and manipulate both film and television on DVD.[103]

According to some critics, these new technologies expanded the cinephiliac's

mastery of the text[104] and increased telephilia by opening up the possibility for

individual spectators to focus on elements like foreshadowing and camera

technique.[105] Shortly after the proliferation of those technologies, the ability to

stream content via home theater, computer or even phone[106] introduced repeat

viewings without ownership. Michael Curtin argues that there now exists a matrix

of possible viewing practices, beyond the original media.[107] One of the most

significant recent changes in the landscape of media studies is the convergence

between film, television, computer and mobile media, and the resulting revolution in

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[100] Barbara Klinger, *Beyond the Multiplex: Cinema, New Technologies and the Home* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2006); Nicholas Hiley, "'At the Picture Palace': The British Cinema Audience, 1895-1920'," in *Audiences: The Key Debates,* ed. Ian Christie (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2012), 33.

[101] A VHS (The Video Home System) is an analog recording on tape. It was the dominant mode of home movie distribution from the early 1980s, when it beat out is competitor, Betamax, until the turn of the century, when it was replaced by the DVD (Digital Video Disk).

[102] Klinger, *Beyond the Multiplex*, 85-90.

[103] Klinger, *Beyond the Multiplex*, 135; James Walters, "Repeat Viewings: Television Analysis in the DVD Age," in *Film and Television After DVD*, ed. James Bennett and Tom Brown (New York: Routledge, 2008), 63-80.

[104] Klinger, *Beyond the Multiplex*, 85.

[105] Walters, "Repeat Viewings," 76.

[106] Roger Odin, "Spectator, Film and the Mobile Phone," in *Audiences: The Key Debates*, ed. Ian Christie (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2012), 155-169.

[107] Michael Curtin, "Matrix Media," in *Television Studies After TV: Understanding Telvision in the Post-Broadcast Era,* ed. Graeme Turner and Jinna Tay (New York: Routledge, 2009), 9-19.

delivery technologies. It is now possible to stream[108] or download[109] movie and television content for viewing on a handheld device. Similarly, it is possible to broadcast YouTube videos or home movies from a computer, tablet or phone to a television set. The distinction between television and film is far less significant than it was in previous eras.

Furthermore, within this matrix of media viewing, the divide between television and film media is only one of many. For the purposes of this project, it did not make sense to treat film and television studies as separate and mutually exclusive fields of study. Online discussions about the representations of professional women's experiences drew freely from both film and television and often compared characters across the two media. Actors, directors and producers move freely between film and television across their careers.[110] Although film and television viewing are converging, subtle differences remain due to the restrictions inherent to each format.

Some meaningful differences endure. A television serial inherently has more time than a movie for plot and character development. For example, the long-running-network drama, *The Good Wife*, has 143 hours of episodes available as of this writing. Even the least voluminous show featured in the study, *VEEP*, offered

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[108] Streaming technology allows users to view content located on a remote server through a high-speed internet connection. Netflix, Hulu Plus, Amazon Prime, and network applications like HBO GO, and ABC GO, are examples of streaming services.

[109] When a user downloads content, a copy of the file exists on their device, making it available for viewing when high-speed internet connection is not available. GooglePlay, iTunes, and the now defunct Napster allow users to download local copies. Because users retain a copy of the file, it makes it easier for them to duplicate and share copies not authorized by the production companies.

[110] For example, Oscar-nominated director, Ridley Scott, produces *The Good Wife;* Sara Jessica Parker starred in *Sex and the City*, created by Darren Star, book by Candace Bushnell (HBO, 1998-2004); *Sex and the City*, directed by Michael Patrick King (New Line Cinema, 2008)*; Sex and the City* 2, directed by Michael Patrick King (New Line Cinema, 2010); *I Don't Know How She Does It*. Melissa McCarthy stars in both *The Heat* and her own series, *Mike and Molly*, created by Mark Roberts (CBS, 2010-).

nearly thirty hours of entertainment. As a result, viewers' involvement in television

is often fluid, waxing and waning across the life of a program. Films, on the other

hand, have only two hours in which to introduce characters and plot and provide a

resolution. The television series included in this study are usually concerned with

the daily trials and tribulations of work, and mostly use professional women as their

main characters. Professional women were plentiful on television but noticeably

sparse in movies released between 2007 and 2014. Contemporary films seemed not

to focus as succinctly on professional women's working experience, but rather to

focus on the nexus of workplace and personal affairs. Despite these dissimilarities,

both movies and television have fewer differences than commonalities as visual

storytelling media.

   Screening Diversity explores film and television on the same plane because

the modes of access for audiences are no longer tied to the texts' original formats.

Rather than parsing the film and television industries, the term "screen" includes

both and alludes to the interplay between filmic and televisual representations.

Similarly, the term "text" refers to the diagetic portion of either a movie or a

television show. I introduce a new term "viewser" to describe any audience member

engaging in online forms of reception, for example posting a comment about a text

on Twitter. The term "viewser" offers a correction to the term "produser" coined by

Axel Bruns.[111] Bruns hoped to capture the revolutionary way in which the internet

blurs the line between media production and consumption. However, in the

interactions examined in this project, media corporations still produced the majority

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[111] Axel Bruns, *Blogs, Wikipedia, Second Life, and Beyond: From Production to Produsage* (New York: Peter Lang, 2008).

of the original content, either in the form of the text under discussion, or the crafting of original hashtags and posts.

I offer the original term, "viewser" to intervene in an overly optimistic view of the agency of the audience. It seemed more accurate to refer to people posting in online forums by a term that denoted only slightly more agency than that of the traditional viewer. Throughout the following chapters, I use "viewsers" to refer to the complete group of people who comment on a particular movie or television show. "Viewsers" is not synonymous with the term "audience"; there were viewsers who participated online after seeing only one episode or part of an episode of a television show, or who commented on a movie that they had not seen based on dislike for the genre, the premise, or an actress. In *Screening Diversity* the term "audience" refers to people who actually watch a show or movie for one reason or another but are not necessarily avid fans. They become viewsers almost by accident. For example, if an ad comes up on their Facebook page or if they are fans of a particular actor, writer or director, they might be inspired to write a comment. Viewsers and audiences are distinct groups with significant overlap, but neither can be said to be a subset or representative sample of the other. Fans, in contrast, are devoted followers of a show or advocates of a film. They post comments because of their genuine desire to become further involved with the stories on screen, the people who make them, and the other people who love them. They were a vocal group online, often confronting other viewsers who posted negative comments.

The viewser comments collected represent a wide range of practices from casual audience member to avid fan. Facebook, Twitter and IMDb were mainstream

platforms for engagement with popular culture, usually facilitated in some way by the producers of the media text. I did not specifically seek out fans in subcultural settings, as I found that they frequently participated in these larger, established, cultural fora. For example, a Facebook group, with the not-so-modest title, "All about Lesbian Love," featured regular posts on televisions' hottest lesbian icons, including one on "Kalinda Sharma" (Archie Punjabi) of *The Good Wife*. Similarly, the sheer volume of Tweets produced about *Scandal* was staggering, and it included some of the most engaged fans, who often provided links to their blogs.[112]

Shaping Collective Memory

To contextualize the study, this section provides a description of professional women in the sphere of popular culture in the previous half-century or so. The goal is to create an account of how the collective memory of the representations of professional women is constructed. Individual viewers have their own personal biography of movies and television that shape their world-view, but they also share a larger narrative and cultural context.[113] As the U.S. film and television industry broadens into a transnational center for media production,[114] the stories it produces shape the individual biographies and collective cultural contexts around the world. Discussions of collective memory frequently focus on traumatic national events such as war.[115] Yet, as Amy Holdsworth points out, rapid changes in media have led the

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[112] A "blog," short for weblog, is an online journal, published on the Internet.
[113] Hansen, *Babel and Babylon,* 130.
[114] Tanner Mirrlees, *Global Entertainment Media Between Cultural Imperialism and Cultural Globalization* (Hoboken: Taylor & Francis, 2013).
[115] Esther C. M. Yau, "Film and Digital Video as Testimony of Chinese Modernity: Trauma, History, and Writing," *Cinema Journal 50*, no. 1 (2010): 154-162; Raz Yosef, "Traces of War: Memory, Trauma, and Archive in Joseph Cedar's 'Beaufort,'" *Cinema Journal 50*, no. 2 (2011): 61-83.

industry to begin to memorialize itself.[116] An evolving sub-section of the industry

produces collectible DVDs, re-broadcasts prior television series or movies, and

digitizes texts for purchase or subscription services. Because a complete inventory of

every individual's interpretation of every text throughout history is impossible, the

historical portion of this investigation must rely on some textual analysis as the best

proxy available for understanding how a text shapes the collective biography of

contemporary culture.

The search for a representative sample of screen representations of career

women from the past was fraught by the limitations of the historical record and the

politics of the available archives. The texts themselves - movies made to be viewed

in theaters when the technology of home viewing was unimaginable - television

shows intended for a singular ephemeral broadcast viewing – are now available on

DVD and in the growing digital archives of services like Netflix and HuluPlus.

Later on, Chapter 3 discusses these developments as they shape the history available

to contemporary viewers, especially in the global North.[117]   These corporate

archival projects privilege text over context; there is no equivalent ready access to

the actual experiences of audiences of the time. Furthermore, the availability of

texts varies widely according to how corporations and academic institutions have

undertaken their preservation.

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[116] Amy Holdsworth, "'Television Resurrections': Television and Memory," *Cinema Journal 47*, no.
3 (2008): 139.
[117] Netflix is widespread in the United States and Canada, and rapidly spreading through Europe.

The politics of race and gender were evident in the search for materials. For example, *Looking for Mr. Goodbar*[118] is referenced frequently by feminist film critics, but the only available copy was on VHS by request through my local library.[119] As of this writing, every episode of CBS's *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*, about a single white career woman in her thirties, is available streaming for a nominal fee. In contrast, *Julia*,[120] about an African American widow and mother, was nearly impossible for me to view. It was not available for official purchase on DVD or VHS. Of the academic libraries in the United States, two claimed to have a few episodes of available, but I was unable to obtain copies.[121] I ended up mailing a check to an address I found on the internet. Three weeks later, I received the majority of the episodes converted to DVD; some were from a BET (Black Entertainment Television) marathon ten years ago, others appeared to be transferred from the film reels. Contemporary viewers who seek to deepen their understanding of screen history will find only some texts available to them.

Historical representations of professional women provide the creative scaffolding for contemporary producers. Whether knowingly or unknowingly the goals of producers and the interpretation of viewers are shaped by earlier media texts. They provide a shared vocabulary of moving images, in terms of aesthetics and narrative. Directors and writers sometimes embed references to prior works

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[118] *Looking for Mr. Goodbar*, directed by Richard Brooks, novel by Judith Rossner (Paramount, 1977).

[119] Boulder County Library procured a VHS copy of the film from another public library. I then borrowed a VHS player from the Institute for Women's Studies and Services at Metropolitan State University of Denver.

[120] *Julia*, created by Hal Kanter (NBC, 1968-1971).

[121] University of California, Los Angeles listed one episode available and Northwestern University claimed to have several. My request for the episodes at Northwestern through the Big Ten Library Consortium was never fulfilled.

directly in the texts. For example, in *I Don't Know How She Does It*, a contemporary romantic comedy about work-family balance, the main character, Kate Reddy (Sara Jessica Parker) watches *His Girl Friday*.[122] When Olivia Pope (Kerry Washington) runs away with Jake Ballard (Scott Foley) to a deserted island in *Scandal,* she uses "Julia Baker" as her alias, a reference to the 1960s sitcom *Julia* starring Diahann Carroll. Producers include little nods, like that one, to pieces of media history that the corporate archives have forgotten. Viewers often cited more recent texts, such as *Murphy Brown*,[123] or *Miss Congeniality*. Even when they did not directly reference earlier movies or television series, the influence of a lifetime of media viewing was discernable in their quick recognition of common tropes and plotlines. Contemporary media texts are understandable to viewers, not because of universally applicable psychological effects, but because of their cultural training in interpreting the screen.

The list of texts used for historical context was informed by a wide variety of sources, traditional and non-traditional. The aim was to include enough to represent collective memory rather than to create a complete historical record. Some media texts were lost in time and have little relevance for today's screen. References to texts in previous scholarly writings were only one important type of source. I also investigated the texts mentioned by viewers in their comments, or referenced within contemporary texts. When I discussed the project with people from both inside and outside academia, they often mentioned their own favorite media representations of

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[122] *His Girl Friday*, directed by Howard Hawks, screenplay by Charles Lederer, play, "The Front Page," by Ben Hecht (Columbia Pictures, 1940).
[123] *Murphy Brown,* created by Diane English (CBS, 1988-1998).

professional women, like *Julia* or *Cagney and Lacey*.[124] That informal resource was especially valuable for the time periods before my own individual biography began in the late 1980s to early 1990s. Nevertheless, in the interest of scope, this history excluded or abbreviated the description of texts that were rarely remembered, and were therefore less significant to contemporary viewers.

Unprecedented Access

Screening Diversity focuses primarily on how audiences actually use texts to create a range of meanings, in conversation with their lived experience.[125] Social media sites provide opportunities for users to participate in a public sphere from the privacy of their own home, where they debate amongst each other and also speak back to the producers. The practice is no longer restricted to an isolated subculture as it was a decade ago. Instead, online viewer communities are, in the words of Jason Mittel, "an important and influential minority viewership."[126] Some scholars, such as Bruns, rush to celebrate user-generated content.[127] In reality, audiences are interpreting and spreading content produced by established media institutions or other users,[128] tweeting their favorite quotes from a movie of television episode, or posting comments about their media diet for friends and followers. Furthermore, the producers and their corporations also maintain presences in virtual communities,

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[124] *Cagney & Lacey*, created by Barbara Avedon, Barbara Coray (CBS, 1981-1988).
[125] Nick Couldry, "The Necessary Future of the Audience…and How to Research It."
[126] Jason Mittell, *Complex TV: The Poetics of Contemporary Television Storytelling* (New York: New York University Press, 2015), 8.
[127] Bruns, *Blogs, Wikipedia, Second Life, and Beyond*.
[128] Henry Jenkins, Sam Ford and Joshua Green, *Spreadable Media: Creating Value and Meaning in a Networked Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 2013), 44.

continuing to shape audiences' readings.[129] The audience has some new forms of agency and interactivity, but it is far from a revolution in control of media content.[130] The term "viewsers" reflects a subtle, rather than seismic shift in the methodologies of reception studies in response to new digital technologies.

Partially, these online spaces functioned to provide ready feedback to producers. Viewsers assumed that producers were actively reading their online comments and took the opportunity to make demands, particularly for television shows. Sometimes their demands were remarkably specific. For example, one *Scandal* viewer suggested that Pam Grier[131] or Khandi Alexander[132] make a guest appearance on the show. Producers seem to be listening to their online fan base, as one season later, Khandi Alexander appeared as Olivia's mother, Maya Lewis. Viewsers exerted their influence through the implicit power of their purses and the value of their eyeballs on the advertisements both on television and embedded within social media that collects consumer data. Without denying the consumer function of both old and new media, I argue that the meaning of these cultural practices exceeds their mere consumerist function. These media platforms offer space for debate on political issues, in this case, women and work. Many scholars have been quick to label this fan labor a form of consumer activism. However, such an analysis reduces

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[129] Tereza Pavlickova, "At the Crossroads of Hermeneutical Philosophy and Reception Studies: Understanding Patterns of Cross-Media Consumption," in *The Social Use of Media: Cultural and Social Scientific Perspectives on Audience Research*, ed. Helena Bilandzic, Jeffrey Patriarche, and Paul J. Traudt (Chicago: Intellect Ltd. 2012), 45.

[130] Couldry, "The Necessary Future of the Audience…and How to Research It."

[131] Pam Grier starred in Blaxploitation classics, Coffy (1973), Foxy Brown (1974), as well as Quentin Tarantino's, Jackie Brown (1997), which reprised the Blaxploitation genre.

[132] Khandi Alexander is a television actress, also known for roles in classic African American films of the early 1990s, such as: *Menace II Society,* directed by the Hughes Brothers (New Line Cinema,1993); *Poetic Justice*, directed by John Singleton (Columbia Pictures, 1993).

screen texts merely to their status as commodities, when, in fact, they have cultural worth that far exceeds their monetary value.

In 2000, Janet Staiger wrote that the greatest challenge in screen studies was "to find traces of the relations between individuals and texts, since the words of peoples without dominant voices are seldom recorded permanently for the researcher to locate later."[133] Until very recently, that was true. While difficulties in accessing the actual experiences of the audience remain a dilemma in embedded approaches to screen studies, the internet provides researchers with unprecedented access to actual viewers. Because of the widespread availability of the internet and social media, audiences are more accessible than they have ever been before. Rather than a traditional interview-based reception study, *Screening Diversity* follows audiences online, gaining access to some of the ways in which people share meaning and interpretations of media texts. Researchers now have the ability to access viewers through participant observation in a way that is more naturalistic than a survey, focus group or interview and that reflects an increasingly important mode of engaging with the screen. Contemporary film and television shows have Twitter hashtags,[134] presences on Facebook, and user-reviews on websites such as IMDB (Internet Movie Database), where fans are invited to engage with the screen with relatively little formal gatekeeping. In *Bring on the Books for Everybody* Jim Collins notes that online user reviews led to the declining significance of professional critics, shifting

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[133] Staiger, *Perverse Spectators*, 118.
[134] A hashtag is a one-word identifier that categorizes the tweet along with others of the same hashtag. Searchable hashtags are the primary way that viewers communicate with each other about a specific media text on Twitter.

cultural authority to readers (or viewers) themselves.[135] However, participation does

not always mean power over media and, in Turner and Tay's later edited collection,

Andrejevic added that often online engagement is designed by marketing agencies to

facilitate consumption.[136] Thus, the difficulty of accessing powerless audiences is

by no means completely resolved by the web. Class, racial, and gender disparities in

digital access shape online communities.[137]   Still, more spectators than ever before

are comparing opinions and publishing supplemental content,[138] and the

opportunities for the democratic conversation about screen culture now available

online offer a valuable source of data for any contemporary study on popular culture.

Navigating Viewer Experiences:

In *Screening Diversity*, I selected texts that specifically provide the

opportunity for audiences to use them as cultural fora on women's work in the

twenty-first century. Each text selected features a contemporary professional

woman as its star in some type of workplace-centered story. Because the project

explores media convergence and the role of social media in reception, I have limited

the sample to film and television produced after 2006, the year that Twitter launched

and Facebook became available to the general public.[139] The comments provoked

by these texts form the primary data for the investigation. The goal is not to supply a

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[135] Jim Collins, *Bring on the Books for Everybody* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 19.
[136] Mark Andrejevic. "Twenty-First-Century Telescreen." *Television Studies After TV: Understanding Television in the Post-Broadcast Era*, ed. Graeme Turner and Jinna Tay (New York: Routledge, 2009); Josh Stenger, "The Clothes Make the Fan: Fashion and Online Fandom when Buffy the Vampire Slayer Goes to eBay," *Cinema Journal 45,* no. 4 (2006): 26-44.
[137] Lisa Nakamura, *Digitizing Race* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008).
[138] Jullier and Leveratto, "Cinephelia in the Digital Age."
[139] From its launch in 2004 until that point, it was restricted to first Harvard undergraduates, then gradually to all undergraduate students, based on what the founders perceived as the prestige level of each university.

novel critique or expert reading of the texts. Instead, it is to observe the meanings viewers ascribed to the stories on the screen and to understand their attitudes toward work, gender, race and American capitalism.

At the turn of the twenty-first century, there were a plethora of female professionals on television, and their numbers were increasing each season. The challenge was to select a manageable number of TV shows considered as texts that provided a representative sample. The television shows, *Scandal*, *The Good Wife*, *Parks and Recreation*, *Homeland* and *VEEP* were selected to offer a range of television genres and to provide me with some of the biggest hits from each network. This selection also allows me to represent both network and premium shows as well as both dramas and comedies. In order to insure that each text had a significant impact on contemporary popular culture, I chose television shows that aired for at least three seasons, excluding some interesting newcomers like *How to Get Away With Murder, State of Affairs*[140] and *Madame Secretary*.[141]

Career women movies, so popular in previous eras, seem to be off cycle since 2007. As such, I expanded my criteria to include movies about women who were specifically portrayed as professionals and at least depicted at work some of the time. I selected mainstream Hollywood fare whose worldwide gross was at least $40 million, as a marker of impact on popular culture. Independent and art movies were not considered, as they do not represent the average cultural diet available to most viewers. It proved difficult to find movies in the contemporary era that included

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[140] *State of Affairs*, created by Joe Carnahan, (NBC, 2014-).
[141] *Madam Secretary,* created by Barbara Hall (CBS, 2014-). Future dissertations and books might take advantage of the ample volume of material on the professional women in contemporary television that were outside the scope of this study.

representations of professional women that were centered on the workplace. Contemporary movies were much more likely to be primarily about women's relationships and home lives as opposed to their working lives. The movies selected, *Zero Dark Thirty, The Proposal, The Heat, Temptation, I Don't Know How She Does It*, and *The Other Woman*, span historical thriller, drama, romantic comedy, and comedy. "Appendix 1: Index of Titles" provides full synopses of each movie and television series.

The empirical portion of the study investigates detailed qualitative information on viewsers' everyday reading practices. The qualitative research software, "Dedoose," aided in data collection and analysis. I chose "Dedoose" because it was a low-cost, open-source software developed collaboratively by academics doing socio-cultural research. Additionally, it was cloud-based, which simplified the process of backing up data regularly.[142]

The primary data are Facebook comments and Tweets, as well as IMBD reviews. Each of the social media platforms included in this study met three criteria: first, they were free to users; second, they allowed for discussion of both film and television on the same terms; third, they allowed and encouraged users to interact with each other. Social media and online ratings sites provide naturalistic settings for the research, and allow the project to focus on practices audiences already voluntarily engage with as part of their reading practices. Furthermore, they provide a readily accessible archive of viewers' comments that were much more difficult for researchers to gather, even a few years ago, before these reception practices became popular. Because of their ready accessibility, reviews and comments like the ones

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[142] See Appendix III for additional details.

collected for this study are becoming more culturally relevant than critical reviews.[143]

As discussed above, the theoretical underpinning of the project holds that media are converging and that people are watching television and film in increasingly similar ways. Therefore, the primary source of data on popular reception was IMDb (Internet Movie Database), because the platform contained user reviews and comments on both film and television together. The investigation began by collecting the IMDb reviews of each television and film text.[144] Its primary function, as the name suggests, is as a database of films, television shows and the actors, directors and other creative workers involved in each text. As with each platform used for the research, IMDb is free to users, but sponsored by corporate media. The online retailer Amazon is the primary architect and sponsor, but the site is also supported by advertising for upcoming movies and television shows. The advantage of the IMDB approach is that it captures a wide subsection of the viewership, not just fans of a particular show or film. IMDb is available on the world-wide-web, meaning that, while disparities in access exist, a large proportion of the U.S. and world population is able to post on the site. Therefore, it provided comprehensive qualitative survey data for the project. Twitter and Facebook data were collected only after the IMDb phase of the research, including data analysis, was complete.

The review format makes IMDb unique among the platforms. In contrast to Facebook and Twitter, where viewers have the freedom to react only to certain

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[143] Collins, *Bring on the Books for Everybody*, 19.
[144] See Inger-Lise Kalviknes Bore; the study used IMDB for a study on popular reception of the romantic comedy *500 Days of Summer* (2011).

elements, episodes or aspects of a text, IMDb specifically asks viewers to compile

their thoughts into an entry that is a minimum of ten lines. The reviews tended to

emphasize overall quality, producing either recommendations or warnings for other

viewers. Viewers from outside the United States frequently write reviews. Many

people clearly spent a considerable amount of time and effort crafting near-

professional-quality reviews. Some were experts, actors and film school graduates

for whom the required ten lines was no problem; they used phrases like "televisual

landscape," provided links to their blogs, and referred to other viewers as "the

ignorant masses." For some reviewers, the ten-line requirement presented a

significant barrier. They attempted to fill out the required length with plot summary,

but in many cases they simply pasted their comment multiple times.[145] There was a

sense of class warfare on the site, as these viewers objected to the clear discounting

of their opinions by the quasi or aspiring-professional reviewers. The readers of

each review participate in ranking the reviews in terms of usefulness: each reader

may designate a particular review helpful or not helpful; the platform's algorithm

then prioritizes reviews based on those voted most useful. Based on the votes many

reviews received, it seems readers often vote based on whether or not they agree

with the reviewer's assessment rather than based on the amount of detail the review

contains or the quality of the reviewer's knowledge of film and television.

The first step to managing the materials was to collect viewers' IMDb

comments and paste them into Dedoose for analysis. Data overload presented a

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[145] One person wrote: "I have said all I have to say. Why should I post ten lines of text? Could I just make smaller lines? Like this? This? Line. No that won't work. IMDb you could do with an easier set of rules for these comments. Quick and to the point comments should count as well. We're not all clones of Roger Ebert after all."

significant challenge to this research, but the algorithm presented a potential

solution. Some texts, like *Zero Dark Thirty*, had over 600 reviews. Because the most

popular reviews appeared first, I collected the first 200 reviews in these cases. A

few texts, like *The Proposal*, had fewer than 100 entries, in which case I collected all

of them. By the time I began the data analysis phase, I was already familiar with the

comments and had some ideas about several of the most important topics, such as

competence, romantic affairs, mental health and chick flicks or chick television. I

began reading through the data and categorizing each comment in one of those

topics, creating additional categories as I encountered new data. Dedoose allowed

me to code passages according to theme and subtheme, and to edit the relationship

among the codes. Because I manually applied each code to each passage, I avoided

allowing the software to distance me from the data – a pitfall identified by

researchers critical of qualitative analysis software, such as Soyini Madison.[146]

Additionally, I kept a notebook identifying emerging relationships and problems

with the codes. For example, sometimes I found that I used two different codes for

something that was in fact the same theme, so I created a parent code to encompass

both. I then used the software to visualize the relationship among codes and create a

larger narrative about my data. Once I had completed the initial phase of data

analysis for the IMDb reviews, I proceeded to collect data from Twitter and

Facebook. In total, I collected 4751 comments.

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[146] Soyini Madison, *Critical Ethnography: Method Ethics and Performance* (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2005), 39.

Twitter included an abundance of irrelevant information, including corporate promotions, other uses of the media texts' hashtags,[147] and a large volume of comments unrelated to the theme of women's work. Data collection on Twitter was an arduous task, particularly for shows like *Scandal* and *Parks and Recreation*, whose audiences are extremely active on Twitter. Before I began, I developed a list of search terms likely to yield comments related to work, based on both my IMDb analysis and on a pilot portion of this study in which I live tweeted along with audiences for several of the television shows. The terms were as follows: professional; boss; career; work; business; job; failure; success; employee; promotion; office; desk; role model; competent; bitch; fired; diversity; discrimination; crazy; psycho; unstable; emotional; slut; housewife; chick; soap opera; melodrama. Again, the number of Tweets collected for each text was limited to 200. The goal was to collect a representative sample of viewer comments about women and work, and not necessarily to create an exhaustive data set including every relevant comment published. IMDb produced a lot of low-quality and minimally useful data as viewers attempted to rate the technical and aesthetic merits of the texts. While IMDb offered comprehensive data, Twitter offered the ability to perform searches targeted to my research questions.

Further, Twitter's unique focus on live events[148] allows viewers to react directly to diagetic elements like characters and plot. Therefore, it leant itself much better than IMDb to comparisons between the lives and workplaces on screen and

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[147] For example, a search for #TheHeat reveals tweets about both the movie discussed here and the basketball team, the Miami Heat.

[148] Tim Highfield, Stephen Harrington and Axel Bruns, "Twitter as Technology for Audiencing and Fandom," *Information, Communication & Society 16*, no. 3 (2013): 315-339.

the vieswers' actual working lives. Retweeting quotes was among the most common live viewing practices, as were plot predictions. Twitter also facilitated social viewing experiences. Viewsers shared where they were and who they were with while watching their favorite shows. Sometimes they even tweeted encounters with their coworkers or bosses that reminded them of the fictionalized representations on screen.

The Twitter data analysis followed the same procedure as the IMDb analysis. Once again, I kept a paper notebook of shortcomings and potential revisions in the codes. After I concluded the initial round of coding the Twitter data, I then recoded the IMDb data based on the updated coding map developed in the course of Twitter data analysis. At that point, the code map was detailed and accurate enough to produce a chapter outline of the second half of this dissertation. It was clear which texts provided the best evidence for each theme, and in which chapters each text would be introduced.

Next on the agenda was Facebook data collection, which I organized according to the theme and chapter. I collected a maximum of 125 Facebook comments because I already knew which theme would be the primary focus of my discussions of each text. For example, based on my findings from IMDb and Twitter, on *Scandal*'s Facebook page I concentrated my efforts on collecting comments about work ethic, success and failure. On *The Good Wife's* Facebook page, I focused on comments that related to women's care work and the ideal of the stay-at-home mother. Like IMDb, Facebook employed an algorithm that cut down on my research time by prioritizing the most popular comments. Comments that

spun off into longer conversations were prioritized, followed by singular topical

comments; comments in which people simply tagged their friends appeared last. For

the most part, Facebook viewers were true fans responding to specific posts by the

producers. They used Facebook to deepen their involvement with a particular text

and its fictional world. They felt entitled to a certain level of service from the

administrators of each page. For example, viewers outside the United States

frequently complained when the administrators posted clips that were available only

to viewers in the U.S. Viewers on *Zero Dark Thirty's* page complained about the

lack of variation in posts from the administrators. Facebook viewers also policed

responses from others, as the fans of *Scandal* did in response to several racist

comments about the program's treatment of racialized police violence.

Limitations and Ethical Considerations

The biggest limitation of *Screening Diversity* is that it relies on a small group

of viewers who chose to participate in online forums and have access to the

necessary leisure technologies. The age of media convergence is also characterized

by differential access to the new technologies within the United States and

globally.[149] Access to technology for leisurely pursuits, in particular, requires high

levels of both personal and community resources, in the form of devices and

infrastructure. Even among those viewers who do have access, not all have the

literacy or inclination to participate in online fan communities. Nevertheless, these

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[149] Virginia Eubanks, *Digital Dead End: Fighting for Social Justice in the Information Age*
(Cambridge: MIT Press, 2011); Kirk St. Amant and Bolanle Abodnrin Olaniran, *Globalization and
the Digital Divide* (Amherst: Cambria Press, 2011); Pippa Norris, *Digital Divide: Civic Engagement,
Information Poverty, and the Internet Worldwide* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

comments, tweets and posts offer insight into the ways in which audiences make sense of the texts, though the generalizability to the audience as a whole is limited.

Second, television receives slightly more attention than film. Near the end of this project I realized that the quantity and quality of social media conversations on television shows exceeded that of the movies to an even greater proportion than I originally thought. Although I researched only five television shows as opposed to six movies, the data was nevertheless disproportionately focused on television.

I did not contact individual fans for in-depth follow-up interviews, or conduct focus groups. The plentitude of information available online made face-to-face interviews redundant, except in targeting particular populations, as in Jacqueline Bobo's research on *The Color Purple*.[150] Because this dissertation seeks to revive class analysis, recruiting working-class participants seemed a logical method; however, I rejected that option as prohibitively difficult and unnecessary. Because of the nature of mass open online forums, it was not always possible to identify the gender, race or class of an audience member. However, it is difficult to target working-class participants in any type of research, largely because people hesitate to self-identify as working class. That hesitancy is both reflective of the changing and more flexible relationships of production under late capitalism and also reflective of the fact that class is particularly ill-suited to identity politics. Gibson-Graham argues that like gender, class is something that is relational and actively constructed through social processes, rather than a fixed social identity.[151] Therefore, my research

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[150] Bobo, *Black Women as Culural Readers*.
[151] Gibson-Graham, *The End of Capitalism (As We Knew It)*, 52-58.

focuses more on how a broad, diverse sample of people online construct gender, race and class than on how a particular community experience the screen.

Although approval by the University of Maryland's Institutional Review Board was not required, the ethics of the proposed research is still important to consider. I followed an ethical decision-making process in line with the recommendations of the Association of Internet Researchers; one that is adaptive and contextually specific.[152] All the data that will be used in this study is already publicly available to anyone with access to the Internet. However, that does not necessarily mean that people posting online always understand the intimate details of the corporate privacy policies to which they are subject and the implications of those structures of power. While their comments are technically public, their intended audience may only be a small circle of followers. There is a potential risk to the viewers' livelihoods in publicizing certain comments, for example, negative comments about a job or boss, or comments that cast doubt on the viewer's competence or fitness for employment. Therefore, I opted not to collect names or personal information. Instead, I use pseudonyms when referring to viewers' and their comments in the dissertation. However, it may still be possible for readers to search the text of a comment and link it back to a user.[153] Therefore, any comments that might pose a risk to someone's livelihood were disguised through use of synonyms or shifts in grammar. The meaning remains the same, but the comments are significantly less searchable and identifiable.

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[152] Annette Markham and Elizabeth Buchanan, "Ethical Decision-Making and Internet Research: Recommendations from the AoIR Ethics Working Committee (Version 2.0)," *Association of Internet Researchers,* 2012. Online: aoir.org/reports/ethics2.pdf.
[153] Markham and Buchanan, "Ethical Decision-Making and Internet Research," 9-10.

My working assumption is that most users are competent with the technology, subsequently mitigating any risks associated with posting sensitive or dangerous (i.e. could get them fired) information about their own work through privacy settings or self-censorship. The alternative assumption, that people are unsuspecting victims of the Internet, seems to replay the idea of the duped masses, and therefore seems ethically at odds with this project's assumptions about the agency of viewers. My primary point of access was through hashtags, official Facebook pages and the like, so people opted into a public conversation in the process of making each comment. This makes the comments that form my data set fundamentally different from many other uses of social media for research, which use information accessed through a personal profile, and therefore rely on the privacy settings that are changed frequently by the corporation.

Conclusion

The advent of social and participatory media irrevocably changed landscape of film and television. However, to call those changes a revolution in the power of representation is an overstatement. New delivery methods such as DVDs, DVRs, and streaming technology elide the distinction between television and movies. In the broadcast era, all citizens of a nation were offered the same media diet. In the contemporary post-broadcast era, the plethora of contemporary and historic media products available makes viewing practices unique. On a typical Thursday night, millions of people are watching *Scandal*, some are catching up on *VEEP* on their DVR, and still others are watching a Hepburn/Tracey classic streaming. Critics are losing their absolute authority over the text to the comparatively democratic practice

of online response, through IMDb, Facebook, and Twitter. As noted, corporations make major decisions about what will be available to the public, thus managing representations of the past and the present.

Scholarship can intervene only by analyzing the process in its entirety. Researchers now enjoy unprecedented access to audiences through their online activities. *Screening Diversity* demonstrates the incredible possibility of this data for the investigation of socio-cultural phenomena. In this case, discussions about the representation of women and work provide insight into the off-screen world of work.

Next, "Career Women on Screen, 1940-2007" frames the project. The story of career women in the twentieth century reflects the extent to which certain aspects of feminism were acceptable to a general audience. Chapter 3 begins with the focus on companionate marriage visible in movies of the 1940s. It addresses the hyper-conservative, yet gender-obsessed texts of the 1950s, followed by the nominal acceptance of single, working women by the late 1960s. In the 1970s, media producers learned to capitalize on racial and gender diversity. Despite the limitations of this commercially oriented version of social justice, the decade left a lasting legacy that broadened the range of screen roles available for women. Even through the anti-feminist backlash of the 1980s and 1990s, professional women remained on screen, poised for a comeback, and a post-feminist makeover, in the late 1990s. The decade prior to the emergence of participatory online viewership was characterized by a hollow insistence on the irrelevance of gender and race, and an unashamed amplification of the importance of class.

3. Career Women on Screen, 1940-2007

> Walter (Carey Grant): You're a newspaper man.
> Hildy (Rosalind Russel): That's why I'm leaving. I want to go
> somewhere I can be a woman for once.[154]

This chapter provides a history of the representation of professional women in U.S. cinema and television, in an effort to explain how women across race came to be portrayed in the same ways as men, in line with the treasured myths of American success. For each time period I discuss the important contextual factors: macro-political, production, and technological. To these contextual factors framing my analysis, I add evidence of the historical interpretation of films/shows wherever the work has already been done by other scholars. Each of these sections could contain enough material for multiple volumes, so the focus here is on broad strokes that will explain how contemporary representations of professional women came to be and why the macro-political and technological situation of the twenty-first century is vital to any comprehensive picture of contemporary representations. The interplay between and among texts that address similar themes is vital in understanding how they produce meaning. In *Time Passages*, George Lipsitz argues that texts do not exist as individual artifacts outside of history and that transformation over time and struggle for prominence and attention should be the focus of analysis.[155] Therefore, this chapter looks across the decades as a way of exploring the ways in which the representations of success and feminism have

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[154] *His Girl Friday*
[155] George Lipsitz, *Time Passages* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), 13-14. He cites Stuart Hall within the text.

shifted and realigned. It also points to some remarkable notes of consistency in the

representations of professional women throughout the recent decades.

Like any effort to create a cohesive history, this chapter is limited by the

politics of preservation. Researching this chapter meant accessing a series of

archives, digital or physical, corporate or public. Practically, the corporate-

sponsored digital archives maintained by IMDb, HuluPlus and Amazon Instant, were

the most accessible. For the majority of the historical research, I relied on these

services, now available to the general public for a monthly fee. Academic libraries

rarely offered access to movies or television series that were not available to the

general public. As of this writing, *Looking for Mr. Goodbar* has not been released

on DVD, meaning that the only available copies are on VHS, requiring outdated

machinery. Neither the subscription services, nor the academic libraries had later

seasons of Murphy Brown; only Season One has been released. For the most part,

my access matched that of any contemporary viewser interested in and able to pay

for the same materials. The illusion of unfettered access camouflaged exclusions in

the historical record, based on which of their old films and series media corporations

do and do not release. This chapter and the history it tells are limited by those

practices.

The following overview focuses on the most significant (and readily

available) predecessors to the contemporary representations of professional women,

highlighting the change in representations of U.S. professional women from previous

periods. The discussion is organized chronologically, beginning with World War II

and the immediate post-war era, a period when career women were frequently the

subjects of film. Women with careers on screen became sparse in the post-war years (1951-1968), reflecting the reactionary tendencies of anti-communist America. There was a substantial delay between the radical politics that emerged in the 1960s and the bland progressivism that finally made its way onto the screen in the late 1960s and the 1970s. With the election of Ronald Regan, the shift away from social justice in favor of profit became an enduring feature of the fictional screen portrayals of career women (1982-1997). Finally, the post-feminist era (1997-2007) combined an emphasis on success for women with a consumerist lifestyle, trivializing the continued struggles of women for economic and social justice. Ultimately, the chapter seeks to explain how in American popular culture, professional success became the gold standard for personhood for women, as it always was for men.

Old Fashioned Ideas (1939-1951)

This overview begins during World War II at the height of Hollywood's classical era (1927-1963)[156] for two reasons. First, there was a substantial increase in the number of women in the professions due to wartime necessity that never completely reversed in the post-war era. Second, World War II marked the emergence of the professional-managerial class.[157] Films of the World War II era highlighted a shift toward companionate marriages of two autonomous individuals.[158] Rather than a social and economic arrangement for the purpose of reproduction and sustenance, a companionate marriage satisfied the individual's psychological need for a spiritual, emotional and intellectual connection with an

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[156] David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style & Mode of Production to 1960* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).
[157] Ehrenreich & Ehrenreich, "The Professional-Managerial Class," 5-45.
[158] Stanley Cavell, *The Pursuit of Happiness* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981).

equal partner. *His Girl Friday*, *No Time for Love*,[159] *Mildred Pierce*,[160] and *Adam's Rib* featured strong career women who were the professional equals of their male co-stars. However, in each case, the women seem to need moral guidance from the men in order to truly be fulfilled. Symptomatic of larger crises in the changing meaning of marriage and relationships, as Glitre argued,[161] these films take companionate marriage focused on the heterosexual couple (rather than family and childbearing) as a primary theme.

The macro-political landscape of the 1940s was dominated by World War II and its aftermath, especially the sudden disruption and subsequent reassertion of traditional gender roles. Women temporarily filled many of the professional civilian jobs vacated by men during the war. The best-known group was the women who entered heavy manufacturing, emblematized by Rosie the Riveter.[162] The war also allowed women to gain access to some of the professions. For example, women in science and engineering fields, critical to the war effort, suddenly received scholarships, job offers and promotions they were denied only a few years earlier.[163] Professional women, like their sisters in manufacturing, were promptly dismissed or demoted at the conclusion of the War. By the early 1950s, women were reassigned either to the home or to lower-paying jobs. This was not a return to the actual gender roles of the 1930s. Instead, it was guided by nostalgia for the frontier and a

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[159] *No Time for Love,* directed by Mitchell Leisen, written by Robert Lees and Fred Rinaldo (Paramount, 1943).
[160] *Mildred Pierce*, directed by Michael Curtiz, screenplay by Ranald MacDougall, novel James M. Cain (Warner Bros., 1945).
[161] Glitre, *Hollywood Romantic Comedy*, 45-48.
[162] Maureen Honey, *Creating Rosie the Riveter: Class, Gender, and Propaganda During World War II* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1984).
[163] Margaret W. Rossiter, *Women Scientists in America: Before Affirmative Action, 1940-1972* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 2.

desire to articulate our national identity in opposition to emerging communist nations at the beginning of the Cold War.[164]

The business of Hollywood was likewise dominated by the war effort. Because its economic and political power had declined from its heyday in the 1920s,[165] the industry felt particularly vulnerable to government investigations of the early 1940s.[166] Hollywood gladly helped promote the image of Rosie the Riveter, temporarily entering manufacturing for the good of the nation, but just as happy to abandon her job when the boys came home.[167] In exchange for creating training and propaganda films for the War Board at or below cost, the studios were allowed to continue to make a limited number of films for significant profit.[168] Scholarship on Hollywood films of the early 1940s is often dominated by concerns with film noir and its characteristic paranoia, claustrophobic camera angles, and femme fatales.[169] In actuality, Hollywood put considerable effort into creating "women's films," anticipating a shift in the demographics of the movie-going public.[170] Women had significantly more disposable income than in the decade prior, and, due to wartime restrictions on other goods, many spent their extra money at the movies.

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[164] Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1988); Laura Belmonte, *Selling the American Way: U.S. Propaganda and the Cold War* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 136-158.

[165] Robert Sklar, *Movie-Made America: A Cultural History of American Movies*, 2nd ed. (New York: Vintage, 1994), 257.

[166] The US Congressional Truman Committee investigated Hollywood studios with charges of war profiteering in 1941 and 1943 according to Sklar,

[167] Honey, *Creating Rosie the Riveter.*

[168] Douglas Gomery, *Movie History: A Survey* (Belmont: Wadsworth, 1991), 186; Sklar, *Movie-Made America*, 250-251.

[169] Jonathan Auerbach, *Dark Borders: Film Noir and American Citizenship* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).

[170] Mary Anne Doane, *The Desire to Desire: The Woman's Film of the 1940s* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 3-5.

The career women in the entertainment films leading up to the United States'

entry into the war revealed suspicion toward American politics and propaganda. In

His Girl Friday, Hildy (Rosalind Russell) is disillusioned with her work and her

boss/ex-husband, Walter (Cary Grant). In this comedy of remarriage,[171] Hildy and

Walter's mutual emotional connection has to be continually enacted through sharing

a career, rather than a family. She decides instead on a traditional marriage to an

insurance salesman, Bruce Baldwin (Ralph Bellamy), but things go awry when she

attempts to announce the engagement to Walter. When she finally tells Walter that

she is not going to get back together with him, Walter says, "you've got an old-

fashioned idea of divorce." Thus the viewers are introduced to an unfamiliar modern

world where marriages come and go and come back again. He confidently tells

Hildy, "you're a newspaper man," to which she retorts, "that's why I'm quitting; I

want to be a woman." It is unclear whether Hildy really wants a traditional marriage

to Bruce, or just feels pulled by the forces of convention. Throughout the day Hildy

struggles with her desire for normalcy on the one hand, and her absolute love of her

job as a reporter.

In the second half of the film, the viewers follow Hildy into the seductive

world of newspaper journalism, where headlines trump morals in every instance. As

James Walters argues, the film blends romantic comedy into a dark world in which

politics and the rule of law are susceptible to manipulation of the newspapers.[172]

While Hildy is reasonably adept at navigating this world, Bruce is powerless to

defend himself when Walter arranges for the police to catch him with counterfeit

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[171] Cavell, *The Pursuit of Happiness.*
[172] James Walters, "Making Light of the Dark: Understanding the World of *His Girl Friday," Journal of Film & Video 60*, no. 3/4 (2008): 90-102.

money and a prostitute. In this twisted world, Hildy's and Walter's newspaper careers are not primarily ways of engaging morally in the world. Instead, they are treated like an addiction. In hopes of winning her back, Walter preys on her love of her career, offering her an irresistible assignment about a story of a man about to be wrongfully executed. Like Walter, her fellow reporters have their doubts about her plans to marry, at first, giving it six months, then three. Walter is so successful in hooking Hildy back in that she does not even notice when Bruce leaves her because she is engrossed in her work. As Verna Kale points out, the film suggests that the cycle of divorce and remarriage will continue well beyond the conclusion of the movie.[173] Walter seems to provide the spirit or motivation that renews Hildy's devotion to her work, and simultaneously drives her away from it.

The sarcastic playful wit of screwball comedies like *His Girl Friday* fell out of favor once U.S. troops joined the war effort. Instead, audiences on the home front were treated to romantic comedies, like *No Time for Love*, which highlights the importance of work, and its relationship to American values. Katherine Grant (Claudette Colbert) works as a newspaper photographer, an artist, who is interested only in composition and inanimate objects. Much to her boss's chagrin, she refuses to photograph actual human beings. When she is assigned to photograph the construction of a new tunnel, James Ryan (Fred MacMurray), one of the Irish-American workers, changes all that. Ryan is described as "primordial," "ape-like," "raw humanity." It is Katherine's encounter with his working-class immigrant

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[173] Verna Kale, "The Girl Reporter Gets Her Man: The Threat and Promise of Marriage in *His Girl Friday* and *Brenda Starr: Reporter*." *The Journal of Popular Culture, 47*, no. 2 (2014): 351.

background that awakens her artistically and sexually.[174] As in *His Girl Friday*,

Ryan acts as a mentor of sorts, helping Katharine find the true meaning of her work.

Yet class poses an obstacle to their eventual union. Katherine confidently

tells her sister, "Romantic marriage went out with smelling salts. Today it's a

common sense institution, and if you don't have intelligence enough to better your

position then you deserve to fall in love and starve to death." As discussed above,

the opposite cultural trend – companionate marriage – had recently emerged.

Luckily, Katherine ends up not having to choose at all between love and class

privilege. The movie speedily disposes of the class barrier between the lovers, using

the classic American mythology of upward mobility. We find out that Ryan has

secretly attended engineering school and designed a machine to save the tunnel

project. Katherine sneaks in to photograph the machines trial and is able to provide

evidence to Ryan's investor that the machine has potential. He, in turn, has helped

bring meaning to her career as an artist. She moves from being motivated purely by

art for art's sake to beginning to view her art as connected to people and their social

lives. It is only after they are able to mutually help each other with their careers that

their connection is strong enough to lead to a companionate marriage, based on

equality between the spouses. The final resolution of the film demonstrates

considerably more flexibility when it comes to middle-class attitudes toward gender

in modern marriage than it does with regards to class. Her devotion to her career

was acceptable and even renewed throughout the course of the film, while his lack of

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[174] Although sexuality is not my primary concern here, *No Time For Love*, is highly concerned with psycho-sexual development and rife with innuendo. For example, when the managing editor gives Katherine her assignment he asks her to ""crawl into the hole and point your talented camera at what goes on," to which she replies, "that's not my type of photography."

an acceptable middle-class career had to be remedied in order for the romantic plot to be resolved.

Mildred Pierce is also explicit in taking class as its subject, but warns of the corrupting influence of wealth. Mildred (Joan Crawford) begins as a housewife who sells cakes to supplement her husband's modest living. Motivated by her daughter's insatiable appetite for wealth and its trappings, she opens her own chain of restaurants and builds a small fortune. Her accumulation of wealth is contrasted to the idleness of the decaying European aristocrat, Monte Baragon (Zachary Scott), at first her investor, then eventually her freeloading second husband. This "fatalistic film noir," [175] as Gomery calls it, ends with the revelation that Veda (Ann Blyth), Mildred's daughter, has murdered Monte. *Mildred Pierce* comments on the moral decay that might accompany American post-war prosperity. Some critics have argued that the film reasserts patriarchy through its negative portrayal of women's economic empowerment. One of the tragic aspects of Mildred's ending is that in overspending just to please her daughter, she jeopardizes her ownership of the business, and loses her genuine love of and connection to her profession, managing restaurants. Mildred's professional consequences once again point to the lesson that women's career ambitions are in need of careful management from a watchful patriarch.

Tensions over the role of class were at the forefront of the everyday lives of people working in Hollywood in the 1940s. The legions of behind-the-scenes workers were well organized by IATSE (International Alliance of Theatrical Stage

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[175] Gomery, *Movie History*, 176.

Employees) and the Confederation of Studio Unions (CSU). In 1945, over ten thousand CSU workers went on strike. At first the studios had enough back stock to continue releasing films, but as many IATSE workers and some powerful stars refused to cross picket lines, production slowed. By 1946, the strike turned into a violent lockout. It was only the practice of blacklisting that challenged the influence of unions and eventually returned Hollywood to business as usual.[176]

By the end of the war, the movies entered a period of stylistic stagnation. Due to the economic threat posed by television, the focus was on tried and true formulas, the importance of stars and technologies such as Technicolor. *Adam's Rib* was one of many films starring award-winning actors Katharine Hepburn and Spencer Tracey, who had previously appeared in *Woman of the Year*, *Without Love*[177] and *State of the Union*.[178] In *Woman of the Year*, Sam Craig (Tracy) and Tess Harding (Hepburn) enter into a marriage revolving around her career as a journalist, covering international politics. In their first year of marriage, Tess leaves almost no time for her home life with Sam, a modestly successful sports writer. Nor does she find bliss in domesticity; in the film's final scene, Tess resolves to devote herself to being Sam's housewife and attempts to make him breakfast. The consequences are disastrous: Tess cannot make coffee or even use the toaster. As the couple reunites, Sam tells Tess, "I don't want to be married to Tess Harding any more than I want you to be just Mrs. Sam Craig. Why can't you be Tess Harding Craig?" With their newly negotiated gender roles, they live happily ever after.

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[176] Sklar, *Movie-Made America* 257-260.
[177] *Without Love,* directed by Harold S. Bucquet, screenplay by Donald Ogden Stewart, play by Philip Barry (MGM, 1945).
[178] *State of the Union,* directed by Frank Capra, screenplay by Anthony Veiller and Myles Connolly, play by Howard Lindsay and Russel Crouse (Liberty Films, 1948).

Sam's proposal, however, comes only after Tess agrees to prioritize their marriage at all costs. When audiences were reacquainted with the couple seven years later in *Adam's Rib,* their marriage relationship was still characterized by equality and reciprocity, but the tone of the film is decidedly more conservative. In *Adam's Rib*, Adam's re-enactment of the murder scene with a fake gun eventually forces Amanda to admit that the legal case she just beat him at was morally indefensible; Glitre and Phillipa Gates note that though she wins the court case, Amanda loses the private argument with her husband.[179] The Hollywood endings seem to offer audiences a reconciled, almost equal, yet still ultimately patriarchal model of marriage.

Films of the 1940s displayed considerable cultural ambivalence over what shifts in gender and work meant for marriage. Women's work in the professions was not automatically problematic. After all, the companionate model of marriage meant that the intellectual connection between partners could extend into the work sphere. In *His Girl Friday* and *No Time for Love*, the male lead actually renews and helps reaffirm the woman's commitment to her profession. *No Time for Love* and *Woman of the Year* begin to suggest that career ambition could manifest itself as pathology in women that needed correcting by a strong male lead. *Mildred Pierce*'s ambition spiraled out of control without a man up to the task of managing her. In all these films, women need the mentorship and guidance of the men in their lives in order to achieve a positive, satisfying relationship to work. Women were not yet fully eligible to be main characters in stories of success.

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[179] Glitre, *Hollywood Romantic Comedy*, 100; Philipa Gates, *Detecting Women: Gender and the Hollywood Detective Film* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2011), 228-229.

The Pictures Get Small (1951-1968)[180]

The introduction of television had widespread implications for everyday media consumption in the United States. The cultural primacy and economic power of the Hollywood studios waned due to competition for audiences from television. Similarly, radio began to lose popularity as a news source and a provider of fiction; many radio serials, such as *Amos 'n' Andy,* (1928-1943)*, The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet* (1944-1954)*, The Lone Ranger* (1942-1954), and *The Goldbergs* (1929-1946) were converted to television programs. The small screen encroached on movies' monopoly on representing everyday life, and, as television took over the role of mundane entertainment, movies became events. In film, the emphasis on marriage shifted from maintaining an ongoing relationship to acquisition of a partner. For the most part, career women in movies found love and abandoned their careers. Meanwhile, the everyday domestic lives of mostly white middle class American families dominated the small screen.

Television had a symbiotic relationship with the suburbanization of post-war America. In its content and advertising it promoted the production of durable goods, like refrigerators, stoves and washing machines. Acquiring these household goods fueled post-war prosperity. Several early television series aided viewers in their own transition to suburbia and consumer culture, including *Mama*[181] and *The Goldbergs*,[182] as argued by Lipsitz.[183] Both of these programs contrasted a family's

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[180] *Sunset Blvd.,* directed by Billy Wilder, written by Charles Brackett and D.M. Marshman Jr. (Paramount, 1950). Silent film actress, Norma Desmond (Gloria Swanson), says, "I am big. It's the pictures that got small."

[181] *Mama*. Created by Carol Irwin. NBC, CBS, 1949-1957.

[182] *The Goldbergs,* created by Gertrude Berg, NBC, CBS*,* 1949-1955. A domestic comedy on radio and later television about a Jewish family who moved from the Bronx to the suburbs along with the

inner city immigrant past to the new supposedly homogeneously white suburbs.

Like the film, *I Remember Mama* before it, the television version of *Mama*[184] was

unusual in that it focused on nostalgia for a traditionally frugal immigrant mother, in

contrast to the 1950s consumerist excess. Characters like Mama (Peggy Wood)

were increasingly drowned out by modern housewives like June Cleaver[185] and

Harriet Nelson,[186] who were emblematic of the good capitalist suburban lifestyle.

Viewers, in turn, watched more television than movies, because they were located

miles away from the urban movie houses that dominated screen culture in the

previous decades.

While in many ways, it was a typical domestic sitcom of the era, *I Love

Lucy*[187] frequently dealt with the issues of gender roles, feminism and women in the

workforce. Lucy's (Lucille Ball's) world was made up of repetitive housework and

lack of control over finances. Many of her antics were attempts at escape and

rebellion. Perhaps the most iconic example is the episode "Job Switching,"[188] in

which Lucy and Ricky (Desi Arnaz) agree to switch places: he and Fred (William

Frawley) do the housework and Lucy and Ethel (Vivian Vance) go to work in a

candy factory. Unable to keep up with the speed of the assembly line, Lucy and

Ethel stuff the extra candies in their hats, blouses, and mouths. The assembly line, a

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show's transition from radio to television. Not to be confused with *The Goldbergs,* created by Adam F. Goldberg (ABC, 2013-).

[183] Lipsitz, *Time Passages*, 20.

[184] Women's liberation pioneer, Robin Morgan, played the younger daughter Dagmar in the television version.

[185] June Cleaver, played by Barbara Billingsley, was the impossibly perfect housewife and mother on *Leave It to Beaver*, created by Joe Connelly, Bob Mosher, and Dick Conway (CBS, 1957-1963).

[186] Harriet Nelson, played by Harriet Hillard, was the housewife and mother on *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet*, created by Ozzie Nelson (ABC, 1952-1966).

[187] *I Love Lucy*, created by Lucille Ball, Bob Carrol, Jr., Desi Arnaz, Jess Oppenheimer, Madelyn Pugh (CBS, 1951-1957).

[188] "Job Switching," *I Love Lucy*, directed by William Asher (CBS, September 15, 1952).

symbol of working-class experience under industrialization, is rendered absurd. The men do not fare much better, and cooking, cleaning and laundry mishaps provide additional opportunities for physical comedy. By the end of the episode, they couples return to standard gender roles, with a new appreciation for the difficulty of the other's position. The episode leaves the final impression that the separate but equal division of labor under standard 1950s gender roles was natural and appropriate. Nevertheless, it is refreshing that the episode neither glorified paid work, nor denigrated the difficulty and necessity of unpaid work. A second example appears in the following season, when Lucy and Ethel buy a dress shop despite the explicit disapproval of their husbands.[189] The shop is an immediate failure, so they are happy to sell it for a small profit. Yet, as usual, Lucy and Ethel do not get the last laugh. They soon find out that the property they sold for $3500 is actually worth $50,000. Lucy did not fit into commonsense definitions of feminist in light of her periodic displays of ineptitude in the world of paid work. She was not a career woman who gave it up and chose to raise a family, nor was she a domestic goddess fulfilled and excited by housework. Instead, the politics of *I Love Lucy* are decidedly anti-work. Therefore, it is especially significant that this series depicting domestic life from a woman's perspective attained immense popularity in a culture that otherwise celebrated a strong work ethic as part of the national character.

During the 1950s, Hollywood's revenues began to plummet due to the onslaught of television. B-films, the low-budget formulaic movies,[190] once popular in the 1930s and 1940s, were no longer attractive enough to pull viewers out of their

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[189] "The Girls Go Into Business," *I Love Lucy* (CBS, October 12, 1953).
[190] Originally B-films were those shown at the bottom of a double feature; the term later came to refer to low-budget commercial films in general.

homes. The studios needed to set themselves apart from and above the ordinariness of television. The slow shift from black and white to color films accelerated. While critics and audiences appreciated the aesthetic possibilities of color, it was the promise of a competitive edge over television that excited the studios. Movies released in the post-war years also included musical numbers and high production value, featuring proven screen stars. Going to the movies became a special event. Professional women were found in movies where their careers could be appropriately represented as a short stage of life culminating in marriage.

Doris Day was one of the most popular stars of the era, and one who came to embody the era's ideals of femininity. Day's stardom coincided with the popularization of modern psychology and its obsession with sexual dysfunction. She maintained a persona of the virginal girl-next door, even as she aged. In her biography of the star, Tamar Jeffers-McDonald argued that she was a "cipher for the coy, manipulative, or pathologically sex-averse aged maiden."[191] Films such as *Pillow Talk*[192] and *Lover Come Back*[193] merged the career woman plot with consumerist themes and anxieties about sexual purity. Her profession as an interior decorator in the former and an advertising executive in the latter both point to the increasingly blurred lines between production and consumption in the 1950s, due to the rise in white-collar labor.[194] *Pillow Talk* included most of the standard Hollywood tricks or the era: extraordinarily bright colors in the mis-en-scene,

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[191] Tamar Jeffers-McDonald, *Dorris Day Confidential* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2013), 11.
[192] *Pillow Talk*, directed by Michael Gordon, written by Stanley Shapiro, Maurice Richlin (Universal, 1959).
[193] *Lover Come Back*, directed by Celbert Mann, written by Stanley Shapiro, and Paul Henning (Universal, 1961).
[194] Glitre, *Hollywood Romantic Comedy,* 139.

musical numbers by Day, and lavish sets. Day was well into her thirties at the time

but still played a virgin whose career stunted her normal sexual development.[195] In

contrast to *His Girl Friday*, in which journalism is a key theme, her job as an interior

designer is merely a plot device that allows for the sexual shortcoming that must be

corrected by her eventual romantic union with Brad (Rock Hudson), and for the final

scene in which she deliberately redecorates his apartment in the worst possible taste.

Her career and the meaning it holds for her personally matter little to the

development of the movie.   The myth of American success lessened its hold on

women in this era.

Critics of 1950s and early 1960s popular culture note the pervasiveness of

anxieties about middle-class white women's sexual purity and its importance as a

commodity for marriage.[196] Careers were portrayed as corrupting in films such as

The Best of Everything.[197] Based on a novel by Rona Jaffe, it features a young

woman named Caroline (Hope Lange), a graduate of an elite women's college, who

takes a job in publishing. When her fiancé calls off their engagement she decides to

become a career woman. In Katherine Lehman's analysis, the characterization of

Amanda Farrow (Joan Crawford) is a warning to young Caroline that if she does, she

will be ruined for marriage to any man.[198] Lehman's reading of Amanda Farrow as

definitively unsympathetic seems hasty, considering the movie's ending. *The Best of*

Everything does not offer marriage as the happy ending; instead, Caroline continues

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[195] Glitre argues that the running jokes about Hudson's impending pregnancy coupled with practical knowledge of his homosexuality by Hollywood insiders and many of his fans allows for a queer reading of *Pillow Talk*; Glitre, *Hollywood Romantic Comedy*, 169.

[196] Katherine Lehman, *Those Girls: Single Women in Sixties and Seventies Popular Culture* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2011), 22-25.

[197] *The Very Best of Everything*, directed by Jean Negulesco, written by Edith Sommer and Mann Rubin (Twentieth Century Fox, 1959).

[198] Ibid, 54-55.

to work as an executive while also maintaining her relationship. It seems unclear what Caroline's fate will be, or how she might go about having the best of everything, including love and career.

Sex and the Single Girl[199] was based on the pop psychology book of the same name, urging women to abandon their hesitations about premarital sex; it was written by Helen Gurley Brown, an early icon of women's liberation and a contemporary of Betty Friedan. In the film version, Natalie Wood's Helen is rescued by Bob (Tony Curtis) from her career. The film also cuts Brown down to size in a number of ways, making her twenty-three (she was actually thirty-six when she published the book) and portraying her as a boundary-crossing psychologist, a stereotype identified by Schultz.[200] Her status as a professional expert in sex is consistently ridiculed, and Lehman argues, is ultimately portrayed as mutually exclusive to her role as a true woman.[201] In the love scene, her alleged expertise on erogenous zones is no match for Bob's real experience with women, raising the concern that her clinical approach to sex could lead to frigidity, the most dreaded affliction for women at the time.[202] In the final moments of the film, the institute she works for is destroyed quite dramatically by a wrecking crew; at the same moment, Bob decides to propose marriage. With her problematic career out of the way, the film reassures the audience that the couple is destined for happiness in traditional marriage free from gender conflict.

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[199] *Sex and the Single Girl*, directed by Richard Quine, screenplay by Joseph Heller (Fernwood, 1964).
[200] Schultz 2005, 107.
[201] Lehman, *Those Girls,* 37-38.
[202] Ibid, 26-27.

By the eve of women's liberation in the United States, portraits of professional women became increasingly unsympathetic, and the idea that women's careers could coexist with marriage was rarely even suggested. The career woman was posed as a problem or conflict at the beginning of a film, to be resolved by the right man. In contrast to the 1940s, sex is an explicit focus, while the inner motivations associated with having a career become less important. Companionate marriage with its emphasis on intellectual exchange and emotional fulfillment for both partners was replaced with personal relationships mediated by consumption. Lucy Ricardo on *I Love Lucy* constantly battled the economic and social relationship of marriage, which was the central focus of the program. Film was dominated by the representation of women themselves as consumer commodities, whose value was intimately linked to their sexual purity before marriage, and whose clear latent sexuality was just waiting to be unlocked by the male hero.

The conservatism of fictional representations contrasted sharply with what viewers were beginning to see on the news. The movement for civil rights and accompanying state-sponsored violence against people of color was featured on the news nightly. Vietnam was the first U.S. war covered primarily on television; scholars argue that the televisual encounter with the extreme violence of war contributed to public opposition to the war. As Alan Nadel pointed out, it provided a sharp contrast to the middle-class white-washed fictional worlds of the rest of television.[203] Fictional treatments of feminism and anti-racism lagged behind the changing realities of U.S. society.

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[203] Alan Nadel, *Television in Black-and-White America: Race and National Identity* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2005).

Selling Progressive Politics (1968-1981)

By the late 1960s, the optimism of post-war America gave way to cynicism about the country's domestic and foreign policies. Anti-communism waned as the Vietnam War became increasingly unpopular and unwinnable. President Richard Nixon's resignation under pressure created by the Watergate scandal shook the country's faith in the American political system. Nevertheless, the initial gains of the civil rights movement in integration, voting rights and equal employment opportunity provided some evidence that the system could be fixed. As the radical women's liberation, black power and gay liberation movements hit their apex, television and film finally expanded their lexicon of representation. A slightly broader range of female characters, including single and widowed working women emerged on screen. African American women were suddenly represented as capable, feminine heroines, rather than in the narrow stereotypical roles of mammies or jezebels.[204] Commercial film and television embraced moderate progressivism, steering clear of both conservative and revolutionary strands of politics.

Television sought a way to tap into moderate progressivism without alienating advertisers. The medium, which previously drew strength from suburbanized middle-class white families, now included upwardly mobile African American families and single women living in urban centers in its targeted demographics. Career women, formerly the protagonists of film, were ideal figures to draw in viewers. A woman's working life was no longer treated exclusively as a short phase ending in marriage, and so career women became the subject of

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[204] See Donald Bogle, *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies, and Bucks: An Interpretive History of Blacks in American Films* (New York: Continuum, 2008).

television. All they needed was a strong work ethic, a pretty face, a reasonable

explanation for why they were single, and some good faith efforts to find a new man.

Before CBS introduced Mary Tyler Moore, NBC aired *Julia*, starring

Diahann Carroll in the title role, as a war widow and single mother. Julia Baker

works as a nurse at "Astrospace Industries" for the company doctor, Dr. Chegley.

The show explicitly reminds viewers that she stayed home when her husband was

alive, as any proper middle-class woman would do. Julia was a reluctant participant

in the workforce in a traditionally female occupation. The series revolves around the

challenges of raising her son, Corey (Marc Copage), in a middle-class Los Angeles

apartment building. Her downstairs neighbors, the Waggadorns, are a white family,

including her son's best friend Earl J. Waggadorn (Michael Link), and his mother,

her best friend, Marie Waggedorn (Betty Beaird), the Ethel to Julia's Lucy. The two

boys frequently journey between one apartment or the other, and Marie and Julia

often act as surrogate parents to each other's sons. Therefore, the show expanded

the representation of non-nuclear families, but in a way that mostly left traditional

gender roles intact. There were, however, real discussions of issues of race. For

example, when Corey is invited to a birthday party, the white mother is overly

complimentary about Corey's good behavior; Julia later tells Marie that she

perceived this comment as racism. When Julia interviews a babysitter, Mrs. Hobbes,

she is shocked to find out that Julia is also black. The interview quickly turns

around, as Mrs. Hobbes grills Julia on her own employment and whether she will be

able to afford the salary. Julia eventually tells Mrs. Hobbs, "you insult all black

people with your attitude."[205] Unlike the white middle-class woman who insults her, Julia is able chastise Mrs. Hobbes because of the class power she holds over her. So, while racism is challenged, class hierarchy is naturalized.

Julia's workplace reflects a similar race-blind but hierarchical workplace. Her boss, Dr. Chegley, is a grouchy autocrat, but an equal opportunity offender. He frequently threatens to fire Julia, and exercises somewhat arbitrary authority over her. His behavior with his other nurse, Mrs. Yarby, is identical. Dr. Chegley calls Julia "Baker," which evokes a militaristic type of discipline, but is likely how he would address any male employee. Underneath the veneer is a heart of gold; Chegley runs a free inner city clinic after hours, where Julia volunteers one day a week. He also feels some paternal duty of care toward Julia. In "the Wheel Deal,"[206] Dr. Chegley arranges for Julia to get a great deal on a car, by trading his medical services to the dealer. Julia is furious when she finds out, and agrees to volunteer another night at the clinic – the only form of payment Dr. Chegley is willing to accept. He is a benevolent patriarch, committed to equality for African Americans, within his existing hierarchical model.

On *The Mary Tyler Moore Show,* Mary Richards' (Mary Tyler Moore's) employment as an associate producer in a local newsroom is not always as justly overseen. Although Lou Grant (Ed Asner) was one of the beloved characters of the show, his management and his relationship with Mary were unorthodox. In her interview, Mr. Grant does not ask Mary about her qualifications for the job. Instead he asks her age, and questions her marital status before abruptly offering her a job

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[205] *Julia,* "A Tale of Two Sitters," directed by Bernard Wiesen (September 16, 1969).
[206] *Julia,* "The Wheel Deal," directed by Ezra Stone (September 23, 1969).

with a better title but lower salary than the secretarial position for which she applied. In that way, the show carefully addressed issues facing women in the workplace. In one episode, Mary finds out that she is being paid less than the man who formerly held her position. After a weak attempt at justifying his actions, Mr. Grant agrees to raise her salary to the appropriate level. As in Julia, the hierarchical relationship between them endures; Mary always addresses Lou Grant as "Mr. Grant," while he always calls her Mary.

In Season 2, Mary is asked to produce a controversial special called "What's Your Sexual IQ?"[207] The network executive subsequently decides that it is too controversial and changes it into a "non-controversial controversy," which the characters Phyllis (Cloris Leachman) and Rhoda (Valerie Harper) agree is horribly boring. The moment was a central metaphor for the politics of its first season. In her research for the book *Those Girls*, Lehman found that Mary was originally scripted as a divorced character, but that because of the objections of network executives, writers changed the premise of the show to one in which Mary leaves a man who would not commit to marriage after two years of dating.[208] Both Dow and Lehman argue that televised images of the period reflected popular ambivalence about feminism, by de-radicalizing the issue of women's liberation.[209] Popular culture showed that social movements were a means of capturing a market share. Bonnie Dow identifies in the show what she terms lifestyle feminism: women's work and family lives are portrayed as the result of lifestyle choices that become equated to

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[207] *Mary Tyler Moore*, "Episode 1, of Season 2," directed by (CBS, 1972).
[208] Lehman, *Those Girls*, 148.
[209] Dow, *Prime Time Feminism,* xxi; Lehman, *Those Girls,* 124.

consumer choice.[210] One chooses the single working woman's lifestyle and its

trappings or domesticity and its products. Consequently, as Dow argues, those social

movements are often coopted and presented not in collectivist forms but in

individualistic forms compatible with consumerism and advertising– a

foreshadowing of postfeminist ideology.[211]

The introduction of the rating system in 1968 allowed Hollywood films to

address content not allowed on the television screen. The production code of the

studio era mandated that every film meet the standards equivalent to a modern "G"

or general audiences rating. Free to create films for adult audiences only, Hollywood

produced films like *Midnight Cowboy*,[212] *The Godfather*,[213] and *The Exorcist*.[214]

Violence, sex and "bad" language offered a gritty form of realism in films of the

1970s. Meanwhile, television maintained strict guidelines on content. Films found a

new way to differentiate their products from the small screen and inspire demand for

movies. As a result of the new possibilities offered by the rating system, Hollywood

experienced a Renaissance in this period.

As long as violent films were box office gold, producers also put out movies

in which female characters were the agents of violence. The figure of the female

crime-fighter, whether an officer of the law or a vigilante, appeared first in

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[210] Dow, *Prime Time Feminism,* 24-28.
[211] Ibid, xxi.
[212] *Midnight Cowboy,* directed by John Schlesinger, screenplay by Waldo Salt, novel James Leo Herlihy (MGM, 1969). The only X rated film to win an Academy Award for best picture, it stars Jon Voigt as Joe Buck, a naïve aspiring prostitute, and Dustin Hoffman, as his streetwise friend Ratso.
[213] *The Godfather,* directed by Francis Ford Coppola, screenplay by Mario Puzo and Francis Ford Coppola (Paramount, 1972). This now iconic set of films (*The Godfather, Part II* was released in 1974) starred Al Pacino as Michael Corleone, heir to a mafia family, who famously consolidates his power by arranging the murder of his competitors during his son's baptism.
[214] *The Exorcist*, directed by William Friedkin, written by William Peter Blatty (Warner Bros. 1973). Two Catholic priests perform an exorcism on a young girl possessed by evil spirits. Max von Sydow plays the elder, Father Merrin and Jason Miller plays the younger, Father Karras; Ellen Burstyn is the girl's mother.

Blaxploitation films like *Cleopatra Jones*,[215] *Coffy*[216] and *Foxy Brown*.[217] Chris

Holmlund observes that Pam Grier's films began with the reality of life for women

in oppressed communities ravaged by drugs and violence, while implicating the

white racist power structure.[218] African American women were no longer just

victims; they were crime fighters whose sexuality and race were assets, according to

Philippa Gates.[219] Yvonne Sims argues that films of the genre also redefined

African American femininity as both feminine and powerful.[220] However,

Blaxploitation films also reified stereotypical associations of black people with

sexuality and violence, at a time when media coverage of the black power movement

was also feeding white fears of racial equality.

There were a few overtly feminist experiments in film making during this

era. For example, *Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore*,[221] Martin Scorsese's foray into

feminist themes, explored the question of whether feminism should be a journey

toward self-fulfillment, or just a struggle to get by. Like Julia Baker, Alice Hyatt

(Ellen Burstyn) is reluctantly propelled back to work when she became a widow.

However, her husband's death is not especially tragic because he is abusive to Alice

and their son. Near the end of the film, she admits to a friend that she was terrified

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[215] *Cleopatra Jones*, directed by Jack Starrett, screenplay by Max Julien and Sheldon Keller (Warner Bros., 1973). Tamara Dobson is FBI special agent, Cleopatra Jones.
[216] *Coffy,* directed and written by Jack Hill (American International Pictures, 1973). Pam Grier is a nurse turned vigilante avenging her sisters' death from a drug overdose.
[217] *Foxy Brown,* directed and written by Jack Hill (American International Pictures, 1974). Pam Grier goes undercover as a prostitute to bring down a drug ring.
[218] Chris Holmlund, "Wham! Bam! Pam! Pam Grier as Hot Action Babe and Cool Action Mama," In *Screening Genders,* ed. Krin Gabbard and William Luhr (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2008), 65-66.
[219] Gates, *Detecting Women,* 196, 218-219.
[220] Yvonne Sims, *Women of Blaxploitation: How the Black Action Film Heroine Changed American Popular Culture* (Jefferson: McFarland, 2008), 8.
[221] *Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore,* directed by Martin Scorsese, written by Robert Getchell (Warner Bros. 1974).

of him. She sings in nightclubs, but the film makes it unclear whether it is simply a

job, a profession, or an artistic calling. Her vague dream of becoming a singer in

California is a less significant feature of the film than the weekly struggle to make

ends meet. Hers is a working-class experience. She eventually settles for work as a

diner waitress and realizes that she is not particularly unsatisfied. After she falls in

love with a customer, David (Kris Kristofferson), she decides to stay in Tuscon. The

moment she gives up her dream of becoming a singer is a moment of relief and

resolution for the film. The struggle for meaningful work has turned out to be a

waste of time and energy. Freed from that struggle, she is able to settle down to a

meaningful life with her son and new love. *Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore* is a

rare meditation on what liberation could look like without middle-class attitudes

toward work.

The medium's new license to portray violence and sex also led to violent

onscreen punishment for liberated women. The portrayal of the topic on film

reflected a larger media panic over several high profile murders of white urban

single women, often portrayed as a threat from men of color.[222] *Looking for Mr.*

Goodbar portrayed Theresa (Diane Keaton), as a masochistic single woman cruising

bars for sex partners, a hobby that corresponded to fears about single women's

behavior, and provided a sharp contrast to her day job as a special education teacher.

According to Ann Kaplan, *Looking for Mr. Goodbar* is a case in point that violence

against women provides scopophilic pleasure for men.[223] Theresa's liberated

lifestyle is portrayed as empty and meaningless, and she is punished for the

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[222] Lehman, *Those Girls,* 209-210.
[223] E. Ann Kaplan, *Women and Film: Both Sides of the Camera* (New York: Methuen, 1983), 80.

audience's viewing pleasure.[224] Yet, Kaplan also argues that the uncontrolled and

excessive rage of Theresa's father (Richard Kiley) illuminates the pathological

nature of violence against women and allows for alternative readings, especially

from female viewers.[225] However, the film's narrative vindicates his objections to

both Teresa's choice to stay out nights and live alone, and to his other daughter's

choice to marry outside her own faith. Both daughters are out of control as a result

of the sexual revolution, and the film seems to pose no alternative other than a return

to patriarchy and tradition.

      Not all films of the era were socially conservative. In fact, unionization and

other forms of resistance were the subject of several films in the late 1970s and early

1980s. The most famous filmic female union organizer was *Norma Rae*,[226] with

Sally Field in the title role.[227] Norma, a cotton mill worker in rural North Carolina,

agrees to work with a union organizer, Reuben (Ron Leibman), a Jewish New

Yorker sent by a big national union. Norma learns the job of organizing from him

and works day and night to make unionization a reality, often neglecting her

domestic responsibilities and leaving her children in the care of her husband, Sonny

(Beau Bridges). The real Norma Rae, Crystal Lee Sutton, denounced the

individualistic approach to collective action,[228] but, at least, in this case, mainstream

Hollywood films created a positive portrayal of organized labor.

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[224] Ibid, 79.

[225] Ibid, 80-81.

[226] *Norma Rae*, directed by Martin Ritt, written by Irving Ravetch, and Harriet Frank Jr. (Twentieth Century Fox, 1979).

[227] *Silkwood*, directed by Mike Nichols, written by Nora Ephron and Alice Arlen (MGM, 1983). Meryl Streep plays Karen Silkwood who begins working for her union when she gets cancer from the hazardous working conditions at a nuclear power plant in Oklahoma.

[228] Jennifer Borda, *Women Labor Activists in the Movies: Nine Depictions of Workplace Organizers, 1954-2005* (Jefferson: McFarland, 2011).

The female heroes of *9 to 5*[229] can hardly be described as organized, but they prove equally tenacious. This corporate revenge comedy stars Jane Fonda as Judy, Dolly Parton as Doralee and Lily Tomlin as Violet, all stuck in a "pink collar ghetto," as Violet calls it, at Consolidated Industries. Franklin Hart (Dabney Coleman) is their boss, a "sexist, egotistical, lying, hypocritical bigot," a walking cliché demonstrating just about every critique of male leadership of corporations. He calls his female employees "girls" to their faces and "bitches" behind their backs. He denies Violet a promotion in favor of a man and admits he made the decision because, according to him, the clients prefer a man. He habitually sexually harasses Doralee and tells the whole office she is having an affair with him. Judy and Violet initially avoid Doralee because of the rumor, but they end up meeting at a nearby bar commiserating about Hart's treatment of female employees.

That night, they form what Karen Hollinger calls a political friendship, "based on mutual recognition of shared oppression."[230] During the night of heavy drinking and pot smoking that follows, the three friends share their respective fantasies of murdering Hart. The following day Violet accidentally realizes her fantasy of replacing his coffee sweetener with rat poison. Hart is not severely injured, but hijinks ensue and the three women end up kidnapping him and holding him hostage in his own home. During his absence, they run the office according to Violet's progressive management style – with the help of Doralee's ability to forge the boss's signature. They revoke his policy forbidding personal items such as

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[229] *9 to 5,* directed by Colin Higgins, written by Patricia Resnick and Colin Higgins (Twentieth Century Fox, 1980).
[230] Karen Hollinger, *In the Company of Women: Contemporary Female Friendship Films* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998).

pictures and plants on desks. Then they introduce job sharing, flexible hours, an

Alcoholics Anonymous program, a day care center, an initiative to hire disabled

employees, and an equal pay policy. Hart eventually breaks out of his chains and

makes it to the office to try to stop Judy, Doralee and Violet during a visit from the

Chairman of the board, Mr. Tinsworthy (Sterling Hayden). However, it turns out

that Tinsworthy is visiting to congratulate Hart on a twenty-percent rise in

productivity due to "his" (really Violet's) new management initiatives. Tinsworthy

explicitly praises every initiative the women introduce under Hart's name, "except

the equal pay thing," he says, "that's got to go." Hart receives an unwanted

promotion to the company offices in Brazil and the women celebrate as he leaves the

office for good. Hollinger argues that in the final summation, the movie descends

into politically impotent, escapist revenge fantasy. However, *9 to 5* is more

appropriately described as a mild victory for progressive (not revolutionary)

feminism: the movie offers proof that progressive feminist policies are good for

business, along with a stern reminder that the male power structure is more complex

than a single abusive boss.

Overall, this era of film and television demonstrated that feminism, often

affiliated with class or racial politics was a subject that sold. The conflict over new

social realities created by civil rights and feminism drew viewers across the political

spectrum. Even in the case of *Looking for Mr. Goodbar,* a warning against liberated

lifestyles for women, anxieties around feminism still helped the movie sell. The

trend toward using liberated women as protagonists opened up new representational

possibilities for female characters, including African American female characters.

Most television shows and movies only cautiously endorsed feminist politics, shying away from radical redistribution of wealth and resources. Julia Baker, Mary Tyler Moore, and Alice Hyatt struggled with money, but their troubles rarely pointed back to larger systems of oppression. 9 to 5 comes the closest, but reforming the office only does so much – and only for insiders.

When Greed Became Good (1982-1996)

In the Reagan-Bush era, public policy was guided by Milton Friedman's theory that money would trickle down from the wealthy elite to all strata of society. In reality the increasing power of corporate conglomerates moved US manufacturing overseas. As trade globalized, de-industrialization led to unemployment for the US working-class, and the beginning of a painful adjustment to a service economy. Meanwhile, in Third World countries receiving new manufacturing operations, wages were depressed. By 1990, Mr. Gorbachev had torn down the wall isolating the former Eastern bloc countries from US-led global capitalism. With our traditional rival, the Soviet Union, in crisis, money became our only significant common national purpose.

The industry was revolutionized by technological changes such as the introduction of video and the expansion of television's demand for movies due to pay-per-view and the new cable networks like HBO (Home Box Office).[231] Hollywood made big budget mass appeal films with an eye on a synergistic approach to marketing. Along with the release of a film came plans for the VHS

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[231] For most of this era, HBO's lineup was largely movies, and sporting events. It was not until the late nineties that it became known for original series, with shows like: *Sex and the City*, *Oz,* created by Tom Fontana (HBO, 1997-2003), and *The Sopranos*, created by David Chase (HBO, 1999-2007).

version, pay-per-view and television premiers, merchandise, and even video games. The short-lived but intense cycle of blaxploitation movies gave way to the *Rambo*[232] and *Terminator*[233] series. Richard Dyer argues that films in this cycle were vehicles for aggressively reasserting white male power through the display of built bodies of stars like Sylvester Stallone and Arnold Schwarzenegger.[234] The emphasis on white masculinity under attack transcended the action adventure genre and made its way into a number of films set on Wall Street.

A cycle of films clustered around 1987 responded to the beginnings of the neoliberal era by critiquing the unchecked expansion of corporate capitalism. Though it did not feature a professional woman, the movie *Wall Street*[235] is singularly important in its critique of cannibalistic business practices that threaten a tradition of well-regulated lifetime corporate employment, as argued by Boozer.[236] The protagonist, Bud (Charlie Sheen) is a young professional trying to succeed in the finance industry. Gordon Gekko, a successful speculator, whose catchphrase is "greed is good," seduces Bud into a life where profit is the only necessary moral compass. Meanwhile, his onscreen and off-screen father, Carl (Martin Sheen),

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[232] The Rambo series includes, *First Blood*, directed by Ted Kotcheff, screenplay by Michael Kozoll, William Sackheim, and Sylvester Stallone, (Anabasis N.V., 1982); *Rambo: First Blood Part II,* directed by George P. Cosmatos, written by David Morrell, Kevin Jarre, Sylvester Stallone, James Cameron (Anabis N.V., 1985); *Rambo III* , directed by Peter MacDonald, written by David Morrell, Sylvester Stallone, and Sheldon Lettich (Anabis N.V., 1988).

[233] The Terminator series includes: *The Terminator*, directed by James Cameron, written by James Cameron and Gale Anne Hurd (Hemdale Film, 1984); *Terminator II: Judgment Day*, directed by James Cameron, written by James Cameron and William Wisher (Carolco Pictures, 1991); *Terminator III: Rise of the Machines*, directed by Jonathan Moscow, written by John Brancato and Michael Ferris (C-2 Pictures, 2003); *Terminator Salvation*, directed by Joseph McGinty Nichol, written by John Brancato and Michael Ferris (Halcyon Company, 2009); *Terminator Genisys,* directed by Alan Taylor, written by Laeta Kalogridis, Patrick Lussier (Paramount, 2015).

[234] Richard Dyer, *White* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 146.

[235] *Wall Street,* directed by Oliver Stone, written by Stanley Weiser and Oliver Stone (Twentieth Century Fox, 1987).

[236] Jack Boozer, *Career Movies: American Business and the Success Mystique* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002), 1.

provides a moral alternative to corporate greed. Bud must ultimately reject the corrupting influence of Gekko and return to natural patriarchal authority associated with stable regulated corporations providing lifetime employment. The two older men represent competing models of masculinity based respectively on the middle-class ideals of the old post-war era and the new neoliberal economy.

Yet Hollywood seemed unable to critique both speculative neoliberal capitalism and gender norms at the same time. Career women movies were mostly conservative in their acceptance of corporations – these became the safe kinds of feminist movies to make. Several career woman movies employed the femme fatale trope to introduce female Gordon Gekkos, embodiments of greed and corruption. Two prominent examples are *Fatal Attraction*,[237] released the same year as *Wall Street,* and, later, *Disclosure*;[238] ironically both movies also starred Michael Douglas. *Disclosure* is the story of a computer programmer, Tom (Douglas), whose new boss Meredith (Demi Moore) sexually harasses him; when he succeeds in stopping her advances, she wrongfully sues him for sexual harassment out of revenge. The ridiculous postmodern inversion of sexual harassment in the wake of the Clarence Thomas scandal produced a relatively conservative message that corporate power corrupted women by turning them into sexual aggressors. Boozer points out that the film does portray corporate America as increasingly image-based and devoid of technological substance.[239] Garrett argues that in films of the 1980s and 1990s tension emerges between coexisting images of the spinster and more glamorous

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[237] *Fatal Attraction*, directed by Adrian Lyne, written by James Dearden (Paramount, 1987).
[238] *Disclosure*, directed by Barry Levinson, screenplay by Paul Attanasio, novel by Michael Crichton (Warner Bros., 1994).
[239] Boozer, *Career Movies*, 139.

portrayals of career women.[240] The problem is gendered feminine in *Disclosure* as well as in *Working Girl* (1987),[241] in which Tess (Melanie Griffith) impersonates her boss, Katherine (Sigourney Weaver) in order to prove her abilities in business. Katherine easily combines the characteristics of Gekko and Amanda Farrow (Joan Crawford) from *The Best of Everything*. She is both the unscrupulous 1980s banker and the corrupt career woman who will never be successfully married.

In *Fatal Attraction*, Dan (Douglas), a married man, has a one-night stand with publishing executive, Alex (Glenn Close), who subsequently stalks him and his family. Alex is a different kind of monster, one seemingly corrupted by feminism, according to Angela McRobbie.[242] Feminism's licensing of ambition in women appears a far greater sin than greed or unethical ambition in men. Alex's punishment is a violent death, framed as a sacrifice to the patriarchal family rather than a prison sentence overseen by the benign regulation of the state. Though the anti-feminist message of *Fatal Attraction* cannot be denied, one alternative reading of the film is as a critique of the cooptation of feminism by the profit motives of large corporations, one that could disrupt narratives about women's professional success as proof of feminism as a fait accompli.

Overall, film-based critiques of corporations in the neoliberal era seem to propose a return to the past of stable patriarchal corporations, or alternately, entrepreneurship. The film *Baby Boom*[243] stars Diane Keaton as J.C. Wiatt, a

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[240] Roberta Garrett, *Postmodern Chick Flicks: The Return of the Woman's Film* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 104.

[241] *Working Girl*, directed by Mike Nichols, written by Kevin Wade (Twentieth Century Fox, 1988).

[242] McRobbie, *The Aftermath of Feminism*, 731-870.

[243] *Baby Boom*, directed by Charles Shyer, written by Nancy Meyers and Charles Shyer (United Artists, 1987).

Harvard Business School graduate, who evolves through enforced motherhood into a strikingly nineteenth century model of entrepreneurial success. She leaves her "five to nine" corporate job for the simple life in Vermont to raise her adopted daughter, Elizabeth, while becoming a gourmet baby food producer. In the final moment of the film, she rejects a buyout offer because she does not want to have to give up spending time with her family, and adds that she does not think that anyone should have to live the lifestyle demanded by large corporations. While seemingly critical of corporate culture, the film only resolves J.C.'s work-family balance issues the American way - with hard work and a bit of luck. Furthermore, Boozer would agree with my assessment that the film significantly misrepresents entrepreneurship as a solution to work-family balance.[244] As he points out, entrepreneurship is a solution that challenges neither the typical American Dream narrative nor neoliberal economic policy.[245] Ultimately, the film celebrates individual success in business and portrays feminism as an individual feat of success.

The Associate,[246] starring Whoopi Goldberg as investment banker Laurel Ayres, speaks back to the earlier cycle of films using women on Wall Street as focal points for discussions of feminism. After her white male mentee gets the promotion she was expecting, Laurel quits the large investment firm where she works and starts her own business. The film quickly dispels the notion that entrepreneurship will be her escape from discrimination: no one on Wall Street will read her proposals. To provide herself with the legitimacy she is not granted as a black woman in business, she invents a fake white male partner, Robert Cutty, who does not take meetings and

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[244] Boozer, *Career Movies,* 75.
[245] Ibid, 95-110.
[246] *The Associate*, directed by Donald Petrie, screenplay by Nick Thiel (Hollywood Pictures, 1996).

is permanently on vacation. Under his name, she finally gains recognition for her

brilliant business ideas, and starts turning significant profits. In this story, the same

work has different value depending on who is doing it.

As the movie progresses, a series of mishaps force Goldberg to physically

perform the gender and racial masquerade she invents. When the fictional Cutty

receives the Peabody award, Laurel decides to attend the award ceremony dressed as

Cutty and reveal herself to the audience. During the final scene, she first takes off

the white gloves she wears to become Cutty, revealing her own black hands;[247] she

then removes the Cutty mask and informs the club that they have just inducted their

first woman member. Laurel's unveiling is a powerful moment because the

masquerade is quite superficial. Despite her costume, she is not, in fact, receiving

the award on false pretenses: her abilities have led her to become the highest

performing investment banker on Wall Street. She earned it, but would never be

entitled to it as a black woman. This movie insightfully points out that the barriers

to the truly elite top tier are barely eroded by intervening changes in lower level

employment of women and people of color. However, it seems that in order to

forcefully make this point, Laurel cannot actually be different in more meaningful

ways, must have no family, other than a dead father, and absolutely no love interest.

In fact, she is decidedly asexual both in her dress and comportment as Laurel and in

that she is able to convincingly execute her drag performance of Cutty. This

representation contrasts sharply to the portrayal of professional white women

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[247] In her discussion of Goldberg's oeuvre, Mia Mask argues that this moment reappropriates the
"transracial transvestitism" of the minstrelsy tradition. Mia Mask, *Divas on Screen: Black Women in
American Film* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009), 139.

characters like Alex in *Fatal Attraction* or Meredith in *Disclosure*[248] whose unruly

sexuality threatens Michael Douglas' characters. Black women's agentic sexuality

was still a taboo subject for the screen.

Beginning in the 1980s, career women on screen were no longer oddities;

they reflected the lived reality of many middle-class women. On television, they

were plentiful. Elyse Keaton (Meredith Baxter) of *Family Ties*[249] was an architect

and the family's primary breadwinner. Maggie Seaver (Joanna Kerns) of *Growing*

Pains[250] worked as a journalist while raising her family. Advertising executive

Angela Bower (Judith Light) of *Who's the Boss*[251] employed a male housekeeper.

The Cosby Show[252] featured an upper-middle class Black family, whose mother,

Clair Huxtable (Phylicia Rashad) worked as a lawyer, though she was usually shown

performing duties associated with her role as wife and mother. In the world of

television drama, there was the police duo *Cagney and Lacey,*[253] and some token

women in key positions on *Hill Street Blues*[254] and *L.A. Law.*[255]

There was one series from this period that attracted anxieties about the social

consequences of feminism like nothing else on television: *Murphy Brown.*[256]

Murphy was an unconventional character, a ruthlessly competitive-female news

anchor in her forties, and a recovering alcoholic. The decision to make Murphy a

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[248] Mia Mask, Mask made a similar critique in contrasting the portrayal of Moore and Goldberg in the movie, *Ghost* (1990), in which they starred along with Patrick Swayze and Tony Goldwyn. Mia Mask, *Divas on Screen.*
[249] *Family Ties*, created by Gary David Goldberg (NBC, 1982-1989).
[250] *Growing Pains,* created by Neal Marlens (ABC, 1985-1992).
[251] *Who's the Boss*, created by Martin Cohan and Blake Hunter (ABC, 1984-1992).
[252] *The Cosby Show*, created by Bill Cosby (NBC, 1984-1992).
[253] *Cagney & Lacey*, created by Barbara Avedon and Barbara Corday (CBS, 1981-1988).
[254] *Hill Street Blues,* created by Steven Bochco and Michael Kozoll (NBC, 1981-1987).
[255] *L.A. Law*, created by Steven Bochco and Terry Louise Fisher (NBC, 1986-1994)
[256] *Murphy Brown*, created by Diane English (CBS, 1988-1998).

single mother in 1992 attracted heated controversy and even aroused the ire of Vice President Dan Quayle, who accused the show of eroding traditional family values.[257] In actuality, Murphy's character recycled many of the standard myths of career women from the postwar era. Like Joan Crawford in *The Best of Everything* Murphy came to regret what she had missed out on in the pursuit of her career. Interestingly, though, after baby Avery's birth, the show altered very little, and Murphy remained singularly focused on her career without altering her schedule or ever seeming to feel the conflict of the competing pressures on her time. She was still the consummate professional according to masculine norms.

The watered-down marketable feminism that was the hallmark of 1970s television and film continued in the 1980s as a strategy to bring in women viewers. Career women protagonists of this era were substantially higher-ranking, higher-powered, and higher-earning than the often paraprofessional characters of the previous era. The stories moved from everyday women to exceptional women and the ambivalence they inspired about feminism and neoliberal economic change. The celebration of wealth and prosperity was not the undisputed norm it became in the following era. In the 1980s, cultural producers still remembered and took the time to represent the pain of economic dislocation brought about by the neoliberal economic shifts of the 1980s. However, there were rarely films that critiqued economic systems while also acknowledging feminist politics. Feminism was successfully disarticulated from class in this era.

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[257] Dow, *Prime Time Feminism,* 152-153.

Feminism Gets a Makeover (1997-2007)

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 200,1 and subsequent wars for revenge

in Afghanistan and Iraq polarized American politics. The justification of the wars

through the issue of women's rights in the Middle East, particularly as symbolized

by the removal of the mandatory veil, fit well with the postfeminist emphases on

empowerment through freedom of sexual expression.[258] Mitchell argues that the

public symbolic destruction of the World Trade Center Towers on September 11,

2001 forever changed the cultural status of Wall Street and cast doubt on American

international economic prominence.[259] Hollywood's prior fascination with Wall

Street turned to avoidance of stories featuring people working in the financial

services industry. Instead, women working in the fashion and cultural industries, set

against the New York City skyline, loomed large in post-9-11 film and television,

reflecting optimism that an over-the-hill empire could still retain its cultural primacy.

Film and television of the late nineties and early 2000s renewed the perennial

American obsession with consumerism through the postfeminist re-embrace of

femininity. Scholars point out that the representations of career women in this

cultural context were often vapid postfeminist day-dreams, in which the career was

merely part of a cultivated image.[260] Angela McRobbie writes that in this era

feminism was "made-over"[261] into a respectable form of politics that "celebrates

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[258] Carol A. Stabile and Deepa Kumar, "Unveiling Imperialism: Media, Gender and the War on Afghanistan," *Media, Culture & Society 27*, no. 5 (2005): 765-782.

[259] W. J. T. Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want?: The Lives and Loves of Images* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 12-13.

[260] Yvonne Tasker and Diane Negra, "In Focus: Postfeminism and Contemporary Media Studies," *Cinema Journal 44*, no. 2 (2005): 107-110.

[261] Angela McRobbie, *The Aftermath of Feminism,* 3274.

human capital (in work) and the market economy."[262] However, as demonstrated here, the celebration of work and careers is actually a fairly consistent theme across early protofeminist, liberation era, and postfeminist representations of professional women. The meaning of work became more superficial in this era, as it became one among many stylish markers of middle-class femininity.

Without a doubt, the most interesting change in the entertainment industry was the rise of premium television, led by HBO. These networks offered commercial free premium content for an additional fee and supplemented their income through a strategy of product placement. The internet was not yet as central to the promotional strategies of film and television as it is in the contemporary era. Producers did explore its possibilities for synergy, which mostly meant enhancing product placement through online shopping. For example, *Sex and the City's*[263] website included an index of clothing, shoes and accessories by episode and provided information on where to buy the outfits showcased on the program. Thus advertisers largely maintained their influence despite the shift away from commercials.

The glamorous lifestyles of the characters on *Sex and the City* are packaged together with the glamorous jobs that provide the women not only the money to support their lifestyles, but also significant social status within the New York City social scene. In *Sex and the City,* career and not family or community affiliations are the appropriate source of post-feminist identity. The lifestyles of the four main characters are explicitly contrasted in a number of episodes with less-fashionable

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[262] Ibid, 3372.
[263] *Sex and the City*, created by Darren Star (HBO, 1998-2004).

"kept" women. For example, "The Caste System" Big (Chris Noth) gives Carrie (Sara Jessica Parker) a bejeweled purse in the shape of a bird. She is horrified when they attend a party on the Upper-East-Side and she discovers that the style is popular with Park Avenue housewives. "[Big] had absolutely no idea who I was,"[264] her voiceover laments. Carrie expects consumer goods to reflect feminism. She also insists that the most important difference between working women and housewives is stylistic. In this context, her job is less about self-fulfillment than about assuming a particular styled version of post-femininity.

Sex and the City signaled a cultural shift away from characters like Murphy Brown, whose power and influence put her at the center of American politics, and Laurel Ayres, whose business savvy blows away her Wall Street competition. In contrast, Carrie Bradshaw acknowledges the silliness of her job as a "sex columnist." At brunch with her friends in episode, she shares her worries about losing her job saying, "I don't know if you read the rest of the paper, but these are troubled times. People with real jobs are getting laid off. This is not a good economy in which to be whipped cream."[265] Her success is still important to her, but, more so than in previous eras, in the late 1990s, success for women became about personal satisfaction, and crafting a glamorous image, instead of gaining power and influence. The emphasis on power as a means of feminist politics in the 1980s and early 1990s was problematic for the egalitarian goals of social justice. The late 1990s focus on

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[264] Sex and the City, "The Cast System," written by Darren Star, directed by Allison Anders (HBO, August 8, 1999)
[265] Sex and the City, "Unoriginal Sin," written by Cindy Shupak, directed by Charles McDougall (HBO, July 28, 2002).

individual expression moved representations of professional women even further away from any commitment to radical collective politics.

Network television remained relevant in the representational landscape of professional women, with shows like the quirky *Ally McBeal*.[266] Ally's (Calista Flockhart's) job as a lawyer in Boston was once again part and parcel of a complete single professional woman's lifestyle, including a hip office and frequent trips to a fashionable bar with friends. Although Ally was presented as a competent lawyer, she was neurotically obsessed with the quest for a husband and in later seasons hallucinated a dancing baby as a representation of her repressed desire for motherhood. This psychoanalytic element reprised 1960s portrayals of career women as sexually immature and stunted because of their devotion to work. *Ally McBeal* added a superficial post-feminist twist to the theme - Ally's signature mini-skirts. Early in Season 2, her hemlines were the subject of the episode, "It's My Party."[267] Ally and Georgia (Courtney Thorne-Smith) represent George (John Ritter), a male editor of a feminist magazine who is fired for belonging to the Baptist church, which advocates the submission of women. In the course of the trial, the judge holds Ally in contempt of court, after warning her about her inappropriate attire. Ally argues that this ruling constitutes discrimination, because her male colleagues' dress is never scrutinized the same way. Couched in a larger episode about discrimination against a white man by feminists, the incident highlights generational differences among old guard feminists, symbolized by the magazine's business owner, and younger women's more sex-positive approach to feminism,

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[266] *Ally McBeal*, created by David E. Kelley (Fox, 1997-2002).
[267] *Ally McBeal,* "It's My Party," written by David E. Kelley, directed by Jace Alexander, (Fox, October 19, 1998).

signaled by Ally's short skirts. Ultimately, Ally refuses to explain why she wants to

wear short skirts even to her coworkers, and presents her refusal to explain her

fashion choices as feminist in itself. The moment was the series' trite way of dealing

with the emerging generational conflicts between ageing feminists and young

women struggling with unfashionable representations of feminism. U.S. popular

culture in the 1990s struggled with the question: what, if anything is still useful

about feminism? The answer was to preserve the women's independent careers, but

step away from political commitments to feminism toward a politics of individual

expression.

Similarly, in films like *13 Going on 30*[268] an independent career is portrayed

as one element of a total lifestyle package including consumption and sexuality.

Jenna Rink (Jennifer Garner) makes a wish at her thirteenth birthday and wakes up

the following day as a thirty-year-old adult and a fashion editor for her favorite

magazine in New York City. Jenna soon realizes that she does not like the person

she has become and returns to New Jersey to marry her grade-school sweetheart,

Mat Flamhaff (Mark Ruffalo). *13 Going on 30* could be interpreted as regressive in

that Jenna yearns for a traditional married life in New Jersey, rather than the

glamorous one she has in New York. However, the portrayal of Jenna's career as a

fashion editor focuses primarily on the consumer trappings of success: great clothes,

fabulous parties, and her relationship with a hot but shallow professional hockey

player. At work, she sells company secrets in exchange for the promise of a

promotion and is abusive to her friends and coworkers. Any analysis of the film as

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[268] *13 Going on 30*, directed by Gary Winick, written by Josh Goldsmith and Cathy Yuspa
(Revolution Studios, 2004).

regressive must also grapple with the absolute lack of feminist commitments in her life as a career woman in New York. For Jenna, the purpose of work is simply self-aggrandizement, money, and glamor. A position as the editor of a magazine for young women (Jenna from *13 Going on 30*), a newspaper columnist (Carrie, from *Sex and the City*), or a lawyer (Ally from *Ally McBeal*) are potential platforms for social change, but instead these characters are motivated by the fulfillment they find in work, and the duty of self-improvement.

Limited critique of the professions appeared in this era, but often couched in the makeover theme. In *Legally Blonde*,[269] Reese Witherspoon plays Elle Woods a beautiful blonde sorority president and fashion merchandising major from Southern California. When her boyfriend, Warner (Matthew Davis), rejects the possibility of marriage because she is not an intellectual, she decides to follow him to Harvard Law School to prove him wrong. She ends up succeeding at Harvard, landing both a prestigious job and a new fiancé fellow lawyer, Emmett (Luke Wilson). Kathleen Rowe Karlyn argues that in *Legally Blonde* Harvard Law School gets a postfeminist makeover. She writes that the film challenges male domination of the professions through "girl power,"[270] a somewhat vapid political philosophy of cheerfulness, traditional femininity, and consumerism. In her comparison of Elle Woods (Reese Witherspoon) and her law school professor, Professor Stromwell (Holland Taylor), Karlyn points out that the film portrays feminists as part of the stodgy unfashionable establishment. Moreover, the comparison trivializes the conflict over political

[269] *Legally Blonde,* directed by Robert Luketic, screenplay by Karen McCulluh and Kirsten Smith (MGM, 2001).

[270] Kathleen Rowe Karlyn, *Unruly Girls, Unrepentant Mothers: Redefining Feminism on Screen* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011), 147.

commitments between young and establishment feminists, reducing it to a matter of style and dress. The title, "Legally Blonde" suggests blondeness, an extreme marker of white femininity, as a protected class[271]. In fact, in the middle of the movie, Elle confidently declares that she is discriminated against as a blonde. Thus, the overemphasis on style and white femininity also downplays the collective agenda of feminists both young and old in continuing the fight against sexism and racism.

By the early 2000s there was a strong contrast between the older generation of women executives and young career women. *The Devil Wears Prada*[272] offers a particularly unflattering portrayal of a female executive, but this time it is the older woman who must teach the younger about appropriate postfeminist style. Andy (Anne Hathaway), an aspiring journalist, finds herself in a job at a high fashion magazine, *Runway*, working for Miranda Priestley (Meryl Streep), a veteran fashion editor, and a formidably tough boss. Miranda is a terror to all who work for her: she barks orders at her assistants without allowing them to ask any questions and she refuses to share the elevator with any underlings. According to Nigel (Stanley Tucci), the art director and a kinder mentor to Andy, Miranda is "just doing her job." Miranda is well aware of the negative perception of her as a "dragon lady," and a "career-obsessed snow-queen." Although she has children, Meryl Streep's role as Miranda is reminiscent of Joan Crawford's portrayal of the hardened career woman.

Thus, *The Devil Wears Prada* takes a critical perspective on the fashion industry, but includes many of the familiar elements of postfeminist consumerism as

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[271] Radner, *Neo-Feminist Cinema*, 65. The movie's promotional strategy included free blonde die jobs for women.
[272] *The Devil Wears Prada*, directed by David Frankel, screenplay by Aline Brosch McKenna (Fox 2000 Pictures, 2006).

part of the movie's appeal. Andy is a newcomer to the world of high fashion and a

skeptic.   When she first starts she makes the unfortunate mistake of laughing during

a meeting at her superiors' agony over choosing a belt. Miranda proceeds to serve

Andy with a diatribe about the relevance of high fashion in society: *"you go to your*

closet and you select that lumpy blue sweater, for instance, because you're trying to

tell the world that you take yourself too seriously to care about what you put on your

back." Miranda then explains how the color of Andy's sweater is a derivative of the

designer dresses that she approved, concluding by saying, "that blue represents

millions of dollars and countless jobs. And, it's sort of comical that you think you've

made a choice that exempts you from the fashion industry when, in fact, you're

wearing a sweater that was selected for you by the people in this room, from a pile of

stuff." Nigel tells her that her rejection of fashion reflects a poor work ethic in the

case of her job. Miranda and Nigel then transform this young earnest, "smart fat

girl," as Miranda calls her, into a fashionable postfeminist career woman. Nigel

provides her with samples from the magazine's lavish closet to help her look the part

of Miranda's assistant, even though he makes it very clear that, as a size six, she will

struggle to fit into the sample sizes. As Hilary Radner points out, Andy's

professional coming-of-age is mirrored by her adoption of high fashion trends.[273]

Andy needs to learn femininity as part of the recipe for success.

However, the movie is also a cautionary tale. After the makeover, Andy is

consumed by her job at Runway, becoming just like the women she scorned when

she first started the job. Andy's boyfriend breaks up with her because of her

devotion to her career at his expense. At the same time, Miranda's husband files for

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[273] Radner, *Neo-Feminist Cinema*, 145.

divorce, foreshadowing Andy's future if she remains in the industry. So the movie critiques both success and consumerism without moving far beyond the stereotype of the frigid career woman, for whom love and success are incompatible. In the final moments of the film Miranda tells Andy, "I see a great deal of myself in you." Andy chafes at the thought of becoming Miranda. Her solution is to become the journalist she always intended to be. With her moral compass back on track, she is able to find a more legitimate path to success, one that will presumably offer more happiness and the possibility for love.

While I share the critics' concerns for the overemphasis on clothing and makeup, I am skeptical about the notion that emphasizing the intrinsic rewards of work is a feminist proposition. The problem is that if work is assumed to be intrinsically rewarding for women, then women are expected to work unlimited hours and employers need not offer adequate compensation. I argue that one of the largest problems with postfeminist career women is that work itself is made to appear glamorous and empowering, without appropriate financial rewards or quality of life. In *The Aftermath of Feminism,* Angela McRobbie agrees, writing that the figure of the working girl demonstrates the benefits of already-achieved equal opportunity and the superiority of Western societies, along with a promise of future economic prosperity.[274]

Conclusion

This chapter discussed the movies and series that shaped the shifting portrayal of professional women throughout the modern history of fictional media.

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[274] McRobbie, *The Aftermath of Feminism*, 1235.

The set of cultural texts discussed above constitute a type of collective memory about the figure of professional women, limited by the availability of the texts in the present. This collective memory is more intense today than it was when Lipsitz wrote *Time Passages*. The advent of new delivery technologies offer easy access to this history and the possibility for viewers to engage deeply with movies and series of the past. It also helps to set viewers' expectations for the new cultural products they encounter today.

The companionate marriages of *His Girl Friday* and *Adam's Rib* have yet to reappear. Fears that careers would ruin women for marriage, so clear in films like *The Best of Everything* and *Sex and the Single Girl*, gave way to concerns over work-family balance, notably in *Baby Boom*. The industry's timid embrace of progressive politics compatible with consumerism in the late 1960s through the 1970s, visible in *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*, re-appeared in the late 1990s through the over-emphasis on the stylistic elements of success, as exemplified by *Sex and the City*. The suggestion that too much ambition in women is incompatible with dating is still visible in contemporary film and television; only now, there are more examples of texts where the preferable solution is for the woman to prioritize work. Contemporary women are welcomed into the competition for the American dream of professional success, rather than the feminine middle-class dream of motherhood and domesticity. Even though the opportunity structure is far from equal in terms of gender, race, and class, professional success is the universal standard against which all are judged.

Chapters four, five and six explore contemporary viewers' attitudes toward professional success for women in contemporary film and television. Chapter Four begins by sketching the contours of professionalism, an elusive set of qualities involving competence, dedication and a minimization of individual difference. Discussions of *Scandal, Zero Dark Thirty* and *Homeland* suggest that women could and should meet male-defined standards of professionalism. Almost no one challenged women's presence in the workforce, or suggested that they return to domestic roles. Although viewers dismissed many of the professional women characters as entertaining fiction, the stakes of their conversations were high. Often, their conversations became referenda on women's progress in the workplace and its tenuous connection to feminism, anti-capitalism, and anti-racist politics.

4. "For God and Country"[275]: The Moral Imperative to Succeed

Maya: "Nothing. I've done nothing else."[276]

As mentioned in the introduction, in the twenty-first century, women and men are ostensibly judged by the same criteria that place professional success at the center of individual identity. In *Scandal*, *Zero Dark Thirty,* and *Homeland* viewers identified with the female characters *as professionals*, in that the problems of promotion, recognition and achievement were prominent in many of the discussions of each of these texts. Success is central to the narrative of each. Olivia offers viewers small victories on a weekly basis, as she saves clients from professional ruination. *Homeland's* Carrie unravels one terrorist plot over the course of each season. Maya's protracted search for Usama bin Laden demonstrated the eventual rewards of continuous hard work. In each case, it is participating in and being a part of their success that seems to excite audiences. Despite episodes of failure, all three women are portrayed as successful overall. The shows and movie portray professional success as a quasi-religious moral imperative, closely affiliated with patriotism. In doing so, they encourage audiences to look away from the issues of class, gender and race-based oppression.

Maya from *Zero Dark Thirty*, Carrie from *Homeland*[277] and Olivia from *Scandal*, the career women heroines of the post-9-11 present, demonstrate increasing

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[275] In *Zero Dark Thirty*, after the Navy Seals kill Usama Bin Laden, they report the successful mission back to Maya (Jessica Chastain), saying, "Geronimo, for God and country." This is the moment when Maya knows that she has succeeded in her ten-year quest and that the US won an important symbolic victory over Al Qaeda.

[276] Ibid.

[277] There was rampant speculation that Maya and Carrie were based on the same actual CIA agent; David Haglund, "Is Carrie From *Homeland* Based on the Hero of *Zero Dark Thirty*?" *Slate,* December 4, 2012.

attention in popular culture to government and politics as opposed to fields such as business and journalism. One explanation for this trend is that it is a reaction to what Mitchell called the public symbolic destruction of Wall Street in the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, which forever changed the cultural status of Wall Street and cast doubt on American international economic prominence.[278] The subsequent decline of Wall Street, compounded by the 2008 recession, helps explain the increased appeal of political and military power as trappings of professional success in narratives featuring professional women. The continued emphasis on hard work and success across multiple contexts provides further evidence of the neoliberal permeation of business values into all spheres of life, including the government and military.

Viewers looked to the screen for something akin to career advice but less proscriptive and more entertaining. The process of watching narrative accounts and subsequently discussing and evaluating them was more important than any of the messages about work embedded in the text. In *The Company We Keep,* Wayne Booth writes that rather than focusing on a particular negative or positive outcome, we should ask what kinds of friendship texts provide as readers experience them.[279] Viewers did not see the screen as necessarily didactic. Instead they saw the characters very much like real friends or acquaintances, and understood them as role models, cautionary tales, or somewhere in-between the two. Much like two people meeting and sharing stories,[280] the texts offered audiences the possibility of thinking

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[278] Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want?*
[279] Wayne Booth, *The Company We Keep: An Ethics of Fiction* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 169.
[280] Booth, *The Company We Keep*, 170.

about work through a process of shared storytelling. In this case, the friendships between viewers and texts were publicly mediated through Twitter, Facebook, and IMDb. Each forum was a social group with their own norms, values and knowledges. They shared anecdotes or told stories about their own lives, in which Olivia Pope or Carrie Matheson were the shared reference point. Viewers added their own meanings to the top layer of the chatter surrounding a character, to the established stories about women and work. Like small village rumors, their comments participated in a social project that was a skirmish of larger political and historical forces.[281]

This practice offered viewers a non-confrontational way of dealing with the politics of work, gender, race and class that were salient to their own experiences. Through analyzing this process, the following portion of this chapter asks: how do viewers translate the work experiences on screen into valuable information that helps them make sense of their own everyday working lives? How do they understand their work in terms of their duty to themselves, their duty to their organizations, and the larger moral duty of the type of work they do?

"For God and Country" begins with a summary that provides insight into the overall reception of each show or movie. These were effectively my field notes. The introduction to each text includes an overview of viewers' reception of that text in each of the three platforms, IMDb, Twitter, and Facebook. The second half of the chapter is a thematically organized discussion of viewers' posts. It begins by discussing the ways in which these women function as ostensibly universal role models for people regardless of race, gender or class position. It then hones in on

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[281] Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance,* 22-23.

the agreed upon standards and duties of professional and organizational behavior. Within this set of values the idea of organizational duty and obedience often superseded individual standards of morality or justice. Full commitment, regardless of other obligations or moral codes, was the behavioral standard for professionals, leaving little room for resistance. However, there were hints that although viewsers espoused these values, they did not truly live by them. The leisurely practice of online viewsing allowed viewers to carve out their own time, space and community relationships, even as they debated the minutia of hard work and professionalism. This contradiction, between resistant conditions of practice and disciplinary content, sets the stage for the remainder of the dissertation.

Scandal (*2012-Present)*

Scholars and critics alike credited *Scandal's* creator and producer Shonda Rhimes with demonstrating the power of social media as a tool for fan engagement. New York Times television critic Allessandra Stanley learned the true power of Rhimes' army of Twitter followers.[282] Stanley's racist comments about Rhimes provoked a social media response so intense that the paper was forced to issue an apology.[283] The vast majority of newspaper critics were aligned with viewers: they designated it an average to mediocre soap opera, rife with cheap tricks to boost ratings, but often admitted its allure as a guilty pleasure.[284] As discussed below,

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[282] Anna Everett, "Scandalicious: *Scandal*, Social Media, and Shonda Rhimes' Auteuristic Juggernaut," *The Black Scholar 45*, no. 1 (2015): 41.

[283] Stanley wrote, "when Shonda Rhimes writes her autobiography, it should be called 'How to Get Away With Being an Angry Black Woman." See Stanley, "Wrought in Their Creator's Image," *New York Times*, September 21, 2014.

[284] Nancy DeWolf Smith, "*Scandal,*" *The Wall Street Journal*, April 5, 2012; Verne Gay, "Shonda Rhimes' *Scandal* Premiers on ABC," *Newsday,* April 3, 2012; Melissa Maerz, "*Scandal,*"

viewsers were more ethically and thematically oriented, and less sensitive to quality as defined by newspaper critics.

The IMDb reviews of *Scandal* were mixed between those who loved it and those who seemed to dislike prime time melodramas in general. Its premise, a powerful black woman Washington insider having an affair with a white president, was intriguing. Its basis in the real life experience of Judy Smith[285] added to many fans' enthusiasm. The show was often discussed using carefully crafted postidentity language that evaded the groundbreaking importance of a black female star on network television. Reviews noted unique camera angles, fast pace and flashy style that some people found aesthetically compelling and others found irritating. Most described the show as more melodrama than political drama, in comparison to shows like *The West Wing* and the Netflix original *House of Cards*. Viewers who rated the show highly usually described it as an addictive, guilty pleasure.

Scandal fans tweeted live along with the show, more so than the fans of any other show. The producers actively encouraged it by organizing live tweets with each of the cast members on a rotating basis.[286] Tweets about *Scandal* were most likely to be minute-by-minute commentary on the action of the show. They were often snarky comments about unpopular or immoral characters, like "Cyrus" (Jeff Perry), the white house chief of staff. Many people admitted to and even bragged about stealing away from work to watch *Scandal*. Actress Portia De Rossi, a

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Entertainment Weekly, December 4, 2012; James Poniewozik, "TV Tonight: *Scandal,*" *Time*, April 5, 2012.

[285] Judy Smith, a consulting producer for *Scandal*, was a political consultant during the first Bush administration. Many of the political scandals that Olivia and her team "fix" are based on Judy Smith's actual experiences. The affair with the president was added for television.

[286] Shelli Weinstein, "How *Scandal* Paved the Way for ABC's Twitter-Based '#TGIT' Marketing Strategy," *Variety,* September 22, 2014.

newcomer to the show in 2014, embraced the trend when she tweeted, "I left work so I could watch #Scandal! If anyone's looking for me I'll be back on set in an hour!" *Scandal's* twitter feed left the overall impression of the most highly managed social media relationships maintained by any of the producers of the texts studied in this dissertation.

Likewise, the *Scandal* Facebook page administrators were extraordinarily active in shaping fan discussions online. Yet, fans who knew about the production teams' active participation in social media used the platform to make demands of the show and to complain about breaks in the schedule. *Scandal's* Facebook fans referred to themselves as Gladiators, meaning that their commitment to the show was as intense as the devotion of Liv and her employees. Many fans took it upon themselves to police the space. Those who disliked a particular portion of the show, or critiqued something were accused of not being true gladiators and asked to leave the site. During this portion of my field research, *Scandal* aired an episode that addressed the issue of police violence against African American men. The subject polarized the fans online; some of the white fans[287] commented that the subject was inappropriate for the show, and that they were going to stop watching the show because it was too political. African American women, who made up the majority of the active viewers, praised the show's courage, discussed the issues and attempted to protect and defend *Scandal's* online space from racist comments. Not every episode was as polarizing as this one, but the sense of fan ownership over the space remained strong.

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[287] I assumed that the users' actual identities were consistent with their self-presentation online, as required by Facebook's terms and conditions. However, it is possible that some users misrepresented their race or gender.

<u>Homeland</u> *(2011 – Present)*

Homeland's critical reviews praised the talents of the writers and actors in the first few seasons.[288] Newspaper critics shared with fans a morbid fascination with Carrie's mental illness and a love/hate relationship to Seasons three and four.[289] *Cinema Journal* devoted a special segment to the series it dubbed, "the kind of program that anchors middle-class taste formations and cultural literacies."[290] As James Castonguay points out, its status as quality premium television disguises its support for US anti-terrorism policies.[291] Viewers did not always share the scholarly and critical perspective of *Homeland* as high quality television. Oddly, many viewers who claimed to hate the show continued to watch and participate in online forums.

The IMDb reviews of *Homeland* alternated between raves and slams, suggesting that there is no consensus among viewers. On average, the reviews were written early in the series – many immediately after the pilot or during season one. As usual, the IMDb reviews were focused on assessing the quality of the series, its actors, directors, producers and subject matter.   A huge proportion of viewers had extremely negative comments about Claire Danes as an actress and her character "Carrie Matheson." In most cases, it seemed like dislike of the "annoying," "crazy,"

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[288] Robert Bianco, "Showtime's *Homeland* is Unmissable TV," *USA Today,* September 27, 2012; Linda Stasi, "God's Country," *New York Post,* September 20, 2012; Jonathan Storm, "One Crazy-Good Spy," *Philadelphia Enquirer*, October 2, 2011.

[289] Mary McNamara, "*Homeland* and Carrie Still Fighting the Good Fight," *Los Angeles Times*, October 3, 2014; Matt Roush, "Weekend TV: *Homeland, Survivor's Remorse, Mulaney*," *TV Guide*, October 3, 2014; Alessandra Stanley, "Two New Wars on Terror on the *Homeland* Front," *The New York Times,* September 20, 2013; Ken Tucker, "*Homeland* Season 4: TV Review," *The Hollywood Reporter,* September 27, 2014.

[290] Diane Negra and Jorie Lagerwey, eds., "Analyzing *Homeland*: Introduction," *Cinema Journal 54,* no. 4 (2015): 126.

[291] James Castonguay, "Fictions of Terror: Complexity, Complicity and Insecurity in *Homeland,*" *Cinema Journal 54,* no. 4 (2015): 139-145.

and "slutty" character informed people's negative evaluation of the actress. In reality, it is probably a testament to Danes' acting that viewsers hated her so intensely. They also seemed to love hating her and therefore kept watching the show, despite what they described as an aspect of the show they disliked. The numerous complaints about Carrie and other characters as professionals were often motivated by a desire to have more faith in the CIA and national security. Much like the reviews of *Zero Dark Thirty*, these were split between those who viewed the show as an inappropriate defense of US counter-terrorism efforts and those who found it reprehensible in its lack of support for our nation and its foreign policy agenda.

Similar political divides appeared on Twitter. Viewers continued to argue that the series was either too pro-government or too sympathetic in its portrayal of terrorists. As with *Scandal,* the majority of Tweets responded to minute-by-minute action of the show. Tweets were more playful than IMDb reviews, and took a light approach to their evaluation of Carrie as a professional. Tanya wrote, "I love crazy Carrie! Is that wrong? Lol #homeland." Every once in a while, there was a genuinely kind comment about the character from a viewser sympathetic to her struggles with mental illness. Twitter viewsers readily praised Claire Danes' performance.

The administrators of *Homeland's* Facebook page followed *Scandal's* lead in mobilizing their fans through referring to them metaphorically as CIA agents. When they accumulated two million likes on Facebook, their celebratory post read, "2 million agents in the field." As with *Scandal*, Facebook was a platform in which

highly invested fans made demands of the producers of the show. Unlike the

Scandal Facebook page, the *Homeland* page contained a significant amount of

animosity between producers and viewsers, as well as among viewsers. The most

prevalent were complaints about short seasons (12 episodes each) and long breaks

between seasons. Viewsers were critical of the decision to move the show to

Germany in season 5. Some argued that the relocation constituted "political

correctness, " and that the show was avoiding the middle-east conflict in order to

avoid criticism for negative portrayals of Muslims. Once again, viewers talked

about how much they hated Carrie, emphasizing her mental illness and sexual

behavior.

Zero Dark Thirty *(2012)*

Critics were struck by *Zero Dark Thirty*'s timely, controversial subject

matter, and brilliant technical execution.[292] David Edelstein of *New York Magazine*

wrote, "as a moral statement, *Zero Dark Thirty* is borderline fascistic. As a piece of

cinema, it's phenomenally gripping—an unholy masterwork."[293] Critiques from

scholars, such as Marouf Hasian Jr., expressed skepticism about director Kathryn

Bigelow and writer Mark Boal's claims to apolitical journalism. Instead, he argues

that the movie promoted American imperialism using "a thin veneer of feminism.[294]

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[292] Roger Ebert, "*Zero Dark Thirty,*" *Chicago Sun-Times*, January 2, 2013; Owen Gleiberman, "*Zero Dark Thirty,*" *Entertainment Weekly,* January 11, 2013; LaSalle, "*Zero Dark Thirty* Review: On Target," *San Francisco Chronicle*, January 3, 2013; Lou Loumenick, "Jessica Chastain Hunts Down Osama bin Laden in Riveting *Zero Dark Thirty*," *New York Post*, December 18, 2012; Michael Phillips, "*Zero Dark Thirty* a First Draft of History," *Chicago Tribune*, January 3, 2013; Katey Rich, "*Zero Dark Thirty* – First Look Review," *The Guardian,* December 4, 2012.
[293] David Edelstein, "Epic Pileup: *Zero Dark Thirty* and *The Hobbit* Compete for Your Three Hours," *New York Magazine,* December 10, 2012.
[294] Marouf Hasian Jr., "*Zero Dark Thirty* and the Critical Challenges Posed by Populist Postfeminism During the Global Was on Terrorism," *Journal of Communication Inquiry 37,* no. 4 (2013): 323;

The movie did not appear to have much influence over viewers' existing political convictions on US military action in the Middle East.

The film was not very popular with viewers on IMDb across the political spectrum. Viewers were far more concerned with the moral statement of the film than the aesthetic qualities of the filmmaking. Overall IMDb viewers found it overrated and undeserving of its Academy Award nominations – a missed opportunity considering its grand subject. A frequent criticism was that the director's and writer's attempt to avoid taking a political position failed. On the right, viewers argued that torture is a necessary tactic and that the movie created undue sympathy for our enemies. On the left, viewers argued that it glorified the American military without sufficient critique. The most frequent charge was that it was boring and slow-paced.[295] Viewers argued that the docudrama approach missed the human element of the story and that Maya's character lacked development.

Twitter users were more charitable in their assessment and their tone was often celebratory. After seeing the movie, many viewers posted patriotic sentiments celebrating the hard work and devotion of the CIA or the military. They made a distinction between the military, as portrayed by the Navy Seals, and the CIA, which one viewer described as "a lot of desk jockeys who haven't been to combat giving opinions about counter intelligence." More often, tweets recounted favorite lines from the movie. One of the most popular quotes was, "I'm the motherfucker who found this place," which Maya says to the director of the CIA.

Marouf Hasian, Jr., "Military Orientalism at the Cineplex: A Postcolonial Reading of *Zero Dark Thirty*," *Critical Studies in Media Communication 31,* no. 5 (2014): 464-478.
[295] One viewser described the film as, "about as much fun as watching someone else play Scrabble." A few people mentioned that other viewers in the theater fell asleep during the film.

Those tweets celebrated Maya as a true American hero, misunderstood within a large male-dominated bureaucracy. The second most popular quote was "do your job, bring me people to kill," a line the CIA Islamabad station chief delivers to Maya and her colleagues. Particularly for those who served in the military, it spoke to the harsh realities of what it meant to make a living off the war on terror.

Facebook viewsers commented on the film as a way of expressing their patriotism. It attracted a conservative, pro-war crowd; some of the typical comments were "for God and country. Geronimo." Many argued that the film did not receive the credit it deserved at the Academy Awards because of the liberal Hollywood establishment and the intervention of liberal politicians. However, several viewsers accused Katherine Bigelow of pushing a radical feminist agenda by simply portraying Maya as the hero, particularly vis-à-vis the male bosses who hesitated to act on her analysis.

Role Models

Scandal's Olivia Pope was described as a kind of everywoman, a role model transferrable across a wide-variety of personal goals and types of work. One viewer tweeted, "I think that every female watches *Scandal*, subconsciously wishing that they could be the Olivia Pope of whatever career they pursue." This tweet and many others like it proposed Olivia as a kind of everywoman and a model for female success for women of all races. Olivia represented the hope of a post-identity future, but was also highly compatible with pro-work discipline.

Scandal presents a particularly glamorous world of work with significant rewards in both money and power. Olivia's clothing, apartment and office are

stunning, but her influence in Washington is even more impressive. Yet, viewers'

identification with Olivia Pope goes beyond money, power and the trappings of

success. The practice represents a shift from the icons of post-feminist style, like

Carrie Bradshaw, of *Sex and City*, whose audience engagement was centrally

defined by its connection to fashion merchandizing (as discussed in Chapter 3).

Although fans greatly admired her style, they perceived Olivia as motivated by love

of her career and the intrinsic rewards of her work, rather than by consumerism. She

was recognized as a role model for many fans, in her capacity as a working

professional. Her character exemplified a set of work values identified by Weeks in

which, "work is not just defended on ground of economic necessity and social duty;

it is widely understood as an individual moral practice and collective ethical

obligation."[296] As such, Olivia provoked several interesting quasi-religious

homages. Crystal admitted, "I printed out 'What would Olivia do?' and keep it taped

to my computer monitor to remind me to kick a$$ at work every day!" The question,

"what would Olivia do?" empowered Crystal to think of her work as important and

fulfilling, just like the exciting world of D.C. politics on television. By echoing the

adage, "what would Jesus do?" she also transformed Olivia into a Christ-like figure,

and gave her professional ambition the status of a religious quest. Olivia's self-

discipline was among her most admired characteristics, and Crystal created a daily

reminder of it as part of her own regime of workplace self-discipline. This fantastic

world of work was highly attractive to viewers, and they seemed to embrace the high

level of expectations on workers just as much as the rewards.

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[296] Weeks, *The Problem with Work*, 11.

Weber's spirit of capitalism, complete with influences of protestant theology, appears relevant today. Benjamin Franklin would certainly approve of the ferocious work ethic demonstrated by Olivia and her employees. Olivia is a proud workaholic: she tells her employees that she does not cry, she does not sleep, and she does not have a life, and that she expects the same from them.[297] Olivia's avowed love of hard work and disdain for leisure and self-care satisfy the demands of employers and the larger system of contemporary American capitalism. Olivia's employees often repeat the adage that they are "gladiators in suits," meaning that they fearlessly fight high-level professional battles from unexpected enemies.

These metaphors also encouraged loyalty to the series *Scandal* and the media corporation ABC.[298] Fans seemed more than happy to accept the suggestions from *Scandal's* Facebook administrators' that they also identify themselves as "gladiators." For example, in one scene when Olivia demands that the chief of staff wake the president, one fan's Facebook comment was, "…and this is why she is our Gladiator." It was a common practice on both Twitter and Facebook for fans to recount Olivia's powerful moments using the hashtag, "#Gladiator." Some viewsers wrote that they found it difficult to identify with Olivia, herself, because she was "too larger than life," as Clarice wrote in her IMDb review. So, instead of seeing her as a role model, they identified with her employees and their loyalty to her as an employer. The hashtag "#Gladiator" worked well for both types of viewsers, allowing room for identification with Olivia or with one of her employees.

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[297] *Scandal,* "Sweet Baby," ABC, April 5, 2012, written by Shonda Rhimes, directed by Paul McGuigan. Harrison tells Quinn, "gladiators, etc."
[298] ABC is now a subsidiary of The Walt Disney Company, one of six corporations that dominate the American media industry.

Scandal provided a unique platform and experience for these fans. Just as their duties corresponded to that of an employee, *Scandal's* producers and ABC took on the traditional responsibilities of the employer. Viewers understood their relationship with the show as a contractual agreement with producers, where viewers "pay" for content though their attention and advertising eyeballs. Through their participation in online social media, viewers offered a monetizable form of free labor.[299] With each use of the Gladiator hashtag, they built the *Scandal* brand. By accepting the metaphorical relationship between corporate employment and viewership, fans also announced reciprocal expectations based on the model of contractual employment. In the moments when the show disappointed them, they attempted to reposition themselves as members of the same organization, all collectively responsible for the quality of the show. They got angry when production schedules were delayed or the network rescheduled the show. After being disappointed by the kidnapping storyline in the middle of season 4, Teresa posted, "fire anyone associated with the last three episodes." Fans had an investment in what being a Gladiator meant: the expectations, duties and rewards of that workplace. Several viewers were upset when the page's administrators used incorrect grammar, because Olivia would never make such an error. Viewer demands were simple: they wanted an enjoyable regular Thursday night show that both entertained them and met their basic moral requirements.

As long as the people working on *Scandal* followed the above dictates, they could expect immediate support from an army of fans. For example, Carol, an

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[299] Trebor Scholz, "Introduction," In *Digital Labor: The Internet as Playground and Factory,* ed. Trebor Scholz (New York: Routledge, 2013), 12.

extremely devoted middle-aged African American woman viewser, was a daily

presence on *Scandal*'s Facebook page.   She weighed in on debates about Olivia's

love life, clarified plot and character trivia for other fans, and offered life lessons.

She was the kind of person young people instinctively call "ma'am" or "Miss

Carol," and she was a true "ride or die Gladiator."[300] Carol felt called to action in

response to the episode, "The Lawn Chair,"[301] which depicted police murdering an

unarmed young African American man. Several white fans accused Shonda Rhimes

of making *Scandal* too political, and threatened to stop watching the show. Carol

defended Rhimes fiercely:

> But all of those cases have everything to do with politics, local, state
> and federal government. This is a subject that has captivated
> worldwide attention because like the civil rights movement, it put
> America on tv around the world in how it deals with minority
> communities. People who don't want to deal with white cops shooting
> a black kid don't care because it's not happening to their kids. But let
> it be a white kid who walks into the school and shoot up white kids
> and people will want the government and the President to deal with
> gun control and pass laws to protect their children. Kudos to Shonda
> for dealing with this subject because it's not going away anytime soon
> because these attitudes are deeply engrained in every fabric of our
> society. However, I will continue to say that black daddy's especially
> and mommas are going to have to keep their children alive by
> keeping them off the streets because they are walking targets and the
> police are shooting to kill.

In the few days leading up to and following the episode, a group of "Ride or Die

Gladiators" reclaimed the Facebook page from those they dubbed "Racist

Gladiators." They appreciated the moral stance *Scandal* took in the collective

mission to end racism. In return, they were more than willing to go "over a cliff" to

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[300] This was a popular phrase used by fans to describe both the characters on the show, and themselves as fans.

[301] "The Lawn Chair," *Scandal,* ABC, March, 5, 2015, written by Shonda Rhimes and Zahir McGhee, directed by Tom Verica.

defend the show, keeping African-American actors and actresses on screen to address issues important to their community.

Scandal's social media engagement strategy set the trend for others in the industry. Other producers sought to harness the power of social media for their own ends. Toward the end of the data collection phase of this project, Homeland's Facebook administrators mimicked the practice – calling their Facebook fans "field agents." Unlike in the case of Scandal, Homeland's approach backfired with some. One viewer responded to the post "Not your agent. I just watch the show. Don't call me your agent." Yet, refusal to identify with the show in that way was unusual. Undeterred, the producers also introduced a new Homeland-themed computer game, asking viewers "how would you fare as a CIA analyst?" Producers are increasingly designing ways for viewers to identify with the fictional world of the show, more specifically through experiencing the type of work being done on the show. In doing so, they created a space for their fans to draw a parallel between CIA employees in the fictional space of their show, and the fan relationship with the television series.

However, fans also believed that they had the power to quit if the show failed to present a worldview that squared with their own values. Homeland's Facebook administrators posted to their fans: "our Facebook division has grown to 2 million! Be sure to alert your case officer about the great news." In exchange for her loyalty to the show, Facebook viewer, Molly, voiced her demands for an expanded role for Quinn (Rupert Friend). So, Molly responded, "noted and done. Will advise the superiors that if anything happens to Quinn, my resignation will be forthcoming!" She was able to use the employee metaphor to assert her own power as consumers,

equating it to worker power. Yet, the threat of resignation, rather than revolt or strike, was the most extreme remedy most viewsers could imagine.

In moments like these, viewsers conceptually shifted themselves into the category of consumer. In accessing the established paradigm of consumer-based activism,[302] they hoped to reframe the power dynamic between producer and viewser. The strategy had limitations: First, while viewsers emphasized their power over producers through threats to stop watching a program, they lacked collective ways to make demands on the representational landscape. Second, corporate management philosophies also reframe employees as consumers in order to give their employment experience the illusion of a consumer choice.[303] Viewsers and producers flowed back and forth between employee and consumer metaphors, as a way of negotiating their respective power to define and shape the future of a television program.

Sometimes, viewsers were extremely successful in mobilizing their defenses as consumers. The producers of *Homeland* learned this lesson when they marketed a T-shirt depicting a drone strike:

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[302] Matthew Hilton, *Prosperity for All: Consumer Activism in an Era of Globalization* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009).
[303] Heather Hicks, *The Culture of Soft Work: Labor, Gender, and Race in Postmodern American Narrative* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 5.

There were a few people who argued that the T-shirt was just a joke or that it only

reflected fandom of the television show. Disapproval was the reigning sentiment, as

exemplified in the following exchange:

> Jake: Uh. This is a seriously f-ed piece of merchandising. The
> drone program isn't something you should be using to promote
> yourselves. It's a part of the show- yes, but not something to be
> made a joke of. You should especially know that given you blew
> up an innocent wedding on the show as a scene.
>
> Quentin: I'm going to take a shot in the dark and say whoever
> released these designs jumped the gun and didn't think of how this
> may be offensive to their target audience.
>
> Anna: Yah, yank that crap off the shelves. And pull it off your
> page. Fictional TV show is an ok escape, tangibly making a tshirt
> with real world implications--STUPID and distasteful piece of
> merchandise.

The television show depicting the drone program seemed to contain room for dissent

among viewers, and contemplation of moral ambiguity. Like *Zero Dark Thirty's*

viewsers, *Homeland's* viewers frequently disagreed about whether the US was

justified in their war tactics. Most of the Facebook posts drew a sharp distinction

between creating fiction and merchandising the T-shirt. The presence of a tangible consumer product seemed to call extra attention to the series as a consumer product rather than an employment relationship. In that position, viewsers attempted to reverse the power dynamics with the show's producers.

Such successful claims to consumer activism were rare. More often, comments offered producers a quick, readily accessible way to observe the popularity of a plotline or newly introduced character. Viewsers worked for the producers for free in the hours after work, or the stolen moments in between tasks. However, for viewsers, the act of discussing a favorite television series or movie online was more than just a way of passing time between shifts. They were deeply morally engaged with the texts and each other. They cared about keeping the right shows on the air – the ones that fit their values.

The Professional and the Organization

This section looks at the ways in which professionalism was constructed in online forums. The demands viewsers made on producers revealed a set of shared cultural values about professional work and the roles and responsibilities of employees and employers. Viewsers recognized full personal commitment to work, and lack of outside responsibilities as among the most important values. Reciprocal loyalty within the organization, between bosses and their employees as well as among fellow employees was also important. Finally, online comments appreciated willingness to forego the rewards of work, both material rewards like money and benefits, as well as immaterial rewards like recognition and fulfillment. Professionalism is the intangible quality that allegedly separates the classes. It is

embedded in a mythology that supports the idea of success as a quality that inheres in the individual,[304] rather than an outcome of social and economic processes. Those individuals are not exclusively white men anymore, but they are required to meet white, male standards of professionalism without exception.

The masculine model of professionalism requires long work hours and a lifetime of continuous full-time employment. Phyllis Moen and Patricia Roehling blame the "career mystique," as the mirror image of Betty Friedan's "feminine mystique."[305] They argue that in the post-war era in the United States, "jobs were greedy institutions,"[306] taking for granted the support of a full-time housewife to reserve the professional's time purely for the organization. Women's participation in the workforce is restricted to the terms of the career mystique. This version of gender equality leaves women to "balance" work and family, in other words, to manage their problems privately, without disturbing the career mystique. Moen & Roehling identify time as the scarcest resource within this regime.

Viewers rarely described commitment to work in material terms, such as work hours or results. They were clearly indebted to both Freidan and her colleague, management psychologist, Abraham Maslow.[307] Viewers emphasized self-actualization for women through the inherent satisfaction of their work. Fans reacted strongly to administrators' teasing suggestion that Carrie would no longer work for the CIA in season five. Helen admired the extent to which Carrie's identification was exclusively with the job, writing "It's her whole identity." Stacy

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[304] Sandage, *Born Losers*, 12.
[305] Phyllis Moen and Patricia Roehling, *The Career Mystique: Cracks in the American Dream* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005), 4-5.
[306] Moen and Roehling, *The Career Mystique*, 11.
[307] Hicks, *The Culture of Soft Work*, 94.

simply posted, "CIA 4 Life Carrie." The character is also a mother, but fans like

Helen identified her with her role as a spy first. Fans were almost universally upset

about the prospect of Carrie losing her professional identity. One of the most

frequent ongoing complaints about *Homeland* was that the scenes of Carrie's family

life were boring.[308] The tendency of viewers to emphasize heroines' professional

status indicated set of values where productive roles and relationships trump family

and community relationships. In fact, life outside of work was an unwelcome

distraction from what viewers perceived to be the appropriate focus of the plot –

work.

The ideal professional was completely devoid of any other commitments.

Maya from *Zero Dark Thirty* perfectly exemplified this value for many viewers.

She has no family, or significant romantic relationships and barely any friendships;

her mission to find Usama bin Laden is the only thing that seems deeply personal.

For ten years, she forgoes any personal priorities outside of the agency, and she was

highly admired for doing so. Chris was even excited about CIA work, accepting the

limits on social life as part of the job: "How cool it would be to work for CIA.

#nosociallife #sowhat #zerodarkthirty." This tweet perpetuated a myth that

complete devotion to work rather than personal priorities was the recipe for a

fulfilling life.

Viewers communicated to the movie's production team their appreciation

for the movie's purity of focus. Barbara appreciated that she "wasn't reduced to

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[308] Many viewers hated the Season 4 finale, because . Jerry even speculated, "You guys do realize that the ending would have been different if it weren't for the untimely release of the CIA torture report right? The episode before the last ended with Quinn going to go all torture on Farad Ghazi. They might have had to shoot a random episode to replace the planned torture episode."

being a love interest." In other words, Maya did not exist in the film purely for the male hero and male audience. *Zero Dark Thirty* does represent a departure from the overt focus on professional women's sexuality found in earlier movies like *Disclosure* and *Fatal Attraction* (discussed earlier). However, it leaves little room for Maya to express her sexuality in a positive way, or develop a personal life outside of the CIA.

Loyalty to the organization, its mission and the boss, was an important test of professionalism. True professionals were expected to fulfill all of their social and emotional needs within the organization. Viewsers used familial terms to describe the professional relationships on screen, which frequently replaced actual familial relationships. Caroline placed organizational loyalty above family when she insisted to her fellow *Scandal* fans, "Gladiators have a special bond. Stronger than family." In a Facebook discussion about Abby, a former OPA employee, then working at the White House, Tessa elaborated "once a gladiator always a Gladiator." These posts suggested a model of employment resembling the family economy. Organizational loyalty was not merely a component of a job; it was a moral obligation that stretched far beyond the terms of employment.

An important component of lifelong organizational loyalty was an employee's acceptance of limited rewards and recognition. When Abby began working at the White House, fans disapproved of the way she was treated, but simultaneously accepted that it was not Abby's place to complain or make demands. Martha viewed this aspect of professionalism as a gendered expectation. She wrote, "#yesallwomen "@ScandalABC: The strong women stand up! Here's to doing the

good and hard work without always getting your praise! #Scandal." There were still expectations that employees receive respect, and recognition for a job well done. However, asking for praise, or a higher salary was a dreaded sign of entitlement, unbecoming a true professional. Rather than complain, fans hoped Abby would quit and return to OPA, an organization they believed upheld its duty to its employees. Gail wrote, "I'm just waiting for Abby to go back to working for Olivia. This job disrespects her hard #Scandal." Fans admired Abby's stoic refusal to demand respect and recognition, even though they hoped she would return to OPA. Just as they often limited their power as fans to their ability to quit the show, Facebook fans and Twitter followers saw employee power as limited to quitting the organization, rather than demanding change.

It was evident that viewers held Olivia to a higher standard than they held Carrie or Maya, much like African American professional women in U.S. corporations.[309] The expectation of full and absolute devotion to her work was no exception. One of the most popular demands made of *Scandal*'s producers was to devote less attention to Olivia's personal struggles and more attention to her work as a fixer. Michelle wrote: "I hope we lose the sad/sitting in the dark/drinking wine by herself/woe is me Olivia in season 4; bring back the Olivia who was a take charge/force to be reckoned with political fixer." Michelle wanted to see Olivia only as a professional, rather than as a full person with emotions in need of occasional self-care. In reality, the experiences of black women professionals are often

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[309] Ella J. Edmonson Bell and Stella M. Nkomo, *Our Separate Ways: Black and White Women and the Struggle for Professional Identity* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2001), 44.

traumatic.[310] A character's difficulty with relationships and sexuality were seen as signs of weakness compromising professionalism. Many fans like Michelle wanted Olivia to be a "strong black woman," and therefore held her to a set of standards that were, in the words of Sheri Parks, "humanly impossible to sustain over a lifetime without huge sacrifices."[311] Several fans did recognize the intensity of the pressures on Olivia; for example, they wondered why she never sought counseling or suffered Post Traumatic Stress Disorder after being kidnapped.

Explicit discussions of gendered and racialized organizational dynamics were sporadic. Instead, viewsers framed the issue as one of an organizational bureaucracy that lacked appreciation for an employee's special talents. *Zero Dark Thirty's* Maya was interpreted as a rogue, often at odds with an organization that did not share her priorities. One of the things viewsers admired most about Maya was the fact that long after her superiors in the CIA lose interest in locating Usama bin Laden, Maya remained monomaniacally obsessed with the mission. Viewsers saw something noble in her lack of recognition by the organization, and her eventual victory. For them, her struggle for recognition represented a kind of universal human condition. George tweeted, "Maya is an example of every underrated and unappreciated employee, not given credit where due, but on a far worse level. #ZeroDarkThirty." On Facebook, Lorraine described her admiration for Maya: "Wow she was an amazing person/woman in the movie. The fact the big rigs of DC didn't believe her it's like I want to tell them here's pie in your face idiots! They could have had OBL

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[310] Toni C. King and Alease Ferguson, "Charting Ourselves: Leadership Development with Black Professional Women," *NWSA Journal* 13, no. 2 (2001): 123-141.
[311] Sheri Parks, *Fierce Angels: Living with a Legacy from the Sacred Dark Feminine to the Strong Black Woman* (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 2013), xv.

so much sooner but they were afraid of getting their fingers dirty!" Lorraine overemphasized the division between Maya and the organization. In the movie, her analysis and priorities differed only slightly from her superiors. There was just enough separation to emphasize the individual's special skills and abilities and personal commitment to the mission.

As with *Scandal,* in discussions of *Zero Dark Thirty*, success was described as a spiritual duty to get in touch with ones' naturally occurring genius. Of course, the fact that the assassination of Usama bin Laden fits into a larger national narrative helped people read Maya as a hero. The film's story re-articulated a collective goal into a personal mission toward the spiritual fulfillment offered by success. Through discussion of Maya, viewers asserted that hard work was its own reward. Maya's quest to locate bin Laden for the CIA was also a long spiritual journey toward her destiny. One tweet read, "[Maya] is an icon; 10 years! Hard work pays off." What made her an icon was a singular motivation to accomplish her mission that transcended the demands of her actual job. Although her mission aligns with a patriotic narrative of US intelligence and military superiority in the "war on terror," viewers were just as likely to point to the intrinsic rewards of hard work itself as her inspiration to work continually for ten years with very little support or recognition.

The idea of women professionals as rogues suggests that they have their own moral compasses opposed to the organization. However, it was usually merely a matter of priorities rather than morality that separated Maya (*Zero Dark Thirty)* and Carrie (*Homeland*) from the CIA organization, never a question of shared mission or ethics. For both women, the ethics of the intelligence profession replaced any other

basis for morality in guiding their decisions as agents. Furthermore, viewers rarely

held the characters individually responsible for even their most reprehensible

actions, because they understood job performance as more important than the act

itself. Thus, they recognized the legitimacy of the organization's procedures and

policies in overriding standard moral codes.

Torturing and killing were frequently described as just part of the job. As

discussed above, *Zero Dark Thirty* viewers were split over political interpretations

of the film. Some saw torture as necessary and justified,[312] while others blamed the

film for glorifying a shameful practice.[313] None ever blamed Maya for her

participation; they understood it as a necessary part of her career development. In

fact, individual morality was not an important component. Alex tweeted, "I think

the way [torture is] portrayed as "just part of the job" is more honest (and disturbing)

than straight-up moralizing #ZeroDarkThirty." Viewers like Alex were fascinated

by what they saw as a lack of emphasis on the moral questions provoked by torture

and freely absolved Maya of any resulting moral dilemma. Sara argued that part of

the film's message was, "it is possible and in principle "alright" to torture people if

this is what your job demands. It won't make you less human or extraordinarily evil.

Things will go on normally just as before." For viewers who served or were

serving in the military, the issue of torture and the morality of the execution of the

war in the Middle East were very real parts of their own experiences making a living

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[312] For example, Sidney's Facebook post read, "Loved 'Zero Dark Thirty.' Torturing terrorists rocks!!!!!!"

[313] Tom posted on Facebook, "As a combat veteran I am sad to see this poor effort at propaganda. When our government sanctioned torture, we lost all moral authority of a great nation. Torture failed to produce actionable intelligence which prompted CIA officials to lie about the extent to which it was used and the fact that it was NOT effective. I give this movie NO stars. It is pure propaganda."

as soldiers. Even those who rejected torture in principle felt sympathy for the

individual's responsible for carrying out orders.

Both *Zero Dark Thirty* and *Homeland* still appeared to be working as tools

for military and government recruitment. Many viewers wrote that they wanted to

join the CIA, the foreign service or the military as a direct result of the inspiration of

these texts. For example, some typical tweets were:

> "The military just got a lot higher on my list of career possibilities #zerodarkthirty,"
>
> "I think I just found out what I want my career to be. #zerodarkthirty."
>
> "Does anyone know how I get a job at the CIA? #Homeland #ZeroDarkThirty #IhaveADream"

Interestingly, enlistment was framed as an individual choice leading to self-

realization and fulfillment, rather than a patriotic duty to serve the nation. Although

the military is a largely working class organization, individuals saw themselves as

subject to ideals of professionalism which dictated extreme commitment and

personal investment in the job.

To them, women like Maya and Carrie represented the professional

managerial class – the decision-makers on whose judgment and discretion their lives

often depended. Terry's comments on the season finale of *Homeland* are

particularly revealing. After Saul makes a deal to work with a known terrorist in

order to achieve an unseen greater motive, Terry posted, "Worst season finale ever.

Saul is a traitor. 39 lost their lives for nothing. Everything is about politics. A good

reminder to us soldiers..." it is important to note that the criticism was about the

decisions of individuals in high-level management, not the war or the nation itself.

In calling Saul a traitor, Terry specifically demonstrated allegiance to the United States, even while critiquing its arbitrary disposal of human life. Veterans and current military personnel were not likely to launch extensive critiques of the United States, its ideals or its organizations and institutions. Criticism of individual professionals like Saul, Carrie and Maya fulfilled that need. For the most part, that criticism was avowedly individualistic, rather than based on gender (more on this in the next chapter). They emphasized the collective effort of the military, minimizing the role of "desk jockeys" or "desk warriors" like Carrie and Maya, who made decisions that put their lives at risk. After watching *Zero Dark Thirty*, Sandy tweeted, "there sure seems to be a lot of desk jockeys who haven't been to combat giving opinions about counter intelligence #ZeroDarkThirty #OGA."[314] It was not the issue of gender itself, but the divide between combat and non-combat personnel, a division that he described as classed. Thus, Sandy's loyalty to the nation and its organizations remained intact.

Critiques like Terry's and Sandy's seemed to be the closest viewers got to a working-class critique of the moral imperative of work. They suggested that perhaps the instructions they received came from professionals whose interests were not pure, or who were simply not competent to make those decisions. They did not ask why one would devote the entirety of one's working life, and even sacrifice that life for a job. It seemed obvious to them that a fulfilling career was central to their sense of purpose in the world, and that their productive roles were what defined them in society.

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[314] I was not able to determine the meaning of #OGA, but I did not want to remove an important layer of meaning from the quote for readers.

In practice, the depiction of hard work as intrinsically rewarding to the individual serves the needs of powerful organizations, whether government or corporate. It is a way of making people feel as though the organization is helping them realize their own spiritual journey toward success, and that they are not exploited. This value system fosters an interpretation of the self and identity as aligned to the organization's mission. Some tension with the organization was vital to the formation of professional identity. However, that tension was never expected to rise to the level of an oppositional position against the organization, one which might allow for critique or demands. For the most part, online forums supported the disciplinary philosophies of capitalism, but revealed the ways in which those philosophies now include women of all races under universal terms and expectations.

Subversive Possibilities of the Screen

In effect, the practice of donating labor online to media producers did subvert workplace discipline. Ironically, viewers demonstrated that they were less invested in their actual paying jobs as sources of identity, and also less committed to them in terms of the allocation of their time. They did not oppose capitalist discipline consciously, but they subverted it by "wasting" their time with television and movies and by participating in the voluntary economy of social media. While the shows presented fairly standard values of hard work and professionalism, their engagement with fans encouraged them to replace leisure time with hard work. The movie and television texts rarely challenged established norms of workplace discipline, but the social media practices were a vehicle for avoiding work. Furthermore, the producers

and cast of *Scandal* appeared to be actively supporting the practice. Portia de Rossi's tweet, "I left work so I could watch #Scandal! If anyone's looking for me I'll be back on set in an hour!" mentioned earlier, was evidence of a coordinated engagement strategy. The phenomenon manifested itself differently for workers in professional versus hourly jobs, but both appeared to be using television as a way of insisting on making leisure time for themselves outside the paid and unpaid labor demands of their everyday lives.

Viewsers working in the professions frequently admitted that they were actively avoiding their work by watching television or movies. There were a number of tweets about all three texts that mentioned surreptitiously consuming entertainment rather than working. For example, Sheila tweeted, "in the studio watching last night's *Scandal* while I work. Lol." There were countless others who admitted to watching television or movies during time reserved for work. For middle-class workers with flexibility, it became a question of time management. One blogger, The Professional Diva, posted "A Working Woman's Guide to getting home in time for *Scandal*." It is a set of tips to improve efficiency at work for fans in the professions with the end goal of carving out leisure time to watch *Scandal*. The four main tips were: "Step 1 – Get to Work Early…Step 2 – Make Sure There are no Meetings Scheduled after 4pm…Step 3 – Bring Your Lunch and Eat it At Your Desk…Step 4 – Bob and Weave, and Avoid Eye Contact with Anyone as You Head out the Door." These tips run counter to a philosophy of complete investment in work. Instead, they are focused on getting the job done with as little time and effort as possible.

Hourly workers without that type of job flexibility were more directly confrontational. Shantal tweeted the following conversation with her boss:

> Me: I have to be off every Thursday starting on September 25th
> Boss: Don't tell me you tryna catch Scandal..
> Me: Bitch I might Be

The struggle for schedule control was a way for her to place limits on her obligation to her employer. It is unlikely that Shantal actually delivered the retort, "bitch I might be" to her boss. Yet, it was only through the television show and its fellow viewers that she found enough support to produce this tweet. For Shantal, as for her professional-managerial counterparts, online fan spaces became a site for resistance to the discipline of her employer.

It was a form of non-conscious resistance to capitalist discipline that nonetheless accumulated into subversion. Still, leisurely engagement with media is a limited form of resistance to capitalism. The value of the free labor performed by fans is converted, through advertising dollars, to corporate profits.[315] In a consumer culture that emphasizes individual taste and niche markets, viewers exercise sway over producers only as potential consumers. Like employees of a corporation, these viewers make substantial contributions to the success of the enterprise, but have limited power over the content. Social media gives them some opportunities to speak as a collective, but only in an environment hosted and managed by the producers, and media corporations (old and new).

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[315] Andrew Ross, "In Search of the Lost Paycheck," In *Digital Labor: The Internet as Playground and Factory,* ed. Trebor Scholz (New York: Routledge, 2013), 37.

This chapter opened with the suggestion that online discussions of professional women characters were skirmishes embedded in larger political and historical forces. "For God and Country" asked how viewers apply the workplace stories on screen to their own everyday working lives, and how they understand the moral stakes of work. Viewers were deeply invested in the professional lives of each of the main female characters and interpreted the ethics of professionalism they displayed according to their beliefs about the real world outside the screen. They appeared to agree on a set of values for the post-industrial workplace. There were discernable traces of the traditional ideologies of American hard work, as well as twentieth-century corporate management strategies. For example, viewers appreciated characters whose devotion to work expanded into all areas of their lives, and rarely questioned the characters' motivations or morals. When they objected to an aspect of the story on screen, it was usually a matter of the level of competence of the female professional. Viewers demonstrated that they had a clear stake in the professional ethics of the women on screen. Whether or not it was the intention of producers, professional women on screen were role models for many women's everyday working lives.

Viewers clearly thought work should fulfill the social and emotional needs of the individual. Thus they admired the characters like Olivia, Carrie and Maya, who derived deep personal satisfaction from meaningful work. In principle, viewers felt that the moral duty of the individual trumped the dictates of bureaucracy. They seemed to believe that everyone should find a job in which their individual talents

could contribute to communities, the nation and the world. As their discussions of the torture demonstrated, nearly any behavior could be justified by loyalty to the organization and its codes of professionalism.

Viewsers' approaches to the screen shifted as they deployed competing frameworks of employment, on the one hand, or consumerism, on the other. As employees, in the case of *Scandal's* "gladiators" their loyalty was extreme. However, many actively subverted their own employers' discipline for their favorite shows, and few of them seemed aware of the irony. Perhaps they reasoned that it was only their job that did not deserve complete identification, devotion and loyalty. When they shifted into a consumer based mode, as with the *Homeland* drone strike T-shirt, they were often openly hostile. Shonda Rhimes was enormously successful in mobilizing *Scandal's* fans. In contrast, *Homeland*'s producers provoked criticism and mockery. Ultimately, no one online seemed quite sure about the precise nature of the relationship between producers and audiences in light of their interaction in digital media.

Viewsers' relationships to both the texts and the characters varied by class position. Some of *Scandal's* most loyal gladiators felt that Olivia was too successful and powerful for them to truly identify with the character. They preferred to think of her, and, by extension, Rhimes, as a benevolent employer - one they could actually respect, unlike their own bosses. Similarly, for working-class soldiers, the CIA women on screen represented distant authority figures. For that reason, people who served in the military instinctively mistrusted both Carrie and Maya. Undoubtedly,

part of their reaction was also based on the cultural illegibility of women as authority figures.

The chapter that follows, "#Bitch Boss/#BossBitch" highlights the moments when women fail to conform to male versions of authority, and are labeled "bitches." When women occupied leadership roles on screen, viewers often saw their authority as illegitimate, particularly their authority over white men. Female professionals were often described as too emotional, too sexual, or not sexual enough to perform their job functions properly. Traditional moral judgments of women were rearticulated in the context of the contemporary professional world.

5. #BitchBoss/#BossBitch: Love/Hate Relationships with Unruly Women

> Chris: It appears that while #BitchBoss is clearly an indication of her frustration, #BossBitch is a term of endearment. Isn't language fun?[316]

The *Parks and Recreation* episode, "Gin It Up," opens in the midst of a heavily publicized campaign to recall Leslie Knope (Amy Poehler) from the City Council of Pawnee, Indiana. One of Leslie's employees at the Parks Department, Donna Meagle (Retta), accidentally sends a personal tweet from the Parks Department's Twitter account.[317] The scandalous tweet reads, "see you tonight…hope you like tongue baths, you big nasty fireman" followed by a picture of lips and an eggplant. Leslie's opponent, Councilman Jamm, uses the opportunity to question her competence as Deputy Director of the Parks Department. In his crusade to explain the "sick, depraved tweet," Jamm obtains access to Donna's entire Twitter log and reads them out loud at the trial. Leslie soon learns that Donna's tweets include complaints about her "annoying" hyperactive management style, under the hashtag, "#BitchBoss." For example, Donna posts, "annoying-ass Leslie has given me another annoying-ass task #stickers #BitchBoss." Donna explains that she needs that outlet because of the pressures Leslie puts on her at work. Incidentally, Donna Meagle also live-tweets *Scandal.*[318]

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[316] *Parks and Recreation,* "Gin It Up," written by Greg Daniels and Michael Schur, directed by Jorma Taccone (NBC, October 17, 2013).

[317] *Parks and Recreation,* "Galentine's Day," written by Greg Daniels and Michael Schur, directed by Beth McCarthy-Miller, (NBC, March 20, 2014).

[318] *Parks and Recreation,* "Galentine's Day."

As the episode unfolds, City Manager Chris Traeger (Rob Lowe) informs Leslie that Donna also uses the hashtag, "#BossBitch," to express her support for Leslie. For example, she posts: "message to the recall haters: you can't keep Leslie Knope down. She's too real for this ish #BossBitch," and "Leslie is stepping up at these hearings and taking a bullet for me #SisterFromAnotherMister #BossBitch."[319] Leslie maintains her firm commitment to Donna as a friend and promises not to let her get fired over this petty scandal. Chris concludes that, "it appears that while #BitchBoss is clearly an indication of frustration, #BossBitch is a term of endearment." The two hashtags, the derogatory "#BitchBoss" and complimentary "#BossBitch," were also indicative of the often paradoxical ways that viewers discussed representations of women in leadership roles.

Viewers alternately reclaimed the word bitch and used it in its traditional negative sense, just as they alternately loved and hated the powerful women on screen. Female characters who were too ambitious, too driven, too career-focused or too feminist, were labeled bitches, especially when they asserted their authority over men. However, like the character Donna, many viewers celebrated women's empowerment, and expressed their admiration for these characters by reclaiming the term, "bitch." This chapter introduces four new texts: the television shows *Parks and Recreation* and *VEEP*; and the movies *The Proposal* and *The Heat. Scandal, Homeland,* and *Zero Dark Thirty* also reappear where they provoked comments on similar topics.

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[319] One fan wrote, "Leslie Knope is a bitch boss, but she's a boss bitch. @unfoRETTAble always has a way with words. #parksandrec."

Viewsers appreciated seeing workplaces that looked like their own in comedies. Book editors and publishers were especially interested in *The Proposal*, and a few viewsers admired Sandra Bullock's Margaret specifically because her position was one of their career goals. Viewsers felt proud if they worked in the industry being depicted and often used the opportunity to make connections and comparisons between the characters' experiences and their own. Similarly, people living in Washington D.C., and especially those who worked on Capital Hill, enjoyed comparing VEEP to their own observations. Although the show offers all viewsers a portrayal of the ridiculousness of politics, it offered viewsers working in politics in Washington a critique of their own workplaces. They often made direct comparisons between the workplaces shown on screen and their own. Many discussed these texts on social media with their pre-existing social groups, including coworkers and bosses. It was clear that the screen had a significant presence in viewsers' actual workplace relationships.

In this chapter, the focus shifts from the success or failure of the individual to the discipline of the organization. Like the previous chapter, "For God and Country," this chapter begins with an overview of the response to each text in each of the three platforms: IMDb, Twitter, and Facebook. Once again, the second half of the chapter is a thematically organized discussion of viewsers' posts. Women characters were called "bitchy," "emotional," or "crazy," whenever they failed to meet social expectations either as professionals or as women. Some viewsers felt caught in the double-bind of these conflicting expectations. They used the same labels to celebrate their moments of rebellion against gendered professional codes.

Viewsers compared and contrasted the on-screen workplaces to their own

workplaces and they often included speculation on the television/film sets as

workplaces.

Parks and Recreation (2009-2015)

      Parks and Recreation had a serious cult following, but lacked a sufficient

number of viewers to receive consistent scheduling on NBC. People were suspicious

of yet another spin-off from *The Office*,[320] and, as a result, the show had a difficult

and uneven start. The first season opened to mixed reviews,[321] but critics eventually

learned to adore it as much as fans. They called it quirky and charming, and

emphasized the appeal of a loveable cast of characters.[322] Its production schedule

was, by far, the most irregular of any of the series studied in *Screening Diversity*. It

was off the air for nearly nine months from May 2010 to January 2011. When it was

on television, often, the network aired two episodes in a night on a condensed

schedule. *Parks and Recreation*'s last season, Season 7, ran only in January and

February with back-to-back episodes on Thursday nights. The network, NBC,

seemed unable to commit to the program, and fans, across platforms, were frustrated.

      Many viewers noted that *Parks and Recreation* was a derivative of *The*

Office and discussed it in relationship both to the UK version, starring Ricky

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[320] *The Office*, created by Ricky Gervais and Stephen Merchant (BBC, 2001-2003).

[321] Nancy Franklin, "Cockeyed Optimist Amy Poehler Gets Her Own Sitcom" *The New Yorker,* May 4, 2009; Tom Shales, "TV Preview: *Parks and Rec*: Poehler Express to Nowhere," *Washington Post,* April 9, 2009.

[322] Erik Adams, "*Parks and Recreation,*" *TV Club*, September 25, 2013; Nancy DeWolf Smith, "Weird and Wonderful," *The Wall Street Journal*, January 28, 2011; Daniel Goldberg, "*Parks and Recreation*: Season Five," *Slant Magazine,* October 31, 2012; Gail Pennington, "TV Review: *Parks and Recreation* Return is Perfection," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, September 20, 2012; James Poniewozik, "Now the Deluge: *Office*, *Parks & Rec* and *Fringe* Return," *Time,* September 17, 2009.

Gervais, and to the US version, starring Steve Carell.[323] On IMDb, many of the

comparisons between *The Office* and *Parks and Recreation* were unfavorable,

particularly in its earlier seasons. As usual, reviews on IMDb paid much more

attention to the behind-the-scenes creative team, and noted the overlap between

Parks and Recreation and the US version of *The Office*. Quite a few people

commented that *Parks and Recreation* was a poor imitation of the dry humor of the

UK original. A substantial portion of viewsers wrote that like the US version of *The

Office*, *Parks and Recreation* was indicative of a poor sense of humor on the part of

Americans – brash and lacking subtlety. As a comedian, Amy Poehler was

frequently contrasted unfavorably to Steve Carell.

Viewers on Twitter were generally more complimentary and more likely to

be highly involved in the fictional world of the Pawnee Parks Department. As with

other shows, a large proportion of the tweets were simply retweeting quotes from the

show with only small comments or modifications. They emphasized their love of the

characters' unique qualities. For the most part, people identified strongly with the

workplace culture and were quick to draw comparisons with their own workplace, or

to wish that their workplace was more like the show. People found Leslie

inspirational and actually took her career advice seriously. In contrast, people were

also entertained by April's lack of motivation and Ron's quasi-political refusal to

work hard for the government. Twitter viewers often complained about NBC's

lackluster efforts to promote the show. They even tagged the network in their

comments, hoping that their demands would result in better treatment for their

favorite show.

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[323] *The Office*, created by Greg Daniels (NBC, 2005-2013).

The Facebook *Parks and Recreation* page was for true fans of the series and showed evidence of some intense fan behavior. For example, these viewers embraced the farcical holidays created in the fictional world of the show in their own worlds. People posted pictures and details of their own "treat yo self" days, similar to the ones celebrated by Tom (Aziz Ansari) and Donna on the show. Viewers also celebrated Galentine's day, a holiday Leslie created in order to celebrate female friendship on February thirteenth. There were a staggering number of comments on Ron Swanson; many of the fans enjoyed the mockery of libertarian political philosophies, but some actual libertarians also admired him. The romantic relationships were a big topic of conversation, particularly the Ben-Leslie relationship and the April-Andy relationship. There were heated debates over which was the better TV couple. The biggest complaint on the page was about the scheduling of the show, particularly the decision to run the final season over a shortened winter time period. Overall, *Parks and Recreation* fans seemed particularly devoted and immersed in the fictional world of their show.

VEEP (2012-)

Based on the British series, *The Thick of It*,[324] *VEEP* even boasted the same creator/director, Armando Iannucci. Mirroring *Scandal's* social media strategy, the actors and production crew regularly posted pictures and comments to both Twitter and Facebook. Critics praised *VEEP* for its uniquely caustic satire with a disturbing

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[324] *The Thick of It*, created by Armando Iannucci (BBC, 2005-2012).

hint of truth.[325] Amid a plethora of dramas about U.S. national politics, *VEEP*

offered a rare comedic view of Washington's seats of power.

The most prominent topic of conversation on IMDb was once again

comparisons to its British predecessor. There was a lot of ego work going on

amongst reviewers in assessing the merits of *VEEP*. Some people thought that it

was highbrow sophisticated humor with excellent writing – an acquired taste that

average U.S. viewers could not appreciate. Others found it too American – another

symptom of American idiocy and simple mindedness, particularly because of the

over-reliance on cussing, which some identified as laziness in script writing. Some

of them speculated that the positive reviews on IMDb were part of the paid

promotional strategy of the show. Many judged it more harshly because of their

heightened expectations of premium cable station HBO. Whether they loved it or

hated it, almost all reviewers agreed that the pace was frenetic. However, they

disagreed on whether it enhanced the show. Quite a few people commented that

Julia Louis-Dreyfus looked much younger than her age, but the plurality were more

complimentary about the quality of her acting and comedic timing.

Krista tweeted, "I described *VEEP* to a friend as what *Parks and Recreation*

would be if it was on HBO and Leslie Knope was a bitch." Viewers retweeted

funny quotes and insults from the show as their primary mode of engagement. Many

viewers compared Selena, the Vice President of the United States, to their own

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[325] Melissa Maerz, "*VEEP*," *Entertainment Weekly,* April 5, 2013; Tim Molloy, "*Veep* Review: High Stakes Bring Out Selina Meyer's Worst," *The Wrap*, April 4, 2014; Joanne Ostrow, "Julia Louis Dreyfus Is Pitch-Perfect in Hilarious *Veep*," *Denver Post*, April 20, 2012; Ben Travers, "Review: *VEEP* Season 4 Proves Holding Power Can Be as Hysterical as Craving It," *Indiwire*, April 8, 2015; David Wiegand, "*Veep* Review: Hilarity Just a Heartbeat Away," *San Francisco Chronicle*, April 20, 2012. Matt Zoller Seitz, "*Veep* Season 4 Review: The President's Flying Monkeys," *New York Magazine (Vulture),* April 9, 2015.

bosses. Surprisingly, the comparisons were often favorable: Selena was also their

role model, in terms of clothing style and interaction with useless/absent bosses; one

person joked that she was going to start referring to her own boss as POTUS. A

number of viewers posted variations of the following tweet, "DC. Where your boss

thinks he's on House of Cards,[326] but everyone else knows he's actually on VEEP."

While their bosses saw work in politics as a dark drama, for many staff members it

was an absurd comedy. Thus, they welcomed the chance to see their working lives

reflected as comedy rather than drama.

VEEP's Facebook page was primarily a platform for repeating particularly

insulting lines from the show. The administrators of the sight actively encouraged

the practice by asking people to post their favorite insults from particular characters.

The page had one repeated heckler, who even resorted to name-calling other

viewers. He frequently compared VEEP to the reality show Keeping up with the

Kardashians,[327] which most fans found very insulting. Some viewers accused him

of being a troll, meaning that he created a dummy account for the sole purpose of

antagonizing the group. A few others commented on the Facebook page that they

disliked the show but not the actress. Viewsers still identified her with her role in

Seinfeld and even called her "Elaine."[328] Louis-Dreyfus was unique in her

overwhelmingly positive assessment online. It was enough of an anomaly to arouse

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[326] *House of Cards* is a Netflix original series starring Kevin Spacey as Frank Underwood, Speaker of the House in Season 1, Vice President in Season 2, and President in Season 3. In this dark drama, Frank and his wife Claire (Robin Wright) ensure Frank's political ascension through devious means including several murders.

[327] A reality television show based on the family of the late Robert Kardashian, it stars his daughters, Khloe, Kim, and Kourtney, his widow Kris, and her ex-spouse, Caitlyn Jenner.

[328] *Seinfeld*, created by Larry David and Jerry Seinfeld (NBC, 1989-1998). Julia-Louis Dreyfus played Jerry Seinfeld's friend, Elaine Benes, in a situation comedy "about nothing"

suspicion that perhaps one of the administrators of the site was actively taking down negative comments about her.

The Proposal (2009)

It was also rare to find a negative comment about Sandra Bullock, even when she played unlikeable characters, as in *The Proposal*. Even if viewers disliked the movie, they generally wrote that they were disappointed that the actress would lower herself to what they considered a low-brow comedy. Again, the lack of negative comments about her personally was suspicious. By 2015, *The Proposal* earned a respectable $317, 375,031 worldwide.[329]

The IMDB reviews of *The Proposal* focused intensely on the film as a romantic comedy or "chick flick." A sizeable portion of the viewers commented that it had a predictable plot and was full of standard genre clichés. Others retorted that these were simply the characteristics of romantic comedy and that the film met their expectations for entertaining light fare. There was an interesting debate about whether Bullock, at forty-five, was too old to play opposite thirty-three-year-old Ryan Reynolds. Usually, the viewers who had a problem with the age difference were also suspicious of the premise of a male assistant to a female executive. Often, the film was compared to *The Devil Wears Prada* (see Chapter 2), and on a few occasions Bullock and Reynolds were compared to Katherine Hepburn and Spencer Tracy (see Chapter 2).

On Twitter, viewers emphasized Margaret's transformation into a vulnerable relatable character. They repeatedly highlighted their favorite scenes

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[329] Box office mojo: http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=proposal.htm

from the movie. One was, unsurprisingly, the final union of the romantic couple. The other was a scene in which Margaret happens upon Gammy engaging in a spiritual dance practice in the woods. Margaret begins to dance to "Get Low" by Lil Jon & the East Side Boyz, singing out lyrics such as "all them bitches crawl" (as noted by one user) and "sweat pours down my balls" as Andrew notes. In contrast, more than a few IMDb viewers mentioned hating that scene. Twitter viewers found it entertaining and compared it to the dance scene with Melissa McCarthy in *The Heat*. Twitter viewers commented extensively on Sandra Bullock's star persona; many claimed her as a role model or wished to be a friend of hers. A few commented that Margaret Tate was their role model, especially in terms of clothing and hair, but few saw her as a potential friend.

The Proposal is distinct among the movies included in the primary research of this dissertation because it is the oldest film (released in 2009). As a result, the Facebook page had three-million likes but no new content. A few of the fans posted complimentary comments about the film and asked for a sequel. Many of them mentioned seeing the film recently on DVD, or on television. The fans seemed to want the opportunity to interact, but the platform was not actively maintained.

The Heat (2013)

According to critics, *The Heat* was a decent chick flick, extremely funny but formulaic.[330] It boasted an impressive $159,582,188 domestic gross but relatively

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[330] Joel Arnold, "*The Heat*: Broads in Blue, Kicking Buddy-Cop Behind." *NPR*, June 27, 2013; Ty Burr, "McCarthy, Bullock Put Life into Buddy Cop Boys Club," *Boston Globe*, June 26, 2013; Ann Hornaday, "*The Heat* Movie Review," *The Washington Post,* June 27, 2013; Shiela O'Malley, "*The Heat,*" *Rogerebert.com,* June 28, 2013; A. O. Scott, "Cop Buddies Packing Extra X Chromosomes: *The Heat* is a Buddy Movie without Any Guys," *The New York Times,* June 27, 2013; Tim Robey,

lackluster international earnings of $70,348, 583.[331] However, *The Heat* trounced

the summer blockbuster, *Lone Ranger.* For that reason, it was heralded as proof that

films starring women can be enormously successful with a general audience.[332]

On IMDb, viewers tended to agree that *The Heat* was a formulaic buddy-

cop movie. They disagreed on whether or not it was funny, but their assessments

were tied to both their attitudes about gender and their perception of the

attractiveness of each of the main actresses. The Ashburn character was described

as, "a neurotic tight-ass," reprising Sandra Bullock's roles in *The Proposal* and *Miss

Congeniality*. Most viewers had a generally positive evaluation of her as an actress

and star personality. However, many of her fans were disappointed to see her in a

formulaic comedy after her academy award nomination for the epic outer-space

adventure, *Gravity*.[333] Again, it is possible that this is the result of careful

management of Bullock's social media presence. Viewers who evaluated the film

negatively frequently included derogatory comments about co-star Melissa

McCarthy's weight, attractiveness, and manners. Positive reviews took the negative

reviews to task for having inappropriate expectations for a formulaic summer

comedy. Sarah wrote, "this is a movie for someone with a sense of humor

apparently not many people who wrote reviews have one."

Viewers used Twitter primarily to quote lines from the movie. Favorites

included those that highlighted Mullins's (Melissa McCarthy's) insubordination to

her boss. For example, when asked when she would be back at the station, Mullins

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"*The Heat, Review,*" *The Telegraph,* August 1, 2013.

[331] Box Office Mojo, http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=bullockmccarthy.htm

[332] Marlo Thomas, "Women in Film: *The Heat* is On," *Huffington Post*, July 16, 2013.

[333] *Gravity*, directed by Alfonso Cuarón, written by Alfonso Cuarón and Jonás Cuarón (Warner Brothers, 2013).

replied, "tell the captain I'll be there sharply at go fuck yourself o'clock, ok, if there's no traffic." Many Twitter viewers revealed replaying a scene where Mullins was looking for her boss's balls, although usually just among fellow employees. Twitter viewers noted the film's considerable financial success, despite the stigma associated with its being "a chick flick." Only a few people noted that the movie glorified instances of police violence under the guise of a woman's film. Most women seemed content to celebrate the box office smash.

The Heat's Facebook page was unusual in that it was less exclusive to fans of the movie and viewers disagreed on its merits. There were far more positive tweets about Melissa McCarthy; viewers said she was beautiful, funny, and a role model. That is partly because a number of fans of *Mike and Molly,* Melissa McCarthy's primetime sitcom, joined the Facebook group. They, and several others, complained about the frequent cussing, and many found themselves unable to finish the movie. Fans of the movie did not see the legitimacy in the complaint: Sophie wrote, "there's a lot of people who thought this was distasteful because of the excessive profanity, but that's just because they're cunts." Kristen replied, "obviously you are if you would print that." It was unusually contentious for a Facebook page. Many fans seemed to merely be adopting McCarthy's style of humor from the movie.

#BitchBoss

Viewers often voiced disapproval of women characters with any level of authority or power. As in Rosabeth Moss Kanter's study of women in corporate America, "women were often measured by two yardsticks: how *as women* they carried out the sales or management roles; and how *as managers* they lived up to the

images of womanhood."[334] Our culture is populated with male authority figures, and a woman in a position of authority is not just an anomaly, but a bitch. Because our concept of authority is gendered male women who try to exercise it are often seen either as horrific monsters or grotesque clowns. Furthermore, being a successful woman is not merely about accomplishments; it is also about self-regulation, submission, and proper expressions of sexuality. Online viewers demonstrated a continued concern with regulating women's behavior at work and in the bedroom. Any signs of mental illness or distress were conflated with bitchiness.

All these female characters were what Nirmal Puwar terms "space invaders"[335] - women and people of color who have gained entry into the upper echelons of organizations but whose presence is still experienced as disruptive.[336] Puwar's study of British Parliament demonstrates that space invaders disrupt deeply held beliefs that authority is disembodied and rational, when, in fact, it is associated with white men.[337] Invaders who draw too much attention to themselves, or fail to limit their diversity to terms that are expected and manageable for the organization face formal and informal sanctions.[338] Legal scholars, Lani Guiner, Michelle Fine, and Jane Balin also find gendered standards of performance in law school. Women who meet the allegedly neutral standards of professionalism are mocked for lacking

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[334] Rosabeth Moss Kanter, *Men and Women of the Corporation* (New York: Basic Books, 1977), 214.
[335] Nirmal Puwar, *Space Invaders: Race, Gender and Bodies Out of Place* (New York: Berg, 2004),
[336] Puwar, *Space Invaders*, 10.
[337] Puwar, *Space Invaders*, 144.
[338] Ward, *Respectably Queer*, 2.

femininity.[339] Professional women on screen provoked similar reactions from viewsers. The label, "bitch," or some variation of it, was the sanction they imposed.

Sandra Bullock's Margaret Tate was a high-level book editor with a variety of male employees, including her assistant, Andrew. Tate was described online as an "ogre," "uber-bitch" and "bossy she-devil." The vehemence with which some people seemed to disapprove of Tate was striking. Once the name-calling was filtered out, the basic problems people identified with her character were that she was "too pushy, bossy and demanding." Logically, "bossy" should not be an insult – that is her organizational role and the structural relationship of her job to Andrew's. However, her authority was at odds with gendered expectations. One IMDb reviewer complained that the premise of the film was unrealistic, because, "the assistant would probably be gay or a young woman." He rated the film low for its lack of realism, but it seemed as though he simply resented the portrayal of a female boss with a male assistant.

Viewsers immediately recognized the cues to dislike Tate in the first few scenes of the movie. Their comments suggest that they made their decisions about the characters based on the established trope of the romantic comedy genre but not always without skepticism. One viewer described the movie as "tropetastic." The characters were automatically read according to existing tropes by both producers and fans alike. As one fan pointed out,

> We are supposed to take from the fact that this woman is driven and
> competent that she is a b**ch, a monstrous boss. At the start of the movie

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[339] Lani Guinier, Michelle Fine & Jane Balin, with Ann Bartow & Deborah Lee Stachel. *Becoming Gentlemen: Women, Law School, and Institutional Change.* Boston: Beacon Press, 1997, 59. They mention that lesbian baiting was a common method of mockery.

we are told by everyone how awful she is, but that awfulness seems primarily to consist of her being confident and doing her job well. This left a bad taste in my mouth --- it seemed like an example of precisely what feminists say about the impossible situation of a woman in business.

There is very little textual evidence that Margaret is, in fact, a bitch. The audience gets enough cues to mobilize the trope and understand the other characters' interpretation of her.

To complete the trope, Margaret is portrayed as emotionally and sexually inaccessible. Her parents are dead, adding a psychoanalytic element to the character. Certainly, her frigidity recalls notions present in the popular culture of the 1960s and 1970s.[340] One of the Twitter viewers' favorite moments involved the couple studying to pass the immigration test, while they are on the plane to visit Andrew's family. A typical post read: "'What am I allergic to? Pine nuts and the full spectrum of human emotion.' Love Ryan Reynolds and Sandra Bullock, cutest couple." Again, the movie pushed the trope and, for the most part, audiences accepted it. There's no reason for success to be at odds with emotional literacy and care for family - it only makes sense in our own cultural logic. Andrew's formulaic quest to soften Margaret's hard shell was a significant part of the appeal for most viewers.

While Margaret is described as a bitch in the movie, Andrew is described as diligent. One IMDb viewer described the premise of the movie like this: "Margaret Tate is an executive editor-in-chief of a book publishing company. Her workers dislike her for her pushy, bossy and demanding [behavior]. Her assistant Andrew Paxton works very hard to achieve the orders." This description reveals an acceptance of the premise that her ambition is bad, while his is natural. So while

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[340] Lehman, *Those Girls*, 26-27.

contemporary popular culture celebrates individual achievement as proof of the myth of meritocracy (as discussed in Chapter 4), there are implied limits for women.

Roguish behavior, at odds with organizational discipline, was often problematic for women. Quite a few people pointed out that in *Zero Dark Thirty,* Maya's behavior on film stretched far outside the acceptable hierarchical model of the military. Colin tweeted, "Military agent: "[Screams in the face of her boss]" Boss: "You're fired." #oscars #zerodarkthirty." There were many more tweets that suggested Maya's behavior would get her fired. Gretta wrote, "I may have sounded like Maya from @ZeroDarkThirty at work yesterday. Oops." Likewise, the most frequent comments about both Carrie from *Homeland*, and Shannon Mullins from *The Heat* were they would be fired in real life. Both women were described as crazy, uncontrollable, and insubordinate. Their roguish behavior was unacceptable for women, and many viewers commented on the failure of organizational discipline in the CIA and police force.

Comments about Mullins, Melissa McCarthy's character in *The Heat*, emphasized the ways in which she emasculates her boss and failed to meet standards of feminine appearance and behavior. Jim described Mullins' character in the following way in his IMDb review:

> "Non-stop F-bombs from an obese slovenly woman police officer. Why does her boss tolerate an interminable scene where she comments on how small smaller and smallest his testicles are? Affirmative Action?"

Jim insinuated that a man would never get away with the same behavior, but his gendered language revealed a double standard. Her aggressive insubordination and swearing is not that different from countless portrayals of male police officers on screen. It is clear that her failure to meet feminine standards of beauty was a major

factor in Jim's assessment. In addition, he focused particularly on the emasculation

of her boss rather than another instance of insubordination within the movie. It is

worth noting that a lot of people loved that scene and fantasized about displaying

that type of insubordination at their own jobs. Most of them acknowledged it would

get them fired in real life, but appreciated the opportunity to see the scene play out

on screen.

Carrie from *Homeland* was less likely to inspire support from the show's

fans. The term "bitch" was prominent in discussions of Carrie, mixed with

accusations of over-emotionality and immaturity. On IMDb, Craig launched a tirade

that encapsulated many of the most negative opinions on the character. He titled his

review, "blond female, slobbering, pill popping, psycho bitch":

> The show has an interesting idea but they cast Claire Danes as a CIA
> operative who works in the Middle East. A blond female white chic in the
> Middle East.....ah yeah...she's on drugs....and yells and screams expletive
> deletives constantly....and she has a speech impediment she can't say an S
> without slobbering on the floor like Sylvester the Cat. Why didn't you caste
> her as miss black America??? it would work just as well.
> But she is the new assertive female...you know the kind that calls people
> anything she wants without getting a foot up her butt....to straighten her out.
> Aside from the fact that no one who ever lived in the middle east. No one
> with a brains would think of her as any more than a disgusting politically
> correct joke. .....I tried to overlook the girl who is laughable and some of the
> other dumb stuff....i watch it.
> She reminds me of Bill Clinton's wife screaming What does it matter.

His interpretation of Carrie rendered her a caricature of "the new assertive female"

or feminist. "On drugs" was a charge of personal weakness linked to femininity,

when, in fact, the series portrays it as compliance with prescribed psychiatric

medication. The rage expressed in this post and the direct comparison with Hilary

Clinton underlined Craig's intense anxiety about women occupying positions of

importance within national security without the close supervision of a male authority

figure. As in Jim's description of Mullins, Craig insinuated that the only reason her insubordination is tolerated is because she is female. However, his comments made clear that the standards of behavior he constructed for CIA agents were highly gendered.

Homeland attempts to portray Carrie as a savant, struggling with a mental illness that was also the source of her genius. Carrie's manic phases are represented as creative responses to insane circumstances, following the existential model of insanity suggested by the popular 1960s psychologist R.D. Laing.[341] When viewers stuck close to the text of the show, they tended to interpret Carrie that way. For example, Kendall wrote, "Carrie. According to Saul, one of the smartest but the stupidest person. A brilliant agent but also emotionally vulnerable," referring back to a quote from the show, "You are the smartest and dumbest fucking person I've ever met."[342] The show attempted to place Carrie within a male model of mental illness linked to rogue genius. For most fans, a mentally ill woman could only be interpreted as an anti-hero or a strange curiosity.

In fact, most comments revealed a popular attitude that mental illness resulted in incompetence and should be an automatic disqualification for any position in the CIA. Dale's IMDb review focused on realism: "would the CIA hire a psycho and not know it? Definitely not. Their background checks are quite thorough." Viewers were more likely to interpret Carrie's mental illness as proof of incompetence rather than a compelling part of her character. "I'm confused as to

[341] R.D. Laing, *The Divided Self: An Existential Study in Sanity and Madness* (New York: Routledge, 1999).
[342] *Homeland,* "The Choice," Showtime, December 16, 2012, written by Alex Gansa and Meredith Steihm, directed by Michael Cuesta.

how Carrie even still has a job at the CIA #homeland #batshitcray." As one IMDb

review put it, "There is not even a single instance where Carrie comes off as brilliant

agent, deserving of the badge. They try at some point to pull the 'rainman' card on

her but it comes out wrong, cheap and it gets even more confusing afterward,

perpetually raising the question 'why is she still around to blow interrogations and

generally irritate everyone?'"

Viewers rejected the legitimacy of her illness either as a source of genius or

as a treatable psychiatric condition. When applied to a woman, gender stereotypes

and infantilization replaced any other potential interpretations of her bipolar

condition. As Phyllis Chesler observed in *Women and Madness*, mentally ill women

seeking help are often judged "annoying inconvenient, stubborn, childish and

tyrannical."[343] Carrie was frequently described as overly emotional – throwing

temper tantrums, and screaming. One comment read, "major CIA operations are

based on the whims and fancies of an out of control, emotionally unstable over

grown child. What a joke!" Far from a disturbed but brilliant agent, Carrie was more

likely to be viewed as the dreaded overly emotional woman with her finger on the

button.

In contrast, *Homeland's* viewers were often highly sympathetic to the male

characters displaying symptoms of psychiatric illness. Peter Quinn was described as

understandably distraught because of the nature of his job as an assassin. Brodie

was described as tortured and disturbed from his time as a P.O.W. In his case, IMDb

reviewers wrote that the display of these elements of his character were a testament

to the actor's abilities. Claire Danes, on the other hand, was described as an ugly

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[343] Phyllis Chesler, *Women and Madness* (New York: Four Walls Eight Windows, 1997), 78.

crier, and viewsers tended to undervalue her skills as an actress. They hated the character (actually a testament to her acting) and confused that with bad acting. More importantly, viewsers clearly did not think Claire Danes was pretty enough for television, and they were simply not interested in unattractive female characters.

Whether in-charge, insubordinate, or insane, women professionals were judged harshly online. Viewsers pointed out their inappropriate behavior in great detail, and hurled insulting comments at them with enthusiasm. There was resentment over women's progress in gaining access to positions of power, and the hours of screen time devoted to them. Women cast in non-traditional roles readily provoked backlash when they failed to meet feminine standards of beauty. Female fans recognized that they had coworkers who probably called them "bitches" behind their backs, too.

#BossBitch

At the end of the episode "Gin It Up," Leslie offers Donna an apology gift: a box full of nail polish and lipstick, along with a schedule so that they can wear matching colors everyday. Donna takes a picture for Twitter and Leslie asks hopefully whether the hasthtag will be "#bitchboss" or "#bossbitch." Donna tells her it's going under "#psychoboss." Leslie admits, "I don't hate that." Women accepted and reframed the "bitch" label in the tradition of third-wave feminism and *Bitch* magazine.[344]

Viewsers were often proud of these bitchy, crazy women. Female viewsers, especially, wanted to claim them as symbols of women's empowerment. The term

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[344] Brenda Helmbrecht and Meredith A. Love, "The BUST in' and Bitch in' Ethe of Third-Wave Zines." *College Composition and Communication 61*, no. 1 (2009): 150-169.

was used in celebration, as in: "i fuckin love #ZeroDarkThirty. @jessicachastain is a damn BOSS the entire movie. bad ass bitch." They used phrases like, "boss ass bitch" and "my favorite HBIC [Head Bitch In Charge]."[345] The word "bitch" came to refer to all women in power and was not necessarily derogatory. Bitchy female characters were also role models. Beauty and style were indispensable components of viewers' attraction to the characters. Bitchiness seemed to capture the right mixture of relatability and distant admiration that some viewers craved.

There appeared to be a strong relationship between bitchiness, work ethic and success for women. The comments about Maya, from *Zero Dark Thirty*, sometimes painted bitchiness as necessary for success. Caden wrote, "Just watched #ZeroDarkThirty and Maya was a straight boss. Angry Females do the best investigating #Provenpoint." In Caden's analysis, bitchiness was an asset, a trait women could mobilize to meet professional expectations. Because the film portrays her as a national hero, viewers almost always accepted her under the male model of professionalism. Candace described her in the following way on IMDb: "we get to see the dogged, monomaniacal Maya, played by Jessica Chastain, use her anger and frustration with the slow acting military to get her way." Bitchiness worked well with the trope of the savant, misunderstood by the organization.

VEEP's Selina Meyer is a beloved caricature of a bitchy boss. Fans called her a bitch as a term of endearment. For example, one fan tweeted, "#Veep Season 2 I am ready for you! Bring it Selina, you crazy, irreverent bitch." The use of the term bitch was a way of creating a personal relationship with an inaccessibly powerful

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[345] The full quote, "Diane is my favorite HBIC," references the top female attorney on *The Good Wife* (discussed in Chapter 6).

woman. Her character is at a level in American politics that women have yet to achieve in reality. Kayla tweeted, "@VeepHBO Selina is a bitch and BITCHES GET THINGS DONE #SelinaForPresident." In this framework, bitchiness was an asset not a liability. Jackie tweeted, "help I'm watching veep and at first I was underwhelmed but now it's injecting bitch life into me." In other words, embracing bitchiness also gave women strength and resolve. Selina was just as likely to be described as a bitch as Margaret from *The Proposal*, or Carrie from *Homeland*. Applied to Margaret, Carrie and Mullins, the label expressed resentment; in Selina's case it expressed admiration and awe. In fairness, there were a few people who mentioned that they admired Margaret's bitchiness too.

Working for any of them was seen as a test of mettle in order to achieve similar status. For example, one young aspiring book editor wrote, "I wish that I worked for a boss like Sandra Bullock in #TheProposal That would be a dream job. Keep me on my feet & scared." It seems illogical to want to be scared of one's boss, but in this case, the viewser appeared to glamorize the workplace abuse that she saw as inevitably tied to high-status work. Selina habitually treats her employees horribly. There was a distinct element of sadism in viewsers' attraction to this show. One of her more often retweeted diatribes to her employees was:

> "I'm the Vice President of the United States, you stupid little fuckers!"
> "That door should be half its height so that people can only approach me in my office on their goddamn, motherfucking knees!"[346]

On IMDb, viewsers argued over whether the dialogue was a sophisticated satirical commentary on the arbitrariness of power, or whether the show attracted fans merely

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[346] Both of these quotes come from the same scene in the show. Because of the 144 character limit on Twitter, viewsers were only able to tweet one sentence or the other.

through its extensive use of profanity. There was also a surprising level of genuine

admiration of her bitchy character. Twitter fans reveled in the practice of repeating

this and many other insults she hurls at her staff. The figure of an abusive, bitchy

boss was actually attractive for many fans.

They also loved the hostile attitude her staff members display towards the

public, particularly Selina's assistant, Sue. One viewer's response to a post about

Sue on Facebook was, "favourite character. I want to feed people to her, and watch."

This viewser and others like him enjoyed watching fictional characters express their

frustrations and confront their coworkers. It seemed that many viewsers wished they

could be that type of bitch in their own workplaces. Fans identified "VEEP

moments" in their everyday life, moments when their workplaces felt absurd. One

person actually tagged their coworkers with the following Facebook post: "Randy,

Christine, Max, it's another season of what it's like working in the office. LOL.

'What the f*ck Amy?!? I'm putting out two fires in there and you set fire to the

f*cking fire truck.'" In other words, this scenario reminded them of their own

workplace. These viewsers identified with feeling undermined, and having to make

up for coworkers' poor performances. Gina tweeted, "@VeepHBO is inspiring me

to be a better boss: "a suck up doesn't fix a fuck up!"#dealwithit." To them, being a

boss bitch meant having both the courage and power to control their coworkers.

At the very least, mocking Jonah (Timothy Simons) made everyone feel

better. One fan site, "VEEPedia" included a wiki where fans could vote for their

favorite Jonah moments.[347] The top three as of this writing were:

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[347] http://veep.wikia.com/wiki/Top_10_list:Top_Ten_Jonah_Insults

1) Ed: Jonah, you're not even a man, you're like an early draft of a man where they just sketched out a giant, mangled skeleton but they didn't have time to add details like pigment or self-respect. You're Frankenstein's monster if his monster was made entirely of dead d*cks.

2) Selina (to Jonah): What are you laughing at, Jolly Green Jizz Face?

3) Jonah: Look who it is. It's your favorite Jonah.
   Mike: You're not even your mom's favorite Jonah, Jonah.

The writers reserved for Jonah the especially crude and mean-spirited jokes. Jokes about his mother, his gangly appearance, and sexuality predominated. Viewsers were especially fascinated in these screen relationships that looked like childish bullying. Devin summed it up by tweeting, "*VEEP* is an expression of my terrible professional soul."

In contrast, the majority of viewers looked to *Parks and Recreation* as a model, or fantasy workplace. Leslie of *Parks and Recreation*, the #BitchBoss/ #BossBitch, who inspired the title of this chapter, was ironically rarely referred to as a bitch online in either sense of the term. Viewsers saw her authority as more legitimate because it emanated from her commitment to the ideals of public service and her desire to serve her beloved hometown. Her leadership style is motivation through enthusiasm. She was described as "perky" "likeable" "optimistic," a "chipper, high-minded, go-getter" with a "manic level of enthusiasm." A number of people commented that they would like to have her as a boss. Viewsers saw her as genuine in her love of the job, and her American work ethic as a noble form of inspiration for her employees. Leslie offered them a positive model for female leadership, compatible both with American culture's love of work and the gendered ideology of selflessness in women.

Viewers saw the workplace of *Parks and Recreation* as idyllic. One tweet read, "Kay wtf parks and rec makes me wanna cry! Like I wanna work with people like this #leslieknope #ParksandRec." The people who work in the Pawnee Parks Department are genuinely friends and care about each other's lives beyond the scope of their work. Another viewser tweeted, "Career Goals: Have a work friendship like Tom and Donna. #ParksandRec #azizansari." The employees are primarily a group of friends and secondarily, coworkers. This was something that most viewsers wanted in their own work lives.

The Parks Department employees go above and beyond their job descriptions out of friendship with and loyalty to Leslie, rather than mandate. This could be interpreted as a management technique to extract free work from employees. However, Leslie offers her friendship and devotion to their lives and career dreams in return. One of the fans' favorite Leslie quotes was, "we have to remember what's important in life: friends, waffles, and work. Or waffles, friends, work. But work has to come third." In other words, in the fictional workplace of *Parks and Recreation,* the relationships among the characters as friends comes before their structural relationship within the organization. This was something that viewsers clearly felt constituted a progressive style of leadership.

Many could not quite reconcile this ideal workplace with what they perceived as bullying on *Parks and Recreation.* Garry Gergich is introduced in season one as Jerry, a marginally competent but good-natured file clerk. The rest of the Parks Department employees, including Leslie, laugh at him, not with him. One of the many fake holidays developed by the show is "Jerry Day." Throughout the

year, they put one dollar in a jar every time Jerry does something stupid, like knock over a trashcan and fart at the same time.[348] On "Jerry Day" they take everyone in the office, except Jerry out to a nice lunch using the money. In season 3, the show revealed that his real name was Garry. The former director called him Jerry by accident, and Garry/Jerry never corrected him. In later seasons, the entire office begins calling him a series of other rhyming names from Larry to Terry. Teasing Garry/Jerry and changing his name becomes a running joke throughout the series. As a result he has become some viewsers favorite character.

Parks and Recreation fans often defended the show for the gag, but not in the sadistic tone of VEEP fans. The gossip on the Internet is that the cast and crew felt so bad for the actor that they cast Christie Brinkley as his wife, Gayle, and gave the character three equally beautiful daughters. Garry/Jerry/Larry/Terry enjoys his beautiful life and his beautiful family while putting in minimal effort at work. Perhaps, Garry should not be pitied or scorned for his lackluster performance at work; he should be envied for his ability never to take work too seriously. On Facebook, Parks and Recreation fan, Katherine, initiated a serious conversation about bullying Garry. She posted, "I really don't like how they bully Garry. It's unnecessary, sad, and sets a TERRIBLE example." Some fans suggested that she took the light-hearted comedy too seriously. They questioned the legitimacy of making ethical demands of comedy and implied that Katherine had no sense of humor. The hostility toward Katherine's remarks seemed to be motivated by fans' reluctance to engage critically with a show that they simply wanted to love and enjoy.

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[348] Parks and Recreation, "Galentine's Day."

The fans that insisted on serious ethical consideration of Garry/Jerry won out by the time the thread ended. Sally wrote:

> I tend to agree with you that the gang bullying of Jerry is a weak point for the series and one with which I've always been uncomfortable. I understand the writers' effort to tip us that Jerry is actually the happiest and most well-adjusted member of the parks dept (therefore, particularly undeserving of poor treatment) but it always made me love all the otherwise lovable characters less that they felt so free to mock and laugh at his expense.

Garry/Jerry may be an antidote to the overemphasis on work and achievement that predominates in contemporary popular culture. Yet, for *Parks and Recreation* fans, bullying offended the perception that they had of the Pawnee Parks Department, as a place where loyalty, friendship and decency reigned. Verbal, sexual, and race-based harassment[349] were all too common a feature of their real workplaces. Some of the women who embraced the epithet "bitch" had not forgotten that it was a term designed to bully them.

Fans took the politics of representation very seriously, and they were excited about the successes these characters represented for feminism. Jessica tagged the *VEEP* production team to thank them, "@VeepHBO I was just hyperventilating watching Selina take the oath of office as the first woman POTUS..." For her, watching a fictional female president being sworn in was almost as good as the real thing. Sarah tweeted, "Elaine is my favorite feminist ever!!! Love everything about JLD!!" Women explicitly claimed Selina, as well as Leslie's victories, for feminism and for themselves.

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[349] Bernadette Marie Calafell, "'Did It Happen Because of Your Race or Your Sex?': University Sexual Harassment Policies and the Move against Intersectionality," *Frontiers 35*, no. 3 (2014): 75-95; Using an intersectional lens, Calafell argues that harassment rarely fits neatly within the strict definitions of sexual or race-based.

However, the comments that referenced feminism identified with a narrow, careerist version of feminism. For example, one tweet read, "International Women's Day shout outs: first and foremost, Leslie Knope for being my career spirit animal #ParksandRec." Women were looking to television for role models for their own achievements. Another feminist proved this point when she tweeted, "Leslie Knope's career development is the best storyline on #parksandrec. How rad is that?! #feminism." The immediate correlation between feminism and career success was never challenged in the nearly six-hundred viewer comments that formed the data for these three texts. The type of feminism they accepted was one based on individual success for women, rather than radical collective politics.

Yet, a powerful woman's status as a feminist role model, or even a role model for women is often a liability. As Selina Meyer so succinctly put it in an audience favorite, "I can't identify myself as a woman. People can't know that." The responses to the administrator posting this quote on Facebook included: "Selina Meyer 2016! Is there any other choice?" and "that was the best line ever!!" The responders immediately understood the bind this character expressed. Even if a woman does manage to achieve a position of power, she is often restricted from exercising feminist values or even acting as a role model for young girls. Similarly, a television show or movie is marginalized as soon as it addresses women's lives in too much depth.

Conclusion

The shift from an individual to an organizational focus highlights the importance of gender in the workplace. The characters were tasked with carefully

160

managing their own diversity by adopting feminine behavioral and beauty standards.

Women were more vulnerable than men to charges that they were overly emotional,

childish, or mentally unstable. The task of fitting women into organizations still lies

with individual women themselves. Viewsers responded to narrow careerist

versions of feminism, focused on following fictional role models down individual

paths to success.

Each character seemed to contain elements of both the bitch boss and the

boss bitch simultaneously, suggesting that the representation of unruly women is still

fraught with contradiction. Bitchiness was sometimes evidence of women's work

ethic, or even a glamorous trait to be emulated. Bitches were women who actually

had control over their organizations. For some, *Parks and Recreation* provided a

model of how work could be, though they had difficulty accepting the Garry/Jerry

plotline. Others appreciated the open hostility of *VEEP* to relieve frustration they

harbored about their own coworkers. Ultimately, bitch-positive politics are an

insufficient response because they fail to challenge the abusive cultures of

hierarchical organizations.

Feminists concerned with working toward the equal distribution of resources,

recognize that in contemporary U.S. society, representation in the salaried

professions is the best starting point. Feminists hope that professional women will

lift other women as they climb the career ladder. We also hope that they will do

something fundamentally different with their power once they achieve it, such as

creating just and humane workplaces. After all, without any allegiance to the larger

goals of social justice or to women as a group, what does the individual achievement of one woman really mean for all women?

Furthermore, in the discussions highlighted so far, commitments outside of working life were ignored or minimized. Duties to the self and the organization were primary in constituting the identities of working professionals. The chapter demonstrated the myriad ways in which women doing the work of the government or corporation were revered and reviled. The next chapter, "Other Women: Comparing, Contrasting and Creating Solidarity," addresses the devaluation of family and community labor, along with the women who perform it. I found more solidarity online than I expected between women doing paid and unpaid work, despite fierce attempts by some texts to highlight the difference between working women and housewives.

6. Other Women: Comparing Experiences and Creating Solidarity

> Carly: I'll tell you something about Martha Stewart. She
> handled prison like a boss.
> Kate: Thank you. Yes she did.[350]

In *The Other Woman*, flighty housewife Kate and ruthless career woman

Carly, form an unlikely friendship, after they discover that Carly's new boyfriend is

Kate's husband, Mark. They team up for revenge and learn that Mark is embroiled

in an embezzlement scheme, fraudulently using Kate as the CEO of dummy

corporations. Carly, a lawyer, helps Kate clear her name. The absurdity of their

circumstances can only be captured by their shared admiration for Martha Stewart.

Stewart, simultaneously a domestic goddess and corporate executive, is a

problematic figure for contemporary feminism.[351] Her emphasis on the prototypical

white middle-class housewife role that *The Feminine Mystique* urged women to

abandon in the early 1960s. For many second-wave feminist scholars, Stewart's

teachings are a sign of the apocalyptic postfeminist future they long predicted. Yet

she is also a corrupt media mogul who went to jail for insider trading, much like the

monstrous female executives in *Disclosure* or *Fatal Attraction*.[352] The figure of the

housewife and career woman collided in the celebrity persona of Martha Stewart.

Stewart problematizes the alleged ideological division among women who

work inside and outside the home. News features on the mommy wars, or the "opt

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[350] *The Other Woman*
[351] Emily Jane Cohen, "Kitschen Witches: Martha Stewart: Gothic Housewife and Corporate CEO," *The Journal of Popular Culture 38*, no. 4 (2005): 650-677.
[352] See above "Career Women on Screen – When Greed Became Good"

out phenomenon"[353] emphasize differences in women's attitudes and beliefs about gender roles and feminism. Stay-at-home moms and working women are not merely occupying different roles; they are ostensibly entirely different species of women. These grossly oversimplified categories of women are pitted against each other supposedly along the lines of attitudes toward feminism, but really just according to the type of labor they perform on a daily basis. Women's choices are rarely portrayed as embedded in complex social and economic realities. Movie and television producers continue to use the figure of the career woman as a shorthand for feminism, like the producers of *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* forty years ago. Yet viewers appeared to share a common-sense understanding of the wider variety of practical concerns that informed women's strategic choices.

For the most part, viewers have refused to accept such a simplified picture of the politics of feminism and reproductive labor. The relative success of the chick flick, *The Other Woman* in comparison to *I Don't Know How She Does It*, demonstrates the flawed nature of second-wave feminism as a marketing strategy. Viewers saw shared struggle as women across labor roles, and refused to consider workforce participation the sina qua non of feminism. While *I Don't Know How She Does It* was still referencing June Cleaver, *The Other Woman* was living in the future of Martha Stewart, who exploded the divisions and handled prison like a boss. On television, *The Good Wife's* Alicia Florrick (Juliana Margulies) also disrupted those static categories by returning to work after fifteen years as a stay-at-home mother. In the case of Tyler Perry's *Temptation*, Judith's (Journee Smollett's) hard

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[353] Mary Douglas Vavrus, "Opting Out Moms in the News," *Feminist Media Studies 7,* no. 1 (2007): 47-63.

work in the home and the workplace were portrayed as aligned, rather than at odds. Viewsers seemed to appreciate women's work, both paid and non-paid, but nevertheless, still placed significant value on careers for women.

There were some deeper conversations about the politics of reproductive labor, but they were sparse. Only a few people acknowledged the work done by armies of working-class women, primarily women of color and migrants, worldwide. Weeks argues that efforts to revalue reproductive labor are complicit with productivism.[354] In her estimation, placing additional value on reproductive labor merely supports the idea that work should be the central activity of life for everyone. However, I argue that assigning value to reproductive labor is critical to women's ability to resist it and reclaim time for themselves. Insisting on the value of reproductive labor offers women an opportunity to resist the idea that it has intrinsic rewards, and instead, to insist on adequate compensation. Like the previous two chapters, "Other Women" begins with an overview of the discussions on each platform before proceeding to its thematic discussion.

The Good Wife (2009-)

Episodes of *The Good Wife* were highly restricted to Amazon Prime and the proprietary "CBS All Access" as opposed to the standard streaming technologies, like Netflix and Hulu Plus. Fans disapproved, because they did not believe a major network was entitled to restrict content in the same way that cable networks did.[355]

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[354] Weeks, *The Problem With Work*, 13.
[355] HBO, for example, only streams its programs on its proprietary "HBO GO." In the final months of the research, Showtime made Homeland available streaming through HuluPlus, a significant departure from the standard practices of premium cable channels. HuluPlus and Netflix tend to offer network or basic cable shows.

However, they insisted that *The Good Wife* was just as good as a premium cable series. Critics praised *The Good Wife* as a sophisticated, yet still current, high-quality drama.[356] Television critic Willa Paskin even likened the show to its lead character in its ability to outwork and outperform the competition well into middle age, or Season 7.[357]

The majority of IMDb reviews for *the Good Wife* were positive. Viewers appreciated the original creative plotlines in comparison to other formulaic network crime dramas and the lack of what they considered cheap tricks, like vampires, zombies, dragons, or an overabundance of sex and violence. Many reviewers hailed it as evidence that network is not dead and noted that it was one of the only shows they bother to watch live rather than recorded. Furthermore, *The Good Wife* earned a lot of credit with its fans by producing twice the number of episodes as premium cable shows, of comparable or superior quality, according to most viewers. There were a few truly negative comments about the show and Juliana Marguiles's acting; several people wrote that she had "dead eyes." Yet those comments were rated extremely low by other reviewers, and were therefore pushed very far down to the bottom. Many reviews fondly recalled her role as nurse Carol Hathaway in E.R.[358] opposite George Clooney, as Dr. Doug Ross. Viewers remarked more than once that Margulies "holds her own" in *The Good* Wife, but they repeated it to the point that it seemed as though they did not expect her to be able to carry a series. The

[356] Verne Gay, "*The Good Wife* Stands by Her Man, but Which One?" *Newsday*, September 24, 2010; Rob Owen, "Tuned In: *Good Wife* Another Bet for Sunday," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, September 27, 2013; Maureen Ryan, "*E.R.* Veteran Tries Life as a Politician's *Good Wife*," *Chicago Tribune,* September 21, 2009.
[357] Willa Paskin, "Television for Adults," *Slate*, September 18, 2014.
[358] *E.R.,* created by Michael Crichton, (NBC,1994-2009).

supporting cast, particularly Kalinda (Archie Punjabi), Diane (Christine Baranski), and Will (Josh Charles[359]) were also fan favorites.

Twitter conversations were similar in that they argued that the show was underrated, with complexity missing from most network shows and subtlety not found on cable. The show's weaving of both personal and professional story lines was a noted marker of the show's quality. Kelly tweeted that she thought of Alicia as "my poker faced role model." There were a few overt discussions of feminism, but mostly just similar expressions of admiration for either Alicia or Diane. A few viewers were surprisingly vehement in their disapproval of Alicia's running for political office. They were especially critical of the show's use of prominent feminist Gloria Steinem, who appears to Alicia in a dream and convinces her to run. Some fans commented on the lack of diversity in the show's cast; there were a lot of people of color in supporting roles, as lawyers, but only one of the main characters, Kalinda (Archie Punjabi) was non-white. On Twitter, some viewers rejected the self-congratulatory white liberalism they saw as the underlying politics of the show.

Facebook viewers were more concerned with the evolution of Alicia's character and the series. They noted that Alicia was a tougher lawyer, but often commented that she had become a disengaged mother. After Archie Punjabi and Josh Charles quit the show, fans pointlessly demanded that the producers bring back their characters. Even though their demands were unrealistic, it seemed to be their way of lamenting the losses of Will and Kalinda. The Facebook page was a major forum for fans to express their frustrations with difficulty of access to the show. Its

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[359] Viewers remembered him fondly from the movies, *Dead Poets Society*, directed by Peter Weir, written by Tom Schulman (Touchstone, 1989) and *Don't Tell Mom the Babysitter's Dead*, directed by Stephen Herek, written by Neil Landau and Tara Ison (Cinema Plus, 1991).

considerable international audience was especially upset by their lack of access to the latest season, streaming. Debbie, a self-described big fan, complained that the DVDs were not even available for purchase in New Zealand.

The Other Woman (2014)

Critics dismissed it as average and formulaic.[360] However, along with *The Heat*, *The Other Woman* was one of the recent movies that proved female stars can bring home box office hits, and that solidarity sells.

The prominent IMDb reviewers praised the movie as a perfect light-hearted revenge comedy celebrating female friendship and solidarity. A few reviews labeled the film feminist, but more often its ethics were described as "girl power" or "empowerment." Some viewers, like Ann, were inspired to post reviews because they thought the negative critical reviews were unfair. She struggled for an explanation for the discrepancy: "I have to believe people feel threatened with the story of women sticking together." Some mentioned a resemblance to the plot of other female revenge comedies, *9 to 5*, *The First Wives Club*[361] and *John Tucker Must Die*.[362]

The production team was exceptional in its ability to engage fans on social media. Using the hashtag, "#OtherWomanSwap," they coordinated a "girls' night

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[360] Kate Erbland, "Review: *The Other Woman*," *Film.com*, April 23, 2014; Liam Lacey, "*Only Lover Left Alive* and *The Other Woman*: Lovers in a Dangerous Time," *The Globe and Mail*, April 25, 2014; Betsy Sharkey, "Review: *The Other Woman* Devolves and Dumbs Down Its Characters," *Los Angeles Times*, April 24, 2014; Anna Smith, "*The Other Woman*," *Time Out: London*, April 22, 2014.
[361] *The First Wives Club*, directed by Hugh Wilson, novel by Olivia Goldsmith, screenplay by Robert Harling (Paramount, 1996). Goldie Hawn, Bette Midler, and Diane Keaton star as friends who team up to get even on the ex-husbands that have left them for younger women.
[362] *John Tucker Must Die*, directed by Betty Thomas, written by Jeff Lowell (Twentieth Century Fox, 2006). In this high-school revenge comedy, three friends team up with a new girl in town to break their ex-boyfriend's heart.

in," where fans could watch the newly released DVD and swap clothing and shoes.

Fans were receptive to the suggestion, and many posted details about their own party

plans, tagging their female friends. A huge proportion of the tweets about this film

focused on Carly (Cameron Diaz). Her job, lifestyle and especially her wardrobe

were highly admired. One favorite and often tweeted quote from her character was

her advice to Kate (Leslie Mann): "cry on the inside, like a winner." Pam tweeted

that her character's lines were, "exactly how I talk to other girls."

The administrators of *The Other Woman*'s Facebook page habitually

responded to viewer posts, in order to increase engagement with the film. The site

featured regular posts labeled "TOW Good/Bad advice," including lines from the

movie such as, "the best revenge is to move on with your life." Women whose

partners cheated in the past identified with the movie. Julie posted, "wish I would

have watched it when it first came out! that was around the same time my husband

was runnin around town like a whore. I think I would have handled things differently

if I had seen this movie lol." For Kim, the movie, "made a first time meeting with a

real life 'other woman' so much easier to deal with."

Temptation (2013)

In newspaper reviews, *Temptation* was almost unanimously described as a

tiresome morality tale.[363] The movie still did better at the box office than the

reviews would suggest, and it garnered high praise online. The film demonstrates

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[363] Scott Foundas, "Film Review: *Tyler Perry's Temptation: Confessions of a Marriage Counselor*," *Variety*, March 29, 2013; Chris Nashawaty, "*Tyler Perry's Temptation*," *Entertainment Weekly*, April 10, 2013; Andy Webster, "Charisma, Wealth, Flattery. How Can She Resist?" *The New York Times,* March 29, 2013; Wigon, Zachary. 2013. "Tyler Perry is Back with *Temptation: Confessions of a Marriage Counselor*." *Village Voice*, April 3, 2013.

that cultural relevance is not restricted to films with critical acclaim. It was unlike *Homeland,* which critics rated higher than the actual audience numbers and the evaluations of the viewers would suggest. It appealed to devout Christians who were primarily, but not exclusively, African-American.

On IMDb, fans applauded the film for its strong moral stance on infidelity. They noted that it was rare for a Hollywood movie to engage in an ethical debate, and they appreciated the opportunity to engage morally as viewers. They specifically referenced Tyler Perry because of his star status, and because this film represented a departure from his Madea franchise.[364] Some IMDb reviewers were happy to see Perry take on a dramatic film and a serious topic. Other IMDb reviewers, who believed their tastes were more refined than the fans, objected to the didactic nature of the film, describing it as tedious, one-dimensional, and poorly-written. They noted a lack of character development, and a reliance on stereotypes. One highly-rated review concluded with, "in this film, Tyler Perry insults black people, white people, men, women, Christians, Southerners, drugstore employees, and anyone with eyeballs."

Most tweets merely mentioned whether the viewer thought the movie was good or bad. For the most part, viewers appreciated the movie's allegiance to traditional marriage. Many claimed that it was an important life lesson about infidelity and materialism. There were a few misogynistic statements such as

[364] *Madea's Family Reunion*, written and directed by Tyler Perry (Tyler Perry Company, 2006); *Madea Goes to Jail*, written and directed by Tyler Perry (Tyler Perry Company, 2009); *Madea's Big Happy Family*, written and directed by Tyler Perry (Tyler Perry Company, 2011); *Madea's Witness Protection*, written and directed by Tyler Perry (Tyler Perry Company, 2012); *Madea Gets a Job,* written and directed by Tyler Perry (Tyler Perry Company, 2013); *A Madea Christmas*, written and directed by Tyler Perry (Tyler Perry Company, 2013); *Madea's Neighbors from Hell*, written and directed by Tyler Perry (Tyler Perry Company, 2014).

"Temptation, the Tyler Perry movie is a classic…trifling hoes won't prosper."

Snarky comments were prevalent, especially regarding the choice to cast reality star,

Kim Kardashian, in a supporting role. The heavy-handed ending elicited some

sarcastic tweets from women, like "Moral of Tyler Perry's Temptation movie:

NEVER cheat on your neglectful spouse. Because you will get AIDS.... and nobody

wants that."

On Facebook, there was a lot of cross promotion with other Tyler Perry

movies, like the Madea franchise, as well as other Lionsgate films. The fan base was

invested in him as an author, and in his traditional religious messages. They were

unapologetically Christian, and frequently posted bible verses to the page. The

debates were about whether or not Judith deserved to get H.I.V. – some people

argued that it was a good lesson not to follow the devil, others argued that G-d

forgives. Perry's fans from abroad were vocal on the Facebook page; fans from

Namibia and South Africa mentioned their country in their comments. They called

for Perry to start working with actors and directors in Nollywood.[365]

I Don't Know How She Does It (2014)

Box office flop, and critical disappointment, *I Don't Know How She Does It*,

rehearsed the old cultural script of competition between stay-at-home and career

moms, and proved that audiences were not interested. One of its many lackluster

reviews suggested that the movie, "should prove relatable to female audiences of a

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[365] "Nollywood" refers to Nigeria's film industry. For details about the industry and films see Pieter Hugo, Chris Abani, Stacy Hardy and Zina Saro-Wiwa, *Nollywood* (New York: Prestel, 2009); Pierre Barot, *Nollywood: The Video Phenomenon in Nigeria* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008); Matthias Krings and Onookome Okome, *Global Nollywood: The Transnational Dimensions of an African Video Film Industry* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013).

certain age and stage whose comparatively carefree Carrie Bradshaw days are, alas, behind them."[366] The consensus was that women who already liked Sara Jessica Parker from her role in *Sex and the City* might find the film tolerable, despite its formulaic plot and general mediocrity.[367]

The movie's ratings on IMDb were atrocious. Joe wrote that it was "nothing more than a waste of space, internet and time." For the most part the movie was described as innocuous, predictable, light fare, overly saccharine and not particularly well executed. Working mothers were disappointed that the film did not delve very deeply into the real issues they faced. Cassandra commented, "it's what I always thought a working mother's life would be...when I was 20 and in business school. Clearly Hollywood never graduated." Specifically, women viewers commented that the competition between the stay-at-home mothers and working mothers was cliché; in actuality, they did not see each other as competition.

On Twitter, a lot of working moms identified with Kate's attempt at being a superwoman. Katherine tweeted, "Remember that movie with @SJP "I Don't Know How She Does It" Yep, that was me tonight #workingwoman #laundress #dogwalker #maid #baker #done." Jessica was relieved to see other women admitting failure to live up to the superwoman ideal, "Loved watching @SJP in "I Don't Know How She Does It." The point is, she DOESN'T! I feel that way most of the time myself.

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[366] Michael Rechtshaffen, "*I Don't Know How She Does It*: Film Review," *The Hollywood Reporter,* September 11, 2011.
[367] Michael O'Sullivan, "Editorial Review: *I Don't Know How She Does It,*" *The Washington Post,* September 16, 2011; Claudia Puig, "All You Need to Know: *I Don't Know* Isn't that Great," *USA Today*, September 14, 2011; Ronnie Sheib, "Review: *I Don't Know How She Does It,*" *Variety,* September 11, 2011; Elizabeth Weitzman, "*I Don't Know How She Does It* Review: Sarah Jessica Parker is Married & Harried in Romantic Comedy," *New York Daily News*, September 16, 2011.

#unsetjello."[368] Because the phrase, "I don't know how she does it" is a popular

saying, a Twitter search for comments on this movie produced an alarming number

of false hits. Some working women were annoyed by how often they heard the

phrase in their daily lives. Cynthia asked, "Does "I don't know how she does it"

also mean "Stop working/living and get back to mothering"?" For her, the phrase

was a veiled criticism. Most of the time, Tweeters used the phrase to praise their

own mothers, grandmothers, or wives for combining work and family.

The administrators of the *I Don't Know How She Does It* page posted

discussion questions about the challenges of being a working mother. The page

yielded more than its share of helpful data, especially considering its lackluster

performance at the box office.[369] Many of the viewsers clearly felt overwhelmed in

their own lives and appreciated the movie's reflection of their reality. Facebook fans

seemed to be more interested in the topics suggested by the page than in the actual

movie. When asked to share their own tips and secrets, alcohol and prescription

drugs featured prominently in many answers. Women testified to being fired for

staying home with a sick child or elderly relative. However, they did not relate to the

movie's dramatization of animosities between housewives and working mothers. It

was the type of movie that people enjoyed watching for free on a weeknight.

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[368] In the movie, Allison (Christina Hendricks) brings unset Jello to the kindergarten bake sale.
[369] The film grossed under ten million dollars in the United States and 30.5 million dollars worldwide.
In comparison, *The Other Woman* grossed nearly 84 million domestic and just under two hundred
million worldwide (Box Office Mojo).

Work Hard, Twerk Harder! #TOWAdvice[370]

The four texts described above all speak to static stereotypes of women as either career women or housewives – either mothers or childless. Viewsers noted that representations of both housewives and working women tend to underrate the difficulty and value of reproductive labor. Houses and apartments are immaculately clean, food appears as if by magic, and children are largely absent. The seemingly unlimited budgets of women on screen seduced some viewsers, but irritated others. They knew from experience that the lives of working women were not as easy as they appear on screen, and that the contributions of paid care workers is vital. Women's reproductive labor is rarely portrayed as valuable, and the women who devote themselves to it were rarely judged positively by the other characters.

Angela McRobbie and Charlotte Brundson argue that postfeminism is characterized by young women's disidentification with second-wave feminists. Brundson writes, "Disidentity—not being like that, not being like those other women, not being like those images of women—is constitutive of feminism, and constitutive of feminism in all its generations."[371] Brundson goes on to argue that young women distance themselves from the negative portrayals of second-wave feminists and instead looked for femininity in their popular culture icons. It was true that contemporary viewsers admired the clothing and feminine style of characters like Carly (*The Other Woman*) and Kate Reddy (*I Don't Know How She Does It*),

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[370] "Work hard, twerk harder," was one of the many pieces of advice *The Other Woman*'s production team posted on Facebook and Twitter.

[371] Charlotte Brundson, "Feminism, Postfeminism, Martha, Martha, and Nigella," *Cinema Journal 44,* no. 2 (2005): 112.

suggesting disidentification with second-wave feminist critiques of the beauty

standard. Yet young women also disidentified with the full-time caregiver role.

Given U.S. culture's emphasis on work as a means to citizenship, it is not

surprising that the most well-known and widely-accepted version of feminist politics

insists on women's access to personhood through the institution of work. In *The*

Feminine Mystique, Betty Freidan examines allegedly successful white-middle-class

women in post-war America: women with ample financial resources to avoid work

for pay, who instead provide full-time care for their families. Friedan calls their

dissatisfaction, "the problem that has no name."[372] bell hooks calls it, "The plight of

a select group of college-educated, middle- and upper-class, married white women—

housewives bored with leisure, with the home, with children, with buying products,

who wanted more out of life." [373] Friedan's implied solution is for women to

undertake professional careers. hooks rightly points out that *The Feminine Mystique*

is upheld by dominant voices of white, middle-class feminism.[374] Motherhood and

care work are only revered when done by white women in a traditional heterosexual

marriage. Friedan also ignores the fact that the labor system is oppressive for most

people, and is a daily site for reinforcing of not just class, but also, gender and racial

inequality. Why the widespread acceptance of Friedan when her work is so narrowly

applicable? How did that book, which sets a pro-work agenda for feminism, become

the sine-qua-non of popular feminism when other voices are available? It squares

with American values of hard work and creates ample distance between the

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[372] Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: Laurel, 1983), 19.
[373] bell hooks, *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*, 2nd edition (Cambridge: South End Press, 2000), 1-2.
[374] Ibid, 3.

mainstream feminism Friedan encourages, and radical socialism, which is part of Friedan's own past as a labor journalist and fellow traveler.[375] Mainstream American feminism was produced within Cold War politics, and its popular acceptance was tied to the context.

Contemporary popular culture constructs a dichotomous relationship between women who conform to the feminine mystique and those adhering to what Moen and Roehling label "its mirror image, the career mystique." They define the career mystique as "the expectation that employees will invest all their time, energy and commitment throughout their 'prime' adult years in their jobs, with the promise of moving up in seniority or ascending job ladders."[376] Young women in particular seemed attached to the career mystique. They identified with the professional women on screen, assuming their lives would progress in the same fashion. As with Olivia Pope on *Scandal*, viewers considered Carly (*The Other Woman)*, Kate Reddy (*I Don't Know How She Does It*), Alicia and Diane (both of *The Good* Wife) role models. Like the young women in Moen and Roehling's study, young, female viewers were enamored with the career mystique. They were sure that with hard work, they could meet the challenges of combining careers with family. Kaylie tweeted that she saw her future in *I Don't Know How She Does It's* Kate Reddy: "Absolutely love @SJP movies! Watching I don't know how she does it and can so picture her character being me in 10 years time #ambition." Carly, the single lawyer in her forties, from *The Other Woman* likewise inspired admiration from Angela, "Cameron Diaz in the other woman is legit my spirit animal. Everything I aspire to

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[375] Daniel Horowitz, *Betty Friedan and the Making of* The Feminine Mystique: *The American Left, The Cold War, and Modern Feminism* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1998).
[376] Moen and Roehling, *The Career Mystique*, 5.

be." Hannah added, "Awesome job, hot car & nice place. I want that when I'm 30!"[377] Often, young women like Kaylie, Angela, and Hannah saw their lives progressing in the direction of career woman or working mother within a lockstep life path.

There were no comments from young women who explicitly stated that they wanted to be housewives or stay-at-home moms. Echoes of the *Feminine Mystique*, were still visible in these texts; young women specifically avoided seeing their futures in caregiving roles. Christina tweeted, "life goal is to be Cameron Diaz in *The Other Woman*, right now I feel like Leslie Mann." Because Mann's character, Kate King, stays home without children, she was considered especially pathetic. No one wanted to be her, or the stay-at-home moms in *I Don't Know How She Does It*. They saw success at work as a requirement for a positive self-image, and believed that the right to work was one of the most important lasting legacies of feminism. Still, viewsers had empathy for characters like who fell victim to the feminine mystique and gave up their careers. However, they were more interested in stories about their subsequent return to work for a chance at professional redemption.

Women who were staying home with children at the time of the study told a different story. Some were offended by the portrayal of Wendy Best (Busy Philipps) in *I Don't Know How She Does It*, the stay-at-home mom who spent hours at the gym with her personal trainer everyday. One stay-at-home mom, Rosemary, was so

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[377] Admiration was the most common response, but there was occasional pity for the character, as with Chris's tweet: "I'm feeling rly sad for Cameron Diaz's character in #theotherwoman bc I'm nervous this is her actual life."

enraged by the movie that she posted a two-paragraph[378] analysis of Wendy's

portrayal:

> So I watched that movie *I Don't Know How She Does It* And I have to say I
> was not impressed. Personally I thought they did not represent the stay at
> home mother accurately or even in the least bit positively. I understand the
> movie was about the struggles a working mother goes through but to even
> add anything at all about stay at home mothers without being true to the
> majority is simply distasteful.... For those who have not seen the movie yet
> they show stay at home mothers as women who spend the whole day at the
> gym with personal trainers criticizing mothers who work.
> They also portray mothers who feed children healthy foods as an
> annoyance...ok!! How accurate is that to your stay at home life??? Not to
> mention the person they casted to represent the stay at home moms is often
> a villain or drunk idiot in the other very few movies she has been is. I will
> be writing something to someone about this because this could have been a
> nice movie and parts of it I related to and enjoyed but those few parts about
> stay at home moms really ruined the whole thing for me. I am almost
> tempted to watch it again to see if I feel differently about it. Perhaps I am
> over reacting but I cant get myself to do it. I just feel as women and as
> mothers especially we should be coming together rather then all this
> negative pick each other apart stuff.

Rosemary resented what she saw as an implication that she had unlimited free time

for herself as well as unlimited time for her children. She argued emphatically for

the value of her labor – she was not a "leisure-class housewife."[379] More

importantly, she was upset that the movie attempted to foster division between

working moms and stay-at-home moms.

Working mom Chelsea disagreed with her interpretation of the film, but still

attempted to connect with Rosemary through their common circumstances as

mothers:

> I thoroughly enjoyed the movie completely relating as how life can be as a
> busy corporate working mom, understanding how stay at home moms
> would be offended. However it is just a movie and honestly just a story of
> how competitive you must feel against stay at home moms. I got the
> impression Sarah Jessica Parker was envious of the stay at home moms but

[378] Although there is no length limit, Facebook comments are ordinarily one or two sentences.
[379] In bell hooks characterized the intended reader of *The Feminine Mystique* as a "leisure-class
housewife;" hooks, *Feminist Theory*, 2.

also enjoyed the challenges of working hard in the corporate world. Just my opinion and we are all entitled to that.

Chelsea minimizes what Rosemary saw as the movie's gross misrepresentation of stay-at-home moms. However, she acknowledges the offense, and assigns value to stay-at-home mom's care work. This conversation displayed a mutual attempt to appreciate each other's circumstances, and a level of cordiality often lacking in social media discussions with strangers.   The dichotomous construction of women as either stay-at-home moms or career women was highly problematic for these women and failed to reflect the social realities of viewers lives.

The reproductive labor women perform for their families and communities was either erased or trivialized. That was especially true when a task could be replaced or bought through the miracle of an advanced service economy. For example, most viewsers' favorite scene from *I Don't Know How She Does It* was the scene in which Kate buys a pie for the school bake sale and distresses it to pass it off as homemade. Many women recognized the strategy, but they wrote that they did not understand why Kate feels guilty about it. Marybeth admitted, "Taken leaf out of "I Don't Know How She Does It" book, bring own food to Class Party-M&S Tarte au Citron is being taken in tupperware – sshh." Marybeth was relieved and somewhat proud of her solution. No one seemed to feel that baking was an important aspect of their roles as women, or mothers. Working mothers did not feel divided from stay-at-home mothers on that count. It seemed there was a declining emphasis on housewifery.

Childcare was entirely different. Viewsers judged women who outsourced childcare harshly. Children were not popular either on television or in film. When

Scandal's lead actress, Kerry Washington, became pregnant, producer Shonda Rhimes opted to hide the pregnancy by filming the star only from angles that hid her belly. Although *Homeland's* Carrie does have a child on the show, the baby is housed in the US with her sister, and therefore not included in the majority of episodes. Kate King, the housewife in *The Other Woman*, is conveniently childless, and even her dog is only featured occasionally to provide comic relief. The presence of children and the labor of taking care of them are largely invisible.

The screen creates the illusion of women doing it all, but viewers were critical of the erasure of reproductive labor. When the administrators of *The Good Wife's* Facebook page posted, "Alicia Florrick proves that raising a family and having a successful career are not mutually exclusive. #TheGoodWife," fans were skeptical. Frances responded simply, "It is fiction and she has $$$$." Frances hinted that her own experience was much more difficult than what she saw on television. Jane agreed, "in real life she would have a maid or a dirty house." While domestic workers are rarely portrayed in these texts at all, viewers seemed more aware of their role in the economy.

In the creation of texts and in their social media posts, producers emphasized women's attitudes about gender and femininity. In reality, only a few of the younger women perceived an ideological divide between housewives and career women. Most viewers thought about the practical considerations of time and money when they compared their lives to those of the characters on screen.

The Righteous Path[380]

      The Good Wife and *Temptation* are remarkable in that they blur the divisions between women as caregivers and workers. They demonstrate the ways in which women may move in and out of those categories throughout their lifetimes, and actually evolve through numerous roles. The good woman and the career woman are not mutually exclusive in popular culture anymore, as they were in the 1960s. Viewers wanted inspiring tales of women returning to work, or cautionary tales about failure to work hard enough. Both *Temptation* and *The Good Wife* promote the ideals of individual hard work for women, struggling to make it on their own without help or patronage from a man.

      In contrast to *I Don't Know How She Does It, The Good Wife*'s Alicia underlines the fluidity of the categories, stay-at-home mom and career woman. When the series premiered, her character appealed to women who pitied her thirteen years at home, and viewed her as a victim of the feminine mystique. It also appealed to social conservatives who saw her as a heroic woman, going back to work only for the sake of her family. Fans of *The Good Wife* were ambivalent about Alicia's evolution from a reluctant participant in the workforce to an aspiring politician in her own right. There were a fair number of comments praising her independence and strength, or claiming her as a role model. Overall, the fans did not appear committed to social justice, and were suspicious of feminism. Even the most opaque reference to feminism alienated some viewers, who categorically rejected the idea of it becoming a show with "an agenda."

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[380] Derrel tweeted that in *Temptation,* "Tyler Perry tried to put those hoes on the righteous path."

The Good Wife's socially conservative fans disapproved of her distance from her children, and her growing ambition. As Alicia grows professionally throughout the series, so does her commitment to feminism. Stacey posted on Facebook, "please go back to your husband, and don't run for any office, that's a man's job.....I know I am old fashioned." That was an extreme comment. Most people did not disapprove of her success per se, but they questioned her priorities. When *The Good Wife*'s Facebook administrators asked "How has Alicia changed?" mild disapproval was a common response. Amanda responded, "She loves her children less. That has bothered me. Mamas don't be like that." In comparison to other fan groups, these fans seemed to place a high value on motherhood, particularly for middle-class white women.

The socially conservative fans of Tyler Perry's *Temptation* were less suspicious of Judith's career. In fact, her commitment to her career and family were seen as linked, rather than mutually exclusive. At the opening of the film, she is an ambitious professional, unhappy about being underemployed at a dating agency for millionaires. Her husband, Bryce, encourages her to stick with her current job so that in ten to fifteen years she can realize her dream of opening her own marriage counseling practice. When Judith meets suave millionaire Harley, he not only treats her to a lifestyle her husband cannot afford, but also offers to give her money to start her practice immediately. On Facebook, Tammy wrote, "they had it all but she wanted more. Life planned for them was in due time but she wanted it now!!" The fans critiqued a materialistic culture of instant gratification, advocating for a return

to the perseverance implied in the traditional Protestant work ethic. The lesson, as many viewers put it, was, "all that glitters is not gold."

Very few viewers wondered how she eventually succeeds in becoming a marriage counselor, or commented on her professional success at the end of the movie. One lone voice posted on Facebook: "Why they had her walkin home in the end like she poor broke and lonely she was a marriage counselor Tyler tryin to scare people if u an affair." Most comments remained completely focused on the lost relationship with Bryce and on H.I.V.. "The overall message for Tyler Perry's movie Temptation was if you cheat you get aids and end up alone only going to church with your mom," wrote Lisa. Some critiqued the fact that Judith, and supporting character, Melinda, are doomed to a life alone after contracting HIV. Judith becomes a spinster, a figure that combines questions about frigid sexuality and sanity, and is a stereotype of female failure. On Facebook, Selina lamented the final scene where Bryce is shown with his new wife and young son: "that could've been [Judith's] life."

The consensus was that Judith attempts to cheat the system of hard work using her sexuality. Sharon, a single mother of four, proudly posted that she used the movie to teach her children the following lesson: "Don't depend on anyone, get out there and get it for yourself by yourself!!" She received many approving responses. They saw Judith as a cheater in two senses: she cheats in her traditional marriage and she cheats the system of constant hard work. In *Temptation,* personal and professional ambitions collapse into material temptation. Judith's desire is the signal of a loss of religious faith and her failure to accept the authority of the church.

Belinda wrote, "never loose your faith in God...this girl had God in her life until temptation sat down in her office." They saw it as a total lifestyle package attained through immoral means.

The movie supports the regulation of women through patriarchal interpretations of religious values. Marvin wrote, "I advise you ladies to watch a movie called "Temptation: Confessions Of A Marriage Counselor". It will knock some sense into a lot of you." The violence of Marvin's imagery highlighted the moral sanctions on women who cheat on traditional marriage and capitalism. Older women also promoted the movie as advice for their younger counterparts. For example, Delores posted on Facebook, "All young ladies thats twerking they way through life need to watch this." Delores's message to the younger generation was simple. She believed in traditional marriage, hard work, and delayed gratification, in the model of ascetic Protestantism.

No one suggested that Judith's profession would be incompatible with the demands of a family. They simply talked about the importance of hard work. Her ability to meet the demands of work and family simultaneously was naturalized. In contrast, conservative viewers assumed that Alicia could not do both without a domestic worker. Yet they still defied the expectations of the production team who assumed that *The Good Wife* could cash in on feminism by celebrating a woman who does it all.

Chick Flicks, Soap Operas and Tyler Perry

Whether they are called women's films, "chick flicks," or "soap operas," women's genres of film and television rarely enjoy the prestige associated with their

184

mainstream competitors, whose appeal is allegedly universal. Often, women's

genres have few defining characteristics other than their female audiences. Labels

like "chick flick" or "soap opera" marginalize content that is associated with women,

their lives and their problems. Similarly, television shows or movies with

predominately black actors or creators are defined as a separate genre lacking

universal appeal.[381] In fact, they have little in common as a genre. Viewers had an

intuitive understanding of these categories and their intended audiences, even when

their own viewing practices defied those norms.

Recent feminist work on "chick flicks" attempts to define the genre as

concerned with relationships and lifestyle, rather than women's career

advancement.[382] Colloquially, "chick flick" simply refers to any movie whose

primary target audience consists of women. Even the buddy cop film, *The Heat*,

discussed above, was frequently described as a chick flick, just because it has two

female leads. Most viewers agreed that *The Other Woman* was a chick flick, but

some fans objected to the term. In her IMDb review of *The Other Woman,* Brenda

wrote,

> I hate the term 'chick flick.' This movie would be fun for women
> to watch together. Because most of the actors in the movie are
> women, I'd say that women will prefer this movie. Here's a
> newsflash: I have no desire to watch a movie with men only.
> Men enjoy watching other heroic men doing heroic things. We
> don't call their movies 'men flicks,' or something similar that's a
> vague put-down.

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[381] Kristen J. Warner, "A Black Cast Doesn't Make a Black Show" in *Watching While Black: Centering the Television of Black Audiences*, ed. Beretta Smith-Shomade (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2012), 49-62.
[382] Roberta Garrett, *Postmodern Chick Flicks*; Stephanie Harzewski, *Chick Lit and Postfeminism* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2011); Hilary Radner, *Neo-Feminist Cinema*.

The "vague put-down" was directed both at the artistic merit of the movie and at the tastes of people who enjoyed it. Brenda critiqued a system of evaluation where the quality of a film is defined by the social location of its audience.

The "soap opera" is the analogous label for television. Nominally, a "soap opera" is a daily low-budget television drama airing in daytime hours.[383] Some scholars extend the term to include prime-time network serials, such as *Dallas* and *Dynasty*.[384] The term is also used as a non-specific label for television appealing to women. As Charlotte Brundson points out, there is frequently an air of superiority involved when feminists study the tastes of those "other women"[385] – the type of women who watch these things for enjoyment. Even when there are no formal indicators of soap opera or melodrama, a female lead is a liability that automatically characterizes a series as a lesser art form. Thus, *The Good Wife* elicited a bizarre range of value-laden labels from courtroom procedural, to political drama, to soap opera. The soap opera label was clearly a way of dismissing the show as low-quality, mindless entertainment. Stanley tweeted, "One of the most underrated shows on TV is The Good Wife. Everyone assumes it's a soap opera for some reason. So well written." In an IMDb review of *The Good Wife*, Gretta explained further:

> I feel it's somehow disrespectful to call this show a soap opera
> but it offers up enough courtroom shockers, relationship drama
> and secrets to earn the title. And yet, it never once condescends
> to the audience. The characters, though not exactly "everyday
> people" feel genuine. The infamous law firm filled with slick,

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[383] Jeremy G. Butler, *Television Style* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 28.

[384] Douglas Snauffer, KellieAnn Reynolds, and Christopher Reynolds, *Prime Time Soap Operas* (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2009); Ang, *Watching Dallas*; *Dallas,* created by David Jacobs (CBS, 1978-1991); *Dynasty,* created by Esther Shapiro and Richard Alan Shapiro (ABC, 1981-1989).

[385] Charlotte Brundson, *The Feminist, The Housewife, and the Soap Opera* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), 41.

well paid, high powered attorneys, the scorned wife of a corrupt politician, hell the politician himself…these are hardly people many of us can relate to but this show somehow makes them not seem so like outrageous characters. Even the political sex scandal angle feels relatable. Maybe that's because we've seen so much of them in recent years? Superb acting, succinct, eloquent writing, excitement … all the things that really bring this show together. While these past few years have been seen some of the best drama in the history of television come to the small screen there are still only a handful of shows that I enjoy to this extent, and that make me feel so connected to the characters that I feel, really FEEL for them and am not just watching for the sake of disconnected entertainment.

Gretta explicitly disavowed the label, soap opera, because soap operas provide only "disconnected entertainment." She made an effective argument for the artistic merit of the show. Why, then, she wanted to know, did so many other viewsers insist on labeling *The Good Wife* a soap opera?

In some cases, fans reserved the label to express their disapproval of a particular episode or plotline. For example, Tracy wrote, "This series is at its weakest when the plot focuses on Alicia. Her personal and professional problems are not more interesting than many a soap opera character." Tracy did not necessarily consider *The Good Wife* a soap opera, but she used the label to object to the show's occasional departures from the courtroom procedural format. What might be considered character development for a male character was cast as a personal problem when experienced by a female character. Keith wrote, "[*The Good Wife*'s writers] can't even match Shonda's masterful display of drama. At this point *The Good Wife* is just soap opera in pantsuits." Viewers used the label, "soap opera" disparagingly to take the production teams to task. For example, Nisha,[386] a Tony

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[386] She used a picture of Tony Goldwyn and Kerry Washington for her profile, so it was difficult to determine her age or race. In addition to her Team Olitz tweets, she frequently retweeted news about politics particularly, those related to anti-racism and feminism.

Goldwyn fan, confronted ABC about *Scandal*'s writing: "@ABC_Publicity Why is Scandal written like a soap opera for teenagers, while "The Good Wife" is written for thinking, sophisticated ADULTS." She was clearly upset at *Scandal*'s turn away from politics toward relationships and interpersonal drama.

Male viewers were especially self-conscious about watching dramas with female leads. For example, Sean[387] wrote, "I have binge watched so many episodes of *Scandal* and *The Good Wife,* I think that my "cycle" has synced with every fat housewife in America." His vivid description of the average viewer as an obese, full-time caregiver placed *Scandal* and *The Good Wife* solidly in the soap opera category. Yet, his self-deprecating humor demonstrated that he recognized the irony in his description. After all, he enjoyed the shows too. Fans inherently recognized the lack of prestige in television designed for women. Doug[388] wrote, "*The Good Wife* is a show that you assume only bored moms like and then you realize is crazy good. Either that, or I'm secretly a bored mom." In other words, shows for women were not supposed to be good and men were not supposed to watch them.

Similarly, most viewers assumed that Tyler Perry movies were only for Black audiences and that they lacked both artistic merit and universal appeal. Jordan's[389] IMDb review exemplified that attitude in describing Tyler Perry's philosophy of filmmaking: "if you keep the budget extremely low and then have a fan base (obviously of a particular race) you will always make money off that movie no matter how bad it is." There was a clear association between Jordan's perception

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[387] Sean appeared to be a white man in his thirties.
[388] Doug appeared to be a white man in his forties or fifties.
[389] It was not possible to determine Jordan's gender, race or age from the IMDb profile. In another comment, Jordan argued that the Nation of Islam was "a cult to carry on the racist African American agenda." Therefore, it is likely that Jordan was white.

of other audience members, and his low assessment of *Temptation.* Because of racist attacks like this, Black people sometimes felt compelled to defend Perry. For example, Steve appreciated Perry for giving voice for the African-American community, and hiring African-American actors, despite his poor execution of *Temptation*. More than one viewer suggested that white audiences refused to take Tyler Perry's dramatic movies seriously because they wanted him to continue to produce stereotypical caricatures of the Black community, as in the Medea franchise.

However, many of the criticisms of Tyler Perry came from within the Black community. Quinn's IMDb review began with the question, "when are we as Black people going to get MORE?" Quinn went on to liken *Temptation* to a *Lifetime*, made-for-television movie. Specifically, viewers complained about the stereotypically shallow characters, and the recycled plots and dialogue. The movie is characteristic of a chick flick in its focus on relationships, women and family, as well as its display of fashion and the makeover theme. Black viewers eagerly used the label "melodrama," but never used the term "chick flick" to denigrate the film. It seemed that it could not be both a Black movie and a chick flick. Yet, all these labels performed the function of ghettoizing certain films made for certain types of audiences.

Ultimately, all of the screen texts investigated in *Screening Diversity* are susceptible to derogatory labeling. They are potential soap operas or chick flicks simply because they star women. A female protagonist caused suspicion among viewers that a show would not be as compelling, or a movie would be formulaic. They clearly made decisions about what to watch, and formed preconceived notions

about what they would like, based on which social groups they believed comprised the audience.

Conclusion

Viewsers troubled the distinction between paid, productive labor and unpaid or underpaid, reproductive labor. Producers' attempts to cast housewives and working women as fundamentally different were rejected by all but a few viewsers. Some young women accepted the second-wave attitude toward work as the vehicle of liberation, and pitied housewives on screen. More often, women saw stay-at-home moms as workers who contributed to the collective wealth of society. They understood many of the realities of reproductive labor, and noticed the striking absence of domestic workers on screen. They reconceptualized reproductive and productive labor as simply part of the necessary hard work of life. They recognized that women were expected to derive inherent satisfaction from both types of work, reducing the need for remuneration. Both were oppressive labor regimes under which women contributed substantially to the collective wealth of the world. Few women reaped the rewards themselves.

Thus, it is not surprising that Martha Stewart is the icon of women in our era. Women are undervalued, both in terms of compensation and social value, and also in terms of the overall importance of even considering their lives in a cultural format. Stewart demonstrates that women's traditional work can create a great deal of wealth in a highly-mediated-post-industrial society. Between her daytime television show, magazine, and merchandise, she created a multi-million dollar corporation,

demonstrating that women's reproductive roles and genres of entertainment are far from worthless.

"Chick flicks" and "soap operas" exist on the periphery of the representational landscape. The trivialization of the genres mirrored the trivialization of women and their problems. Even women viewsers' sympathy for the challenges of work-family balance was often limited. They did not seem interested in giving upper-middle-class professional women extra credit. Many made no separation between reproductive and productive labor – they simply saw the challenges of hard work. However, attempts to claim compensation for either type of labor were sparse.

Epilogue

> 'In my mind, I see a line. And over that line, I see green fields and lovely flowers and beautiful white women with their arms stretched out to me, over that line. But I can't seem to get there no how. I can't seem to get over that line.' That was Harriet Tubman in the 1800s. And let me tell you something: The only thing that separates women of color from anyone else is opportunity. You cannot win an Emmy for roles that are simply not there. ~Viola Davis, Emmy Acceptance Speech[390]

Over the course of the several years I spent working on *Screening Diversity*, there were significant shifts in representation and politics. The grassroots #BlackLivesMatter movement posed a major challenge to the post-racial myths of equal opportunity that seemed deeply entrenched a few years earlier. In the final phase of the project, Viola Davis won an Emmy for the lead role in *How to Get Away with Murder*, another of Shonda Rhimes' creations. It is hard not to get excited when Harriet Tubman is quoted on national television and pictured on the twenty-dollar bill. However, neither Davis's acceptance speech, nor the content of *How to Get Away with Murder* reject the idea that work performance is necessary to earn social equality. Like Olivia Pope, Davis' character Analeese Keeting extracts complete devotion from her employees, simply because of her fabulous success as a law professor. The series became the fourth-ever-network-television show to star an African-American woman, after *Julia, Get Christy Love*[391] and *Scandal*. In a few short years, Rhimes accelerated the pace of change in the representational landscape remarkably.

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[390] "The 67th Primetime Emmy Awards," directed by Louis Horvitz (Fox, September 20, 2015).
[391] *Get Christy Love* (ABC, 1974-1975).

The hypervisibility of Rhimes along with her stars Washington and Davis belies the continued white male domination of Hollywood today. Increased diversity appears limited to low-prestige genres, and formats, such as Rhimes' network serial melodramas. They offer the industry ostensible proof that with hard work and devotion, racial and gender barriers are no longer relevant in Hollywood. Rhimes, Washington and Davis are tokenized at events like the Emmy Awards.[392] Yet, at the 2016 Academy Awards, nominees were overwhelmingly white in all categories, re-energizing the hashtag "#OscarsSoWhite."[393] In film and on premium cable networks, the roles still are simply not there.

Screening Diversity has an epilogue rather than a conclusion, because the story it tells is still unfolding. American popular culture appears to be at the precipice of a shift in representations of professional women. It remains unclear whether challenges to the narrative of racial and gender equality will include a reflection of the role of work in maintaining the status quo. Olivia Pope's mantra, "you have to be twice as good as them to get half of what they have," is striking in that it gives voice to Black experience. However, it is not a political solution to the ever expanding demands on the time of women of color. If people express their commitment to social justice by being twice as good, large portions of our lives will be appropriated for profit.

Viewers devoted significant portions of their lives to their favorite television shows. At best, the practice might foster the creation of new media publics

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[392] Kerry Washington and Diahann Carroll presented the award for Best Supporting Actor at "The 65th Primetime Emmy Awards," directed by Louis Horvitz (Fox, September 22, 2013).

[393] Rev. Jesse Jackson, "Spotlight on Hollywood: It's Time to Flip the Script on Diversity," *USA Today*, February 2, 2016; Brandon Griggs, "Once Again, #OscarsSoWhite," *CNN,* January 14, 2016. Available: *http://www.cnn.com/2016/01/14/entertainment/oscars-so-white-protest-nominations-feat/*

concerned with issues of social justice. For some, it was simply a way of claiming time outside of work and family obligations. However, they were also part of an internet economy in which corporations now capture and exploit our voluntary free labor. Viewser participation built a movie's or show's brand. Meanwhile, their personal data was converted to a profitable commodity to sell to advertisers.[394] Viewsers did not demand any monetary compensation. Instead, they sought creative, moral, and political input as their reward.

The struggle for representation is constitutive of gender, race and class relationships. The stories we share about work play an important role in establishing the moral and ethical boundaries of the employment relationship. In fact, the employment relationship functions as a model for the interaction between viewers and producers. The screen has played a role in mediating industrial capitalism since they arose contemporaneously in the late-nineteenth century. Corporations and the technology they create now mediate our view of screen history. Early film theorists asked how mass culture functioned in the ideological machinery of capitalism. This dissertation considered representations of women's work through their industry-guided participation online.

The lead characters were relatable role models; each was some blend of role model and everywoman. Across race and class, women viewers appear fascinated with professional women characters, like Olivia (*Scandal*), and Maya (*Zero Dark Thirty*), whose identities were completely invested in their careers. Viewers agreed on a set of values for the workplace, the most important of which was the individual's fundamental moral duty to her career. Yet, it was clear that \ workers

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[394] Mark Andrejevic, "Estranged Free Labor," in *Digital Labor*, 279-309.

were tasked with managing their own diversity. Women characters were judged harshly when they occupied positions of authority, traditionally occupied by men. Mullins (*The Heat*), Margaret (*The Proposal*), and Carrie (*Homeland*), were called unprofessional, incompetent, or crazy "bitches." Women also defended and supported characters like Leslie (*Parks and Recreation*) and Selina (*VEEP*) by celebrating the "bitch" label with sarcasm and irony. Viewers recognized that these criticisms and labels were the price of success for women.

Films and movies from every historical period demonstrate the challenges of combining work and traditional female roles. Screen producers clearly approved scripts that ignored or minimized reproductive labor, and portrayed housewives like and Kate (*The Other Woman*) as objects of pity. However, women viewers rarely conceptualized the same kinds of separations among women performing different roles. They identified with women like Judith (*Temptation*) and Alicia (*The Good Wife*) who worked hard on both ends of the continuum. For many women, paid work and unpaid work were simply part of what needed to be done to succeed in life.

Screening Diversity illustrates that feminism needs to be uncoupled from individual success and from wealth. We need not distribute resources through our current labor and compensation system. Corporations use their monopoly on wealth to extract unlimited commitment from their employees. There are other ways of engaging productively in society and sharing in its rewards. A certain amount of work is necessary to sustain our lives, but not nearly as much as we actually do. Kathi Week's feminist anti-work politics offers another way.[395] We should insist on the right to refuse surplus work, and carve out time for ourselves. We should not

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[395] Weeks, *The Problem with Work.*

accept simply enough time to devote to reproductive labor and sleep. Instead, we should demand time that is truly ours, time for leisure and creativity.

If people had more time away from necessary labor, it is very likely that they would donate it to their favorite television shows. They would have more opportunities to form media publics to demand changes. We might begin to see female characters who live truly balanced lives, not centered exclusively around their professions and reproduction. At the same time, those representations are a necessary condition for widespread change. The relationship between social change and television representation is not causal; it is reciprocal. Ultimately, media participation is a powerful way to work toward social justice.

Appendix I: Glossary

Below are brief descriptions of the major characters and plotlines of the movies and television shows under examination in *Screening Diversity*.

The Good Wife:

The pilot episode opens at a press conference in which the Chicago State's Attorney, Peter Florrick (Chris Noth) resigns amid allegations that he accepted the services of prostitutes in exchange for favors. His wife, Alicia, does not divorce him, but their marriage changes permanently. While Peter serves a term in prison, Alicia returns to work to support her children. She gains employment as a favor from Will Gardner (Josh Charles), a friend from law school, who is now a partner at Lockhardt Gardner. Young, recent Harvard law graduate, Carey Agos (Matt Czuchry), starts the same day. They soon learn that the firm will only retain one of them after a six-month competitive trial period. Will's law partner, Diane (Christine Baranski), eventually agrees eventually to keep Alicia because her political connections. Carey remains a series regular, moving to the State's Attorney's office and back to the firm. Her children, Zach (Graham Phillips) and Grace (Makenzie Vega) offer occasional diversions from the primarily office-centered drama. Meanwhile, Alicia and Will are rekindling a romance from law school. Their relationship remains strictly platonic until Alicia learns that Peter has also cheated on her with her best friend, investigator Kalinda Sharma (Archie Punjabi). After a brief romance, Alicia decides to return to Peter, a decision she soon regrets. Will is tragically killed in a courtroom shooting before the two can reconcile.

The Good Wife is also a courtroom procedural and each episode revolves around a case. The trials very often reflect issues relevant to the current events such as U.S. government surveillance, middle-eastern politics, and political corruption. Alicia proves herself quick-witted and clever. Over the course of the series, Alicia rises meteorically through the ranks of the firm. Within the space of seven years, she goes from being a stay-at-home mother to running for State's Attorney herself, her husband's old job. Although she wins the election, the Democratic National Committee forces her to withdraw in disgrace to distract from their actual election fraud in a key district. At the close of Season 6, Alicia starts over, creating her own practice in Zach's empty bedroom (he moves away for college).

<u>*The Heat:*</u>

Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Agent Sarah Ashburn (Sandra Bullock) travels to Boston to investigate a mysterious drug lord, Larkin. She is a by-the-book rigid perfectionist and does not always work well with others. Her boss, Hale (Demian Bichir), tells her that the promotion she wants depends on her ability to work well with the local police to resolve the case. Her partner, Detective Shannon Mullins (Melissa McCarthy), is a brash Boston native with very little respect for authority or procedure. She lives in the same dilapidated apartment building as one a prostitute they interview, where she keeps guns and ammunition in her non-working refrigerator. Mullins is estranged from her family, after arresting her brother, Jason (John Rapaport), a low-level drug dealer. Asbhurn grew up in foster care and has no family at all; even the cat she adores, is actually her neighbor's cat.

The two women clash over methods of investigation: Ashburn is polite and proper, while Mullins frequently employs brutal physical methods of interrogation. They unite as partners when they confront sexist Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) agents, Adam (Taran Killan) and Craig (Dan Bakkedahl) on a stakeout. Craig tells them to back off of the case, adding, "we do not need to the two of you coming in with your estrogen flying at full speed." Ashburn and Mullins are called off the investigation in favor of the DEA, but sense that something is amiss. Ashburn eventually learns to break the rules to get results. When she and Mullins storm Larkin's warehouse with the weapons from Mullins' refrigerator, they discover that Larkin is Adam, the DEA agent. In the end, Ashburn does not get the promotion, but she moves to the Boston field office, where she and Mullins can continue to fight crime together.

Homeland:

Carrie Mathison (Claire Danes) is a rising star in the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the beloved protégé of Saul Berenson (Mandy Patinkin). She suffers from bipolar disorder, which also makes her an investigative genius in many cases. Carrie is the only one who suspects that returning prisoner of war, Nicholas Brody (Damien Lewis), is working with the terrorists who held him captive. Brody is a celebrated national hero, but once the suspicion of the CIA arises, black operations agent Peter Quinn (Rupert Friend) is sent to kill Brody. However, once Brody gets elected to congress, Saul drops the surveillance on Brody and takes his name off the kill list. Acting alone, Carrie prevents Brody from deploying the suicide bomb he is supposed to use to kill the Vice President. Carrie turns out to be right about Brody,

but she falls in love with him along the way. Brody eventually redeems himself as a patriot by going into Iran on a mission for Carrie. He is killed in the process, but not before Carrie becomes pregnant with their daughter, Frances.

In Season Four, Carrie becomes the Kabul Station Chief, the youngest in agency history. In her new position, she has life and death authority to execute drone strikes against potential terrorists. When terrorists kidnap Saul, Quinn stops her from ordering the strike. Instead, they negotiate with the terrorists to get Saul back. In the process they leave the U.S. embassy vulnerable to a terrorist attack that kills many of their colleagues. In Season Five, Carrie quits the CIA for a position in private security for the During Foundation. Nevertheless, she is pulled back into the CIA when a double agent, Allison (Miranda Otto), sends Quinn to kill her.

I Don't Know How She Does It:

Based on the novel by Allison Pearson, *I Don't Know How She Does It* stars Sarah Jessica Parker as financial analyst, Kate Reddy. Kate and her husband, Richard (Greg Kinnear), have two small children and two full-time jobs. At the same time that Richard gets a big project at work, Kate gains approval for her proposal to develop a new fund for the company. These golden career opportunities take a toll on their ability take care of their children and maintain their relationship. Kate makes weekly trips to New York to work with Jack Ablehammer (Pierce Brosnan) on developing the fund. Kate's daughter, Emily, who is six, is upset by her mother's frequent travel, and their son Ben, who is two, is having difficulty learning to talk. Kate leaves a family vacation on Thanksgiving Day to fly to a presentation, to the disappointment of her family and shock of her mother-in-law, Marla (Jane

Curtin). There is some romantic tension between Kate and Ablehammer, but Kate remains loyal to her husband.

At work, Kate has trouble keeping up the appearance of someone who does not have children. Her protégé, Momo (Olivia Munn), is troubled by Kate's disheveled appearance, and horrified when Kate finds out she has lice moments before their first presentation to Ablehammer. The quality of her work prevails, and the proposal gains acceptance. However, during the meeting, her son Ben falls down the stairs and Richard takes him to the emergency room alone. Because of her success, Kate is able to refuse some of the long hours and travel that accompany her job in order to be there for her family. In the concluding scene, Kate makes it home in time to build a snowman with her daughter, and Richard agrees to take more responsibility for running the household. She introduces Jack to her best friend Allison (Christina Hendricks), and they begin dating. The modest resolution does not completely resolve all issues; Kate's family and work life still appear chaotic.

The Other Woman:

The Other Woman is a story of solidarity among a housewife, Kate (Leslie Mann), and a career woman, Carly (Cameron Diaz). Carly meets Mark (Nikolaj Coster-Waldau), who seems like the perfect man, until he cancels a date to attend to plumbing problems at his house. Carly surprises him there, in a provocative outfit, and, instead, meets his wife, Kate. In the days that follow, the two forty-something women form an unlikely friendship. Carly, a lawyer, not only consoles Kate, but offers her divorce advice as well. Carly and Kate soon discover that Mark is cheating on them with yet another woman, Amber (Kate Upton). Kate Upton, the

actress who plays Amber, is a *Sports Illustrated* model in her twenties. Her

character is introduced running down the beach in a bikini – a scene that won Kate

Upton a nomination for MTV's award for Best Shirtless Performance. While Carly

is jealous, Kate comments that Amber, "really brings up the group average."

Eventually all three women join together to get revenge on Mark.

Thus begins a somewhat cliché series of pranks on Mark. Kate puts

depilatory cream in his shampoo, and estrogen pills in his morning smoothies. Carly

slips something into his drink at dinner, which gives instantly gives him violent

diarrhea. Amber tells Mark that she has Gonorrhea, and he awkwardly tries to

convince Kate to take antibiotics for a cold that he insists is going around. In the

process, Carly forms a relationship with Kate's brother, Phil (Taylor Kinney), and

Amber forms a relationship with Carly's father, Frank (Don Johnson). Their real

revenge is ruining Mark's career as a venture capitalist. Although Kate does not

have her own income, she supports Mark professionally, even providing him with

business ideas. Carly discovers that he is using Kate as the CEO of dummy

corporations in order to embezzle money from his investors. With Amber and

Carly's help, Kate empties Mark's off-shore bank account and returns the stolen

money. She also gets half of his remaining funds, because, as she puts it, "that's

what equal partners get." As the closing credits role, Kate impresses a group of

investors with a business presentation, Carly is shown pregnant with Phil's baby, and

Amber is shown once again in a bikini, this time on a remote island with Frank.

Parks and Rec:

A successful NBC sitcom, *Parks and Recreation* is, as the name suggests, set in the parks and recreation department of a small city government in the Midwest, Pawnee, Indiana. Its deputy director, Leslie Knope (played by *Saturday Night Live* alumn, Amy Poehler), is an explicitly feminist overachiever and workaholic. The show chronicles Leslie's career advancement, her successful run for city council in Season 4, and subsequent recall. Each episode revolves around Leslie's smaller battles, like her fight with the local burger chain to turn a vacant lot into a community park, rather than a Paunch Burger, or her feud with libraries over budget matters. Through all her projects for the parks department and Pawnee, her friends in the parks department offer her 100% support of both their work and personal time.

The cast of characters includes the director of the parks department, Ron Swanson (Nick Offerman), a fiercely independent libertarian, who makes all his own furniture, eats only meat, and abhors the government of which he is ironically a part. Ben Wyatt (Adam Scott), who originally came to Pawnee as an auditor, is now Leslie's husband, and alternately her campaign manager or boss. Comically immature husband and wife, Andy Dwyer (Chris Patt) and April Ludgate-Dwyer (Aubrey Plaza), are Leslie and Ron's assistants, respectively. Jim O'Heir plays Garry, the office chump, habitually bungling his assignments and entertaining everyone with spills and mishaps like splitting his pants. Rounding out the cast are Tom Haverford, played by up-and-coming comic, Aziz Ansari, and Donna Meagle (Retta), most beloved by fans for their annual "treat yoself" episodes, where they blow off work for a day to spend obscene amounts of money at the local mall.

Rashida Jones plays Ann Perkins, a health department official and nurse who is Leslie's quirky best friend, and 1980s heartthrob, Rob Lowe, plays the city manager and Ann's eventual partner.

The Proposal:

The Proposal is a romantic comedy starring Sandra Bullock, as successful book editor, Margaret Tate, and Ryan Reynolds, as her executive assistant, Andrew Paxton. Margaret is universally detested and feared by everyone in the office including Andrew. Andrew even warns coworkers about her movements through instant chat messages such as, "it's here" and "the witch is on her broom." Margaret coolly fires another executive in the first part of the movie and does not appear affected when he calls her a "poisonous bitch" in front of the whole office. She is a ruthless businesswoman who cares only about getting the job done and not the people around her. Andrew is an aspiring book editor, paying his dues in the immasculating role of Margaret's secretary. Trouble arises when Margaret discovers that her immigration visa expired and she is about to be deported back to her native Canada. To keep her job, Margaret proposes a fake marriage to Andrew, who demands a promotion to editor in exchange.

Once teamed up in the farcical marriage, the duo has to convince the suspicious immigration agent, Mr. Gilbertson (Denis O'Hare) that they are a really in love. Andrew agrees to take Margaret back to the small town in Alaska where he grew up in order to convince his family that the marriage is real. Andrew's mother (Mary Steenburgen) and gammy (Betty White) accept her into their family immediately. Andrew turns out to have a complicated relationship with his father

(Craig T. Nelson), who does not support his dreams of becoming an editor and does not approve of him working as an assistant for a female boss. His father's disapproval strengthens Andrew's resolve to go forward with the sham marriage. In typical romantic comedy fashion, Andrew and Margaret continue to be repulsed by each other just long enough to allow for some hilariously awkward moments like bumping into each other naked in the shower. Soon enough, they realize that they really do love each other. Margaret walks out of the sham marriage, unable to go through with forcing Andrew to marry her now that she loves him. Andrew then returns to the office where he romantically proposes a real marriage, kisses her, and they live happily ever after.

Scandal:

Scandal is the second ABC hit produced by Shonda Rhimes, one of very few African-American females in an influential position in the television industry. As Olivia Pope, Kerry Washington is the first African-American lead actress on network television in over forty years. Olivia is the owner of a crisis management firm that helps elite Washington clients avoid the bad publicity that might result from alleged murders, suicides, prostitution, infidelity, and in the case of the White House, election rigging. The soundtrack of mostly 1970s funk pays homage to one group of predecessors, the black women detectives of blaxploitation films. The character, Olivia Pope, is loosely based on Judy Smith, who worked as a press officer in the first Bush administration before founding her firm, Smith & Associates. Although much of Smith's work is classified, there is no doubt that Olivia Pope leads a much more interesting life than her historical counterpart. She

is involved in a great on-again, off-again love affair with the President, Fitzgerald Grant, or Fitz (Tony Goldwyn). Her father Eli, a.k.a. Rowan (Joe Morton), heads a secret spy organization, B-613, that does not report to the executive branch. Her mother, Maya (Khandi Alexander) is an international terrorist, whom her father has kept in prison since Olivia's childhood.

Most of the other prominent characters are employees of Pope and Associates. Harrison Wright (Columbus Short) is Olivia's second in command at work, but has few plotlines outside the office. Abby Whelan (Darby Stanchfield) is outspoken about her disapproval of their clients, particularly if they are Republicans. She is also dating the State's Attorney, David Rosen (Joshua Malina), who suspects, but cannot prove, the truth about the rigged election. Huck (Guillermo Diaz) is a former B-613 operative who works in as an investigator for Olivia. Quinn Perkins (Katie Lowes) is a young lawyer who becomes Huck's protégé and in season 3, leaves Pope and Associates for B-613. Jake Ballard (Scott Foley) is a friend of President Fitz's from the navy, who he hires to spy on Olivia Pope in Season 1. Unbeknownst to Fitz, Jake is also in B-613, and has orders from Rowan to try to break up the relationship between Olivia and the President. The team at the White House includes Cyrus Bean (Jeff Perry), the Presidents' Chief of Staff, and a gay Republican, who battles both Olivia and the First Lady for influence over Fitz. The First Lady, Mellie Grant (Bellamy Young), cannot decide whether she still loves her husband or not; as a result, she is alternately tolerant of Fitz's relationship with Olivia and vindictive toward her.

Judith (Journee Smollett) grows up in a small, southern town, goes to church every day, and marries her childhood sweetheart, Brice (Lance Gross). The couple moves to Washington, D.C. to start their lives. Brice works as a pharmacist with Melinda (Brandy Norwood), and Chapman (Renée Taylor), who provides the comic relief for the film. Judith dreams of opening her own marriage counseling practice, but Brice estimates that they need to save money for at least ten to fifteen years. She detests her job as the therapist for a dating service for millionaires, and her boss, Janice (Vanessa Williams), who dons a fake French accent, but is really from Georgia.

One of those millionaires is Harley, a social media executive interested in partnering with Judith and the dating service. He contrives a special project that keeps them at the office together late, and takes her to a meeting in New Orleans on his private plane. Ava (Kim Kardashian West) gives her a makeover for the trip. On the trip, Harley propositions Judith; in a scene that has the air of a bizarre rape fantasy, she says no at first, but is ultimately seduced. Unlike Brice, Harley appears to believe in her, and offers to invest in her practice. Soon, Judith leaves the marriage, spirals out of control, and develops a cocaine habit. Brice learns that Harley is Melinda's abusive ex-boyfriend who gave her H.I.V.. In the dramatic conclusion, Brice rescues her when Harley turns abusive. Many years later, Judith sees Brice to pick up her prescriptions for H.I.V., along with his new wife and young son.

Julia Louis-Dreyfus, previously known for her role as Elaine in *Seinfeld*, stars as Vice President Selina Meyer in this HBO comedy. Washington political staffers are portrayed as callous egomaniacs primarily interested in their own advancement and pointing out their coworkers' incompetence. Amy Brookheimer (Anna Chlumsky), the VP's chief of staff, is a driven career woman with no personal life. In fact, when her sister calls her away from work to visit her father is in the hospital, she is angered by the interruption, mocking her sister for only working at CVS.[396] Amy's primary competition for the position as Selina's campaign manager is Dan Egan (Reid Scott), a ruthless behind-the-scenes negotiator with no real loyalty to Selina or anyone else. Gary Walsh (Tony Hale) is Selina's emasculated "body man," who caters to her every whim, carrying a bag containing her lipsticks and toiletries, favorite snacks, and any other item Selina might demand. Sue Wilson (Sufe Bradshaw), Selina's assistant, is a formidable gate-keeper and the only character that is intimidating enough that no one else in the office dares to insult her. In contrast, the White House liaison, incredibly tall, Jonah Ryan (Timothy Simons), or "Jonad" as everyone at the VP's office calls him, is the victim of more than his fair share of jokes, but never lets that deter him from attempting to climb the ranks in Washington. Mike McLintock (Matt Walsh), the Vice President's press secretary, is the only apathetic worker of the bunch; he barely accomplishes the basic tasks of his job, and pretends to have a dog to take care of when anyone asks him to work late.

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[396] CVS is a chain drug store prominent on the east coast of the United States.

The humor of the show is based in an extremely abusive workplace culture, where creative insults are the primary mode of interaction among coworkers. Most of the insults include crude sexual references and creative uses of cuss words. The show has an absurd quality underscored by the fact that the president is wholly absent from the screen. In almost every episode, Selina asks Sue, "Did the President call?" The reply is always, "no." Much like the film *Waiting for Guffman*,[397] the characters' actions are all driven by an authority figure that is ultimately absent.

Zero Dark Thirty:

The film *Zero Dark Thirty* commemorates the search for and assassination of Usama bin Laden. Jessica Chastain plays Maya, the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) officer, who continues the hunt Bin Laden for ten years, even after her superior, Joseph Bradley (Kyle Chandler) tells her that it is no longer a priority. It was directed by Kathryn Bigelow, who also directed *The Hurt Locker*,[398] which chronicled the daily routines of war from the perspective of a military explosives expert. She made both films without the support of the US military, which allows movie crews to use their actual vehicles and equipment in shooting a film, in exchange for editorial control over the content of the film. *Zero Dark Thirty* was released in theaters a mere eighteen months after the assassination to mixed reviews.

The film opens with a graphic sequence in which CIA officer Dan (Jason Clarke) tortures an alleged al Qaeda soldier Ammar (Reda Kateb) on Maya's first day in the field. Maya learns these "enhanced interrogation techniques" well and

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[397] *Waiting for Guffman*, directed by Christopher Guest, written by Christopher Guest and Eugene Levy, based on the play, *Waiting for Godot*, written by Samuel Beckett (Warner Bros., 1996).
[398] *The Hurt Locker*, directed by Kathryn Bigelow, written by Mark Boal (Voltage Pictures, 2008).

tortures dozens of other detainees throughout the film in pursuit of information on Bin Laden. Jessica (Jennifer Ehle) is the closest thing Maya has to a friend while she is stationed in Pakistan. When the two go out for drinks at the Marriot in Islamabad, a suicide bomber blows up the hotel. Soon after, Jessica recruits a member of al Qaeda who she believes will lead her to Bin Laden. Instead, he uses their first meeting to bring a bomb into Camp Chapman, killing Jessica along with many others. Once al Qaeda attempts to kill Maya in her home in Islamabad, she is sent back to the Washington, DC office for her own protection. Nevertheless, she manages to locate the compound where Bin Laden is hiding and eventually succeeds in convincing her commanding officers to strike. Although she favors a bomb, they decide on a raid by the Navy Seals; once the Seals complete their mission, Maya identifies the body as Usama bin Laden.

Appendix II: List of Screen Titles

9 to 5. Directed by Colin Higgins. Written by Patricia Resnick and Colin Higgins. Twentieth Century Fox, 1980.

13 Going on 30. Directed by Gary Winick. Written by Josh Goldsmith and Cathy Yuspa. Revolution Studios, 2004.

"The 67th Primetime Emmy Awards." Directed by Louis Horvitz. Fox, September 20, 2015.

Adam's Rib. Directed by George Cukor. Written by Ruth Gordon and Garson Kanin. MGM, 1949.

The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet. Created by Ozzie Nelson. ABC, 1952-1966.

Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore. Directed by Martin Scorsese, written by Robert Getchell. Warner Bros. 1974.

Ally McBeal. Created by David E. Kelley. Fox, 1997-2002.

The Associate. Directed by Donald Petrie. Screenplay by Nick Thiel. Hollywood Pictures, 1996.

Baby Boom. Directed by Charles Shyer. Written by Nancy Meyers and Charles Shyer. United Artists, 1987.

Cagney & Lacey. Created by Barbara Avedon and Barbara Coray. CBS, 1981-1988.

Cleopatra Jones. Directed by Jack Starrett. Screenplay by Max Julien and Sheldon Keller. Warner Bros., 1973.

Coffy. Directed and written by Jack Hill. American International Pictures, 1973.

The Cosby Show. Created by Bill Cosby. NBC, 1984-1992.

Dallas. Created by David Jacobs. CBS, 1978-1991.

The Devil Wears Prada. Directed by David Frankel. Screenplay by Aline Brosch McKenna. Fox 2000 Pictures, 2006.

The *Dick Van Dyke Show*. Created by Carl Reiner. CBS, 1961-1966.

Disclosure. Directed by Barry Levinson. Screenplay by Paul Attanasio. Novel by Michael Crichton. Warner Bros., 1994.

Dead Poets Society. Directed by Peter Weir. Written by Tom Schulman. Touchstone, 1989.

Don't Tell Mom the Babysitter's Dead. Directed by Stephen Herek. Written by Neil Landau and Tara Ison. Cinema Plus, 1991.

Dynasty. Created by Esther Shapiro and Richard Alan Shapiro. ABC, 1981-1989.

E.R.. Created by Michael Crichton. NBC,1994-2009.

The Exorcist. Directed by William Friedkin. Written by William Peter Blatty. Warner Bros. 1973.

Family Ties. Created by Gary David Goldberg. NBC, 1982-1989.

Fatal Attraction. Directed by Adrian Lyne. Written by James Dearden. Paramount, 1987.

First Blood. Directed by Ted Kotcheff. Screenplay by Michael Kozoll, William Sackheim, and Sylvester Stallone. Anabasis N.V., 1982.

The First Wives Club. Directed by Hugh Wilson. Screenplay by Robert Harling. Novel by Olivia Goldsmith. Paramount, 1996.

Foxy Brown. Directed and written by Jack Hill. American International Pictures, 1974.

Gladiator. Directed by Ridley Scott. Written by David Franzoni, John Logan and William Nicholson. Dreamworks, 2000.

The Godfather. Directed by Francis Ford Coppola. Screenplay by Mario Puzo and Francis Ford Coppola. Paramount, 1972.

The Goldbergs. Created by Gertrude Berg, NBC, CBS, 1949-1955.

The Good Wife. Created by Michelle King and Robert King. CBS, 2009-.

Gravity. Directed by Alfonso Cuarón. Written by Alfonso Cuarón and Jonás Cuarón. Warner Brothers, 2013.

Grey's Anatomy. Created by Shonda Rhimes. ABC, 2005-.

Growing Pains. Created by Neal Marlens. ABC, 1985-1992.

The Heat. Directed by Paul Feig. Written by Katie Dippold. Twentieth Century Fox, 2013.

Hill Street Blues. Created by Steven Bochco and Michael Kozoll. NBC, 1981-1987.

His Girl Friday. Directed by Howard Hawks. Screenplay by Charles Lederer. Play, "The Front Page," by Ben Hecht. Columbia Pictures, 1940.

Homeland. Created by Alex Gansa and Howard Gordon. Showtime, 2011-.

How to Get Away with Murder. Created by Shonda Rhimes. ABC, 2014-.

The Hurt Locker. Directed by Kathryn Bigelow. Written by Mark Boal. Voltage Pictures, 2008.

I Don't Know How She Does It. Directed by Doug McGrath. Screenplay by Aline Brosh McKenna. Novel by Allison Pearson. Weinstein Company, 2011.

I Love Lucy. Created by Lucille Ball, Bob Carrol, Jr., Desi Arnaz, Jess Oppenheimer, Madelyn Pugh. CBS, 1951-1957.

John Tucker Must Die. Directed by Betty Thomas. Written by Jeff Lowell. Twentieth Century Fox, 2006.

Julia. Created by Hal Kanter. NBC, 1968-1971.

L.A. Law. Created by Steven Bochco and Terry Louise Fisher. NBC, 1986-1994.

Leave It to Beaver. Created by Joe Connelly, Bob Mosher, and Dick Conway. CBS, 1957-1963.

Legally Blonde. Directed by Robert Luketic. Screenplay by Karen McCulluh and Kirsten Smith. MGM, 2001.

Looking for Mr. Goodbar. Directed by Richard Brooks. Novel by Judith Rossner. Paramount, 1977.

Lover Come Back. Directed by Celbert Mann. Written by Stanley Shapiro, and Paul Henning. Universal, 1961.

Madam Secretary. Created by Barbara Hall. CBS, 2014-.

Madea's Big Happy Family. Written and directed by Tyler Perry. Tyler Perry Company, 2011.

A Madea Christmas. Written and directed by Tyler Perry. Tyler Perry Company, 2013.

Madea's Family Reunion. Written and directed by Tyler Perry. Tyler Perry Company, 2006

Madea Gets a Job. Written and directed by Tyler Perry. Tyler Perry Company, 2013.

Madea Goes to Jail. Written and directed by Tyler Perry. Tyler Perry Company, 2009.

Madea's Neighbors from Hell. Written and directed by Tyler Perry. Tyler Perry Company, 2014.

Madea's Witness Protection. Written and directed by Tyler Perry. Tyler Perry Company, 2012.

Mama. Created by Carol Irwin. NBC, CBS, 1949-1957.

The Mary Tyler Moore Show. Created by James L. Brooks and Allan Burns. CBS, 1970 – 1977.

*Midnight Cowboy. D*irected by John Schlesinger. Screenplay by Waldo Salt. Novel James Leo Herlihy. MGM, 1969.

Mike and Molly. Created by Mark Roberts. CBS, 2010-.

Murphy Brown, created by Diane English. CBS, 1988-1998.

Norma Rae. Directed by Martin Ritt. Written by Irving Ravetch, and Harriet Frank Jr.. Twentieth Century Fox, 1979.

The Office. Created by Ricky Gervais and Stephen Merchant. BBC, 2001-2003.

The Office. Created by Greg Daniels. NBC, 2005-2013.

The Other Woman. Directed by Nick Cassevetes. Written by Melissa K. Stack. Twentieth Century Fox, 2014.

Oz. Created by Tom Fontana. HBO, 1997-2003.

Parks and Recreation. Created by Greg Daniels and Michael Shur. NBC, 2009-2015.

Pillow Talk. Directed by Michael Gordon. Written by Stanley Shapiro, Maurice Richlin. Universal, 1959.

Private Practice. Created by Shonda Rhimes. ABC, 2007-2013.

The Proposal. Directed by Anne Fletcher. Written by Peter Chiarelli. 2009

Rambo: First Blood Part II. Directed by George P. Cosmatos. Written by David Morrell, Kevin Jarre, Sylvester Stallone, James Cameron. Anabis N.V., 1985.

Rambo III. Directed by Peter MacDonald. Written by David Morrell, Sylvester Stallone, and Sheldon Lettich. Anabis N.V., 1988.

Scandal. Created by Shonda Rhimes. ABC, 2012-.

Seinfeld. Created by Larry David and Jerry Seinfeld. NBC, 1989-1998.

Sex and the City. Created by Darren Star. Book by Candace Bushnell. HBO, 1998-2004.

Sex and the City. Directed by Michael Patrick King. New Line Cinema, 2008.

Sex and the City 2. Directed by Michael Patrick King. New Line Cinema, 2010.

Sex and the Single Girl. Directed by Richard Quine. Screenplay by Joseph Heller. Fernwood, 1964.

Silkwood. Directed by Mike Nichols. Written by Nora Ephron and Alice Arlen. MGM, 1983.

The Sopranos. Created by David Chase. HBO, 1999-2007.

State of Affairs. Created by Joe Carnahan. NBC, 2014-.

State of the Union. Directed by Frank Capra. Screenplay by Anthony Veiller and Myles Connolly. Play by Howard Lindsay and Russel Crouse. Liberty Films, 1948.

Sunset Blvd.. Directed by Billy Wilder. Written by Charles Brackett and D.M. Marshman Jr.. Paramount, 1950.

Temptation: Confessions of a Marriage Counselor. Directed and written by Tyler Perry. Lionsgate, 2013.

The Terminator. Directed by James Cameron. Written by James Cameron and Gale Anne Hurd. Hemdale Film, 1984.

Terminator II: Judgment Day. Directed by James Cameron. Written by James Cameron and William Wisher. Carolco Pictures, 1991.

Terminator III: Rise of the Machines. Directed by Jonathan Moscow. Written by John Brancato and Michael Ferris. C-2 Pictures, 2003.

Terminator Genisys. Directed by Alan Taylor. Written by Laeta Kalogridis and Patrick Lussier. Paramount, 2015.

Terminator Salvation. Directed by Joseph McGinty Nichol. Written by John Brancato and Michael Ferris. Halcyon Company, 2009.

The Thick of It. Created by Armando Iannucci. BBC, 2005-2012.

VEEP. Created by Armando Iannucci. HBO, 2012-.

The Very Best of Everything. Directed by Jean Negulesco. Written by Edith Sommer and Mann Rubin. Twentieth Century Fox, 1959.

Without Love. Directed by Harold S. Bucquet. Screenplay by Donald Ogden Stewart. Play by Philip Barry. MGM, 1945.

Waiting for Guffman. Directed by Christopher Guest. Written by Christopher Guest and Eugene Levy. Based on the play, *Waiting for Godot*, by Samuel Beckett. Warner Bros., 1996.

Wall Street. Directed by Oliver Stone. Written by Stanley Weiser and Oliver Stone. Twentieth Century Fox, 1987.

Who's the Boss. Created by Martin Cohan and Blake Hunter. ABC, 1984-1992.

Woman of the Year. Directed by George Stevens. Screenplay by Ring Lardner Jr. and Michael Kanin. MGM, 1942.

Working Girl. Directed by Mike Nichols. Written by Kevin Wade. Twentieth Century Fox, 1988.

Zero Dark Thirty. Directed by Katherine Bigelow. Written by Mark Boal. Columbia Pictures, 2013.

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