

Representations Of Female Friendship And Identity In And Just Like That... & Insecure

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ABSTRACT

This study compares how two HBO series, And Just Like That... (2021-) and Insecure (2016-2021), represent female friendship and identity. Both shows focus on women, but they come from different cultural and social contexts. Using postfeminist theory (Gill, 2007) and intersectional feminism (Crenshaw, 1991; Collins, 1990), this research analyzes character development, dialogue, and storylines from selected episodes. The findings show that And Just Like That... emphasizes personal choice, lifestyle, and privilege, while Insecure highlights how race, gender, and class shape women's everyday experiences. The study also shows that friendship works differently in each show: in And Just Like That..., it supports personal growth, while in Insecure, it represents solidarity and shared struggle. Together, the shows reveal two different ways of understanding modern womanhood on television

INTRODUCTION

Television today is more than just a form of entertainment; it reflects how society understands gender, identity, and relationships. Over the years, television has changed the way women are represented on screen. In the past, women were often shown as supporting characters or limited to domestic roles. Now, more shows portray women as complex individuals with their own goals, struggles, and friendships. This change is connected to the influence of feminism and the growing awareness of diversity in modern society. According to Rosalind Gill (2007), postfeminist media often shows women as free and empowered, but it also tends to focus on individual success and lifestyle rather than collective struggles. On the other hand, intersectional feminism (Crenshaw, 1991; Collins, 1990) reminds us that gender cannot be separated from race, class, or social background.

Within this context, HBO's And Just Like That... and Insecure present two different ways of showing female friendship and identity. And Just Like That..., a sequel to Sex and the City, follows a group of women in New York City who are dealing with aging, privilege, and change. The show reflects postfeminist ideas of independence, self-expression, and personal growth. In contrast, Insecure focuses on young Black women in Los Angeles and shows how race, gender, and class affect their everyday lives. It uses humor and honesty to highlight the importance of friendship, community, and self-acceptance in a world full of challenges.

This study compares the two series to understand how modern television represents women and their friendships in different cultural settings. While And Just Like That... focuses on individuality and privilege, Insecure emphasizes collective support and empowerment among marginalized groups. By using both postfeminist and intersectional feminist perspectives, this study explores how television continues to shape the way we see womanhood, friendship, and identity in the 21st century.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Female Friendship And Identity In And Just Like That...

Continuing the legacy of Sex and the City, And Just Like that..., the series portrays its main characters; Carrie, Miranda, and Charlotte who redefine themselves as independent women in the face of aging, loss, and social change. The series extends the ideology of Sex and the City, where women's

empowerment is often portrayed through autonomy, consumption, and personal growth. As Rosalind Gill (2007) argues, postfeminist media constructs femininity through “individualism, choice, and empowerment,” yet these are frequently tied to lifestyle and self-surveillance.

Carrie’s arc in Season 1 exemplifies postfeminist reinvention. Following the death of Big in Episode 1 (“Hello It’s Me”), Carrie performs empowerment through emotional resilience, fashion, and continued authorship. Her identity reconstruction seen in Episode 7 when she sells her old apartment highlights postfeminism’s emphasis on personal narrative and lifestyle transformation rather than collective resistance. This pattern is visible in how Carrie redefines herself after losing her husband, expressing independence through fashion, writing, and emotional reinvention.

Similarly, Miranda’s storyline reflects the tensions within postfeminist discourse. In Season 1, Episode 8 (“Bewitched, Bothered and Bewildered”), Miranda leaves her long-term marriage and begins a same-sex relationship with Che Díaz, aligning with Rosalind Gill’s notion of the “autonomous choosing subject.” Yet the series treats this transformation primarily as an individual journey, disconnected from wider feminist discussions about sexuality or identity politics. Charlotte’s continued attachment to domestic ideals, on the other hand, demonstrates the lingering coexistence of traditional femininity within a postfeminist narrative that claims to celebrate diversity of choice.

Friendship among these women operates as both emotional refuge and performativespace where empowerment is continuously reaffirmed through conversation, consumption, and self-presentation. However, the homogeneity of their social circle, mostly white and affluent, exposes the limits of postfeminist inclusivity. Although new characters of color appear, their perspectives remain secondary, reinforcing Rosalind Gill’s critique that postfeminism often masks inequality under the rhetoric of freedom and choice. Ultimately, *And Just Like That...* presents friendship as empowering but conditional, shaped by privilege and the commodified version of independence that defines postfeminist media culture.

Female Friendship And Identity In Insecure

Insecure portrays the complexities of female friendship and identity through the lives of young Black women navigating love, career, and self-discovery in Los Angeles. The series, created by Issa Rae, stands out for its honest depiction of how race, gender, and class intersect in shaping women’s experiences. Using the framework of intersectional feminism (Crenshaw, 1991; Collins, 1990), *Insecure* highlights that womanhood is not a universal experience; it is shaped by overlapping systems of power and inequality that influence how women see themselves and relate to others. In Season 1, Episode 1 (“Insecure as F***”), Issa faces workplace microaggressions while Molly contends with racialized dating expectations. These scenes exemplify Crenshaw’s (1991) argument that Black women exist at the intersection of multiple forms of oppression. Their bond shows how Black women rely on each other for emotional support while also struggling with personal insecurities and societal expectations. Through their conversations and conflicts, *Insecure* explores the pressure of being “successful” in a world that often undervalues Black women’s achievements. The show resists the simplified “strong Black woman” stereotype by presenting vulnerability, humor, and imperfection as real parts of identity.

Insecure also uses everyday experiences such as career setbacks, romantic failures, and awkward social interactions to portray how identity is negotiated rather than fixed. Their friendship is further complicated in Season 4, Episode 5 (“Lowkey Happy”), where unresolved tensions reflect both personal insecurities and structural pressures. Each character must balance the desire for self-fulfillment with the collective realities of race and gender. Crenshaw’s (1991) concept of intersectionality helps explain this dynamic: Issa and her friends experience not only sexism but also racism and class bias, which shape how they navigate professional spaces and personal relationships. Meanwhile, Collins’ (1990) idea of “Black feminist thought” appears in how the show celebrates community, shared struggle, and female friendship as sources of empowerment rather than competition. Ultimately, *Insecure* frames friendship among Black women as both a refuge and a mirror, a space where they can be seen, supported, and challenged. By centering intersectional identities, the series expands the idea of what it means to be a modern woman on television. Unlike many mainstream portrayals that universalize womanhood, *Insecure* insists that friendship and identity are deeply influenced by social context, making it a powerful representation of intersectional feminism in contemporary media.

METODE PENELITIAN

Throughout the television series *And Just Like That...*, representation of female friendship and identity can be seen through these main points: (1) *And Just Like That...* reflects the Post Feminist framework by Rosalind Gill (2007) where femininity is represented through individualism, choice, and

empowerment yet often tied to lifestyle and privilege. (2) Character arcs such as Carrie's independence, Miranda's choice, and Charlotte's attachment aligns with the Postfeminism Framework and shows identity formation of these characters through choice. (3) Friendship among these characters serves as emotional refuge and empowerment space yet conditional shaped by privilege and the commodified version of independence that defines postfeminist media culture.

On the other hand *Insecure* exhibits these main points of female friendship and identity:

(1) *Insecure* (2016-2021) reflects Intersectional Feminist Framework (Crenshaw, 1991; Collins, 1990), which theorized how race, gender, and class intersect to shape Black women's identities and relationships. (2) The television series challenges stereotypes in Black women's experience and forms identity through overlapping systems of power inequality reflecting Kimberlé Crenshaw's (1991) Intersectionality. (3) The friendship between Issa and Molly serves as emotional labor and interconnected support space within marginalized communities, this also embodies Black feminist thought (Collins, 1990) where empowerment comes from collective growth and shared struggles.

From each main point described, both television series *And Just Like That...* and *Insecure* share similarities and differences in the themes of female friendship and identity. Both television series depict female identity as something not fixed fluid, identity formation is built upon changes, choices, and continually negotiated by each character.

Carrie, Miranda, and Charlotte in *And Just Like That...* redefine their identity through their shift in relationship and lifestyle while Issa and Molly in *Insecure* identities are shown and shaped through their struggle to reconcile with personal life, internal conflicts, and external influences such as race, sexism, and class expectations. Both representation of female friendship and identity shares the same concept of the dynamic female identity, something that each of them possess and perform, change, and negotiate.

Moreover, female friendship portrayed both serves as a site of emotional support and empowerment where in the television series *And Just Like That...* the friendship's conversation, consumption, and self-representation reaffirms empowerment and the friendship in the television series *Insecure* recognizes Issa and Molly's collective growth and shared struggles causing empowerment.

Although they share similarities in each theme of female friendship and identity, differences still occur in them. While both female friendships act as a site that solidify relationships and promote empowerment, why it happens have different reasons. *And Just Like That...* empowerment shown is individualized and mostly tied to consumption and privilege. Friendships among Carrie, Miranda, and Charlotte (mostly white experience) isn't a move or act of challenging inequality yet a media for performance of empowerment. In contrast *Insecure* empowerment is seen through friendship between Issa and Molly which is a dynamic process of support, growth, and challenge within structures of inequality of the marginalized community. Their empowerment comes from the integrity of community, not consumption or performance.

Nevertheless, both television series *And Just Like That...* and *Insecure* share the same similarities in their friendship as empowerment sites yet they do so through different feminist frameworks revealing contrasting views in women empowerment. *And Just Like That...* aligns with a postfeminism ideology theorized by Rosalind Gill (2007) while *Insecure* reflects intersectional feminism coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991) and Patricia Hill Collins (1990). So *And Just Like That...* offers a postfeminist fantasy of independence, while *Insecure* delivers an intersectional realism of interdependence.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study compared how *And Just Like That...* and *Insecure* represent female friendship and identity through different feminist perspectives. Both shows highlight that women's identities are not fixed but constantly changing through their choices, relationships, and life experiences. However, they differ in how they define empowerment and community.

And Just Like That... follows a postfeminist framework, where empowerment is shown through personal freedom, lifestyle, and self-expression. The main characters, Carrie, Miranda, and Charlotte find strength through individuality and independence, but their stories are shaped by privilege and comfort. Friendship in the show functions as emotional support but remains centered around personal growth and consumption rather than collective change. In contrast, *Insecure* reflects intersectional feminism, showing how race, gender, and class shape women's experiences and relationships. The friendship between Issa and Molly shows empowerment through shared struggles, community, and growth. The series represents a more realistic view of how women, especially Black Women, support each other in facing everyday challenges and systemic inequalities.

In the end, both shows reveal that television continues to explore what it means to be a woman and a friend in today's world. While *And just Like That...* offers a vision of independence and privilege,

Insecure highlights interdependence, solidarity, and authenticity. Together, they show that female friendship and identity are powerful spaces for understanding how feminism evolves in the 21st century.

CONCLUSION AND SUGESSTION

This study reveals that the television series *And Just Like That...* and *Insecure* portray female friendship as a dynamic space in which identity is continuously negotiated and reconstructed. Both series go beyond depicting emotional bonds among women; they present friendship as a crucial site where personal growth, self-reflection, and social positioning take place.

In *And Just Like That...*, female friendship is framed within the context of midlife transitions, including aging, loss, shifting romantic relationships, and social change in the digital era. The series portrays identity as evolving and adaptive, yet still shaped by privilege, class, and cultural background. Although the show attempts to embrace inclusivity and diversity, its representation remains largely situated within an urban, upper-middle-class environment.

In contrast, *Insecure* offers a more intimate and grounded portrayal of female friendship, particularly within the lived experiences of Black women navigating career, love, and community expectations. The series highlights that friendship is not always harmonious; it involves conflict, misunderstanding, emotional vulnerability, and reconciliation. Identity in *Insecure* is constructed through the intersection of personal aspirations and structural factors such as race, class, and professional challenges.

Comparatively, both series emphasize that female friendship functions as a significant medium for identity formation. However, they differ in focus: *And Just Like That...* concentrates on identity transformation during later stages of adulthood, whereas *Insecure* centers on the ongoing search for self-definition amid social and cultural pressures. Overall, this study confirms that contemporary television plays a powerful role in shaping cultural understandings of womanhood, friendship, and identity.

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