

# Gender messages presented on the television show...friends

[Sociology](#)



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Friends: Gender Messages and Television Programming Phoebe, Rachel, Monica, Ross, Joey, and Chandler created an ensemble of characters that was emblematic of a generation. Each of the characters was a 'brand' to themselves, the nature of their plight revealing culture, gender, and social status. Not only was gender a factor, but socio-economic status was also represented. Lacking in the ensemble was a wide diversity in the social construct of race, skin color relatively similar across the diversity of ethnic origins. Gender was the great conflict within the program, however, with the relationships within and between the genders explored through the intimacy of the friendships and defined by the way in which they 'did' gender. While an equality of value was managed between the genders, the associations between socio-economic status, gender, and character were a clear message that provides an interesting commentary on the modern society of the period.

The show Friends ran between the years 1994 and 2004 (IMDB). The show was comprised of six characters, three of which were women and three of which were men. The traditional roles of males and females was maintained through a modern perspective throughout the show, with the women being both involved in the workplace and representing common female characteristics, as well as men who represented commonly held stereotypes of male gender characteristics. The characters were not only divided by gender, but through socio-economic status. Rachel, Ross, Monica, and Chandler came from affluent backgrounds, where Joey and Phoebe came from working class backgrounds. Rachel, Phoebe, and Joey were in a lower economic class in the beginning of the show, where Monica, Ross and

Chandler were in a higher economic class, although their friendship placed them all within the same social class.

Phoebe, the free spirit of the group, is ethereal and strange sometimes, and her sexuality while present is also enigmatic as she never engages in a relationship with any of the other characters. Joey is the male counterpart to Phoebe, an inspiring actor who is also a sexual predator in the sense that he has no aspiration for more than a short term relationship. Although not the kind of boy to bring home to your mom, he lacks the intelligence level to form bad intentions, which also serves to 'explain' his lack of monetary success. Chandler works in a corporate environment, but the nature of his job is never clarified which is a running joke on the show and also a commentary on modern corporate life as a 'cog' in the works. Ross is professor at a college whose focus is on paleontology which comments on modern fascinations with dinosaurs, which often is connected to his child-like and 'geek' styled personality. Monica is a chef, a former obese woman who is now rail thin but fights with her food issues. She has an intense case of OCD and this relates her to the traditional roles assigned to women in the domestic sphere, re-packaged for a modern audience as career and pathology. Rachel is a former modern 'princess', who enters the first episode in her wedding gown having run from her wedding in order to find independence. Her character development is more than likely the most evolutionary as she goes from a bad waitress in a coffee shop, her first job after leaving the comfort of being taken care by her father and striking out on her own, to the point where she works her way up into the offices of a department store as a fashion expert.

The characters relate to one another within the context of modern interpretations of male and female. The women are independent, but also engaged in traditional roles of women. The male and female roles are treated with an unusual equality, a balanced cast with a balanced set of focal points as far as theme and plot are concerned. The advertisements tend to aim towards women, so it is likely that women are the target audience for the program. The program uses gender relationships in order to create the various aspects of the program including the conflicts, the resolutions to problems, and in creating intimate relationships.

#### Works Cited

IMDB. Friends. IMDB. 2011. Web.