

The representation of gender roles in the media

- An analysis of gender discourse in *Sex and the City* movies

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Abstract

Media is a big part of people's everyday lives. It influences both how we see ourselves and the world to some extent. There are many different types of media, for example: television shows, movies, the radio, news papers, advertisements which are placed in random places and the internet. In these different forms of media, there are images of men and women, which are represented in different ways and with different characteristics. Research has been made on a lot of movies and television shows and this thesis will be adding to this vast amount of research by analyzing gender representation in the movies *Sex and the City* 1 and 2. By using discourse analysis, the results show different types of gender representation and whether the characters in *Sex and the City* challenge the patriarchal privilege. Assuming social constructivism, we believe that these images of gender representation in movies affect our perception of what a man or a woman is. Our results suggest that the characters do still follow the patriarchal privilege but some characters do on occasion challenge them. However the outcome is rarely successful.

Keywords

Discourse Analysis, Representation, Gender Roles, Film and Media, *Sex and the City*.

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1. Introduction

The problem brought forth with this thesis concerns the representation of gender, or the ‘discourse’ of gender. If you watch television, walk on the street, wait for the bus or do other things, you are always confronted by images of men and women. In movies, television series and advertisements you see these images and they may influence you consciously or subconsciously. Since media is such a big part of people’s everyday lives, and in some ways may influence how people perceive themselves and the world, it is interesting to see how representations in movies portray gender. These images, whether it is known or not, may have an important impact upon people’s lives and how people create their identities. It is highly improbable to think that the media does not affect people, their way of thinking, and the way they perceive the world and themselves (Gauntlett 2008, p. 1-3).

Therefore, in order to add to the literature, the main idea of this thesis is attempting to see how gender is represented in movies by loosely using different types of discourse analysis. It is especially interesting considering the political problems connected to this subject ‘gender’. For example the rise of women’s rights and the fight towards women’s equal rights has affected the gender representation in movies before which is mentioned in the literature review chapter. Due to time restraints the movies which will be analyzed in this thesis are *Sex and the City* 1 and 2. The reason we believe these movies was a good choice for analysis is rather simple; they are a continuation of the television series with the same name, which in turn is based on the book with the same name. So it is assumed that it has been seen and most likely, liked by many, and therefore may have had a big widespread influence in our current culture. Then the interesting thing is, if it has been this popular and seen by a lot of people for a long period of time, in what way have it represented men and women, and their gender roles.

Based on previous research in the field of gender studies in media, it has been argued that men and women are viewed differently, and this view lives on in how they continue to be represented/characterized/framed etc within different forms of media. We have chosen to look at the representation of gender in the movies *Sex and the City* 1 and 2¹, which are by no means gender neutral movies, considering the main characters are female not male.

Sex and the City 1 was released in June 2008 and had an estimated budget of \$65,000,000 but grossed \$415,252,786 worldwide. *Sex and the City* 2 was released in May 2010, and it had an estimated budget of \$100,000,000 but grossed \$95,328,937 only in the US by August 15th (IMDB.com). There is no worldwide estimate of the gross for the second movie visible at

¹ *Sex and the City: The Movie* (IMDB.com), however, we refer to it as *Sex and the City* 1.

IMDB. Both of the movies belong to the genres Comedy, Drama and Romance. There are no stats of how many have actually seen these movies but the gross numbers gives us a good indication at least. Furthermore, getting an actual accurate number would be close to impossible since there is no real way of knowing exactly how many have seen it due to online piracy.

The first movie describes the different lives of four white, well-educated, upper class women that live in New York City. The second movie takes place mostly in Abu Dhabi instead of New York City. Both movies have a story-telling mode: Carrie, one of the four women, describes how life is like for her and the other three women. Carrie, the main character in both of the two movies, is a professional writer who in the first movie gets married to a rich guy named Mr. Big. Miranda is portrayed as a particular career woman, a lawyer, who struggles to be a good mother at the same time. Charlotte is portrayed as a more traditional woman who has a dream of having a perfect family. And Samantha is a woman portrayed as an open-minded woman who considers sex more important than anything else in a relationship. It can be argued that the success of the television show with the same name was the portrayal of these four different types of women. However, we have not found any data to support this as being the reason for the success of the show.

Gender studies in media are a wide topic of research that includes many different types of media: prime-time television, radio and more recently, the internet. It is a constantly growing field of study and is important for many reasons. Different ideologies concerning gender representation can be seen in various films. A wide range of methods in researching have been applied to the field as well. The most common methods have been quantitative content analysis and discourse analysis.

Studies on gender roles in media show that women are underrepresented in movies, and that they are represented in a different way than men. Men tend to be portrayed as having higher and longer lasting career status based on their success, while women have lower and shorter career status based on their youth/looks (Carter & Steiner 2004). Although gender studies imply that gender concerns both femininity and masculinity, it is rare that both sides are discussed at the same time. Gender studies in media mostly concern the feminine perspective, and how women are portrayed. Mostly it focuses on the negative aspects of women's portrayal, rarely the positive. It rarely pays attention to how men are portrayed. If at all it is mentioned but not discussed to the same length. Furthermore, media and gender is a big area that constantly produces new data that can be gathered and analyzed in various ways. Each year there are a huge amount of movies and television shows produced. Media is an

important area of study since it has the power to represent what is ‘socially acceptable’ (Carter & Steiner 2004). Furthermore, representations are political in the sense that they are power-laden, proof of this can clearly be seen in literature pertaining, the history of Hollywood film and representation (Ryan & Kellner 1990, Benshoff & Griffin 2004). We are trying to fill a small gap in the research by studying both the representation of male and female characters in *Sex and the City* movies, since so far there has been no research made on the movies, only the television series.

The general aim of this thesis is therefore to add to the literature by studying the representation of male and female characters in the movies *Sex and the City* 1 and 2, based on findings from previous research. We aim to qualitatively apply the theories of social constructivism, representation analysis and discourse analysis. Specifically, what we do is, looking at how men and women are represented, by describing the characters in the two movies *Sex and the City* 1 and 2, and to test the theories made in previous research by discussing whether they challenge the patriarchal gender roles.

Firstly, following this introduction, a literature review is presented in order to show in more detail what kinds of research have been done before regarding gender and media as well as *Sex and the City*. Different theories and concepts are introduced in order to strengthen the relevance of this thesis, in this case theories concerning social constructivism, representation, semiotics, discourse, and gender. Various methods such as quantitative content analysis and qualitative discourse analysis are described and discussed in order to support the choice of method for this study. A discourse analysis of the two movies *Sex and the City* is conducted in order to answer our research questions. Last but not least, a brief conclusion is drawn regarding the results of this thesis. Furthermore, for simplicity in our analysis, results and discussion are referred to the first movie as SATC1 and the second movie as SATC2.

2. Literature Review

Previous research concerning gender and media is quite extensive and covers many different forms of media, for example: prime-time television, movies, cartoons/Disney, music, games and much more recently the internet where new forms of media are being produced. Previous research has shown that the most common data analyzed is from prime-time television, movies have not been analyzed as much, although this research field involving movies seems to have expanded (Carter & Steiner 2004, Gauntlett 2008). A wide range of different methods have been used in this field of study, however, the most common ones are quantitative content analysis and discourse analysis (Carter & Steiner 2004, Collins 2011, Gauntlett 2008, Rudy et al 2010).

Research on contemporary Hollywood films over time indicates that political messages and ideologies can be seen in films, representing the ideas and opposition of the social system in effect at the time (Ryan & Kellner 1990). Specifically, during the time period when second wave feminism was taking place, Hollywood was still creating the same type of movies, representing men and women in a traditional way. The movies ignore the ideas connected to the feminist movement taking place, or promoting ideologies opposing feminist ideas (Benshoff & Griffin 2004, p. 273). Furthermore, Hollywood still seems to represent gender in a way that still upholds a 'patriarchal privilege' (Benshoff & Griffin 2004, p. 288).

Representation of certain characters can work towards explaining the political social landscape at a time, concerning ideas of or from political movements, for example the feminist movements against patriarchal oppression of women, or the black rights movements towards giving black people the same rights as white people (Ryan & Kellner 1990). It is interesting to see how the black feminists see the movie *Pretty Woman* as spectators, from different aspects such as gender, race, class etc. *Pretty Woman* is considered having a typical Disney fairy tale princess plot because it is describing the life story of an attractive street hooker named Vivian who is saved and turned into a classy woman by a handsome corporate raider Edward, which answers questions from a black feminist spectatorship point of view (Bell et al 1995, p. 224-234). The movie implies several signs such as gender, romance, femininity, masculinity, wealth, economic implications, respect, class etc. which in turn, shows that this movie follows the concepts in typical Disney princess movies. Although the heroine Vivian is portrayed to be a typical modern woman being attractive, independent, self-employed, the fact that she is just a street hooker which belongs to a lower class, cannot be changed. In the end she is turned into a proper lady who belongs to the upper class by Edward

and becomes his wife, which in turn helps Edward to become a more sensitive human being. Vivian is not like any other prostitute. The fact that she is portrayed to be white and clean, she refuses to kiss on the mouth, she flosses her teeth and does not do drugs, she uses proper condoms, implies that although she belongs to a lower class, she still has the potential to become a proper lady (Bell et al 1995, p. 224-234).

There is research concerning feminism and femininity which focuses on the television show *Sex and the city* which is based on the book with the same name (Akass & McCabe 2004, Arthurs 2003, Southard 2008). The research made by Stillion Southard concerning the television show is conducted through the use of discourse analysis. The research points out that the characters within the show possess certain characteristics, and the main characteristics are mostly white, female, well educated and economically independent. According to the research, the show takes place in a post-feministic arena, and that post-feminism is mostly referred to anti-feminism. Although, there are arguments for and against such a statement, some argue that feminism is ever changing and there are different ways of looking at it in the context of the television show (Arthurs 2003, Stillion Southard 2008). Femininity is described as a moving target, which represents cosmetic and behavioral expectations of womanhood during a certain period of time. Femininity also includes women's sexual attractiveness to men (Stillion Southard 2008, p. 158-159).

According to Stillion Southard (2008), *Sex and the City* pushes the gender boundaries and questions the current social norms within the series in various ways. Examples of scenes and episodes of this are given on multiple occasions. However, it is unclear how these scenes have been selected, if it is random or whether it is to promote the authors' own ideas. So in the case of research made on the television series of *Sex and the City*, the method of collecting and the use of data in the analysis is unclear.

However, there has been no research made on the movies. Therefore, we wish to add to the literature by doing research on the movies *Sex and the City* and *Sex and the City 2*. Specifically, it would be interesting to find out how men and women in these movies are represented: how different characters are portrayed, using typically feminine and masculine traits. Furthermore, we aim to find out whether or not the characters challenge the traditional gender roles, and if they do, in what way they are doing so. Questions concerning age and representation are also interesting when it comes to these two cases, since the characters are older than in most other Hollywood films.

3. Theoretical approach

3.1 Social Constructivism

The ontological viewpoint held as a basis for this thesis is social constructivism. The basic idea of social constructivism is that the world is socially constructed. The social order in which we perceive the world, what is right and/or wrong, is in a constant state of change. Meaning is constructed through interaction between different people and their relation to objects and other people. Definitions and concepts are also constantly changing, depending on the current culture, and it is also varying from situation to situation (Bryman 2008, p. 19-20). What this means is that meaning is created through language depending on how people use concepts and what the meaning of these concepts are. The following quote describes it perfectly:

It is social actors who use the conceptual systems of their culture and the linguistic and other representational systems to construct meaning, to make the world meaningful and to communicate about that world meaningfully to others (Hall 1997, p. 25).

Furthermore, there is a wide variety of ideas on what constructivism really is (Marsh & Stoker 2010, p. 83). But the most relevant approaches for this thesis are the ones concerning representation analysis. Mainly, the semiotic approach which was influenced by Ferdinand de Saussure, and the discursive approach influenced by Michel Foucault (Hall 1997, p. 15). What is interesting in this thesis then is the social construction of men and women: how gender roles are constructed within the two movies *Sex and the City 1* and *2*.

3.2 Representation

Language is the main medium of which we humans use to interact with each other and this is a basic understanding of what language is. It is the medium that makes it possible for us to write this thesis and for others to read and understand its meaning. The interesting thing is how language creates meaning. Language operates as a representational system which includes signs and symbols (Hall 1997, p. 1). The following quote is a good way of describing language and its importance overall.

Language, then, is the property of neither the sender nor the receiver of meanings. It is the shared cultural 'space' in which the production of meaning through language - that is, representation - takes place (Hall 1997, p. 10).

As mentioned previously, there are two social constructivist approaches that are especially concerned with representation analysis and those approaches are the semiotic approach and the discursive approach (Hall 1997, p. 15). Both of them are described in more depth due to their importance for this thesis.

3.2.1 The Semiotic Approach

The semiotic approach pertains the meaning of language and individual texts parole, which considers the analysis of texts an important feature in the cultural analysis of media (Lacey 2000, p. 238. Fairclough 1995, p. 24). Language is a system built on signs: there are many different types of signs, all ranging from images, sounds, written words. The approach is heavily influenced by Saussure's ideas concerning the form or as he called it the signifier: the idea referred to as the signified and the correlation between these two elements of a sign. The signifier in this context is the word, image or photo of the object and the signified is the object itself. For example, the image of a walkman is a signifier, whereas the signified is the concept, in this case the concept of the portable cassette player (Hall 1997, p. 30-31). However, according to Saussure, signs have no fixed meaning, rather as mentioned when describing social constructivism overall: it is ever changing and adapting to the time period wherein it is being used. Furthermore, what signify are things' differences, for example the color red, what 'is not' red makes it possible to signify what 'is' red. The simplest way to show these differences is to pair things or words with other things and words that mean the opposite, for example black/white, day/ night and masculine/feminine etc (Hall 1997, p. 31-32).

3.2.2 The Discursive Approach

The discursive approach is influenced by Michel Foucault. It is not focused as much on the semiotics, language side of things. Rather it is focused more on the production of knowledge and meaning. Foucault's discourse approach is much broader than Saussure's semiotic approach, in the sense that it also incorporates power/knowledge in correlation with history and historical events (Hall 1997, p. 51). Discourse is a very difficult concept to understand. Therefore the following quote will hopefully sheds some light on its meaning, concerning practices and not just text and words etc.

[s]ince we can only have knowledge of things if they have a meaning, it is discourse – not the things-in-themselves – which produces knowledge. Subjects like 'madness', 'punishment' and 'sexuality' only exist meaningfully within the discourses about them. (Hall 1997, p. 45).

It is not a concept about the idea concerning 'if' things exist or not, but rather the idea of 'where' the meaning comes from (Hall 1997, p. 45). For this thesis, a good example would be the concept 'gender' or 'gender roles'. If discussed with a discourse approach, the interesting thing is the meaning of gender in correlation with power/knowledge in a historical perspective. The interesting questions worth being looked at are: what the statements about gender are, what the used rules are when speaking about gender, what we are allowed to think and say concerning the concept gender and how the concept is dealt with in institutions.

The term discourse includes two senses of meanings: one is discourse as social action and interaction which is of great significance in linguistic studies; the other one is discourse as a social construction of reality as well as a form of knowledge, which is the main force in post-structuralist social theory studies. Therefore, discourse analysis can be viewed as a way to show systematic relationships between socio-cultural practices, discourse practices e.g. intertextual analysis as well as texts, including linguistic, spoken and written languages as well as visual images and sound effects (Fairclough 1995, p. 17-18).

What should not be ignored is that there are two different categories of discourses: genres and discourses. "A discourse is the language used in representing a given social practice from a particular point of view. Discourses appertain broadly to knowledge and knowledge construction." (Fairclough 1995, p.56). "A genre is a way of using language which corresponds to the nature of the social practice that is being engaged in." (Fairclough 1995, p. 76). Therefore, to make contributions from discourse analysis to social and cultural analysis, the way of combining these insights with textual analysis is strongly needed, which aims at making them 'operational', usable as well as matching specific cases (Fairclough 1995, p. 54).

3.3 Gender

3.3.1 The concept gender

There are two concepts of gender, the biological gender and the socially constructed gender. A text written by Gayle Rubin's in 1975 discusses gender as a sex/gender system, in which the social gender is described as enhancing the idea of a biological gender, which in itself creates 'gender'. It implies that the image of gender image for both sexes is being distorted, due to gender being socially constructed. In gender theory there is also the discussion of the power aspect being built into the gender system: a system in which the male is the norm, making the female the subordinate one of the two genders (Månsson 2010, p.243-245. Miegel & Johansson 2002, p. 162). The starting point in gender theory then is that the features/traits that we consider as being feminine or masculine is socially constructed, and has

changed throughout history. The woman is described as being watched/saved, while the man the one watching/saving (Bell et al. 1995, Miegel & Johansson 2002, p. 158, 165-169). In this thesis the important concept concerning gender theory is the constructed gender. It is all very interesting that women are positioned as the subordinate gender, since women are the gender assigned to physically weaker traits or features that describe what they are like.

The research on American film shows how gender has been represented historically and what changes there have been, or rather have not been (Benshoff & Griffin 2004). During the early times of American cinema women were represented based on codes drawn from the Victorian era. Her main job was to produce and raise children, not work outside the home (Benshoff & Griffin 2004, p. 208). During this time there were also images of bad women: women who were described as explicitly sexualized, and the moral of those stories usually ended with bad things happening to these bad women. This in turn made a woman of that time believe that if they do not behave like good women, bad things would happen to them. When the first wave feminism took place in America, the image presented in the movies of feminist women was that of 'criminal radicals or madwomen' (Benshoff & Griffin 2004, p. 210). By the time women earned equal rights a new type of character was introduced, called the flapper, however, in movies she was represented as independent but only by using her freedom to buy things to show her 'personal style'. She was also still out to find a husband (Benshoff & Griffin 2004, p. 211). In 1934, activist groups eventually managed to force the industry to self-censor itself through something called 'the seal of approval'. Their arguments were that the behavior of independent women and flappers was 'wild, godless and scandalous' (Benshoff & Griffin 2004, p. 218). In movies during this time, a woman's place was portrayed as being in the private sphere. If they did not stay good mothers and housewives, they would be some way or another punished. Happiness for a woman was described as 'finding a man'. A common scenario often includes a story where the woman has to choose between having a man and pursuing her career. Movies with those scenarios usually lead to a wonderful life if she chooses the man, and loneliness and misery if she chooses her career. The message these movies are meant to teach women is 'how to be submissive and beautiful' in order to 'find a man to raise a family with', and how horrible their lives would be if they cannot find a man (Benshoff & Griffin 2004, p. 220). During the great depression, when men were 'disabled' from their role as family providers. Due to being laid off their job, men in movies were starting to represent rougher images of 'leading' men, and were increasingly represented as showing violence towards women. The message movies sent to men during these times was

how to be masculine: by teaching them how to walk, talk and handle other men and women (Benshoff & Griffin 2004, p. 250-251).

Previous research made using quantitative content analysis point out several issues concerning the portrayal of gender in media, as well as findings that several studies have in common. The most striking finding is that women are highly underrepresented in most forms of media (Collins 2011, Gilpatric 2010, Lauzen & Dozier 2005). Furthermore, previous studies show that if women are represented, if at all, it is usually in a negative manner, as an object, subordinated or as a victim that needs to be saved: in some cases women are even portrayed as less successful than men (Collins 2011, England et al 2011, Gilpatric 2010, Lauzen & Dozier 2005).

Another interesting aspect that previous research has found is that age and gender is yet another area where the gender roles are uneven. Studies made in 2002 about the top 100 grossing films show that the majority of female characters are in their 20s and 30s, while male characters are usually in their 30s and 40s. The same research shows that women are also portrayed as less successful the older they get and less appealing overall, meanwhile men get portrayed as more successful and appealing the older they get. The research also shows that women's success are based on youth and looks, while men's success are more directed at achievements such as high status occupations (Lauzen & Dozier 2005).

There are also a few examples of media where women are not underrepresented: an example of a study that shows this is a content analysis concerning the portrayal of Disney Princesses, which also compares changes over time. The research looks at the gender portrayal of the princesses in nine different Disney movies, over three periods of time. The three periods that were studied are: 1937-1959 – 3 movies studied, 1989-1998 – 5 movies studied and only the one movie in 2009. This study shows that women, in this case princesses, overall have the most on screen time compared to princes or their male counter-part, which rarely have any on screen time, especially in the earliest movies. However, it also shows that women overall are portrayed with typical feminine traits, but that over time the gender roles have visibly changed from the first period of movies to the last. In the last movie, it is analyzed that the princesses and princes have a more equal division of female and male traits (England et al 2011). Furthermore, princes are mentioned, but very little compared to the princesses, and it is clear that the focus is on the gender portrayal mainly on female characters. The focus is usually on the relation the man has to the portrayal of women, usually as the woman's savior or sometimes lover (England et al 2011, Gilpatric 2010). So there is a gap

when looking at the portrayal of male characters, no matter how small or large their on-screen time may be.

Even in advertisements as in movies it is possible to see that women/girls are represented and analyzed in a different way compared to men (Carter & Steiner 2004). For example, advertising discourses during the interwar period identifies three different types of portrayals concerning women's identities, which are the capable household manager, guilt ridden mother and the flapper (Carter & Steiner 2004, p. 44-45). A more recent example on how this type of discourse is still alive is a study conducted by Goodin et al from 2011, showing that self-objectification is a discussed concept when it comes to how women and children are portrayed by the way they dress in advertisements and magazines, as well as outside of these medias. Furthermore how women dress has been a topic of discussion in various ways in describing them negatively or positively. An example on how the analysis of women and girls dress is conducted is by looking at their clothing's shape, colors and so forth (Goodin 2011).

3.3.2 Analytical framework

The below table has been put together based on traits used/discussed in previous research (England et al. 2011, p. 561 table 2 & 3). They are not all put as opposites to each other but a basic list of features.

Table 1: Analytical framework of feminine and masculine

Feminine Traits	Masculine Traits
Physically weak	Physically Strong
Submissive	Assertive
Emotional	Unemotional
Dependant	Independent
Nurturing, Helpful	Selfish/Self-serving
Afraid, Fearful	Hero, Brave, Inspires fear
Troublesome	Problem solver
Follower	Leader
Victim	Perpetrator
Described as physically attractive	Described as having higher economic/career status and being intellectual
Asks for or accepts advice	Gives advice
Ashamed	Proud

This table is used to answer our prime research question, which broadly looks at how men and women are represented based on what is considered typical gender traits from previous research. This table is used when we try to distinguish if the characters are represented in a feminine or masculine way. Therefore, we describe these terms a little bit more in detail in order to show the exact meaning².

3.3.2.1 “Feminine” traits

Physically Weak - When a person is unsuccessful using bodily strength, for example incapable of opening a jar or carrying a big box, or similar actions.

Submissive - When someone is obeying someone else without questioning their authority.

Emotional - When someone is showing his/her feelings, both positive and negative.

Dependant - Someone that depends on someone else, for example a home, food and money or other things.

Nurturing, Helpful - Someone that takes care of or supports someone else physically or mentally.

Afraid, fearful – When someone is nervous or afraid to get hurt or that something bad will happen.

Troublesome – Someone who causes trouble or pain to others.

Follower – A person that supports and admires another person or set of ideas. A person who is very interested in a particular activity and follows all the current news about it.

Victim: Someone that needs to be saved because he/she is being hurt or tortured by someone.

Described as physically attractive - The character is described as beautiful/attractive by another character.

Asks for or accepts advice - The character asks for help or assistance or in other ways and shows that he/she need help.

Ashamed – Someone feels shame or embarrassment due to something he/she has done.

3.3.2.2 “Masculine” traits

Physically Strong – Something shows that the character is strong, by example moving heavy objects, hitting something etc.

² The source we use for explaining these terms is found in England et al pages 558-560 and *the oxford advanced learners dictionary*, we will not be referencing after each term being explained since it would just make it cluttered, therefore we are mentioning the sources used, here instead.

Assertive – Someone that strongly expresses their opinions so that others will notice declaring or positively stating something.

Unemotional – The opposite of emotional, a character that does not show emotions.

Independent - Someone who is self-sufficient and does not depend on other people for home, food and money etc.

Selfish/Self-serving – People who only care about themselves and not about others. People who are only interested in gaining advantages for themselves.

Hero, Brave, inspires fear – A person that is admired for doing something good or brave, for example saving someone or doing something that is dangerous. Someone who inspires fear by making someone else be afraid of him/her.

Problem solver – A person that find ways to solve problems.

Leader – A person that in some way leads a group of people.

Perpetrator – A person that commits a crime or does something that is wrong/evil/mean.

Described as having a higher economic/career status and being intellectual – A person that is described as having a profession in which the character earns a lot of money. Also this person is reading or doing similar intellectual activities.

Gives advice – Someone who gives other people advice on how to act etc.

Proud – Feeling satisfied with something that has never been achieved.

3.4 How theories will be used

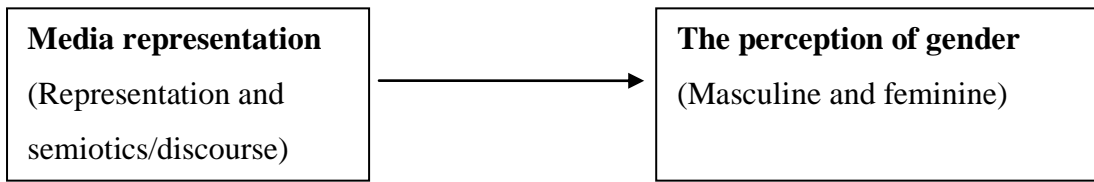
The theory of representation establishes that language is a part of culture and it is the main medium we use to interact with each other. Different forms of media use languages to portray meanings in various ways, for example spoken, text and visual forms. The semiotic approach explains this relationship with the two terms signifier and signified. The concept of discourse adds to this understanding through the ideas of power and the production of knowledge through language. The focus is on the production of meaning and how it is perceived.

What will be done in this thesis is that we will analyze the two movies based on these theoretical understandings. Representation, semiotics and discourse will be our “independent variables” because they provide us with the basic understanding of the importance of language and media, in how we understand the world and ourselves. The perception of gender then is the “dependant variable” because it is influenced by how gender is represented in the different forms of media. More importantly, we assume this causal relation but we do not seek to analyze it.

Figure 1: Independent and dependent variable

Independent variable

Dependent variable



We qualitatively apply the theories and ideas of representation analysis, social constructivism, semiotic/discourse analysis in analyzing the two movies *Sex and the City 1* and *2* to see how men and women are represented. To do this we use the table made and explained in our concept chapter about what historically are masculine and feminine traits.

4. Specified Aim and Research question

The aim of this thesis is to apply the theories of representation and different forms of discourse analysis to see how gender is represented in the SATC movies. The following research questions are used to guide us towards this aim.

Prime research question:

1. How are men and women represented in the movies?
 - a. How are the differences between masculine and feminine traits of the different characters shown?
 - b. Do the traits of the characters challenge conventional gender roles? If so, how? If not, in what ways are they not doing so?

5. Methodology

5.1 Research design and Method

This thesis qualitatively investigates how men and women are represented in the two movies *Sex and the City*. We analyze how gender roles are represented in the two movies in order to see how men and women are represented. Whether they are represented as typically feminine or masculine, which has been the case in previous studies within the field, is worth being looked at.

For our aim, the best type of research design is a comparative design. Since the aim of this thesis is to describe and discuss how the two genders, male and female are represented in *Sex and the City* 1 and 2. Our prime research question is of a descriptive nature. When conducting research of a descriptive nature, it is not enough to just describe, the material also needs to be used in an interesting way. More importantly, the analysis needs to be based on a clear analytical tool, in order to draw conclusions other than those explicitly showed in the material (Esaiasson et al. 2007, p. 37-38). In this thesis we are also interested in if the traditional gender roles are questioned and if so in what way and to what extent. Because of this, we are indeed able to bring the discussion a step further and therefore sufficiently discuss and support our results with good and valid arguments.

Analyzing more than two movies is not feasible for this thesis due to time constraints, at least not in order to produce a thorough enough analysis and discussion about the gender representation in order to fulfill our aim. Based on this design we cannot make too broad generalizations about gender representation. However, we still believe that this study, albeit small and only concentrating on two movies, adds to the overall literature regarding gender representation and if the movies are showing similar types of gender representation as in previous Hollywood movies, broader generalizations are possible and relevant since they are supported by previous research.

We test theories of gender representation by using discourse analysis as the most important method of gathering and analyzing data. One of the reasons as to why we believe that a discourse analysis is the best choice is that as previously mentioned, it is one of the methods used by previous researchers within this field and the seemingly best suited in responding to our type of research questions. Content analysis which has also been used in media studies is in our opinion not suitable because we are not interested in the frequency of certain aspects or features but rather the detail which we believe is better done with discourse analysis.

What should not be ignored about discourse analysis is that it has many different types, but under some conditions, two or more types can be put together. The types of discourse change all the time, as the old ones die and the new ones emerge, as related to complicity and contestation with other discourses in society. Discourses need to be shown in large scale, and they are limitless to be counted as types (Gee 2005, p. 31). Media discourse approaches mainly include linguistic and sociolinguistic analysis, conversation analysis, semiotic analysis, social-cognitive analysis, cultural-generic analysis as well as critical linguistics and social semiotics (Fairclough 1995, p. 20). Analysis of texts and practices should focus on analysis of social and cultural context of media practices, including the above media discourse approaches. As is mentioned in the theory, our main theoretical approach and concepts are social constructivism, gender theory, representation as well as semiotic approach and discursive approach. We use a mix of different discourse approaches and how we use them is described more in detail in the following sections.

5.2 Method of gathering the data

We are not verifying or falsifying theory, we are simply mapping different types of representations seen in the movies concerning gender representation, in relation to the different characters and how these representations are presented in the movie narratives. The collection of data is gathered through watching the movies and taking notes of what is seen, and spoken in the movies. Samples are chosen from these notes for analysis. Of course there are implications to this.

One implication is that there is a wide variety of discourse analyses and there is no exact way of conducting one. A lot of researchers that use discourse analysis see it more as an analytical mentality and some argue that it is hard or even impossible to code the practices some even resist the idea of doing so (Bryman 2008, p. 499-501). We are doing research on how women and men are represented in media. The aim of this thesis is to find out how gender is represented in the movies *Sex and the City 1* and *2* by looking at femininity and masculinity. A qualitative discourse analysis is selected as the most suited for our aim. For most social studies of media, the analysis of media language can make a significant contribution. The ideological work of media language includes mainly three aspects: the certain social identity constructions, certain constructions of social relations and the certain ways of representing the world e.g. gender (Fairclough 1995, p. 5-12, 27).

Since our aim is to analyze the movies, our only sources of data are the movies themselves, because this thesis applies a qualitative research design. When using a discourse analysis, it is

hard to separate the gathering of data with the analysis of data since they are done roughly at the same time. As already mentioned, other researchers using this approach resist the idea of coding the process. However, we ‘loosely’ code the process. The reasons we have to code the process loosely are: firstly it makes the analysis simpler and more organized to carry through; secondly it improves the chances for consistent results, making it easier to draw conclusions and make appropriate generalizations. We use the following template when gathering the data to get the information needed from each relevant scene:

Figure 2: Framework used when coding

<p>Timeframe in the movie: x: xx: xx - x: xx: xx</p> <p>(Characters): name1, name2 etc</p> <p>Description of Scene: What has happened in the relevant scene and where the dialogue takes place.</p> <p>Analysis: Which traits are seen based on the listed traits in the analytical framework.</p>

By coding the process of gathering the data, it makes the conduction of the analysis easier. Since we have it in written form and can therefore go back and forth in the data when necessary to double-check for mistakes and to re-watch the scenes when needed. Since we are using this template to gather our data, our research can easily be replicated.

5.2.1 Ethical Discussion

When conducting qualitative research it is hard not to be biased when gathering and analyzing data. When it comes to gender and gender roles, we already have an idea of what a typical woman and a typical man look like, and how they behave. So it would be ignorant to say that our pre-determined ideas of those concepts of what a man and a woman are do not somehow reflect on how we interpret our results.

The following ethical principles are based on the four main areas mentioned by Diener and Candall (Bryman 2008, p. 118). When it comes to the first principle concerning ‘harm of participants’, it is not an issue for this thesis, since ‘the participants’ are ‘fictional characters’, namely just representations of stereotypes in the movies instead of real people. Based on the argument that the ‘participants’ are not real people but just stereotypical representations that are being studied, the other points concerning ‘lack of consent’, ‘invasion of privacy’ and ‘deception’ do not pose a problem either (Bryman 2008, p. 118). Of course one could pose the question whether permission should be given by the director and the actors.

5.3 Method of analyzing the data

5.3.1 Operationalization framework

When discussing the results of our analysis, we use detailed description to describe the relevant scenes and the dialogue in them. This is followed by a discursive analysis of the scenes and arguments related to gender discourse in these scenes. This is based on the terms found in our analytical framework under our theory chapter.

As Gee (2005) describes in the book, discourse models are theories (including images, frameworks, and storylines) that come along often with people's unconscious thoughts, which contain personal experiences inside and are used to understand the world (Gee 2005, p. 61). A discourse exists in the ordered pattern of words, symbols, images, thoughts, times and places etc (Gee 2005, p 28). Therefore, collecting data from the languages spoken in the movies, the images shown in the movies and the time and space coordinated in the movies is the best and direct way to get data for our analysis. Besides, a discourse analysis in media also requires asking questions about how language in specific situations is used to maintain an understanding of the scenes (Gee 2005, p.110).

However our external validity can be seen as weak, considering our samples are not selected randomly (Bryman 2008, p. 46). Rather we chose the scenes and dialogues that are based on our observations somehow, showing portrayals of gender representation. It is quite possible that others, who choose to replicate our research, decide to use different scenes. However, our research does not jeopardize the ecological validity, since the movies are constant and does not change their 'behavior' due to us observing (Bryman 2008, p. 46).

5.3.2. Criteria for conclusions

We believe that the descriptions given in how to indicate what trait is shown, is sufficiently described in our theory chapter under our analytical framework. Furthermore, reasons as to why we code a certain character as showing 'submissive' traits will be discussed on a case by case basis. Arguments as to why we conclude some things to be a certain trait are clearly explained in the analysis.

6. Analysis and results

How gender is represented has importance and it affects how people see themselves and gender in reality. A discourse analysis of movies and how they portray gender is important for us to see what society's broader view on gender is. However we are in no way implying that this analysis gives a complete and true image of what gender is in the world, movies are after all fictional. If you think about it, you can probably agree with the fact that sometimes they do affect the way you think, act or even dress because movies are usually based on our views of reality. This analysis is conducted through the use of a discourse analysis, which requires us to interpret the text with the context it is in. We have done this by watching the movies and transcribing relevant scenes and parts of the dialogue that show a clear use of gender discourse. We then do the analysis by using our analytical framework as a tool.

In this discourse analysis, we start off by looking at the representation of the male and female characters overall, meaning what attributes most of the different characters have in common based on our observations. Furthermore, it is interesting to see how the different men and women are being represented, in relation to their different personalities. We therefore analyze the different characters in pairs/couples to see the different ways male and female characters are being represented both visually with their behavior and orally through the dialogue.

6.1 Female characters overall

Carrie, who is the main character in the movie, is a writer that has come to New York looking for the big love and she eventually found that in the male character Mr. Big. The two eventually get married at the end of the first movie after going through a lot of drama and misunderstandings.

Charlotte is described as the one who is looking for Mr. Perfect. She is longing for the picture perfect family. She is presented as being a very prude and traditional woman who is unwilling to swear and discuss sex or other personal things in detail. She is very careful with what she says and very concerned about how other people perceive her.

Miranda is a woman who struggles between being a good wife, mother and succeeding with her professional career. She loves her family but she also loves her job. However, problems always occur and she is sometimes forced to choose between her career and her family, although she does what she can to manage her time for both.

Samantha is described as loving lots of sex and all the adventures connected with sex and she does not mind discussing sex and going into details when doing so. She is portrayed as if she does not seem to be concerned about what people think of her at all, she does what she wants anyways. In a way she is Charlotte's opposite personality wise: she does not care if she swears loudly, or where she is when she does that. She is quite straightforward, although in quite a few situations her straightforward behavior makes her friends feel awkward. She also cares a lot about looking young and being able to keep her urge for sex going. Although she is such a successful woman, she still has to deal with aging problems. In SATC2 she has a box with 44 different kinds of vitamin and hormone pills to achieve keeping her youth. She would do anything, no matter what the cost, to keep her body young and fresh.

Overall the women in the SATC1 are represented as concerned about their physical appearance, trying to always look beautiful by using make-up, having styled hair, wearing brand clothing, high-heels and jewelry. The main female characters are all skinny, and the movie can be seen as promoting this feature of physical beauty. There are quite a few scenes that are good examples of this emphasis of physical beauty as having high importance. The first example is the opening scene of SATC1 in which Carrie's narrative voice begins with describing the reason as to why women come to New York. The opening scene that shows images containing skinny women, brand clothing and shoes could be interpreted as showing what goals single women in New York should have. Carrie's narrative voice strengthens this perception when she says:

Carrie's narrative voice: Year after year, twenty something women come to New York City, in search of the two Ls': Labels and Love (SATC1).

In this case what is meant by labels is quite clear due to the images used in the movie. Love of course implies a woman's search for a 'man'. This can be interpreted as women should strive towards looking as beautiful as possible, which as mentioned previously includes: being skinny, using make-up, wearing high-heels and brand clothes or just pretty clothes in general. At the same time, they should also be on the lookout for a man to fall in love with.

In a scene where Samantha shows up at Charlotte's baby shower and everyone is staring at her belly, she says that she eats a lot so she would not cheat on her boyfriend. They are asking her how she could not notice how much she had gained; she tells them that she has been avoiding mirrors. She also responds by saying that Smith has stayed with her through chemo so she should be able to stay in the relationship for him (SATC1). This scene again points

towards the underlying message that women should be thin and attractive. It is very visible considering Samantha is looked upon as being overweight for just having gained 15 pounds. She wants to cheat on her boyfriend because she loves sex, but she feels forced to stay faithful, because that is what people in relationships are supposed to do.

Another example that emphasizes physical beauty is a scene when Carrie, Charlotte, Miranda and Samantha are sitting by the beach in their bathing suits in Mexico and Samantha comments on Miranda's pubic hair, which Miranda takes offence to. She interpreted it as that it is her fault that her husband cheated on her, because she is not trying enough to be physically attractive for him (SATC1). Implying that pubic hair is not acceptable for a woman and if a woman does not tend to care about such things it may cause a man to cheat, making the cheating becoming the woman's fault.

The scene in SATC1 where Carrie is talking to her editor at Vogue concerning the fact that she is getting married at 40, Carrie is offered to personally feature in the magazine Vogue, as the 40 year old bride. The story itself is referred to by the editor as being a 'twist' and in the article Carrie would be referred to as 'the last single girl'. This could be interpreted as women having expiration dates, for when a man would want to marry them, and 40 being past the 'due date'.

Carrie: I thought it was great style at every age.

Editor: Style yes, Bride no (SATC1).

This dialogue enhances the thought that there may be an expiration date, at least of when a woman can still look good in a wedding dress without being photo shopped too much for it to be too obvious. So again being physically attractive is considered important and with age it is considered harder to stay and be physically attractive (SATC1). This scene also implies that women are limited due to their age and their physical appearance and that although they can be independent and strong, they still need marriage and love from men in order to fulfill their lives.

What can also be seen about the four main characters in the movies is, in the beginning of SATC2, the four of them all attend a gay wedding for their gay best friends. This scene shows that they are all very open-minded and they accept and respect gay marriage. It is also in this part of the movie that Samantha gets the chance to go to Abu Dhabi on a business trip with all fees covered. But she only wants to go if her three best friends are going. From here we can see that the friendships between the four ladies are portrayed as very deep and that they really care about each other. Although all four of them are so different, they always find a way to

get together and enhance their similarities. Charlotte worries so much about her children but she still joins her best friends. The two characters Miranda and Carrie said yes immediately when Samantha asked them.

6.2 Male characters overall

Mr. Big is a very rich guy that has been together with Carrie on and off for over ten years. He takes care of her, buys her expensive clothes and jewelry and he helps her solve problems when they occur. He even buys a super fancy apartment in New York City for the two of them. He also rebuilds the original wardrobe in the apartment by increasing its size from small to 'huge' in the lack of better words, just for Carrie (SATC1). Also in SATC2, Big proves to be a loving and forgiving husband when Carrie tells him she accidentally kissed her old boyfriend Aidan while in Abu Dhabi. He forgives Carrie by giving her a big diamond ring and telling her to swear that she would remember from now on that she is married.

Steve, Miranda's husband, loves Miranda very much, but he is also bothered by the fact that Miranda is so focused on her work, which sometimes gives him the feeling that Miranda does not care about him and their marriage. He wants to be the man of the house and have a wife who is more feminine. But Miranda is not that type of woman. Instead, she is independent, ambitious, and intellectual and cares about her economic status (SATC1).

Harry, Charlotte's husband, is not seen much in the movies. But from what we can see, it is possible to draw the conclusion that Harry is the "perfect" guy for Charlotte who gives her a perfect family. However, they had to travel all the way to China just to adopt a daughter because they cannot have children of their own. He financially takes care of Charlotte and his two daughters. He is loving, caring, independent and economically strong (SATC1). The only possible problem between him and Charlotte is when Charlotte is afraid that he might cheat on her with the nanny, due to the fact that he stares at the nanny's braless breasts. But everything turns out to be fine and he remains Charlotte's "perfect" husband in her perfect family (SATC2).

Smith is Samantha's boyfriend in SATC1 that allows her to combine sex and love in a relationship. Samantha has made him successful in his acting career and he is very into his work. Although Samantha regards sex more important than anything else, she has fallen in love with Smith. But the fact that he is too into work instead of having more sex with Samantha has annoyed Samantha and she is not comfortable in their relationship and she feels unhappy and trapped (SATC1).

The male characters are presented as overall independent, having a strong economic status and giving the impression that they should support their women economically. The male character that is showing the most feminine traits is Steve, who on multiple occasions shows his emotions, which means that men can be feminine as well. Furthermore, the male characters are always portrayed as wearing typical male clothes that show their masculinity, for example suits and ties, instead of wearing makeup, having styled hair, high heels and dresses. They do not seem to care about looking young and attractive. Although there are not so much described about the male characters in the movies as the female characters, it is still clearly shown that the female characters rely on the males very much both physically and emotionally, and sometimes economically and women care about what men think of them very much.

6.3 The relationships

6.3.1 Carrie Bradshaw and Mr. Big

The biggest themes/genres concerning Carrie and Mr. Big are love, a home (apartment) and marriage. In SATC1 when Big and Carrie is out looking for an apartment, Carrie describes apartment hunting as “Finding the perfect apartment in New York City is like finding the perfect partner. It can take years.” The scene implies that having an apartment as a couple is just as important as finding the perfect partner. Furthermore, when they decide to get the apartment, it is clear that Big is the one deciding. Big shows clearly that he is independent, whereas Carrie can be seen as dependent due to the fact that she lets him take care of it, showing that he has a higher economic status. He clearly shows that he has no problem taking a higher economic responsibility in their relationship. Another important aspect that is being brought up in this scene is the fact that they are not married, but merely boyfriend and girlfriend. The fact that the real-estate agent assumes they are married could be a sign of it being more common to look for an apartment together when married.

When the three characters Carrie, Charlotte and Miranda discuss the apartment purchase, Miranda points out to Carrie that legally Big owns the apartment and if something would go wrong, she would have no legal claim on ‘their’ home. Miranda also asks Carrie if she will be keeping her old apartment. Carrie accepts Miranda’s concern and her advice, but tells Miranda that she just wants her to be jealous of her for moving into a penthouse apartment. Accepting advice can be considered a feminine trait, but here Miranda gives advice, which is a masculine trait (SATC1).

After Carrie has discussed the apartment purchase with her friends, she discusses it with Big as well. She tells him that she wants to sell her apartment and put that money into ‘their’ new penthouse apartment. Big tells her she should not do that because it already is ‘their’ apartment, as he bought it for them. Then Carrie points out the fact that ‘he’ bought it and she has no legal rights to it since they are not married. So as a solution to this problem, Big asks her if she wants to get married. So she is asking if that is what he wants in a very submissive way by staring down on the table. Big is then very assertive by firmly saying ‘I want you’. Big’s proposal insinuates that getting married is the best way to solve the legal problem (SATC1).

In the scene where Big and Carrie are discussing the wedding that they are going to have, Big does not want to discuss it because he is busy working, but Carrie wants to make a big plan. So she sits in his lap but he pushes her away (SATC1).

Carrie: You’re not taking this serious.

Big: No I’m not, it is a circus... This is my third marriage how do you think this makes me look?

Carrie: I didn’t know that was even an issue...

Big: This is what you want. I want ‘you’ that is what I want. I could have just gone down to City Hall (SATC1).

She goes to the bathroom door and knocks on it: he opens it (SATC1).

Carrie: I think it’s too late for City Hall now.

Big: I wasn’t suggesting that.

Carrie looks sad.

Big: That’s the face I’ve been trying to avoid. Come here (SATC1).

Then he holds his arms out and gives her a hug. Quite a few traits are seen in this scene both typical female and typical male ones. Big is worrying about his pride on how he is perceived in public because he is getting married for the third time. He is also being very assertive with what he wants since he pushes her away when she wants to talk and he wishes to work. He tells her that he would have preferred just going to City Hall instead of having a huge wedding and a wedding he refers to as ‘being a huge circus’. This makes Carrie sad and she ends up being very submissive when she later approaches him with ‘it might be too late to go to City Hall’. She shows her submission by the way she knocks on the bathroom door and waits for him to open it before she says what is on her mind, even though the door was half open to begin with. She also seems ashamed for getting her way with the wedding instead of doing what he wants (SATC1).

At the wedding Carrie calls Big who has not showed up yet, he answers and tells her he cannot do this. She drops the phone on the floor. She is having a panic attack and tells her friends to get her out of there. Outside in the car Big changes his mind and tells the driver to turn around. The two cars meet halfway. They get out and Carrie runs up to him and hits him with the bouquet of flowers (SATC1).

Carrie: I knew you would do this, I am humiliated (SATC1).

Then she bursts into tears and gets help to get back into the car. In this scene Carrie shows her emotions by crying. She also says that she is humiliated and when dropping her phone, she is showing lack of physical strength due to the whole situation. Big on the other hand shows regret but no obvious and visible emotions. They both seem to show typical traits for their genders in this scene. However at the end of the movie they do get married, even though they no longer have the apartment. Big gets what he wants: Carrie and a small inconspicuous wedding in the City Hall. Carrie ends up having the wedding Big wanted in the end (SATC1).

In SATC2 Big has made them a delicious anniversary meal. Carrie gives Big an engraved Rolex watch. Carrie's gift from Big is a flat screen TV in the bedroom. Carrie is extremely disappointed.

Big: Did I mess up?

Carrie: A piece of jewelry would have been nice (SATC2).

Carrie is expecting an expensive jewelry instead of a TV that leads to "old married couple" life style in her opinion. She thinks that their marriage is different than anyone else. It should just be the two of them. A TV would lead to the result that they do not talk to each other anymore when they are at home.

When Carrie is in Abu Dhabi, she runs into her old boyfriend Aidan when she is visiting the market. They both feel that it is a magical coincidence that they both have traveled to the other side of the world and meet there. So they decide to meet for dinner together, where they end up flirting with each other. In the end of the dinner, when they are about to say goodbye, they kiss each other. Carrie almost runs back to her hotel and tells her friends immediately about what just happened. She regrets it so much because she realizes how much she cares about Big and how childish she was to get into all those arguments with Big. She calls Big right away and tells him how sorry she feels about kissing Aidan. Big does not say anything about this and just hangs up the phone. Big does not come to the airport to meet Carrie as he has promised. She has been waiting and calling for Big all day until he comes home in the

evening. Surprisingly, Big gives her a big black diamond ring as a punishment to let her remember that she is married (SATC2). There are many feminine traits seen by Carrie here, she feels guilty for arguing with Big and not doing what he wants, and for being troublesome. She is also being submissive when accepting the diamond ring, that she needs to remind herself that she is married and belongs to Big. Likewise by giving Carrie the ring to remind her not to cheat, Big is being assertive and a leader in the way that he tells her that she is not allowed to cheat, which Carrie agrees with and follows. This scene somehow shows that Carrie is not as mature as Big because she wanted to flirt and get attention from Aidan and eventually ended up kissing him although she knows clearly that she is married to Big. Instead, Big shows his understanding and love for Carrie although she cheated on him.

6.3.2 Charlotte and Harry York

Carrie's narrative voice: Charlotte was looking for the perfect love, well almost perfect. She married a Jew that can't get it up (SATC1).

Charlotte and Harry traveled to China and brought back for their daughter Lily, since they could not get children on their own. So here we can see that Charlotte's idea about a perfect family should include a perfect husband, and children (SATC1).

She is the only one in the movie that has never had fights with her partner, which can be seen from her character—the one who values family more than anything else. The only problem occurs when Samantha tells Charlotte about the fact that her nanny is not wearing a bra might lead to her husband cheating on her with the nanny. Charlotte is busy baking with her daughters while she is talking to Carrie on the phone about her worries concerning the braless nanny. She is afraid that the fact that the nanny does not wear a bra threatens her family's happiness, but at the same time she feels that she cannot deal with the kids on her own because it is just too much work for her. She is baking while her younger daughter is screaming and crying and her older daughter ends up destroying her cream Valentino skirt. She feels so bad that she steps into the kitchen storage room and bursts into tears meanwhile the nanny Erin comes home right at that moment and takes over the kids. Charlotte is happy that the nanny comes home right at that moment. Since Samantha told her about the concern she should have about the nanny, Charlotte has been so worried that Harry would cheat on her. So when they go to Abu Dhabi, she cannot stop texting Harry and she gets upset if he does not answer her texts immediately. But all of her worries turn out to have been in vain, since it turns out the nanny is a lesbian and has no interest in Harry (SATC2). Charlotte is showing a

lot of feminine traits: she is nurturing when taking care of her kids and she is emotional and starts crying when her dress gets ruined and she is also emotional by worrying so much about her husband possibly cheating on her.

Although Charlotte loves the fact that she has a perfect family, she still agrees with Miranda that being a mother is hard. When she is sitting in the hotel bar with Miranda, she starts to talk about her feelings out loud, which she has never allowed herself to do before. Even though she loves her kids so much, she has been enjoying time away from them. She says that Rose, her younger daughter, cries all day and all night. She says that what she has always wanted is a perfect family and now she has these two beautiful girls, who are driving her crazy. She feels that she has been failing all the time. Here the femininity of Charlotte is shown clearly, because she is showing emotions very clearly, and that she is afraid of not being a good mother, as well as she is dependent on her nanny to help her take care of her kids. In the end of SATC2, Charlotte returns home and finds out that her nanny is lesbian. Everything turns out to be fine and she still has her perfect family. The scene also shows that Charlotte's trust in her husband is not that deep. She would even worry about a nanny cheating with her husband instead of believing in her husband after all the years they have spent together. Instead, Harry remains the caring and loving husband despite of all Charlotte's doubts on him.

6.3.3 Miranda Hobbes and Steve Brady

In the opening scene Miranda is described as "A disciple of tough love". She got pregnant and then she married the father of her child and moved with them to Brooklyn.

Miranda and Steve are having sex.

Miranda: Let's just get it over with. I mean we have to get up in 4 and a half hour.

Steve: We never have sex and you just want to get it over with?

Miranda: Steve we have sex.

Steve: When was the last time we had sex.

Miranda: umm.

Steve: There was snow on the ground (SATC1).

This scene can be taken as a power struggle between Steve and Miranda. Steve wants to have sex, but Miranda just wants to get it over with. In a way it can be taken as Miranda being submissive, because she is having sex without actually wanting to, or at least not for as long as Steve wants to. Miranda seems to feel ashamed about the fact that she told Steve to just get it over with, because she feels the need to use an excuse as to why (SATC1).

Later on Steve cheats on Miranda with another woman. Steve clearly shows that he is ashamed of his actions and that he regrets what he has done. He is trying to give an explanation as to why he cheated on her, by using the excuse that they had not had sex for such a long time and he did not know what he was thinking, admitting that it was not an intellectual decision on his part. So he is showing multiple traits that are not very masculine by admitting he was not thinking and that he feels ashamed of his actions. Miranda on the other hand uses traits that are not very feminine. She is very assertive when she tells Steve not to follow her, and she is unlike Steve not showing her emotions. Her face is stern and blank in a way. She is not crying, just staring him down, and then she just silently leaves the room (SATC1).

Steve, Miranda and their son are eating breakfast.

Steve: Sit down please, have some breakfast.

Miranda: I can't. I have this presentation and I'm sick to my stomach. I used to love going to work and now I'm sick at the thought of it.

Steve: you don't have to put yourself through this. You can quit.

Miranda: I'm a lawyer, that's who I am.

Steve: Life is too short. Go someplace where they appreciate you until you find a better job, you can be home and help out around the house.

Miranda: I've waited too long to get here. I just have to suck it up.

Their Son: mom, you're going to come to the science fair today?

Steve: Sorry honey, she can't.

Their son: She has to go to work, yeah (SATC2).

Here you can see that Miranda is an independent woman who thinks her career is important. She is not the type of woman who stays at home and helps around the house. Steve gives her the advice to quit and tells her she does need to be submissive towards her new boss, and while she is looking for a new job she can help around the house. Miranda decides to quit her job anyways, because she is too sick of not getting the respect she feels she deserves. She is showing that she is proud of herself and believes in her own abilities. Later when she is sitting in the hotel bar in Abu Dhabi with Charlotte, she starts to talk about how much she loves her son, but that she also misses her job. This clearly shows both her masculine and feminine traits. In the end of SATC2, Miranda gets a new job where her voice is finally heard. She gets her life fulfilled by successfully dealing with the relationship between work and family. Her character is proven once again: a combination of masculinity and femininity. But on the other hand, Miranda's passion for work sometimes seems to be a bit too much. There is

no doubt that she has a successful career but the doubt of whether or not she is a good mother and wife is worth thinking about. When it comes to the character Steve, he is portrayed as not understanding that his wife loves her job and enjoys what she is doing. Instead, he chose to cheat on her by having sex with another woman, which turns out to hurt both him and Miranda. If this character had been represented as showing more understanding towards the character Miranda about her passions for her work, they would not have ended up with so much drama.

6.3.4 Samantha Jones: Smith Jerrod, Nicky and Rikard

Smith gives Samantha the item she wanted from the auction which she got out bidden on.

Smith: I knew how much you wanted it.

Samantha: But I was going to get it for myself.

Smith: I wanted to give it to you. For our anniversary, we met 5 years from today. Do you like it?

Samantha: Yes, but just to make something clear, this is a ring with Diamonds not a diamond ring, right?

Smith: yes.

Samantha: Then I love it (SATC1).

This is a clear example of Samantha wanting to be independent. She wanted to buy the ring for herself, but she had been out bided by her boyfriend without knowing it was him bidding on it against her. So there is a power struggle between her and Smith. He wanted to give her a gift, but she wanted to get it for herself. Furthermore Samantha shows very clearly that she wants to be independent and does not wish to get married, both by wanting to buy the things she want by herself and pointing out that the ring he gave to her is a ring with diamonds and not a diamond ring. The difference is clearly referring to the fact that diamond rings are what you get when you are proposed to, and a ring with diamonds are different and does not mean you need to accept a proposal (SATC1). The character Samantha is brave enough to challenge the norms.

Carrie, Charlotte, Miranda and Samantha are discussing relationships while they are having dinner in Mexico.

Samantha: I can't believe that my life revolves around a man. On what planet did I allow that to happen?

Charlotte: But you love him.

Samantha: Does that mean saying his name fifty times a day more than I say mine. Does it mean worrying about him and his needs before mine is it all about the other person, is that love?

Miranda: No that's marriage.

Samantha: He bought me this ring: I wanted to buy this for myself that meant something to me, to be able to do that. And then he buys it for me (SATC1).

Samantha is wondering how her life ended up revolving around a man. Charlotte says it is because she loves him and that is the reason why her life is revolving around him. That it is a feminine trait to care about others before caring for you. When Samantha asks if love is all about the man and his needs, Miranda says that is marriage. Meaning, in marriage a woman is supposed to care about the man's needs. However this is hard for Samantha to accept, since she wants to be independent and care for herself and instead of letting a man come before her own needs. She seems to accept that the reason is love and that is why she cares about his needs before her own (SATC1).

On Valentine's Day, Samantha has planned to make sushi for Smith, aiming at giving him a surprise when he comes home. But Smith is late due to work, and he has kept Samantha waiting for the entire day and evening.

Samantha: You're three hours late.

Smith: Bummer I know. Did you eat?

Samantha: Yes I ate. I ate the Sushi that I handmade for you, the sushi I laid all over my naked body as a valentines surprise for you.

Smith: Why are you so upset, I called?

Samantha: You think it's funny that I slaved all day in this kitchen to make a lovely meal for you.

Smith: You made some sushi it's not a big deal.

Samantha: not a big deal. I'm not the type of woman that sits home all day waiting for a man.

When Smith comes home, Samantha is very upset and angry because she feels that her hard work was for nothing. Samantha is showing her emotions in form of anger and she is being assertive when pointing out she is not the type of woman sitting around at home all day waiting for a man. Meanwhile Smith is being very unemotional and does not seem to understand what the problem is (SATC1). This scene also shows that Samantha is a bit selfish when it comes to her relationship with Smith. Smith wants to work to give him and Samantha a bright and rich future, while Samantha thinks that he ignores her efforts in this relationship just because Smith was late arriving home from work. This makes people doubt what love really means to Samantha.

Samantha cannot accept the fact that she is losing her freedom in her relationship with Smith, so she breaks up with him. She wants to stay who she is. The breakup does not hurt Samantha's feelings because she is not that kind of woman who stays with just one man like

this. She is not shy at all to let people know that she wants lots of sex with whoever she shows interest in. In the gay wedding in SATC2, she is immediately attracted by a hot guy Nicky and starts to flirt with him.

Samantha is talking to two guys at the wedding when Anthony's brother Nicky walks up to her.

Nicky: you looked pretty hot out there before. Wanna dance again?

Samantha: I can think of so many other more fun things I'd rather do with you.

Nicky: I'm Nicky.

Samantha: Samantha.

Nicky: nice to meet you Samantha.

Samantha: what do you do for a living, Nicky?

Nicky: I lay concrete.

Samantha: That sounds promising (SATC2).

And then later they are having sex while it makes too much noise for everyone. So everyone walks out of the building and tries to figure out what is happening. As Samantha's character is portrayed as demanding sex all the time, she definitely keeps her eyes on the lookout for hot guys wherever she goes. So when she is in Abu Dhabi, although she knows that dressing with sexual intentions, kissing and having sex is strictly forbidden, she still ignores all of these (SATC2).

The four women are having resting in a tent in the middle of the desert after some Camel riding, when a Danish architect drives by and catches their attention. He stays in the same hotel each time when he is in Abu Dhabi. Samantha thinks that he is a very hot man and she starts to get interested in him. Samantha goes on a date with the Danish Architect named Rikard and they are having dinner together and start flirting. While they are doing that, someone who is also at the dinner table reports them to the police that they are showing sexual intentions, which is strictly forbidden in Abu Dhabi. They choose to go on a walk on the beach, where they are caught kissing by the police. In the end, Samantha returns to America safe and there she has had sex with Rikard as wanted. Her typical character is proven again, with an ending of having sex with a hot guy (SATC2).

6.4 Discussion

While the women are represented as being strong and independent, they do not challenge the current gender power structure. There are quite a few examples of this. Carrie is mentioned as a writer: she has a career which brings her a good economic status even without

being married. Yet she decides to get married to Big, and she wants to have a big wedding whereas he does not. He eventually ends up getting what he wants, a small wedding in City Hall. Furthermore, when Carrie kisses her old boyfriend in SATC2, Big solves the problem by giving her a diamond ring to remind her that she is married to him. So while she is both strong and independent, she is still at the same time dependant on a man. There are many scenes in which she shows that she is submissive towards Big. Even though Big did not show up at the wedding, and she left him then because she was humiliated, she still thought it was her fault that he did not show up because she did not do the wedding he wanted. This gives the impression that being a strong and independent woman is acceptable. However, you should know that you are a woman that needs to always respect the man's needs and thoughts before your own.

Samantha, who is a business woman, is also depicted as a strong independent woman. In a sense her character does contradict the gender power structure on some points. In SATC1 her character ponders on the gender structure where the woman takes care of the man's needs, she openly questions it and shows her disapproval. However, she does try to abide to the gender power structure but eventually she gives up, because she is not happy with her relationship being about catering to a man's needs over her own. Samantha does throughout the two movies show that this is the social structure: a woman in a relationship is supposed to care about the male counterpart before taking care of her own needs. This is the reason why she decides relationships are not for her. By being single she does not have to abide to that part of the gender structure. In a way this says it is alright for a woman to care about her own needs, over a man's needs, but only if they are not in a relationship.

Charlotte, who has always been pursuing a 'perfect' family, has found her 'perfect' man and kids. She adopted a daughter from China and had another daughter on her own. She cares about her husband Harry and her two daughters more than anything and she always tries her best to maintain the harmony of this 'perfect' family. When Samantha told her about the problems that might occur due to her nanny not wearing bra, she was so worried that her 'perfect' family would break down. So even when she went on a trip with the other three ladies to Abu Dhabi, she could not stop texting her husband by asking him to keep her updated about what was happening. She is portrayed as a typical traditional woman whose goal is just to have a husband to love and who also loves her back, as well as children. As a character, Charlotte does not seem to challenge the traditional gender roles at all; besides, she is also the character who has the least amount of relationship problems. So overall, Charlotte

as a character sends the message seen in previous research, of a woman who takes care of her husband and children that acts like a proper lady, has minimal hardships in life.

Miranda is portrayed as a typical career woman who is crazy about her job and her passion for her career is very high. Meanwhile, she also tries hard to be a good mother, despite the fact that she always seem to feel like she is not good enough at it. Her struggles between being a good mother and a good wife as well as being a career-successful woman are magnified when her husband tells her that he cheated on her because she does not have time for sex. In a way, this can be interpreted as: that being a modern, independent woman is alright, as long as she also realizes that she is a woman and should care about her family and have their needs as priority in order to be completely happy. And if she has done that, her husband would not have ended up cheating on her with another woman just for sex. In SATC2, when the four of them are in Abu Dhabi, she seems to be very good at planning the trip and very organized, which shows her masculine traits.

It is difficult to have a concluding discussion about the representation of the male characters since there is not nearly as much data as there was for the female characters. However, based on the data which is available, we can conclude that just as with female characters men are also represented as following the gender power rules. They are for the most part showing typical male traits, but also occasionally female traits. For example when Steve cries after cheating on Miranda he is showing emotions in a clear and distinct way. Men are, however, represented as having to take care of the women, by giving gifts or paying for things in general.

Big has been together on and off with Carrie for ten years and is described as being the perfect guy for Carrie. He looks after Carrie's needs, both economically and emotionally. He is a typical masculine representative, as he is always shown to be strong, rich, independent, taking charge and deciding. In SATC1, when he leaves the wedding, this could be interpreted as him showing typical masculine traits, as he seems afraid to get married and have such a big wedding for the third time. Also in SATC2, when he finds out that Carrie has kissed her old boyfriend, he turns out to be a loving and caring husband instead of being mean and leaving Carrie. He knows clearly that he is a man and he is supposed to take care of his woman. However this could also be interpreted in a different way, since he gives her a ring to remind her that she is married, and in a sense 'belongs' to him but no other man.

Steve is portrayed as a mixture of both masculinity and femininity. He on one hand is the caring and loving husband of Miranda and a good dad who takes good care of his son. On the other hand, he shows many feminine traits: for example when he tells Miranda that he has

cheated on her because of the fact that she does not want to have sex with him often enough. He starts to cry when begging for her forgiveness. Although he is a man, he is not afraid to show these feminine traits. He shows that it is alright for men to show their emotions and be feminine and weak as well, instead of always showing their masculine sides all the time.

Smith is portrayed as the guy who allows Samantha to combine sex and love together. He cares about his career as well as Samantha. When he buys Samantha the diamond ring, he just wants to make Samantha happy by giving her what she has always been wanting for. He works hard in order to give him and Samantha a bright and wonderful future, which is typical masculine. Although Samantha left him because she does not want a relationship where she should put the guy's needs beyond her own needs, Smith still contacts her when he is awarded for his newest movie. He invites Samantha to join him to the ceremony because he is grateful that Samantha has made him famous and because he and Samantha were once crazily in love.

Harry is portrayed as being Charlotte's 'perfect' husband, who gives her a 'perfect' family. He takes care of Charlotte and all her needs, as well as taking care of the babies. On one hand, he is the loving husband who supports Charlotte both economically and emotionally, and here the typical masculine traits are seen, on the other hand, he takes care of the babies and is not afraid to face the young babies screaming and the chance that they might make his clothes dirty, where the feminine traits of him are shown.

7. Conclusion

The way gender is represented in the media does have an influence on how we perceive gender roles. Certain gender specific features can strengthen the image of what a man and a woman are, and how they should behave in relation to each other. The two movies SATC1 and SATC2 does not in some aspects, based on our observations, seem to challenge the conventional gender power structure in which men are depicted as the 'stronger' of the two sexes.

Women are represented as striving towards being as beautiful as possible, and as young-looking as possible. So just as in previous research, this study shows that physical appearance and age are important for women. Like in previous studies, the two genders are still for the most part represented as different from each other, in both a traditional and modern way, but do sometimes try to question 'the patriarchal privilege'. What we mean by different in a modern way is that while they are portrayed as sometimes economically independent, they do not clean by themselves, they have cleaners or other women doing such things (usually women with another ethnic background), they have good jobs and careers, fun and exploring sex lives as well as control of their sexuality and reproduction. They also show traditional traits as well, they show a lot more emotion than men do; they sometimes are portrayed as feeling guilty for putting their own needs first. A lot of emphasis is put onto being physically attractive and staying young, they also seem ashamed when their relationships do not work out very well, and when this happens they are portrayed as them feeling it is their fault for not doing enough to please their man.

Although some traits are used by both sexes, women are still portrayed as being subordinate to men even in these two movies, although a big exception when it comes to being submissive is Samantha. Men are also represented in a typical manner, most of the time, that in one way or the other; they end up getting what they want even when they make mistakes. There are many examples of this: Steve, who cheated on Miranda, eventually gets her back, Big who did not want a big wedding, finally gets to marry Carrie in City Hall with barely anyone watching, the way he seemed to have wanted it from the start. So, even though there has been progress legally on a political international level concerning women rights, this does still not seem to be represented to its full potential in the *Sex and the City* movies. It is to an extent, but hardly enough to represent the progress that should have been seen by now. The gender roles that we are presented with on a regular basis are still lagging behind in terms of showing better representations of gender equality.

Of course this study does not imply that real life is black and white like this, and we do not claim that our conclusion is completely accurate since people do interpret and perceive things differently. However, we do believe the study is important in a sense that it gives an idea of how things can be interpreted, and that movies in a broader sense influence how we look at ourselves as men and women, and how we are supposed to act. As we mentioned in the introduction, we wanted to add to the literature of how genders are represented in Media by more specifically looking at gender representation in the *Sex and the City* movies. In this thesis we have covered the most important aspects concerning the representation of men and women in the *Sex and the City* movies, by doing so we feel we have managed to fill the small gap mentioned in the literature review, and thus also fulfilled the aim of this thesis.

Furthermore, research could be conducted by doing research on a larger scale, by including more movies from the same time period as *Sex and the City* to see if the gender representation is the same in other movies in the same era. It would be interesting to see if movies show the same type of representation and if other movies are showing more or less gender equality concerning gender representation or not. Of course it would also be interesting if there would be some type of research on how these representations influence the 'real world', what the practical 'real world' implications are for everyone in their everyday lives after watching movies. Research could also be made, comparing the television series with the movies, concerning gender roles but also take into consideration other aspects, for example ethnicity and class. There are so many more aspects that can be studied, other than just gender.

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