"I'LL BE THERE FOR YOU" IF YOU ARE JUST LIKE ME: AN ANALYSIS OF HEGEMONIC SOCIAL STRUCTURES IN "FRIENDS"

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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this dissertation is to analyze the dominant ideologies and hegemonic social constructs the television series *Friends* communicates in regard to friendship practices, gender roles, racial representations, and social class in order to suggest relationships between the series and social patterns in the broader culture. This dissertation describes the importance of studying television content and its relationship to media culture and social influence. The analysis included a quantitative content analysis of friendship maintenance, and a qualitative textual analysis of alternative families, gender, race, and class representations. The analysis found the characters displayed actions of selectivity, only accepting a small group of friends in their social circle based on friendship, gender, race, and social class distinctions as the six characters formed a culture that no one else was allowed to enter.

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This project stems from countless years of watching and *appreciating* television. When I was in college, a good friend told me about a series that featured six young people who discussed their lives over countless cups of coffee. Even though the series was in its seventh year at the time, I did not start to watch the show until that season. Little did I know that years later I would become so engaged with the series that it would turn into an enjoyable research project for my doctoral dissertation.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Friends began with five characters sitting in a coffee shop talking about their relationships. They continued talking about their friendships and romances for a decade; however, they rarely discussed the importance of gender, race, and class to those relationships. The situation comedy about six "twenty-somethings" (Sandell, 1998, p. 141) living in New York City ran on the National Broadcasting Company's (NBC) prime-time schedule for 236 episodes over 10 seasons from 1994 to 2004 (Bright, Kauffman, & Crane, 1994). Viewers learned about the relationships among Rachel Green, Monica Geller, Phoebe Buffay, Joey Tribbiani, Chandler Bing, and Ross Geller, as they discussed their triumphs and disappointments over countless cups of coffee. This dissertation analyzes representations of friendship, gender, race, and class in the Emmy Award-winning (Emmy winners 1994-2004, 2005) and commercially successful television situation comedy *Friends.* The first chapter introduces the show and describes the importance of studying television content. It provides the theoretical frameworks and methods used for analysis in this dissertation. That analysis includes a quantitative content analysis of friendship maintenance, and a qualitative textual analysis of alternative families, gender, race, and class.

How this Project will Study Television

Dominant ideologies, as described later in this chapter, have the ability to perpetuate acceptable attitudes and beliefs about social standards. Dominant ideologies also reinforce these ideals in today's culture (Butsch, 2005) through friendship practices, gender roles, racial representations, and social class distinctions this project explores. Television creates a connection from the outside world to our living rooms (Fiske, 2003; Press, 1991). Television, particularly situation comedies, attempts to confirm cultural identity through distinguishing an

"'inside,' a community of interests and values, and localizing contrary or oppositional values as an 'outside'" (Neale & Krutnik, 1990, p. 242). "Sitcoms' predominance on prime-time television throughout its history and their consequent share of television audience over this history mean that they are preeminent examples of dominant culture, steadily presented to the largest population over the longest time" (Butsch, 2005, p. 113).

Television should be studied because is it popular and pervasive with viewers. In order to stay popular, television needs to reach a broad variety of people (Fiske, 1987). Millions of people invited the six friends into their living rooms every Thursday evening. In fact, *Friends* was always one of the top 10 shows; when the series was on the air from 1994 to 2004, the average number of viewers was 25.4 million (Ginsburg, 2004). With as many as 4,708,000 viewers (Zap2it, 2007) in syndication each week, *Friends* continues to be popular today, three years after the series concluded. *Friends* should be studied to locate connections between relationship research, televised messages, and their connections to society.

Purpose of Research

The purpose of this research is to analyze the dominant ideologies and hegemonic social constructs the television series *Friends* communicates in regard to friendship practices, gender roles, racial representations, and social class in order to suggest relationships between the series and social patterns. The series depicted relationships and how those relational structures were sustained throughout the series, which are discussed throughout this dissertation. Textual and content analysis methods are used to examine ways that the ensemble acknowledged their friendships, gender, race, and class.

About *Friends*

Friends was created by David Crane and Marta Kauffman. Kevin Bright, David Crane, and Marta Kauffman were executive producers of the series, who also worked together on shows such as *Couples, Jesse,* and *Veronica's Closet* (IMDB.com). The creators of the series included the following statement in the original description of the show during its creation: "It's about sex, love, relationships, careers, [and] a time in your life when everything's possible. And it's about friendship because when you're single and in the city, your friends are your family" (Lauer, 2004).

The situation comedy began with four people—Monica, Phoebe, Joey, and Chandler—sitting in a New York City coffee shop discussing relationships. Ross Geller walked into the coffee shop, Central Perk, looking for his friends. Horrified by his recent divorce, his lesbian ex-wife just moved out of their apartment and he was scared about being alone. "I don't want to be single, okay? I just…I just…I just wanna be married again" (Bright, Kauffman, & Crane, 1994). As Ross was talking about his problems with his friends, Rachel Green entered Central Perk in a wedding dress searching for her high school friend Monica. Rachel was clearly upset and needed someone to talk to because she had left a man at the altar. Rachel was looking for a place to live because her wealthy parents were upset with her decision not to marry a rich man. They would not let her move back in to their house and forced her to start an independent life. Rachel knew that Monica lived in Greenwich Village in New York City and hoped Monica would agree to let her rent a room. Rachel moved in with Monica during the first episode. Rachel, not knowing how to survive without use of her father's credit cards, started work as a server at Central Perk, the group's regular hangout. Rachel renewed her friendship with Monica and quickly became friends with the rest of the group by the end of the first episode.

Figure 1. Cast and character names, and character descriptions in *Friends*

Actor/actress name	Character name	Character description
Jennifer Aniston	Rachel Green	Spoiled, fashion executive
Courteney Cox-Arquette	Monica Geller	Mother-figure of group, chef
Lisa Kudrow	Phoebe Buffay	Eccentric, played guitar, masseuse
Matt LeBlanc	Joey Tribbiani	Dim-witted, actor
Matthew Perry	Chandler Bing	Sarcastic, low self-esteem
David Schwimmer	Ross Geller	Paleontologist, hopeless romantic

Monica, an aspiring chef, was obsessed with keeping a clean apartment and being tidy. During the series, she acted as a mother for the group and was obsessed with becoming a mother to a child of her own. Monica's hyper-competitive, outgoing nature supported her character; she always wanted to be perfect and the best at everything. Monica was constantly searching for the perfect man and dated several men. She worked many jobs as a chef and was the head chef of an exclusive restaurant at the end of the series' run. In the beginning of the series, she and Rachel lived just a few steps away from Central Perk.

Living across the hall from Monica and Rachel in the first half of the series were Joey and Chandler. Joey, a dim-witted, struggling actor looking for short-lived relationships, became a recurring star of the television serial *Days of Our Lives* during the series. Joey was proud of his large Italian family and his ability to eat large portions of food at one sitting. He always ordered two pizzas at a time or stole leftovers from Monica's apartment. Joey often commented about his good looks and had sexual relationships with many women.

Joey's best friend was his roommate, Chandler Bing. Chandler often referred to taking care of Joey, as if Joey was his own child. Chandler held a data processing job in New York City that he despised. Later in the series, he pursued a career in advertising. Chandler's sarcasm and frequent non-sequiturs were staples of his character. Chandler always told jokes and made fun of himself because he had low self-esteem. Chandler and Ross Geller, Monica's brother, were college roommates.

Ross had a doctorate degree and worked in a natural history museum as a paleontologist at the beginning of the series. In season 6, he accepted a position as professor of paleontology at New York University. He, like Monica, was competitive. Their parents favored Ross over Monica, which gave him a big ego. Ross was a hopeless romantic character who was looking for the perfect relationship. In the pilot, Ross mourned the break up of his first marriage to Carol, who divorced Ross to pursue a romantic relationship with another woman. Carol remained in Ross' life throughout the series because she gave birth to their son, Ben, in the first season. Ross and Phoebe Buffay, the sixth character, lived nearby the other characters in Greenwich Village.

Phoebe Buffay's quirky actions and headstrong opinions were staples of her personality. Phoebe lived with Monica before Rachel moved in. Phoebe had a troubled childhood as her father abandoned the family, her mother committed suicide, and her stepfather went to prison. Phoebe worked as a masseuse. She was a vegetarian and had strong opinions about animal rights. Phoebe's favorite hobby was creating jingles for the others with her guitar. On her guitar, Phoebe's songs often lacked quality, but had fun, catchy lyrics. The group often congregated at Central Perk to listen to her songs.

Friends with Romance

The relationships among the characters changed during the time the series was on the air. Ross' failures at marriage became a central theme of the show. Ross had romantic feelings for Rachel in high school; his attempts at achieving a successful romance with Rachel became a driving force in the series from episode 1. Ross and Rachel first dated in season 2 for a year. They temporarily broke up and remained an on-again-off-again couple. In season 4, Ross married Emily Waltham after a short-lived relationship. At the wedding, however, Ross said, "I Ross take thee Rachel" at the altar (Borkow, Goldberg-Meehan, Silveri, Condon, Toomin, & Bright, 1998). Ross and Emily divorced the following season and Ross was single again. At the conclusion of season 5, Ross and Rachel got married in Las Vegas. Ross and Rachel, however, were drunk during the ceremony and the marriage was annulled after a few episodes. Ross and Rachel became parents to a baby girl, Emma, in season 8, following a one-night stand. For the next 2 years, Ross and Rachel did not date, but rekindled their relationship in the series finale.

Chandler, like Ross, dated several women, but had little confidence in his abilities to sustain a romantic relationship. Chandler feared committing to a woman and, as a result, had few relationships. Chandler overcame his relationship fears when he started to date Monica in season 4. They slept together at the end of the season and continued the relationship in season 5, but kept it a secret from their friends. In season 5, the other characters found out about their relationship and were happy for their friends. Chandler moved in with Monica in season 6. At the end of the season, he proposed. They were married the following season.

Unlike Ross and Chandler, neither Joey nor Phoebe had trouble securing sexual relationships. They were the most active daters and did not choose to settle down until the end of the series. Joey fell in love with Rachel in season 8, but the relationship was plagued by the extensive dating history between Ross and Rachel. Joey could not date Rachel because it

bothered Ross too much. Phoebe married a former attorney turned piano player, Mike Hannigan, in season 10. All of the characters, except Joey, ended up in coupled relationships by the end of the series. Ross and Rachel were together in the series finale but they were not married. The series ended with Joey feeling the need to start a new life. This set up the short-lived, spin-off NBC series, *Joey*, the following fall season (Goldberg-Meehan & Silveri, 2004).

Theoretical Framework

This dissertation uses two theoretical foundations to create a framework that demonstrates multiple perspectives of how these six friendships were maintained and how dominant ideologies reflected the representation of those friendships on the series. Both hegemonic ideology and social penetration are discussed in the following sections. This dissertation contributes to academic research because it uses these theories to gain a richer understanding of the *Friends* text and its possible relationship to the broader society. Results from this research will show a relationship among friendships, gender, race, and class to television, situation comedies, and the greater society.

Dominant Ideology

Ideology essentially means "the study or knowledge of ideas" (Eagleton, 1994, p. 1). There are several different and sometimes contradictory uses of the concept of ideology currently used in scholarship. This dissertation relies on the work of Butler, Eagleton, Hall, and White. Stuart Hall (1986b) defined ideology as "the mental frameworks—the languages, the concepts, categories, imagery of thought, and the systems of representation" that are used by social classes to "make sense of, define, figure out and render intelligible the way society works" (p. 29). Butler (2007) defined a *dominant ideology* as a "system of beliefs about the world that benefits and supports a society's ruling class" (p. 446). Dominant ideologies attempt to control or resolve

issues of “contention and contradiction in the process of promoting a more unified idea of social subjectivity” (White, 1992, p. 179). This research defines dominant ideology as the prevailing ideas that serve the interest of the dominant groups in society. This research found that *Friends* perpetuated dominant ideologies of friendship, gender, race, and class, frequently using humor to communicate these ideas.

Hegemony

Many scholars are familiar with hegemony from Gramsci’s (1971, 1977, 1991) writing. Scholars have used his work and applied hegemony to specific media texts and cultural practices. This research relies on the scholarship of interpreting Gramsci contributed by Butler, Eagleton, Hall, Gitlin, Lears, and Press.

Press (1991) situated hegemony and ideology through using Gramsci’s writings; in the United States, we live in a capitalist society with a set of values and beliefs that constitute dominant ideologies. There are cultures within the United States, however, that attempt to resist those ideologies; the process of reinforcing dominant ideologies is known as *hegemony*. Hall (1986a, 1986b) suggested that while ideology facilitates understanding of how certain ideas are able to control thinking in society, the ways that these ideas maintain power and control over society all together is hegemony.

Lears (1985) argues that hegemonic ideologies are not imposed, but rather embraced by society. Hegemony, according to Lears, recognizes that there are dissimilarities in “wealth and power” and “seeks to show how those inequalities have been maintained or challenged in the sphere of culture” (p. 572). Hegemony is “not a static, closed system of ruling-class domination. Rather it is a society in constant process, where the creation of counterhegemonies remains a live

option" (p. 571).

Dominant Ideologies and Hegemonic Influence

This system of hegemonic power does not function by itself (Gitlin, 2000). Dominant ideologies have to be constantly "reproduced" and "superimposed" (p. 590) to combat different ideas that may be present in society. Within the hegemonic process, social conflicts can be restructured to fit within the existing dominant ideologies. Gitlin labeled the combination of these two structures working together as "hegemonic ideology" (p. 590). Hegemonic ideology is accomplished "by absorbing and domesticating conflicting definitions of reality and demands on it, in fact, that it remains hegemonic" (p. 590).

Eagleton (1991) suggested that "ideology has to do with *legitimating* the power of a dominant social group or class" (p. 5) as it "is perhaps best seen as a field of struggle and negotiation between various social groups and classes" (p. 11). Therefore, the ruling social class has power over its representation of principles and standards in society (Marx & Engels, 1968). The ruling class, as a result, "appears as the thinkers of the class" (p. 61). Ideology divides social groups into sides of dominant versus subordinate and superior versus inferior (Kellner, 2003). "I" is the point of view that ideology comes from, which is normally the "white male, Western, middle- or upper-class subject positions, of positions that see other races, classes, groups, and gender as secondary, derivative, inferior, and subservient" (p. 61). Kellner used the example that people of color—not White—are sometimes referred to as lazy, dense, and unreasonable, and become substandard to Whites. Women are often seen as subservient and submissive, who belong in the home while men are in the workforce. The generally accepted ideology of the upper-class White male, for example, controls the working-class White female and other individuals who are not upper-class, White, and male. However, the process of hegemony allows

for resistance to the dominant ideology as “oppressed individuals struggle to overcome structures of domination in a variety of arenas” (p. 32).

White (1992) claimed that ideology is an ongoing practice in society. Ideology has a relationship to hegemony through “constructing people as subjects in an ideology that always serves the interest of the dominant classes” (Fiske, 1992, p. 291). If ideologies of the ruling class are so compelling to those individuals who are not part of the ruling class that they believe the ideologies as the reality, hegemony has been successfully accomplished (Butler, 2007; Gramsci, 1991). The ruling social class has power over commonly accepted principles and standards in society. In other words, hegemony attempts to influence society through ideologies of the dominant class (White, 1992) as the dominant class “wins the willing consent of the subordinate classes to the system that ensures their subordination” (Fiske, 1992, p. 291).

Dominant Ideologies in the Media

Hegemony is a critical theory because it analyzes the social practices and the distribution of power in society (Littlejohn & Foss, 2005). Hegemony is widely used by media researchers to display ways that texts positively or negatively represent the dominant ideologies of society on television (Bertrand & Hughes, 2005). Littlejohn and Foss described the relationship of hegemony to mass media in communication contexts as a “dominant ideology perpetuates the interests of certain classes over others, and the media obviously play a major role in this process” (p. 292). Western culture perpetuates dominant ideologies and uses television to carry such messages (Lotz, 2006). The process of understanding the permeation of television messages makes the medium meaningful to explore because “Television texts continue to provide the forum for the most widely shared storytelling in U.S. culture, depicting cultural anxieties, fears, hopes, and questions in a constantly evolving manner” (p. 179). The various ideological

messages created from television are seen as single episodes or programs and their position within the greater structure of television as a mass medium (White, 1992).

Hall's Hypothetical Positions of Discourse

Ideological assumptions created through television are continuously conflicting with one another due to several interpretations and opposing beliefs from society (Fiske, 2003). Fiske defined *discourse* as a "language or system of representation that has developed socially in order to make and circulate a coherent set of meanings about an important topic area" (p. 14). Discourse is a social action that can either endorse or resist a dominant ideology. Discourses are social identities produced by social systems, not individual people. "Ideology, in short, is a matter of discourse—of practical communication between historically situated subjects—rather than just of *language*" (Eagleton, 1994, p. 11).

Fiske (2003) concluded that discourses are important in order to understand the social world. A discourse, however, would not be meaningful if it was not circulated throughout society. A channel has to be designated to distribute the discourse. This is how mass media enter the picture as television and other forms of media disseminate numerous types of discourses (Butler, 2007). Fiske (2003) used the television series *Charlie's Angels* as an example of perpetuated gendered values in society. Fiske argued that the gendered dominant ideology in *Charlie's Angels* was that men saw women as objects. Of course, not all viewers may have decoded this televised message the same way as Fiske. This concept of viewers interpreting several meanings from a message is called *polysemy* (Fiske, 1986, 1987, 2003).

Fiske (1987) further defined polysemy:

An essential characteristic of television is its polysemy, or multiplicity of meanings. A

> program provides a potential of meanings which may be realized, or made into actually experienced meanings, by socially situated viewers in the process of reading. This polysemic potential is neither boundless nor structureless: the text delineates the terrain within which meanings may be made and proffers some meanings more vigorously than others. (pp. 15-16)

Hall's (2000) essay on encoding and decoding texts suggested that television viewers understand messages from one of three ideological positions. These positions are the dominant-hegemonic position, the oppositional position, or the negotiated position. These concepts suggest that television programs employ an array of meanings that are designed to advocate and maintain dominant ideologies in society.

Viewers who believe the dominant-hegemonic position accept the messages produced based on the connotative meanings the source provides. The dominant reading of a text positions the viewer to acknowledge and concur with the dominant ideology and the bias it creates for the cultural group represented. Viewers who understand the dominant-hegemonic position infer television texts from the ruling-class point of view (Butler, 2007). In other words, if a news program provides a political story, a producer decides which images, elements, and personnel to integrate into the production when airing the story (Hall, 2000). This position "operates *within* the 'hegemony' of the dominant code [ideology]" (p. 59).

The negotiated reader understands a text from a position of challenge, accepting the authority of the hegemonic discourse in the "'large views' of issues" the story is situated, yet feels restricted and creates personal "ground rules" in which to function (Hall, 2000, p. 60). The reader agrees with the dominant position and privileged explanation, but maintains personal negotiated beliefs. Hall used the example of a government integrating a law that prohibits

workers at a company from striking. The negotiated viewer would agree with the hegemonic ideology, and assume that no one should earn extravagant incomes that could result in companies facing inflation. Negotiated readers might feel differently, however, if it was their own company striking and their job was on the line; this view would reflect the negotiated position.

The oppositional reading of a text includes viewers who simply oppose the dominant ideology being presented through a message and reject it. These viewers assume the oppositional view by ignoring the preferred meaning of a message and restructuring it with an alternative point of view (Hall, 2000; see also Butler, 2007). Viewers oppose the dominant-hegemonic discourse of the text. “He/she detotalizes the message in the preferred code in order to retotalize the message within some alternative framework of reference” (Hall, 2000, p. 61).

The negotiated position, according to Butler (2007), is the most common ideological position of the three discourses. Negotiated viewers do not support dominant messages 100%, but are not far removed from the discourse. This position allows the dominant text to “set the ideological ground rules” and amend “those rules according to personal experience” (p. 450).

Social Penetration

This dissertation is also grounded in interpersonal friendship research and practices that maintain friendships. Aside from nuclear family relations, “friendship appears to be one relationship to which we attach special importance personally and culturally” (Allan, 1989, p. 1). This research uses *Friends* as the text to examine the dominant ideologies of friendship, gender, race, and social class through the discourse of the six character’s friendships. Using their friendships as a lens of discourse, this research is able to analyze the construction and maturity of friendship, gender, race, and class ideologies, through those friendships. The characters’ friendships developed and matured through the process of *social penetration*.

Altman and Taylor's (1973) social penetration theory is used in this dissertation to ground the present research in terms of friendship development and maintenance among the *Friends* ensemble and their relationships with one another. Social penetration theory is often cited in relationship research (Johnson, Wittenberg, Villagran, Mazur, & Villagran, 2003). Interpersonal social interaction skills are important to the maturity of any social relationship just as social relationships are important to any person's well-being and happiness (Spitzberg & Cupach, 2002). Altman and Taylor's conjectural approach to the theory rests on two main hypotheses. First, social penetration is a process that progresses through phases over a given period. When people meet new individuals, Altman and Taylor conclude that the process of getting to know one another is an enduring process. "Specifically, it is hypothesized that interpersonal exchange gradually progresses from superficial, nonintimate areas to more intimate, deeper layers of the selves of the social actors" (p. 6). Second, individuals evaluate the equilibrium of costs and rewards a new relationship can offer before, during, and after an interaction with a new individual; they decide if they want to continue the relationship. "Assuming such predictions to be favorable, it is hypothesized that the pair then gradually moves to successively more intimate levels of encounter, from superficial biographical features to emotions and attitudes" (p. 7).

Social penetration communicative actions consist of verbal, nonverbal, and environmental behaviors, such as information exchange, body language, and personal distance, respectively. As two people meet and begin to interact with one other, these behaviors take place (Altman & Taylor, 1973). Altman and Taylor related their theory to a cocktail party, where invited individuals attending the event usually do not know many people. During initial interactions with strangers, topics of discussion may range from who knows other people at the

party, or where each other lives or works. Each topic is generally discussed with caution however, to avoid any type of controversy in order to maintain an agreeable environment. Probing rarely occurs; those individuals who do prod for intimate information are usually dismissed from future interactions. During this first interaction, each individual subjectively evaluates the other person; positive and negative judgments are made about the other individual and both come away from the interaction with a conclusion if a future interaction will occur based on perceived costs and rewards of a future relationship. In other words, if an individual perceives that the friendship could be more gratifying than damaging, they will most likely pursue a future interaction. People will generally make best use of rewards and avoid costs in relationships, just like any other decision in life (Littlejohn & Foss, 2005).

If a second interaction occurs, both individuals will exchange more intimate information. Similar cost and reward critiques take place and an individual continues to reach some type of conclusion if he or she would like to continue the relationship. If the relationship progresses, exchanges will become more intimate. If an individual reaches a negative conclusion and does not want to meet the person for a third time, the relationship will probably end (Altman & Taylor, 1973).

Social penetration rests on the idea that as relationships progress, they become more intimate. It is the practice where communication shifts from non-intimate causal stages to more personal levels (Altman & Taylor, 1973). “Slowly, as long as rewards continue to outweigh costs, a couple will become increasingly intimate by sharing more and more personal information” (Littlejohn & Foss, 2005, p. 195). Communication thus moves forward through steps of intimacy. Social penetration, however, does not deal with specific chronological time or “rate” (Altman & Taylor, 1973, p. 42) of penetration in interpersonal relationships, but rather

suggests that as friendships become more intense, self-disclosure will increase. In other words, all relationships progress differently as some may develop slowly and others may grow like a "summer romance" (p. 42) where two individuals may become friends rapidly. The specific time frame it takes for friends to disclose will vary from friendship to friendship.

Friends will disclose more information about themselves than acquaintances (Hays, 1985) who generally share superficial details. In Planalp's studies, (Planalp, 1993; Planalp & Benson, 1992) friends showed increased knowledge of each other's lives and mutual knowledge of other people, events, and places based on tape-recorded conversations between acquaintances and friends. Participants who were friends exchanged more emotional, detailed, intimate information versus acquaintances who exchanged only superficial ideas. Intimate self-disclosure, therefore, increases as friendships move from familiarity to closer stages. Individuals are more apt to self-disclose intimate information about themselves to closer friends (Rubin & Shenker, 1978).

Altman and Taylor's (1973) social penetration theory can be compared to the process of peeling an onion. The more layers a person peels from an onion, the sooner he or she reaches the core. The same can be said for friendships. Wood (2004) described this onion consisting of four main layers—superficial, middle, inner, and core—and the goal is to get to the center. The superficial layers are the outer skin that encompasses one's likes and dislikes. The middle layers signify political and social views. The inner layers further penetrate, reaching a person's spiritual beliefs, dreams, deep fears, and fantasies. The core of the onion is the personality; it is a person's truest form. The more layers of information a person penetrates in a friendship, the closer he or she reaches the core. The same process applies to people; the better one individual is acquainted

with another person, the more layers he or she goes through until they reach the personality and self-concept, or the view one has of him or herself (Altman & Taylor, 1973; Wood, 2004).

Methods

Textual Analysis

This dissertation uses two methods of analyzing the *Friends* text: qualitative textual analysis and quantitative content analysis. *Textual analysis* is a method of analyzing media texts in order to formulate a meaning. Textual analysis is an interpretive process. The development of textual analysis is subjective. When using textual analysis, researchers form interpretations that emerge from a text (McKee, 2003). This research provides an interpretation of *Friends* to further understand the goals of this research using a textual analysis of the *Friends* series as the text. Both dominant ideology and social penetration theories are used to frame the interpretations of the textual analysis of the following chapters.

The deconstruction of texts enlightens the researcher's sensitivity and awareness of various cultural and political implications that lie underneath the surface of messages. Identification, construction of meanings, and deconstruction of those meanings are essential for a meaningful interpretation of a media text. Because textual analysis is such a subjective process, the interpretation of scholars varies. The individual twist of interpretation is what makes textual analysis interesting and appealing for academics, researchers, and fans of media (McKee, 2003). Newcomb and Lotz (2002) suggested that textual analysis is a beneficial method for analyzing individual productions, such as a film or television series, because it places an emphasis on "genre and format as indicative of an organizational style" (p. 64).

The researcher viewed the *Friends* series at least two times analyzing the construction of friendship, gender, race, and, class and reported the results in chapters 2, 3, 4, and 5 using textual

analysis. The researcher first casually watched all 236 episodes of *Friends* several times as a viewer uninformed about dominant ideology and social penetration theories. After learning about dominant ideology and social penetration, the researcher then watched the entire series in the order that the programs aired looking for the relationship of the text to the theories this research addresses.

Content Analysis

Two methods are used in this dissertation. From a different epistemological paradigm, quantitative content analysis is also used in this research. Content analysis is not a theory but a method for examining texts (Hansen, Cottle, Negrine, & Newbold, 1998). Babbie (2004) defined *content analysis* as "the study of recorded human communication, such as books, web sites, paintings, and laws" (p. 314). The method is effective in communication studies because it can answer "who says what, to whom, why, how, and with what effect?" (p. 314). This quantitative method recognizes and counts the number of times a characteristic appears in a text. Researchers use findings from a content analysis and infer possible conclusions about the "messages, images, [and] representations" (Hansen, Cottle, Negrine, & Newbold, 1998, p. 95) of the text and their larger implications to society. Hansen, Cottle, Negrine, and Newbold offered six steps to content analysis: research problem definition, media and sample selection, definition of analytical categories, construction of coding schedule, pilot of coding schedule and reliability checkpoints, and data-preparation and analysis.

A content analysis was completed for this research using a purposive sample of 35 episodes of the series to examine friendship rituals displayed by the six friends. Although textual analysis provides an understanding of how viewers may make sense of the *Friends'* text (McKee, 2003), a content analysis shows that the text existed and the characters' friendship

maintenance actions can be counted. Friendship rituals provide friends a notion of shared experiences, denote intimacy, and are based on established histories (Oring, 1984). Bruess and Pearson (1997) analyzed rituals in adult friendships to illustrate observed communicative activities that maintain friendships. Chapter 2 uses content analysis to analyze friendship rituals in the series. The details of the content analysis method used in this research are explained in chapter 2 (see pp. 52-53).

Why Study Television?

Media Culture

Fiske (1992) described *culture* as an approach to living within a developed society that includes "all the meanings of that social experience" (p. 284). Kellner (2003) defined culture as a "highly participatory activity, in which people create their societies and identities" (p. 2). People use media, in the forms of television, radio, or music, as forms of culture. Individuals, therefore, use cultural messages found in society—or in this case, through television—to shape their actions, dialogue, and creative abilities. The media uses "sight, sound, and spectacle to seduce audiences into identifying with certain views, attitudes, feelings, and positions" (p. 3).

Kellner (2003) defined *media culture* as "a contested terrain across which key social groups and competing political ideologies struggle for dominance" (p. 2). Media culture offers models of what it means to practice gender roles, to be successful in life, or to gain power. Media also help create views of how viewers shape notions of race, ethnicity, gender, and social class judgments through images of what represents a "common culture" (p. 1) worldwide.

Television Influence

Television has surfaced as the "most important discursive medium in American culture" (Lipsitz, 2003, p. 40). Television functions as a "dominant media culture" in order to "maintain

boundaries and to legitimate the rule of the hegemonic class, race, and gender forces" (Kellner, 2003, p. 62). It is important to locate the relationships between television artifacts, such as television series, and their connections to television's function in American culture (Newcomb & Lotz, 2002). Using media culture, viewers invite television programs into their homes as "the medium attempts to inscribe the viewer as part of its own 'family'" (Neale & Krutnik, 1990, p. 242). Media researchers such as Gomery (1991), Lipsitz (1998), and Steele (1991) found media content, television in particular, need to be studied. Gomery suggested that because television programs can now be preserved through recording technologies, a cultural examination of series and single episodes is now feasible and should be done.

As these scholars have demonstrated, television programming influences viewers and the broader culture. Fiske and Hartley (2003) suggested that messages sent through television have power to function in the following seven ways:

1. To *articulate* the main lines of the established cultural consensus about the nature of reality….
2. To *implicate* the individual members of the culture into its dominant value-systems, by exchanging a status-enhancing message for the endorsement of that message's underlying ideology….
3. To *celebrate,* explain, interpret and justify the doings of the culture's individual representatives in the world out-there….
4. To *assure* the culture at large of its practical adequacy in the world by affirming and conforming its ideologies/mythologies in active engagements with the practical and potentially unpredictable world.

5. To *expose*, conversely, any practical inadequacies in the culture's sense of itself which might result from changed conditions in the world out-there, or from pressure within a culture for a reorientation in favour [*sic*] of a new ideological stance.
6. To *convince* the audience that their status and identity as individuals is guaranteed by the culture as a whole.
7. To *transmit* by these means a sense of cultural membership…. (pp. 66-67)

Television also has the ability to function as means of social utility to kindle water cooler talk, shape personal values, or assist viewers on forming opinions about social issues. Television is able to accomplish all the functions discussed since it is as an industry, an electronic appliance, and it provides a flow of sounds and images. Television flourishes on economic gain. Since broadcast television is technically free—although many people pay for cable and satellite services for cable stations and more selection of channels—advertising spots are sold during commercial programs. The greater the number of viewers that are attracted to watch a particular program, the more money advertisers will pay for commercials (Vande Berg, Wenner, & Gronbeck, 2004). Forty-one point eight billion dollars was spent on advertising for television in 2002 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2004); this number was up from 38.9 billion in 2001. For example, 28 sponsors paid for commercials in the 2007 Super Bowl (Crupi, 2007). The Super Bowl is pro football's biggest game and has been historically considered a prime outlet to debut new television advertisements. Sixty 30-second commercials were made available to advertisers. The average cost of a 30-second commercial was 2.6 million dollars (Crupi, 2007). Televised media culture, therefore, attempts to reach sizeable viewers, and as a result, "it must resonate to current

themes and concerns, and is highly topical, providing hieroglyphics of contemporary social life" (Kellner, 2003, p. 1).

Television is an appliance in every sense of the word. Society may think of the purest function of the television set similar to another appliance, such as a washer or refrigerator. In other words, "we expect it to provide us a range of services of our choosing on demand, at any and every hour of the day or night" (Vande Berg, Wenner, & Gronbeck, 2004, p. 7). Television essentially is just a piece of equipment. The product of the appliance, however, is what becomes the most meaningful. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2004), the average U.S. household owned 2.4 televisions of the 248 million sets owned nationwide in 2001. In 2004, adults 18 years old and older watched television for an estimated average of 1,669 hours; this number equated approximately 70 days or more than two months of straight viewing.

Television also allows for a variety of installments and structures in programming choices, such as episodes, series, or serial forms, to lure viewers back time and time again. These televised images, thanks to commercial television and the need to continuously fund the industry, are broken up into acts and scenes to divide the storyline. The acts are broken up into a series of scenes. Acts in situation comedies usually follow a similar structure week to week; the situational problem or conflict is introduced in the first act, followed by the difficulty or hurdle to overcome the problem in the second act, followed by the misunderstanding, and the resolution. In dramas, the terms vary to rising action, falling action, and denouement. Serials, such as soap operas, follow a different form; the storylines are never resolved and continuously flow into the next episode week after week, or day after day (Gronbeck, 1984; Vande Berg, Wenner, & Gronbeck, 2004).

Television programs also include elements beyond the program content and advertisements, such as station identification and promotions for other programs. All of these bits and pieces "provide a constant flow of sight and sound" (Vande Berg, Wenner, & Gronbeck, 2004, p. 8). For more than 30 years, VCRs and other recording technologies have given viewers the abilities to acquire programs for critical study (Gomery, 1991; Vande Berg, Wenner, & Gronbeck, 2004). Several television series, both past and present, have been available for purchase on digital versatile discs (DVDs) since 1997 (Campbell, Martin, & Fabos, 2002). This reduces the image flow of television programming by eliminating elements such as commercials, making it easier for a media researcher to focus on only program content for an analysis of a series (Vande Berg, Wenner, & Gronbeck, 2004).

Traditions of Studying Television

Defining Sitcoms

Genre is a French word for category. Programs in genres are unique. Genre is a static and dynamic system. When the term is applied to television, the word assumes wider meaning (Feuer, 1992; Fiske, 1987). Television programs fall into what most people perceive are clear general categories or genres, such as situation comedies, cop shows, soap operas, or game shows (Fiske, 1987). This research uses the situation comedy *Friends* as the text for analysis.

Situation comedies, also known as sitcoms, are programs where characters are placed in new scenarios each week that are packaged into half-hour episodes (Butsch, 2005). Sitcoms have been a television staple and the most resilient form of all genres, establishing viewing repertoires, and branding networks for prime-time lineups night after night (Butsch, 2005; Horton & Wohl, 1956; Vande Berg, Wenner, & Gronbeck, 2004). Television's prime-time is the 8:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. Eastern Time Zone time window for programming Monday through

Saturday and from 7:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. on Sunday (Eastman & Ferguson, 2002). Commercial networks, such as the American Broadcasting Company (ABC), Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS), FOX, and National Broadcasting Company (NBC) generally compensate local network affiliates (local stations) to run national network programming. Prime-time is when commercial networks have attracted the largest numbers of viewers (Eastman & Ferguson, 2002; Shapiro, 2007).

Sterling and Kittross (1978) concluded that the television sitcom has remained popular because it shows the same cast in a different situation each week. Sitcoms are successful because they can be fresh week to week, unlike theater (Mills, 2005). The more time viewers invest in the characters, the more time they will watch a particular television show. The situation comedy genre has been around since *I Love Lucy* made it popular in the early 1950s (Sterling & Kittross, 1978). Before television, comedy was located in vaudeville. Radio then used many of the same vaudeville routines for on-air series (Neale & Krutnik, 1990). *I Love Lucy*, for example, was based on a radio comedy that preceded the series, *My Favorite Husband* (McClay, 1995). One of the most significant radio sitcoms was *The Jack Benny Program*, which encompassed many familiar elements of radio programs like returning characters and linear plotlines (Neale & Krutnik, 1990). Benny's character, however, was the most important element of the program. His routine scripted actions were eventually anticipated by audiences, which made him popular and recognizable to fans. When this notion was transferred to radio, the genre encouraged writers to compose jokes around narratives. Butsch (2005) concluded that since *I Love Lucy*, 400 sitcoms have been aired during prime-time.

Situation comedies possess many of the same characteristics as other television genres such as types of actors and actresses, shooting styles, performance styles, and program lengths.

Sitcoms allow viewers to engage in the plotlines more than other genres. Most sitcoms provide laugh tracks. The *laugh track*, or recorded laughter, is the infamous marker of a sitcom. It indicates when a portion of an episode is deemed humorous for viewers at home (Mills, 2005). Comedies are more "naturalistic" by nature; other genres that entail intimate content often create the illusion of viewers "eavesdropping" (Neale & Krutnik, 1990, p. 242) on the characters. Laugh tracks in comedies, therefore, invite viewers to laugh in order to feel like they are part of a live audience watching the program.

It is rare that characters in sitcoms discuss events from past episodes; however, like other genres, the sitcom has a narrative storyline, recurring characters, and a central plot (Mills, 2005). Tension builds in the plot and is resolved by the conclusion of the half hour. In every episode of a series, this tension is constantly recreated. In some sitcoms, a character finds him or herself in a dilemma episode after episode. Others sitcoms have been created around a character that is a naïve fool in new predicaments week after week (Butsch, 2005).

Comedies have been dominant in broadcast programming since the beginning of television. There are two common types of sitcoms: family-based (e.g. *Everybody Loves Raymond*) and occupational (e.g. *Frasier*). Both types of situation comedies combined make up more than three-fourths of all comedies since the early 1980s. Other types of comedies like *The Simpsons* and *Friends* exist, but have unique characteristics different from the other two types (Eastman & Ferguson, 2002). *Friends* was unique because it was successful with an ensemble cast and *The Simpsons* remains a popular program choice because it gives cartoon imagery a new audience with adults.

Several elements define situation comedies, as the previous paragraphs have described. Mintz (1985) provided a further detailed definition of a sitcom:

> A half-hour series focused on episodes involving recurrent characters within the same premise. That is, each week, we encounter the same people in essentially the same setting. The episodes are finite; what happens in a given episode is generally closed off, explained, reconciled, solved at the end of the half hour…. Sitcoms are generally performed before live audiences, whether broadcast live (in the old days) or filmed or taped, and they usually have an element that might almost be metadrama in the sense that since the laughter is recorded (sometimes even augmented), the audience is aware of watching a play, a performance, a comedy incorporating comic activity.
>
> The most important feature of sitcom structure is the cyclical nature of the normalcy of the premise undergoing stress or threat of change and becoming restored…. This faculty for the 'happy ending' is, of course, one of the staples of comedy, according to most comic theory. (pp. 114-115)

Sitcoms, however, can exceed Mintz's (1985) definition. For example, he classified *M*A*S*H* as a sitcom that used film instead of tape, did not have a live audience, and used elaborate sophisticated sets. The same arguments could be attributed for series such as previously mentioned *The Simpsons* and the comedy/drama cross-genre Home Box Office (HBO) series *Sex and the City* (Butsch, 2005).

Why Critical Analysis?

Since television is seen as an industry with the previous characteristics described, a meaningful vital analysis of the medium in necessary (Vande Berg, Gronbeck, & Wenner, 2004). Television has been credited for creating plausible social and economic relationships with viewers since its existence (Lipsitz, 1998). The medium can be critically examined for concerns regarding meaning, economics, power, social change, marketing, aesthetics, technology, and

identity (Hartley, 1999) and their respective relationships to society. Critical examinations of television texts have been in existence since the late 1970's (Fiske, 1986). "The cultural primacy of television as a form of mass communication has, understandably, captured a great deal of attention among those interested in the study of mass media" (Lewis, 2002, p. 4). Insightful television criticism presents knowledgeable explanations of specific texts and their relations to other programming and society. Providing insight through deconstructing television messages facilitates understanding between viewers and their perceived understandings of the text.

Hartley (1999) cited several scholars and writers who have made television studies their research specialization including Allen, Fiske, McKee, Newcomb, and Spigel. According to Hartley, these researchers "show that of course there is such a thing as TV studies, and that it boasts scholars, theorists, essayists, researchers and students of the highest calib[er]" (p. 29). Television scholars are "interpreters, teachers, and social and intellectual catalysts all rolled into one" (Vande Berg, Wenner, & Gronbeck, 2004, p. 10). The objective of teaching and practicing television criticism is to show others how to evolve into educated critics who can "use critical tools to systematically examine the social, cultural, aesthetic, and political meanings of television programs" (p. 10) and communicate their opinions to industry professionals as well as academic scholars. Lotz (2007) suggested that television scholarship needs to persist in order to identify with various interpretations of texts that continue to explain "the function of ideology and commerce in the creation of television texts to the changing relationships among producers, distributors, advertisers, and audiences" (p. 178).

Organization of the Study

Considering all of these factors, sitcoms' historical prevalence on prime-time television constantly recreates a notion of "dominant culture" (Butsch, 2005, p. 113) that is constantly

changing as the hegemonic process is at work. Hegemonic messages sent to viewers about race, class, and gender continue to "crystallize as cultural types" (p. 113) in specific historical moments. This first chapter briefly described the common place narrative of the *Friends* series, defined sitcoms, and justified the need to critically study television and situation comedies. The chapter provided an overview of dominant ideology and social penetration theories and concluded with a summary of the methods the following chapters use for analysis.

Chapter 2 analyzes friendships, families, and how *Friends* supported or negated these hegemonic structures in society, using two methods. Results from a textual analysis of the series suggest how the *Friends* characters may be categorized as an alternative family based on dominant ideologies of what constitutes a family. A content analysis was also completed using 35 episodes of the series to examine friendship rituals displayed by the six friends, adapting Bruess and Pearson's (1997) ritual types and their connection to social penetration. The results suggest a connection between televised friendship practices to real world friendships and the relationship between the popular series and changing social patterns.

Chapter 3 analyzes the gender role performances of the six main characters in the series. This chapter compares and contrasts masculine and feminine characterizations in society, discusses the connections between gender and comedy and gender and friendship, and locates the characterizations in relation to gendered representations from television's situation comedy history. This chapter uses textual analysis to explore how the characters performed both masculine and feminine roles in the series. The results are compared to previous research about gender representations and their implications for modern-day culture.

Chapter 4 examines themes of race representations in the series. The chapter focuses on television as a form of cultural production and reproduction using the series to analyze cultural

messages regarding racial representations on screen. Race is defined for this chapter as any ethnic depiction, including religion, that the series explores. The chapter found four themes of racial representation throughout the series.

Chapter 5 defines current social class characteristics in America, describes historical connections between humor and social class, provides an overview of social class status in American sitcoms, and presents the results of a textual analysis of social class representations on *Friends*. The results are compared to median wage statistics from each character's occupation in 1994 and 2004 from the *U.S. Department of Labor Occupational Outlook Handbook* for each respective year (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1996, 2004). Chapter 6 summarizes the findings, discusses implications of the findings, and discusses the relationship between friendship, alternative families, gender, race, and class.

CHAPTER 2: "THEY'RE LIKE MY FAMILY": ALTERNATIVE FAMILIES AND FRIENDSHIP RITUALS

"I'll be there for you when the rain starts to pour. I'll be there for you like I've been there before. I'll be there for you, 'cause you're there for me too" (Bright, Kauffman, & Crane, 1994). The title theme lyrics from the situation comedy *Friends* are played over video clips of people laughing, dancing, and enjoying one another's company at the beginning of every episode. The lyrics described the relationships between the six main characters examined in this chapter. The purpose of this chapter is to analyze the acts that maintain friendships, place the text in the context of alternative families, and make comparisons to changes in family structures in society.

Although the series focused on friendships, the relationships among the characters could be seen as more complex than just friends. Since the 1970s, situation comedies have shifted from the nuclear family ideology and have focused more on households filled with adults who are not related (Feuer, 1992). Sandell (1998) suggested that *Friends* was a clear illustration of "families we choose" (p. 147), borrowing the term from Weston's (1991) research in relation to homosexual families (p. 18). Traditional nuclear families consisting of two parents and children living under one roof are becoming less common in today's society (Coontz, 2000). Children are leaving their homes at earlier ages, households are being separated by divorce, and family members are compelled to form new circles of close peers. This literature suggests that nuclear families are dismantling at various levels and illustrates how the series *Friends* began in the first season with an example of six young adults forming a support system outside their nuclear families. This chapter provides background on the notion of "families we choose." Results from a textual analysis of all 236 episodes of the series suggest how the *Friends* characters may be categorized as an alternative family.

While the series rarely focused on how the ensemble became friends, the show and this research focused on how the characters' friendships were maintained. It is important to understand how the six main characters—Rachel, Monica, Phoebe, Joey, Chandler, and Ross—sustained their friendships throughout the series' 10-year-run. The chapter also explores methods of friendship preservation and explains how the characters maintained their relationships with one another throughout the series using friendship rituals. Friendship rituals are important because they create bonds and preserve a shared sense of meaning among friends. These frequent practices provide friends a notion of shared experiences, denote intimacy, and are based on established histories (Oring, 1984). Bruess and Pearson (1997) analyzed rituals in adult friendships to illustrate observed communicative activities that maintain friendships. A content analysis was completed for this study using 35 episodes of the series to examine friendship rituals displayed by the six friends, adapting Bruess and Pearson's ritual types. The results suggest connections between the friendship patterns on the popular series and changing social patterns.

Defining Friendship

There are many behaviors individuals must demonstrate and manage for their friendships to last. Many scholars have recognized that friendships are important and research their development and maintenance. There is little agreement, however, among scholars on the number of categories and qualities that defines a friendship. As a result, it is difficult to make generalizations among friendship studies. Rawlins (1992) claimed that since every friendship is different, each one has different expectations. He defined a close *friend* as "somebody to talk to, to depend on and rely on for help, support, and caring, and to have fun and enjoy doing things with" (p. 271). Rawlins (1992) further described *friendships* as relationships that are void of

romantic or sexual feelings. He suggested that these examples maintain ideological beliefs about friendships that are established by society as "friends are not compelled to 'be there' for friends but choose to make the effort out of caring for each other" (p. 214). Bruess and Pearson (1997) defined friendship in their study using Bell's (1981) definition. "Friendship can be seen as voluntary, close, and as an enduring social relationship" (p. 12). This research supports both Rawlins and Bell's concise definitions, as they mutually stress the voluntary and ongoing components of friendships. The actions the *Friends* characters used in the series conformed to the categories defined by Rawlins and Bell. This chapter contributes to research by comparing actual friendships to academic friendship studies, televised friendships, and changes in society.

Stages of Adult Friendship Development

Adult friendships are different from those relationships developed during earlier stages in life. Researchers found that the importance of friendships has different functions and declining levels of significance after adolescence (McCandless, 1970; Reisman & Shorr, 1978). Contact with numerous friends declines during adulthood (Dickens & Perlman, 1981). Between the ages of 18 and 25, friendships become more intense and require more time commitment (Argyle & Henderson, 1985). In their early twenties, people have multiple connections with many friends (Verbrugge, 1983). During these years, young adults are more concerned with good looks, peer group orientation, sex roles, and physical strength when it comes to interpersonal attraction among friends (Johnson, 1989). Their concentration shifts to focus on a friend's individuality and shared communication by the mid-twenties (Tesch & Martin, 1983). After their twenties, adults search for more profound interpersonal relationships. Their focus shifts, looking for friends with good judgment to fill lost voids of other family members (Johnson, 1989) that may have passed on or may no longer have prominent roles in their lives. As adults often settle into

their career choices in their thirties, they more likely become friends with people from their jobs. If individuals choose to have a family, their friendships with others made during their child and young adult years will start to dissolve. People start leaning towards friendships of convenience, such as those with people at work or in their neighborhood (Altman & Taylor, 1973; Stueve & Gerson, 1977).

Families Defined

According to Hamburg (1994), most Americans collectively agreed on the definition of family until 1960. Their beliefs supported the following definition of *family*:

> Family should consist of a husband and wife living together with their children. The father should be the head of the family, earn the family's income, and give his name to his wife and children. The mother's main tasks were to support and facilitate her husband's, guide her children's development, look after the home, and set a moral tone for the family. (p. 196)

A current example of a traditional family configuration is defined as possessing one or more of the following characteristics: "an adult head of household with dependent children; married couples with dependent children, married couples with adult children, married couples without children; or adults with dependent children sharing domicile with others" (Skill & Robinson, 1994, p. 453). Family, however, is not always limited to marital situations. Any adult with parental household responsibilities can also be considered as family (Skill & Robinson, 1994).

Family Structure Modifications, Friends and Alternative Families

Nuclear family structures are able to create the "most salient and durable" connections between a group of people living under one roof (Muraco, 2006, p. 1313). Since 1960, this belief system changed. Historical shifts have taken place in society that have altered the composition of

families. Romantic couples are delaying marriage, and single parent families—a mother without an adult male or at times no other adult living in the home—are becoming more common. Women have branched out of the home and held paying jobs (Hamburg, 1994). These changes are “shaking the typical hierarchies in the family” (Fitzpatrick & Caughlin, 2002, p. 727). There is also an increase of same-sex couple families; in 2000, 11% of all couples in America were of the same sex. Also, in 2000, there were 163,000 same-sex homes identified as families with children (Parke, 2007).

Demographic modifications in family structures and the increase of new birth technologies have affected the size of families as well. In developed countries such as the United States, decreased fertility and improved life expectancy within the last 100 years have shaped these changes. As a result, there have been a decreased number of biological family members in generations (Fitzpatrick & Caughlin, 2002; Schmeeckle & Sprecher, 2004).

Nuclear families are therefore becoming less typical in today’s society (Adams & Blieszner, 1994). Several children are being raised in more than one form of family structure during their childhood years. In 1994, less than 20% of American families were considered traditional, which meant that they had a working father, a homemaker mother, and children. Families started becoming increasingly blended with both single-parent and extended family units (Smith-Mello & Schirmer, 1998). There has been an increase in the number of children who are raised outside marriages and an increase in the number of divorces, which has led to the growing number of single-parent family structures. In 1996, 71.5 million Americans under the age of 18 were reported as living in the United States. Of those 71.5 million children, two-thirds resided with two biological parents that were married, one-quarter with a single parent, less than 7% with a step-family parental structure, and less than 4% of children lived in foster care or with

another blood relative. Four of every 10 children will witness the divorce of their parents before they reach 18 years of age (Parke, 2007).

For a number of years, people have had more freedom to choose where to settle and live (Adams & Blieszner, 1994). As a result, the once traditional family is branching out into a union of elective relationships. Families have become elastic as a growing number of people are choosing to live alone or with friends, romantic partners, or even co-workers (Smith-Mello & Schirmer, 1998). There is an increase in extended enduring relationships with those individuals or groups that people refer to as extended or *alternative families*. These forms of social structures encompass both blood and non-blood kin individuals (Schmeeckle & Sprecher, 2004). Friends are now being described as family (Muraco, 2006).

Johnson (2000) defined extended (or alternative) families as those "social relationships among those related by blood, marriage, or self-ascribed associations that extend beyond the marital dyad, the nuclear family of parents and dependent children, or one-parent households" (p. 625). Using Johnson's definition, a best friend could be regarded as a close relative based on social circumstances that define the relationship. Blood ties are no longer needed to ascribe the notion of family; this new concept of household organization is made up of individuals who possess diverse interests and experiences (Beck-Gernsheim, 1998). Many alternative families are shaped by groups of people who are similar to one another related by economic, social, or emotional needs (Sandell, 1998). This not only blends various backgrounds and interests, but different levels of self-constraints and risks. An alternative family is faced with balancing and coordinating the range of personalities, creating a unique living environment (Beck-Gernsheim, 1998). Both terms, extended family and alternative family, are often used interchangeably throughout interpersonal relationship literature; however, to avoid confusion, this chapter refers

to the concept as alternative family in the analysis.

Unconventional Families in Your Living Room

The notion of unconventional families is not new in television programs (Kutulas, 2005). "At the heart of the American sitcom lies the family, nuclear, extended, blended, and created" (p. 49). Since the 1960's, alternative structures of households have been more popular in fictional television than the typical nuclear family. Television families have remained compelling means of displaying family-like values to audiences. Skill and Robinson (1994) analyzed almost 500 television families from 1950 to 1990; unconventional family relations were the most common types of familial relationships that appeared on television in their study. Skill and Robinson's analysis of television family construction resulted in three major configurations over the years. These configurations resulted in couples without children, single-parent families, and extended families.

After the 1970s, situation comedies began shifting from nuclear family structures "toward 'families' of unrelated adults" (Feuer, 1992, p. 143) that were often situated at the workplace instead of the home. Nuclear families were dismantling at various levels and methods of alterative family structures began increasing on television. While the television family has been the foundation of sitcoms since the earliest days of comedies on radio (Linder, 2005), sitcom families still exist. As a result of these shifts, families have been shown as alternative, work-related, or neighboring structures.

In Douglas and Olson's (1995) study of domestic comedy family structures, they found that television families have greatly changed since traditional times. Single-parent television families became more common in the 1990s (Moore, 1992). Families have become less functional and are shown on screen in less accepted traditional American representations.

Television showed increasing divorce rates and more remarriages of single parents in the 1990s through series such as *Step by Step* and *Life Goes On* (Douglas & Olson, 1995).

Alternative families have been analyzed in few television programs such as *Roseanne* and *Friends*, (Lee, 1992; Sandell, 1998) but not in a complete series. Sandell (1998) explored alternative families in *Friends*, but only through a portion of the series. The present research examined actions supporting alternative family structures throughout the entire series of *Friends.*

Social Penetration Theory

Friendships are fundamental in the lives of adults. From casual friends to close friends, maintaining interpersonal relationships with others is essential for many people. Interpersonal skills (social interaction) are important to the maturity of any social relationship just as social relationships are important to any person's well-being and happiness (Spitzberg & Cupach, 2002). Social penetration theory is often cited in relationship research (Johnson, Wittenberg, Villagran, Mazur, & Villagran, 2003). Altman and Taylor (1973) concluded that social penetration rests on the idea that as relationships progress, they become more intimate. It is the practice where communication shifts from non-intimate causal stages to more personal levels. Littlejohn and Foss (2005) suggested that "Slowly, as long as rewards continue to outweigh costs, a couple will become increasingly intimate by sharing more and more personal information" (p. 195). Communication thus moves forward through steps of intimacy. (See pp. 13-17 for a description of social penetration.)

Method

In order to reach a more comprehensive understanding of familial structures in *Friends,* a textual analysis was conducted to locate examples of alternative family structures defined in this chapter. All 236 episodes were examined. (See pp. 17-18 for an explanation of the method of

textual analysis.) The following themes emerged from the analysis: social support, date disapproval, holiday commemoration, and threat of other friendships.

Results

Social Support

The main characters of *Friends* displayed actions of social support for each other throughout everyday trials and tribulations. The following examples describe numerous instances of social support exhibited throughout the 236 episodes of the series. The important factor to consider is that several examples of social support would typically be filled by blood-family members; instead on *Friends,* viewers saw friends stepping into these familial roles.

In the pilot episode, Ross sought emotional support from the ensemble after his first divorce was finalized (Kauffman, Crane, & Burrows, 1994b). In the same episode, Rachel fled her wedding in search of a life independent of her wealthy parents; she looked at Central Perk for her old friend, Monica, because she needed to confide in someone about her problems. Rachel moved in with Monica at the end of the episode. The group forced Rachel to her cut up her father's credit cards to signify a new life as an independent young woman. Later in the season, Ross and Monica sought comfort from their friends after the loss of a grandparent (Kauffman, Crane, & Burrows, 1994a). Phoebe also found sympathy from the ensemble when her grandmother suddenly died in season 5 (Kurland, Curtis, & Mancuso, 1999).

The group continuously provided social support to Joey, a struggling actor, during the series. While many of Joey's performances were often negatively portrayed as a form of humor for the character (see pp. 119-122), his friends were found gathered in front of Monica's television to watch him. They also frequented various plays and movie premieres (see Abrams & Mancuso, 1999; Abrams & Schlamme, 1996; Borkow, Junge, & Lembeck, 1996; Boyle &

Schwimmer, 2000; Calhoun, Goldberg-Meehan, & Halvorson, 1999; Chase, Ungerleider, & Sanford, 1994; Curtis & Jensen, 1998; Reich, Cohen, Malins, Silveri, & Bright, 1999; Silveri, Goldberg-Meehan, & Bonerz, 1997; Ungerleider & Schlamme, 1995). Joey's best successes resulted from a recurring role as Dr. Drake Ramoray in *Days of Our Lives*. Even when Joey was unexpectedly fired from *Days of Our Lives* in season 2, Rachel assured Joey that his friends would always be there to support him, no matter what happened in his life (Borkow, Junge, & Lembeck, 1996).

The ensemble also supported each other through life-altering decisions. When Phoebe agreed to be a surrogate mother for her brother and sister-in-law's triplets in season 4 (Kurland & Steinberg, 1998), they helped take care of her. Phoebe's friends accompanied her to doctor's appointments, helped name a baby, threw her an after-pregnancy shower, and were at the hospital during delivery.

Ross married his second wife, Emily, at the end of season 4 (Borkow, Goldberg-Meehan, Silveri, Condon, Toomin, & Bright, 1998). His friends attended the wedding in England. The ensemble also supported Ross when he and Emily split up just six episodes later. Ross was left homeless and needed a place to stay. Chandler and Joey put a roof over his head for several episodes until he found a new apartment.

When Monica and Chandler got married at the end of season 7, the four other characters were the only members of the wedding party (Malins, Crane, Kauffman, & Bright, 2001). At the beginning of season 8, Rachel told her friends that she was pregnant (Crane, Kauffman, & Bright, 2001). Monica assured Rachel that everyone would be there for her throughout her pregnancy. Joey created a space for the baby in his apartment, Monica and Chandler watched a birthing video with Rachel to help ease her distress, Monica and Phoebe threw Rachel a baby

shower, and Ross furnished his apartment for the new baby. The ensemble was also an active participant in Phoebe's wedding in season 10 (Carlock, Borkow, & Bright, 2004). Rachel and Monica were bridesmaids and Joey performed the ceremony. Monica also served as the wedding planner. Chandler and Ross were surprised and disappointed when they found out that they were not asked to be in the wedding. They soon learned that one of the groomsmen backed out and Phoebe's stepfather could not make the ceremony to walk her down the aisle. At the end of the episode, Chandler gave Phoebe away to her new husband, Mike Hannigan, and Ross was a groomsman. All of Phoebe's friends were able to be a part of the ceremony.

Date Disapproval

Chapter 4 of this dissertation explores the concept of race in the series. The characters did not accept any racial others into the group that dated someone in the ensemble (see pp. 111-116). In fact, the ensemble found something wrong with practically *every* person who entered their lives by dating another character. A number of examples throughout the analysis support the second theme of alternative family found in the series, date disapproval. Findings indicated that in order to be accepted by the group, you could only be *one of them*.

In season 1, Monica complained to a co-worker that her friends always found something wrong with the person she was dating (Astrof, Sikowitz, & Burrows, 1994b). Monica threatened to not bring any more dates home to meet her friends because she was scared of ridicule. However, deep down, Monica only wanted her friends' approval and support. Ten episodes later, (Junge & Myerson, 1995) Phoebe anticipated the needed approval of her new boyfriend, Roger, from her friends. While most of the characters loved Roger in the beginning of the episode, he slowly started to get on their nerves. The characters quickly expressed disapproval of Roger to one another; a theme of the episode was the friends saying they "hate[d] that guy!" When Phoebe

accidentally overheard her friends talking about Roger, she quickly reconsidered her feelings and broke up with him at the end of the episode.

Toward the end of season 1, Monica dated a much younger man, Ethan, whom she was led to believe was a senior in college (Junge & Benson, 1995). Ethan lost his virginity during their relationship and soon confessed to Monica that he was a "senior…in high school." Monica's friends were already making fun of his age, so when they found out that Ethan had been dishonest it only gave them more ammunition to disapprove of their relationship.

Ross became involved with a much younger love interest in season 6. He met Elizabeth, a student in his paleontology class at New York University. Soon after she confessed to Ross that she was responsible for writing that he was a "hottie" in her course evaluation, they started dating (Kurland & Halvorson, 2000). His friends made fun of the age difference, insinuating that she was a Girl Scout, was going to camp for the summer, and suggested that he should take her to Chuck E. Cheese for a romantic dinner. Even when Ross told his friends that he needed their approval saying, "it really matters a lot to me that you like her," they continued joking until Ross ended the relationship at the end of the season.

Perhaps no other love interest was more ridiculed throughout the series than Janice Litman, Chandler's on-again-off-again girlfriend for four seasons. Chandler's friends first met Janice in season 1 (Greenstein, Strauss, & Fryman, 1994). Characterized by her annoying laugh, nasal voice, gaudy fashion choices, and big hair, the ensemble jumped at any chance to mock Chandler's decisions to call Janice when he felt lonely. Janice's famous loud, nasally catch phrase, "Oh…my…God," annoyed the characters every time they saw her, fueling their hatred for her even more. Even when Chandler started dating Monica in season 5, Janice continued to make appearances on the show. In season 7, Janice visited Monica and Chandler in their

apartment after a dinner date (Silveri & Schwimmer, 2000). When Joey walked by in the hall outside Monica's apartment and saw the back of Janice's head, his eyes widened and he ran away as fast as he could without saying a word. Even though Chandler and Monica were a couple, Janice still vied for Chandler's affections for the remainder of the series. His friends continued to disapprove of any type of friendly relationship between the two characters.

Holiday Commemoration

A third theme found in this research that supported alternative family structures was the frequent exclusion of nuclear family members when celebrating a holiday. In traditional notions of Americans and their families, it is customary to celebrate holidays, such as Christmas or Thanksgiving, with nuclear blood family members. Many people travel several miles to visit family over holidays. According to the American Automobile Association (2006), an estimated 64.9 million Americans were expected to travel at least 50 miles from their homes during the 2006 holiday season. Other people, however, choose to celebrate with families they choose, such as a close group of friends.

In the first season, Monica cooked Thanksgiving dinner for everyone because her parents left town, Rachel missed her flight to Vail to ski with her parents, and Joey's parents temporarily disowned him because he posed for a public service poster about syphilis to make extra money (Greenstein, Strauss, & Burrows, 1994). Chandler confessed he had a recurring sore spot for Thanksgivings in the episode because his parents announced their plans for divorce during Thanksgiving dinner when he was a child. Chandler, therefore, claimed to never be excited about the holiday. The episode left many irritable characters without a place to celebrate Thanksgiving. The group resiliently ended up spending their first Thanksgiving together as a group in the episode. This Thanksgiving tradition continued for the following nine seasons. One episode

every year was dedicated to the holiday. Monica always assumed a mothering role and cooked for the others, Chandler continued to dislike the holiday, and blood relatives were rarely seen visiting the group unless they were part of the main storyline. The friends celebrated the traditionally family-inspired holiday with one another for 10 years. Nowhere else was it more apparent than during Thanksgiving celebrations; friends became family.

The same argument can be made for birthdays as well. At the end of season 1, Monica organized a birthday party for Rachel; only friends were invited (Brown & Bright, 1995). In season 2, Rachel's parents did make an appearance at her birthday party; however, the plot of the episode centered on the fact that her parents were recently divorced and she was trying to cope with the fact that her nuclear family would never be the same (Junge & Lembeck, 1996). Rachel turned to her friends for support. Several other birthdays were celebrated throughout the series that were planned by the main characters, not parents or other family (Bilsing-Graham, Plummer, McCarthy, & Weiss, 2001; Brown & Gittelsohn, 1995; Buckner, Jones, Borkow, & Weiss, 2003; Curtis & Holland, 1999; Junge & Hughes, 1997; Silveri & Schwimmer, 2002).

Threat of Other Friendships

The fourth alternative family theme found throughout the series was jealousy of other friendships. When the characters indicated having additional friendships outside the ensemble, the others felt threatened. In season 4, Joey was dumbfounded when Chandler said he could not hang out with him because he was going out to meet up with other people (Curtis, Malins, & Mancuso, 1997). Joey asked the group, "He has *other* friends?"

Rachel, like Chandler, indicated having plans with someone outside the group in season 2 (Ungerleider & Schlamme, 1995). Monica quickly, but sarcastically, exclaimed, "You have *other* friends?" This episode aired only eight episodes after Rachel was obsessed with Monica's efforts

to be friends with Julie, Ross' new girlfriend (Chase, Ungerleider, & Lembeck, 1995). Over a series of episodes, Rachel grew more jealous of Julie because she, too, had romantic feelings towards Ross. Rachel ridiculed Monica, Phoebe, Joey, and Chandler for being friendly to Julie. Monica went shopping and had dinner with Julie without telling Rachel. Rachel's favorite hobby was shopping and when she realized that Monica was secretly spending time with Julie behind her back, she broke down in tears. Monica tried to explain the situation. "One thing led to anther and before I knew it…we were shopping. We only did it once. It didn't mean anything to me." Later in the episode, Monica confronted Rachel about the situation. Rachel claimed that it was "terrible" that Monica was friends with Julie and felt that Julie was "stealing" Monica away from her. Monica assured Rachel that no one could take Rachel's place. Sandell (1998) concluded, "Clearly, Julie could not last, for she represented too great a challenge to the group's cohesion" (p. 152).

Monica and Chandler got married at the end of the seventh season. When they returned from their honeymoon early in season 8, Joey and Phoebe were anxiously waiting to hang out with their friends (Silveri & Bright, 2001). The newlyweds, however, were more excited to set up a double date with another newly married couple they met on the plane, Greg and Jenny. Phoebe and Joey could not get a word in the conversation with Monica and Chandler because they were talking about Greg and Jenny. Chandler tried to explain to Phoebe and Joey that they were "just kinda excited 'cause we finally have a couple to hang out with." Joey furiously responded. "A couple? Like two people? Like one [himself], two [Phoebe] people?" When Monica tried to comfort them by saying, "This is different! Greg and Jenny are in a relationship," Joey and Phoebe felt more threatened. At the end of the episode, Chandler and Monica found out

that Greg and Jenny were just pretending to be nice to them because they secretly could not stand them. Phoebe and Joey were happy that they had their friends back.

Chandler and Joey shared a close, brotherly bond throughout the series. Chandler was often credited by the others as having raised Joey as his own child. Joey described Chandler as a brother in season 5 (Goldberg-Meehan, Kurland, & Halvorson, 1999). Joey and Chandler were roommates until season 6. There was a time, however, when Joey temporarily moved out. Joey felt he should have a place of his own to prove his independence in season 2 (Borns & Lembeck, 1996). Chandler confronted Joey later in the episode about moving out. Joey said, "It's not like we agreed to live together forever. We're not Bert and Ernie." In the next episode, Joey quickly grew jealous of Chandler's new roommate (Chase & Lembeck, 1996). Rachel assured Joey that Chandler's new roommate was only a "rebound roommate," and Chandler missed Joey just as much as he missed Chandler. Chandler eventually kicked the new roommate out and Joey moved back in soon after.

Friends began on the premise of six individual's histories intertwining into one cohesive group of people. They were friends by choice, not force (Sandell, 1998). Through the four themes of alternative families found in the series—social support, date disapproval, holiday commemoration, and jealousy of other friendships—the show perpetuated the idea that these six characters were more than neighbors or acquaintances. They were one another's family. Monica's apartment was the "affective center and shared familial space" (Sandell, 1998, p. 144) for the ensemble. Similar to Brown's (2005) analysis of the public sphere in *Cheers,* the group also spent a large amount of time drinking coffee and discussing one another's lives at Central Perk. The series successfully capitalized on the dual concept of friendships and family between the six characters (Sandell, 1998).

It is important to note that Monica and Ross were biological siblings. Their relationship mirrored a close friendship more than a biological tie. Ross and Monica supported one another as friends and family. Ross loaned Monica money in season 2 when she was unemployed (Junge & Burrows, 1996). Later in the season, Monica admitted that she did not like Ross when she was a kid, but loved him now. “I hated you. I mean I, I, loved you in a ‘you’re my brother so I have to’ kind of way, but basically, yeah, I hated your guts. …Now I love you. And not just ‘cause I have to” (Chase & Lembeck, 1996). Both characters were rarely seen alone in scenes together functioning or talking about specific family issues. Both Monica and Ross treated each other as close friends just the same as with the other four characters. The two siblings shared a close intimate bond within the alternative family structure the show created.

In addition to the examples provided in the previous pages, the characters explicitly communicated the importance of their relationships through other examples. Joey ended a relationship with a woman in season 6 because she did not like Monica and Chandler (Boyle, Rosenblatt, & Bright, 2000). Joey—who rarely turned any woman away—told his girlfriend “They’re like my family” and ended the relationship because he could not be with someone who did not approve of his family. In season 7, Phoebe was upset with Joey because he cancelled their dinner plans to go on a date. Phoebe reminded Joey that relationships “come and go, but this [friendship] is for life” (Goldberg-Meehan & Halvorson, 2001). As previously mentioned, Chandler gave Phoebe away to her groom in season 10 because her father could not make it to her wedding (Carlock, Borkow, & Bright, 2004). Ross’ son, Ben, even called Rachel and Phoebe “aunts” and Joey and Chandler “uncles” throughout the series. These findings supported Rawlins (1992), who suggested that it was culturally acceptable to “recognize a reciprocity from one relational type to honor members of another” (p. 174). These titles, aunts and uncles, indicated

both affection and pride from Ross to his friends. The themes strengthened the argument that *Friends* was an example of how the characters deconstructed blood kin ties and adopted chosen kin. At the end of the day, with their ever-changing lives, the ensemble knew the one thing they could always control was their friendships.

Connecting Alternative Families to Friendship Rituals

Now that this research has defined friendships and families, the chapter will focus on the maintenance of friendships. Since viewers only had reference to a few flashback episodes and stories from the characters to understand how the six individuals became close friends, this research will focus on the preservation of friendships in the following pages.

While the *Friends* characters were classified as alternative families, one thing remained constant through the present analysis—their dedication to the preservation of friendships remained fervent. Friendship is an exclusive act of voluntary union; selecting friends is an action of choice. Relatives are pre-determined factors (Allan, 1989) as everyone is born into some form of a nuclear family. The characters on *Friends* chose their family. The ensemble continuously showed the one thing they could be in charge of was their friendships (Sandell, 1998). Sandell suggested that alternative families should share a feeling of “choice and self-creation” (p. 148). Alternative families are expected to remain intact no matter what happens in life, similar to many biological family structures. People are born into a family and should accept the struggles that accompany family life. With alternative families established in the series, it is important to assess how the characters maintained tight relationships with one another. Friendship rituals can indicate the maintenance of companionship strength found in friendships not only on television, but also in current social conditions in real world friendships.

Using friendship rituals to indicate increased social penetration in the series, this researcher examined the intensity which the ensemble maintained their friendships from season 1 to season 10. The concept of friendship rituals as maintenance behaviors has not been explored in *Friends* through previous research. The analysis of friendship maintenance behaviors in the series is not only applicable to this series, but similar texts as well. The results found through this research add to the growing knowledge of friendship rituals and the acts that maintain them.

Defining Friendship Rituals

One way to understand how friendships are maintained is through *rituals*. Research shows that friendships are sustained through sets of ritual practices. These every day interactions are the core of relationships (Duck, Rutt, Hoy-Hurst, & Strejc, 1991). One may think of religion when hearing the word ritual, however, rituals are not restricted to only religious traditions (Rappaport, 1971). Families also utilize rituals to manage everyday life (Fiese & Kline, 1993). Using stories and rituals, families construct realities to share with other members (Baxter & Braithwaite, 2002). Rituals reveal how families respond to pressure in order to maintain stability and encourage collective values and meanings (Jorgenson & Bochner, 2004). Rituals, in addition, provide family members with a feeling of identity in a group. People can also use stories and the shared values described above to pass down family stories from generation to generation (Coontz, 2007).

This research suggests that rituals are applicable to not only families, but friends as well. Rituals enable people to simultaneously show novelty, predictability, or distance and closeness (Baxter, 1988). Rituals help contribute to the feasibility of relationships through special symbols that are constantly recreated through interactions. Most important, “rituals provide researchers

with a valuable resource for understanding the communication processes that embody relationships" (Bruess & Pearson, 1997, p. 28).

Main Concepts

The following defines each of the six relationship categories used in the analysis of friendship rituals in *Friends*. The rituals are adapted from Bruess and Pearson's (1997) research. The six rituals include time-honored/traditional, social-fellowship/casual, communication, share/vent/support, task/favors/gifts, and friendship with romance.

Figure 2. Six friendship rituals used in study

Ritual name	Ritual description
Time-honored/traditional	Routine celebration (e.g. holiday, other established event), frequent items of consumption
Social-fellowship/casual	Enjoyable/non-planned activities, play rituals (e.g. jokes, mocking, pranks)
Communication	Contact outside physical presence (e.g. phone, email, note)
Share/support/vent	Sharing feelings/concerns, voicing problems/concerns, looking for support
Task/favors/gifts	Actions or gifts of kindness (asked for or by surprise)
Friendship with romance	Non-platonic actions (using the other five categories)

Time-honored/traditional rituals include routine celebrations. Examples of these rituals are birthdays, holidays, and other special established events (Bruess & Pearson, 1997). Time-

honored/traditional rituals include favorite places that friends frequent or recurrent items people consume, such as meeting on a regular basis at a coffee shop drinking coffee.

Social-fellowship/casual rituals include relaxed enjoyable activities such as movies, games, shopping, watching television, and other informal ways of physically spending time together. This category contains rituals that are not premeditated, as opposed to the time-honored/traditional category. This category also includes play rituals, which consist of joking, kidding, pulling pranks, and sharing inside jokes (Bruess & Pearson, 1997).

Communication rituals are ways of keeping in touch outside of human contact. Examples of communication rituals include phone calls, emails, notes, or greeting cards. All communication rituals involve some form of contact that does not require two people to be physically present in the same environment (Bruess & Pearson, 1997).

The *share/support/vent* category involves instances in which friends gather to discuss personal information (Bruess & Pearson, 1997). Sharing involves exchanging feelings or concerns without strong haste. Spending an evening sharing secrets is one example. Venting allows people to strongly voice problems and opinions about issues in their lives. Venting is a fervent action that usually occurs between close friends, allowing support to occur soon thereafter. Supporting includes those actions developed for particular emotional encouragement among friends. Support calls for actions of others to help calm or ease emotional pain of a troubled individual.

Tasks/favors/gifts involve acts of kindness for others out of either random occurrence or resulting from a need of compassion. For example, a friend might seek out another person for help with a task or ask for a particular present for a holiday. Exchanging birthday or holiday gifts would also be included in this category.

As *Friends* progressed, however, many of the characters became romantically involved with one another. *Friendship with romance* rituals may not apply to all episodes, but were included in Bruess and Pearson's (1997) study. Examples of these rituals include a routine date, romantic physical interactions, or a celebratory event commemorating romance between two of the main characters. It is important to note that friendship with romance rituals are conceptually different than the other five friendship rituals. The analysis was divided into results for friendships and results for romantic relationships.

Operationalization of Concepts

With the friendship ritual concepts defined, the researcher operationalized the study by viewing a sample of *Friends* episodes noting actions the six ritual variables previously described. The researcher and coders documented the rituals located within each scene of the episodes sampled. Operationalization (Babbie, 2004, p. 45) is the process of specifying the exact operations involved in measuring the variables. The researcher and coders measured rituals according to the descriptions following each action on coding sheets provided. If the researcher or coder observed a ritual being performed in a scene, he or she noted the appropriate number on the coding sheet, which indicated the action(s) involved within the scene (see Appendix).

Research Questions

This research addressed the following questions:

Research Question 1: In what ways do the characters in *Friends* exhibit the six rituals described in friendship research?

Research Question 2: Over time, are there changes in the pattern of rituals exhibited in *Friends?*

Research Question 3: What, if any, is the relationship between friendship rituals on *Friends* and social patterns in society?

Method

This research included a content analysis of a purposive sample of seasons 1, 4, 7, and 10 of *Friends*. A content analysis was used to count the number of times any main character—Rachel, Monica, Phoebe, Joey, Chandler, or Ross—exhibited a ritual defined in this research in every scene of a given episode. A *scene* is defined as "event details that form an organic unit, usually in a single place and time" (Zettl, 2001, p. 404). Butler (2007) defined a scene as a "specific chunk of narrative [story] that coheres because the event takes place in a particular time at a particular place" (p. 27). The time in situation comedies may skip hours, days, or weeks between scenes. For example, one scene could be on Monday and the following scene could be on Wednesday morning. If several characters were in Monica's apartment discussing a conflict for 2 minutes, and the story jumps to another location, the events going on in Monica's apartment at that given time would be considered one scene.

The sample in this research included 35 episodes (15% of the series), examining one-third of the episodes in seasons, 1, 4, 7, and 10. These four seasons were chosen to provide a representative sample of episodes from the 10 years of the series. Every third episode in each season was selected to provide data that could measure how the rituals compared across the life span of the series. This sample supported Babbie (2004) and Hansen, Cottle, Negrine, and Newbold's (1998), sampling strategies which advocated using a random starting point and continuing on by selecting every nth episode throughout the available text.

The unit of analysis in the study was the individual action in the scene of a given show within the sample. For example, the researcher and coders first analyzed Rachel's actions in a scene, and then went back to the beginning of the scene and examined Monica's actions, and so on. The researcher and coders viewed all scenes within each episode in the given sample and

located rituals defined in this research within each, completing a coding sheet for each character present in every scene selected. Each coding sheet represented a character present in a given scene and his or her actions only.

The researcher trained six coders the proper procedures to code three episodes of the series to locate the frequency of the same six friendship rituals described. The episodes selected for testing intercoder reliability were chosen at random from seasons 1, 4, 7, and 10 and were not part of the final sample. The intercoder reliability percentage for this study was .96 (96%) using Holsti's method of reliability.

Results

The data showed that the cast of *Friends* exhibited the six friendship rituals defined in this chapter and maintained those rituals over the course of the series (see Table 1). Each character was equally represented in the 35 episodes coded. The males—Joey, Chandler, and Ross—displayed 1808 rituals while the females—Rachel, Monica, and Phoebe—exhibited 1752 rituals (see Table 2). Rachel was present 17% of the scenes, Monica 17.7%, Phoebe 15.5%, Joey 17.5%, Chandler 17.1%, and Ross was present in 15.2% of the scenes. The most often occurring rituals the friends displayed were social-fellowship/casual (93%) and share/support/vent (84%).

Over the course of the 35 episodes coded, Monica's apartment was most frequented by the group (45%). Time-honored/traditional rituals, such as hanging out at regular places of business, were seen 22% of the time when the group was at Central Perk, the local coffee shop. Established celebratory events were rarely seen, as only 7% of scenes indicated a form of commemoration such as a wedding, holiday, or birthday.

Social-fellowship/casual rituals in this study showed the friends hanging out together or performing play rituals, such as joking, mocking, or playing pranks. Aside from spending time

together (93%) the friends performed many play rituals. Chandler demonstrated more play rituals than other characters (119); Rachel expressed 48 play rituals, Monica 58, Phoebe 47, Joey 53, and Ross 55.

Communication rituals—contact outside physical company—were rarely displayed by the ensemble. The group only corresponded with each other via phone 21 times (1.7% of scenes). Tasks/favors/gifts rituals were also rarely seen. The group asked for favors, help with tasks, or for material gifts in 11% of the episodes, while a friend courteously assisted with tasks or gave gifts to another friend 9% of the scenes. Share/support/vent rituals, however, frequently appeared 1021 times (84%) by means of listening, offering advice, and/or voicing problems.

Five of the six friends—Rachel, Monica, Joey, Chandler, and Ross—were romantically linked with another main character at some point throughout the episodes coded. The most frequent romantic rituals found were social-fellowship/casual (2.6%) and share/vent/support (10.8%). As for physical interaction, members of the ensemble rarely displayed public romantic actions. Any type of physical interaction without dating or being married occurred .9% while interaction while in a dating or married relationship was displayed in 1.8% of the scenes.

Discussion and Conclusion

The situation comedy often supposes the family of a particular series contemplating a concern or problem of another character; rarely does a character have to seek outside assistance from another person (Eaton, 1981). Other series have focused on stressing family relationships with help from others from the "outside world," (p. 35) such as neighbors. Alternative family structures have also escalated in situation comedies (Press, 1991). *Friends* incorporated both of these paradigms, regarding close neighbors as friends *and* family. This chapter analyzed alternative family structures and friendship rituals in the television series *Friends*, offering a

textual analysis of the entire series and demonstrating the deconstruction of blood ties and the construction of alternative families within the group of close friends. The main themes of this chapter—social support, date disapproval, holiday commemoration, and threat of other friendships—communicated that these six people formed their own kind of family. Even though the six characters had jobs and lives of their own, they were each other's daily support systems. Rarely did one of the characters discuss having friends outside of the group. When a character did mention other friends or was dating someone outside the group, the others became jealous and felt a threat of dismantlement to the group. The ensemble also needed to grant consent for a character to date outside of the group, replacing the approval of a stereotypical biological parent. Absent were biological family ties in order to share holidays, birthdays, and celebrate other occasions with one another.

These alternative family patterns illustrated the unrivaled bond the six characters shared through the creation of an alternative family in New York City. The average number of people living in a household in New York City in the year 2000 was 2.59 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). According to the New York City Department of City Planning (2000), these households were not strictly nuclear family structures. The number of family households in New York City in 2000 was 3,021,558; in Manhattan, this number was 738,644. The number of alternative family households—or nonfamily households as indicated in the Census data—in New York City in 2000 was 1,168,365. In Manhattan alone, where the characters lived, this number was 436,674. While the ensemble diverged from traditional television family structures and became each other's support systems, they clearly reflected current living trends in society through their alternative family structures in the series.

The chapter also adapted Bruess and Pearson's (1997) friendship ritual types in four seasons of *Friends* to find if these rituals existed and increased over time in order to suggest how the character's friendship practices reflected real world friendships. Interpersonal friendship rituals are daily communicative tools amongst friends. They form intergenerational connections and maintain a sense of meaningfulness within relationships (Schvaneveldt & Lee, 1983). This research found that the rituals did not increase, but instead were maintained over the course of the series. This suggests that friendships within the series were maintained through everyday communicative activities such as hanging out, sharing personal information, listening to each other, venting problems, frequenting the same places, and doing favors for one another. Each of the characters aged 10 years during the 10-year-run of the series, and there was no variation in the amount of friendship maintenance actions during that time. The characters started out with a high level of friendship in season 1 and maintained that same level of friendship throughout season 10 using the ritual actions defined in this chapter (see Table 1).

Baxter (1990) and Wood (1982) concluded that in both friendships and marriages, exclusive cultures are produced by members through symbolic actions, such as rituals. In this research, this culture was formed through ritual engagements. The largest percentage of rituals displayed by the *Friends* characters, social-fellowship/casual (93%) and share/vent/support (84%), suggested potential parasocial implications for viewers to want to be like these characters. "Because successful television shows often last several years, relationships with popular characters are likely to be well-established, long-term relationships" (Eyal & Cohen, 2006, p. 506). Viewers can see themselves within specific personalities of characters and therefore make comparisons between themselves and those characters (Reeves & Nass, 1996). The rituals in this research, as a result, may suggest to viewers that in order to mimic those

relationships displayed on screen, they should maintain three major rules of friendship within their own lives. Those rules are spending every moment together, mimicking the upward mobility lifestyles the characters perpetuated, and that married couples can remain strong friends with close friends after marriage. A significant amount of time must be spent with close friends, hanging out and focusing on each other's personal lives and being there for support by spending almost every waking moment together while not focusing on their careers. The show implied that not working in a classless society, like the New York City represented on screen (see pp. 160-162), sends a message to viewers that anyone can move to a large city and do the same thing. The results also suggested that while romantic interactions begin the demise of many friendships, these six characters sustained their close bonds with one other through the characters' in-circle romances. As for romantic couples interacting with single friends, researchers suggested couples generally seek other couples for friends, due to the threat of an individual relationship intimidating one of the individuals in the pair (Rubin, 1985). Monica and Chandler were a couple for six years of the series. This relationship did not change their friendships with the other characters. They kept their close bonds with the group throughout their relationship. In society, time devoted to a marriage often takes precedence over friendships; the characters in this series showed they could strike a balance between the two.

Since the largest audience demographic of the series when it was still in production was 18 to 49-year-olds, (Crawford, 2004) viewers could have felt that their lives could mirror those of the six characters. The cast lived in Manhattan, the metropolis of New York City. This study found the characters working 2% of the time in this study. Viewers of the show who are the same ages of the characters could have expectations of how their lives could be similarly structured based what they see the characters achieve in the series. Viewers could conclude that their lives

should be just as easy, living richly in a big city and taking care of themselves without any fiscal difficulty. For example, adults in their twenties who do not have a full circle of best friends by the time they are 25 could think there is something wrong with their lives because their lives do not mirror that of the show. In addition, adults in their thirties could think their romantic coupled relationships are flawed if they only have coupled friends before and after marriage. Today, three years after the series finale, syndicated ratings remain strong for the series. During the week of May 7, 2007, Zap2it (2007) indicated that *Friends* ranked 11th in the top 25 syndicated series for the week with a 3.3 rating and 4,708,000 viewers. These numbers suggest that the show is still popular and continues to perpetuate these socially dominant messages to viewers.

Not all friendships last forever (Altman & Taylor, 1973; Hays, 1984) or even for a 10-year-run, like the lifespan of the *Friends* series. Some relationships stop growing; others do not stay stable and as a result, dissolve. Research suggested that many friendships come to an end over time when individuals feel that the relationship can no longer progress because it has reached the highest level of intimacy possible (Altman & Taylor, 1973). Altman and Taylor emphasized that relationships with neighbors are frequently superficial in attempt to get along for the sake of spatial relevance. They used the metaphor "strong fences make good neighbors" (p. 13) to allude to the concept that neighbors, like family, do not usually choose each other but should uphold a level of communication to maintain a positive communication climate.

The *Friends* series finale centered on the threat of the group's demise by Rachel moving to Paris to pursue a job at Louis Vuitton (Kauffman, Crane, & Bright, 2004a). The ensemble was torn by Rachel's decision to leave New York. At the end of the episode, Rachel decided to stay in the city with her friends. In the last scene of the series, the characters walked out of Monica and Chandler's apartment to go to the coffee house. Rachel's last line, "Should we get some

coffee?," suggested that the group planned on going Central Perk and perform the time-honored/traditional and sharing rituals of hanging out at the coffee house and talking about their lives. Some neighbors become friends; these neighbors became friends, remained friends, and were each other's family.

This chapter explored friendship maintenance practices and showed the relationship between the research findings to current social conditions in the world. Other dominant ideologies created in society this research has yet to describe include performances of gender roles, race, and social class among individuals. Chapter 3 examines historical dominant gender portrayals on television and analyzes creations of gender roles for each character in the series.

CHAPTER 3: “MY MAN’S BAG”: GENDER PERFORMANCES

The purpose of this chapter is to analyze the gender role performances of the six main characters—Rachel, Monica, Phoebe, Joey, Chandler, and Ross—in the television situation comedy *Friends*. This chapter compares and contrasts masculine and feminine characterizations in society, discusses the connections between gender and comedy and gender and friendship, and outlines gender-specific character representations from television’s history. This chapter is grounded in the theories described in chapter 1. This chapter uses a textual analysis of all 236 episodes of *Friends* to locate gender role performances the characters exhibited throughout the series. (See pp. 17-18 for an explanation of the method of textual analysis.) The results are compared to previous research about gender representations.

Masculine and feminine traits mark a person’s basic personality (Goffman, 1976). Both masculinity and femininity can be looked at as examples of how a man or woman expresses him or herself. Goffman sees gender displays as ritualistic activities and behaviors that are constructed in conversation to distinguish dominance. “If gender [can] be defined as the culturally established correlates of sex, then gender display refers to conventionalized portrayals of these correlates” (p. 69).

Gender is a commanding ideological facet which is created, and recreated; gender justifies the choices an individual makes in his or her sex classification. Chancer and Watkins (2006) defined *gender* as “social and cultural interpretations that turn sexual difference into more than a merely biological distinction” (p. 18). Gender can be classified as either masculine or feminine as opposed to sex, which focuses more on biology (male versus female). In other words, sex comes from and is defined by biology; gender is a status that can be achieved and created through various cultural and social measures (West & Zimmerman, 1991). Gender

"focuses on behavioral aspects of being a woman or man" (p. 14). Gender "is the activity of managing situated conduct in light of normative conceptions of attitudes and activities appropriate for one's sex category. Gender activities emerge from and bolster claims to membership in a sex category" (p. 14).

Gender Roles on Television

These definitions of gender can be used in analyzing representations of the gender roles characters perform on television. Television and mass media offer "traditional and nontraditional portraits of gender" (Wood, 2007, p. 255). In their roles on television programs, actors and actresses symbolize conventional and evolving stereotypes of men and women. Men are often shown as "aggressive, independent, and violent" and women are established "as sexy, dependent, and domestic" (p. 255). Men are frequently characterized as "active, adventurous, powerful, sexually aggressive and largely uninvolved in human relationships" (p. 258). Women are often characterized as "young, thin, beautiful, passive, dependent, and often incompetent" (p. 258). Occasionally, television presents non-traditional images of men and women. Men can be "sensitive and nurturing" and women "assertive and independent," (p. 255) contrary to the usual stereotypes.

Masculine to Feminine

In the United States, society has traditionally linked women to domestic and nurturing gender roles. Chancer and Watkins (2006) offered a list of "gendered dichotomies" (p. 19) of masculine and feminine traits. Masculine is to feminine as rational is to emotional; active is to passive as public is to private. In terms of professional implications, masculine professions in business, politics, and law are compared to feminine careers in retail sales, elementary school

teachers, secretaries, and caregivers. Highly specialized masculine-dominated professions like doctors and dentists are compared to feminine nurses, dental assistants, and home health aides.

Performing gender can be defined as "means of creating differences between girls and boys and women and men; differences that are not natural, essential, or biological" (West & Zimmerman, 1991, p. 24). People perform gendered identities that are more visible in some contexts than others. For example, Goffman (1977) explained that masculinity is frequently correlated with stamina, determination, and competitiveness through sports performances that are visible to others.

Both gender and sex categories are controllable properties. People evaluate and react to others based on different performances. One's specific gender is not just a facet of what a person is, but is something that a person performs and changes with everyday contact with other individuals (West & Zimmerman, 1991). Gender is an essential characteristic of social structures, as more than any other feature it "defines people's social position and identity, and patterns the opportunities and constraints they face" (Allan, 1989, p. 66).

Hegemonic Masculinity

Although different people in different contexts perform masculinity differently, and there is not a fixed definition of the concept, there are some masculinities that are socially valued over others. Connell (1995) suggested that static definitions of gender are challenged because "the right to account for gender is claimed by conflicting discourses and systems of knowledge" (p. 3). Connell explained while many definitions of masculinity exist, there is a model form that makes other masculinities and femininities less imperative. Connell defined *masculinity* as "the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of

men and the subordination of women" (p. 77). Connell labeled this model of masculinity perpetuated through dominant ideologies in society as *hegemonic masculinity*. "While this ideal emerges and develops from within the socio-cultural milieu, it becomes essentialized and ultimately, reified as the benchmark against which all men must gauge their success in the gender order" (Howson, 2006, p. 3).

Chancer and Watkins (2006) claimed that this definition of masculinity supported the most prominent hegemonic description of masculinity accepted in society. "A culturally idealized form, it is both personal and a collective project, and is the common sense about breadwinning and manhood" (Donaldson, 1993, p. 645). Connell (1995) connected his definition of masculinity to hegemony itself. "One form of masculinity rather than others is culturally exalted" (p. 77) at any specified moment in time. "Hegemonic masculinity can be defined as the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees the dominant position of men and the subordination of women" (p. 77).

Howson (2006) further situated hegemonic masculinity into modern-day Western culture and explained how it controls other genders as it is seen as the "ideal" (p. 60) system.

> Typical features of a hegemonic masculine individual include the following:
>
> …Whiteness, location in the middle class, heterosexuality, independence, rationality and educated, a competitive spirit, the desire and the ability to achieve, controlled and directed aggression, as well as mental and physical toughness are all highly honored and desired in the community and must be protected. (p. 60)

Connell (1995) further defined a hegemonic masculine individual as possessing rational trains of thought as opposed to women. Women are generally stereotyped to be more emotional than men.

Masculinity can be achieved via knowledge of science and technology or working in positions of authority, such as in business management or in the military.

Hegemony is a process that communicates dominant ideologies. Connell (1995) described hegemony as "the cultural dynamic by which a group claims and sustains a leading position in social life" (p. 77). There are people in society who resist the dominant ideological way of thinking. These forms are inferior to the hegemonic description. Men practicing subordinated masculinities oppose the hegemonic definition. One example of subordinated masculinity would be a man who identifies as homosexual. By challenging the dominant definition, subordinate masculinity is socially barred by men who support the hegemonic position. Men and young boys may be rejected from the dominant masculinity because of actions that deem them such as a "wimp…nerd… sissy…candy ass…pushover…mother's boy…dweeb, or geek" (p. 79). These terms also position the masculine characteristics of a man or boy to be feminine.

The dominant cultural ideal in modern-day American and European countries is that homosexual men are viewed as less important compared to heterosexual men. This repression situates homosexual masculinities "at the bottom of a gender hierarchy among men" (Connell, 1995, p. 78). Connell positioned homosexual masculinity beneath heterosexual ideologies and classified this alternative form of masculinity with actions such as finicky preferences in home décor to "receptive anal pleasure" (p. 78). Homosexual masculinities, therefore, are situated within forms of femininity. Becker (2006) explained "the dominance of heterosexuality is established at homosexuality's expense" (p. 7).

Connell (1995) described a third form of masculinity as marginal. Marginal masculinity is a form of masculinity that encompasses men who become isolated from society through race

and class distinctions. As a result, marginal men balance their feelings of alienation by exercising power over women. This power could be exalted through sadistic actions, such as verbal or physical violence.

Gender and Friendship

Friendship is affected by gender practices. In cultural practice, women and men's friendships differ based on gender. Men usually socialize with other men while women share close bonds with other women (Allan, 1989). Allan suggested that the word friendship is ambiguous to which gender it represents, but appears to have more masculine connotations with words that describe friendships such as "mate, buddy" and "pal" (p. 65).

Men historically have had more numbers of friendships than women because men have been more socially involved with other people compared to women counterparts. Friendship networks begin at a young age. Boys' friendships are based on joint activities with one another and girls focus more on self-disclosure with other girls through emotional expression (Allan, 1989). Powers and Bultena (1976) explained that these social skills begin at an early age because boys are urged to participate in team-oriented sports such as baseball and football, while girls partake in individual activities like tennis, swimming, or gymnastics.

As for adults, younger adults and single individuals have more access to prospective friends than older and married adults with household and/or child responsibilities. Even though women's social positions in society have evolved over past decades, the existing social structure in America provides men with more free time than women. Men, therefore, have more time to form public friendships with other people. These friendships are generally with other men. Men are more apt to socialize than women overall because of careers and leisurely activities that require socialization (Allan, 1989), such as lunches, golf outings, and other sporting events. Even

though men tend to have higher numbers of friendships than women, men are believed to create impersonal relationships with others by engaging in activities, therefore, forgoing excessive self-disclosure and discussing the activity at hand, such as golfing (Hess, 1979; Rubin, 1985; Swain, 1989; Wood, 2007).

With domestic family duties aside, women face social class challenges regarding occupation, income, and means of transportation. Men, therefore, have greater access to extracurricular activities and increased chances to meet new people than do women. This does not mean that women have fewer friendships, overall. Many women, as a result, share close bonds with a few exclusive female friends while men share more bonds with increased numbers of informal acquaintances (Allan, 1989). Men's friendships, therefore, are grounded in companionship and women position themselves by sharing through conversation (Aries & Johnson, 1983; Fehr, 1996; Rubin, 1985; Wood, 2007).

Gender differences among same-sex friends are present because men and women maintain diverse beliefs about what friendship means for their respective gender. Research shows women to be highly skilled in emotional communication while men are criticized for their lack of emotional talk (Wood & Inman, 1993). Women's friendships are more private and precarious than men's. Close, emotional, supporting qualities of female friendships result from the social skills a woman creates within the home with her family. Men have less trouble than women in creating relationships with other people and are "better able to service and sustain them without petty squabbles or jealousies emerging" (Allan, 1989, p. 65). Dominant stereotypes position women as gossips more than men while also being more disloyal towards other women. But, for those women who share intimate contact with a handful of good female friends, they

typically situate their friendships around characteristics of “closeness, empathy, and caring” (p. 77).

Conversation with friends has benefits on an interpersonal level. Johnson and Aries (1983) reported that “through extensive talk about the most routine of daily activities to the most private of personal problems and crises, women friends establish connections with one another that function significantly in their lives” (p. 358). Oliker’s (1989) female participants in his study on friendships during marriage reported that conversing with a female friend assisted in resolving conflicts with their husbands. Women provided a solid support system for one another’s marital relationships as their friendships tended to help instead of hinder their married lives.

Johnson and Aries (1983) found that women highly value conversations with friends. In their study of women between the ages of 27 and 58, women treasured having a close friend to talk to as the most important aspect of a friendship. Lewittes’ (1989) study found that intimate self-disclosure was treasured in the close friendships of older women, ranking higher than shared interests. Rosenfeld and Kendrick (1984) found that self-clarification is a motivation of friendships as they reported “Friends appear to provide opportunity and support for a discloser’s being open and honest without fear of ridicule, allowing for self-concept clarification” (p. 337). Conversing with friends can be valued higher than conversing with family members, supporting the argument of the *Friends* characters functioning as an alternative family as argued in chapter 2 (see pp. 33-36, 38-47).

Women are more likely to talk about other people than men. Men enjoy discussing careers, sports, and automobiles instead of personal concerns (Fehr, 1996). Johnson and Aires (1983) found that men discussed sports significantly more than women with a ratio of 65:16.

Men were also more prone to discuss other hobbies and activities that they could do with other men, including recalling events from past encounters. Middle-aged and elderly men talked to their friends about news, art, music, women, and sports. Women discussed food, relationship concerns, men, family, and fashion. Women between the ages of 20 and 60 talked with their friends about housekeeping, appearance, motherhood, and other personal concerns (Oliker, 1989). They confided in others about the vital relationships they were part of, for instance marriage, children, family, cohorts, and other friends (Johnson & Aires, 1983).

Men and women actively choose to become friends with people of their opposite gender as well. This practice is known as *cross-gender friendships* (Allan, 1989). Cross-gender friendships are more probable between younger adults (Adams, 1985). Cross-gender friendships may be found in the neighborhood or the workplace where individuals are required to work with both men and women. Cross-gender friendships may also occur in laid-back atmospheres through extracurricular activities outside the home (Allan, 1989).

Many cross-gender friendships have a different focus than same-gender relationships. Rawlins (1992) suggested that cross-gender friendships present more self-disclosure for the individuals involved, especially because many men encounter restricted levels of intimacy with other men. Self-disclosure and social penetration was described in chapter 1 (see pp. 13-17). Men, therefore, turn to female friends as “potentially loyal, caring and supportive partners” (p. 111). Sexual attraction, however, may arise between the males and females involved. There is a risk that cross-gendered friendships may turn into sexual relationships (Bell, 1981; Rubin, 1985). Once a sexual relationship forms, it may not last; therefore it may be complicated to return to the previous friendship structure (Allan, 1989).

Some individuals in cross-gender friendships, however, do not choose to cross the sexual line as these friendships function just as well or better than same-sex relations (Allan, 1989). The same sexual possibilities exist between homosexual individuals who choose to enter into same-gender friendships as well. Since the six main characters in *Friends* did not identify as homosexual, this chapter focuses on the characters' heterosexual same-gender and cross-gendered friendships with one another.

Gender and Comedy

Male stand-up comedians have historically controlled the comedy industry (Mills, 2005). The comedy industry has been successful "from the ways in which humour [*sic*] as a whole has been co-opted as a male [personality] trait" (p. 111). Women generally lack a sense of humor based on social differences linked to the connections between comedy and gender (Gray, 1994; Levine, 1976). Grotjahn (1957) said that males are typically comical in conversations because they have the social authority to do so. Times have changed since Grotjahn's argument, but men and women still use humor differently as Frailberg (1994) explained that "it is important to place *comedy* at the center of a discussion of *women* because it has been done too rarely" (p. 317). "Kidding is almost a masculine prerogative" (Grotjahn, 1957, p. 35) as women are typically not raised in society to tell jokes because comedy is a sign of social interruption to the gender. If women make jokes about people around them, they will not be as well accepted (Mills, 2005; Pollio & Edgerly, 1976). Pollio and Edgerly suggested that "men joke, women laugh and smile" (p. 228). Levine (1976) found that females who choose to use humor usually place themselves at the butt of jokes because they are more self-deprecating than men. Men, on the other hand, typically use comedy to make fun of other people to assure themselves that they are still in charge of the interaction.

Gender Representations on Television

Sitcoms using male stand-up comedians as leading characters result from male control in the comedy industry (Mills, 2005). Examples of successful series using stand-up male comedians include *Seinfeld* (Jerry Seinfeld), *The Drew Carey Show* (Drew Carey), and *Everybody Loves Raymond* (Ray Romano). If the public is not accustomed to seeing women in comedic roles in society, viewers will have trouble picturing funny women as leads in television series (Mills, 2005). This would create an imbalance between television reality and dominant ideology and demonstrate opposition to the dominant ideology that men prevail in comedy.

Studies have examined the representation of gender on prime-time television shows. Studies dealing with representations of men and women on television have shown that the medium is "guilty of perpetrating various stereotyped impressions of men and more especially of women" (Gunter, 1995, p. 9). In McNeil's (1975) study of 1973 prime-time programs, the ratio of men to women was 68:32. In Signorielli's (1989) longitudinal study of programs from 1965 to 1985, the ratio was 71:29. By the 1992 to 1993 season, the ratio of speaking roles of men to women was 61:39 (Elasmar, Hasegawa, & Brain, 1999). Lauzen and Dozier's (1999) study of women in prime-time television in the 1995 to 1996 season found that the radio of men to women was 63:37.

Women have been more represented in situation comedies than in dramas (McNeil, 1975). In 1973, the ratio of men to women in situation comedies was only 60:40. Davis reported this ratio in 1990 was 58:42. By the 1995 to 1996 season, the ratio of men to women with leading roles was 57:43 (Elasmar, Hasegawa, & Brain, 1999). In the 1995 to 1996 season, the ratio of sitcom characters held by men within domestic settings was 54:46 (Lauzen & Dozier, 1999). All of these figures represented a higher ratio of representation of men to women on

television. Mulvey (1975) suggested men are the typical heroes to their submissive female counterparts. Gray (1994) concluded that situation comedies ask viewers to identify with male characters in order to be able to understand the comedy. Women are usually seen as the object of the male gaze in addition to the object—women—being the source of men's comedy.

Historically, television has valued a woman's physical appearance more than a man's. In Greenberg's (1980) study, the leading age demographic of prime-time women characters was 20 to 34 years old (45-47%). The leading age category for men was 35 to 49 years old (37-47%). In Davis' (1990) study, 54% of women ranged from 18 to 34 years old. Women in the same study were more prone to have blonde or red hair than men. Women wore more revealing and tighter clothes than men. Lauzen and Dozier (1999) found that women made up the majority of 20 to 29-year-old characters. Women, in addition, were underrepresented in other categories. Men represented the majority of children, teenagers, and characters aged 30 or older. Older women only counted for 29% of characters that were 40 years of age and older in prime-time television.

The next section describes gender representations on television programs from the 1950s to today. This is not a complete listing of every character that has appeared in a situation comedy, but a summary of the research about gender representations on television. It provides a foundation for the discussion of the *Friends* characters that follows. An analysis of the results of a textual analysis of gender representations of all 236 episodes of *Friends* follows this section.

Feminine Representations

During the 1940s, World War II peaked during the first half of the decade. More than 6.5 million women began taking their husbands' roles in the workforce to keep a steady income for their families. For the first time, women felt a sense of empowerment and felt as if they were worth something more than just a homemaker. When television debuted shortly after, these

attitudes were reflected through many of America's favorite female characters (Watson, 1998). The following describes women's representations on television sitcoms and the relationship between their roles and society.

Bathrick (2003) noted that it is the "woman who provides situation comedy with its capacity to mediated historical change through its representation of both the family and the familial" (p. 156). The woman, dedicated to both her home and family, has been depicted in the media as a "fragile and feminine family maintenance-expert" when "she was in fact asked to function as the powerful preserver of individualism in a newly competitive industrial society" (p. 136). Mills (2005) described women and femininity, the current major themes of gender representations on television, as contested within situation comedies. During the 1950s, the fundamental tensions in male and female gender roles were limited in situation comedies. Both 1950s and 1960 domestic middle-class sitcoms such as *I Love Lucy* and *Leave it to Beaver* featured the mother as the marginalized homemaker who was constrained to the exclusive space of her house. Her husband was the wage earner for his wife and children (Haralovich, 2003; Watson, 1998; Wright-Wexman, 2003). Women's ambitions were suppressed, as characters like Lucy Ricardo of *I Love Lucy* and Alice Kramden of *The Honeymooners* wanted jobs of their own, but were confined to the home.

Lucy represented American women who wanted to break out of the housewife mold and have a purpose outside the home. When women were shown working on television, they often did not succeed (Watson, 1998). Lucy would find ways to get into husband Ricky's nightclub acts, time after time. She and her best friend, Ethel, yearned to spend their *own* money on luxurious items such as fancy dresses and hats. Lucy was given an allowance from Ricky to spend on such items, but she often bounced checks or begged store clerks to cash them at a later

time. One particular episode in season 2 entitled “Job Switching” focused on Lucy and Ethel’s desire to bring home a paycheck of their own (Oppenheimer, Pugh, Carroll, & Asher, 1952). According to Ricky, Lucy often spent too much money on things for herself. He reminded her that the “husbands are earners and the wives are spenders.” Lucy, Ricky, Ethel, and Ethel’s husband Fred made a bet that the women could not work one full week at a job and the men could not stay home, cook, and clean. All agreed to the bet and the women quickly found jobs at a local chocolate factory. To their surprise, they were not good at any position at the plant. Back at home, the men decided one pound of rice per person should suffice for dinner and ended up making a mess in the kitchen, starched pantyhose, and made a seven layer cake as thin as a piece of paper. The conclusion of the episode resulted in the characters appreciating their spouses and going back to and accepting their previous gendered ways.

The Honeymooners and *Leave it to Beaver* were two other sitcoms that represented women praising their husband’s work during the era. When Alice started a new job because her husband Ralph was unemployed in *The Honeymooners*, he convinced her to quit because he was embarrassed. June Cleaver in *Leave it to Beaver* was portrayed as the model housewife. She loved her family and appreciated her husband working for the family episode to episode (Watson, 1998).

The dominant social assumption in society during the 1960s was that women who were working gave up their jobs when they got married. Television belittled women who chose not to do this through sitcoms such as *The Donna Reed Show*. Donna Reed was similar to June Cleaver in many ways; however, she tried working a job herself in one episode. Donna was asked to run for political office and accepted the nomination. During her initial campaign meetings she was away from the home all day and things were in disarray. Neither her husband, Alex, nor her

children helped with the housework because as men it was not their domestic duty. She was referred to in public as “Alex’s wife,” and not by her first name. Alex, frustrated with the disorganized home and lack of time with his wife, asked Donna “Who was her family?” He said he needed her more than the country did. Donna quickly stepped down from the campaign and returned to her work at home (Watson, 1998).

During this decade, Betty Friedan published *The Feminine Mystique*. Watson (1998) suggested that shortly after Friedan’s work was published, television saw a new wave of situation comedies. These new series placed women in roles they had never before held. Women were cast in leading roles with superpowers. Examples of these sitcoms included *Bewitched, I Dream of Jeannie, My Living Doll*, and *The Flying Nun* (O’Reilly, 2005; Watson, 1998). While these women were portrayed as powerful to their partners, it was only because of their superhuman talents. Being a woman alone was not enough to overcome the dominance of men; they had to have outside help. The women would cast spells by the twitch of their nose and make things disappear. At the end of episodes, the men would make the women switch things back to normal and the show would conclude (Watson, 1998). O’Reilly (2005) concluded that Samantha and Jeannie in *Bewitched* and *I Dream of Jeannie* “could have twitched or nodded away the men in their lives if they so desired,” but “both of these superpowered women did their best to use their abilities according to the regulations set for by these male authority figures” (p. 194).

The 1960s also saw the success of *The Dick van Dyke Show.* Women characters such as Laura Petrie were still seen sleeping in separate beds from their husbands as in previous years, but were liberal in other actions (Watson, 1998). Laura always wore slacks or Capri pants and was often criticized for putting too much “spark” (p. 109) into her marriage with Rob. The character Sally Rogers was a writer for the Alan Brady show with Rob and fellow colleague

Buddy. Even though she was a woman working a full-time job, she was stereotyped as a woman of the time. Sally was always seen typing up scripts while Buddy and Rob goofed off. She frequently stepped in as the mother figure, telling them to settle down and work. Sally often complained about being single, saying men did not want to go out with her because she was too funny and intelligent. These two characteristics belonged to men during the time. Instead, Sally sat home with her cat on the weekends, supporting yet another stereotype of single women of the era (Watson, 1998).

By the end of the 1960s, many liberal thinking women challenged the idea of traditional marriage. The next decade of television reflected these changes. Women began marrying later in life as well as having fewer children during the 1970s. This attitude within society was first mirrored in *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* where Mary Richards, a young, attractive, single woman, moved to Minneapolis to start a career in television. In the first episode, Mary had just separated from her long-time boyfriend, with whom she had previously lived. Living with a romantic partner outside marriage was not well accepted during this time. Mary made a leap of faith to move to a new city and make it on her own without financial assistance from her parents. Mary quickly found her way into an associate producer position at WJM-TV working alongside many men. She celebrated her singleness, enjoyed living alone, and liked not having the added responsibility of children. She was very successful as viewers saw her throw her hat up in the air to commemorate her independence in the show's opening credits (Watson, 1998). One of the themes in the series, according to Watson, was the fact that women, particularly Mary's friend Rhoda, could never be happy. In America, women were starting to find increased economic and proficient success in the workplace. The series depicted that it was not possible for women to

have a good career and a successful relationship with a man at the same time. It had to be one or the other. Women could not be truly happy.

Maude, a spin-off of *All in the Family* that also aired in the 1970s, showed the lead character in a marriage where she was not afraid to say what was on her mind. Maude was very outspoken and voiced her opinions about women's controversial issues. She had a facelift and survived three divorces. When she was 47 years old, she had an abortion. During the end of the show, she had hopes of running for political office, showing her independence as a liberal woman who at the same time had a family (Watson, 1998).

The 1980s was the decade of American "Super Women" (Watson, 1998, p. 69). These women were successful with challenging jobs. Watson provided the following description of the Super Woman character:

> She had a loving marriage that was a true partnership; she had lively, maybe even mischievous, but good kids; the house was never a mess even though she employed no hired help; and she looked better than anyone else at her high school reunion. (p. 69)

America saw the rise of women mayors and continued to see the increase of working mothers during the 1980s. Motherhood was no longer seen as a 24-hour/7-day a week job. Women worked to stay out of poverty and to save money for their children's education. Three particular sitcoms appeared during this time that represented Watson's description: *Family Ties, Growing Pains,* and *The Cosby Show*. Elyse Keaton, a successful architect, was always on the go as a great mother on *Family Ties*. Like the other two series, she was attractive, well kept, had a clean house, full-time job, and a loving family. She was not, however, seen at her job and rarely portrayed as a mother who brought work home (Watson, 1998).

Both Maggie Seaver on *Growing Pains* and Claire Huxtable on *The Cosby Show* had characteristics similar to Elyse. Both—Maggie a journalist and Claire a lawyer—left their homes to go to work while their husbands worked from home. Alan Seaver and Cliff Huxtable were doctors who ran their practices from home offices. This gave opportunities for their children to stay at home and interact with their fathers in ways television had not previously portrayed (Watson, 1998).

The 1980s also saw the birth of another working woman with a family, but this time the family was not as wealthy or well-behaved as the previous three. *Roseanne* premiered as a working mother who had constant dead-end jobs and a family who did not help around the house. Her husband was seen as one of the first lazy men on television who ate all the food in sight, did not help with housework, and expected to be pampered. *Roseanne* helped take 1980s sitcoms into the following decade, showing blue-collar families in a way they had not been portrayed before. Roseanne was an honest mother who had only good intentions for her family, no matter how little they respected her (Watson, 1998).

The 1990s witnessed the increased numbers of the public dismantlement of nuclear families that chapter 2 explored (see pp. 33-36). Factors such as divorce and remarriage were not new concepts to society, but both were happening more often in America. The concept of remarriage had only really been seen once with *The Brady Bunch.* Two shows premiered that portrayed blending families in the 1990s. *Step by Step* and *Life Goes On* gave viewers a peek into two broken families coming together into one new family (Watson, 1998).

Gauntlett (2002) commented that the 1990s were known for programs that displayed "comfortable, not-particularly-offensive models of masculinity and femininity" (p. 59) that the majority of viewers found adequate. Lotz (2006) suggested that 1990s series alleviated the

"construction of the working woman as tough and assimilated into male corporate culture" (p. 95). Several female characters had careers, but viewers rarely saw them in the workplace in series like *Sex and the City*. The 1990s also saw sitcoms with women in complete control of their marriage (Gauntlett, 2002) unlike previous series. Situation comedies such as *Everybody Loves Raymond* showed strong women being the leaders of their families. Deborah Barrone on *Everybody Loves Raymond* represented both the *Donna Reed* and *Roseanne* characters in many ways. She was a stay-at-home mother with three children who rarely received help with housework from her husband unless requested. Her husband, Ray, frequently expected her to thank him for making money. She attempted working a few jobs during the series, but found she was needed more at home.

Gerhard (2005) criticized shows with strong women casts such as *Sex and the City* for their confusing portrayals of appearing successful in their jobs. Classifying the four leading women as postfeminists, Gerhard concluded that they overdressed for their jobs while constantly reiterating that they were strong single women who did not need men for emotional purposes. While the women did have several boyfriends throughout the series, most of them constantly relied on men for dinners and sex. The women had trouble talking about anything else but their love lives to their friends when they were in relationships. Hermes (2005) criticized the *Sex and the City* women for their contrast of not needing men during the span of the series but all four ending up with male partners at the show's end. Hermes suggested that the four women created their own families; Carrie and Mr. Big were together, Charlotte married Harry and adopted a baby, Miranda married the father of her child, and Samantha had yet to care for a man like Smith. The families these women created all leaned towards traditional nuclear families (Hermes, 2005), opposite of how the series began. While Charlotte's goal was to marry and have

a family, Carrie, Samantha, and Miranda arguably challenged dominant ideology for several seasons. They resisted the conventional ties of marriage and children and instead struggled to remain single. At the series' end, however, the narrative contained the women within the dominant ideology. All four women were partnered with a man.

Lotz (2006) also criticized *Sex and the City* and other leading women programs such as *Ally McBeal* and *Judging Amy* for perpetuating the ideal model of female containment to viewers. "The prevalence of single characters who work outside the home suggests that television creative and executive communities are also aware of the terms by which the role-model framework determines 'positive' characters, a status they seek" (p. 173). Women in these series represented the "ultimate counterpoint" (p. 173) of the 1970s single, working female and ascertained "a new construct of what women should be rather than increasing the uninhabitability of confining gender roles" (p. 173).

Wood (2007) suggested four themes of traditional representations between the relationships of men and women in media, including television. First, women are seen as "domestic and dependent on powerful, independent men" (p. 263). Ariel in *The Little Mermaid* relinquished her mermaid character to have a relationship with a human man, Prince Eric. *The Lion King* showed female lions who relied on men to rescue them. The second theme portrays "men as the competent authorities who save or take care of less competent women" (p. 264). Examples include leading women in *The West Wing, The Practice,* and *Commander in Chief.* Third, women are represented as "caregivers" and men are seen as the "breadwinners" (p. 265). Even though women have job titles, "they are shown predominantly in their roles as homemakers, mothers, and wives" with "little or no attention to their career activities" (p. 265). Wood suggested that in *Sex and the City,* viewers learned more about the women's fashion

choices than their careers. Finally, women are continuously seen as "sex objects," (p. 265) often represented as skinny, attractive, and reliant on men.

Masculine Representations

Cantor (1990) concluded that the way men and women are represented on television differs from genre to genre. In comedies, however, the "dominating, authoritative male, so common in other genres, is rarely found in domestic comedies" (p. 276). While scholars have examined women's roles in situation comedies, less attention has been paid to men's roles. The following provides an overview of masculinity and situation comedy men, husbands, and fathers, throughout television's history with examples of each.

As described in chapter 5 (see pp. 141-147), working-class men in sitcoms have been historically depicted as fools or chumps (Butsch, 2005). Busch claimed that every American should recognize characters such as Archie Bunker, Fred Mertz, or Homer Simpson as working-class individuals. Sitcoms depicting working-class families of the 1950s and 1960s portrayed the male—usually the husband—as a "buffoon, dumb, incompetent, irresponsible, immature, lacking good sense" (p. 115) character. He cared for his family, but was not competent to adequately accomplish roles as husband and father. Writers incorporated humor through various situations where the 1950s and 1960s working-class male was insufficient.

The model family in the early days of television consisted of a homemaker wife as previously explained in this chapter, children, and a skilled working father as in *Leave it to Beaver* (Cantor, 1990). At least one child was male in the family. The father in many middle-class families of the 1950s and 1960s was seen as the "super-dad" (p. 279) figure as in series like *Father Knows Best* and *The Donna Reed Show*. The father handled familial conflict situations fairly, at the most punishing his children with a customary grounding, which prohibited his

children to engage in fun activities outside the home. Cantor suggested that Jim Anderson of *Father Knows Best* was the "symbol of the ideal American father" (p. 280) as he was a tender man who removed his jacket when he returned home for work and replaced it with a sweater while retaining authority in the household.

In the 1980s, the traditional model of family changed to include the working mother and the father who occasionally prepared meals like in *The Cosby Show* and *Family Ties*. Cliff Huxtable and Steven Keaton were both always in charge of their households, but in more gentle ways. They both cooked meals and conducted other domestic duties for their family as their wives were working. Cliff was the "traditional middle-class TV father, sympathetic, caring, and strong" (Cantor, 1990, p. 282). Fathers in 1980s situation comedies performed domestic duties and showed greater sensitivity to their children. Their days did not end by coming home from work and letting their wives perform all the domestic duties (Cantor, 1990).

During the past 10 years, television has witnessed an increase in the analysis of men and masculinity on television. Mills (2005) concluded "each gender can only exist within the context of the other…the male position within society is so all-pervasive that it requires subtle interrogation to be understood" (p. 111). Male situation comedy characters have been demeaned when they were portrayed with feminine characteristics. They have also been belittled by creating a character that is childlike.

Results

The literature about gender on television shows the evolution of men and women on situation comedies from the earliest days of television to today. Although men have historically secured more leading roles in comedies, women have seized opportunities to work outside of the home and take care of their families. Men have become more involved in raising children and

women have chosen to place career before marriage. Regarding friendships, this chapter has explained that men and women usually create bonds with people of the same gender. As the analysis below explains, on the television situation comedy *Friends*, the characters often supported and negated definitions of gender defined in this research. The characters successfully maintained cross-gendered friendships with one another throughout the series. The following is an analysis of the gender role performances of the six main characters based on a textual analysis of all 236 episodes of the series. (See pp. 17-18 for an explanation of the method of textual analysis.)

Joey

Joey's sexuality was constantly recreated in the series; his quick sexual advances toward women accentuated his masculine drive to remain in control. He always wanted every relationship with a woman to lead to sex. In the pilot, Monica quickly corrected Joey's sexual desires toward Rachel when he met her (Kauffman, Crane, & Burrows, 1994b).

> Joey: "And hey, you need anything, you can always come to Joey. Me and Chandler live right across the hall and he's away a lot."
>
> Monica: "Joey, stop hitting on her. It's her wedding day!"
>
> Joey: "What, like there's a rule or something?"

Joey's attempts at cross-gender friendships were rarely successful outside from his three female counterparts. In season 5, Joey said he wanted the "closeness" that Monica and Chandler romantically shared in their relationship in place of "just sex" (McCreery, Rein, Varinaitis, & Tsao, 1999). His friends advised him to try to be friends with a woman first before he slept with her.

Rachel: “Hey! How’s it going? Did you make any new friends?”

Joey: “Yeah, yeah, I met this woman.”

Chandler: “Hey, whoa, whoa! What’s she like?”

Joey: “Uh, well, she’s...really good in bed.”

Joey spent the majority of the series looking for a woman to satisfy his sexual desires. Results showed that Joey’s behaviors clearly support Allan’s (1989) concept of cross-gender friendships failing. This research found that Joey slept with a countless number of women in the series and never called them back. He was unable to have any type of satisfying friendship or relationship with a woman after he had sex with her. Monica, Rachel, and Phoebe were clearly friends of Joey’s, even though they all admitted having crushes on each other throughout the series for a short period of time.

Joey was self-centered and proud of his sexuality. He often talked about his abilities to successfully attract women and maintain an active sex life as compared to the other men. Mills (2005) concluded that Joey was the “most sexually active of the male characters and is therefore defined as the most male” (p. 113). Results of this study found that Joey often reinforced his masculinity through his overt sexuality and his toughness to take control of any conflict. In season 2, Joey offered to beat up two bullies that were harassing Chandler and Ross at Central Perk. Chandler and Ross were too afraid to confront the situation themselves (Jones, Bucker, & Lembeck, 1996). In season 8, Joey offered to beat up the man who may have impregnated Phoebe (Borkow & Schwimmer, 2001). Joey also was a fan of and enjoyed team sports such as football and basketball, supporting Allan (1989) and Hess’ (1979) assertions about men and team-oriented activities. Allan and Hess’ conclusions about men in society were also reflected through Joey, a sitcom character.

On the other hand, Joey had a softer, feminine side as well. Joey's feminine actions were usually accompanied by laughter from the laugh track. Joey often showed emotion when matters would not go his way and hugged Chandler and Ross when he was happy. In season 5, Joey wanted to look good for an audition, so he sought fashion advice from Rachel (Kurland, Curtis, & Mancuso, 1999). Rachel dressed Joey a nice shirt, tie, and pants, but added a shoulder bag to Joey's ensemble. At first, Joey rejected the idea.

Joey: "It looks like a woman's purse."

Rachel: "No Joey, look. Trust me. All the men are carrying them in the spring catalog. Look." (Rachel opens the catalog.) "See look, men, carrying the bag."

Joey: "See, look, *women*, carrying the bag." (Joey puts the bag on his shoulder and looks at himself in the mirror and smiles.) "But it is odd how a woman's purse looks so good on me, a man!"

Joey took the bag into the coffee house when he met up with his friends.

Chandler: "Wow! You look just like your son Mrs. Tribbiani!"

Joey: "What? Are you referring to my *man's bag*? At first, I thought it just looked good, but it's practical too. Check it out! It's got compartments for all your stuff! Your wallet! Your keys! Your address book!"

Ross: "Your make-up!"

This example of Joey's bag showed the usually ideally hegemonic masculine Joey in a situation in which he resisted society's norms for a man to use a shoulder bag. Men generally do not carry purses; they carry wallets in pants pockets. Purses or shoulder bags are found in women's departments in retail stores, not in men's departments. Joey often referenced his own masculinity and compared himself to Chandler and Ross' performances of gender in the series.

Chandler was often portrayed as feminine (see analysis below). Ross, too, also had his feminine qualities and tastes. If Chandler had carried the bag, it would have supported the other character's notions that Chandler was clearly effeminate or even gay. The bag story would not be funny, therefore, if Chandler was carrying it. At the end of the episode, Joey shed the bag because he did not get the part. He blamed the bag for the bad audition. The other characters nevertheless offered their disapproval for Joey's brief excursion beyond stereotypical hegemonic masculinity.

Joey: "…the casting people had some problems with me."

Ross: "What kind of problem?"

Joey: "Well to tell you the truth, they uh…they had a problem with the bag! …I don't wanna give up the bag. I don't have to give up the bag! Do I Rach?...."

Rachel: "Honey wait, Joey, I'm sorry. I mean as terrific as I think you are with it…I just don't know if the world is ready for you and your bag."

Joey: "I can't believe I'm hearing this!"

Rachel: "Wait a minute! Wait a minute! I'm not saying that you shouldn't have a bag, I just—it's just there are other bags, you know, that are maybe a little less umm…controversial."

Chandler: "Yeah umm, they're called wallets."

A season 9 episode found Joey in another feminine situation (Rosenhaus, Bilsing-Graham, Plummer, & Halvorson, 2003). Joey needed new headshots for acting (photographs actors distribute to perspective employers). His photographer recommended that he get his eyebrows waxed to help make him more attractive. He asked his friends for advice.

Joey: "Let me ask you guys something. I have new headshots taken tomorrow, right, and

the photographer said that she thinks I should have my eyebrows waxed. Is that weird for a guy?"

Phoebe: "Well it depends."

Joey: "On?"

Phoebe: "On how far along he is in the sex change process!"

Joey was persuaded to go through the eyebrow waxing process, even though it crossed the lines between masculine and feminine. But, he thought it would help his career so he made an appointment to get the procedure done. Joey was so embarrassed that he had to go to a woman's beauty salon that he booked his appointment under Chandler's name. Joey could not take the pain, so he left the salon after only one eyebrow was completed and ran home to find someone who could help. He found Chandler and explained the situation. Chandler admitted that he knew how to tweeze eyebrows and helped Joey with the other eyebrow.

Joey: "Thank you so much."

Chandler: "No problem."

Joey: "Listen that's a pretty girly hour we just spent, we should probably do something manly to make up for it."

Chandler: "Yeah."

Joey: "Curl my eyelashes."

This episode, again, situated Joey in a feminine situation to which his masculinity was subordinated. It was funny—the laugh tracked played—because Joey was in a situation where his masculinity was questioned. At the end of the episode, Joey was more interested in keeping his good looks over his masculinity and went through with the process of having his eyebrows groomed. As these two examples demonstrate, the narrative contained Joey's masculinity by

depicting him as needing his eyebrows waxed in order to secure a job, not because he was feminine. The laugh track, the characters' reactions, or both, let viewers know that Joey's deviations from hegemonic masculinity were unacceptable.

Ross

The research found Ross was a more feminine character; this conclusion agrees with Connell (1995) and Mills' (2005) assumptions about the character. The other characters often mocked Ross' lack of manliness in several episodes. In season 4, Ross wanted to prove to his girlfriend that he was masculine after meeting her burly ex-boyfriend (Calhoun, Reich, Cohen, & Burrows, 1998). Ross agreed to play a game of rugby with her ex-boyfriend and his husky friends, so he tried to learn the rules of rugby from watching ESPN at Monica's apartment. Ross often participated and watched sports with Chandler and Joey, but only as functions of same-sex communication and bonding (Allan, 1989; Powers & Bultena, 1976). Ross did not subscribe to ESPN but claimed that he was "man enough to play this sport." Joey responded. "Dude, you're not even man enough to order the channel that carries the sport." A few minutes later, Ross tried to convince his friends once again that he could handle the rugby game.

Ross: "I'm gonna show her [girlfriend] how tough I really am."

Rachel: "You're the toughest paleontologist I know!"

Rachel's comment mocked Ross' alleged feminine profession because Ross did not choose a job that was seen as masculine to his friends, such as a doctor, lawyer, or politician (Chancer & Watkins, 2006). The rest of the ensemble also laughed at Ross' career as a paleontologist and frequently suggested that Ross was a nerd for being interested in science and fossils. Connell (1995), however, suggested that science interests encompass hegemonic masculinity. Other actions Ross took throughout the course of the series, however, negated

dominant masculinity. In season 4, Ross got his ear pierced (Calhoun, Silveri, & Bright, 1998). In society, it is more acceptable for women to pierce their ears than men. Ross, therefore, demonstrated the ideals of hegemonic masculinity, and the consequences of violating them. When Joey saw the earring, he asked Ross, “We don’t make enough fun of you already?”

Ross, unlike Joey, was able to suppress his sex drive. This research concluded that Ross was the most emotional of the three men. Ross often found himself opening up to his friends about his feelings, which contradicted Connell’s (1995) description of hegemonic masculinity. When he was upset about a troubled relationship, Ross sought advice from both his female and male friends instead of keeping his feelings bottled up inside of him. Although the other characters provided social support for Ross, they would ridicule his emotions. Therefore, the narrative allowed for a space for Ross’ anti-hegemonic masculinity to be present.

Ross often discussed his desire to obtain a happy marriage. Ross, married three times during the series, was sensitive about his inability to find love and settle down. One of the central themes in the first episode was Ross picking up his life and moving on after his first divorce. Ross successfully moved on and pursued other relationships, but a recurring joke in the series was Ross’ failures at marriage. The series ended with Ross chasing Rachel all over New York City to tell her he loved her and wanted to spend his life with her. The series happily came full circle for Ross as his character found a happy conclusion in the series. Ross’ character continuously pushed for the dominant ideology of marriage. To Ross, being married equaled success.

Chandler

Chandler’s most dominant male trait was his humor. Grotjahn (1957) suggested that humor is a male trait. Men generally use comedy to poke fun at other people to reassure

themselves that they are still in charge of the interaction. Characters in the series often referenced not understanding Chandler's sarcastic humor, but Chandler's quick wit was a staple of his character. In season 9, for example, Chandler and Monica were babysitting Rachel and Ross' daughter, Emma (Bilsing-Graham, Plummer, & Halvorson, 2003). Chandler, already insecure about his abilities to be a father (see Goldberg-Meehan & Bright, 2002), attempted to entertain Emma with funny faces. His efforts just made her cry. He replied, "Don't cry. It's just a bit! I'm your Uncle Chandler; funny is all I have!"

While Chandler enjoyed constantly mocking his friends, he also consequently often placed himself at the butt of his own jokes. This does not support Levine's (1976) claim that females generally place themselves at the butt of jokes because they are more self-deprecating than men. But, it does support the argument that Chandler, like Ross, possessed feminine characteristics. Chandler lacked positive self-esteem and as a result, he poked fun at himself. Chandler also displayed a number of other feminine characteristics, which diminished his masculinity. In season 1, Chandler admitted that he was afraid to approach women (Chase, Ungerleider, & Sanford, 1994). Chandler's fear of committing to women continued for several seasons. In society, the man usually asks a woman out on a date. Mills (2005) concluded that Chandler's fear of seeking dates with women he was attracted to "renders him laughable because of his failed masculinity" (p. 113). Later in the season, Chandler was afraid to fire a female coworker because he thought she was attractive (Crane, Kauffman, & Lembeck, 1995).

In season 2, Chandler reacted to Joey's moving out of their apartment like a romantic break-up (Chase & Lembeck, 1996). Chandler reflected back on their good times together and emotionally opened up to Ross and Rachel about his feelings. Chandler was even sensitive when Joey told everyone that he used moisturizer in season 3 (Silveri, Goldberg-Meehan, & Simon,

1997). In season 4, Chandler mocked himself for not going to the gym and being proud of his "flabby gut and saggy man breasts" (Reich, Cohen, & Mancuso, 1997). In season 8, Chandler admitted that he enjoyed taking baths (McCarthy & Weiss, 2002). Monica had to soothe Chandler's need to be masculine, so she made the bath a "boy bath" and gave Chandler a toy boat to float in the water. It was also revealed in season 8 that Chandler owned two copies of the *Annie* soundtrack (Rosenhaus, Fleming, & Halvorson, 2002). Chandler admitted to being afraid of dogs in season 7 (Lin & Bright, 2000). In season 2, Rachel actually had to remind Chandler that he was indeed "a guy" because of his feminine mannerisms (Curtis, Malins, & Bright, 1995). In season 10, Chandler was upset because he was cut out from being an usher in Phoebe's wedding (Carlock, Borkow, & Bright, 2004). He said the feeling reminded him of being cut from sports such as gymnastics, swimming, and figure skating as a child. When Chandler realized that he was listing feminine sports, he turned to Ross and asked, "Help me!" Ross responded with a loud "football!" Chandler's references to gymnastics, swimming, and figure skating also support the argument that Chandler illustrated feminine characteristics according to Powers and Bultena's (1976) description of male versus female sports.

Chandler's lack of masculinity was specifically mocked throughout season 6. Monica, Joey, and Phoebe were crying when they were watching *ET* and asked Chandler why he wasn't upset over the sad part of the movie (Reich, Cohen, & Bright, 2000).

> Phoebe: "Ya know what's sadder than this? *Bambi*. I cried for three days with that movie. No wait two! Because on the third day my mother killed herself so I was partly crying for that."
>
> Chandler: "Well see now that I can see crying over, but *Bambi* is a cartoon!"
>
> Joey: "You didn't cry when Bambi's mother died?"

Chandler: “Yes it was very sad when the guy stopped *drawing* the deer!”

Monica: “Chandler, there’s nothing wrong with crying! You don’t have to be so macho all the time.”

Chandler: “I’m not macho.”

Monica: “Yeah you’re right. I don’t know what I was thinking.”

Chandler later admitted that he did not cry over sad movies. This was humorous because Chandler was usually in touch with his feelings and this episode represented Chandler as very masculine. Worried about what his friends thought of him, Chandler tried to find his soft side by flipping through old childhood pictures and even reading *Chicken Soup for the Soul*, but nothing worked. Later in the episode, Ross and Rachel had a fight over Ross dating her sister. Rachel disapproved of the relationship. Ross and Rachel’s romantic relationship was on-and-off-again for most of the series and the other characters wanted to see them work things out. Chandler busted into tears during their fight. “I just don’t see why those two can’t work things out!” This episode was a sarcastic jab at Chandler’s character, but at the end of the episode Chandler returned to his softer, feminine side.

Like Ross, Chandler had bad luck with relationships. Since Chandler had difficulty securing relationships in the first half of the series, the other characters often questioned his sexuality. He and Joey often shared many hugs, which is explained below. Chandler was often seen as feminine through starting sentences with “If I was a guy” (Borkow & Christiansen, 2003). Phoebe even wrote a song for Chandler and Monica’s wedding at the beginning of season 7 after they announced their engagement (Kauffman, Crane, Calhoun, & Bright, 2000). The lyrics read “First time I met Chandler, I thought he was gay. But here I am singing on his wedding day!” In other episodes, Chandler shared his talent of shaping eyebrows with Joey,

which this chapter discussed (Rosenhaus, Bilsing-Graham, Plummer, & Halvorson, 2003). He received pedicures on a regular basis and in season 4, Chandler went with Rachel to get a manicure (Calhoun, Reich, Cohen, & Burrows, 1998). Chandler also admitted to using his "wife's tools" for projects (Buckner, Jones, & Bright, 2002). Other characters often insinuated that Chandler was not physically strong as compared to other men (see Buckner, Jones, Bilsing-Graham, Plummer, & Prime, 2001; McCreery, Rein, Varinaitis, & Tsao, 1999). In season 5, Ross bought a large couch and could not move it upstairs to his apartment alone. He sent Rachel to find more help, hoping she would bring Joey back to help them move the couch (McCreery, Rein, Varinaitis, & Tsao, 1999).

Ross: "You brought Joey?"

Rachel: "Well, I brought the next best thing."

Chandler: (Walks into room.) "Hey!"

Ross: "Chandler! You brought *Chandler*? The next best thing would be *Monica*!"

Several *Friends* episodes also displayed the male characters bonding through activities such as attending sporting events and playing foosball, supporting both Powers and Bultena (1976) and Gauntlett's (2002) claims of male-bonding to preserve male friendships. Several episodes also showed the men "hugging it out" to show emotion after a conflict or to celebrate a good cause (see Abrams & Bright, 2000; Astrof, Sikowitz, & Burrows, 1994a; Astrof, Sikowitz, Chase, Ungerleider, & Lazarus, 1995; Borkow & Bonerz, 1997; Chase, Ungerleider, & Sanford, 1994; Kauffman, Crane, & Place, 1995; Lawrence & Burrows, 1995). As a result, all of the men proved their masculinity by showing interest in pornography and talking to one another about women to which they were sexually attracted. Being masculine on the show can specifically be defined as one that sees women as objects for sex (Mills, 2005). This also supports Wood's

(2007) notion of the media representing women as objects. The men in the series rejected any self-notion of femininity and had to make up for it by being overly masculine, which created humor.

The women, on the other hand, depicted their gender roles differently than the men. The female characters did not acquire Joey's masculine needs to just sleep with their male friends; they were more concentrated on the dominant ideology of finding lasting love and getting married. All three women had several boyfriends during the series. Few of these relationships developed into significant relationships. Rachel and Ross had an on-again-off-again relationship, Phoebe was known as a serial dater, while Monica and Chandler slept together on what was thought to be temporary basis, but eventually led to marriage. The following pages assess gender roles of the female characters.

Monica

Monica, an outwardly attractive female, possessed the most masculine characteristics of any of her female counterparts. Her overly controlling, competitive personality shined during the series, as she always had to be right and be the winner of games. Monica paid her bills the day they arrived, made her own cleaning solvent, and even had 11 categories of bath towels in her bathroom. In the first season, the ensemble referred to the "Pictionary incident." Monica broke a plate because she was so invested in the game (Astrof, Sikowitz, & Burrows, 1995). Monica also showed her competitive spirit in season 4 when she and Rachel bet Joey and Chandler that they knew the men better than the men knew them through a Jeopardy-inspired game about each other's lives (Condon, Toomin, & Bright, 1998). In season 6, Monica refused to admit that she was sick and needed to rest (Bilsing-Graham, Plummer, Kurland, & Halvorson, 2000). She was a stern manager as a chef as well, as she wanted customers to be satisfied with their food and her

employees to like her. In season 4, Monica's employees did not like her, so she fought with them until they obliged to obey her orders (Silveri & Halvorson, 1997).

Monica was less emotional and assumed a more assertive role among the three women characters. Although Chandler often worried about where his relationship with Monica was going, Monica felt secure. He felt the need to constantly reassure himself of Monica's love for him. Monica was usually more rational with Chandler. When Chandler moved in with Monica in season 6, she laid down the ground rules (Kurland & Halvorson, 1999). He was not allowed to bring his barcalounger over to her place because it did not match her living room décor. He also had to learn where everything was organized in the apartment through an orientation. In season 9, Chandler wanted to use their fine wedding china for Thanksgiving dinner (Goldberg-Meehan & Bright, 2002). Monica continuously refused the idea because she did not want any of her expensive plates to get broken. She eventually gave in to Chandler's request. At the end of the episode, Chandler accidentally broke all of the plates and Monica was upset with Chandler's carelessness. Monica continuously ordered Chandler around like a child. Mills (2005) concluded that "While Monica may be in charge, her career as a chef signals her domesticity and role as provider" (p. 114). When Chandler was unemployed in season 9, Monica financially supported him. He said "You are the sole wage earner. You are the head of the household. I don't do anything. I'm a kept man" (Abrams & Bright, 2002).

Even though Monica was competitive and neurotic, she possessed one key feminine characteristic. Monica was the domestic mother hen of the New York group. In the pilot, Monica offered not to go on a date to assure that both Ross and Rachel were okay after their break-ups (Kauffman, Crane, & Burrows, 1994b). Throughout the series, Monica tended to both the physical and emotional needs of each character. Monica put a roof over Rachel's head in the

pilot and elicited the help of the others to help Rachel make it on her own. Monica helped Ross as a friend and as a sister when in need. She was there to support him through his failed relationships and functioned as a true cross-gendered friend. Cross-gendered friendships occur when men and women choose to become friends with people of their opposite gender (Allan, 1989). Monica frequently cooked and brought home food from her restaurants to feed the others. She also made large Thanksgiving dinners each year. Monica helped her friends talk out their problems and offered them sound advice. These qualities place Monica in a historical feminine context. She was responsible and caring. She upheld a sense of domestic support not only when she was married to Chandler (seasons 7 to 10) but to every character in between along the way.

As previously described, Monica was a mothering figure who longed for marriage and motherhood. Monica yearned for the perfect husband so she could have the perfect family. She broke up with long-time boyfriend Richard Burke at the end of season 2 because he did not want to have children (Mandell, Ungerleider, & Lembeck, 1996). In season 3, Monica decided that the time was right to have a baby, and the only way she could have one was through artificial insemination (Calhoun & Bright, 1996). Her friends rejected this idea and tried to talk her out of it using their views of dominant ideology to show her there was a more ideal way of having a child. They did not criticize Monica's wants to be a mother, but her desire to have a child without a father. Just as she was leaving to have to procedure done, Joey stopped her and described how he pictured her perfect life.

> Joey: "I don't know, I always pictured you ending up with one of those tall, smart blonde guys, name like...Hoyt."
>
> Monica: "Hoyt?"
>
> Joey: "It's a name, yeah. I saw you, in this, you know, in this great house with a big

pool."

Monica: "Is he a swimmer?"

Joey: "He's got the body for it."

Monica: "I like that." (Joey laughs.) "What?"

Joey: "You guys have one of those signs that says, 'We don't swim in your toilet, so don't pee in our pool', you know."

Monica: "We do not have one of those signs."

Joey: "Sure you do, it was a gift from me. Oh! And you have these three great kids."

Monica: "Two girls and a boy?"

Joey: "Yeah!"

Monica: "And, and, and they wear those little water wings, you know. And they're, they're running around on the deck. Then Hoyt wraps this big towel around all three of them."

Joey: "Sure!" (Monica gets depressed.) "But hey, you know this way sounds good too."

Monica: "Yeah."

Joey helped Monica confirm her true feelings towards a stereotypical domestic family life that dominant ideology perpetuates. Monica regained her bearings and did not go through with the procedure. In fact, just a year later, she and Chandler began dating and they eventually married. Even though they had problems conceiving a child, they became the parents to twins in the series finale. During the finale, the birth mother forgot to inform them that she was having twins, so the announcement came as a surprise from the doctor (Kauffman, Crane, & Bright, 2004a). Chandler had his doubts about being a good father to two children. Monica responded. "That doesn't matter! We have waited so long for this. I don't care if it's two babies. I don't care

if it's three babies! I don't care if the entire cast of *Eight is Enough* comes out of there! We are taking them home, because they are our children!" From the first episode, Monica expressed her wish to be married and have children. At the end of the series, Monica realized her dream not only taking care of her five friends and husband, but her two newborns as well. Monica, the most masculine female who was always in control, upheld and carried out the dominant ideology that she must be married and have children in order to be happy.

Rachel

This research labels Rachel as the most feminine character on the series. Her ethnic Jewish background projected the idea of the spoiled Jewish American Princess this dissertation explores in chapter 4 (see pp. 126-129). Rachel worked in two fields during the series, food service and fashion. Women stereotypically occupy both of these careers. Rachel assumed a feminine domestic role during the series' first few seasons through being a server. She delivered coffee and pastries to her friends and they paid for her services. What made Rachel's server job comical was the fact that she performed it poorly. If a man was the server, it may have not been funny, but Rachel was expected to do a good job because she was a woman. This loss of femininity lessened Rachel's domestic femininity and as a result, depicted her as an incompetent woman. Throughout the series, Rachel attempted cooking, but also failed. In season 6, Monica trusted Rachel to make the dessert on Thanksgiving (Malins & Bright, 1999). When Rachel announced that she had chosen to make an elaborate English trifle, Phoebe immediately exclaimed, "Wow, that sounds great! And what are you making Monica, you know, in case Rachel's dessert is so…[almost says 'bad'] good that I eat all of it?" Rachel ruined the dessert by mixing it up with ingredients from a Shepherd's Pie. The dessert had meat, peas, and onions, mixed in with whip cream and custard. Rachel also alluded in several episodes to not cleaning

and being a poor representation of Monica's domestic character. Rachel fits Gauntlett's (2002) non-domestic homemaker characteristics that reflected 1990s sitcoms previously discussed in this chapter.

After quitting her serving job, Rachel had better luck working in fashion, as she was successfully able to accomplish tasks working at Bloomingdale's and Ralph Lauren. In season 1, Rachel obtained an interview for an assistant buyer at Saks 5th Avenue (Astrof, Sikowitz, & Burrows, 1995). Phoebe responded. "It's like the mother ship is calling you home!" Rachel did not get that job, but worked her way into the industry throughout the rest of the series. She even offered fashion advice to Joey and Ross in a few episodes (Kurland, Curtis, & Mancuso, 1999; Silveri & Schwimmer, 2004). She admitted that although she was not up-to-date with political issues that were more important in the world, she read 30 fashion magazines a month and knew fashion.

Rachel attempted to perform her tough side in several episodes. She wanted to prove to her friends that she could take care of herself and not depend on a man or anyone else for support. In season 2, Rachel was afraid to get a tattoo because she thought Ross, who was her boyfriend at the time, would be mad at her (Borns & Lembeck, 1996). Phoebe asked Rachel, "I don't believe this. Is this how this relationship is going to work? Ross equals boss…. Who is the boss of you? ...You are the boss of you!" Rachel got the tattoo. In season 6, Rachel and Phoebe enrolled in a self-defense class (Chase, Rosenblatt, & Halvorson, 2000). After taking the course, they felt like they were ready to "kick anybody's ass," so Ross put them to the test. He hid in their apartment to scare them when they walked in. The women walked in their apartment, found Ross, and pinned him to the ground. Ross could not break their strength to escape and the scene was humorous. In season 9, Rachel's sister, Amy, visited (Goldberg-Meehan & Bright, 2002).

After dinner with the group, Amy and Rachel got into a verbal fight over family issues. The fight turned physical and Rachel warned Amy, “Hey man, I work out! ...I do Pilates…. Bring it on!” Rachel proceeded to try to beat up her sister, but the women only pushed each other around and pulled on each other’s hair, depicting a humorous fight.

In season 8, Rachel gave birth to a baby girl, Emma. During her baby shower, Rachel realized that there was more to motherhood than just reading the back covers of baby books (Bilsing-Graham, Plummer, & Bright, 2002). She misinterpreted a breast pump for a “beer bong for a baby” and realized she really knew nothing about motherhood. In season 9, Rachel brought Emma home and asked Monica to watch the baby while she took a nap, refusing to take responsibility for her new child (Borkow & Epps, 2002). Rachel did not initially assume any responsibilities as a mother. In subsequent episodes, Rachel evolved from a girl with a baby to an overbearing protective mother who never wanted to leave her child. In this sense, Rachel was clearly feminine as she regained the domestic motherly role she lost in the beginning of the series. Rachel was portrayed as being financially independent at the end of the series, supporting both herself and Emma. Rachel proved that she could support a family without a husband and remain working. Rachel evolved from season 1 to season 10; in season 1, Rachel would have not been able to juggle both children and a career because she was still reliant on friends and family for financial and emotional support.

Phoebe

Phoebe was the most sexual female character. In terms of sexual relationships, she could be described as the female Joey, but with feelings. Phoebe often voiced her sexual needs and verbally commented on attractive men. She usually was able to identify with the men on the show more than Rachel and Monica. Mills (2005) described her character “depict[ing] a sexually

active and desiring female character as somewhat deranged, in a manner remarkably similar to Dharma in *Dharma and Greg*, Roz in *Frasier*, Jane in *Coupling*, and Patsy in *Absolutely Fabulous*" (p. 114).

In mathematical terms, this research describes Phoebe as the outlier character. Her characteristics were remote from the others. Phoebe broke the feminine mold as her character constantly confirmed her sexuality but refused to see herself as feminine by conventional standards with her idiosyncratic characteristics (Mills, 2005). Phoebe's quirkiness could be attributed to her troubled childhood, but more than anything, Phoebe was the one character who was never afraid to take risks.

As previously mentioned, Phoebe identified with the male characters better than Monica and Rachel. She was secure enough with her sexuality that she admitted when she found both men and women attractive (Reich, Cohen, Bilsing-Graham, Plummer, & Bright, 2001; Reich, Cohen, & Halvorson, 2001). Phoebe was a good cross-gendered friend for the men to turn to when they needed advice about sexual relationships. In season 8, Phoebe even alluded to the fact that she was once a prostitute (Fleming & Bright, 2001). This research found Phoebe to be the least feminine of the female characters. Phoebe lived alone during most of the series and enjoyed being single. Phoebe rarely allowed insults from other characters bother her. Rarely did Phoebe allow her personal feelings to prevail in conversations. She displayed strong opinions, however, about animal rights and consumerism, so she often voiced her support for those causes.

Since Phoebe did not gain a sense of a happy family as a child because of her disturbed upbringing, she did not worry about marriage like Monica and Rachel. Phoebe lived through numerous romantic relationships and only allowed two men to prevail in her life. It was not until

season 10 that Phoebe realized that she wanted the normal life of her friends she never had and wanted to marry her boyfriend, Mike (Kunerth & Bright, 2003).

When Phoebe and Mike were planning their wedding, they decided that they wanted to donate the money they would spend on the ceremony to charity in lieu of a fancy celebration (Kunerth & Bright, 2003). Later in the episode, Monica offered her wedding veil to Phoebe to wear in her own wedding. Just as Phoebe was explaining to Monica that she did not want to have a big celebration, she tried the veil on, looked at herself in the toaster, and remarked, "I just look…well, radiant!" Phoebe convinced Mike to go back to the charity office to try to get their money back.

> I didn't have a graduation party! And I didn't go to Prom. And I spent my sweet sixteen being chased round a tire yard by an escaped mental patient who is his own words wanted to 'kill me' or whatever. So I deserve a real celebration….

It took 10 years for Phoebe to conform to the dominant ideology of the American ceremonial wedding tradition. She realized the happiness that her other friends had experienced. Mike showed her the ideal lifestyle through love and traditional marriage.

Discussion and Conclusion

When the writers of the series wanted to generate laughs, the men—Joey, Chandler, and Ross—were generally portrayed as feminine, while the women—Rachel, Monica, and Phoebe—were generally depicted as masculine. Men performing feminine traits and women performing masculine traits were consistently used as the basis of humor during the 10 years *Friends* aired. Using the multiple definitions of gender, femininity, and masculinity this chapter discussed, this dichotomy not only positioned each character as an individual who often disregarded their

respective gender identity, but also placed the characters in situations where neglecting their ideological gendered roots produced comedy for viewers.

The men in *Friends* represented conventional representations of hegemonic masculinity, yet displayed modes of sensitivity by continuously showing signs of male bonding while performing group activities to maintain their friendships (Gauntlett, 2002). The three women were “clearly feminine” (p. 59) with their wit, intelligence and non-domestic homemaker type characteristics that also exemplified the 1990s description. This pattern of striving for equal gender representation within the series has been seen on other shows such as *ER, Frasier,* and *The West Wing.* While these shows appear to have an ensemble cast, viewers see several storylines revolving around one or more male characters on screen, unlike *Friends,* which prided itself on having a true ensemble cast with equal division of storylines (Gauntlett, 2002).

The men in the series all identified as heterosexual but often displayed feminine characteristics. Ross and Chandler were both well-educated men. Their sensitive characteristics, however, often prevailed over their hegemonic masculinities. Joey, a strong, Italian male, even had a softer side. While all of the characters yearned for marriage throughout the series, they learned to individually financially support themselves in the process. The women in the series provided for themselves; they did not rely on men to pay their way through life. Even though Rachel was the most feminine character of the three women, she took control of her life in the beginning of the series and learned how to live on her own without the help of a man. As for Monica, chapter 5 explains that she did not make much money (see pp. 151-152; Table 3), but she always provided unsolicited support for herself, her friends, and for her husband when needed. Phoebe evolved from an independent quirky female in season 1 to a happily married

woman in season 10. She found a traditional life through a husband. This allowed the series to conclude by having Phoebe conform to the dominant ideology of marriage and family.

These results show that the ensemble functioned as separate same-gendered dyads and a cross-gendered group. The women interacted with one another on several occasions outside of the men, and vice versa. The ensemble, however, better functioned as a group of cross-gendered friendships. Sandell (1998) concluded, "The conceit of the show is the strength of the friendships between them all" (p. 145). Allan (1989) concluded "same-gender friendships will continue to dominate until gender itself becomes an insignificant dimension of social experience" (p. 84). While these results show that gender is not yet a trivial element in society today some eighteen years later, television still arguably represents dominant ideologies in society. For a series so popular, with as many as 4,708,000 viewers (Zap2it.com) in syndication today, these friendships perpetuated the idea that successful cross-gendered friendships do exist; these six characters proved that cross-gendered friendships can happen on screen. While it is important to recognize that television characters' actions and dialogue are scripted, inspiration of gendered actions found on screen originates from writers' creativity coupled with reality of what the gender of each character might say or act in a conversation (Lauzen & Dozier, 1999). For the realms of this research, however, this chapter situated these scripted interactions within the boundaries of society's depictions of gender and examined how the characters perpetuated these gender-based representations.

This chapter discussed the connections between gender and comedy, gender and friendship, compared and contrasted masculine and feminine characterizations, and outlined gender specific representations on television. This chapter provided results of a textual analysis of gender portrayals in *Friends* and connected those findings to gender and television research.

Television influences how viewers “perceive men and women in general and ourselves in particular” (Wood, 2007, p. 279). The next chapter will discuss race representations on the series, and compare the findings to research and the representations in society.

CHAPTER 4: "YOU HAVE OTHER FRIENDS?": A CLOSED CIRCLE OF RACIAL REPRESENTATION

This dissertation has established that television is a pervasive producer of cultural images. Chapter 1 described the importance of television and its permeation of mediated messages (see pp. 10-11, 19-23). The process of understanding the dissemination of televised messages makes the medium meaningful to explore. "The media are conceived of as a resource by which, almost irrespective of their institutional purposes, meanings are circulated and reproduced according to the contextual interests of the public. Knowledge becomes…the lived understandings of the community" (Livingstone, 1999, p. 96). The following section defines culture and its relationship to televised messages.

Culture Defined

There are many definitions of what constitutes culture. Kellner (2003) defined *culture* as a "highly participatory activity, in which people create their societies and identities" (p. 2). Hegemonic practices should be studied because they have profound meaning in society. Using the political meanings of cultural symbols such as television, hegemony helps researchers "understand how ideas reinforce or undermine existing social structures" (Lears, 1985, p. 568). Since ideology is continuously battling resistance because of conflicted interests from people who choose to not accept dominant beliefs (Fiske, 1992), hegemony is widely used by media researchers to display ways that texts positively or negatively represent society on television (Bertrand & Hughes, 2005). (See pp. 8-11 for an explanation of hegemony.)

Forms of cultural symbols in the media "provide models of what it means to be male or female, successful or a failure, powerful or powerless" (Kellner, 2003, p. 1). Individuals use cultural messages produced by media to shape their actions, dialogue, and creative abilities.

Kellner defined *media culture* as "a contested terrain across which key social groups and competing political ideologies struggle for dominance" (p. 2). Kellner suggested that media culture must strive to produce positive representations of hegemonic ideologies such as race, class, and gender. Media culture, however, has a history of promoting these ideas through means of prejudice. Kellner described media content in his research including radio, music, film, print, and television industries. This dissertation focuses on television culture only and has explored ideologies regarding friendships, alternative families, and gender in *Friends*. The purpose of this chapter is to examine themes of race representations in *Friends.*

This chapter focuses on television as a form of cultural production and reproduction using the series to analyze cultural messages regarding racial representations on screen. *Race* is defined for this research as any ethnic depiction, including religion, that the series explores. Humor may or may not be used in the representations. The following pages provide background information about historical race portrayals in television programs, a textual analysis of race in the series *Friends*, followed by a comparison of televised and real world statistics of racial demographics in New York City where the *Friends* characters lived. This chapter uses a textual analysis of all 236 episodes of *Friends* to locate racial representations the characters exhibited throughout the series. (See pp. 17-18 for an explanation of the method of textual analysis.) This chapter situates its theoretical framework within dominant ideologies of racial representations both on television and in society and the hegemonic processes that maintain those ideologies (see pp. 7-13).

Whiteness and Racial Representations on Television

Jay (2005) defined *Whiteness* as critically thinking about White skin preference and the ways that this preference actively creates power in society. Studying Whiteness is not a decisive

evaluation about prejudice, but explains how people with White skin have unconscious power to influence other, non-White people. Whiteness also examines how the dominant ideology of skin preference is perpetuated through society. Whiteness can be unconscious because "'White' is thus a political fiction that has been used by one social group to harm and oppress others" (¶ 5). Whiteness establishes who is and is not allowed being part of the dominant hierarchy. Cultural groups such as Jews or the Irish may be considered White because of skin color; however, some people accepted as White see themselves as Whiter than other people (Dyer, 1997). White protestant Americans, for example, may view themselves Whiter than Jewish people because of religious differences. Whiteness, therefore, appears "to have no meaning as a race category" for many people who identify as White (Pascale, 2007, p. 32). Those individuals who see themselves as White often discuss race as "a matter of forms and boxes" (p. 32) when filling out government paperwork, such as income tax returns. By discussing race as an impersonal and political identity using forms only reinforces dominant ideologies that race is insignificant and trivial to many people who identify as White. The analysis in this chapter examines the patterns of racial representations on *Friends* and shows a relationship between the findings and social conditions on television and society.

Black Characters on Television

For many years, scholars have condemned the lack of Black characters on television and the quality of representations when they do appear (Mastro & Tropp, 2004). Since the beginning of television in the 1950s, "the social and cultural rules of race relations between blacks and whites were explicit: black otherness was required for white subjectivity; blacks and whites occupied separate and unequal worlds" (Gray, 2000, p. 286). Television producers and networks created series that were more representative of Black culture in 1972 in reaction to protests; these

series, however, showed Black characters in working-class urban areas. Black sitcoms of the later 1970s and early 1980s shifted focus and showed Blacks attempting upward social mobility in middle-class communities. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, *The Cosby Show* revolutionized how current television characterized Black characters; the series focused on Black families living an upper-middle-class lifestyle (Gray, 1986, 2000).

Black Representations

Gray (2000) categorized three types of discourses of Black characters in television images: assimilationists, pluralists, and multiculturalists. Assimilationists characters represent a society that is grounded in social disparity where racism is invisible and trivial to characters on screen. Gray cited sitcoms such as *Designing Women, The Golden Girls,* and *L.A. Law* fitting into this category. When White characters in these series interact with Blacks, they do so "at the level of individual experience" (p. 295) to avoid coming off as racist. Characters in assimilationist series, for example, blame an interpersonal conflict, such as distrust or a squabble, to end relationships with Black characters. Conflict is shown in these series to end interpersonal relationships with characters of color in order to avoid actions that could be read by viewers as racism. White characters in assimilationist series Gray discussed were generally part of the middle-class.

Pluralist discourses—also known as separate-but-equal—show Black television characters in familial communities that are analogous with White ideologies. Blacks are shown dealing with similar issues as White people. African Americans, however, remain "separate but equal" in a "homogeneous and monolithic black world" (Gray, 2000, p. 296). Examples of pluralist television sitcoms included *Sanford & Son, The Jeffersons, Amen, Family Matters,* and *The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air.*

The third discourse Gray (2000) concluded from his research was diversity representation. This type of discourse situates Black culture as imperative in the plot and allows viewers to share African American culture from race, class, and/or gender perspectives. Gray cited several episodes from *Frank's Place*, *A Different World*, and *In Living Color* supporting African American diversity and culture discourse through narratives.

Black Characters in Hierarchal Positions

Entman and Rojecki (2000) used the relationship between Whiteness and humor in their analysis of television texts in regards to race. They examined White versus Black character representations on television. Seventy percent of shows in their sample showed Black characters in managerial or hierarchal positions. This same study also found that two-thirds of the shows examined portrayed Black characters in administrative positions. Of these series, 24.4% were popular with White viewers. This meant that White viewers, although in small numbers, would watch television programs with Black characters.

These Black characters in Entman and Rojecki's (2000) study were in administrative positions outside the main plot. Even with African American characters in managerial positions, viewers still did not see the characters interacting with the whole ensemble. The Black character served as a managerial figure that was present for the story at hand and did not interact with the rest of the characters.

The six main characters in *Friends*—Rachel, Monica, Phoebe, Joey, Chandler, and Ross—were White by skin appearance. The textual analysis for this chapter found four themes of racial representation of characters within the series. The first was the main characters' interactions with Black superiors. There were many instances that these characters had interactions with Black superiors at their jobs. The majority of the ensemble encountered a Black

boss at least once throughout the series. In season 1, Chandler's boss was Black (Crane, Kauffman, & Lembeck, 1995). This same character was seen in the end of season 2 (Mandell & Ungerleider, 1996). He had a name, Mr. Douglas, but was a stern, managerial character, that did not have many lines. Chandler worked with another Black executive later in the series, Ms. McKenna. She was also strict and was not amused by Chandler's jokes. She asked Chandler in a staff meeting to relocate and manage their corporate office in Oklahoma. Chandler agreed to move, only because he was asleep during the meeting. When Chandler told Monica about the news, she refused to leave New York. Chandler confronted Ms. McKenna about the situation. Afraid of his boss' authority, Chandler made up for his nervousness and told petty jokes. McKenna was not pleased with Chandler's actions. He left her office without a resolution and temporarily relocated to Oklahoma (Borkow & Epps, 2002).

Joey attended a few auditions with Black directors during the series (Abrams & Benson, 1997; Bilsing-Graham, Plummer, & Halvorson, 2004). These directors did not have names, unlike Chandler's bosses. This indicated the level of importance these characters brought to the episodes. In season 3, the Black director had confidence in Joey's abilities, but Joey was afraid of the director's authority and ran out of the audition. In season 10, the Black director was not impressed with Joey's skills to fluently speak French and made fun of his acting abilities.

Ross had a physician in season 3 who was Black (Reich, Cohen, & Jensen, 1997). Dr. Rhodes was a serious, demanding gentleman who provided comic relief for Ross. Ross also had a Black divorce lawyer, Russell, who appeared twice in season 6 (Goldberg-Meehan & Mancuso, 1999; Reich, Cohen, & Halvorson, 1999). When Ross joined the faculty at New York University in season 6, he had a few Black colleagues as well. One fellow professor, Lydia, only had one

line (Kurland & Halvorson, 2000). The other colleague, Professor Fredrickson, did not have any lines (Boyle, Bilsing-Graham, Plummer, & Halvorson, 2001).

Phoebe reported to a Black superior when she sold copier toner as a side job in season 7 (Buckner, Jones, Bilsing-Graham, Plummer, & Prime, 2001). Her supervisor only had eight lines. The supervisor explained the requirements for the job to Phoebe but did not interact with her for the rest of the episode. These examples support Entman and Rojecki's (2000) conclusion that Black characters—in non-Black series—are often cast as managers or in positions of power at the top of the social hierarchy. This allows Blacks to appear in guest roles without having a considerable effect in a series featuring White characters, such as *Friends.* The Black characters described in the previous pages had little or no effect on the plot and shared an unimportant, meaningless relationship with the *Friends* ensemble. Black characters in power positions allowed the main characters to feed off their lines for comedy. This suggested that the main character's jobs in the series were not important to their lives, a subject the next chapter will address. Black characters never become emotionally involved with the main group like a new friend would unless they were dating a main character, which the following pages analyze.

Representations of Racial Others: Interracial Relationships

The *Friends*' ensemble showed that it was only acceptable to be friends with people who looked just like you (Auster, 1996; Chidester, 2005; Dyer, 1997; Sandell, 1998). White television characters often perpetuate the idea that they are an unraced people, meaning that they can easily stand-in for any other raced character (Dyer, 1997). This was never more prevalent than in the case of the second theme of racial representation in the series that involved interracial romantic relationships with one of the six main characters and a guest character. Ross Geller, in particular,

had romantic relationships with three non-White women—Julie, Emily, and Charlie—during the series, which the following pages discuss.

Julie

Julie was introduced at the end of season 1 (Brown & Bright, 1995). Julie was outwardly Asian or Asian American by appearance but her race was never mentioned in the series (Chidester, 2005). Julie did not have an accent and her name was "Americanized" (p. 21). This analysis found that Julie and Ross exchanged lines in the episode about expected reactions from Ross' friends about their relationship, such as "You don't think they'll judge and ridicule me?" This suggested that Julie knew that her race could be an influencing factor of whether Ross' friends would like her. When Rachel met Julie at the beginning of season 2, her first loud, over-articulated words were "Welcome to our country!" Julie responded even louder with "Thank you. I'm from New York" (Astrof, Sikowitz, & Lembeck, 1995).

Ross also introduced Julie to Monica, Phoebe, Joey, and Chandler at the beginning of season 2 (Astrof, Sikowitz, & Lembeck, 1995). Julie was immediately considered as someone who was outside the "closed circle" (Chidester, 2005, p. 18) or an outcast of the group. This research borrowed the term "closed circle" from Chidester and also agrees with Chidester's assessment of Julie in his research. When Julie met the rest of the characters, they also pronounced a loud "hi." The rest of the characters, like Rachel, assumed that Julie was not an American. Rachel spent a number of episodes growing a strong hatred towards Julie because of her recent realization of romantic feelings for Ross. Even though the ensemble wanted Rachel and Ross to be together as well, they were forced to like Julie because of their friendship with Ross. When Julie was kind enough to tie Rachel's waitress apron at Central Perk, Rachel muttered "What a bitch!" under her breath as Julie walked away. Monica, as a kind gesture to

Ross as his sister, agreed to go shopping with Julie, as discussed in chapter 2 (see pp. 43-44). Phoebe warned Monica that Rachel would "kill her" if she found out. Rachel's favorite hobby was shopping and she eventually found out about Monica's shopping trip with Julie. Rachel reacted as if Monica had cheated on her like a romantic partner. By the end of the episode, Rachel tried to be nice to Julie by accepting an invitation to see a movie. As Julie walked away, Rachel exclaimed "What a manipulative bitch!" (Chase, Ungerleider, & Lembeck, 1995; Chidester, 2005).

In a moment of weakness, Ross kissed Rachel at Central Perk while he was still dating Julie (Borkow & Bonerz, 1995). In the next episode, Ross was encouraged by Chandler to logically compare Julie and Rachel and formed a list of pros and cons of each woman to decide which one he should date (Kauffman, Crane, & Place, 1995). Julie was, for once, portrayed as a good character because she was intelligent and more professionally connected to Ross than Rachel. Ross, however, realized Julie just "isn't Rachel" and immediately broke up with Julie. Rachel found the list by accident and became enraged when she read that Ross listed her as having "chubby ankles" and being "spoiled." The rest of the ensemble did not care about losing Julie as a friend and instead focused on the Ross and Rachel incident, neglecting to mention anything about Ross being unfaithful to his girlfriend. Ross' list supported the creation of Whiteness in this episode; he cast Julie aside because she was "not Rachel," or not White by appearance. Ross dated Julie for nine episodes and viewers got to know her well. Julie even opened up about her life to the characters (Junge & Mancuso, 1995). Even though their relationship was short-lived, the main characters wanted Ross and Rachel to be together instead of Ross and Julie. Julie was outcast of the group who failed to fit in with the characters. Could this have been attributed to her race? Chidester (2005) concluded that Julie was treated with

"viciousness…particularly in comparison to other women Ross dates in these episodes" which "speaks to a threat well beyond her presence as a simple substitute for Rachel's affections" (p. 20).

Emily

Emily Waltham was introduced in season 4 (Calhoun & Bonerz, 1998). Emily, the niece of Rachel's English Boss at Bloomingdale's, was not American. Emily had White skin but spoke with a thick British accent. Sandell (1998) suggested that Julie was White, but her accent was the source of comedy for the characters. The present research concluded that Emily was *not* White because of way the characters ridiculed her accent. When Rachel met Emily, she was supposed to take her to a Broadway show but backed out because of other plans. Rachel begged Ross to take her place and entertain Emily for the evening. Ross reluctantly agreed to spend the evening with Emily. As a surprise to everyone, he and Emily started dating. After the ensemble met Emily, Phoebe immediately made fun of how "they [British] talk" and muttered a few words in a fake accent. In the next episode, Phoebe boldly reminded Emily that "no offense, but sometimes it's hard to understand you, you know, with the accent" (Calhoun, Reich, Cohen, & Burrows, 1998). Emily's accent quickly sparked Chandler and Ross to emulate British accents as well.

Ross and Emily's relationship progressed quickly and they were engaged to be married in England at the end of the season. Rachel soon realized that she still had romantic feelings for Ross and tried to stop the wedding by flying to England to tell Ross she loved him on his wedding day. Phoebe tried to talk her out of it by saying that Ross won't say "I love you too Rach, forget about that British chippie!" (Borkow, Goldberg-Meehan, Silveri, Condon, Toomin, & Bright, 1998). She tried to convince Rachel that she needed to move on. Rachel did not believe Phoebe and flew to England. In the meantime, Phoebe tried to call Emily's house to warn

Monica, Joey, and Chandler about Rachel's antics but only got through to the housekeeper who refused to comply with Phoebe's request. Phoebe replied, "I'm going to kick your snooty ass," and made fun of the housekeeper's English accent.

Ross and Emily's marriage did not last, and Ross ended up divorced for the second time. A year later, Emily placed a surprising call to Ross to ask him if he was still thinking of her (Goldberg-Meehan, Kurland, & Halvorson, 1999). Rachel was in Ross' apartment when Emily called and heard the message. Rachel asked Monica to come over and hear it for herself. Monica wanted to erase the message to spare Ross' feelings and Rachel tried to talk her out of it. Rachel accidentally deleted the message when she mistakenly hit the erase button. Rachel panicked and thought she should call Ross' answering machine to leave a new message and sound like Emily. Rachel tried to mimic a British accent for Monica and it was only accompanied by laughter from the laugh track.

The characters did not approve of Ross' relationship with Emily and were happy to see them split up. The British Emily, like the Asian or Asian American Julie, was treated as an outcast. The ensemble recognized Emily's racial differences and made fun of her. The characters expected an accent from Julie when they met her and did not hear one; however, they did not assume that Emily had an accent. Whenever one of the characters tried to impersonate an English accent, the laugh track was heard during the episode. This communicated to viewers that she was not accepted into the ensemble.

Charlie

Charlie Wheeler, a Black female character, was introduced in season 9 (Reich, Cohen, Goldberg-Meehan, & Epps, 2003). Charlie was Ross' new colleague at New York University and they immediately connected intellectually. Ross told his friends that he was attracted to

Charlie; by the end of the episode, however, Ross found Charlie kissing Joey. Joey and Charlie dated through the end of the season until they mutually decided to end the relationship. Charlie immediately confided in Ross about the break-up and admitted that part of the reason for ending the relationship was because she had developed feelings for him. Charlie and Ross began a relationship. They dated six episodes into season 10 until Charlie ended the romance. She wanted to rekindle a relationship with a past boyfriend, who was also White. By the time Charlie left the series, there was no mention by any of the characters about Charlie's romantic involvement with two White men.

Charlie got along with the other characters more than Julie or Emily. Rachel, however, did not like Charlie when she was dating Joey because Rachel realized she had developed romantic feelings for Joey. This scenario was similar to Rachel's reaction of Julie and Emily dating Ross. Charlie appeared to fit into the circle of friends more than the other two non-White women did, but she did not stick around for long. Rachel's disapproval for Julie, Emily, and Charlie perpetuated the idea that Rachel felt threatened by the inclusion of non-White characters into the ensemble. Even though Rachel's dislike for these women grew out of romantic feelings for Ross and Joey, her constant disapproval showed that the non-White characters did not have a place in the group (see pp. 40-47). Rachel's aversion to the non-White characters only encouraged the rest of her friends to dislike Julie, Emily, and Charlie as well.

Italian American Representations

A third theme of racial representation found in *Friends* included Italian Americans. Although perhaps not typically considered non-White, the stereotypical characteristics of Italian Americans were the subject of racial and ethnic ridicule in *Friends* through Joey's character. Squiers and Quadagno (1998) provided an overview of generalized traits of Italian American

families. Italians and their lineage are known for having large families and homes filled with both nuclear and extended family members (see pp. 33-36 for an explanation of alternative family). Marriage has been a basis of social identity for several years; divorce rates are low. The mother is the hub of the family and generally has the most power and influence, not the father. Jobs historically have been judged by their tangibility as Italians' work had to be something that could be evident to others. In other words, Italians have felt like they have to engage in jobs that could tangibly demonstrate their work, such as building something from raw materials.

Italians immigrated to the United States as an illiterate culture. Italians were known for having few substantial skills to secure jobs. They were ready to work when given an opportunity. Other ethnic groups immigrating to the United States have been affluent in terms of educational levels compared to Italians. Italians were often seen working blue-color jobs as a result of the racial and class distinctions and stereotypes (Squiers & Quadagno, 1998).

Italian American Characters on Screen

Several of these Italian characteristics and stereotypes have been evident on television over the years. Leebron and Ruggieri (2004) analyzed television's portrayal of Italian American female characters from 1950 to 2004. The first Italian American characters seen on television were on the short-lived *Mama Rosa* in 1950. The leading character, Mama Rosa, was Italian American. Through the 1950s and 1960s, Italian American females were only seen in secondary roles in series such as *The Goldbergs, The Danny Thomas Show, The Doris Day Show,* and *Life with Luigi*. These secondary women mainly offered comic relief for other characters in the series.

The first contemporary sitcom to introduce to an Italian American female in a leading role was *Laverne & Shirley* in 1976 (Leebron & Ruggieri, 2004). Laverne was a flamboyant Italian American looking for the perfect man. The success of *Laverne & Shirley* paved the way

for other Italian American leading female characters in 1970s and 1980s series such as *One Day at a Time, Blansky Beauties, Square Pegs, Angie,* and *The Golden Girls*. These leading Italian American women, "like *The Goldbergs*, portrayed the role of the matriarch as central to the plot" (p. 40).

Cavallero (2004) analyzed Italian American stereotypes in films. In his analysis, Cavallero categorized three forms of Italian stereotypes in cinema and compared their representations to the HBO Italian television series, *The Sopranos.* Cavallero's categories included gangsters, fessos, and tricksters, which are explained in the following paragraphs.

Gangsters in older Hollywood films were stereotyped as heartless unintelligent characters. The lead gangsters in *Little Caesar* and *Scarface* lacked social skills and intelligence. They were shown aiming for not just other gangsters in their respective films, but anyone else who was in the area during a gangster strike. They were not selective in their crimes, as gangsters took advantage of any situation or business in their striking area (Cavallero, 2004).

The second Italian character often stereotyped in Italian films was the fesso. Known as the gangster's sidekick, the fesso was senseless and unintelligent. *Fesso*, meaning fool, described a person who is oblivious about the world around him. The main characters in films such as *The Gay Divorce* and *Top Hat* showed Italian fessos that were egotistical, had poor speaking skills, mispronounced words, and often referred to themselves in the third-person. The non-Italian characters, on the other hand, were attentive to the world around them (Cavallero, 2004). Cavallero suggested that the fessos' ethnicity was a central facet to the films and more importantly, imperative for the representation of Italians. According to Cavallero, "non-American characters challenges and questions American myths and ideas by being both stupid and incredibly wealthy" (p. 56).

The trickster was not always related to Italian stereotypes, but was used in Cavallero's (2004) analysis. *Tricksters* were stereotypically controlling, dim-witted, and unfaithful to their counterparts. They tended to bounce between jobs and told lies in order to be successful. Examples of films with tricksters included *Duck Soup* and *A Night at the Opera* where the character Driftwood enjoyed eating food and living with lavish living arrangements.

Joey—A Fesso

Joey Tribbiani was an Italian American. He explicitly stated his cultural roots often and was proud of his heritage. Based on evidence that his grandmother was Italian, (Abrams & Mancuso, 1999) this research classified Joey as a second generation Italian American fesso based on Cavallero's (2004) explicit description of Joey in his categories of Italian character stereotypes on screen in his research. Chidester (2005) described Joey as the only character that frequently demonstrated any form of racial distinctiveness in his personality.

The current research found that Joey represented an Italian fesso in every sense of the word. He was Chandler's best friend for the entire series; their dyadic bond often showed Chandler in control of their actions—a representation of the gangster patriarchal figure Cavallero (2004) described. This research found that Joey encompassed all of the fesso actions in Cavallero's description as he was always oblivious to the world around him. Chandler or another character had to fill Joey in on inside jokes, correct his grammar, and order him around like a child. Other characters made fun of Joey's lack of intelligence. Joey's stupidity was often the butt of jokes. Cavallero described Joey as "carry[ing] on the tradition of the *fesso*, occasionally surprising his friends with an astute comment, but usually remaining clueless" (p. 59). The following examples illustrate Joey's dim-wittedness and lack of oblivion.

This research found that Joey's friends often found themselves taking time to make sure he was in the loop. They corrected his wrong assumptions about things or clued him in on common sense facts. In the pilot, Joey decided to use his Italian charisma and hit on Rachel on her wedding day (Kauffman, Crane, & Burrows, 1994b). Monica corrected his actions and reminded him that he needed to back away from Rachel and treat her with respect. Chidester (2005) concluded that Joey was a "vivid example of what belongs and what simply does not" (p. 22). Other episodes in this analysis support Joey's fesso character. For example, in the first season, Chandler expected that Joey was going to perform a dim action, so he warned him to stop "before you do anything Joey-like" (Crane, Kauffman, & Lembeck, 1995). In season 2 Joey said he went out with a woman "with a large Adam's Apple" (Curtis, Malins, & Bright, 1995). Chandler turned to Ross and dreadfully asked, "You or me?" to correct Joey. Later in the season, Chandler gave Joey word of the day toilet paper to increase his vocabulary (Curtis, Malins, & Lembeck, 1996). Joey didn't know that hookers were illegal until season 3 (Kurland & Benson, 1997). Instead, he thought a person had to be 21 to legally solicit one, similar to the drinking age. In season 5, Joey was confused with a pair underwear marked "XS" to mean "excess" room, instead of a clothing size (Reich, Cohen, & Jensen, 1999). In season 8, Joey wanted to move to Vermont because he and Ross had a fight. Joey thought going to Vermont was leaving the country and he had to exchange his money for foreign currency (Reich, Cohen, & Weiss, 2002). In season 9, Joey thought emus weren't birds. Instead people "plant" them (Carlock & Halvorson, 2002). Every episode perpetuated Joey's lack of intelligence in some form, which continuously provided comedy to the character and added to the representation of Italians. Joey's friends had to take time and correct his actions or misconceptions. Chidester (2005) commented

"Joey learns precisely what it means to belong to the in-group—and in the process, we as viewers are taught these enduring actions as well" (p. 22).

Chidester (2005) provided additional insight of his analysis of Joey.

> As the extreme limit of the group's tolerance for racial difference, Joey is always on the verge of being turned away by the cluster of friends; h[e] is a constant cycle of transgression and punishment, of learning to tame his 'natural' tendencies to behave inappropriately based on his own racial impurities. (p. 21)

Joey was naïve about many things, but had a soft spot for important friendships. He understood the value of having good friends. Cavallero (2004) concluded that fessos in the films analyzed showed the characters in feminine roles. For example, Beddini in *Top Hat* worked as a fashion designer. Cavallero suggested that fessos tried to balance feminine representations with a vivacious sexual image that accentuated their masculinity and added comedy to their characters. Joey's character portrayed several feminine features; however, these feminine qualities were sporadically shown throughout the series. This research suggests that these feminine characteristics were written for comedy purposes only because Joey was the most masculine character of the three males on the series (see pp. 82-87). In season 5, Joey wanted to wear a new outfit for an audition, so Rachel allowed him to borrow clothes from Ralph Lauren (Kurland, Curtis, & Mancuso, 1999). As described in chapter 3, she insisted that he take a new handbag to match the outfit. Joey referred to the handbag as a feminine purse. After Joey realized that the bag could hold his food and belongings, he was sold on the idea. Chandler and Ross, subsequently, made fun of him for carrying a "woman's purse" (see pp. 84-85).

Joey's character also supported Cavallero's (2004) Italian blue-collar/job security stereotype as well. Joey was an on-again-off-again working actor who had trouble securing good,

decent-paying jobs. The other characters often referenced Chandler's thankless parental care towards Joey; Chandler paid for headshots, food, and several acting classes for his best friend. Joey earned parts in several unusual jobs throughout the series. He worked as an elf during Christmas time at the local mall, posed in a health public service poster for syphilis, and even sold Christmas trees (Chase, Ungerleider, & Bonerz, 1994; Curtis, Malins, & Hughes, 1996; Greenstein, Strauss, & Burrows, 1994). When Joey secured a recurring role on *Days of Our Lives*, he was depicted as a neurosurgeon. Joey's portrayal of a doctor on *Days of Our Lives* was ironic, given the dim and unintelligent nature of his character around his friends. Most of these working-class jobs created a source of comedy for the series and continuously perpetuated the characteristic that Joey was unsuccessful, not wealthy, and of Italian descent.

Cavallero (2004) suggested "ethnicity becomes an important rhetorical tool in these films, as it replaces the failure of [American] myths and becomes the problem itself" (p. 55). The findings of this research directly related to Joey's character and were longitudinally persistent throughout the series. Cavallero claimed that fessos, like Joey, were "not quite American" (p. 57) in American media representations. Joey perpetuated these Italian dominant ideologies and continued to reinforce ethnic stereotypes of Italians both on the series and in the larger scope of television.

Judaism

This chapter has analyzed Asian, British, African American, and Italian representations in *Friends*. Judaism was also discussed several times during the series. Several scholars have recognized Judaism as not only an ethnic background but also as a race. The following pages describe Judaism as an ethnic and racial marker of identification, explain past Jewish portrayals on television, and provide an analysis of Jewish identities created throughout the series.

Broadkin (2000) explained that the majority of immigrant Jews settled in the Lower East Side of New York City when they moved to the United States. Segregation by both race and class turned "working-class neighborhoods" into "racial and ethnic neighborhoods" (p. 108). Even professional and academic Jewish immigrants were characterized as working-class. Jews were seen and treated as racial others and had to come together and fight for their rights in the workplace. "The mass appeal of socialism gave it a hegemony in the Jewish community that it lacked in almost all of nonethnic America" (p. 109).

This same struggle has transmitted into the idea of Jewish individuals becoming White and being acknowledged as mainstream Whites since World War II (Broadkin, 2000). After the war, American Jews continued to fight to belong to mainstream culture. Many Jews living in America today celebrate as White people, living in a world of White freedom and upward mobility (Lipsitz, 1998) where Christianity is normative (Rockler, 2006). Rockler defined *normative* as the cultural presumption that all people are Christian unless they identify as practicing a different religion.

Television's Representation of Jews

Many Jewish individuals wonder if it is feasible to personally identify Judaism as both an ethnicity and religion (Stratton, 2000). Television characters that have identified as Jewish have been portrayed as minorities throughout television's history (Brook, 2003). Leebron and Ruggieri (2004) said that "Judaism is a religion, though often seen as a cultural identifier" on television (p. 34). Television often represents Jewish characters in "secular, cultural terms rather than focus on any religions dimensions of Jewish identity" (Antler, 2000, p. 70). For more than 50 years, many Jewish female characters have been portrayed with satire in prime-time sitcoms, which has cultivated negative representations of Judaism to viewers (Leebron & Ruggieri, 2004).

For several years, Jewish television characters were depicted as “exotic” (Pearl & Pearl, 1999, p. 233) with thick accents and unusual fashion sense.

Leebron and Ruggieri (2004) identified Molly Goldberg in *The Goldbergs* as one of the first leading female Jewish roles on television when the show aired from 1949 to 1954. The series first started with a radio program that had characters with Yiddish accents that observed Jewish holidays. The television series, however, did not make its primary focus Judaism.

Few Jewish female characters were seen on television after *The Goldbergs* until Rhoda Morgenstern was introduced on *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* in 1970 (Leebron & Ruggieri, 2004). Rhoda was also seen on *The Mary Tyler Moore* spin-off, *Rhoda,* which focused on “the Jewishness” (p. 36) of the leading female character through traits such as her loud voice and opinionated nature. *Rhoda* failed to focus on the character’s Judaism directly. Leebron and Ruggieri suggested that viewers instead had to infer the Jewish characteristics from Rhoda’s “stereotypical” (p. 36) Jewish personality.

Leebron and Ruggieri (2004) claimed that the 1970s and 1980s featured Jewish females in more secondary roles than primary protagonist characters through series such as *Lanigan’s Rabbi*, *Archie Bunker’s Place*, *Dream Street,* and *Dirty Dancing*. The trend resurged later in the 1980s and early 1990s through series such as *thirtysomething* and *Northern Exposure*. Situation comedies airing from 1989 to the early 2000s saw a rise of protagonist Jewish characters in *Dharma & Greg*, *Mad about You*, *The Nanny*, *Seinfeld*, *Will & Grace*, and even *Friends* (Brook, 2003). Leebron and Ruggieri identified both Mrs. Costanza and Mrs. Seinfeld as “crypto-Jews” (p. 37) on *Seinfeld* because they were “meddling, overweight, and pushy” (p. 37). The authors defined *crypto-Jew* as a character that viewers had to deduce was Jewish based on their

stereotypical appeal, not based on self-proclamation, similar to the Rhoda character previously discussed.

Situation comedies that embraced Jewish identities have only done so on an artificial level, a concept Brook (2003) called “conceptual Jewishness” (p. 124). Brook described the concept as one that encompasses a character’s particular culture and ethnic characteristics, and rarely leaves room for religious aspects. He labeled *Friends* as a “Jewish-trend sitcom” where the characters “are literally conceived, more than represented, as Jews” (p. 124). He suggested that Jewish themes were only seen on the show through “annual allusions” (p. 122) to Hanukkah. Specific examples in the series that support Brook’s conclusions are discussed later in this chapter.

Hanukkah

Hanukkah recognizes the Jewish 165 B.C. victory over the domineering Greeks where one day’s worth of sacramental oil lasted for eight days. This miracle is celebrated every December during the Christian Christmas season (Werts, 2006). Werts claimed that Hanukkah was the first alternative Christian holiday to be portrayed on television. Werts explained that this was the result of many people in show business being raised in Jewish homes; as more Jewish people started careers in show business, the more they wanted their ethnicity and racial backgrounds to be represented on screen.

Analysis of Judaism in the Series

The Geller’s—Are they Jewish or White?

Two of the main characters in *Friends*, Ross and Monica Geller, outwardly identified themselves as Jewish on several occasions throughout the series. As the series progressed, the Jewish characters were seen celebrating Christmas annually with the rest of the characters with

little or no mention of Hanukkah. Pearl and Pearl (1999) concluded that Hanukkah is often celebrated with Christmas on television. The characters in the present analysis only mentioned Hanukkah when it was convenient to the storyline. Their religious beliefs appeared to come and go as necessary, a phenomenon Rockler (2006) labeled as a "monocultural fantasy" within the series (p. 453). She suggested that the Jewish identity of the Geller's was often "subsumed" into how "contemporary identity politics are represented in the media" (pp. 453-454) in terms of an unprejudiced world where the characters lived.

Identity of Convenience

Antler (2000) described Monica Geller as being "nothing inherently Jewish" (p. 61). Antler concluded that Monica's outward appearance was not Jewish, although she could arguably have been be a *Jewish American Princess* (JAP) based on her past wealthy, high-maintenance lifestyle growing up as a child. Antler did not specifically define the term Jewish American Princess. Merriam-Webster Online described a JAP as a "stereotypical well-to-do or spoiled American Jewish girl or woman." Leebron and Ruggieri (2004) also explained a JAP as a shopaholic, who has similar materialistic traits to Fran Fine in *The Nanny*.

Antler (2000) described recurring guest star Janice Litman as a more stereotypical representation of a Jewish character than Monica. Antler claimed Janice was more similar to the self-proclaimed Jewish Fran Fine in *The Nanny*. Janice encompassed a characteristic nasal voice, manners, clothing, and laugh. Antler compared Janice, long time on-again off-again girlfriend of Chandler, to Monica, Chandler's wife. Antler suggested that both women could not be more different in terms of Jewish identities. She described Monica as attractive and not-noticeably Jewish compared to Janice, who was always overdressed and not as beautiful as Monica. Even

though both women captured Chandler's attention during the series, Monica was seen as a Jewish woman to marry where Janice was "the girl to date and dump" (p. 62).

Monica, perhaps the most poignant female character of the ensemble, exhibited what Rockler (2006) called "postidentity politics," or a rhetoric characterized by the supposition that everyone in the world was now equal, so "identity issues no longer matter" (p. 454). Monica's character screamed perfection and accomplishment; she was proud of her neurotic quirks and boldness. For a character like Monica's to disregard her religious Jewish values questioned the identity of the character itself, a characteristic this research labeled as "identity of convenience." Monica was only Jewish when it made her stand out in the crowd and be proudly different than the others. Every season, Monica had a Christmas tree in her apartment. She also displayed the Star of David hanging from her ceiling from time to time, but there was never a clear celebration of Judaism during the series or by character.

Monica's wedding did not incorporate any Jewish elements such as the ritual mikveh or breaking of the glass (Malins, Crane, Kauffman, & Bright, 2001). Pearl and Pearl (1999) described the *mikveh* as a customary "ritual immersion" (p. 24) a Jewish bride participates in the night before her wedding. Rockler (2006) said that the *breaking of the glass* is a time-honored ritual of Jewish weddings. Jewish Encyclopedia.com described the breaking of the glass as an action where a newly married couple shatters a glass after the marriage ceremony. The ritual is a symbol of good luck. Rather than including these traditional practices, Monica continued to be focused on the perfection of her wedding day. She even hired Joey as an ordained Internet minister to perform the ceremony instead of a rabbi. A *rabbi* is defined as an "appointed spiritual head of the community," according to Jewish Encyclopedia.com, who serves to unite couples in marriage, similar to a minister in Christian weddings. Joey was late getting to the church, and

Rachel had to find a temporary replacement until he arrived. The only clergy Rachel could find on short notice was a Greek Orthodox minister. Monica appeared to not have a problem with the minister, but with the fact that Joey was not there. This research supports Rockler's conclusions. In addition, Monica never discussed raising a Jew or interfaith child during her adoption of twins with Chandler, a gentile. If her Jewish background was important to her, it should have been evident through her actions, especially those dealing with a wedding or child.

Leebron and Ruggieri (2004) claimed that Monica never self-identified or proclaimed to be Jewish; this research disagreed with their conclusion. The analysis for this chapter concluded that Monica was Jewish, but only claimed her faith on certain occasions throughout the run of the series. She referenced having a bar mitzvah in season 7 (Reich, Cohen, Bilsing-Graham, Plummer, & Bright, 2001). She also claimed her Jewish identity in season 10 when she and Chandler traveled to Ohio as candidates to adopt a child (Silveri & Schwimmer, 2004). Monica was mistaken for a reverend by the adoption agency and the birth mother thought it would be beneficial for the baby that Monica was a reverend. If the birth mother decided to give Monica her child, it would be raised in a good Christian home. Monica played along with the mistake until Chandler took her aside and convinced her to tell the truth. Chandler said, "You're Jewish!" Monica responded. "*Technicality*!" Monica, again, assumed her Jewish "identity of convenience," and was not proud of her racial heritage. Instead, it was an opportune time for Monica to identify as Christian until Chandler talked her into telling the birth mother the truth. While Monica abandoned her Jewish beliefs, it created comedic dialogue between her and Chandler until she told the truth. When the birth mother heard Monica wasn't a reverend, she was enraged that Monica had lied to her. Chandler explained to the birth mother that they wanted to be parents more than anything and eventually convinced her to give them her baby.

Antler (2000) and Brook (2003) labeled Rachel Green as Jewish. They suggested that Rachel was also Jewish American Princess, like Monica. Even though the present analysis found that Rachel's character never outright stated that she was Jewish, Rachel did live up to the JAP definition. She was a spoiled daddy's girl who was ultra-consumed with a materialistic lifestyle and gifts. On any given special occasion such as a birthday, Rachel was known to return presents in order to receive what she found to be most valuable, "credit." Rachel and other characters often referenced Rachel's decision to have a nose job after high school. A nose job is a social indicator of being consumed with beauty. Brook concluded that this bodily alteration showed a connection between a possible past Semitic "hooked" nose (Jewish Encyclopedia.com), which viewers saw in flashback episodes, and her current nose. Dyer (1997) suggested that a person could noticeably be White based on a combination of physical elements outside the skin, such as lips, clothes, and even nose structures. Fashionably, a "nose may be perceived as insufficiently attractive in terms that obviously, though not explicitly declare it is not white enough" (p. 42). If Rachel was indeed Jewish, then her nose job supported Dyer's claims that she altered her physical appearance to appear more White. Findings from this research showed that Rachel never said she was Jewish. Her actions, however, were consistent with what other researchers have described as those of a Jewish American Princess; therefore, she could be seen as culturally Jewish. If Rachel was indeed Jewish, she completely abandoned her ethnic/cultural roots and conformed to Protestant culture.

Antler (2000) described the typical Jewish man on television as one that is "brainy and sharp-witted" (p. 51) that can be both physically and socially uncoordinated and cumbersome. A typical Jewish man is also sensitive with a dry sense of humor. Antler labeled Ross as a "wimp" (p. 51) and classified him as Jewish. This chapter also classified Ross as Jewish, as he identified

as Jewish several times throughout the series. The findings in this research suggest that Ross arguably tried to stick to his Jewish beliefs more than Monica or Rachel, particularly when it came to raising his son, Ben.

The Jewish Armadillo

This research found that only one episode in the series explicitly examined Jewish beliefs throughout an entire episode, "The One with the Holiday Armadillo" (Malins & Halvorson, 2000). This research coincides with Rockler's (2006) analysis of the episode, which detailed events of the episode and provided her analysis. The following pages explain the Holiday Armadillo episode in detail, analyze its relationship to Judaism, and connect its implications to the current chapter.

The plot of the episode centered on Ross' son, Ben, and how Ross felt his 6-year-old was old enough to learn about his "part-Jewish" (Malins & Halvorson, 2000) heritage on the eve of Hanukkah. The conflict in the episode was that every time Ross tried to explain Hanukkah to Ben, Ben resisted the idea. Through an understanding of the series, this research concluded that Ben's lesbian mothers—Susan and Carol—were not Jewish, so Ben had happily celebrated Christian holidays since birth. Ross first tried explaining Hanukkah to Ben at the beginning of the episode. His attempt failed when Ben burst into a line of "Jingle Bells." When Ross stopped Ben from singing, Ben quickly concluded that Santa "isn't coming" and he instead had to start celebrating Hanukkah. Ben thought this meant that he would not receive any presents. Ross felt guilty, reconsidered his intentions, and guaranteed Ben that Santa would indeed visit that year, just like previous Christmases.

Ross ran to the nearest costume store in hopes of renting a Santa costume on Christmas Eve to please Ben. When Ross learned that all of the Santa costumes were gone, he settled for a

giant armadillo costume. He named himself “The Holiday Armadillo.” Ross ran to Monica’s apartment, where Ben was staying, equipped with gifts in attempt to buy Ben’s attention for the chance to explain the story of the Hanukkah. Just as Ross was making progress, Santa—played by Chandler—heard that Ross was looking for a Santa costume and busted through the door to wish Ben a “Merry Christmas!” Ben was again drawn to Santa and only agreed to learn about Hanukkah if Santa stayed with him to listen to the story. Joey also heard about Ross’ dilemma. Joey arrived soon after in a Superman costume and joined in the festivities. Ross was able to explain the story of Hanukkah to Ben. At the conclusion of the story, Chandler remarked that his favorite part was when “Superman [said he] flew all the Jews out of Egypt!” Joey’s comment brought the serious topic back to the comedy in his Italian fesso style. Chandler had to correct Joey’s misunderstanding, which removed the focus away from the important subject of Hanukkah (Malins & Halvorson, 2000).

Joey’s Superman comment about Hanukkah reflected what Frankenberg (1993) called a “Black, green, yellow, or pink” statement (p. 38). Joey’s statement took the focus away from racial differences that could have affected the episode in a positive light and instead included a dialogue that lacked considerable meaning. Ross’ attempts to teach Ben and viewers about Hanukkah were overshadowed by frilly costumes and Joey’s dense comments. This episode supported Pearl and Pearl’s (1999) conclusion about Jewish holidays seen on television; when Hanukkah is seen on screen, it is often celebrated with Christmas. Rockler (2006) suggested that Ross seemingly did not talk about raising a Jewish, gentile, or interfaith son with Ben’s mothers, Carol and Susan, from the beginning, so Ross felt compelled to take the responsibility to teach Ben Judaism’s principles. Rockler described the Holiday Armadillo episode as one that not only

poked humor toward another religion or ethnicity but also dismissed the possibility that the differences between Christianity and Judaism are significant and deserved to be addressed.

Rockler (2006) explored the tie of Judaism to hegemony in terms of dominant discourse within the Holiday Armadillo episode (Malins & Halvorson, 2000). The "'we are all equal now' rhetoric reifies race, gender, and other power structures by deterring critical examination of these structures" as *Friends* supported this concept that "Jewish American identity politics historically have been downplayed on television" (Rockler, 2006, p. 454). Rockler suggested that the Holiday Armadillo episode in particular assumed that "Christmas is for everybody" (p. 460). The episode sent the message that the holiday could be happily observed by anyone of any secular faith. The episode did not critically assess the hegemonic supremacy of Christianity in the United States, but suggested that Hanukkah is indeed for everybody. The series used humor to represent Judaism and did not focus on the devout aspects of the religion. *Friends* had power in ratings to influence and further educate the public about a religious and political discourse such as Judaism, but instead took the low road and mocked not just Judaism, but also Italians, Blacks, Asians, and British individuals.

The "White" Apple: Friends' New York City

White characters seen on television, according to Dyer (1997), are models to every ethnic and racial background in society. Individuals from various classes, genders, and sexualities often characterize White representations. "Whites are everywhere in representation… Whites are not of a certain race, they're just the human race" (p. 3). Pascale (2007) explained Whiteness as a form of "normalcy" (p. 34) in which other races are measured against in terms of U.S. television dramas and situation comedies. Whiteness, according to Pascale, was created to perpetuate an "ordinary way of being" as "…Whiteness on network TV was produced by casting apparently

White actors as characters with speaking roles and casting actors who appear to be ‘of color’ in nonspeaking roles that were incidental to scenes…” (p. 34). Several apparent non-White characters were seen as extras on *Friends*, but again, these people were still surrounded by White people (Sandell, 1998).

Nakayama and Krizek (1995) suggested White Americans are never labeled as White Americans. In their “strategies of the discourse of whiteness,” the fourth strategy “confuses whiteness with nationality” (p. 300) and suggested that if one is White, he or she is called “American,” not “white American.” However, at the same time, “all Americans are not white, nor are all whites necessarily Americans” (p. 300).

Sandell (1998), who primarily discussed the alternative family structures within the series (see pp. 33-36), commented on the Whiteness the tight social group created within the series. “*Friends* nevertheless distance[d] itself from contemporary discourses about race and ethnicity by showing these six men and women firmly situated within a white ethnic enclave in the context of a multicultural space, New York City” (p. 148). The ensemble demonstrated a rhetoric of *their* version of New York City that was primarily White, rich, and privileged. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, (2000), 44.7% of the people living in the city identified as White. Twenty-seven percent of New Yorkers identified as Hispanic or Latino, 26.6% Black, 9.9% Asian, .5% American Indian or Alaska Native, and .1% Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander. Forty-seven point six percent of people living in New York City reported speaking a language other than English in their homes. These percentages represent a different society from the one in which the *Friends* resided. Greenwich Village, where the ensemble identified living, is in the heart of New York City. None of their memorable neighbors outwardly appeared to be of another race or spoke a language other than American English.

In season 4, a letter mailed to Rachel showed that she, Monica, Joey, and Chandler lived at 445 Grove Street, New York, New York, which is in Manhattan (Kurland & Bonerz, 1998). The New York City Department of City Planning (2000) reported 703,873 (45.8%) people living in Manhattan identified as White in 2000. This number was slightly less than half of the population of Manhattan. As for other races, 417,816 (27.2%) identified as Hispanic origin, 234,698 (15.3%) as Black, 143,291 (9.3%) Asian, 2,465 (.2%) American Indian or Alaska Native, and 572 (0%) Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander. While these numbers showed that the area of Manhattan was predominantly White, there were still many races that were not represented through the series. A Hispanic *friend of a friend*, for example, was never introduced in the series.

Discussion of Race Interpretations

Situation comedies are created to make viewers laugh, sometimes at any culture's expense. Television has an ability to influence viewers (Leebron & Ruggieri, 2004); racial stereotypes communicate orthodox representations to viewers that undermine racial others. The *Friends* cast contained six White characters that rarely seemed to acknowledge their own White identities. Humor was used in *Friends* to communicate to viewers a sense of otherness as the group rejected relationships with guest characters of other races or ethnicities. "*Friends* is a show that knows its whiteness is problematic…much is at stake in a show which valorizes choosing a white family…" (Sandell, 1998, p. 153). Chidester (2005) agreed that the *Friends'* Whiteness was intricate as the ensemble portrayed a metaphor that they were a "closed circle" (p. 18) and the thought of including another friend, being Black, Hispanic, or another race, threatened their inner unity.

During the week of May 7, 2007, Zap2it online ratings indicated that *Friends* ranked 11th in the top 25 syndicated series for the week with a 3.3 rating and 4,708,000 viewers (Zap2it, 2007). Producers with such a large audience at their disposal during first-run production had a big window which they could have influenced viewers by representing racial others in a positive light (Chidester, 2005; Kellner, 2003). Instead, producers chose to belittle guest stars that were races other than White, religions other than Christianity, and forgot to acknowledge the ensemble's Whiteness altogether. Chidester (2005) suggested that the characters exhibited a concept of "presence of absence," (p. 6) that used the central characters Whiteness as a "racial marker of privilege" (p. 6). "If *Friends* were somehow able to make its historic *lack* of concern for racial issues clearly evident to its viewers, then the program could make a significant contribution to the reinforcement of whiteness as a contemporary American subject position" (p. 15). *Friends* should have had an edge over other series to discuss racial differences in a positive light because of its mass popularity with viewers.

The creation of Whites on television is a result of "white hegemony" (Pascale, 2007, p. 30). For example, "Television adopts the lens of race and gender to visually codify the essence of national identity and promote unambiguous images of Italianness" (Ardizzoni, 2005, p. 509). This chapter examined portrayals of race in the television series *Friends.* Race was defined in this research using as any ethnic depiction, including religion, that the series explored. Racial themes found in the analysis included Black representations of guest characters, ethnic stereotyping, Italian portrayals, and counter representations of Judaism through the ensemble. The chapter also analyzed the rejection of romantic relationships that involved a main character dating a non-White individual. The main characters of the series were good friends that shared the same social circle, each other. Most of these characters, however, did not make their race

visible through their attitudes and actions. Chandler and Phoebe, in addition to the other four characters this chapter analyzed, did not identify as White throughout the series, did not discuss their White identities, nor identified as practicing a particular religion. They, however, were often shown making fun of racial others. Phoebe and Chandler both mocked British accents, talked condescendingly to Joey when he would make unintelligent remarks, and did not accept racial others into their social circle of friends.

As the findings indicate, when a guest character from another race or ethnicity was introduced in the series, the main ensemble rejected their friendship. The other characters made fun of a non-White individual or found reasons not to like them. This chapter analyzed Black power representations in the series and concluded that Black characters were often seen in managerial positions over the White characters. Black bosses never interacted with the group, but on superficial levels with single characters.

Pascale (2007) suggested that when a main character was in a situation where their racial identity was at stake, they usually took the high road and sided with the dominant ideology of "disidentification" (p. 30). The concept of disidentification entails "a specific refusal of the apparent naturalness of whiteness by including whiteness—a white racial category, not simply white people" (p. 30). For example, the results suggest that Monica and Ross would not ask their friends to celebrate Hanukkah with them even if they wanted to because it would suggest resistance to the dominant ideology, Christmas. Therefore, Ross and Monica identified as White unless a situation arose where being Jewish was convenient to them. Any form of racial difference was therefore made White (Pascale, 2007). "The meanings of race must be made visible through the relationships that produce it" (p. 30). This chapter explained that Joey self-identified as Italian. Joey, unlike Ross and Monica, was happy to talk about his ethnic heritage.

His behaviors, however, supported Calvallero's (2004) fesso description. Joey was stereotypically Italian through his actions and dim-wit, and the other characters were quick to correct his mannerisms to conform him to their own Whiteness. Chidester (2005) described an episode of *Friends* as one that formed a "rhetorical silence" that "speaks to whiteness' privilege as a subject position—namely, the privilege of sealing oneself from any interaction with the racial other" (p. 22). The results found in this chapter support Chidester's argument. The results also perpetuate Hall's (2000) dominant-hegemonic position (see pp. 11-12), succumbing to the ruling, dominant ideological middle-class point of view that the White individual is usually in a position of privilege, which the next chapter will explore.

CHAPTER 5: "I JUST NEVER THINK OF MONEY AS AN ISSUE": SOCIAL CLASS REPRESENTATIONS

Ethnicity, according to Squiers and Quadagno (1998) can also function as an identity marker of working social class individuals. Mass media, particularly television, "have long been recognized by communication scientists to mask class differences in American society" (Press, 1991, p. 6). In addition to the televised racial and ethnic representations the last chapter explored, television also serves as a lens to viewers at home depicting dominant ideologies of social class status through its programs. Social class status representations in *Friends* are explored in this chapter.

Butler (2007) defined a dominant ideology as "a system of beliefs about the world that benefits and supports a society's ruling class" (p. 446). This chapter is situated within the dominant ideology framework explained in chapter 1 (see pp. 7-11). Butler connected ideology to television viewers. He concluded that the ideological "model typically positions television as an agent of the ruling class" (p. 447). Television, therefore, "must necessarily support dominant ideology" (p. 447). Viewers of all classes are often inspired by "ruling class ideology that they accept this capitalist version of reality as truth" (p. 447). If ideologies of the ruling class are so compelling to those individuals who are not part of the ruling class that begin to believe the ideologies as the reality, hegemony has been successfully accomplished (Butler, 2007; Gramsci, 1991). The ruling social class, therefore, has power over commonly accepted principles and standards in society. Press (1991) believed that using a Marxist framework in conjunction with social class standing has helped "privilege[d] the concept of social class as a basic category of social analysis" (p. 21). This chapter defines current social class characteristics in America, describes historical connections between humor and social class, provides an overview of social

class status in American sitcoms, and presents the results of a textual analysis of social class representations on *Friends*. The results are compared to median wage statistics from each character's occupation in 1994 and 2004 from the *U.S. Department of Labor Occupational Outlook Handbook* for each respective year (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1996, 2004).

Social Class Characteristics in America

Social class status in America can be calculated using several factors. There are many definitions of social class in research. Coleman and Rainwater (1978) offered contemporary definitions of social class. They classified Americans as upper, middle, and lower-class citizens. Upper-class Americans were grouped based on three criteria, the old rich (aristocratic), new rich (current elites), and a managerial class, such as successful college graduates. Middle-class Americans were defined as those of "comfortable living standard" and those who were "just getting along" (p. 26). Lower-class Americans were grouped with two subcategories: working poor individuals, and those individuals living off the welfare system. Coleman and Rainwater referred to middle-class Americans as the "common" people (p. 26).

Coleman and Rainwater (1978) concluded that "America is a fluid society in which 'effort' and 'drive' are rewarded more often than not and lack of the same is usually punished" (p. 234). Every person is born into a family with some form of social class standing. An individual's social class may change throughout his or her lifetime as a result of economic changes such as a college education or a well-paying job. Mobility, or "the movement of families up and down the economic ladder," is "the promise that lies at the heart of the American dream" (Leonhardt & Werschkul, 2005, Income mobility, ¶ 1). Researchers examine mobility to determine what proportion of people move up and down the income ladder through time; some people may shift between income levels, but some stay in the social class in which they were

born. Mobility can also be examined concerning generations of families, such as the progress of children moving up the economic latter as compared to poor parents and siblings (Leonhardt & Werschkul, 2005).

Social class can be determined in the present day through the combination of four factors of social standing to indicate the class designations described above. According to Tse and Werschkul (2005) of *The New York Times,* the leading characteristics that currently determine an individual's social class status include occupation, educational level, yearly income, and overall wealth. This description offers a more modern definition of social class versus Coleman and Rainwater (1978), but incorporates several characteristics from their definition.

Comedy and its Relationship to Social Class

Since television viewers often see comedy through the point of view of dominant classes through characters, situation comedy is a practical realm to examine social class issues (Freeman, 1992). Situation comedy allows viewers to identify with social class stereotypes in society through laughter by focusing on "deviations both from socio-cultural norms, and from the rules that govern other genres and aesthetic regimes" (Neale & Krutnik, 1990, p. 3). It has been said that it is easier to know characters of opposing ideologies in situation comedies than other genres, such as dramas (Taylor, 1989). When characters show resistance to dominant ideologies, they are often mocked or their comment is turned into a joke. Humor is used to maintain dominant ideologies; hegemony operates through humor. (See pp. 8-11 for an explanation of hegemony.)

Comedies are more naturalistic by nature, inviting audiences into the situation at hand (Neale & Krutnik, 1990). The producers of situation comedies use laugh tracks to extend invitations to home viewers to laugh and become part of the audience. The laugh track indicates

when a portion of an episode is deemed humorous for the audience at home (Mills, 2005). Situation comedies attempt to confirm cultural identity through distinguishing an "inside community" of viewers (Neale & Krutnik, 1990, p. 242). It is this naturalizing that powerfully conveys dominant ideologies through comedies. Viewers are humored because laugher is natural. Other genres that entail more intimate content, such as dramas, often create the illusion of audiences "eavesdropping" (p. 242). As a result, audiences do not feel invited into these programs compared with comedies.

Characters are frequently depicted as striving for upward social mobility in situation comedies (Freeman, 1992). Freeman concluded that sitcoms often demonstrate "extended portrayals" of "Middle Americans" (p. 400). Freeman borrowed the term Middle Americans from Coleman and Rainwater (1978), who described the term as "people of comfortable living standard and people just getting along" (p. 26). If sitcom characters are striving to become part of another social class, two themes are typically implemented: sacrifice and self-reliance (Freeman, 1992). Sacrifice entails a character attempting to improve their social situation by "suffering personal indignities, jeopardizing personal relationships, giving up resources, and demonstrating worthiness through hard work" (p. 401). Characters might in addition be self-reliant, meaning that they realize that it is not possible to depend on other people to reach upward mobility in order to reach a level of financial security; these characters have to branch out and be self-sufficient.

Televised Class Stereotypes

The following provides an overview of social class character stereotypes on television situation comedies from the 1950s through today. This is a summary from television scholars and literature based on social class. These examples provide a template of class depictions since

television's inception. Since social class has many definitions, some scholars vaguely characterize social class in their research and utilize their own definitions. This study, however, uses the definition of social class as "social divisions and inequalities based on occupation, economic standing, heredity, or other distinctions" (Rohmann, 1999, p. 63), incorporating Tse and Werschkul's (2005) category of educational level to Rohmann's term "other distinctions."

1950s and 1960s

Popular sitcoms in the first decade of television showed families in three social class stages: satisfied middle-class families, families that were more or less middle class, or working-class families that wished to obtain middle-class social status (Taylor, 1989). Sitcoms depicting working-class families of the 1950s and 1960s portrayed men as a "buffoon, dumb, incompetent, irresponsible, immature, lacking good sense" (Butsch, 2005, p. 115) character. He supported family financially, but was not a competent or adequate husband or father. Writers incorporated humor through many situations in which the 1950s and 1960s working-class man was an insufficient husband or father. Wives and children were represented as more dependable, mature, and intellectual than the men. Examples of series supporting Butsch's formula included *The Honeymooners, The Life of Riley*, and *I Remember Mama.*

Typical parental middle-class stereotypes of the era represented men and women that were intellectual, levelheaded, and mature. Fathers were "affluent and successful, further accenting the difference from working-class men" (Butsch, 2005, p. 117). Mothers fulfilled domestic roles, taking care of the children when the father was at work. Mothers and fathers both were focused on their children and provided moral guidance for their families. Plotlines centered on children's mischief and the lessons they learned from their parents. Examples of sitcoms

supporting Butsch's formula for middle-class stereotypes included *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriett, Father Knows Best, Leave it to Beaver,* and *Make Room for Daddy.*

Rarely a middle-class sitcom represented a "fool" for laughter sake, and the fool was generally the wife as a "dizzy blonde" (Butsch, 2005, p. 118). The best example from this era of the middle-class wife was Lucy Ricardo in *I Love Lucy*. Ricky was the intellectual, well-established, and mature husband; Lucy was the troublemaker. Even though Lucy did fulfill the domestic housewife duties like *Donna Reed* and *Laura Petrie*, she often found her way into mischief, which displeased Ricky. Other comedies that depicted dizzy wives included *The Burns and Allen Show, December Bride,* and *Here's Lucy* (Butsch, 2005).

1970s and Early 1980s

By the 1970s, the historical family-grounded situation comedies of past decades started growing old and losing their appeal to audiences (Butsch, 2005). As a result, new types of sitcoms were introduced, many which featured Black men. Networks such as Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) and advertisers started aiming for particular audience demographics such as younger viewers that were 18 to 49 years old. Producer Normal Lear created sitcoms such as *All in the Family, Good Times,* and *Sanford and Son* that focused on tangible social problems such as racism and lower class families. Butsch (2005) described *Sanford and Son* as a "black version" of *All in the Family* and *Good Times* as a "black version" of *I Remember Mama* (p. 122). Series such as *The Jeffersons* had theme songs like "Movin' on Up," suggesting that the characters were "not born and bred middle-class" (p. 121). Race was the counterpart of class in these series, showing that "lower statuses were interchangeable for the purpose of creating a dramatic fool" (p. 122). Black working-class males were often the center of humor in the working-class series of the era.

Sitcoms produced in the 1980s perpetuated similar stereotypes of working-class men from previous years. In the series *Alice,* Mel, the outspoken father (like Archie Bunker), owned and worked at a diner. In *Gimme a Break,* the father worked as a police captain (working-class status) but was not a good father to his children (Butsch, 2005).

Middle-class series featured parents in the 1980s that focused on teaching children moral values and lessons such as *Family Ties* and *Growing Pains*. Other series deviated from the standard middle-class expectations by demeaning professional careers of leading characters. Dr. Robert Hartley in *The Bob Newhart Show* was a psychologist who often doubted his abilities. Walter Findlay in *Maude* had a friend who was a medical doctor, Arthur, who was portrayed as the 1950s clown or fool character. Benson, the Black butler, in *Benson,* worked for a foolish wealthy upper-class governor who was a laughable father. In *Who's the Boss?,* Angela, an upper-middle-class advertising executive, hired Tony as her working-class housekeeper to help raise her son (Butsch, 2005). Butsch suggested that these examples exemplified the "class reversal…veiled by the gender reversal (males performing domestic duties) that is the heart of the situation" (p. 124).

Late 1980s and 1990s

Butsch (2005) argued that a postmodern shift took place in the late 1980s that challenged historical representations in situation comedies. Characters in working-class series such as *Roseanne* and *Married with Children* were known for their characteristic use of mockery, sarcasm, and insults. These series started discussing sex with the same intent that Norman Lear introduced social subject matters such as racism. "In general, sitcoms shifted away from the morality tales" and focused on "ruder, even gross" (p. 125) dialogue, building on historical stereotypes of working-class men as fools who were incompetent fathers. Al Bundy, the father in

Married with Children, was a working-class shoe salesman. Al was constantly insulted by his wife because of several flaws in his character, one being his lack of sufficient income to support his family.

Similar to the family in *Married with Children*, the characters in *Roseanne*—another working-class comedy that began in the late 1980s—did not desire upward mobility. They accepted their working-class lives and judged the middle-class ways of living as inferior (Butsch, 2005). “For the first time, working-class characters were allowed to be themselves instead of inferior copies of middle-class characters” (p. 128).

From 1990 to 1999, 53 new sitcoms about domestic families debuted. Sixteen of those series included working-class families. Men were still juvenile and dense as opposed to their sensible wives, such as Doug in the *King of Queens*, which concluded its 9-year-run this year. Women were increasingly identified as having jobs and in some cases, outshined their husbands in series such as *Cosby*. Single mothers also began to appear on screen. Working-class families were shown as not only having lower status in society, but also as dysfunctional. In *Grace Under Fire*, spousal and alcohol abuse surfaced. *King of the Hill*, an adult cartoon still in production, features Hank, a father who drinks often and shares foolish characteristics with his friends (Butsch, 2005). Overall, “men in turn confirmed their lower status as working-class and resolved the contradictory statuses of adult white male, on the one hand, and working-class, on the other” (p. 129).

Several middle-class sitcoms produced in the late 1980s and 1990s still included families with proficient parents such as *Step by Step* and *7th Heaven*. Others, such as *Home Improvement* and *Everybody Loves Raymond* resulted back to the inadequate father characters, but were not classified as buffoons as previous working-class comedies. In *Home Improvement*, both parents

worked (Butsch, 2005). Butsch suggested that while the family in *Everybody Loves Raymond* did not fit the stereotype of one particular social class, Ray's family perpetuated both working and middle-class stereotypes. Ray had a successful career as a sportswriter and as a result, his wife did not have to work. Ray was a member of a private golf club, but his brother had a blue-collar job as a police officer. Ray's children also respected his authority as a father figure (Butsch, 2005).

The 2000s

The turn of the century introduced several working-class sitcoms such as *Grounded for Life* and *Still Standing*, both of which Butsch (2005) described as *King of Queens* counterparts. *Malcolm in the Middle* and *According to Jim* feature negligent middle-class fathers of the new millennium. Series such as *One on One* and *Two and a Half Men* feature bachelors who have parental duties as single parents, helping raise a daughter and a nephew, respectively. The males on *Two and a Half Men* represent more affluent characters than other middle-class sitcoms of the 1990s, but have to incorporate a child into their bachelor lifestyle, which produces fresh situations each week.

Over the past 50 years, sitcoms' depictions of social class have changed. Working-class men once known as good husbands and providers in the 1950s have since evolved into fools and immature fathers today. This slapstick "stock character" of the working-class father has "persisted as the dominant image" in society (Butsch, 2005, p. 133). Middle-class families were flawless for three decades (1950s, 1960s, & 1970s). There has been a contrast of portrayals for domestic middle-class fathers, such as the good dad, foolish but financially stable dad, and the buffoon. These television images are transformed to dominant ideologies that society may adhere to, thanks to preservation technologies and cable networks such as Nick-at-Nite and TV Land.

Today, television viewers are exposed to many series from all decades of television described in this research. As Press (1991) explained, "television may be unique among media in that its images are strongly positioned to be accepted unconsciously by viewers as presenting images of reality…paining pictures of our world as it truly exists" (p. 17). The current research compares findings in this study to historical depictions of social class depictions in the conclusion of this chapter.

Method

The researcher examined the *Friends* series for the following analysis. Using textual analysis of all 236 episodes, the researcher found that the six main characters strived for upward mobility in the series. (See pp. 17-18 for an explanation of the method of textual analysis.) The following pages will detail the characters rise to upward mobility and how their mobility indicated their class status in society.

Moving Up: Upward Mobility in *Friends*

The six characters in *Friends*—Rachel, Monica, Phoebe, Joey, Chandler, and Ross—had different occupations. Not one character retained the same job position from the beginning to the end of the series. The financial stability of each character is therefore questioned in this research. The following provides an overview of each character's occupations and subsequently details episodes that explore financial difficulty in the series. A comparison of the *U.S. Department of Labor Occupational Outlook Handbook* salary statistics are explored for each character's occupation to analyze the relationship between televised social class privilege and actual earning power today (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1996, 2004).

Rachel

The pilot episode of *Friends* showed Rachel Green escaping her wealthy Long Island family in search of a new independent beginning on her own (Kauffman, Crane, & Burrows, 1994b). At the end of the episode, Rachel cut up her father's credit cards and began work as a waitress at Central Perk. Rachel went to college but her major and tangible skills were unknown. Rachel admitted in a flashback episode that she changed her major in college because there was "never any parking by the psychology building" (Malins & Bright, 1998). Rachel was undoubtedly terrible at her waitress job, as she was often found talking with her friends during shifts and mixing up customers' drink orders. Throughout the first few seasons, Rachel relied on customers' tips and gracious gratuities from her friends to help pay bills. She was naïve about living on her own and learned that making money resulted from personal sacrifice. She cut back on spending money for the first time in her life in the first season. Early in the season, Rachel questioned why a man named "FICA" was getting all of her money (Junge & Burrows, 1994). In the same episode, VISA Card phoned Rachel to report "unusual activity" on her credit card because she hadn't spent any money. A few episodes later, Rachel asked customers for advances on tips so she could afford to fly to Vail for an annual Thanksgiving family ski trip (Greenstein, Strauss, & Burrows, 1994). Rachel actually was forced to give some of her tips back to the coffee house because she broke a cup. She didn't earn the airfare, so her friends chipped in to pay for her ticket. Rachel appeared to get by the first few seasons, but there were only a few episodes that depicted financial problems for the group. Those episodes are analyzed in the following pages. One episode in particular depicted financial scarcity for the entire episode, "The One with Five Steaks and an Eggplant" (Brown & Gittelsohn, 1995).

Five Steaks and an Eggplant

Rachel, Joey, and Phoebe confided in each other about personal fiscal issues early in the second season (Brown & Gittelsohn, 1995). Rachel was still working as a waitress, Joey was surviving job-to-job, and Phoebe was a self-employed masseuse. The three friends complained that Monica, Ross, and Chandler "just [didn't] get" that they didn't have as much money to splurge on lavish things. Rachel, Joey, and Phoebe claimed that the others always felt the need to celebrate any tiny occasion with a fancy dinner at "someplace nice." During the episode, Monica earned a promotion to head lunch chef at her restaurant the same day the group was planning a surprise birthday celebration for Ross. These events forced Rachel, Joey, and Phoebe to contribute donations to both occasions. After Monica announced her big promotion to her friends, she suggested that they celebrate with a big dinner "someplace nice." When Monica left the room, Joey turned to Rachel and Phoebe and asked, "How much do you think I can get for my kidney?"

Tension among Rachel, Joey, and Phoebe grew throughout the episode when the group met for Monica's celebratory dinner. When Phoebe ordered a cup of soup and Ross wanted to split the bill five ways in honor of Monica's big night, Phoebe couldn't take the pressure any longer and explained that she couldn't pay $30 for a cup of mushy soup. With dead silence at the table after Phoebe's remark, Joey was brave and explained "Ok, umm, we three feel like, that uh, sometimes you, you guys don't get that uh…we don't have as much money as you." Ross, Chandler, and Monica were dumbfounded.

Monica: "Ok."

Ross: "I hear ya."

Chandler: "We can talk about that."

Phoebe: "Well, then...let's."

Ross: “Well um, I, I guess I just never think of money as an issue.”

Rachel: “That’s ‘cause you have it.”

Ross: “That’s a good point.”

Rachel picked up the conversation and further complained about Ross’ pricey birthday plans. The group planned to pay for a fancy dinner and tickets for a Hootie and the Blowfish concert to celebrate. Ross felt bad about the lavish gesture and said that he wanted to spend his birthday with his friends, concert or no concert. Later in the episode, Monica tried to patch things up with Rachel, Phoebe, and Joey. She brought home five steaks and an eggplant—for vegetarian Phoebe—from work to make dinner for everyone. She, Ross, and Chandler offered to pay for the concert tickets themselves so the group could still see Hootie and the Blowfish. Rachel, Phoebe, and Joey did not appreciate the charitable gesture from their friends because they wanted to prove they could survive on their own and refused the tickets. Monica, Ross, and Chandler were furious and left the room after Phoebe exclaimed, “Oh, well, then you’ll have extra seats, you know, for your tiaras and stuff!” Rachel later referred to Phoebe, Joey, and herself the others’ “poor friends outreach program” (Brown & Gittelsohn, 1995).

Monica was sitting with her friends at Central Perk at the end of the episode when she received a page from her boss. Monica called her boss back and found out that she had been fired from her new job. Her boss accused Monica of stealing the steaks from the restaurant. She claimed they were a gift from a meat vendor. As Monica hung up the phone, a waitress handed Monica a check for coffee; Joey quickly offered to pay for it but turned to Chandler for cash because he didn’t have any. This episode realistically described what six young “twenty-somethings” (Sandell, 1998, p. 141) might encounter on a daily basis concerning finances and living paycheck to paycheck. The episode centered on a realistic plotline, but because it was a

comedy, the story attempted to gain more laughs from the audience than worry about the characters' well-being. Fiscal difficulty was never revisited in the series to the degree it was in "Five Steaks and an Eggplant." The characters occasionally borrowed money from each other or complained about not being able to afford overpriced items such as fancy clothes, but it was for comedy purposes (see Abrams & Bright, 2000; Abrams & Schlamme, 1996; Bucker, Jones, Carlock, & Bright, 2001; Jones, Buckner, & Lembeck, 1996; Junge & Burrows, 1996; Kunerth & Halvorson, 2003; Reich, Cohen, & Halvorson, 1999; Silveri, Goldberg-Meehan, & Jensen, 1997).

Rachel

In season 3, Rachel quit Central Perk without another job lined up in hopes of pursuing a career in fashion (Curtis, Malins, & Hughes, 1996). By the end of the episode, Rachel secured a position in the fashion business. During the series, she worked for buyers such as Bloomingdale's and Ralph Lauren. Rachel appeared financially secure after the first few seasons. She also seemed to have enough money to support the birth of daughter Emma in season 8. By the end of the series, Rachel was an executive at Ralph Lauren, a company who fought for her to stay at her job when Louis Vuitton offered her a position in Paris in season 10. Rachel's actions throughout the series supported Freeman's (1992) concept of self-reliance. Rachel realized that it was no longer possible to depend on her family to pay her bills in season 1; she quickly learned the value of independence through working. Although when Rachel decided to make career moves she miraculously secured another job quickly, she suffered pain and consequence worrying about financial security in the process.

Monica

Monica, like Rachel, also attended college. After the “Five Steaks and an Eggplant” incident (Brown & Gittelsohn, 1995), Monica remained unemployed for several episodes. She borrowed money from both Ross and Phoebe, but for only comical purposes. Both Ross and Phoebe mocked Monica for being unemployed. Monica soon thereafter secured a waitress/chef job at the end of season 2 at a 1950s diner where she had to wear roller skates, poodle skirt, a blonde curly wig, and flame-retardant breast inserts (Jones, Bucker, & Lembeck, 1996). She claimed having “paid her dues” through the diner job—supporting Freeman’s (1992) notion of personal sacrifice—until a wealthy customer offered her a head chef job at his new classy restaurant (Brown & Lembeck, 1997). That job fell through and Monica and Phoebe started a catering business (Silveri, Goldberg-Meehan, & Jensen, 1997). The catering business did not last long because Monica was hired as head chef of Alessandro’s, an Italian restaurant, in season 4 (Reich, Cohen, & Bonerz, 1997). Monica worked at Alessandro’s until season 9. She left Alessandro’s for a better job at Javu, a sophisticated, small bistro in New York City (Buckner, Jones, & Christiansen, 2002).

Chandler

Throughout most of the series, Chandler complained about hating his job as a data processor for a large multinational corporation. He and Ross were college roommates, but Chandler’s major was unknown. Chandler often missed work to goof around or hang out with the guys, claiming his job was unimportant to himself and the company. In season 9, Chandler quit his job as data processor because he wanted to pursue a career he loved (Abrams & Bright, 2002). Chandler did not think through his decision before he quit, and had to adjust living off of Monica’s income. The Bing’s checkbook quickly diminished and they needed to borrow money to pay bills (Kunerth & Halvorson, 2003). They sought out Joey, who Chandler had financially

supported in previous years, for a small loan. Chandler later pursued an advertising internship toward the end of the season. Chandler soon received a position as a junior copyrighter in advertising, which lasted for the rest of the series (Bilsing-Graham, Plummer, Buckner, Jones, & Halvorson, 2003).

Joey

Joey was a struggling actor. While the staples of his character can be seen as the stereotypical Italian characteristics of blue-color workers the last chapter explored (see pp. 121-122), Joey's social class was often measured by his intelligence as the ensemble often ridiculed his aptitude. Joey did not go to college but was proud of his sister who went to college "for both years" (Bucker, Jones, Carlock, & Bright, 2001). Ross mocked Joey's intellect when the group took part in "Chandler's States Game" in season 7; the goal of the game was to list all 50 states in a matter of minutes (Lin & Bright, 2000). When Ross thought he successfully listed all 50 states, he turned to his friends and arrogantly commented, "You know, I hate to lecture you guys, but it's kinda disgraceful, that a group of well-educated adults, *and Joey*, can't name all the states."

Joey, like Monica, paid his dues through personal sacrifice (Freeman, 1992). He performed in corny infomercials, posed in a poster for syphilis, worked as an elf for a shopping mall Santa, and even donated sperm at a local sperm bank (see pp. 121-122). Joey was most proud of his recurring roles on *Days of Our Lives* as a neurosurgeon. When Joey was on the show, he said he made enough money to survive. Throughout the series, Joey also landed leading roles in motion pictures and also worked his way to the top as a featured guest star contestant on *Pyramid* (Kauffman, Crane, & Bright, 2004b).

Ross

Ross Geller, a Ph.D. in paleontology, had two jobs throughout the series. His first career as a paleontologist at the Museum of Natural History lasted through season 5. Ross was placed on temporary leave in the middle of the season after his temper got out of control during a shouting incident with his boss (Reich, Cohen, & Halvorson, 1998). He was eventually fired and soon hired as a professor at New York University. Ross earned tenure at NYU 5 years later in season 10 (Reilly, Carlock, & Halvorson, 2004). Ross appeared the most fiscally secure character in the series and he was usually conservative with his finances. Sandell (1998) described Ross as "the only one who can live alone" (p. 145). In season 9, the ensemble purchased several lottery tickets in hopes of winning a big payout (Bilsing-Graham, Plummer, Buckner, Jones, & Halvorson, 2003). When Ross was asked what he would do with his cut of the big winnings, he said, "I don't know, probably just invest it." Ross appeared to do well for himself considering he supported two children—Ben and Emma—and lived alone in a roomy apartment across the street from Monica.

Phoebe

Phoebe, on the other hand, faced financial difficulty throughout most of the series, but always seemed to somehow get by. She was a self-employed masseuse who refused to allow herself to work for large corporate massage chains. Phoebe was also proud of her music, but turned down a record contract in season 2 because she did not want a label to control her musical "sound" (Chase & Lembeck, 1996). Her income, therefore, frequently fluctuated as she lived off profits from an inconsistent massage clientele. Phoebe resisted dominant ideologies in society by refusing to earn more money over personal values. Phoebe worked several side jobs to earn extra cash throughout the series to compensate, including a job as an extra on *Days of Our Lives* with Joey in season 5 (Chase & Bright, 1999). In season 9 however, Rachel found Phoebe working at

a corporate massage chain (Carlock, Silveri, & Halvorson, 2003). Phoebe, who was embarrassed because she betrayed her principles, told Rachel that she had to “sell out” for the cash. Phoebe began to conform to hegemonic ways.

Phoebe referenced being poor and living on the streets growing up because her mother committed suicide when she was a teenager. In season 9, Phoebe admitted to mugging people as a teen after she and Ross were held up in an alley and she recognized the mugger (Tibbals & Halvorson, 2003). Later in the episode, Phoebe incidentally realized she personally mugged Ross several years previous, and had to cope with coming to terms with how her life has changed since her mugging days. Phoebe had climbed the social mobility ladder.

Phoebe married Mike Hannigan, a former attorney turned piano player, in season 10 (Carlock, Borkow, & Bright, 2004). When Phoebe met Mike’s parents, who lived on the wealthy east side of New York City, she was amazed by their large home equipped with a butler and 13 bathrooms (Carlock & Halvorson, 2002). Phoebe exclaimed, “Oh my God, you’re rich!” Mike replied, “No, my parents are rich.” Phoebe quickly responded “Yeah, they gotta die someday.” Phoebe, unlike the other five characters, had witnessed the most evident social class shift in the series. She never finished high school, went to college, nor kept a steady job in the first half of the series, but by season 10 she found a good job and fiscal security in a husband. Phoebe realized she wanted to have a fancy traditional wedding and found a “normal” life in a husband and money.

The previous pages described the six characters occupations. At the beginning of the series, a few characters—Rachel, Phoebe, and Joey—had to struggle to make it paycheck to paycheck while others—Monica, Chandler, and Ross—were more financially secure. As the series progressed however, each character found better opportunities to professionally succeed

and strive for upward mobility. Their salaries fluctuated throughout the 10 seasons, depicting a shift in disposable income.

Analysis of Characters' Salaries

In order to better gauge earning salaries of each character, this research compared the *U.S. Department of Labor Occupational Outlook Handbook* wage indexes from 1994 and 2004 for each character's occupations (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1996, 2004). These indexes of various occupations describe working conditions, required qualifications, and average earnings of each profession. *Friends* began in 1994 and ended in 2004; this research used comparisons from both years in order to estimate annual salaries of each character. The results enabled the researcher to further determine social mobility of the characters. The figures are listed in Table 3 in estimated hourly wage and full-time amounts. The estimated salary figures were calculated using the average number of hours constituting a year's worth of work in America in 1994 and 2004. The average number of full-time hours worked in America during the series' first season was 1827 hours; in 2004, this number was 1864 hours (Economic Policy Institute, 2007). It is important to note that every character was not employed for every episode of the series. It is not known if each character had full-time positions, so these numbers only provide an estimate of what each character grossed in the years examined. A few characters, Ross, Rachel, and Chandler, changed occupations from season 1 to season 10, so these changes are noted as well. The findings helped evaluate each character's social class and mobility based on personal economic gain during the series' 10-year-run.

These occupational findings helped determine the *Friends'* social class economic status based on Rohmann's (1999) definition: "social divisions and inequalities based on occupation, economic standing, heredity, or other distinctions" (p. 63). Rachel's character, even though she

originated from a wealthy Long Island family, started from rock bottom at the beginning of the series. Rachel ended up on Monica's doorstep with no money and no place to live. Even though Rachel alluded to going to college, she evolved from a waitress to fashion executive by the end of the series. Rachel knew she wanted to work in fashion, and committed herself to hard work to achieve her goals. If examining the occupational and economic facets of the social class definition this research uses, she achieved upward mobility. Her average salary increased by $29,280 as she left behind blue-collar service work and concluded the series as a fashion executive. Hereditary distinctions of Rachel were examined in the last chapter regarding racial stereotypes of Jewish characters (see p. 129). Researchers classified Rachel as a Jewish character. The once wealthy Jewish American Princess still lived a fashionable lifestyle throughout the series. Once Rachel overcame financial issues at the beginning of the series, she was known for impulsively shopping, buying new clothes, shoes, and other expensive things, such as furniture from Pottery Barn. Aside from her lavish purchases, Rachel appeared to be financially stable through the majority of the series and did not worry about having enough money to survive.

Chandler, unlike Rachel, had an established career at the beginning of the series. As a child, his family had a pool, which is societal marker of privilege, so his family was presumably financially stable. During the series, his father headlined a show in Las Vegas and his mother was a successful writer. Chandler, a college graduate, was conservative with his money and was able to afford to buy new furniture for his and Joey's apartment in season 4 after they were robbed (Chase & Bright, 1997). He also admitted to having a large savings account in season 7 when he and Monica were planning their wedding. He paid for the wedding himself. Even though he earned approximately $56,890 a year working a data processing job he never liked,

Chandler quit the company in season 9 to pursue a career in advertising. He accepted a junior copywriter position that he loved. This career change, however, lowered his financial mobility by -$12,540 in season 10. One could argue that Chandler lowered his economic social mobility, but this research supports that he increased his economic mobility by marrying Monica and living off of two incomes. At the conclusion of the series, he and Monica averaged a total of $71,844 per year.

Joey had to work hard to make it to the top of the acting industry, and he swallowed his pride several times to play roles in off-beat productions. Even though he secured a recurring role on *Days of Our Lives*, Joey admitted keeping his money taped behind the toilet tank and not in a bank. This assertion was presumed to be a source of comedy to show a relationship between class and Joey's dim-witted character. Joey's nuclear family was also featured in a few episodes. His father was a plumber and his mother's occupation was unknown; one of his sisters admitted to killing her husband. Another sister was deemed the most successful Tribbiani, because she went to college for "both years," as previously mentioned (Bucker, Jones, Carlock, & Bright, 2001). The depiction of Joey's family supported the working-class Italian stereotype of Rohmann's (1999) social class definition. Even though Joey didn't start making respectable money until the end of the series, he valued the pride of being able to support himself for the first time in his life. Joey's acting career evolved from off-Broadway plays and commercials to television and film roles. His average salary increased to approximately $42,212 over the course of the series. By season 10, Joey was living independently, supporting himself, and overcoming Italian working-class stereotypes, therefore achieving upward mobility. Even though Joey was selected to be on a game show, his Italian fesso characteristics (see pp. 119-122) brought him little success on *Pyramid* because he answered several of the questions incorrectly. His answers

were depicted as humorous. If Joey would have answered the questions right and won, it would have been abnormal for his character. Even though Joey ended up with a successful career, his friends still looked at him as the same dim-witted character from season 1. Joey ended the series making money and being able to care for himself, but he still represented the Italian fesso character through his actions and lack of intelligence.

Monica and Ross' childhood was referenced on occasion throughout the series. Their parents lived in a large suburban home outside of New York City. Even though researchers have classified both Ross and Monica as Jewish children brought up in a wealthy family, they strived to become independent adults and not turn to their parents for money. Although Ross never encountered financial troubles, Monica, however, found herself in fiscal difficulty a few times throughout the series. Although her Long Island family was portrayed as wealthy, her parents did not lend her money or offered to pay for things as she had to learn, through sacrifice, that she could successfully profit on her own. She had good jobs when she was employed and concluded the series as head chef of a fancy restaurant. By the end of series, Monica had earned an average salary of $27,494, increasing $14,980 since season 1. Monica achieved upward mobility in the series.

Ross, on the other hand, was more conservative with his money than Monica. Ross was financially stable like his parents and achieved upward mobility by using his doctorate degree to earn a tenured position at New York University during the series. His average yearly income increased $37,213 from season 1 to season 10. This research concluded that Ross was the most upper social class character of the group. He was intellectual, articulate, and showed appreciation for sophisticated tastes, such as art and literature.

Phoebe, on the other hand, saw a considerable increase of social class mobility throughout the series. Phoebe never graduated from high school because she lived on the streets. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2000), Phoebe was part of 27.7% of people living in New York City without a high school diploma. Phoebe improved her life and enrolled in classes from the New School in season 5 (Reich, Cohen, & Halvorson, 1998). This research found that Phoebe's intellect increased throughout the series because she spent a considerable amount of time around characters like Ross, Chandler, Rachel, and Monica who were educated. Even though she retained the same occupation throughout the entire series as a masseuse, she climbed the economic ladder from working as an independent contractor to being employed at a large massage chain in season 10. This corporate success averaged Phoebe an increase of only $2,291 of yearly earnings from season 1 to season 10, but she was better able to support herself with better wages, health insurance, and retirement benefits. Phoebe married Mike Hannigan, who came from a wealthy New York family unlike her own, in season 10 as well, increasing her household income.

Statistics of Social Class in New York City and Beyond

The U.S. Census Bureau (2000) reported that the average number of people living in a household in 2000 was 2.59. In 1994, the median income of American households was $32,264; in New York State this number was $31,899 (U.S. Department of Commerce, 1996). The average income of the *Friends* characters in the first season combined was only $25,086. This figure was $6,813 less than the median New York figure. If these salary figures were divided to reflect households, Monica and Rachel (roommates) earned a combined $24,264 and Chandler and Joey (roommates) grossed a combined $72,014. Ross lived alone in the first season and Phoebe lived with her grandmother. Ross earned a below average $27,900 and Phoebe grossed

only $26,340. How could these individuals survive living in Manhattan with elaborate, roomy apartments and a below average income? Monica and Rachel's 1994 income combined failed to still meet the New York State average figure. Chandler was the only character bringing home a paycheck that was above the national and state average.

The 2005 U.S. Census Bureau Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance Coverage Report stated that the median income of White households in 2004 was $48,218 (DeNavas-Walt, Proctor, & Lee, 2006). The median income of homeowners aged 25 to 34 years old in 2004 was $46,985. The average income of homeowners living in the Northeast portion of the United States—including New York State—was $49,462. The average income of the *Friends'* characters in 2004 was $43,992, according to the *U.S. Department of Labor Occupational Outlook Handbook* (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2004), increasing $18,906 over 10 years. Joey witnessed the most significant financial gain, increasing his average yearly salary an estimated $42,212. The characters, nonetheless, still failed to meet the average salary figures in the United States and in New York State, yet they all managed comfortable lifestyles. According to the New York City Department of City Planning (2000), the average cost for rent in the Manhattan census tract where the characters lived was $796 a month; that was $9,552 a year. The characters rarely mentioned the use of saving money for practical purposes or living off of a budget. The characters often referenced lavish shopping trips and dined at fancy restaurants.

The percentage of individuals below poverty in 1999, according to the 2000 U.S. Census was 21.2%; the average income of an individual in poverty in 2004 was $9,645 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000, 2006). In 1994, the U.S. Department of Commerce (1996) indicated that 38.1 million people were living in poverty across the United States (14.5%). In New York State alone, the percentage of individuals living in poverty was 17%. Even though the characters' salaries did

not reflect poverty levels by the U.S. government, the group still lived in metropolitan New York City with people who did live in poverty and on the streets. Chidester (2005) described New York City as "perhaps the most racially diverse community in the nation" (p. 15). The majority of episodes in this analysis showed the characters walking the streets of New York City outside their apartments or Central Perk surrounded by clean-cut, White, outwardly middle and upper-class people. Rarely were poor and homeless people shown throughout the series unless the storyline revolved around poverty. Two episodes in particular provided speaking parts for the poor (Astrof, Sikowitz, & Burrows, 1994b; Tibbals & Halvorson, 2003). As Steeves (2005) concluded, the New York City the characters lived in was "essentially irrelevant to the identities of the characters and the nature of the action…the plot seem[ed] contrived and the city [wa]s at most a backdrop, not nearly a character in itself" (p. 261). Even Phoebe, a former character living in poverty as a teen, kept rare contact with her friends from the street (Astrof, Sikowitz, & Burrows, 1994b; Tibbals & Halvorson, 2003). In episodes where Phoebe interacted with poor people, her interactions showed her in a superior upper-class lifestyle interacting with old friends for comedy. In the first season, Phoebe gave a poor friend free money she received from her bank because she thought it was tainted (Astrof, Sikowitz, & Burrows, 1994b). In season 9, Phoebe encountered a former poor friend on the street when she and Ross were held up during a mugging incident (Tibbals & Halvorson, 2003). Phoebe recognized the man and they shared a laugh.

Discussion and Conclusion

Using inferior class status representations of individuals as the target of comedy in situation comedies only continues to perpetuate dominant ideologies established in mass culture and society. Minorities, including lower-class status individuals, have historically been targets of

ridicule because such stereotyping is “useful for their familiarity” (Butsch, 2005, p. 112); therefore, the stereotypical depictions easily get laughs. Television producers continue to write given stereotypical characteristics for characters because audiences will already know how to understand a character based previous knowledge of “stock images” such as “the country bumpkin” and the “dizzy blonde” (p. 112) from other programs. Steeves (2005) agreed, explaining that situation comedies thrive on “cheap illusions” (p. 267). If viewers quickly understand a racial or social class reference, they will laugh. If people laugh, then they are “part of the ‘community’” (p. 267) of individuals that laugh at the same images and believe the same cheapened dominant representations in society seen on screen. “The foolishness in sitcoms is almost always attached to a character’s lower status, by representing well-known stereotypes of this status group” (Butsch, 2005, p. 112). Dominant ideology, therefore, “differentiates and separates groups into dominant/subordinate and superior/inferior, producing hierarchies and rankings that serve the interests of ruling powers and elites” (Kellner, 2003, p. 61). Viewers exposed to these social class stereotypes episode after episode might eventually compare fictional stereotypes of characters to real people in real life, similar to racial representations this dissertation explored in chapter 4.

Several findings from this chapter supported Butsch (2005) and Steeves’ (2005) conclusions. It would be difficult to picture Chandler or Ross with Joey’s persona. Chandler and Ross, educated men, were known for being smart and savvy. Joey, on the other hand, only had a high school diploma. Joey’s stereotypical Italian American fesso character helped audiences quickly identify and connect Joey with past-televised representations of dim Italian characters (see pp. 119-122). When Phoebe ran into her poor friends from the past, it produced laughs. The mugger in season 9 was a White man dressed in a dirty trench coat and had a deep intimidating

voice (Tibbals & Halvorson, 2003). When Phoebe recognized the mugger, he came out of character, hugged Phoebe, and they caught up on life. Viewers were able to recognize the illusion of the mugger's deep voice and trench coat to quickly conclude that the man was a poor individual looking for money. Even Rachel's Jewish American Princess persona would be difficult to envision for Phoebe, because Phoebe knew what life was like without money. Phoebe evolved from an underprivileged homeless teen to an adult that achieved upward mobility. Rachel, on the other hand, was born into a wealthy family, lost mobility when she decided to live independently, and achieved professional success through sacrifice and hard work by the end of the series. She achieved the American dream.

Television continues to reproduce the dominant ideology that America is a place of fiscal opportunity and anyone can reach his or her goals through work and determination (Press, 1991). Situation comedies continue to produce many "shared representations" (Livingstone, 1999, p. 96) of race and class that are contained by the "safe confines of a joke" (Taylor, 1989, p. 27). This chapter defined social class as "social divisions and inequalities based on occupation, economic standing, heredity, or other distinctions" (Rohmann, 1999, p. 63). This research found that the six characters achieved upward mobility in the series.

Using television programs such as *Friends* to disseminate stereotypes of dominant social classes communicates to the television community that a group of six young adults can attain social mobility though sacrifice and autonomy, *but* in little due time. Just as Busch (2005) and Steeves (2005) suggested that television forgets the working-class, the *Friends* characters existed through inflated notions of upper-class lifestyles. Although all six characters achieved economic upward mobility throughout the series, they made less than average earnings compared to U.S. income figures and portrayed a fruitful lifestyle. The characters appeared wealthier than they

were according to income statistics, which future research could further explore. The characters lived in the heart of Manhattan, a character rarely seen in its truest form; the homeless were absent, the people were White, and the characters resided in spacious apartments with affordable rent. As Livingstone (1999) concluded, mass media are knowledge producers that create a "mediated worldliness" (p. 97). Viewers see alternative ways of living through these six characters; unfamiliar representations of New York City livelihood are made familiar. "We know about places and times we have not personally visited, and when we do visit them it is from within that knowledge context" (p. 97) that audiences can relate to, thanks to television.

Situation comedies have historically depicted lower-status cultures as less important than higher-status groups (Butsch, 2005). *Friends* illustrated a group of people starting out with little money and ending the series with the illusion of turning a profit. At this point, this dissertation has chronicled and analyzed dominant ideologies portrayed on sitcoms and in the series. The current chapter provided a brief history of social-class depictions in sitcoms and analyzed the *Friends'* efforts to achieve upward mobility. This dissertation has shown how dominant ideologies function from society to the television screen and back to the audience. Sitcom programming is one way that the hegemony of the ruling class ideologies are maintained, as television is a producer of cultural images to viewers. The following chapter will conclude this dissertation, revisiting the themes from the previous five chapters and connecting these findings to their relationships within greater society.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

This dissertation has examined representations of friendship, gender, race, and social class in the award-winning and commercially successful television situation comedy *Friends* (Bright, Kauffman, & Crane, 1994; McClelland, 2004). The first chapter introduced the series and described the importance of studying television content. The chapter also provided an overview of the theoretical framework—dominant ideology and social penetration—and methodologies—textual analysis and content analysis—used in the previous chapters. The introductory chapter provided the groundwork, justification, and organization for the current research.

Chapter 2 analyzed alternative family structures and friendship rituals in the series. The chapter offered a textual analysis of the entire series and demonstrated the disregard for blood ties and the construction of alternative families within the group of friends. The *Friends* narrative contained the idea that biological families are no longer prevalent or important to the characters' lives. The main themes that this chapter found in the series—social support, date disapproval, holiday commemoration, and threat of other friendships—communicated that these six people formed their own kind of family. The characters were each other's daily support systems. Rarely did one of the characters discuss having friends outside of the group. When a character did mention other friends or was dating someone outside the ensemble, the others became jealous and felt a threat of dismantlement to the group. The characters did not want to be alone. The ensemble also needed to grant consent for a character to date outside of the group, replacing the approval of a stereotypical biological parent. Absent were biological family ties in order to share holidays, birthdays, and celebrate other occasions with one another. The ensemble created an

exclusive family among the six of them, demonstrating that the characters were indeed more than just friends. They were family.

Chapter 2 also adapted Bruess and Pearson's (1997) friendship ritual types in four seasons of *Friends* to locate if these rituals existed and increased over time. Altman and Taylor's (1973) social penetration theory was used in this dissertation to ground the research in terms of friendship development and maintenance among the *Friends* ensemble and their relationships with one another. Social penetration rests on the idea that as relationships progress, they become more intimate. It is the practice where communication shifts from non-intimate causal stages to more personal levels. Using social penetration, the characters demonstrated that in order to maintain their friendships, they had to display a number of everyday communicative activities such as hanging out, sharing personal information, listening to each other, venting problems, frequenting the same places, and doing favors for one another (see Figure 2 for description of rituals, p. 49).

The rituals suggested how the character's friendship practices reflected real world friendships. This research found that the rituals—time-honored/traditional, social-fellowship/casual, communication, share/vent/support, task/favors/gifts, and friendship with romance—were distributed equally among the characters. All of the characters performed all of the friendship rituals roughly an equal number of times in all 35 episodes examined. The males—Joey, Chandler, and Ross—displayed 1808 rituals while the females—Rachel, Monica, and Phoebe—exhibited 1752 rituals (see Table 2). Each of the characters aged 10 years during the 10-year-run of the series, and there was no variation in the amount of friendship maintenance actions during that time. The characters started out with a high level of friendship in season 1 and maintained that same level of friendship throughout season 10 using the ritual actions defined in

the chapter (see Table 1). The maintenance of rituals over 10 years indicated that the characters' friendships did not change; this communicated a consistent ideology to viewers of what actions dictated and preserved their relationships. By performing friendship rituals, the characters learned about each other and maintained their friendships. This research found that characters spent the most time at Monica's apartment (45%), and the coffee house, Central Perk (22%). Monica's apartment, as Sandell (1998) suggested, was the "affective center and shared familial space of the group" (p. 144). Viewers learned about the characters' lives as the group often discussed their problems or disclosed personal information about themselves in these two spaces.

Chapter 3 discussed the connections between gender and comedy, gender and friendship, compared and contrasted masculine and feminine characterizations, and outlined gender specific representations on television. This chapter provided results of a textual analysis of gender portrayals in *Friends* and connected those findings to gender and television research. The men in *Friends* performed conventional representations of hegemonic masculinity, yet displayed modes of sensitivity by continuously showing signs of male bonding while performing group activities to maintain their friendships (Gauntlett, 2002). The three women were "clearly feminine" (p. 59) with their wit, intelligence and non-domestic homemaker-type characteristics. Results showed that the male characters often performed feminine traits and the women characters often displayed masculine traits. Men performing feminine traits and women performing masculine traits were consistently used as the basis of humor during the 10 years *Friends* aired.

The characters' narratives demonstrated several conclusions about their growth and change throughout the series concerning marriage and their gender practices. Attallah (2003) suggested sexual discourse in sitcoms is represented by dominant ideologies in the "most highly domesticated form" (p. 111). The main characters in sitcoms are either married, divorced, or

aspire to be married. This research found that at the beginning of the *Friends* series, all of the characters were single. Throughout the series, however, the characters frequently discussed their desires to marry and have children.

In the pilot, Ross was trying to move on with his life after his first divorce. For the next 10 years, Ross was involved with several women, but felt that he and Rachel were supposed to be together. Rachel began the series fleeing her wedding and spent the next 10 seasons trying to find the perfect man. She and Ross dated on and off throughout the entire series; this recurrent love affair provided the motivation for storylines. Ross and Rachel were an important couple on the series. This motivation for them to be together provided maintenance of the hegemonic ideology that idealizes coupling. In season 8, Rachel gave birth to Ross' baby but they agreed the baby was not a reason to start dating again. They had a child and fulfilled the hegemonic ideology that family creates happiness, but their resistance to coupling continued to drive the plot for the final two seasons. The rest of the characters expressed their concerns that Ross and Rachel were not together; they, too, supported the hegemonic ideology of coupling. Ross and Rachel got back together in the series finale; the hegemonic ideology of marriage was confirmed at the end of the series for Ross and Rachel.

Monica was obsessed with getting married and being a mother. When she contemplated having a baby through artificial insemination, her friends condemned her reasoning as they saw it as not acceptable in society (Calhoun & Bright, 1996). They did not criticize Monica's wants to be a mother, but her desire to have a child without a father. This supported the dominant hegemonic ideal the series created of having a nuclear family. Even though the characters themselves were an alternative family, they also believed that marriage and family resulted in happiness. They did not agree with Monica's resistance to coupling in order to have a child.

Monica decided at the end of the episode to not go through with the procedure. She started dating Chandler soon thereafter.

When Chandler proposed to Monica at the end of season 6, Monica did not waste a minute planning the wedding. In season 7, she showed her friends the "Wedding Book," a huge binder filled with pictures of flowers, dresses, menus, and other wedding-related items she had collected since the fourth grade (Reich, Cohen, & Lembeck, 2000). This suggested that Monica had desired to be married for nearly 20 years, supporting the dominant ideology that in order to be happy, a woman should be married. Creating the "Wedding Book" at such a young age confirmed that Monica had lived her life with the goal in mind to be married.

Chandler was often portrayed as insecure, but his love for Monica in the series did not compare to any other relationship he ever had. Chandler's non-masculine traits described in chapter 5 often overshadowed his desire to be a good husband, provider, and father. Even though Chandler disappeared the night before his wedding, he realized that being with Monica was what he has always wanted. In his wedding vows he said, "Monica, I thought this was going to be the most difficult thing I ever had to do. But when I saw you walking down that aisle I realized how simple it was. I love you. Any surprises that come our way it's okay, because I will always love you. You are the person I was meant to spend the rest of my life with" (Malins, Crane, Kauffman, & Bright, 2001).

Phoebe and Joey were less concerned with marriage and having a family than were the other four characters. Their views about domestic life were often portrayed with jokes, resisting hegemonic ideology and lightening their resistance to marriage and family. Throughout most of the series, Joey preferred to sleep with as many women he could without calling them back. Phoebe enjoyed living romance to romance. By the end of the series, both of their views

changed. Joey fell in love with Rachel and realized he wanted to settle down. Phoebe married in season 10.

> Phoebe: “Can I see someday being married to Mike? Sure! Yeah. Ya know, I can picture myself walking down the aisle in a wedding dress that highlights my breasts in an obvious yet classy way. But do I want that house in Connecticut, you know, near the good schools where Mike and I can send little Sophie and Mike Junior? Oh my God I do!”
>
> Ross: “Phoebe, I had no idea you were so conventional.”
>
> Phoebe: “I know! I guess I am! Oh my God! Load up the Volvo I want to be a soccer mom!” (Kunerth & Halvorson, 2003)

Even Phoebe, the character who displayed the most anti-hegemonic feelings about marriage, ended the series confirming to the dominant ideology. By the end of the series, Monica and Chandler got married and adopted twins. Ross and Rachel were a couple. Even though Ross was married three times, the marriages did not work. His marriages to Emily in season 4 and to Rachel in season 5 appeared forced in order to conform to the dominant ideology of success and happiness. Joey did not have a partner at the end of the series, but realized that he could not go all his life sleeping with women and never returning their calls. He started to live within the dominant views that he, too, could settle down with one woman and have a family of his own. For the first time, viewers saw both Phoebe and Joey in domesticated settings. The other characters could finally relate to both of them in dominant hegemonic ways. Monica was excited to talk to Phoebe about planning her wedding and Joey confided in the other characters about being in love with a woman for the first time in his life (Kunerth & Bright, 2003; McCarthy & Weiss, 2002).

Chapter 4 examined stereotypes of Whiteness and how the *Friends* failed to acknowledge their own racial and ethnic identities. The chapter focused on television as a form of cultural production and reproduction and used the series to analyze cultural messages regarding racial representations on screen. It provided background information about historical race portrayals in television programs, a textual analysis of race in the series, followed by a comparison of televised and real world statistics of racial demographics in New York City where the *Friends* characters lived. Racial themes found in the analysis included Black representations of guest characters, ethnic stereotyping, Italian portrayals, and counter representations of Judaism through the ensemble.

Chapter 4 found that racial and ethnic portrayals were present but not appropriately depicted. There were many instances when the characters had interactions with Black superiors at their jobs. The majority of the ensemble encountered a Black boss at least once throughout the series. These bosses, however, had few lines and were not important to the main storyline. Black characters in power positions allowed the main characters to feed off their lines for comedy.

The characters' religions and ethnicities were not taken seriously throughout the series. Hanukkah was not mentioned unless it was convenient to a character. For example, Monica's wedding did not include any Jewish elements, nor did she discuss raising an interfaith child with Chandler (Rockler, 2006). Joey's character was depicted with several Italian fesso stereotypes (Cavallero, 2004). The findings in this dissertation found that the extent of Monica and Ross' religion and Joey's fesso characteristics confirmed but additionally contributed to Rockler and Cavallero's descriptions. Ross and Monica always celebrated Christmas with their other friends. For a character like Monica's to disregard her religious Jewish values questioned the identity of the character, a characteristic this research labeled as "identity of convenience" (see pp. 126-

130). Monica was only Jewish when it made her stand out in the crowd and be proudly different than the others. Monica decorated several Christmas trees in her apartment. She also displayed the Star of David hanging from her ceiling from time to time, but there was never a clear celebration of Judaism during the series or by the character.

The group often found themselves taking time to make sure Joey understood what was going on in the world around him. They corrected his wrong assumptions about things or clued him in on common sense facts. Joey had several working-class jobs. Most of these jobs created a source of comedy for the series as they were off-beat positions and Joey often performed them poorly. It was in part through this series of jobs that Joey was presented as unsuccessful, not wealthy, and of Italian descent. The narrative demonstrated through Joey what was valued by the other characters. The group continuously corrected Joey's actions and judged his choice of work because they wanted to contain him within the dominant ideology.

In comparison with the U.S. Census Bureau statistics, there were races other than White present in New York City and in Manhattan, where the characters lived (New York City Department of City Planning, 2000; U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). The majority of these racial others were Black and Asian. The show, therefore, did not appropriately reflect society where the characters lived. Race was present, but it was not important. White was the race most reported in New York City (45.8%), but there were still rare instances of racial others seen in the show.

The chapter also analyzed the rejection of romantic relationships that involved a main character dating a non-White individual, supporting the notion that the characters served as one another's alternative families for date approval described in chapter 3. The main characters of the series were good friends who shared the same social circle, each other. Most of these characters, however, did not make their race visible through their attitudes and actions; they were oblivious

to their racial and ethnic identities and chose not to include racial others into their group. This research suggests that the ensemble exhibited behaviors Essed (1991) described as "everyday racism" (p. 3). Through a lens of everyday racism, Whites suppose that everyone else in society has the same beliefs they do because White people by no means have an understanding of life outside from the dominant ideology. In this case, the characters rarely experienced a lived world outside of their confined spaces among one another and therefore, did not accept racial others into their "closed circle" (Chidester, 2005, p. 18) of racial representation.

Mills (2005) suggested that comedy is "commonly examined, in its social context, through its relationship to social power, and stereotyping more generally has connections to power too" (p. 103). Power, therefore, is exercised using comedy in sitcoms. Chapter 5 provided a brief history of social class depictions in situation comedies and analyzed the *Friends'* efforts to achieve upward mobility. The chapter defined current social class characteristics in America, described historical connections between humor and social class, provided an overview of social class status in American sitcoms, and presented the results of a textual analysis of social class representations on *Friends*. Using Rohmann's (1999) definition of social class, all six characters achieved economic upward mobility throughout the series. Rohmann defined social class as "social divisions and inequalities based on occupation, economic standing, heredity, or other distinctions" (p. 63). Even though the characters earned less than average earnings compared to U.S. income figures, they portrayed a fruitful lifestyle. The characters appeared wealthier than they were according to income statistics. The characters lived in a New York City where the homeless were absent, the people were White, and the characters resided in spacious apartments with apparent affordable rent.

Connecting *Friends* to Alternative Families, Gender, Race, and Class

While chapters 2, 3, 4, and 5 comprised of four separate elements of this dissertation, they all intertwined to indicate a relationship between dominant ideologies in society and how those ideologies were perpetuated in *Friends*. Race intersected with social class; gender roles were performed based on the family structures presented in a given setting; social class standing demonstrated a relationship to gender. One facet was dependent upon another.

The title theme lyrics, "I'll be there for you," symbolized the bond the ensemble shared for 236 episodes over 10 years. "[T]he primary focus of the show is the relationships between these men and women who are not only each other's best friends but also each other's family" (Sandell, 1998, p. 145). The ensemble selected and accepted family and friends based on their own practices of Whiteness. Though their actions, the characters communicated, "Whites are people whereas other colors are something else" (Dyer, 1997, p. 2). This research found several types of actions were repeatedly accompanied by the laugh track. If guest characters were not like the main characters based on race or ethnicity, they were ridiculed. At the same time, if guest characters of other races were dating a main character, they were also rejected from the group because they did not fit into the ensemble's alternative family.

Situation comedies "mobilize a discourse on class" (Attallah, 2003, p. 110) and thus influence the creation and maintenance of friendships. "The characteristic social and economic conditions of middle-class life also shape the form that middle-class sociability and friendship takes" (Allan, 1989, p. 136). Middle class individuals have more access to mobility than working-class individuals (Allan, 1989). Although Monica and Joey's apartments were across the hall from one another and Ross and Phoebe lived elsewhere in New York City, the characters never had trouble paying for public transportation or walking to visit their friends. The characters lived in fashionable spaces and spent money on lavish purchases. According to the New York

City Department of City Planning (2000), the average cost for rent in the Manhattan census tract where the characters lived was $796 a month; that was $9,552 a year. The characters failed to meet the average salary figures in the United States and in New York State, yet they all managed comfortable lifestyles. The characters appeared wealthier than they were. This research concluded that this portrayal of upward mobility helped shape the notion of alternative family within the ensemble. In order to be accepted in the group, a character had to have a life fiscally independent of their own. If a character was short on money, they were made fun of by the other characters.

Friends and familial relationships interconnected with one another through the characters' middle-class lifestyles in the series. Chapter 2 concluded that the six friends were indeed an alternative family structure. Allan (1989) concluded that middle-class friends are often acquainted with one another's families instead of inhabiting a distinct sphere. In the case of this series, Monica was introduced to Chandler because he was Ross' college roommate. Ross and Chandler knew Rachel through Monica. Phoebe lived with Monica before Rachel moved in, and Joey knew the other characters because he was Chandler's roommate. All six characters formed close relationships with one another. All of the characters also knew one another's parents. For example, in season 8, Monica and Ross' parents celebrated their wedding anniversary with a formal party. All six characters were in attendance (Kunerth, Tibbals, & Halvorson, 2002).

The middle-class home also provides a space where the outside world is excluded and close friends and family are invited in. "[F]or many of the middle-class the transformation of a house into a home with an appropriate ambiance represents a personal and social statement of some significance" (Allan, 1989, p. 139). The home becomes an "expression of identity" (p. 139) as everyone invited in is relaxed and enjoys informal expression. As described in previous

paragraphs, Monica's apartment could be argued as a middle-class sphere in the series (Chidester, 2005; Sandell, 1998). All of the characters felt at ease in her place. It was a space where she was the hostess and could entertain her friends and family. When a character was looking for another person, he or she would usually check Monica's apartment or Central Perk, the coffee house. Central Perk was also a middle-class home for the characters. The orange couch and surrounding chairs provided enough room to seat the six characters. Rarely did any other Central Perk customers sit in their seats. If their seats were taken, the characters were clearly upset (Curtis, Malins, & Mancuso, 1996; Jones, Bucker, & Lembeck, 1996; Sandell, 1998). Central Perk not only housed a favorite ritualistic hangout for the characters, but also served as a middle-class sphere for New York City. Poor people were not invited in nor were guests of color rarely seen in the background (Sandell, 1998). If people of another race were in the coffee house, rarely did they have speaking parts. The characters were often seen performing friendship rituals both in Monica's apartment (45% of scenes of episodes coded) and in Central Perk (22% of scenes of episodes coded) as explored in chapter 2. These results showed that both of these homes away from home provided the characters a hospitable environment for the friends to dwell and actively participate in each other's daily lives, maintaining their relationships through the rituals and social penetration as discussed in chapter 2.

Attallah (2003) connected gender to the importance of studying television comedy. "All situation comedy, inasmuch as it is concerned with discursive hierarchies, is also concerned with sexuality…being one of the dominant models of manifestation of class difference" (p. 111). For example, when Wally Cleaver in *Leave it to Beaver* tried to find dates, his mother often scolded his attempts to find girls who were of lower social classes. Attallah discussed Fonzie's gender performances on *Happy Days*. Fonzie's "overt sexuality is also a clear indication of his class

origin" (p. 111). The Fonz, also known as Arthur Fonzarelli, used his sexual desires and strong, dominant masculine traits, such as making the jukebox work, to attract women. In a Christmas episode, the Cunninghams invited Fonzie over for the day. As they were singing carols, he commented on how he loved "middle-class families." The more the Fonz incorporated middle-class ideals into his lifestyle, the more his "sexual potency" (p. 111) weakened. Joey Tribbiani could be viewed as the modern-day Fonz. The more time Joey socialized with his friends, the more they humanized Joey through correcting his language and his outward sexuality, reminding him that it was not proper to constantly hit on women.

Connecting Friends to Friendship

Chapters 2 and 3 discussed gender portrayals on television and their relationship to friendships displayed on television. Chapter 2 found that the six characters in *Friends* created close family-like bonds with each other and maintained those relationships actively practicing friendship rituals. Each character was equally represented in the 35 episodes examined using content analysis. The characters used the friendship rituals discussed in chapter 2 to maintain their same and cross-gendered friendships in chapter 3. The characters did not single out a member of the same gender to discuss everyday trials and tribulations, but often tuned to every character for social support. The most often occurring rituals displayed in the series were social-fellowship casual rituals (93%), which were defined as enjoyable, non-planned activities or play actions such as jokes. Chapter 3 discussed the relationship between gender and friendship and found that the six characters performed gender roles in both similar and dissimilar ways compared to interpersonal gender literature. While the three men and three women characters performed gender in traditional manners, they often deviated from the norm to produce laughs.

As Wood (2007) explained, cross-gender friendships "pose unique challenges and offer special opportunities for growth" (p. 192). Men and women's roles in cross-gender friendships are different from those created with same-gendered friends. Each gender provides different advantages to friendships. Women reported that in cross-gender friendships, they had an advantage of reduced emotional attachment with male friends than with female counterparts. Men, on the other hand, valued the closer emotional attachment they found with women more than with male friends. While all characters in the series were seen interacting with both same and cross-gendered friends, the amount of emotional attachment appeared to be continuous between both genders. Both men and women in the series often cracked jokes or poked fun at their friends' problems, but always offered emotional support in the end.

Television and Dominant Ideology

According to Margaret Mead's account in Watson's (1998) *Defining Visions*, "TV more than any other medium gives models to the American people—models for life as it is or should be or can be lived" (p. 59). Television competes with the public versus private experience; images created and seen privately on screen by audiences contend with our everyday, real-world experiences and our understandings of those experiences (Press, 1991). This dissertation has described how dominant ideologies function from society to the television screen and back to the audience. Situation comedy programming is one way that the hegemony of ruling class ideologies is maintained, as television is a producer of cultural images to viewers. Television produces images that help us understand the world and the values and beliefs we practice in our public lives (Press, 1991).

According to Mills (2005), the situation comedy has been analyzed "for the way it reflects changes within society" (p. 8) as the "sitcom becomes not only representative of a

culture's identity and ideology, it also becomes one of the ways in which that culture defines and understands itself" (p. 9). "Situation comedy situates us" as the genre offers a "powerful model for private life in the age of broadcast culture" to audiences who choose to mold their everyday practices based on their favorite programs as seen on screen (Bathrick, 2006, p. 155). Situation comedies encourage audiences to laugh based on comedic situations that characters are faced with on a weekly basis and invite viewers to "fit in" with the characters' lives, creating demands for a "highly rationalized society" seen on screen (p. 155).

Television, therefore, functions as a "dominant media culture" in order to "maintain boundaries and to legitimate the rule of the hegemonic class, race, and gender forces" (Kellner, 2003, p. 62). The relationship between television and social development is important in order to recognize television as a "social practice" (Haralovich, 2003, p. 70). Television affects "every aspect of American life and culture. One cannot examine the United States today without turning on television" (Katzman, 1998, p. 12). Television programs symbolize particular "social groups, issues, and institutions systematically and repetitively in a manner that often reflects the position of these groups within our society's hierarchical power structure" (Press, 1991, p. 27). As a result, television is as an important tool to examine hegemonic social structures for many television scholars. Television studies "must continue to adapt macro frameworks explaining the function of ideology and commerce in the creation of television texts to the changing relationships among producers, distributors, advertisers, and audiences" (Lotz, 2006, p. 178).

Is There Room for Another Friend?

Friends, a series about six young people living in the heart of New York City, was popular both during first-run production and currently in syndication. The series was in high demand for advertisers as the hour-long series finale, airing May 6, 2004, attracted an estimated

52.5 million viewers (Levine, 2004; McClelland, 2004). The price for a 30-second advertisement in the finale was 2 million dollars, costing advertisers 15% less than the spot rate for the 2004 Super Bowl (Albiniak, 2004).

Critics claim the successful series possessed one major flaw. Auster (1996) suggested the show portrayed "totally sanitized bohemia…without any poor, or the ethnic and racial tensions that plague the city" (p. 6). The ensemble exhibited that it was only acceptable to create close bonds with others who look or act like you by having the same color of skin (Chidester, 2005; Sandell, 1998). Future research could compare the *Friends* text to other series with non-traditional family-like structures, such as *Entourage, Sex & the City*, *Will & Grace*, and BBC America's *Coupling* to compare and contrast themes of friendship, family, gender, race, and social class depictions the characters demonstrate.

It is important to conclude from this dissertation is that people *do not individually invent* representations of race, class, or gender. Representations of dominant ideologies of race, class, and gender images in television are produced in mass media texts (Press, 1991) through producers, creators, and writers. "These presentations help to constitute the image-environment within which our adult identities—and our own ability to represent—are developed" (p. 6). Viewers receive messages through what they see on television because they selectively invite the outside world into their homes through program selection (Kellner, 2003). "Popular cultural texts naturalize these positions and thus help mobilize consent to hegemonic political positions" (p. 59) such as White, Western, upper-class societies.

Series such as *Friends* depicted family-like relationships in traditional settings. Many episodic series tend to focus on characters becoming a family in spite of being related by blood or marriage (Taylor, 1989). *Friends* displayed a cross between the two; all six characters were

friends, but three of them were also related. Monica and Ross were siblings and Monica married Chandler in season 7. Even though blood ties could have made these three characters emotionally closer than the other three, this research confirmed that they all were a family. To be a friend, a person had to support "the idea that you can put up with anything, so long as you have your room-mates or neighbors to come back to at the end of the day" (Sandell, 1998, p. 148).

Kellner (2003) suggested that people use television as forms of culture as the media uses "sight, sound, and spectacle to seduce audiences into identifying with certain views, attitudes, feelings, and positions" (p. 3). Media helps create views of how viewers shape notions of race, ethnicity, gender, and social class judgments. Sandell (1998) concluded "While is it not the job of a weekly sitcom to teach us how to deal with race, class, gender, or sexuality, shows such as *Friends* nevertheless perform important cultural and ideological work in terms of how such issues are represented" (p. 153).

With a series so popular among many viewers, why did producers choose not to include friends of color that the characters liked, illustrate a realistic New York City with both rich and poor citizens, or position the six characters to live in apartments that realistically reflected their salaries? The series sent a message to viewers that the characters displayed actions of selectivity, only accepting a small group of friends in their social circle. In order to be accepted with the characters, an individual had to be White, appear to have plenty of money, and conform to gendered stereotypes of his or her gender. At the same time, a character had to demonstrate a constant form of social support to the other five characters. The six characters formed a culture that no one else was allowed to enter. Even when Phoebe married Mike in season 10, Mike was often working or had other commitments and, therefore, rarely interacted with the group.

This dissertation found these six individuals cared and depended on one another through the friendship rituals and family-like depictions the characters displayed. But, was Rachel the last addition to the ensemble during the first season? Could there be a seventh friend? It appeared that the “you” in “I’ll be there for you,” only stood for one of six loyal, White, wealthy individuals that were part of the exclusive culture *Friends* created and recreated over 10 years.

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Borns, B. (Writer), & Lembeck, M. (Director). (1996). The one where Joey moves out [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Boyle, B., Bilsing-Graham, S., & Plummer, E. (Writers), & Halvorson, G. (Director). (2001). The one with Joey's award [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Boyle, B., & Rosenblatt, Z. (Writers), & Bright, K. S. (Director). (2000). The one with the apothecary table [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Boyle, B. (Writer), & Schwimmer, D. (Director). (2000). The one with Rachel's assistant [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Brown, C. (Writer), & Bright, K. S. (Director). (1995). The one where Rachel finds out [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Brown, C. (Writer), & Gittelsohn, E. (Director). (1995). The one with five steaks and an

eggplant [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Brown, C. (Writer), & Lembeck, M. (Director). (1997). The one with a chick and a duck [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Buckner, B., Jones, S., Bilsing-Graham, S., & Plummer, E. (Writers), & Prime, S. (Director). (2001). The one where Rosita dies [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Buckner, B., Jones, S., & Borkow, D. K. (Writers), & Weiss, B. (Director). (2003). The one with Phoebe's rats [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Buckner, B., & Jones, S. (Writers), & Bright, K. S. (Director). (2002). The one with the secret closet [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Buckner, B., Jones, S., & Carlock, R. (Writers), & Bright, K. S. (Director). (2001). The one with Monica's boots [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Buckner, B., & Jones, S. (Writers), & Christiansen, R. (2002). The one with the pediatrician [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Calhoun, W. (Writer), & Bonerz, P. (Director). (1998). The one with Joey's dirty day [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Calhoun, W. (Writer), & Bright, K. S. (Director). (1996). The one with the jam [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Calhoun, W., & Goldberg-Meehan, S. (Writers), & Halvorson, G. (Director). (1999). The one with Joey's big break [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Calhoun, W., Reich, A., & Cohen, T. (Writers), & Burrows, J. (Director). (1998). The one with all the rugby [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Calhoun, W., & Silveri, S. (Writers), & Bright, K. S. (Director). (1998). The one with all the haste [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Carlock, R., & Borkow, D. K. (Writers), & Bright, K. S. (Director). (2004). The one with Phoebe's wedding [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Carlock, R. (Writer), & Halvorson, G. (Director). (2002). The one with Ross's inappropriate song [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Carlock, R., & Silveri, S. (Writers), & Halvorson, G. (Director). (2003). The one with the fertility test [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Chase, A. (Writer), & Bright, K. S. (Director). (1997). The one where Chandler crosses the line [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive

producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Chase, A. (Writer), & Bright, K. S. (Director). (1999). The one with the girl who hits Joey [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Chase, A. (Writer), & Lembeck, M. (Director). (1996). The one where Eddie moves in [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Chase, A., & Rosenblatt, Z. (Writers), & Halvorson, G. (Director). (2000). The one with the unagi [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Chase, A., & Ungerleider, I. (Writers), & Bonerz, I. (Director). (1994). The one with the monkey [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Chase, A., & Ungerleider, I. (Writers), & Lembeck, M. (Director). (1995). The one with the breast milk [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Chase, A., & Ungerleider, I. (Writers), & Sanford, A. (Director). (1994). The one with the butt [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Condon, J., & Toomin, A. (Writers), & Bright, K. S. (Director). (1998). The one with the embryos [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Crane, D., & Kauffman, M. (Writers), & Bright, K. S. (Director). (2001). The one after I do

[Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Crane, D., & Kauffman, M. (Writers), & Lembeck, M. (Director). (1995). The one with two parts [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Curtis, M. (Writer), & Holland, T. (Director). (1999). The one where Rachel smokes [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Curtis, M. (Writer), & Jensen, S. (Director). (1998). The one where Phoebe hates PBS [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Curtis, M., & Malins, G. S. (Writers), & Bright, K. S. (Director). (1995). The one where Heckles dies [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Curtis, M., & Malins, G. S. (Writers), & Hughes, T. (Director). (1996). The one where Rachel quits [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Curtis, M., & Malins, G. S. (Writers), & Lembeck, M. (Director). (1996). The one where Eddie won’t go [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Curtis, M., & Malins, G. S. (Writers), & Mancuso, G. (Director). (1996). The one with the Princess Leia fantasy [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Curtis, M., & Malins, G. S. (Writers), & Mancuso, G. (Director). (1997). The one with Joey's new girlfriend [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Fleming, R. L., Jr. (Writer), & Bright, K. S. (Director). (2001). The one with the stain [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Goldberg-Meehan, S. (Writer), & Bright, K. S. (Director). (2002). The one with Rachel's other sister [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Goldberg-Meehan, S., & Kurland, S. (Writers), & Halvorson, G. (Director). (1999). The one with the ride-along [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Goldberg-Meehan, S. (Writer), & Mancuso, G. (Director). (1999). The one where Ross hugs Rachel [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Greenstein, J., & Strauss, J. (Writers), & Burrows, J. (Director). (1994). The one where Underdog gets away [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Greenstein, J., & Strauss, J. (Writers), & Fryman, P. (Director). (1994). The one with the East German laundry detergent [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Jones, S., & Bucker, B. (Writers), & Lembeck, M. (Director). (1996). The one with the bullies

[Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Junge, A. (Writer), & Benson, R. (Director). (1995). The one with the ick factor [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Junge, A. (Writer), & Burrows, J. (Director). (1994). The one with George Stephanopoulos [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Junge, A. (Writer), & Burrows, J. (Director). (1996). The one with the prom video [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Junge, A. (Writer), & Hughes, T. (Director). (1997). The one where Chandler can't remember which sister [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Junge, A. (Writer), & Lembeck, M. (Director). (1996). The one with two parties [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Junge, A. (Writer), & Mancuso, G. (Director). (1995). The one with Phoebe's husband [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Junge, A. (Writer), & Myerson, A. (Director). (1995). The one with the boobies [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Kauffman, M., & Crane, D. (Writers), & Bright, K. S. (Director). (2004a). The last one [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Kauffman, M., & Crane, D. (Writers), & Bright, K. S. (Director). (2004b). The one where the stripper cries [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Kauffman, M., & Crane, D. (Writers), & Burrows, J. (Director). (1994a). The one where Nana dies twice [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Kauffman, M., & Crane, D. (Writers), & Burrows, J. (Director). (1994b). The pilot [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Kauffman, M., Crane, D., & Calhoun, W. (Writers), & Bright, K. S. (Director). (2000). The one with Monica's thunder [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Kauffman, M., & Crane, D. (Writers), & Place, M. K. (Director). (1995). The one with the list [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Kunerth, M. J. (Writer), & Bright, K. S. (Director). (2003). The one with the home study [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Kunerth, M. (Writer), & Halvorson, G. (Director). (2003). The one with the boob job

[Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Kunerth, M., & Tibbals, P. (Writers), & Halvorson, G. (Director). (2002). The one in Massapequa [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Kurland, S. (Writer), & Benson, R. (Director). (1997). The one with the hypnosis tape [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Kurland, S. (Writer), & Bonerz, P. (Director). (1998). The one with the invitation [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Kurland, S., & Curtis, M. (Writers), & Mancuso, G. (Director). (1999). The one with Joey's bag [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Kurland, S. (Writer), & Halvorson, G. (Director). (1999). The one with Ross's denial [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Kurland, S. (Writer), & Halvorson, G. (Director). (2000). The one where Ross dates a student [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Kurland, S. (Writer), & Steinberg, D. (Director). (1998). The one with Phoebe's uterus [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Lawrence, B. (Writer), & Burrows, J. (Director). (1995). The one with the candy hearts [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Lin, P. (Writer), & Bright, K. S. (Director). (2000). The one where Chandler doesn't like dogs [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Malins, G. S. (Writer), & Bright, K. S. (Director). (1998). The one with all the Thanksgivings [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Malins, G. (Writer), & Bright, K. S. (Director). (1999). The one where Ross got high [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Malins, G., Crane, D., & Kauffman, M. (Writers), & Bright, K. S. (Director). (2001). The one with Monica and Chandler's wedding [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Malins, G. (Writer), & Halvorson, G. (Director). (2000). The one with the holiday armadillo [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Mandell, B., & Ungerleider, I. (Writers), & Lembeck, M. (Director). (1996). The one with Barry & Mindy's wedding [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

McCarthy, V. (Writer), & Weiss, B. (Director). (2002). The one where Chandler takes a bath [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive

producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

McCreery, G., Rein, P., & Varinaitis, A. S. (Writers), & Tsao, A. (Director). (1999). The one with the cop [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Reich, A., Cohen, T., Bilsing-Graham, S., & Plummer, E. (Writers), & Bright, K. S. (Director). (2001). The one with Joey's new brain [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Reich, A., & Cohen, T. (Writers), & Bonerz, P. (Director). (1997). The one where they're going to party [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Reich, A., & Cohen, T. (Writers), & Bright, K. S. (Director). (2000). The one where Chandler can't cry [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Reich, A., Cohen, T., & Goldberg-Meehan, S. (Writers), & Epps, S. (Director). (2003). The one with the soap opera party [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Reich, A., & Cohen, T. (Writers), & Halvorson, G. (Director). (1998). The one with Ross's sandwich [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Reich, A., & Cohen, T. (Writers), & Halvorson, G. (Director). (1999). The one where Joey loses his insurance [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Reich, A., & Cohen, T. (Writers), & Halvorson, G. (Director). (2001). The one with Ross and

Monica's cousin [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Reich, A., & Cohen, T. (Writers), & Jensen, S. (Director). (1997). The one with Ross's thing [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Reich, A., & Cohen, T. (Writers), & Jensen, S. (Director). (1999). The one with Rachel's inadvertent kiss [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Reich, A., & Cohen, T. (Writers), & Lembeck, M. (Director). (2000). The one with Rachel's book [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Reich, A., Cohen, T., Malins, G., & Silveri, S. (Writers), & Bright, K. S. (Director). (1999). The one in Vegas [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Reich, A., & Cohen, T. (Writers), & Mancuso, G. (Director). (1997). The one with the ballroom dancing [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Reich, A., & Cohen, T. (Writers), & Weiss, B. (Director). (2002). The one where Joey tells Rachel [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Reilly, T., & Carlock, R. (Writers), & Halvorson, G. (Director). (2004). The one with Princess Consuela [Television series episode 10.14]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Rosenhaus, S., Bilsing-Graham, S., & Plummer, E. (Writers), & Halvorson, G. (Director). (2003). The one where Monica sings [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Rosenhaus, S., & Fleming, R. L., Jr. (Writers), & Halvorson, G. (Director). (2002). The one with the tea leaves [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Silveri, S. (Writer), & Bright, K. S. (Director). (2001). The one with the videotape [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Silveri, S., & Goldberg-Meehan, S. (Writers), & Bonerz, P. (Director). (1997). The one with the screamer [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Silveri, S., & Goldberg-Meehan, S. (Writers), & Jensen, S. (Director). (1997). The one with the dirty girl [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Silveri, S., & Goldberg-Meehan, S. (Writers), & Simon, S. (Director). (1997). The one without the ski trip [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Silveri, S. (Writer), & Halvorson, G. (Director). (1997). The one with the girl from Poughkeepsie [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Silveri, S. (Writer), & Schwimmer, D. (Director). (2000). The one with Ross's library book [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive

producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Silveri, S. (Writer), & Schwimmer, D. (Director). (2002). The one with Phoebe's birthday dinner [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Silveri, S. (Writer), & Schwimmer, D. (Director). (2004). The one with the birth mother [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Tibbals, P. (Writer), & Halvorson, G. (Director). (2003). The one with the mugging [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

Ungerleider, I. (Writer), & Schlamme, T. (Director). (1995). The one with Russ [Television series episode]. In K. S. Bright, M. Kauffman, & D. Crane (Executive producers), *Friends*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers.

APPENDIX

***Friends* RITUALS CODING SHEET** Coding Sheet Number_____

EPISODE Season _____
Number _____

SCENE NUMBER ___of____

CODER NAME 1-A 2-B 3-C 4-D 5-E 6-F _____

CODING FOR CHARACTER _____
1-Rachel 4-Joey
2-Monica 5-Chandler
3-Phoebe 6-Ross

1-Location _____
1-Central Perk 6-Street _____
2-Monica's Apt 7-Workplace _____
3-Joey's Apt 8-Monica/Joey's Hallway
4-Ross' Apt 9-Other (Please Describe)_____
5-Phoebe's Apt

2-Main Characters Present
1-Rachel _____
2-Monica _____
3-Phoebe _____
4-Joey _____
5-Chandler _____
6-Ross _____

Rituals (If involves romance between 2 characters, see item 9)
3-Time-Honored/Traditional _____
0-No
1-Celebrations/Established Events _____
(Routines for birthdays, holidays, other special established events)
2-Favorites
(Habitual/shared/symbolic places friends frequent, regular things consumed, watching favorite show together, that are idiosyncratic and preferred among friends)

4-Social-Fellowship/Casual _____
0-No
1-Enjoyable activities/Getting together _____
(Something leisurely at random; Ways of physically being together, excluding phone calls)
2-Play Rituals
(Joking, kidding, inside jokes, mocking, pranks)

5-Communication _____
(Keeping in touch outside physical contact, via phone, notes, mail, email)
0-No
1-Yes

6-Share/Vent/Support _____
(Share/Vent can be exchanging of personal thoughts, feelings, concerns, complaints.
Support is a response which can be used for emotional encouragement.)
0-No
1-Yes

7-Tasks/Favors/Gifts _____
0-No
1-Asked for _____
(Friend blatantly inquires help with a task: Asks for a material gift)
2-Courtesy
(Friend performs positive gesture to assist friend without being asked; Gives a material gift)

8-Friendship with Romance (Must involve 2 of the 6 characters—otherwise 0) _____
0-N/A
1-Flirtatous Actions (Please Describe)_____ _____
2-Time-Honored/Traditional (Planned date or event, celebration, preferred activities)
3-Social-Fellowship/Casual (Includes random dates, watching TV, random events) _____
4-Comunication
5-Share/Vent/Support
7-Tasks/Favors/Gifts
8-Phyical interaction (No dating relationship)
9-Physical interaction (Dating relationship)
10-Other (Please Describe)_____

Table 1

Number of Times each Friendship Ritual Appears in Four Seasons

	Season			
Ritual	1	4	7	10
Time-Honored/Traditional	116	79	70	96
Social-Fellowship/Casual	473	389	347	313
Communication	7	8	0	6
Share/Vent/Support	267	281	241	232
Tasks/Favors/Gifts	65	76	56	59
Romance	17	30	56	59

Table 2

Number of Times each Character Performs each Friendship Ritual over Four Seasons

Ritual	Rachel	Monica	Phoebe	Joey	Chandler	Ross
Time-Hon/ Traditional	57	62	68	59	60	55
Social-Fellow/ Casual	247	251	234	260	298	232
Communication	5	2	3	3	6	2
Share/Vent/ Support	185	174	159	174	165	164
Tasks/Favors/ Gifts	49	37	35	61	32	42
Romance	43	141	0	15	143	37

Table 3

Mean Hourly Earnings, 1994 versus 2004

Character	Occupation	Mean Earnings per Hour 1994	2004	Average Salary
Rachel	Waitress	$6.43	——	$11,750
	Executive/Office Support	——	$22.01	41,030
Monica	Chef	6.85	——	12,514
	Chef	——	14.75	27,494
Phoebe	Masseuse*	14.41	——	26,340
	Masseuse	——	15.36	28,631
Joey	Actor—Off-Broadway	8.27	——	15,124
	Actor—Theatre & TV	——	30.76	57,336
Chandler	Data Processor	31.13	——	56,890
	Advertising/Copywriter	——	23.79	44,350
Ross	Paleontologist	15.27	——	27,900
	Associate Professor	——	34.93	65,113

*A masseuse was not listed as an occupation in the *U.S. Department of Labor Occupational Outlook Handbook* (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1996). A physical therapist was the closest comparable occupation found for a masseuse in the 1994 statistics; those figures were adapted to this research.