

Leading Female Characters: Breaking Gender Roles Through *Broad City* and *Veep*

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Abstract

Historically, television has been dominated by male leads, but feminism and the challenges faced by working women are becoming more prominent in recent programming. This study analyzed two comedy television shows with female lead characters, Broad City and Veep, to examine if their main characters break traditional gender roles. In addition, this research studied if Broad City portrayed more feminist values than Veep, using feminist theory, which examines obvious and subtle gender inequalities. Three episodes from each show were chosen, selected by a ranking website. The coder analyzed three subcategories: behavior, interpersonal relationships, and occupation. This study concluded that both Broad City and Veep depicted strong female lead characters who broke gender roles continuously through their behavior, relationships, and occupation. Broad City depicted more feminist values through their main characters' friendship, empowerment of female sexuality, as well as their beliefs against traditional gender roles. This conclusion sheds light on the fact that women in television, especially female lead characters, do not have to be portrayed in a traditionally feminine way.

I. Introduction

Society has placed gender roles upon men and women, expecting everyone to conform. These roles derive from “traditional societal roles and power inequalities between men and women” (Prentice & Carranza, 2002, p.1). These stereotypes are often learned through observation, including portrayals in television, film, and other forms of media. Traditionally, challenging stereotypes has been discouraged; recently, however, these gender roles are increasingly being reexamined through entertainment media.

Television has always been dominated by male leads, but feminism and the challenges faced by working women are becoming more prominent in shows such as *Broad City* on Comedy Central and *Veep* on HBO. *Broad City* was created as a web series in 2009 by Ilana Glazer and Abbi Jacobson. The show premiered on Comedy Central in 2014, with Ilana and Abbi as the leading roles. Comedy Central describes *Broad City* as the feminist show that celebrates women, inverts gender stereotypes, and normalizes taboos. *Broad City* follows two women in their twenties living in New York City. (Broad City, 2014).

In comparison to *Broad City*, *Veep* has a narrower storyline. It's an American political satire television series that premiered in 2012. Selina Meyer, played by Julia Louis-Dreyfus, is the Vice President of the United States. *Veep* follows Meyer through her personal life and political career, as well as that of her staff

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and others around her. As the series progresses, Selina continues to try and move up in power, running for president in the third season. *Veep* rarely focuses solely on Meyer's gender. For the most part, Selina Meyer is seen as the incompetent vice president who happens to be female; however, there are instances that do address gender stereotypes.

Both of these shows can be considered feminist television shows; however, each show reflects a different wave of feminism, this article argues. *Broad City*, focusing on two young women living in New York City, depicts third-wave feminism, with some aspects of fourth-wave feminism. In contrast, Selina Meyer, a grown woman working in a powerful position, represents the second-wave movement. Both shows have female leading roles, both breaking gender stereotypes in some ways, yet portray feminist values differently. This study examines how *Broad City* and *Veep* contradict traditional gender roles.

II. Literature Review

This literature review will discuss the history of feminism, specifically the four waves of feminism and how each wave has been portrayed on television. Feminist theory will inform the feminist values and transformations that are seen in *Broad City* and *Veep*. This review will also address research on gender stereotypes portrayed in television by discussing stereotypical gender characteristics and traits, including the Bem Sex-Roles Inventory (BSRI) test, and gender stereotypes in a professional setting. In addition, this study will discuss female stereotypes portrayed in television and how they relate to the traditional gender traits identified by the BSRI test.

Different Waves of Feminism

The feminist movement began in 1848 with the first wave. The wave metaphor describes and differentiates the eras and generations of feminism. It is one of the primary tools for understanding the history of feminism in the United States—how it developed and where it came from (Grady, 2018).

The first wave began in 1848 at the Seneca Falls convention in New York, which addressed women's social, civil, and religious rights. The first-wave movement was dedicated to fighting for political equality for women, as well as equal opportunities to education and employment, and the right to own property (Grady, 2018). The greatest achievement of the first wave was the 1920 ratification of the 19th Amendment ("Feminist Movements," 2019).

The second wave did not begin until the 1960s, with the creation of Betty Friedan's book *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963. *The Feminine Mystique* was revolutionary in its reach, making its way into the hands of housewives who passed it along to all of their well-educated, middle-class white female friends with nice homes and families (Grady, 2018). Friedan argued that reducing women to only housewives limited their potential and wasted their talents. Second-wavers made clear that they weren't just fighting for political equality, but social equality also. Problems that appeared to be individual and insignificant—about sex, relationships, access to abortions, and domestic labor—were actually systematic and political (Grady, 2018). These issues were crucial to fight for women's equality and went beyond voting and property rights ("Feminist Movements," 2019).

The third-wave movement emerged in the 1990s. Early third-wave activism fought against workplace sexual harassment, as well as increasing the number of women in positions (Grady, 2018). Additionally, the third-wave movement broadened the parameters of feminism, including more diverse groups of women and a more fluid range of sexual and gender identities ("Feminine Movements," 2019). Two important theorists of the '80s had a major influence in the movement. Kimberlé Crenshaw, a scholar of gender and critical race theory, coined the term *intersectionality*, explaining different forms of oppression and the disadvantages caused by them. Judith Butler, a gender theorist, argued that gender and sex are not the same, and that gender is performative (Grady, 2018).

A major difference between the second and third-wave movements was the acceptance of being called *girls* rather than *women*. Second-wavers fought to be called *women*; whereas, third-wavers embraced the world *girls* and saw it as empowering ("Feminist Movements," 2019). The decision to embrace feminine imagery such as lipstick, high heels, and cleavage was a response to the anti-feminist backlash of the 1980s when people referred to feminists as shrill and unfeminine. The "girliness" movement was also born out of

the belief that the *rejection* of “girliness” was misogynistic. Third-wavers argued that it was pointless to punish individual women for doing things, like being feminine, that gave them pleasure (Grady, 2018).

Currently, feminism is in its fourth wave, which began in 2008 and has been shaped by technology and movements, such as #MeToo, Time’s Up, and the Women’s March that floods Washington every year (“Feminist Movements,” 2019). Feminist Jessica Valenti in 2009 mentioned that the fourth wave could be online, given the internet’s major presence in society (Grady, 2018). Activists meet and plan events online; feminist discourse takes place online; social media tags, like #MeToo, promote inclusion (“Feminist Movements,” 2019).

The fourth wave is also not uniform; different people interpret it in their own ways. Fourth-wave feminism is sex-positive, trans-inclusive, queer, and digitally drive. It also has started a historical movement of holding culture’s most powerful men accountable for their behavior, critiquing the systems of power which allow predators to target women (Grady, 2018).

Waves of Feminism in Television

Television is a powerful medium that can have a significant influence on society’s views. Progress has been made to increase culture’s awareness and recognition of diversity, including race, sex, and ethnicity. The waves of feminism have been portrayed in television as they progressed and shifted throughout history.

The Donna Reed Show was a popular television sitcom, running from 1958 until 1966, that portrayed a wholesome wife and mother, revolving around her mundane family issues and dramas as well as dealing with her children. This one-dimension portrayal of a woman is one of the reasons the second-wave movement began. As the rise of women working in the ‘60s and ‘70s increased, the portrayal of nontraditional family lives and female characters also increased on television. *That Girl* (1966) was the first show to portray a young, unmarried girl living on her own (Press, 2009).

Collins defines feminism as a “recognition and critique of patriarchy and sexual politics” (Collins, 1986, p. 214). In the 1990s, television began to reflect third-wave feminist beliefs surrounding sexual and gender identities. *Ellen* was the first show on prime-time television to feature an openly gay woman come out (Press, 2009).

More recently, third-wave feminism can be seen in NBC’s television show *Parks and Recreation*, starring Amy Poehler as Leslie Knope, a feminist in all forms. She works for the Parks and Recreation Department, in a leadership position, and is deeply committed to both her job and personal life (Swink, 2017). Her office is covered in framed portraits of Hillary Clinton, Nancy Pelosi, and Margaret Thatcher. She says things such as, “Government isn’t just a boys club anymore,” and “Women are everywhere. It’s a great time to be a woman in politics.” Poehler’s character depicts a feminist, motivated, and hard-working woman (Bennett, 2013). This is the new era of television with women cast in primary roles and depicting feminist values.

Feminist Theory

Broad City and *Veep* both transform ideologies of stereotypical gender roles on television through their feminist values and strong female leads, similar to *Parks and Recreation*. Feminist theory aims to reveal obvious and subtle gender inequalities and then reduce or eliminate those inequalities. (Martin, 2002). As early as the 19th and early-to mid-20th centuries, feminist theory texts existed; however, it wasn’t until the mid-1970s, during the second-wave movement, in which it developed further and became a tool for the feminist movement (Carlson & Ray, 2011).

Feminist theory works towards systematic change and states several concerns, including historical concepts regarding reification and dichotomization, such as examining male and female and rationality and emotionality. An example is the separation between rationality, most often attributed to males, and emotionality, very often attributed to females. This dichotomy has led to valuing rationality through a gender-specific lens, and completely devaluing emotions. Feminists view these dichotomies as socially constructed and misleading (Martin, 2002).

The universalization of sectional interest has been explored by critical theorists in a way that has represented the interests of all employees; however, feminist theories have explored the interests of men and how they’ve been assumed or asserted to be universal, whereas women’s concerns and voices are silenced and ignored. Feminist scholars have repeatedly revealed gendered interests hidden in supposed gender-neutral

language and practices (Martin, 2002).

Broad City and *Veep* challenge societal structures of gender through their character's personalities, occupations, and relationships. Feminist theory points out a structural change that is visible in *Broad City* and *Veep*. Just as the waves of feminism have evolved through time, feminist theory has too, both influencing the representation of female characters on television and breaking away from stereotypical gender roles.

Bem Sex-Role Inventory Test

Gender stereotypes are highly prescribed and expected of society. They apply to occupations, daily life, and character traits (Prentice & Carranza, 2002). In 1974, Sandra Bem developed the Bem Sex-Roles Inventory (BSRI) test, which is used to measure different psychological gender traits. The purpose of this test was to "assess the extent to which the culture's definition of desirable female and male attributes are reflected in an individual's self-description" (Hoffman & Borders, 2011, p. 2). It consists of 60 personality characteristics; 20 are stereotypically feminine, 20 are stereotypically masculine, and 20 are considered gender neutral (Hoffman & Borders, 2011).

Since 1974, however, the scoring procedure has been modified. Critics pointed out that the original interpretations of an individual's score—classification as "feminine," "masculine," and "androgynous"—didn't differentiate between people who scored extremely low on both scales, or those who scored very high. The current procedure now has four distinct groups: feminine, masculine, androgynous, and undifferentiated. Androgynous applies to those who rate high on both dimensions; undifferentiated applies to those who rate low on both dimensions. Sex-typed as either masculine or feminine requires scoring high on one dimension but low on the other (Hoffman & Borders, 2011).

In addition to transforming the scoring procedure, Bem created a BSRI Short Form test. It contains 30 of the original 60 items. Ten items constitute each of the three scales (masculinity, femininity, and social desirability). The purpose of this development was "to address concerns related to poor item-total correlations with the Masculinity and Femininity scales as well as issues raised by factor analyses" (Hoffman & Borders, 2011, p. 3). The original form remains widely used, however, and is strongly recommended by Bem because of her reasoning that it predicted behavior better than the Short Form (Hoffman & Borders, 2011).

Traditional Gender Stereotypes in Television

The BSRI test has shifted over time, given how it's not quite defined since Sandra Bem developed the test in 1974. However, studies have found that female characters in television often depict stereotypical occupations and relationships involving romance, family, and friends (Lauzen, Dozier & Horan, 2008). Their personalities consist of feminine traits identified in the BSRI test, such as affectionate, cheerful, gentle, love children, do not use harsh language, and more (Hoffman & Borders, 2001).

Lauzen, Dozier, and Horan (2008) found that female characters on television more often depict roles involving interpersonal actions such as socializing and counseling, instead of political or operational actions which male characters tend to perform. Female characters also perform more communal traits that deal with relationships and the concern of others. These findings correlate with the BSRI test's masculine and feminine traits. Feminine traits include sympathetic, sensitive to others' needs, and compassionate; whereas, masculine traits include assertive, independent, and have leadership abilities (Hoffman & Borders, 2001). Similarly, Glascock (2001) found in his study that females were portrayed as less dominant on television, and males, instead, depicted characters who gave more orders as an attempt to show independence. In contrast, females initiated more acts of affection.

When it comes to the depiction of employment on television, males are more often seen in leadership roles as managers, professionals, or law enforcement officers, following the BSRI's masculine traits of assertive, independent, and having leadership abilities (Hoffman & Borders, 2001); in contrast, women have been portrayed as teachers or nurses, and in lower-paying occupations (Glascock, 2001). Women who are portrayed as strong and competent can be seen as favorable, only if they also portray the stereotypical traits of a female, like being modest and caring. In order to be even seen as competent, women have to perform better than men (Prentice & Carranza, 2002). This is especially true in roles of power, like for professional women.

Rosabeth Moss Kanter identifies four common stereotypes of professional women that relates to stereotypical gender roles and traits found in the BSRI test. The *seductress* or *sex object* refers both to

sex roles and sexuality, and often behaves or speaks in “feminine” ways. The *mother* is viewed as having stereotypical traits such as caring and understanding, which can be taken in a negative light. These “feminine” traits question a “woman’s ability to perform a leadership role” (Carlin & Winfrey, 2009, p. 328). The *mother* is judged for trying to juggle her professional life with her responsibilities as a mother, for which men do not get criticized. The *pet* is seen as weak or naive, and unable to handle a task without a man’s help; therefore, this diminishes a woman’s ability to complete leadership roles. Lastly, the *iron maiden* is a woman who goes against stereotypes by portraying too many masculine traits (Carlin & Winfrey, 2009).

In addition to employment, marital status has also been used to portray a stark contrast between female and male roles in the family (Glascock, 2001). Female characters’ marital statuses are more likely to be known. They are also seen more in the home, taking care of the family. These are traditional stereotypes that have always been present in society and are depicted on television (Lauzen et al., 2008).

Women have been held to a set of certain character traits they must portray; however, the feminist movements have paved the way for shows like *Broad City* and *Veep*, with leading female roles who portray feminist values as well as break stereotypical gender roles. Researchers have studied gender stereotypes in prime-time television and have identified roles characterized by certain genders. This study intends to fill the gap by examining two recent shows, *Broad City* and *Veep*, and studying how the female characters in the show either adhere to or break traditional stereotypes, through content analysis. This study will also examine the different portrayals of feminism in each show and how the characters depict different waves of feminism.

Research Goal

- Do both *Broad City* and *Veep* break traditional gender roles, portrayed through the main characters in their occupation status, behavior, and interpersonal relationships?
- Does *Broad City* promote and display more outwardly feminist values than *Veep*?

III. Methods

This research examines how the female lead characters in *Broad City*, Ilana and Abbi, and the female lead character in *Veep*, Selina Meyer, break gender roles, through qualitative content analysis.

Three episodes from each show were chosen, selected by the ranking website ranker.com. Anyone can vote either up or down on any item of the list. The four primary factors that affect the ranking on a list are: number of up-votes and the ratio of up-votes to down-votes, how often it’s ranked, and where it’s ranked. For this study, six episodes were analyzed. The coder viewed each episode in the sample using the categories of analysis. The code sheet was used to evaluate three subcategories.

First, the behavior of the three lead female characters was examined. The behavior that was analyzed was physical and verbal. As referenced in the literature review, males are usually portrayed as dominant whereas females are more nurturing (Glascock, 2001). This study examined verbal aggression--negative comments, threats, hostility (shouting and ordering), and physical aggression--overt behavior such as hitting or shooting meant to harm someone else or oneself, altruism, showing affection, and concern for others. These behaviors and traits, like altruism and hostility, are traits identified in the BSRI test, which was used to identify female and male traits.

The next subcategory was interpersonal relationships. This study referenced Lauzen, Dozier, & Horan (2008) and their coding methods. Familial roles were studied such as sister, niece, sister-in-law, and daughter-in-law, mother, and grandmother. Romantic roles were also studied, including wife and girlfriend. Friendship was included in this study as well. Previous literature found that female characters are more likely to have an identifiable marital/relationship status than their male counterparts. Female characters also were more likely to be found in the home and around the family.

The final subcategory was work roles and occupation. This study identified white collar, blue-collar, service, and professional work roles, including the four common stereotypes of professional women referenced in previous literature (Carlin & Winfrey, 2009). This study noted any roles portraying the seductress or sex object, the mother, the pet, and the iron maiden. Although women have been portrayed in

the workplace, they are often depicted playing domestic and interpersonal roles.

In addition to coding, feminist theory was used to understand the roles of women in these shows, which examines obvious and subtle gender inequalities. This study analyzed which shows depicted more characteristics breaking gender roles, including through behavior, relationships, occupation. The waves of feminism were also used to analyze how feminism, in each show, was portrayed in a different context.

IV. Findings and Discussion

Breaking Gender Roles

Through behavior, interpersonal relationships, and occupation status the main characters in *Broad City* and *Veep* break gender roles. The first category, behavior, depicted the strongest portrayals of breaking gender roles.

Behavior

The coder studied physical and verbal behavior. The Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) test was used to identify specific feminine, masculine, and neutral traits. Overall, more through verbal behavior, gender roles were broken, depicting masculine traits. Two strong themes were found—aggression and the use of harsh language.

The BSRI test identifies *aggressive* as a masculine trait. Merriam-Webster defines aggression as “hostile, injurious, or destructive behavior or outlook especially when caused by frustration.” In both *Broad City* and *Veep*, the female lead characters depict this trait in a variety of scenes, both through verbal and physical behavior. The coder examined and found that all three of the characters acted out behaviors involving hostility, negative comments, threats, and other forms of aggression.

In *Broad City*'s top-rated episode “Knockoffs,” Ilana and her mother search the city for the perfect knockoff handbags. They eventually find an entire suitcase worth of knockoffs; however, towards the end of the episode, Ilana's mother's handbags are taken by the police. After having her handbags confiscated, Ilana comforts her mother by hugging her while standing on the sidewalk. A man passes them and curses at them for blocking the sidewalk. They both yell back aggressively. Ilana's shouting is more audible and hostile, and punctuated with curse words. In this scene, Ilana depicts aggression through hostility, shouting, and by making a threat. The tone of her voice is angry. Not only does she scream, but she is posturing towards the man; she is facing towards him with her arms wide open in a defensive, power position. As a result, the man walks in the opposite direction. He most likely expected Ilana to react in a traditional feminine way. This could have been depicted through feminine traits such as being empathetic, speaking softly, and maybe ignoring the man and even apologizing to him. Instead, Ilana screams at the man, uses harsh language, and threatens his life.

In *Veep*'s second-highest-rated episode “Election Night,” Selina runs for re-election as President. She and her team grow more and more anxious as each state's result is called. The race comes down to the state of Virginia; if Selina wins, then it would be a tie. This would result in the possibility of her Vice President, Tom James, becoming President. Tom James goes out onto the rally stage, without Selina's permission, in order to energize the crowd. When Selina finds out she becomes aggressive towards her team.

Selina informs her team that she is going to the rally. Kent, her campaign manager, tells her that it is unprecedented. Selina replies back in an aggressive manner. “No, I'll tell you what's unprecedented Kent. A tie is unprecedented. So is becoming the first lady president. So is that jackoff becoming president through the back door. Okay? The rule book's been torn up now and America is wiping its nasty ass with it.”

Selina's tone becomes increasingly hostile. As she's facing Kent she points her finger at him. She screams the last sentence with clear rage in her voice and her veins visibly pop out of her neck. Selina's aggression stems from her Vice President undermining her and speaking to the crowd after she specifically told him not to. This aggressive behavior is common and accepted for men in power; however, because Selina is a woman, she is expected to behave differently. In this scene, Selina broke gender roles by choosing to stand up for herself and her position of power.

The next strong theme is the *use of harsh language*. The BSRI test identifies “does not use harsh language” as a feminine character trait. The word “fuck” -- used as variously as a noun, adjective, adverb, verb, and interjection -- was specifically coded to measure the use of harsh language. The use of harsh language was consistently found in both *Broad City* and *Veep* by the female lead characters; however, in *Veep*'s episode “Testimony,” the use of harsh language was not found. This is due to the fact that the entire episode takes place in a court setting and the use of harsh language is eliminated. The female lead characters both similarly and differently expressed harsh language. Two settings were identified to measure the use of harsh language: an aggressive manner and to describe sexual behavior.

The coder found that in *Veep*, Selina used harsh language solely in an aggressive manner. “Election Night” depicts several examples of this throughout the episode. Selina aggressively yells at Kent, her campaign manager, to “Get the f--- out of here Kent,” when he knocks on her door. She then becomes angry with her team for allowing Tom James to go to the rally and says, “Alright, f--- all of you. I’m going to the rally.” Her use of harsh language in this context is disrespectful and depicts her uncaring for them. Lastly, when Selina is walking to the rally and discussing how much she dislikes Tom James, she uses harsh language four times within two sentences. “That f---ing guy. His f---ing charm and his f---ing son with his f---king wheelchair and his spine all f---ed up.”

In “Wisdom Teeth,” Ilana aggressively calls out the government for their poorly regulated distribution of medicine when she’s talking to Lincoln, her friend-with-benefits and Abbi’s dentist. “You know, Western medicine does stick to a pretty strict schedule. The sooner you take more pills, the sooner you buy more pills. F---ing government regulated, Dr. Drew, all you can eat buffet.”

Ilana’s aggression towards the government is depicted through her use of harsh language. Even though her intentions are not to be aggressive towards Lincoln, the use of “f---ing” emphasizes her feelings about the government.

In contrast to *Veep*, *Broad City*'s lead female characters use harsh language not only in an aggressive manner, but also to describe sexual behaviors. In the episode of “Knockoffs,” Ilana’s grandmother has died and she is talking to Abbi about her. Ilana describes her grandmother as outgoing and willing to take risks. For example, Ilana mentions her grandmother’s sexual history and tells Abbi that Grandma Esther “f---ed Lil’ Richard.” Abbi also uses harsh language to describe specific sexual behaviors in the episode.

It’s important to note that Selina never uses harsh language to describe sexual behaviors in *Veep*. Abbi and Ilana are significantly younger than Selina; age may play a factor in this comparison, having grown up in different generations with a different culture. Another reason could be Selina’s occupation. The people she is surrounded by for the majority of her time are professionals and she is in a position of power. It may not be harsh language that is viewed as inappropriate by Selina, but instead the use of harsh language in the context of discussing sexual behavior.

Relationships

The coder analyzed friendships, and romantic and familial relationships. Three relationships stood out in this study that depicted the female lead characters breaking gender roles; however, also in these relationships, some character traits were seen that correlated to traditional female roles. The association of female characters with interpersonal roles focusing on romance, family, and friendship is not gender-consistent in this study.

Marital status has been used to depict a stark contrast between female and male roles. Women are also seen more in the home taking care of the family. Neither of these hypotheses hold true in this study. Both Abbi and Ilana are not depicted as being married or in an exclusive relationship. The status of Selina’s marriage is unknown in two of the episodes; however, she does mention Catherine’s father in “Election Night.” She and Catherine are looking at photos and Selina speaks of him in a negative light: “Oh, there’s daddy. Horrible.” This makes it unclear if they are separated or still together.

In *Broad City*'s episode “Knockoffs,” Abbi has a romantic relationship with her neighbor Jeremy. It’s important to note that their relationship is not exclusive, and they only have one “non-date hangout.” During their date they have sex and Abbi suggests they “switch it up” regarding their sexual positions; however, Jeremy takes it one step further and introduces a wearable sex toy into their relationship. He gives it to Abbi and then enthusiastically turns around on the bed on all fours and asks Abbi to put it “right in the butt” before realizing that isn’t what Abbi meant. After much consideration, Abbi agrees to put on the sex toy and use it on

Jeremy. This reversal depicts Abbi as dominant, portraying the traditional male character trait.

Veep also shows the reversal of gender roles through Selina and Gary's relationship. Gary is Selina's assistant and bag man. He is loyal and kind to Selina, whereas she is controlling, mean, and abusive to Gary. The show depicts this relationship as humorous, but it's important to note that if their genders were reversed, their relationship would be described as inappropriate and abusive more often.

Selina depicts dominance, a masculine character trait, over Gary in almost every situation. In return, Gary always yields to her, a feminine character trait. In "Helsinki," Selina lands in Finland and immediately wants cigarettes. She asks Gary for them and at first he tries to remind her how bad they are for her and how they negatively affect her. This doesn't stop Selina from demanding a cigarette from him. Throughout the episode, each time she asks for a cigarette, he makes a negative remark; however, Gary yields and retrieves them for her. Selina uses her dominance and power over Gary to get what she wants.

The coder found an example of traditional gender roles in the relationship between Ilana and her mother, Bobbie. Individually, both women depict behaviors that break gender roles, but their relationship correlates with the traditional mother-daughter relationship. Bobbie is nurturing towards her daughter, and in return Ilana does the same for Bobbie. The episode "Knockoffs" depicts their similarities and love for each other.

After Bobbie's knockoff bags have been taken by the police she is in denial and insists they must go back and buy more. Ilana comforts her in a gentle tone and tells her to "let it go." She then hugs Bobbie, but soon after is interrupted by a stranger who tries to pass them and yells at them. It is clear through their similar behaviors that Ilana has learned the behavior of aggression and feminine power from her mother. After Ilana and Bobbie yell back at the stranger they continue to hug and Bobbie tells Ilana she loves her. Ilana reassures her affection and appreciation for her mother: "You are my world. You are my everything. I think about you all day, every day."

Ilana and Bobbie's relationship differs greatly between Selina and her daughter, Catherine. Selina is nurturing towards her daughter; however, she is not nurturing in the typical feminine way. She does the bare minimum. In "Election Night," Catherine, clearly concerned for her mother, suggests that she and Selina have mother-daughter time. Selina apologizes to Catherine for previously breaking up her engagement and acknowledges that her job can be hard on her. She then gives advice to Catherine explaining how all men are horrible, including her father. In addition to this conversation, once Selina comes back to watch the election with her team, she asks someone how long she was gone for. After realizing she was only gone for a few minutes, she responds: "God, it always seems longer with Catherine." Selina's position of power could be a factor for why she does not exhibit nurturing behavior towards her daughter. Instead of nurturing her daughter, it's as if the United States of America is Selina's baby who she has to nurture.

Occupation

Often, female characters are depicted as working in interpersonal actions, like counseling, socializing, and nursing. Powerful, political, and operational actions are depicted by men in order to emphasize their dominance and independence. *Veep* reverses these gender stereotypes by portraying Selina Meyer as the Vice President of the United States and then later in the series as President of the United States. Selina portrays leadership, dominance, and power through her occupation, all masculine character traits.

It's important to note that Selina does not fit any of Rosabeth Moss Kanter's four common stereotypes of women in power. In the episodes studied, the coder did not find any instances in which Selina portrayed the *seductress*, using her sexuality or femininity in her role. Selina also did not depict the *mother* in anyway. Selina's ability to lead was never questioned because of her role as a mother, nor was she ever criticized for trying to juggle her professional life with her responsibilities as a mother. The coder did not find any examples of Selina being portrayed as weak or unable to handle a task without a man's help. Lastly, Selina could not be labeled as an *iron maiden*. The coder did find Selina break stereotypes and portray masculine traits; however, these character traits were never a distraction that made the coder question why Selina, a woman, was holding a position of such power. *Veep* uniquely depicts Selina's occupation by not addressing her gender as a main theme throughout the show; instead, *Veep* tells the story of an incompetent Vice President who happens to be female.

Feminist Values

This study confirmed the second research question—*Broad City* does, in fact, depict more feminist values than *Veep* by rejecting the traditional dichotomies of gender and sexual orientation, critiquing the patriarchy's traditional beliefs on the sexes regarded in terms of power, and therefore eliminates these gender inequalities.

Ilana's love for being a woman, as well as her acceptance and embracement of her body and sexuality epitomizes feminism. In "Wisdom Teeth," the episode begins at Abbi's art class, in which Ilana shows up as the nude model for the class. She is entirely naked and exudes confidence throughout the entire scene. This humorous scene has underlying feminist values, embracing Ilana's femininity, third-wave feminism, and portraying sex-positivity, fourth-wave feminism.

Later in the episode, Ilana is trying to find Abbi after she went missing. Ilana's on the phone with Lincoln, freaking out, and he tells her to calm down. Immediately, Ilana becomes angry and shouts at him: "F-- you. Don't tell me to calm down. I hate when men tell women that." As feminist theory mentioned, feminists aim to reject dichotomies such as the belief that rationality is attributed to males, whereas emotionality is attributed to females, completely devaluing emotions (Martin, 2002).

The empowerment of female sexuality is a strong theme in *Broad City*. Abbi and Ilana constantly empower each other's sexuality and don't refrain from having crude or explicit conversations or behaviors in their episodes. They find a lot of their humor in sexual moments. In "Knockoffs," Abbi calls Ilana for advice after Jeremy gives her the sex toy, unsure if she should do it or not. Ilana gets so excited to talk about it with Abbi that she twerks on a wall. Ilana's excitement and openness to discuss such sexually explicit content with Abbi are clear fourth-wave values; Ilana's confidence and love for being a woman are also third-wave feminist ideals. In addition, another episode ("The Last Supper") promotes sex-positivity, a benchmark of fourth-wave feminism. Abbi and Ilana are at an elegant seafood restaurant, celebrating Abbi's birthday. One topic of conversation is their mutual enjoyment of fingers during sexual activity.

The major theme in *Veep* is power. This entails Selina's power within the government, power over those around her, and power in her life. In contrast, Abbi and Ilana's friendship in *Broad City* is the most central part of the show, emphasizing the importance of strong platonic relationships. It's important to note the age gap between the female lead characters in *Broad City* and *Veep*. The different generations depict feminism in different ways. Selina could possibly be portraying her feminism through second-wave feminist notions, like depicting a woman in a powerful position, traditionally portrayed by men. Selina's power in the workplace is an example of the second-wave movement when women fought to end discrimination in the workplace, as opposed to rejecting the traditional dichotomies of sexual orientation and gender.

Overall, the findings of this study confirm that both shows, *Veep* and *Broad City*, portray feminism, but highlight it through different waves. Selina's work ethic and demand for power reflect second-wave feminism. Abbi and Ilana promote third- and fourth-wave feminist values through their friendship, empowerment of one another's sexuality and others around them, and their beliefs against traditional gender roles that they instill in each episode.

V. Conclusion

Previous research found that many female characters on television depicted traditional gender roles through their behavior, relationships, and occupations. Female characters were nurturing and warm, most often found taking care of their family and working in the home; however, those character traits were not often found in this study. The female lead characters did depict nurturing traits in specific situations, but they were not portrayed as having the sole purpose of taking care of their home and family.

Lauzen, Dozier, and Horan (2008) found that female characters on television more often depict roles involving interpersonal actions like counseling, instead of political actions which male characters tend to perform. In addition, Glascock's research in 2001 found that females were portrayed as less dominant and, instead, males depicted characters who gave more orders. Both of these findings contrasted with the results found in this study. The female lead characters all displayed dominant and aggressive behaviors. *Veep*'s portrayal of Selina as the Vice President, a powerful and dominant position, contradicts Glascock's findings.

The female lead characters in *Broad City* and *Veep* break traditional gender roles constantly. In addition, this research found that both shows portray feminism through different waves of feminism. Feminism is outwardly portrayed in *Broad City*. Both of the main characters, Abbi and Ilana, are strong feminists. Episodes often revolve around some topic of feminism or symbolize feminism within the episode. The wave of feminism that *Broad City* reflects is the third-wave movement. In contrast, *Veep* doesn't discuss or promote feminism directly through the main character, Selina. Instead, Selina's position of power, as the Vice President and later President of the United States, is what symbolizes feminism. *Veep* shows that gender is not a factor when it comes to powerful positions. Selina's feminism is a reflection of the second-wave movement when women fought to end gender discrimination in the workplace.

Future research could study how other shows with female lead characters promote feminism in their own ways and break from traditional gender stereotypes, mirroring the changes in culture and society.

One limitation of this research design is that because only three episodes of each show were coded, the behavior, interpersonal relationships, and occupation status may be underestimated. The episodes of *Broad City* did not include any portrayals of occupation status. This study also only analyzed the female leads in each show, limiting this study to only three characters to be examined. Because of these specific limitations, the coder did find gaps in the research.

In order to improve the present study, the sample size could be expanded to increase the number of episodes analyzed. Researchers could then find more data on behaviors, such as physical behaviors involving aggression, or harsher language in *Veep* to describe sexual behaviors. By increasing the sample size, researchers could also observe and study change throughout seasons which could reflect change or movements within the waves of feminism. In addition, researchers could also expand upon the number of characters to code. Instead of only coding the female-lead characters, the research could code how characters surrounding the female leads respond and react to those characters when they do break gender roles. Researchers could examine if this analysis reveals anything about the female lead characters or about society in general.

Overall, this qualitative content analysis offers support for the notion that women in television, especially female lead characters, do not have to be portrayed in a traditionally feminine way. *Broad City* and *Veep* both depicted strong female lead characters who broke gender roles continuously through their behavior, relationships, and occupation. Third- and fourth-wave feminism has caused change in society which is reflected in the media, including in *Broad City*. Although *Veep* and *Broad City* depict feminist values in different ways, both shows offer support for the notion of empowering women and therefore depict their characters breaking gender roles.

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