MRS. CLEAVER TO MRS. FLORRICK: HOUSEWIFE TO GOOD WIFE
AND PORTRAYALS OF FEMALE POWER

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
San Francisco State University
In partial fulfillment of
the requirements for
the Degree

Master of Arts
In
Humanities

by
Rhonda K Rodgers Tannenbaum
San Francisco, California
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CERTIFICATION OF APPROVAL

I certify that I have read *Mrs. Cleaver to Mrs. Florrack: Housewife to Good Wife and Portrayals of Female Power* by Rhonda K Rodgers Tannenbaum, and that in my opinion this work meets the criteria for approving a thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree Master of Arts in Humanities at San Francisco State University.

Cristina Ruotolo, Ph.D
Professor of Humanities

Laura Garcia Moreno, Ph.D
Assoc. Professor of Humanities

Saul Steier, Ph.D
Assoc. Professor of Humanities
Mrs. Cleaver to Mrs. Florrick:

Housewife to Good Wife and Portrayals of Female Power

Rhonda K Rodgers Tannenbaum

San Francisco, California

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How Portrayals of women in the corporate workplace have changed since 1960’s.

To examine changing representations of women in the American corporate environment since 1960’s.

Close reading of film, photography, fiction, memoirs and published interviews by corporate men and women, autobiography, advertising, feminist theory, film theory.

That the representation of women has changed over time in relation to changes in women’s economic and social position, when women tell their stories they rely on a different set of narrative conventions than do men.

I certify that the Abstract is a correct representation of the content of this thesis.

[Signature]

Chair, Thesis Committee

Date
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I wish to thank the Professors of San Francisco State University who have encouraged, promoted, prodded, cajoled, and questioned me over the course of my education and this journey, and my husband, who inspires me every day. I’d also like to thank my mom, who influenced me greatly and probably never realized she was a feminist, and of course, my female colleagues and peers – we all came out of the other side.
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My Experience In Corporate America.

My personal experience in finance from 1980 - 2010 contributed to and informs my overall interpretation and exploration of women’s power in the corporate marketplace and its depiction in media. Published theories and textual analysis are enhanced by my experiences and training as a Humanities scholar and instructor.

I entered the financial job market in 1980 at the age of twenty-one. I began as a secretary, the only skill I cultivated from high school. Gendered vocational classes aimed at enabling women to become capable secretaries before becoming wives and mothers were taught in my school by an endearing, sharply dressed woman with a personality to match her high heels. She was the only high school teacher who inspired me and I thrived under her tutelage. I had various jobs in my home state of Texas, but nothing challenged me until I moved to San Francisco. I answered a “Help Wanted” classified advertisement as an “Executive Secretary” to the Vice President of a stock brokerage firm. It sounded stimulating, so I applied and was hired “on the spot.” My boss was an extremely charismatic man in his late thirties, as well as a dynamic entrepreneur who created municipal financing products heretofore unknown in the marketplace. He eventually promoted me to the bond-trading desk, which increased my

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1 Countess Dowager Violet Crawley from the television show, Downtown Abbey. PBS.
income and marketability considerably. I was extremely well paid for a young woman without a college degree and my title garnered a certain degree of respect when mentioned in social circles. My boss mentored me in many aspects of capital markets. He taught me how to interpret Federal Reserve monetary policies, how to structure municipal, government and corporate issues, and price debt. He also fired me for not having sex with him.

The trading desk where I started my career had eight traders, and at most times, five were women. The ratio of men to women was unique at the time but what were not unique were salaries; my female peers were then and are still paid less than men. Many of us felt that we were just “lucky to have jobs.” Sheryl Sandberg asks in Lean In, why women are less likely to stand up and demand equal pay and power. She’s obviously not the first person to ask the question – it is asked seemingly over and over again to a dulled and “gender weary” reading, tweeting and blogging public.

“I myself have never been able to find out precisely what feminism is: I only know that people call me a feminist whenever I express sentiments that differentiate me from a doormat.” - Rebecca West

Women have made great strides in status as characters within popular narratives in the past fifty years, at the same time that, and perhaps because, women have garnered more powerful positions in historically male-dominated fields. Examples of this changing frontier include televised financial newscasters and editors (Trish Regan on

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2 UK author and journalist, Rebecca West, 1892-1982
Bloomberg TV), financial advisors (such as Suzy Orman), sports broadcasters (such as Erin Andrews), and political analysts (Rachel Maddow). Cultural perception shapes the ways in which men and women are treated within society and, at the same time, popular culture reflects the gains women have made in areas heretofore reserved for men. By reading and imprinting images, whether in film advertising, television, video, or texts, men and women perceive their roles within society and their status within popular culture. In this essay, I will refer to articles that suggest women are exiting financial markets and careers, which seems to imply women are losing ground on feminist issues, but even as diminishing numbers of women in finance is disconcerting, representations of women are evolving in different and positive ways. As more women garner acceptance and prestige in traditionally male careers, females in all markets appear normalized, and will eventually earn economic parity to men. In this essay I will argue that film and television representations of women in the last 50 years give us reason to be optimistic, however, each character I describe encounters some type of push back in their attempts to excel in business, whether from men, or other women, or from society, in wanting a status-quo. From Mrs. Cleaver, who appeared at a time when there were virtually no female television role models in finance, to today’s Mrs. Florrick, a female television character who owns and manages a law firm\(^3\), I will trace my own personal challenges and observations as a woman in the world of business. I suggest that my own

\(^3\) *The Good Wife*. On CBS, in it’s sixth year on broadcast television as of May, 2015
experience—as both a cultural consumer and working woman—is evidence of the power of culture both to reflect and shape women's place in society.

I entered the financial job market in 1980 at the age of twenty-one. I began as a secretary, the only skill I cultivated from high school. Gendered vocational classes aimed at enabling women to become capable secretaries before becoming wives and mothers were taught in my school by an endearing, sharply dressed woman with a personality to match her high heels. She was the only high school teacher who inspired me and I thrived under her tutelage. I had various jobs in my home state of Texas, but nothing challenged me until I moved to San Francisco. I answered a “Help Wanted” classified advertisement as an “Executive Secretary” to the Vice President of a stock brokerage firm. It sounded stimulating, so I applied and was hired “on the spot.” My boss was an extremely charismatic man in his late thirties, as well as a dynamic entrepreneur who created municipal financing products heretofore unknown in the marketplace. He eventually promoted me to the bond-trading desk, which increased my income and marketability considerably. I was extremely well paid for a young woman without a college degree and my title garnered a certain degree of respect when mentioned in social circles. My boss mentored me in many aspects of capital markets. He taught me how to interpret Federal Reserve monetary policies, how to structure municipal, government and corporate issues, and price debt. He also fired me for not having sex with him.
The trading desk where I started my career had eight traders, and at most times, five were women. The ratio of men to women was extremely rare at the time but what were not unique were salaries; my female peers were then and are still paid less than men. Many of us felt that we were just “lucky to have jobs.” Sheryl Sandberg asks in Lean In why women are less likely than men to stand up and demand equal pay and power. She’s obviously not the first person to ask the question – it is asked over and over again to a dulled and “gender weary” reading, tweeting and blogging public.

I have drawn on my personal experience, beginning as a consumer of these images as a child, progressing through my career as a corporate “working girl”, and then as a scholar in the field of culture studies. My thesis follows the timeline of my life watching and being influenced by films and television, interpreting their influence on me and observing the ways in which they impact female and male perceptions of women. I believe, and will argue here, that popular culture’s portrayals of women’s progressive socio-economic status and power and, by extension, women’s position within society, has improved significantly in the past fifty years. These advances are a result of progressive social rights as well as “imprinting”, as young girls and women embody the changing ideal they see before them in text and image.

Primary sources that my thesis will draw from and analyze include several works documenting women’s place in the workplace: Sheryl Sandberg’s Lean In, Dr. Katherine J. Lehman’s Those Girls, and Dr. Deborah L. Rhode’s What Women Want: An Agenda For The Women’s Movement; as well as popular cultural narratives, mainly
television, from the 1960’s to today. Cultural observances will also be gathered from various documentary sources, such as editorials and stories in *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal*, and studies conducted by gender empowerment focus groups.

Advertising, film, television and literature reflect and, to some extent, construct, what it means to be a woman. From housewives to CEO’s, female characters in popular culture have evolved to reflect the idea that women have become more powerful, particularly within the institutional framework of corporate America. Mainstream media and advertising remain the center of intense focus by critics who stress feministic ideals. Textual analysis of performance and female status in television shows and film, and exploring the depictions of women within the context of the changing landscapes of contemporary culture, are essential in cultural (and gender) studies.

Women have made enormous strides in positions of power, but increasing depictions of sexualized females is cause for concern. We view images with an understanding that “our stories are universal in many ways” and for a generation of young girls, the hyper-sexualized images of women problematizes their idea of where they fit into society. Sexuality is a natural progression for a young girl, but understanding one’s self as sexually objectified being is not. Producers of reality pornographic television shows such as *Girls Gone Wild* suggest that women have

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4 Saskia De Melker, *Researchers Measure Increasing Sexualization of Images in Magazines*. December 21, 2013, PBS NewsHour

5 Pornographic reality based entertainment created by Joe Francis and begun as infomercials in 1997-present. By 2002, the company produced over 83 different titles.
acquired greater freedom to present themselves exactly as they please in society. Feminist and writer Ariel Levy takes issue with this suggestion, and argues that the terms “raunchy” and “liberated” are not synonymous.\footnote{Female Chauvinist Pigs: Women and the Rise of Raunch Culture, August 2005.} Dr. Douglas Kellner contends, “Relations of power and domination are ‘encoded’ in cultural texts, such as those in television and film.”\footnote{UCLA Professor of Philosophy of Education and Critical Theorist, Gender, Race, & Class, 9 Miss Representation, 2012} According to recent documentary filmmaker, Jennifer Seibel Newsom\footnote{Ms. Seibel Newsom has produced two documentaries that focus on hypersexualization: Miss Representation in 2011 and The Mask You Live in 2015.}, studies by PBS Newshour\footnote{Saskia De Melker, December 21, 2013 at 1:28 PM EDT. http://www.pbs.org/newshour/updates/social_issues-july-dec13-sexualization_12-21/} and feminists such as Dr. Gail Dines\footnote{Gail Dines is a Professor of Sociology and Women’s Studies, and chair of the American Studies Department at Wheelock College, as well as a prolific anti-pornography activist and lecturer. Pornland: How Porn Has Hijacked Our Sexuality} sexualized performances imply that there are still clear constraints on women’s self-presentation because women’s images in the media have been sexualized in a way that has become nearly compulsory for young women. As we derive meaning from visual and audio stimuli, these images and narratives are problematic. I will discuss their impact later, but I will also argue that the steady progression of female depictions in popular culture is evolving in ways that not only confine but also empower young women and girls.

Advertisers and “image” producers know that images are power. Images invite a dialogue with the viewer, much like a conversation, and always depict the bias of the
“writing” artist, photographer or storyteller.\textsuperscript{11} We look at images through a filter of our own memories and experiences and images trigger an internal language based on these individual experiences. Young women and girls are more highly influenced by media images because their memories and experience are limited. Certain images project, or assume, authority to speak the “truth” to the viewer. A layperson, not trained to interpret the images as particular points of view, will assume, “That is the way it is.”\textsuperscript{12} Advertising depends on an untrained viewer; advertisers assume the viewer desires to see him or herself in a picture they’re viewing. If a consumer relates to a commercial image in some way, such as admiring a photograph of a popular performer (let’s say, Beyoncé) who happens to be holding a name brand handbag, it creates desire within the consumer’s subconscious. In the process of emulating Beyoncé the consumer might buy the handbag. In this example the advertiser is attempting to convey Beyoncé and her handbag as representative of ideal womanhood.

Even as images create desire, they can also be paradoxical in that they complicate the viewer’s placement within them. If the viewer does not know Beyoncé, it’s possible she may still desire the handbag, but the image loses power if there’s ambiguity in viewing and associating Beyoncé and the handbag with ideal femininity. Reciprocity is only accomplished if the viewer relates to the image in some predictable manner.

\textsuperscript{11} John Berger, \textit{Ways of Seeing}, 1972
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid. 137
Political structure can create ideas and ideology by intentionally introducing an image to a viewer, thereby “imprinting” or registering a “reality” or history to the viewer. Louis Althusser suggests that ideology is enforced by a combination of “recognition” and “identification.” Moviemakers and advertisers introduce new ideas to viewers in this manner. Think of the progression of villains (or alternately, heroes or heroines) in the past fifty years in American movies: The U.S.’s socio-political landscape usually determines the ethnicity or identity of a villain: German (Nazis), Russian (Cold war), middle Eastern (Desert Storm), or Russian (Balkans) again. A constant barrage of negative images intended to shock can ultimately normalize the imagery itself; videos which repeatedly hyper-sexualize women can desensitize a video watching culture to the disturbing shock value of a woman’s (or anyone’s) sexual abuse. A woman repeatedly depicted as sexy and powerful shapes the viewer’s idea of “normal”.

Objects of desire change as ideologies and political landscapes change. Images act as historical reconstruction that creates evidence without words as the image creates a relationship between reader and narrative. A more complex relationship is developed as the viewer calculates his or her place within the image. Berger claims the “reciprocal nature of vision is more fundamental than that of spoken dialogue” because images conjure a type of historical documentation within the viewer’s mind. Berger argues that “image[s] create meaning to the viewer as well as make meaning with the past: that is to

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13 Louis Althusser, Algerian Philosopher, 1918-1990
14 John Berger, *Ways of Looking*, 135
say, the experience of seeking to give meaning to our lives, of trying to understand the
history of which we can become the active agents”.15

Television’s female characters offer audiences particularly powerful images of
what it means to be a woman16 Dominant ideologies work within the viewer’s
subconscious to support or undermine an individual’s idea of what’s normal. Barbara
Klinger notes, “Examples of social readings like those geared towards voyeurism and
consumption are particularly important to consider in relation to assessments of film to
[its] ideological relationship. They suggest institutional and social forces can act to
produce a heterogeneous text offering a variety of viewing pleasures.”17

Laura Mulvey’s groundbreaking work argued that most films are designed to
appeal to the male gaze, as viewers gaze upon the woman as subject.18 This apparently
continues to be true if we gauge the content of contemporary reality shows, such as
*Girls Gone Wild*, as “productions” by males “directing” pornographic content. Certain
images instruct viewers to understand women as always sexual and violable because the
human interprets images as ideological ‘subjects.’ The female is informed of her status
in this example, as the subject of the “action.” Mirroring or imprinting her placement
within the narrative as subject objectifies her. Social hegemony is established and

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15 Ibid. 155.
16 Cristina Ruotolo, Professor of Humanities. SFSU.
http://humanities.sfsu.edu/cristina-ruotolo
17 Barbara Klinger, Professor Film & Media Studies, Indiana University. *Melodrama
http://www.jahsonic.com/VPNC.html
maintained in social structures, with each social and economic class obtaining or retaining an internal class logic based on learned or observed behavior which instructs them on their status as opposed to those "outside" their class and gender. In March 2015, a woman was gang raped on the beach in Panama City, Florida, as bystanders and revelers merely watched the progression of men assaulting the young woman, who was apparently incapacitated and unable to push them away. Footage of the gang rape was found on the cell phone of the young woman, who did not remember the assault. No one watching came to her assistance. This story is an example of a systemic problem in contemporary society in which voyeurism is common among viewers and the line between violation and sexual performance is fuzzy. The titillating consumption of the spectacle of sexualized violence against women becomes naturalized when men and women are barraged by constant images of sexualized or abused females. The viewer learns to interpret his or her place in the world by placing him or herself "in" the film or television show. Andi Zeisler defines ideological marketing within pop culture by "the time and place in which we live and the way we define ourselves as individuals...personally and collectively." Female viewers learn their class, their status and their gender through this process. Sexualized females can trouble the way females' ideals are shaped and how they interpret the ways they fit into society, but

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19 CNN. April 4 2015.
20 Andi Ziesler, Feminism and Pop Culture, 2008, Pg 4.
there are progressive role models in media that empower young women and girls as well.

If a viewer “identifies” with female figures in television and film, she or he becomes actively engaged in their experience of them. Depending on whether the viewer is male or female, straight or gay, people identify with images they see in film and television in ways that change as their representation changes. Today, young women 18-34 years of age spend 3.4 hours per day social networking and girls spend more time than boys, so one can assume they are encountering many normalizing images. The self is constructed with an understanding of one’s position or status in the world and it stands to reason if men and women (or young boys and girls) continuously see women empowered in images, they believe this is normal.

The shift from “ladylike” television characters in weekly sitcoms, such as Mrs. Cleaver in Leave It To Beaver, to more current images of hard-partying and highly sexualized females on reality television has provoked vocal feminist approaches to women’s televised images. Documentary filmmaker, Jennifer Seibel Newsom argues that sexualized female images exist in nearly everything we consume, and points to cognitive learning theories as evidence that it affects a younger generation. Occidental College Professor, Carol Heldman, suggests that today’s young girls suffer more eating disorders, self-worth issues, body shaming and other mental health issues than in the

22 1959-1963
past, and attributes this increase to unrealistic body image and objectifying female images generated for general consumption.\textsuperscript{23} Due to in part to this objectification, young women's ideas of how they fit into society as powerful females, can be troubled. Attempting to recruit young women into male dominated fields, such as business, can be problematic if the messages they receive as kids and young women are constant reminders they are viewed as sexual objects, and it becomes problematic when an entire generation of young girls is imprinted with misogynistic images. At the opposite end of the spectrum, Disney's depictions of female characters can be problematic, as well. Institutionalized stereotyping of mythological princesses and princes can create unobtainable desires in young girls and women. However, Disney's latest animated princess from \textit{Frozen}\textsuperscript{24} breaks the stereotypical blonde white princess mold. Anna, a princess with an interesting "ice queen" magic is unlike blueprints of Disney's traditional rehashing of mythological princesses awakening with the kiss of a Prince and living happily ever after, Anna is a more complicated character (based loosely on a dark fairytale)\textsuperscript{25} who realizes the power of love through her sister, and overcomes obstacles by overcoming fears of her own [inner] magical power. Two other female-empowering contemporary films, \textit{Hunger Games} and its sequel, have grossed over $1 billion in theatre ticket sales, and made its heroine, Jennifer Lawrence, one of the most recognized stars of today. Katniss Everdeen, Jennifer Lawrence's character, depicts a

\textsuperscript{23} Interviewed for her film, \textit{Miss Representation}, 2012  
\textsuperscript{24} Disney animated film, 2013  
\textsuperscript{25} Hans Christian Andersen, \textit{The Snow Queen}, pub. 1845.
female warrior who saves mankind, simply because it’s the right thing to do. The depiction empowers young women, and promotes the image of females as strong fierce warriors. Contemporary warriors are shaped by earlier versions, and the first warrior I remember was *That Girl* in 1966.

“A house does not need a wife any more than it needs a husband.”
- Charlotte Perkins Gilman

Ninety percent of American households had a television in 1960. As families increasingly turned to television as a source of news and entertainment, TV became a primary purveyor of messaging and advertising. In the late 50’s and early 60’s, post-war middle class societal norms were represented and enforced by characters such as Mrs. Cleaver, who epitomized the stereotypical housewife, immaculately well kept in appearance, and the perfect example of refined domesticity. Television viewers frequently found Mrs. Cleaver or someone like her in the kitchen cooking or baking. Television commercials at the time depicted Cleaver clones stirring tonight’s supper on the stovetop of her new Amana Radar Range.

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26 Charlotte Perkins Gilman was an economist and writer from the early feminist movement 1860-1935
28 *Leave It To Beaver*, 1957-1963
Mrs. Cleaver represents a white middle class stereotype repeated throughout the fifties and sixties in television characters such as Mrs. Petri,29 Mrs. Nelson,30 and Mrs. Anderson31 and countless others who portrayed amusing and somewhat refined housewives. Television and advertising depicted wives as well coiffed in high heels who wore pretty, figure flattering dresses, while entertaining, cooking, shopping or merely lounging, all while under the protective, watchful gaze of an American viewing audience. June Cleaver had become an unrealistic, unattainable bar against which women in general, along with their husbands, would judge mothers. Constant imprinting upon the country’s white middle class psyche dictated what one should expect from women and what they could and should aspire to become.

Mrs. Cleaver, like the other wives, retained power only within the realm of the household. A normal housewife’s sex life was hidden from the viewer; normalized images showed TV husbands and wives during this time period slept in twin beds wearing men’s pajamas, and sex was only nuanced obliquely. Advertising continued to imprint upon the housewives their need for cleaning products and girdles, and Mrs. Cleaver continued to wear pearls while gardening. In 1963, Betty Friedan and other second wave feminists focused a critical eye on women in the home and pointed to unrest percolating within a growing number of housewives32 According to Friedan, the

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29 *The Dick Van Dyke show*, 1961-1966
30 *Ozzie & Harriet*, 1952-1966
31 *Father Knows Best*, 1954-1963
32 *The Feminine Mystique* (1963)
time was approaching for women to move their careers toward meaningful occupations outside the household, and she urged American housewives towards action when she asked them if housework, cooking, cleaning and driving kids around was all there is to life. When Friedan states, “The only way for a woman, as for a man, to find herself, to know herself as a person, is by creative work of her own,” she addresses a housewives’ “crisis” in their growing frustration with the constraints of being a housewife. Friedan’s claims of housewife “identity crisis” prompted a wave of feminists’ writings and Friedan later founded the National Organization for Women (NOW), an organization that promotes equality for women and affirmative action and still exists today. Increased visibility of feminism, combined with the movement of more middle-class women into the workforce, both destabilized family structures and undermined earlier assumptions about fixed gender roles.

I turned seven years old in 1966. My formative years were spent watching *Bewitched*, *I Dream of Jeannie*, and *That Girl*. To me, TV’s female heroines were attractive and goofy but they also displayed signs of power. Samantha was only a housewife, but she could blow up her husband with the twitch of her nose, and Jeannie, a sexy alien from another dimension, could magically disappear and reappear. TV shows depicting women with independent streaks emerged and I consumed these images with keen interest. *That Girl*\(^{33}\) and *Mary Tyler Moore*\(^{34}\) were women working in

\(^{33}\) 1966-1971
\(^{34}\) 1970-1977
cities, displaying self-sufficiency in a non-threatening (non-castrating) way, while they still retained a goofy playfulness. Ann Marie ("that girl") was a young, vibrant and independent woman in New York, the densest city in the world, which was incredibly exciting to me, a young girl from a small, working-class town in the south. Katherine Lehman points out that "single girl narratives emphasized glamour and consumerism, but they also conveyed messages about class."\(^{35}\) Ann Marie lived in material comfort (despite her seemingly low paying actress job). She was a fresh-faced young woman in her early twenties who dressed fashionably and struggled to maintain an independent lifestyle, away from her overprotective and overbearing father who constantly struggled to protect her virginity by appearing in the show at opportune romantic times. Ann Marie lived in an urban landscape that was new to women like her, as she displayed signs of independence and struggle. She constantly walked a tightrope between the emotional and financial safety of her middle-class family while attempting financial and professional independence in an urban environment.

In the seventies, a television show was introduced that is still considered by some to be the first "truly" feminine, and "feminist" driven sitcom.\(^{36}\) Mary Tyler Moore (MTM) was a young woman who lived alone and displayed some aspects of managerial power at work. More importantly, MTM figuratively replaced her biological family for a workplace family. Lehman points out, "Work was not just a prelude to marriage or a


substitute for it, but could form the center of a satisfying life for a woman.” The show emphasized personal relationships within the context of her experiences both within and outside the workplace. MTM also was popular because she didn’t display “vulgar” sexual desires; she was not obvious in her sexuality, although she was a sexual being. Her desires were oblique, making her character neither threatening to the obscenity hawks monitoring decency norms, nor to the conservative viewing public. As Lehman argues, MTM made meaning out of internal structures as she navigated external circumstances, resulting in a “concerted emphasis on relationships rather than personal autonomy, which countered potential anxieties about women’s independence and placed these singles in recognizable feminine roles: as confidantes, sisters, daughters and love interests, and blurred the lines between home and work.”

I was too young to grasp these concepts, but I am convinced these characters and their traits influenced me and my later choices. If these women could navigate cultural, personal and financial challenges in an urban setting so could I. Lehman claims MTM “primed Americans to accept bolder representations of sex and women’s work ambitions.” As a kid, I never knew that feminist challenges existed in the 60’s and was made only remotely aware of the women’s rights movement by watching angry feminist performances on Walter Cronkite’s Evening News. Feminists feverishly worked to create economic and political equality for women, and the EEOC (Equal Employment

37 Lehman, Those Girls, 131.
38 Ibid. 144.
39 Ibid. 156.
Opportunity Commission) was passed in 1972, as an addendum to the Civil Rights Act of 1964, allowing women to apply for mortgages and credit cards on their own recognizance without a male co-signer. The act also gave women “equal” rights in regards to equal pay.40 Introduction of the birth control pill, which gave reproductive rights to all American females of age, the civil rights movement, organized resistance to a very unpopular Vietnam War, and feminists’ organized movements against inequality all helped bring women’s issues to the forefront of the American psyche, and by extension, into popular culture.

Shows from this time period contributed to the process of social change and normalized women’s roles. Sitcoms and dramas of non-traditional women’s roles were a “welcome alternative to traditional media representations of women as wives and mothers and resulted in sweeping changes in general roles and sexual mores.”41 Rape revenge films, such as *Last House on the Left* and *I Spit On Your Grave*, emerged in the 1970’s, depicting women in power exchanges with male counterparts. More than merely “R” rated “slasher” films with titillating sexual content, they characterized the female character’s repressed frustration, with often-explosive ends. Most films end with the female protagonist eviscerating or emasculating the male sexual predators. I was a teenager in the 1970’s and these films played regularly at the drive-in theatre. Even though ‘slashers’ were generally restricted to audiences over 17, people who did not

40 1972 Title VII. EEOC. Signed by Richard Nixon.
care about the age of the car’s occupants administered drive-in admittance. I remember my visceral reactions to the violence of these films. Does sexually explicit violence against women significantly affect psychological development? Some experts believe that it does. Literary texts and articles can describe violence against women in ways that does not immediately engage the viewer. However, watching violence against women in films places the viewer in the film itself as “the way it is,” as representational “reality.” Watching rape and torture makes it instantaneous to the viewer, whereas reading about such violence is only theoretical in nature. Female viewers engage in films as it’s subject, and in watching sexualized violence against women, the female is not only watching another victimized female, she is also the subject of the victimization and violence (her mirrored self). In watching sexual violence she is imprinting being objectified as a sexual being, but she can do nothing to stop it (hence, the terrified look on females in movies).

In the 1970’s and 1980’s, television series had continuous weekly viewing audiences that became vested in character developments, and one storyline that became prevalent concerned single working mothers raising children. Not only did shows reflect a growing (and real) increase in divorce, they also depicted the woman as provider for the family’s needs. Examples include Murphy Brown, Shirley Partridge in The

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42 Mulvey, Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema. 1975
43 From 1960 to 1980, divorce rates went from less than 10% to 20%. http://www.stateofourunions.org/2009/si-divorce.php
44 1988-1998
Partridge Family, and One Day At A Time, with Ann Romano, which ran for eight years beginning in 1975.

Lehman describes Charlie's Angels as an example of “working girl solidarity” and although critics complained it stereotyped females, the show was extremely popular, garnered top ratings for five years and had a cult following. Lehman claims the show was a catalyst to “single working women as smart and sassy and drew more definitive lines between professional and sexual roles, reflecting changing attitudes towards sexuality in the workplace.” The writing focused on female camaraderie and their resistance to sexual innuendo, as they fought crime together (ironically, while wearing bikinis). Newsweek ran a feature article in 1980 on sexual harassment, and interviewed attorneys who were quoted as saying women were not going to “take sexual harassment behavior” any longer and were “fighting back.”

“Yes, I think I know what ya’ll really want. You want some gross caricature of a woman. To prove some idiotic point, like, like power makes a woman masculine, or masculine women are ugly… Well shame on the woman who lets you do that.”

  – Dorothy Michaels

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45 1976-1981
46 Farrah Fawcett was featured in a poster that sold 20MM copies the biggest selling poster in history
47 Lehman, Those Girls, 205.
48 Ibid. 205.
49 Dorothy Michaels is the leading character in Tootsie, 1982
The 1970’s introduced revenge fantasies, but films in the 80’s represented women’s revenge in the workplace as realistic and achievable. Women’s rights became topical in film at this time, especially women’s workplace issues, and were presented to pop culture in award-winning films, such as Norma Rae, Coal Miner’s Daughter, and my personal favorite, Tootsie. Norma Rae depicts a woman claiming power in a working class, unionized setting. Coal Miner’s Daughter centers on a class struggle within a poverty-stricken environment where an uneducated, yet talented woman (Loretta Lynn) becomes a legendary singer. The fictitious Tootsie (played by Dustin Hoffman), introduces a cross-dressing actor (an idea not mainstream in 1982) who becomes more enlightened about gender-roles and sexism through his performance in drag. Dorothy’s self actualization is evidenced by frequent observations throughout the film about the difficulties of “being” a woman; walking in heels, worrying if he looks attractive, as well as mentioning a bias shown to his unmarried pregnant sister by the other men and women in her workplace. In a scene that is not uncommon in the “real world”, Dorothy is in danger of being raped during a date, and is frequently frustrated by what she deems to be double standards. Her struggles are summed up with the declaration to his (her?) love interest, “I was a better man with you, as a woman than I ever was with a woman, as a man. I just gotta learn to do it without the dress,” and

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50 Reagan appointed the first female Justice to the Supreme Court in 1981, and Geraldine Ferraro was the first Democratic female candidate to run for Vice President in 1984 on Walter Mondale’s ticket. The title of “Ms.” was introduced into the lexicon, allowing women to retain a title without indicating their singlehood or marriage status, an increasing display of power.
confesses that being a “woman was the best part of my manhood.” Dorothy realizes the obvious difficulties of trying to “be” female and all it entails, but she also temporarily sees the world through the lens of a female, which makes him more sensitive to social biases and male sexism - realizations he could not appreciate as a male.

In a scene that reminded me of my own desires in the 80’s, Dorothy demands the film’s patriarch and stereotyped sexist, Ron, call her by her name instead of his token nickname for her. After Ron repeated calls her “toots”51 she finally turns on him: “Ron, I have a name. It’s not Tootsie or Toots or Sweetie or Honey or Doll.” As he guffaws at her apparent dramatic protest, she continues: “No, just Dorothy. Alan’s always Alan, Tom’s always Tom and John’s always John. I have a name too. It’s Dorothy. Capital D-O-R-O-T-H-Y.” I was repeatedly referred to as “honey” or “sugar” by men in professional settings, emphasizing their superior status, as well as their apparent awareness of my sweet nature. Dorothy, up until the time he’s walked a mile in a woman’s shoes, has been as a sexist. Not only does Dorothy’s characterization open up discussions about gender, she shows that women are more powerful if allowed to be themselves, without compromise. Today’s depiction of Dorothy Michaels would seem ridiculous; gender stereotypes have changed considerably over the past forty years, and I’m only called “sweetie” or “sugar” by folks who really do think I’m good-natured.

The film 9 to 5 appeared about the time I started working in a corporate setting. The film portrays three working women in an office setting “living out their fantasy of

51 “Toots” is slang for “babe” “sweetie” or “honey”—repeated in the deep south
getting even with, and their successful overthrow of, the company's autocratic, ‘sexist, egotistical, lying, hypocritical bigot [sic] boss’. Sexual harassment is prevalent in the film and the women seek retribution through various violent (and illegal) means. It was so popular it garnered several awards and a television show of the same name followed that ran from 1982-1988. 9 to 5 was relevant because, as an extension of “working girl solidarity” it depicted a growing unrest of females “fighting back” in an unsafe workplace. The movie and its character’s actions spoke to Betty Friedan’s discourse years earlier. Women want to work but it must be in a safe, productive space.

Mary Tyler Moore’s show spawned similar situational characters in the 1980’s. For example, Murphy Brown focuses on a newsroom manager with a dry sense of humor. Murphy was able to “push the envelope” when relating to sexual situations and her own desires. She became a role model to many women and a pariah to conservatives, especially when the character decides to have her baby without a partner. Her decision to have a child without a husband, while still working, upset the staunchest of conservatives over her ‘apparent’ lack of family values, and created a media firestorm around the show. Office chatter frequently centered on popular television situations and Murphy Brown’s circumstances were a catalyst for discussions about women’s reproductive and rights as single mothers. Murphy was an independent, hardworking businesswoman, much like Mary Tyler Moore before her, but she differs,

52 IMDB. By-line offered by film’s producers.
53 Candice Bergen. The show was extremely popular and ran from 1988-1998.
and seemingly advanced within society and popular culture. The difference was in Murphy’s choice to have a child out of wedlock. Murphy’s “choice” represents a much larger argument the single working woman has with popular culture, who immediately decides how she can and cannot work or when and if she wants to be a mother and under what circumstances.

A film was introduced in 1987 that addressed aspects of women’s reproductive rights and stressed the difficulties of raising children while working. *Baby Boom* starred Dianne Keaton, as a successful businesswoman who proudly echoed her nickname, “Dragon Lady,” which implied a strong, dominant female. The viewer is advised that she “has a corner office” and worked from 5AM through 9PM every night (in opposition to the traditional work hours for corporations of 9AM to 5PM). The movie’s byline describes *Baby Boom*: “Manhattan executive climbing the corporate ladder becomes the unwilling mom to a relative’s infant.” The opening credits show women hurrying through the streets of Manhattan on their way to work, with a voice-over informing the viewer, “53% of the American workforce is female. As little girls, they were told to grow up and marry doctors and lawyers. Instead, they grew up and became doctors and lawyers. They moved out of the pink ghetto and into the executive suite. Take J.C. Wiatt, for example. Graduated first in her class at Yale, got her MBA at Harvard. Has a corner office at the corner of 58th and Park…married to her job, she lives with an investment banker married to his. One would take it for granted that a woman like this has it all. One must never take anything for granted.” Immediately the
viewer is made aware that J.C. is a dedicated career woman who "has it all," but it is about to come to an end.

J.C., on the brink of becoming a managing partner, is reassured by her boss, because he "doesn't think of her as a woman," but still voices his concerns that she might reproduce as he asks, "What if you get married? What if Steven (the investment banker boyfriend) expects a wife? A man can be successful without sacrificing his personal life, but a woman can't." Her boss is reiterating several prescient points of the time period: It's difficult for an ambitious male or female to advance while balancing a family with work and it is almost certain to stall a female's advancement if she chooses to start a family. It's apparent that Steven doesn't want to have children when he warns J.C. that "he thought he heard her biological clock ticking." The narrative is set into motion when J.C. unexpectedly "inherits" a toddler, and then she makes the conflict apparent when she tells the state worker, "I can't have a baby - I have a 12:30 meeting." The viewer is expected to take huge leaps of faith within the scope of plot feasibility, but for the sake of informing the reader of societal expectations and workplace situations in the 80's, it is introduced here. When Steven leaves J.C., she is forced to raise the child alone, while attempting to preserve her hard fought place within the upper management of her firm (the viewer learns earlier that there is only one other female managing partner). Management displays bias against J.C. as she obviously struggles to care for the baby, and when she eventually loses her position to an underling, management tells her, "You can't have it all – nobody can." The film is silly
on many levels but it touches deeper concerns for single working women (or men.) J.C. eventually wins out with her entrepreneurial skills while mothering a baby, but she makes a serious claim against society and patriarchal status quo at the end of the film when she reminds the managing partners of “that night when you told me about the things I was going to have to give up, and the sacrifices I was going to have to make… Well, I don't want to make those sacrifices, and the bottom line is, nobody should have to. I just think the rat-race is going to have to survive with one less rat.” This is after she has been offered $3MM in buy-out funds, but nonetheless, she is telling the viewing audience of the dilemmas single working mothers are experiencing. J.C. represents successful working women who must sacrifice their agency to raise children, or sacrifice having a child to pursue a successful career. The glass ceiling is still evident in the form of choices the working woman must face if allowed to succeed. She’s allowed to have a child out of wedlock, but not at the expense of a highly rated career.

Interestingly, a 2012 article written by Anne Marie Slaughter entitled, *Why Women Still Can’t Have It All*,[^54] created a firestorm of controversy from its title alone. Slaughter is a former State Department advisor who wrote while also a Professor at Princeton, while carrying a full academic load, giving 40-50 speeches per year, writing a book and raising a family. Deborah Rhode critiques the article by reminding the reader of Slaughter’s small focus group and her “implicit message that the noble thing for mothers to do is to sacrifice a ‘dream’ job when its hours are long and a child is

[^54]: Anne-Marie Slaughter, *The Atlantic Monthly*, July/August 2012
going through a troubled patch."⁵⁵ Questions of mothers trading high-powered jobs to raise a family are still raised today

The 1987 "romantic comedy" *Broadcast News* depicts an aspiring female newsroom producer, whose professional savvy and detail-oriented perfection is eventually rewarded in her promotion over her male colleagues during an economic downturn. The premise is unlikely unless she’s extremely underpaid. However, her professional success is counterbalanced by a more stereotypical quirkiness showcased in numerous hysterical crying jags and her (seemingly cute) obsessive-compulsive driving instructions to every cab driver that picks her up in the film. By having the handsome, dumb liar accept broadcast news’s highest honor for journalism, the movie appears to suggest ways in which (male) mediocrity is promoted in the media. Unfortunately, the dumb, handsome liar is also the romantic downfall of the heroine, undermining her hard-earned power in the film. Jane represents a working woman at the top of her game, but she is still stymied by romantic challenges and limited by displays of emotional weakness. Her power is limited; she can’t have a smart lover in addition to a well-respected position, unless she displays the occasional demonstrative emotional outburst, which is representative of a different type of “glass ceiling;” the seeming emotionally unstable businesswoman.

“You’re the first woman I’ve seen that dresses like a woman, not like a woman thinks a man would dress if he was a woman.”

– Jack Trainer

In 1988, film director Mike Nichols introduced a box-office hit that garnered Golden Globe and Oscar nominations for the actors. Working Girl starred Sigourney Weaver as a Mergers and Acquisitions Specialist (M&A), who moves to New York to revive the department’s declining profits. Parker’s over-the-top stereotyped character is almost cartoon-like in her prim and poisonous depiction of a manipulative, power-hungry female. She quietly mentors her charge, Tess, the highly sexual, uncultured female secretary played by Melanie Griffith. Tess is from a working class borough of New Jersey, and works for a couple of jocks on a trading floor on Wall Street. The viewer is made aware of her ambition because she takes night classes in “Emerging Markets” (junk) but she also stresses her status as a secretary, reminding the viewer and herself of her lowly station. A client dismisses her savvy investment advice and she’s repeatedly passed over for a promotion due to her gender and class. Her bosses set her up with a colleague and promise her a potential job possibility within the firm, but it turns out to be [apparently another] coke snorting power broker who only wants sex. After she calls out her bosses as “pimps,” the narrative is set in motion. Although the film is rife with stereotypes, this particular depiction, in my experience, was close to the truth in the 1980’s.

56 Jack Trainer, Tess’ love interest in Working Girl
57 made $100 million worldwide
Katherine Parker is the epitome of refinement, wears nicely tailored suits, sits in a corner office overlooking the Hudson River, and exchanges waspish nicknames with her pedigreed family. When Parker prompts Tess to change her clothing choices, I was reminded of my experience and the “unspoken” but universal dress code in finance, which calls for tailored clothing that reflected seriousness in handling people’s money. Katherine also informs Tess that they’re a team going forward, and Tess begins to hope that she’s finally found a mentor in Parker. Tess confesses, “She takes me seriously because she’s a woman. None of this chasing-around-the-desk crap. She wants to be my mentor.” Parker is an empowering depiction of working women in the 80’s, but her betrayal of Tess undermines a female portrayal of strength.

The New York skyline is showcased in the opening credits and the shot prominently frames the Statue of Liberty as the musical score by Carly Simon soars in the background. Based on the opening shot’s focus on the Statue of Liberty and the World Trade Center, as symbols of justice and prosperity, the film maker is going to focus on the U.S. as the “land of opportunity”, and the suggested “promise” of equality. Melanie Griffith is part of this symbolism, as she portrays a rags-to-riches young woman struggling on Wall Street. The next film shot shows NYC traffic, people rushing on the streets and into the corridors of the World Trade Center, a typical workday and the frenetic pace of New York City and Wall Street.

Tess’s character is vulnerable and she looks as if she’s about to cry in many scenes. She carries books around about syntax and “good” English. At the same time,
she understands her sexual power, wearing short skirts and plunging necklines. The movie’s tagline promises the viewer a “pretty secretary who trades in her miniskirt for a business suit in order to prove that she’s more than just a pair of legs,” as well as a “spunky wall street secretary who takes her boss’ place with a merger specialist.” When introducing herself to the movie’s hero and love interest, Harrison Ford, Tess declares she “has a head for business and a bod for sin”[sic]. The quote became a repeated paradoxical classic, but it embodied an important question: Why can’t a woman be perceived as smart and sexy at the same time? The movie asks it more often than not. The complication comes with Sigourney Weaver’s character, who schemes to manipulate the struggling female with lesser status and steals her work. The film thus undermines female power by associating the authoritative female with manipulative and calculating behavior. By denying the possibility that one strong female helps another, the writers reinforce the status-quo of “old boys network.” Tess can trust no one in this film: neither her male superiors nor her female boss. Parker plays men to advance her own career and her manipulation is evident when she points to a man at an office party and suggests Tess should be nice to all men in power because, “Today’s junior prick is tomorrow’s junior partner.” Parker falsely advises Tess: “Watch me; learn from me. We’re a team.” Ultimately, the film’s symbolic patriarch and head of a large corporation advises Tess that she possesses the only thing she needs to succeed: “gumption.” The film is important to the feminists’ cause because it depicts a struggling

58 Producer’s description
female advancing to the “corner office” based solely on her brains and ambition. Silly language aside, the sappy, but all too familiar rags-to-riches storyline, the movie’s core is a significant time capsule, enabling the viewer to see the struggles and resistance from both sexes which are familiar to me and many other young professional women from the 80’s. Lehman points to this film as representing women facing harassment and fighting back. It also advances the notion that ability, intelligence, and being ‘sexy’ should not be mutually exclusive.

Melanie Griffith was perfectly typecast in the film due to her box office success and marketable sex appeal, with bleached blonde hair “Aqua-netted” to “there,” and exaggerated shoulder pads, a look reminiscent of 80’s over-the-top-militarism-on-steroids fashion. Tess was constant prey to the male predators in the office, but Nichols uses her sexuality repeatedly in the film to seemingly speak to the ‘male gaze.’ She disrobes several times for the camera and viewer, while revealing a “bod for sin” in lingerie only available at stores above her pay grade.

At the time the film came out, I thought it was another ironic film about the uneducated female “underdog” in the office, who falls for the handsome scoundrel who steals her “money” idea and presents it to the board and then takes all the credit. However, it turns out the love interest is a good guy; he gives Tess credit for her ideas and dumps the scheming Parker. Sheryl Sandberg would argue that Tess should have Trask’s position instead of a male, anyway, but in this schmaltzy feel- good “American dream” story, the female gains power and prestige from the patriarch, and “wins” the
man. It was an argument for the concept of a woman who could be successful and feminine, but not necessarily "feminist." Early in the film, the love interest admires Tess for dressing femininely because he believed most women dressed, as they believed men would dress, if they were women. Hollywood guild aside (a big budgeted film in which stars are directed by big names and a big soundtrack accompanies a superficial film), the movie takes a stab at feminists’ ideals but contains a feminine bent: smart, attractive woman from a working class background, who dresses femininely, attempts to advance her career and succeeds with "gumption." More importantly, the film shows the viewer a positive outcome for an ambitious female, but it comes at the expense of another woman. The hardworking female underdog is allowed to climb up the "ladder of success" but only after Parker's demise. Parker and another female colleague are depicted as bullying and masculine. When Parker's colleague questions Tess on her knowledge of current events, she is obviously surprised and annoyed to find Tess reads status magazines aimed at fashion conscious females, a display of "unconscious bias." Parker is then punished when she displays characteristics of a male competing in a similar circumstance. Parker is "back-biting," a term reserved for females, whereas a male would just be termed "competitive," and another type of glass ceiling is displayed. I remember being amused by Working Girl, because I didn't find Melanie Griffith believable in her depiction of a "smart" professional female. She had a whispery voice and kittenish appearance. Of course, I used the same bias against Melanie Griffith as most men and women used against me when meeting me as a bond trader. I was blonde,
laughed easily and my Texas accent was thick, allowing too many colleagues to stereotype me as a “sexual mark” or “bimbo.”

When I turned thirty years old, I took a job as a Vice President and Manager of the Capital Markets Department at a respected investment-banking firm. One weekend early in my tenure, the managers of the company (of which I was the only female) convened at the owner’s house for a daylong manager’s meeting. I was approached by the wife of another participant upon arrival, who introduced herself by asking me, “Who in this group do you belong to?” I relate this story because it reflects the general conditions under which my female friends (most of them traders or support staff at brokerage firms) and female colleagues experienced the double bind of sexual bias.

I was subject to the double bind of women protecting their turf, whether professional or sexual. The woman I spoke of at the think-tank session was merely defending her territory. Unconsciously or not, she was making sure I felt threatened by her presence and her statement. I’m sure her next words were an indication of identifying “her” male.

Women are as ignorant as men in their treatment and class placement of other women, and are subject to the same “unconscious bias.”59 The woman I describe was shocked to find I was actually a manager at the firm where her husband worked, and from my general experience, more often than not, felt threatened by my proximity to her husband every day. The behavior of this firm’s males, sadly, would have indeed led to a

59Rhode, What Women Want, Pg.7)
sexual harassment lawsuit, had I believed that was available to me at the time. I frequently received anonymous notes on my desk pointing out a suggested sexual position that would best suit me with the [seemingly prolific] males in the office. The alpha (highest grossing) male in the office suggested weekends when he would be alone at the family beach house, sans family. “Nudie magazines” were left on my desk with little notes suggesting I turn to a certain page that the writer thought looked like his imaginary dominatrix. One of the senior partners gave me a Christmas gift that consisted of a red T-shirt imprinted with the invitation to “Open Me First.” I laughed these acts of aggression off or merely ignored them, because that was the only safe behavior I believed available to me. I was aware that I was being treated unfairly (as were many others I knew) and yet I never considered a lawsuit as more than fantasy. No one that I knew had successfully won (or even filed) a sexual harassment lawsuit, and I knew that if I filed against my firm, I would be ostracized within the industry as a troublemaker. The printed phone book was the only source of information for professional services, except for ads in the newspaper, and there wasn’t a special section that listed attorneys that specialized in “Discrimination.” I probably didn’t know the term’s meaning at the time. Inquiries into my rights as an employee were limited to the Human Resources Department, and they, for the most part, were equipped to interpret employee insurance forms and vacation hours. Practical knowledge of women’s rights at that time was limited.
A younger generation may take current employment protection laws for granted, but the first sexual harassment lawsuit was heard by the Supreme Court in 1986, a mere thirty years ago. Sexual harassment wasn’t even defined in the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission until 1978.\textsuperscript{60} Even the language in today’s EEOC Title IX online site describing sexual harassment is ambiguous:

\begin{quote}
It is helpful for the victim to directly inform the harasser that the conduct is unwelcome and must stop. The victim should use any employer complaint mechanism or grievance system available. Prevention is the best tool to eliminate sexual harassment in the workplace. Employers are encouraged to take steps necessary to prevent sexual harassment from occurring. They should clearly communicate to employees that sexual harassment would not be tolerated. They can do so by establishing an effective complaint or grievance process and taking immediate and appropriate action when an employee complains.\textsuperscript{61}
\end{quote}

It seems rather obvious that prevention is the best tool to eliminate sexual harassment, but exactly what type of encouragement do employers need to prevent it? I could not imagine behavior similar to my boss’s or male coworker being tolerated in today’s marketplace and recourse against such behavior is more readily available. At

\textsuperscript{60} http://eeoc.gov/eeoc/history/35th/milestones/1986.html
\textsuperscript{61} http://www.eeoc.gov/facts/fs-sex.html
my last place of employment, and probably over the past fifteen years, managers and department heads were advised in periodic house counsel meetings to report any suggestions of sexual harassment (or harassment of any kind) to the Human Resources Department. It was made clear to everyone in a supervisory position that department heads were obligated by law (and held personally responsible) to document harassment issues and forward them to the personnel department for further action. The government’s EEOC current language is still ambiguous and should be better defined, but securities firms are rather clear about their responsibility of individual rights within the workplace.

The eighties was a decade of change in workplace civil rights. Several large class actions suits representing women’s wages and workplace entitlements were heard in the courts. Margo Epprecht, in writing about her history as a former Equity Analyst for Prudential in 1982, makes several claims in an article for *The Atlantic Monthly*:

62 Women do more poorly in market corrections (and subsequent layoffs) than men. Epprecht claims men are more skilled at forming strong bonds at work, and because of this, are more likely to be overlooked during market corrections.63 This could be due to men’s ability to ensconce themselves in work settings more favorably than women.64 A woman in power on Wall Street is a somewhat new model, and as women settle into

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63 Ibid.
64 Ibid.
and thrive in positions of influence, it will become normalized, resulting in workforces with more balanced genders.

While women make slow and steady progress in most industries and in government, Wall Street is an exception, and because trading tends to be ego-based, it is not surprising to me that fewer women are entering the trading markets. Women are generally relationship-based, and can multi-task better, but the work has to be meaningful. Rhode and Sandberg point to the overconfidence bias of men in business. In studies, Sandberg cites that men are more confident in their own abilities whether warranted or not, and Rhode claims men are more confident when risking other people’s money. I agree to a certain extent, but my female peers and I were, and still are, confident in our jobs. Investing with other’s funds should not be done with a lack of confidence, and Ginny Clark, the first female block trader at Salomon Brothers, sees “women as having common sense and instincts that play well in the markets.” It’s possible that less bailout would have been needed had more women been in power during the mortgage back/derivative crisis. Over the course of my career on Wall Street, I traded capital markets based on instincts, and I was successful (in that I made healthy returns on capital investments), but generally the risk/reward model used on Wall Street benefits big risk takers. Most bonuses, which can be substantial in relation to individual salaries, are usually based on short-term profits and are traditionally paid out yearly, and promote bigger risk models. Stories of women stealing millions or billions of dollars from big banks on Wall Street just don’t exist; it is more likely to read of men
doing so. However, I believe the risk/reward model that banks assume is slowly changing as the SEC and FINRA (government regulators) take a more hands-on approach to regulating risk, as well as pressure from within as shareholders apply for ‘self’ regulation.

It is possible that women on Wall Street, much like me, are moving into much broader based and client-oriented fields, and these numbers are sure to increase as the general demographic of “boomers” increase. Financial planners focus on long term risks versus short-term profit taking, on which many traders’ incomes are based. It is also possible that more women are starting small businesses based on the current laws that promote women business enterprises (WBE) and the independence small firms provide. In 1967, Muriel Siebert, who died last year at the age of eighty, bought a seat on the New York Stock exchange so “she could play with the boys on an equal footing.”65 In reality, the only reason she was allowed to play with the boys at all is due to the WBE’s and “Minority Business Enterprise” (MBE) laws that were enacted which required municipalities and states to devote a certain percentage of their business towards those disenfranchised groups.66 According to Epprecht, studies show men are more effective leaders in male-dominated settings and women are more effective in female-oriented workplaces. For women to advance on Wall Street, they must fit into a male-dominated hierarchical work environment according to Epprecht. I argue the only way to change

66 Originally affirmative action programs begun with the Civil Rights Act, ECOC in the 1970’s, with 5% federal contracts aimed at WBEs effected in 2000.
Wall Street demographics (or any other male dominated field) is if women pursue careers in these underrepresented fields. In 1980 there were no women in top executive positions and now there are 11%. Positive numbers are evolving in the Board of Directors and Executive Officers of financial firms, and are now reflecting twenty percent and sixteen percent respectively. Fortune reports that 63% of Fortune’s most powerful women have climbed the ladder without MBA’s, so it stands to reason, MBA’s are not required to excel in business.

Sandberg claims that women are quick to undermine their successes as fraudulent, and don’t always speak up for themselves. She cites “the tiara syndrome” as an inherent belief that women will be rewarded if they perform excellent work, and in lieu of speaking up and pointing out their accomplishments, waits for a crown to be placed on their heads. In my experience, this was a tendency I observed in both sexes, not just females; confidence is a trait that is learned and nurtured. Garance Franke-Ruta argues that women excel in college, and it stands to reason, would be better rewarded for their smarts and industriousness. However, women are prone neither to boast of their accomplishments nor self-promote, and if they do, they’re viewed negatively. The same behavior that rewards men is discouraged in women, and subsequently, women don’t step up and “sit at the table” and “lean in” as Sandberg encourages them to do.

68 http://fortune.com/2014/10/13/women-mba-students/
69 Sandberg, Lean In, 63.
70 Garance Franke-Ruta, The Atlantic, April 2013.
http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2013/04/miss-education/309267/
Franke-Ruta points out that behaviors rewarded in school, such as studying, careful preparation, patient and linear progression, are not necessarily rewarded in the marketplace (which instead rewards aggressive and risky trading). Skills that propel women academically are met with negative consequences in the workplace. Franke-Ruta surmises that there is also an “ingrained set of behaviors that also undermine women: Men learn often and early that to woo women, they must risk rejection and be persistent. Straight women, for their part, learn from their earliest years that they must wait to be courted. The professional world does not reward the second approach...[and because being] female in our culture is to be trained from puberty in the art of rebuffing, rebuffing gazes, comments, touches, propositions, and proposals,”\textsuperscript{71} it is a natural and learned behavior to win notice by “primping” in a professional environment for recognition and praise.

Women are making headway in many industries, including government. While the number of women entering jobs on Wall Street has been shrinking,\textsuperscript{72} the number of women getting MBA’s is promising.\textsuperscript{73,74} Garance Franke-Ruta brings up interesting

\textsuperscript{71} Ibid. Franke-Ruta.
\textsuperscript{72} In a ten-year study, Catalyst claims there is a 15% drop in women between the ages of 20-35 in brokerage and asset management jobs as men’s employment in those industries increased. From the 1970’s to 1980’s, women stock analysts numbered one in five, and those numbers have not changed significantly since the stock market collapse of 1987
\textsuperscript{73} Wharton’s School of Business boasts 45% female population
\textsuperscript{74} In 2010, the GMAT reported that 40% of its test takers were women, an all-time high that represented more than 100,000 women nationwide taking the first steps toward
observations that correspond with Sandberg regarding ways in which women are paid and praised in the workplace. Even though Title IX\textsuperscript{75} was mandated over forty years ago and required women to be treated equally, the language only addressed to treat women equal academically and women are still not on equal footing economically. I was not educated in finance (except in practical applications), algorithmic theories or fundamental flow charts, but I believed that I was successful if I made money for my clients and the firms I worked for. I personally attempted to protect our client's assets by avoiding derivative mortgage backs entirely, and it was more of a risk model that I self-imposed than a required mode of trading risk. Generally speaking, this stance is not well rewarded financially by employers, but more so by clients who entrust their funds to a money manager. Unconscious gender stereotypes affect evaluations of women's performance at work as well, but according to Rhode, "People like to believe there is a just world and individuals get what they deserve and deserve what they get."\textsuperscript{76} Women generally do not want to present themselves as victims so they don't complain.\textsuperscript{77} Sheryl Sandberg's understanding of feminism is that it acknowledges that things are not equal for men and women: "What makes it appealing or attractive to be a woman?" she asks.

\textsuperscript{75}Title IX is an addendum to the Civil Rights Act, which prohibits sex discrimination in education, ratified in 1972 by Lyndon B. Johnson

\textsuperscript{76}Rhode, \textit{What Women Want}, 25.

\textsuperscript{77}Ibid. 35.
Wall Street (and “main street”) has vastly improved for women. For Sandberg’s suggestions to work, however, more compromises are required of either the providers of childcare (as in affordable) or more partners need to step up in dividing time to help raise a family. Rani Nazim, a female executive director at Morgan Stanley, reiterates Sandberg’s stance during an interview in 2013:78

“Historically, finance has been a male dominated industry and both minorities and women had a tough time building careers on Wall Street. But the nature of the business and the people in it are all changing, and I think this creates more opportunity. In my business alone, four women were promoted to senior management positions this year. I think this underscores the importance of female executives in the trading business and on Wall Street. Equally impressive, Morgan Stanley has been recognized by Working Mother magazine for 13 consecutive years as one of the ‘Top 100 companies for working mothers.’ To me, this proves more women feel comfortable balancing work and family so naturally you see more women on Wall Street.

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"When a man gives his opinion, he's a man. When a woman gives her opinion, she's a bitch." - Margo Channing

Almost twenty years after *Working Girl* a blockbuster was released that garnered several awards and featured a woman in a position of power within corporate America. *The Devil Wears Prada* was a commercial success, but its title infers that the devil wears red high-heeled pumps (females in today’s corporate structure). The association between high heels and a demon is evident in the film’s advertising, and I guess it stands to reason, the devil is female. The film’s viewers are voyeurs into the world of couture and fashion, and a woman is running it. Wall Street has lost its glamorous status, and we are now in the prosperous world of couture fashion, where “a million girls would die to get a job.” Miranda Priestly is the head of “Runway” magazine and the insufferable demon that steers the magazine’s content. Miranda’s character is bullying and venomous and could well be Katherine Parker twenty years later, if Parker was allowed to continue sitting as the head of a corporation. A power exchange, is shown at the conclusion, as the underling accepts the knowledge she has garnered from the devil and goes on to accept a job in which she is capable and qualified. The movie troubles the depiction of women as heads of corporations and displays another type of glass ceiling. Priestly displays gender bias and is so difficult to work for, she

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79 Bette Davis as Margo, *All About Eve* film, 1950
80 2006.
81 Finished in 2006 as one of Top-20 grossing films at $300MM
stereotypes bitchy women in power. Alternately, the show depicts an elevated space for Tess twenty years later, in a corner office at the top of the building.

More women are assuming the mantle of political power, in spite of editorials, images and texts that seemingly contradict the power women have gained over the past fifty years. A different, albeit still undermining, display of the glass ceiling is evident as the media continues to focus on weight and hairstyles, but as more “empowerment” programs are implemented in schools and through “self help” groups, this will begin to change. Research led me to many programs in place for raising awareness of feminine issues: Jennifer Seibel Newsom’s organization, “The Representation Project”, which empowers young women and girls, as well as serving on the advisory committee for “Dove Self Esteem Project,” as well as Sheryl Sandberg’s contribution to empowerment programs, such as “Ban Bossy,” are generating media buzz.

Girls buy into the gender bias, but they also attempt to replicate and emulate heroines. With the introduction of female heroines in films such as Hunger Games, Brave, Frozen, and Avatar, empowerment is imminent for young women and girls within popular culture, and in the working world. In the short time Hollywood has been producing films depicting females as powerful, evidence of their impact on young girls is everywhere, as more advertisements address young girls and women as focal groups.

Environment constructs femininity and masculinity. Jennifer Lawrence’s depiction of a strong fierce female warrior, who saves mankind for no other reason other than she’s capable, strong, and it’s the right thing to do, imprints upon and
empowers young women. When I had the opportunity to teach a lower level Humanities class in 2011, I asked the incoming freshmen and sophomore students to share with me their personal interests. Several female students stated that they loved The Hunger Games\textsuperscript{82} novels and could not wait until the film adaptation came out. 2012 saw a proliferation of female empowered warrior films, and a subsequent NYT article entitled What Men Want: Then and Now, showed a poll of men from 1939, and compared their answers to the same questions in 2012. Men are now hunting for a woman who is smart and educated and less likely to want a virgin or a good cook as a wife.\textsuperscript{83} Good news for all of those little girls now studying to be warriors.

Betty Friedan pointed out fifty years ago, “It is perhaps beside the point to remark that bowling alleys and supermarkets have nursery facilities, while schools and colleges and scientific laboratories and government offices do not.” Sheryl Sandberg laments that while women make up 51% of the population, “A truly equal world would be where women ran half our countries and companies and men ran half our homes.”\textsuperscript{84} Deborah Rhode agrees when she points out half of today’s law students and 30% of today’s full professors are female, but also agrees with Sandberg’s assessment that the term “feminism” is problematic, and has been weighted down with the vision bias of bra–burning, aggressive butch females with a chip on their shoulder, and many

\textsuperscript{82} Trilogy written by Suzanne Collins. The Hunger Games, Catching Fire, and Mocking Jay. 2008.
\textsuperscript{84} Lean In, pg. 50.
contemporary women who would claim to support equality among working females would not term themselves as feminists.

Women have been taught not to stand up and demand equal pay for equal work, and don’t want to appear aggressive in their political views or divisive when they point out or challenge inequities they see within social and economic structures.85 Men and women react to "feminist" challenges as a signal that women want to act like men or take over men’s positions. Ellen Pao made international headlines recently for filing a $16MM lawsuit against a Venture Capital firm in Silicon Valley. Pao claimed sexual discrimination, and the news played out the trial’s daily testimony with a bias against Pao. One of the headlines described Pao as a “female with a chip on her shoulder, and was a “squeaky wheel who complained too much”, “grabbed for credit,” and had “sharp elbows.” What exactly is a “female chip on one’s shoulder?” if not misogynistic? Do writers describe men as having sharp or rounded elbows and is ‘squeaky’ a feminine term? In concurrence with Sandberg’s assessment that women are rated differently at work than men, Pao’s performance reviews were summed up as contradictory: “Speak up, but don’t talk too much. Light up the room, but don’t overshadow others. Be confident and critical but not cocky and negative.”86 Several articles emphasized Pao’s sexual affair with a colleague while simultaneously emphasizing her high salary while

employed at Kleiner Perkins\(^87\) (in comparison to what, her male colleagues?). John Doerr, Pao’s former boss and Kleiner partner, testified, “There is no easy path for women entrepreneurs to get funding so very few women become venture capitalists.”\(^88\) The WSJ, in a later editorial, states, “Pao’s lawsuit is the perfect example of the feminist vendetta against Silicon Valley companies…and America’s most vibrant economic sector [Silicon Valley cannot withstand] the continuing feminist onslaught of feminist crusaders.”\(^89\) Cultural representation is problematic in depictions of women’s oppression.

Women just want an equal shot at the same positions that men have held for years, and they want to retain these positions with the same standards and gauges that are used to determine the strengths and weaknesses of a man doing the same job at the same salary level. Concurrently, women who have fought to obtain footing within social and economic structures see other women as threats. Until there is equal footing and salaries for all genders, there will be an overwhelming tendency for women to react with gender bias when women are introduced into their power structure, but this is changing. As women are portrayed in popular culture with more power, women are also gaining recognition as essential to the corporate structure. This year, Alibaba, China’s largest e-commerce company, issued history’s largest IPO and consists of 47% women

\(^{87}\) Elizabeth Weise. *Pao Trial Costs Kleiner* USA Today. April 23 2015.
with 33% females retaining senior positions within the firm. In Adam Grant and Sheryl Sandberg’s NYT editorial entitled, “How Men Succeed” the writers conclude that “When children see their mothers pursuing careers and their fathers doing housework, they’re more likely to carry gender equality forward to the next generation.” Sandberg/Grant goes on to state the U.S. GDP increase since 1970 has been attributed to the increase in women entering the paid work force.

Mary Tyler Moore was celebrated because the show represented an individualist and self-sufficient woman in a professional setting. It remains for women to release their hard won power and embrace other women into the marketplace, or recognize that helping a female will uplift the entire gender. It is problematic to expect women to embrace “sisterhood” after calling for “individualism.” Empowerment is packaged to women in various forms, but women are expected to attain this power by asking politely.

In 2012, Katy Gilpatric, an instructor at Palm Beach State College in Film Appreciation, researched the top twenty grossing films from 1991-2005 and found that most heroines in action films were actually sidekicks (“props” or love interests) to the male heroes. Gilpatric concluded, “Instead of breaking down gender barriers and portraying women empowering female roles, most violent female action characters were involved in a romantic relationship with the lead. Evidence that the majority of female action characters shown in American cinema are not images of empowerment; they do not draw upon their femininity as a source of power, and they are not a kind of
'post-gender woman' operating outside the boundaries of traditional gender restrictions...Instead, they operate inside highly socially constructed gender norms, rely on the strength and guidance of a dominant male action character, and end up re-articulating gender stereotypes."^{90} However, the construct is changing with production companies’ realization that young ladies are a 50% resource for marketing product and movies and femininity and masculinity are constructs of environment.

More women are now being portrayed in popular television series as powerful and yet sexy women. Lehman claims the depiction of single women in television and film, “regardless of their feminist stance, are essential to processes of social and political change. As young single women dare to move away from their families, delay marriage, obtain birth control and make their way in the workplace, they may have been following their individual desires but they advance the cause of women as they enter patriarchal professions, seek sexual pleasure on their own terms and speak out about sexual assault."^{91} These women might not have been aware of the changes television helps them achieve; all they are doing is trying to pay the rent.

As women advance in the “real world,” it is reflected in popular culture. Two of the most popular shows on television today are *The Good Wife* and *Mad Men.*^{92} *The

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^{92} *Mad Men* garners 3.4 million viewers per week
[http://www.ew.com/article/2013/04/08/mad-men-season-6](http://www.ew.com/article/2013/04/08/mad-men-season-6); The Good Wife gathers an average of 11.8 million adults 18-49
*Good Wife* views women in a contemporary setting and *Mad Men* views women as they “were,” in the 1960’s and 70’s, experiencing oppression and pushing back. *Mad Men*\(^\text{93}\) evolved to show changes in the 60’s and 70’s of men and women’s power within the corporate structure and is now coming to a close after seven seasons. Peggy Olson is an ambitious secretary, who showed “gumption,” much like Tess. She is mentored by the alpha male in the office and eventually advanced to the position of “copywriter.” Her power is evident because she’s one of the only two females in the office that has an office and retains a staff of assistants. Over the course of the show’s historical representation, from 1960-1970, Peggy eventually gains enough power to sustain an assisting staff (all men), but as the show comes to its end, it is made obvious that a “glass ceiling” restricts Peggy’s advancement. When the firm where she works is bought out, the new firm doesn’t respect women enough to give her the benefits she has worked so hard to achieve. The challenges Peggy experiences as a woman struggling in a male dominated field are the same today as they were in the 1960’s and 1970’s, but women are making real strides in their advancement.

Women’s struggles in the 60’s, such as sexism displayed in *Mad Men*, are reminders of the strides women made in the workplace and in culture since Mrs. Cleaver was expected to stay home and raise kids. As women’s workplace and individual issues evolve, struggles for advancement and independence, in shows such as *That Girl* and *Mary Tyler Moore*, sexual harassment and power struggles in *Working*

\(^{93}\) 2007, AMC, written by Matthew Weiner
Girl, gender stereotypes in *Tootsie*, the struggles of working mothers in *Baby Boom* and *Murphy Brown*, are written into mainstream television and film. Women’s real power is depicted in current popular programs, such as *The Good Wife*, but struggles are still addressed with the show’s introduction of current topics, such as sexism in the courtroom and the sexual double standards women experience in the working world.

*The Good Wife* will continue to normalize new narratives and roles for women, but it also brings to the forefront arguments Sandberg makes in her book, such as a woman’s difficulty in remaining aggressive enough to woo clients and hold onto power, but still be “liked” enough within the workplace to advance.

The issues at play in depictions of the current working girl will occur when powerful women are less of an exception and more of a “naturalized” depiction. We need “more portrayals of competent professionals and happy mothers, or even happy mothers and competent mothers.”94 Men should be depicted as child rearing. The goal is to work towards depicting males and females in parity with one another.

“I want what I’m worth” – Dianne Lockhart

“I want you to think of me as a mentor, Alicia. It’s the closest thing we have to an old boys’ network in this town: Women helping women, okay?” – Dianne Lockhart

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95 Christine Baranski plays Dianne Lockhart, *The Good Wife*
One of the TV’s most popular television shows is *The Good Wife*, and the title suggests a dutiful wife much like Mrs. Cleaver. Alicia Florrick is the show’s heroine, and is portrayed as the stay-at-home-mom with a law degree who re-enters the job market and eventually secures a position as a law partner for a prestigious law firm. In the series’ beginning years, she stands by her scandal-plagued, sexually promiscuous political husband, but in the course of the show’s six year run, Alicia partners up with Diane Lockhart (Christine Baranski) to run a woman-owned law firm and becomes a powerful attorney in her own right. She eventually leaves her husband and runs for Illinois State Attorney General, which she has to give up as a result of a power struggle within her political party.

Several of the show’s major characters are female, and all are powerful. Men are frequently shown as bumbling manipulators who are always outsmarted by female protagonists. The show’s creators (one of which is Ridley Scott) also depict the office’s female investigator (Archie Panjabi is the hard drinking Kalinda Sharma) as a whip-smart bisexual who is frequently called upon to assist in solving the firm’s seemingly unsolvable dilemmas. The writing is smart and appeals to the weekly viewer who wishes to see strong women showcased in a setting that makes them physically attractive, but also flawed as humans. The writers have made the heroines smart and sexy, frequently wearing body conscious suits and platform pumps. Florrick’s partner Diane displays elevated grooming skills, wearing extremely high-end fashion, along with Kalinda, who sports thigh high boots. These characters rely on their sexual appeal...
as a source of power and leverage rather than aim for sexless equality. All of the characters are an amalgamation of Tess, but they have achieved advancement in a work environment where attractiveness and power are seamlessly blended. The show engages the watcher with current cultural platforms, as real world news affecting consumer, individual, and civil rights are showcased. Current cultural dilemmas challenge the attorneys, as well as their clients, and their corporate depictions are made more realistic as the show focuses on current affairs because the show almost instantly addresses issues raised in the public domain. For example, privacy discussions of government versus individual rights currently play out in the news and on the show. Female attorneys sometimes encounter sexist judges and must navigate bias, while maintaining their relationship with the courts.

The show depicts role models as female, powerful and sexy. Alicia is a flawed human, much like most of her viewing audience, and struggles with ethical issues presented in professional and personal situations. She is the only attorney who raises two children alone. Issues frequently arise from the show that addresses the challenges of single parenthood. Alicia is sexual, and her desires realistically address the difficult boundaries set for women in the workplace: she has sexual challenges but attempts to maintain her professionalism. She pursues and retains clients for the law firm, and she also fights for people she sees as being underrepresented in society. She is the modern day corporate warrior, who happens to be female, powerful and sexy.
Diane is smart and funny, while policing the firm’s attorney’s ethical boundaries. She was once considered for the role of the state’s Supreme Court but met with resistance when her left-leaning politics met resistance by right-wing policy makers, but she’s also considered an expert in her field and is constantly consulted by right-wing think-tank attorneys who ask her to argue the outcomes of hypothetical cases.

Popular culture mirrors real life characters and situations, and based on the progression of popular culture’s depictions of females, positive reinforcement and imprinting, women will continue to achieve positions of power within social structures. As women continue to make educational advances and headways in real positions of power, it will be reflected in popular culture.

When I was a kid, and I was asked what I wanted to be when I grew up, I answered, “Carhop.” Carhops were female waitresses who worked at drive-in restaurants delivering burgers and shakes, sometimes on roller skates and always in costume. It was an honest answer from a kid who saw waitressing in a short skirt on wheels as sexy and exotic, and more significantly, whose choices were limited. Due to television shows that reflected powerful females to me, I imagined becoming one. Women are making “firsts” in many business environments and will influence and encourage the next generation of females to follow. As women assume more positions of power heretofore reserved for males, popular culture will reflect this shift and empower young women and girls to pursue positions in these fields. Girls become what
they see in popular culture and in the real world. Films and television that depict women as warriors will result in psychological imprints on young women and girls as, “people use systems of representation to experience, interpret, and make sense of the conditions of their lives both as image makers and viewers.” As contemporary writers, filmmakers, newsmakers, and leaders depict women breaking stereotypes and reaching greater parity in gender roles, and thereby breaking glass ceilings, more women will enter job markets previously reserved “for men only.”

Works Cited


http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/ows/seminars/tcentury/FeminineMystique.pdf


