

Any suggestions for making paragraphs shorter? Splitting them up.

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Suggestions for flow? Is the order of paragraphs effective?

Any suggestions for condensing? I am definitely going to go over the word limit. ✓

## GENDER ROLES AND POWER PLAYS: WOMEN IN THE WORKFORCE

One of the many uses of comedy in film is to address social issues. While modern-day women have become more aware of their rights and opportunities in the workforce, professions such as business primarily remain male-dominated fields. Comedy exploits the fallacies of sexist men and underachieving women, while emphasizing power plays between the sexes. Some comedies, in order to shed light on the possible success of female integration, focus on the triumphs of the movies' heroines. <sup>New Paragraph.</sup> In the 1996 film, *The Associate*, an African-American woman (Whoopi Goldberg) begins her own stock broker firm when a Caucasian male coworker is promoted above her after stealing the credit for her research and making business deals without her knowledge. Her privately-owned firm is an immediate failure. That is, until she creates an imaginary Caucasian male partner. Her business, driven by her ideas, becomes a huge success behind the symbol of business success, a middle-class man of the majority race. <sup>New Paragraph</sup> In the 1980 film, *9 to 5*, three businesswomen, all secretaries, revolt against having a "sexist, egotistical, lying, hypocritical bigot" for a boss. While providing entertainment, comedy has the potential to advocate change through its portrayals of the genders in a working environment.

Introduce more w/ *Associate*

The primary technique of comedy delivered in these two films is one sometimes referred to as "gendermandering." Gendermandering is the use of characterization to portray as well as exploit stereotypes (Johnson 20). Characters are given certain stereotypical qualities, which eventually are undermined by their actions throughout the

course of the plot (Johnson 20). Gendermandering allows the writer to retaliate against society's "habit of gender stereotyping while confirming it by exploiting expected sexual behavior" (Johnson 21). This is evident in the way both films introduce their characters. Judy from *9 to 5* and Sally from *The Associate* possess the mentality of typical working women, but they grow into individuals with many more attributes than what is revealed at first glance. Doralee and Camille represent the heightened sexuality of women in the workplace. Doralee inadvertently gains success through her physical qualities but refuses to submit to her boss's desires, while Camille knowingly uses her body to acquire power. Violet and Laurel are the two who break from the mold most dramatically. Mr. Hart and Frank are typical sexist males in power, but the audience disdains their biased views and rejoices at their undoing. Through gendermandering, the stereotypes represented in these women are clearly defined and accepted, which leaves room for the comedy to throw the audience offguard when these individuals do not act according to plan.

A paragraph on the traditional depiction of women, Judy and Sally. Competitive nature. Women's Careers:

Judy Bernly's character is an all-encompassing portrayal of a woman's inferiority according to men, especially in a professional capacity. She is forced to earn her own income after her husband leaves her and becomes a secretary at Consolidated. She has never worked before, except as a housewife, and her attire on her first day of work in a light pink and blue suit, with a huge pink hat to top it off. We laugh at her attire and her cluelessness because we consider such a display of femininity in the workplace as ridiculous (Ellmann 148). Her demeanor is that of a delicate, sheltered woman who needs protection. She has depended solely on her husband and now has to recover from

Remember Quotations!

the loss and survive on her own. She seems neither ambitious nor confident in her capabilities, but her male boss finds her aesthetically pleasing. Judy falls into place along with her fellow female employees and is getting used to the routine, with the male boss at the helm. She possesses a “feeling of security” in her new job and initially does not consider the possibilities of career enhancement, which reemphasizes how the female nature is not as ambitious (Lipman-Blumen 7). In *The Associate*, Sally Dugan, also a secretary, represents this stereotypical nature of women as well. She is timid, unsure, and does not retaliate to the derogatory actions and nicknames, like “sweetie” given to her by her male superior.

Doralee and Camille depict the sexual aspect of women and the role it plays in work relationships with men. Physical qualities contribute to the divide between men and women in the workforce. The female body is described as “simple, sensuous, and insignificant” (Ellmann 148). ‘Men’s bodies have a more aggressive and forceful air than those of women’ (Ellmann 148). Even when the occasional woman breaks this physical barrier, most do not approve of this masculinity applied to a woman’s form (Ellmann 148). The high-pitched voice of a woman makes her somewhat harder to take seriously in professional situations (Ellmann 149). Some women feel their high-pitched voice makes it difficult for them to command attention in a room when speaking (ihavetofinditagain #). Doralee has big blonde hair, a high-pitched voice and voluptuous breasts, the ideal physique for a secretary. While Mr. Hart has power over her because of his elevated career status, Doralee has the power of choosing to withhold herself from her superior’s sexual urges. Camille uses her sexuality to advance up the corporate ladder. In a conversation with Laurel, Camille explains, “Men like doing business with men, but they want to sleep with us, and that’s our power.”

Her method of manipulation, as well as that of the other female characters, is described as “micromanipulation,” in which the minority tries to take power from the majority socially and intellectually through some implementation of deceit. In this case, Camille chooses sexual manipulation and reinforces stereotypes, while Doralee and Laurel use their intellect to change company policy and law founded on stereotypes. (Plan to find quote describing how women are perceived to have more control over their sexuality).

~~Paragraph about Lily and Whoopie:—~~

Successful women in the workforce are often regarded in a negative light. While men are “unsexed by failure,” women are “unsexed by success” (ihavetofinditagain #). This is evident in the character of Roz, Mr. Hart’s right-hand woman. She represents the misconception of what a woman in power would be like, resulting from the notion that the “attack” caused by intellect would take away from “the man’s ideal of [her] delicacy” (Ellmann 25). Her aging features are severe. Her dress is grey, drab, anything but form-fitting. No one find her appealing, except for Hart, because of her masculine qualities. She seems to hold a decent position in the company, but she remains inferior to her boss. By falling into Hart’s good graces she has permission to mooch of his power, but her power only goes as far as he will allow.

Consolidated, the company in which the three secretaries work, symbolizes the ideal relationship for male superiority in the workplace. The male is in charge and the “women...have chosen...to entrust themselves to men and the institutions men run” (Lipman-Blumen 7). The office is gray and bland, but “efficient”. The male boss demonstrates his power by not allowing his female employees decorate their workspace with personal effects. The so-called frills of femininity are perceived by males as unproductive, distracting and unfit for business (Ellmann 77). He also does not allow

his secretaries to work part-time, refusing to succumb to the needs of his "girls". He maintains his power in the workplace by restricting the identities of his employees and by enforcing a masculine atmosphere. At the end of the film, the shift of power is evident in the splashes of bright color about the office and the apparent contentment of the co-workers. The film stresses that these women brought positive change to the office. Catering to the needs of the employees through flexible office hours and day care centers is not frivolous but productive.

~~Paragraph about comedy types Associate~~

"In the film *9 to 5*, all three theories of comedy (superiority, surprise, relief) are present. Individuals laugh at Hart's downfall because they believe they are superior to him. He is a character people love to hate because of his somewhat overly-exaggerated sexist behavior. People know better than to hold such prejudices against women, but they understand that his character is not so unbelievable. The audience can relate to his character's mentality and behavior through past or present circumstance, and through laughter they express recognition of past wrongs." *QUOTE*

A crucial scene in the film that describes the type of comedy where one laughs because of something unexpected is the pajama party. In this scene, the secretaries fantasize about what they would like to do to their boss. Viewers find humor in these scenes because it is unexpected that these women react so strongly. Jane Fonda, dressed and armed in hunting gear, shoots Hart and puts his head above her mantle similar to that of the deer he displays proudly in his real-life office. One is surprised to see this frail female turning to violence and aggression as means for retaliation. In Doralee's fantasy, it is she who commits the sexual harassment, and Hart is the victim. She is the authoritative boss; he is the timid secretary. This timidity is played in an

exaggerated fashion by the actor, heightening the role-reversal effect and the humor.

People associate the male with power and laugh when it is the woman who is doing the

harassing and pursuing. The last fantasy is Violet's, in which she plays a disturbing

version of Snow White. A fairytale princess is the ideal woman, a beautiful, virtuous,

innocent damsel in distress. Violet shatters this vision by poisoning the boss's coffee. *Do I need to find a source to back this up? If you found it in a text, yes.*

Her graceful movements and elegant voice are extremely deceptive; we do not expect

someone with this seemingly kind nature to be capable of committing murder.

However, her underlying motive is revealed and acted upon as she frolics about the

room with her animal friends, mixing in poisonous fairy dust with the coffee and

obediently serving it to Hart. Once again, the audience laughs because it does not

expect a figure like Snow White to solve her troubles in this unconventional manner.

The film's comedy also provides relief. During intense moments of stereotype exploitation in the office, where Hart expresses most of his biased judgment, his broken

chair causes him to reel back when he sits at his desk. Violet thinks she has accidentally

killed the boss with rat poison, which commences a sequence of events involving

kidnapping the wrong dead body at the hospital at night and dealing with the police.

While the chair takes away from the boss's masculine presence, the hospital and car

scenes play up a woman's irrationality under pressure (Ellmann ). Both scenes do little

to preserve the social awareness presented for the majority of the film. They do,

however, give the audience a break from the seriousness of such controversial issues.

This creates an effect that allows the viewers to retain the overall messages from the film

and to consider change while not going completely out of their comfort zones. →

Movie makers and their objectives

Is comedy progressive? ~~Works Consulted~~

Conclusion

Works Consulted

maybe include dialogue

from the movie →

that further enhances your point.

could remove it to keep from going over word limit