UNIWERSYTET MARII CURIE-SKŁODOWSKIEJ
W LUBLINIE
Wydział Filologiczny

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Women's Occupational Identities in American Primetime Dramas of the Early Twenty-First Century

Praca doktorska
napisana w Katedrze Anglistyki i Amerykanistyki
pod kierunkiem **prof. UMCS dr hab. Irminy Wawrzyczek**

LUBLIN 2022

Acknowledgments

I would like to express my deep gratitude to Professor Irmina Wawrzyczek, my research supervisor, for her patient guidance, encouragement and useful critique of this research work. Her knowledge and plentiful experience have kept me on track during my academic journey. I would also like to thank the scholars and administrative staff of the Saginaw Valley State University in Saginaw, MI, especially Dr Gary Thompson, Ms Barbara Cohen, Dr Louis Cohen, Ms Victoria Stewart, and Ms Maureen Engel for making my stay as visiting scholar a time of extremely beneficial academic experience and immense fun.

Last but not least, I wish to thank my friends and family for their support and encouragement throughout my study. I especially thank my husband, my mother-in-law, and my little son — without their tremendous understanding in the past few years, it would be impossible for me to complete my project.

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Introduction: Mapping the Field

1. Why working women?

Despite the voices heralding the end of broadcast television and the rise of Web 2.0 society, the medium remains a potent and far-reaching platform for entertainment, education, and information. The salience of these three basic functions may fluctuate, but they all conflate in the genre of television drama, albeit in different proportions. The propensity for stories, characteristic for human kind, has secured its continuous popularity in multiple variants reflecting cultural changes in societies and in the tastes of audiences. These narratives continue to reflect cultural values, defining assumptions about the nature of reality (Fiske and Hartley 85). The phenomenon has spun numerous studies within different social science disciplines, focusing on a range of aspects pertaining to this type of TV programming. Various scholars, especially British and American, explored representations and audience reception of the mediated images of class, race, and gender. Due to high modality of both the medium and the genre (Hodge and Kress, Kress and Van Leuwenn), a number of scholars and practitioners have been concerned with the impact television dramas may have on perceptions of professions or occupations (Donelan et al*.,* Goldberg, Kalisch and Kalisch "Nurses," "Sex-Role Stereotyping," Kinsky, Klein, Marek, Yoon and Black) and, consequently, career aspirations, especially among adolescents. It is generally agreed that the exposure to positive media images of relatable characters is very empowering in nature, and the lack of such contributes to the reinforcement of deeply rooted stereotypes, fossilizing gender-based presumptions about occupational identities.

One of the reasons I decided to embark on the project sharing such concerns was the fact that, growing up with imported American television productions in the 1990s, as a young girl I particularly enjoyed watching the strong-willed, foul-mouthed working mother of three in *Roseanne*; the successful, feisty TV presenter in *Murphy Brown;* or even the former fashion model turned detective Maddie Hayes of *Moonlighting*. They all came across as strong and fun — and they all had a life beyond romance and family. And although I did not dream of becoming a blue-collar worker or a detective, back then the job of a TV presenter was within the scope of my interest. Naturally, as I grew older, I kept watching contemporary dramas, perhaps not so much looking for relatable heroines of today, but for sheer pleasure. As millions of other young women on both sides of the Atlantic, I was a huge fan of *Ally McBeal* and *Sex and the City*, considering them breakthrough productions for multiple reasons. In recent years, however, my interest in organizational and corporate cultures allowed me to evaluate the fascinations from twenty years ago, and watch more contemporary productions,

from a different perspective. Instead of simply following the plots and the romantic entanglements in them, I became intrigued by women's depictions as workers.

To all appearances, television dramas have been teeming with working women for decades now. However, their representations have never been entirely satisfactory and constantly met with criticism. Perhaps the main objection concerned the validity of a woman's image as a complete and rounded self. Although the number of women in American TV show business with real power to influence those depictions through their creative and managerial work has been on the increase since the 1990s (Lauzen *The Celluloid Ceiling* 10), a sense of dissatisfaction with the result has never disappeared. Therefore the aim of this research is to determine analytically what occupational identities were available and what elements defined an on-screen persona of a working woman when America was entering the third millenium. The established nature of the representation will contribute to an enhanced understanding of the contemporary American popular culture's response to the concept of a working woman during the inspected period.

2. American women's work in historical perspective

The present project, though not a contribution to the historiography of American women, relies upon and draws from the existing scholarship related to their work history. The importance of work in American culture has had a long tradition stemming from the Protestant work ethos of Puritan immigrants setting their feet on American soil back in the 17th century. Their toil to build a self-sufficient community on a hostile land was also graced by their faith or "divine calling". This engendered a set of values referred to as Puritan ethic, also known as Puritan work ethic, driving the early New England pioneers to work "not only for the glory of God and for oneself, but also for the well being of the whole community" (Chylińska 117–118). Unquestionably, the vocation was at the root of every man's and woman's occupation, and their everyday strive for the family's and community's welfare became one of the cornerstones of the American settlers' myth to last through centuries. As Alice Kessler-Harris puts it:

> Compulsory labor in this closed circle was a necessity, and social and community sanction supported it. In Puritan New England, religious injunction offered a convenient device for mobilizing workers. A prosperous community was evidence of divine favor and gave townspeople a special moral incentive to weed out those who would not pull their own weight. (5)

In those early Puritan communities, labor was not only sanctioned by the religious standards highly gendered: the man worked outside, whereas the woman's labor was predominantly domestic.

In addition to child-rearing duties and taking care of the livestock, her main jobs included cooking, cleaning, making soap and candles, sewing or mending clothes (Ulrich *Good Wives*, 13–34). An exclusively female occupation in the early colonial period was midwifery (Ulrich *A Midwife's Tale*), "the on[ly] occupation that women monopolized and it took a long time before male doctors were able to force female practitioners out of the field" (Applebaum *Colonial Americans* 141). In the colonial South, due to specific demographic and settlement patterns of the plantations, many more paid occupations were open to women, especially widows, in addition to midwifery: private and parish teaching, nursing, shopkeeping, innkeeping, some crafts and even newspaper publishing (Spruill 255–313). While Kessler-Harris claims that "[w]omen's transition from paid and unpaid family-centered roles to wage labor of all kinds began early in American past," (3), Claudia Goldin (1986) reports that occupations of Philadelphia's female heads of households, mainly widows, between 1790 to 1860 were mainly linked to home and their labor force participation averaged around 44% throughout this period (402). Thus until the Industrial Revolution, the primary duties of a white free woman were to be domestic, and even though she might have been seeking additional income, this was not readily accepted or supported (Woloch 151).

The nature of women's work started evolving rapidly in the 19th century, as this was the time when "'work' came to mean work for pay and often meant work performed outside of the home." (Green, Elna 18). In the North, the Industrial Revolution entailed greater women's participation in labor force, mainly in domestic service, piecework shops, and textile factories (Early, Adair and Gormley 601). The latter could be exemplified by the Waltham-Lowell system, whose name came from the companies based in Massachusetts. Technological innovations in the textile industry necessitated the hiring of young, single women recruited from the rural areas. The motivations of the young mill workers varied, but the Lowell Mill Girls, as they came to be known, were a distinct social phenomenon: although they would earn about half of what their male counterparts made, they came in throngs, "achiev[ing] a measure of economic and social independence not possible while living under the parental roof" (Dublin). In a strange twist, through multiple public and literary renderings, the textile factory was positioned as a place where "["mill girls"] could learn to be attentive, caring, and hard-working — in other words, 'womanly and domestic' — until such endeavors prepared them for the salvation of a good marriage" (Adair and Gormley 601). This narrative came from the ideology of the "cult of domesticity" or "true womanhood," which proliferated during that period, both in the North and the South. Nevertheless, women's increased participation in the labor force meant that they could manage to fend for themselves and, as in the case of Lowell women, "became involved in anti-slavery, moral reform, peace, labor reform, prison reform, and women's rights campaigns."

(Dublin "Review"). This was perhaps the first opportunity for New England's women to venture out into the public sphere and make a political statement.

Meanwhile, the popular image of the South with its plantation-based economy and much more conservative views about the occupational roles of men and women is challenged by the authors of essays collected in the volume of essays *Neither Lady nor Slave: Working Women of the Old South* (Delfino and Gillespie), exploring the working lives of ordinary women across the antebellum South. The editors state in the Introduction that "[A] sizable number of southern women performed jobs that were both paid and officially acknowledged" and "participated in the developing marketplace in an impressive variety of ways, as wage earners and as entrepreneurs, regardless of traditional social expectations about gender and race." (2)

The increase in the number of working-class women in both South and North resulted from the most rapid industrial growth that took place between the Civil War and World War I. Their income came from work done at home, i.e. doing laundry or taking in boarders, industrial "homework," e.g. sewing, making lace or rolling cigars, and from full-time industrial labor (Adair and Gormley 601). Elna C. Green (1997) notes that in the Southern states women would gain new employment opportunities due to the impact of the Civil War and the postwar economic change (18). By 1879, women's participation in the official paid labor force nationwide reached 16% (Hapke 67). However, Elna C. Green emphasizes that in the early 20th century the majority of southern women, at least from the middle class, were unpaid voluntary workers active in a variety of associations. The regional differences in employment of working women in 1920 stood at around 4%, with 9.4% for women employed in professional capacity in the South and 13.3% in the United States (18–19).

On the national level, even the late 19th century cultural and legal norms required women to choose between career and marriage, and the priority was given to the latter option. Married women were prohibited from working in a number of professions, especially in the 1930s, as employers believed they would be so preoccupied with their roles of wife, mother and lady of the house that it would render them ineffective in the professional sphere (Farley 36). Due to the marriage bars in the teaching profession, for example, in the year 1941 87 % of local school boards refused to hire women who had husbands, and 70 % mandated that single women quit or be laid off when they married (Goldin "Marriage Bars" 6). Law, medicine, science, engineering, and well-paid white-collar jobs were perceived as primarily "male occupations," whereas clerical and low-paid sales work became feminized (Adair and Gormley 601). By the end of the millennium, over 90 % of bank tellers, secretaries and typists were women (Coontz 158).

Nevertheless, the outburst of WWII and the shortage of men who could fill the positions in, among others, munition factories, produced an opportunity for women to leave the household and join the workforce. The iconic image of "Rosie the Riveter," got appropriated by the popular culture to denote both feminist ideals and women's economic power dates back to those years. At that time, a staggering 6 million American women constituted around 80% of the labor force in certain branches of heavy industry (Cullen). This, however, was a temporary situation; once the war was over, women were forced to vacate the positions, yield them to the returning service men, and engage in the population reproduction. The cult of domesticity was reinvigorated, running counter the ambitions and concerns of working women. "This recycled ideology heralded unpaid professional mothering and household chores as the most valuable work in which a woman could engage" (Adair and Gormley 603). Between 1946 and 1964, American women gave birth to 76.4 million babies, spawning the generation known as "baby boomers". At that time American women's position in the job market, and in public sphere by extension, was dispiriting:

> By the late nineteen-fifties, seventy-five per cent of the women who worked were in female-only, mainly service jobs. In the higher-status professions, women were virtually invisible. Seventy-eight per cent of college faculty were men; ninety-five per cent of physicians were men; ninety-seven per cent of lawyers were men; and more than ninety-seven per cent of United States senators, members of Congress, and ambassadors were men. (Menand)

Dissatisfied with the lives of suburban housewives and mothers, yearning for better education and career opportunities, the American women in the 1960s started to revive the women's movement. The most notable feminist of that era was Betty Friedan, herself a housewife and a mother, who authored the 1963 *The Feminine Mystique,* a controversial and seminal book whose first paperback printing sold in 1.4 million copies, topping over 3 million by 2006 (Menand). It harshly criticized the American middle-class reduction of women's roles to those of the wife and mother and encouraged women to envision work outside the home and to pursue other personal and professional roles in the society. Friedan's book is often quoted as one of the first to engage in feminist critique of mediated images of femininity. Focusing on the 1950s women's magazines, advertising and cinema stars, she debunked the 'myth of the Eternal Feminine', which validated the conviction that women 'can find fulfillment only in sexual passivity, male domination, and nurturing maternal love' (qtd. in Thornham 4). It was in the late 1960s that the academic cross-discipline of women's studies was born, and within that field numerous scholars embarked on the examination of the representations of women, womanhood, and femininity in a variety of media content.

Later in the year 1963, the Equal Pay Act was passed, followed by the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1965 Executive Order 11246, expanded in 1967 to include the category "gender." Step by step, they banned discrimination in employment on the basis of race, sex/gender, color, religion and national origin, thus extending the number and the types of jobs and incomes that women could access and expect (Cho and Kramer 2–5). Nevertheless, although the level of women's participation in the workforce equalled 39 % in 1960s, and increased to 43% in the 1970s, they continued to earn 58.9% and 60 %, respectively, of what their male counterparts made (Adair and Gormley 603). Even though, beginning from the 1970s, more and more women pursued college and university degrees, the wage gap did not close; in the 1980s, women in general made 68.7 % of men's salaries, reaching about 73% by the end of the 1990s for comparable full-time work ("Money Matters"). Industry segregation has also been directly linked to wage gaps, with "women … overrepresented in clerical, retail, sales, and service occupations, but … underrepresented in higher paying professional, managerial, and high-skill craft jobs" (Adair and Gormley 605). According to the US Census Bureau, women's employment rate kept rising until 2000, when it reached 68%; however, in the aftermath of the Great Recession 2007–2009 it fell to 62% in 2011 (Parker and Wang 32).

The aspect of women's employment experience essential for further argument is its intersection with their reproductive decision-making. Working mothers, in nuclear families and as single parents, are currently the major driving force behind the rise in women's employment rate. While working mothers with young children constituted about 37% of the American labor force in 1968, in 2011 the number nearly doubled to about 65% (Parker and Wang 10). Despite the maternity protection secured by the Congressional Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993, Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010, and the "Break Time for Nursing Mothers" law, millions of working women experience some form of discrimination in connection with childbearing (Bornstein et al, Morris et al.). Also, regardless of the growing acceptance of women's presence in the workforce, only 10% and 11 % of respondents in the 1994 and 2002 General Social Survey, respectively, opined that a woman with young children should work full-time ("The Harried Life").

3. Fictional representations of women's work and their critics

Women's work and women as workers in America have been represented in literature and art since the turn of the 18th century. The literary depictions reflected the concerns and contradictions of social and economic nature. Sandra L. Dahlberg and Vivyan C. Adair claim that representations of women and work addressed the conflict between work and "womanliness," focusing on "issues of work and sexuality, family, motherhood, marriage, power, and social activism."(624) Dahlberg and Adair invoke several early texts that emphasized the virtues of working-class women, who sacrificed them-

selves to support their families and never succumbed to immorality, e.g. Sarah Bagley's *Offering* (1841), T.S. Arthur's *The Seamstress* (1843), or Fanny Fern's *Ruth Hall* (1855). Other 19th-century writers examined the corruptive potential of a workplace, threatening women's procreative powers (Herman Melville's "The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids," 1855) and casting them as victims of unequal sexual division of labor, moral abuse, and physical maltreatment (Rebecca Harding Davis's *Life in the Iron Mills*, 1861, or Elizabeth Stuart Phelps's *The Silent Partner*, 1871). Although most of those early representation of women workers excluded African American slave women, the experience of black women was narrated by some authors, for instance Harriet Wilson (*Our Nig, or Sketches from the Life of a Free Black*, 1859), Harriet Jacobs (*Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, 1861), or Elizabeth Keckley (*Behind the Scenes: or Thirty Years a Slave and Four Years in the White House*, 1868). At the beginning of the 20th century, Theodore Dreiser wrote *Sister Carrie* (1900*),* a novel depicting the life of a working girl and the emerging consumer culture in an urban setting, and *Jenny Gerhardt* (1911*),* whose protagonist is a young destitute domestic servant. An interesting collection of thirty-four lesser known stories and poems edited by Hoffman and Howe in 1979 were published under the title *Women Working: An Anthology of Stories and Poems;* the editors organized the texts in a such thematic sections as: "oppressive work," "satisfactory work," "family work," and "transforming work" (Dahlberg and Adair 624–625). Other authors tackled the theme of one of the most notable strikes in the history of the USA, the Loray Mill Strike in Gastonia (Mary Heaton Vorse, 1930; Dorothy Myra Page, 1930; Grace Lumpkin, 1932).

The advent and rapid development of the mass media, especially television, along with the growing popularity of its entertainment content added another space where women at work could be fictionally represented. Right from the start television became a powerful tool for the dominant groups in the society to enforce and perpetuate the solid, fossilized ideology guarding their interests on various levels. One of them was women's presence on the job market, its implications for women themselves and for the entire society. The critical response to such television content has always involved attempts to reveal how "gender discourse [is] negotiated in the 'moments' of the construction of media meanings: production, text and reception." (Van Zoonen 9)

As in the 1950s, the decade television quickly becoming a national mass medium, the media were exclusively owned by (white) males, the patriarchal order took priority. According to Lynn Spigel:

> [t]he 1950s was a decade that invested an enormous amount of cultural capital in the ability to form a family and live out a set of highly structured gender and generational roles. … [T]elevision was typically welcomed as a catalyst for renewed domestic val-

> ues. In many popular sources, television was depicted as a panacea for the broken homes and hearts of wartime life…(2–3)

As a result, the shows and advertisements of that period featured traditional families in traditional roles: a breadwinner husband with a paid job outside the home who ruled the family, and a stay-at-home, obedient wife and caring mother, totally dependent on her husband for financial support. The iconic shows of that period were *Father Knows Best, Leave It To Beaver, The Donna Reed Show* and *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet*, whose female protagonists are briefly characterized by Susan Douglas as “smiling, benevolent, self-effacing, pearl-clad moms who loved to vacuum in high heels” (*Where the Girls* 36). A slight variation on the theme of a perfect housewife was *I Love Lucy,* in which the eponymous Lucy, an often scatterbrained wife, wished to “break out of the confines of the domestic sphere and enter [her husband] Ricky’s glamorous world in the public limelight…” (Douglas *Where the Girls* 127). In a way, she was a precursor of troublesome housewife characters endowed with supernatural powers that sprang up in mid-1960s: Samantha in *Bewitched* and Jeannie in *I Dream of Jeannie*. These two shows are sometimes considered pre-feminist, although neither of the two protagonists can be regarded feminists. (Douglas *Where the Girls* 134–137). Early on, the only shows which featured working female protagonists were the sitcoms *Private Secretary* (1953–1957) and *Our Miss Brooks* (1952–1956). Although background female characters were now and again shown in such paid occupations as clerical, sales or cleaning, they would hardly ever have speaking roles. As a rule, the professional sphere outside the home was reserved for the male characters, and women who ventured outside tended to be presented with ridicule (e.g. *I Love Lucy*). The domestic setting of the shows was reserved for mothers and children, while the husbands and fathers were allowed to depart for work. The pattern which persisted until late 1960s began to gradually transform due to social and political changes in the outside world, leading to “regendering of prime-time that occurred in the early 1970s, when women gained equal time in prime time largely through workplace-centered dramas” (Hanley 630).

The first portrayals of working women to gain mass following were *That Girl* (1966–1971), *Julia* (1968–1971) and the ground-breaking *Mary Tyler Moore Show* (1970–1977). This latter comedy series, as well as its spin-off *Rhoda* (1974–1978), both centered on women pursuing careers. This 1970’s show was, in the words of Jennifer Keishin Armstrong, "TV's first truly female-dominated sitcom" (qtd. in Reese). The show was immensely seminal to later representations of women in paid employment. According to Lawrence Hanley, Mary Richards, the character played by Mary Tyler Moore:

> was single (and originally conceived as a divorcee), middle class, and professionally successful; she succeeded in the traditionally male work world of broadcast news; and, by dramatizing the tensions between traditional female gender roles centered on romance and new roles, including professional work, she became a televised representative of major changes occurring in the social world. (Hanley 630)

Apart from the young age, the distinctive feature of many working women of that era was singlehood. This was the time when not only was America in the middle of the women's liberation movement, but in 1972 the birth control pill became widely available, regardless of marital status, making it possible for young unmarried women to postpone motherhood and embrace their sexuality at the same time. Importantly, the shows were situation comedies, a default genre for working women stories for decades to follow. No less important is the fact that the types of women in the TV series depended on the airing hours: the day-time shows tended to present women in more conventional roles, whereas prime-time series portrayed them more progressively.

In 1970s, television industry responded to the increased number of working women in the labor force by offering more nontraditional portrayals of women in employment. (Press "Gender and Family" 148) This is why Mary Richard's friends, Rhoda and Phyllis, were "spun off" into separate series in 1974 and 1975, and the first shows starring women in title roles as cops came on television screen in the same season: *Police Woman* (1974–1978) and *Get Christie Love* (1974–1975) (Douglas *Where the Girls* 208–209). The first short-lived show featuring a top-billed female attorney, *Kate McShane* (1975), also appeared in 1975.

In 1980s, one of the most popular and critically acclaimed shows was *Cagney and Lacey* (1982–1988). It was one of the first procedurals with two female leads, and in non-traditional occupation to boot. Following the daily routine of crime-fighting female cops, the show occasionally tackled such important issues as sexual discrimination and sexual intimidation in the workplace. Julie D'Acci's monographic study *Defining Women: Television and the Case of Cagney and Lacey* (1994) argued that the show negotiated "meanings of *women*, *woman*, and *femininity*"(59). According to Horace Newcomb, one of the reasons that made the show stand out was the focus on difficulties encountered by two females in a male-dominated profession dealing with crime and criminal investigation ("Cagney & Lacey"). Other popular shows which started in the 1980s (and often continued into 1990s) and featured notable women who worked or even pursued a career were, among others, *Designing Women* (1986–1993), dealing with the professional and personal lives of female interior designers; *Roseanne* (1988–1997), presenting a working-class female head of the family working as a line worker, waitress, and in half a dozen of other menial jobs; *Murphy Brown* (1988–1998), featur-

ing a prominent 40-plus television journalist and news anchor who becomes a single mother. Although they constituted only a fraction of the entire bulk of prime-time dramas, some scholars enthused that "[t]here is no doubt that the presence of women employed outside the home has increased in prime time, with series featuring such characters rising from as few as 8 in the 1970s, to 10−14 in the early 1980s and about 20 by the end of the decade (Atkin et al., 1991)." (Comstock and Scharrer 72).

In mid to late 1990s, one of the trends included representations of career women as successful singles, such as the main protagonist and her female colleagues in *Ally McBeal* (1997–2002) or the four friends from *Sex and the City* (1998–2002). While both dramas continued the tradition of showing successful single career women, they could not ignore the contemporary progress of feminism, the "third wave" of which was emerging just then. Despite their excellent viewership, they came under criticism. *Sex and the City* was reprimanded because its "white, middle-class, heterosexual, racially, sexually, and economically privileged professional women took feminism for granted" expecting the society to do the same (Owen et al. 92). Ally McBeal, in turn, was a frustrated "quintessential postfeminist" who had the professional opportunities formerly unavailable to women, but who wished to have a satisfying relationship as well (Chambers, qtd. in Owen et al. 98). Nevertheless, *Ally McBeal* was probably the first show to contest cultural scripts concerning issues of appearance, sexuality and competence through the main protagonist's legal performances, often related to gender discrimination (Owen et al. 112–113).

The other conspicuous trend in that period was the rising popularity of ensemble shows featuring women in high-profile professions, e.g. medical in *ER* (1994–2009) or *Chicago Hope* (1994 – 2000), and legal and police force in procedurals such as *Law & Order* (1990–2010) or *Homicide: Life on the Street* (1993–1999). Not only did shows allow to introduce a greater variety of working women characters in terms of age, race, and position held in the organization, but it also enabled to occasionally pit them against each other in the workplace conflict scenarios.

In the first decade of the 21st century, the popularity of ensemble shows expanded. This format allows for the casts to appeal to larger audiences and gives the scriptwriters more flexibility in creating the plotlines for different characters. Most of these shows have a specific workplace setting, and thus they also create a complex insider view into the daily routines of the staff. In many cases, ensemble shows are "less about doctoring than about the relations between doctors or lawyers or about the relations between these professionals and their clients," which may "obscure the real work of lawyering or doctoring – from the tedious hours of case searching to endless paperwork filing and report filling" (Hanley 632). However, numerous more procedurally oriented shows, such as, for ex-

ample, *Third Watch* (1999–2005), *Law & Order*: *Special Victims Unit* (1999–), *CSI* (2000–2015), *CSI: Miami* (2002–2012), *The Wire* (2002–2008), *CSI: NY* (2004–2013), or *Grey's Anatomy* (2005–), focused on the actual work being done, revealing a lot about the knowledge and techniques the characters needed to apply in order to achieve their goals. According to Hanley, such shows "celebrate and idealize work because extreme devotion to work and its codes of professionalism promises personal fulfillment [and] communal identity" and thus "[r]epresentations of work in American television … generally tell us less about the realities of American work than about an idealized workplace an idealized work relations" (632). On the other hand, the first decade of the 21st century also witnessed the advent of heroines who are far from emblematic occupational role models, such as Brenda Leigh Johnson in *The Closer* (2005–2012), Patty Hewes in *Damages* (2007–2012) or Jackie Peyton in *Nurse Jackie* (2009–2015). All hailed as strong female characters, they pursue their careers while transgressing the long-established codes of conduct in their professions.

Overall, working women's characters in American TV dramas elude clear-cut periodic categorization. For more than half a century, some media critics have regularly applauded the arrival of strong, independent, and powerful female characters, while others bemoaned their lack. Beyond doubt, although representations of women in workplace settings have become commonplace, they remain the object of scrutiny of the feminist scholars, and due to the peculiar and inherent media bias, such images require careful reading and analysis. In fact, Susan Douglas cautions against a new form of discrimination camouflaged by the omnipresence of powerful female characters on TV. She calls it "enlightened sexism" which, according to her, "[is] a new, subtle form of sexism. It insists that full equality for women has been achieved, and therefore we don't need feminism anymore. So it's O.K. to resurrect retrograde, sexist images of women in the media, all with a wink and a laugh." (qtd. in Fitzpatrick). One of the aims of the of the present study is the analytical verification of her warning.

4. Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework that guided the conduct of my research and underpins the multi-faceted approach to the research problem draws from six relevant theories.

4.1 Feminist theory

Understood as the political and theoretical approach to society and culture that puts the role of women and femininity as the focal point, it permeates the present project on multiple levels. The preliminary idea, the choice of the shows, the bulk of research that preceded mine, the critique of women's occupational identities created in television fiction as well as identification of possible need for improvement have all been inspired by feminist critique.

4.2 Occupational identity theory.

According to Cynthia L. Wagoner and other scholars she quotes, “[o]ccupational identity refers to the way in which one views identity through the lens of occupational choice” (19). It cannot be considered in disconnect from one’s personal identity, as “[e]ach occupation has its own template, complete with structures, interactions, and incentives, which are yet filtered through individual experiences (19). According to Anita M. Unruh et al., occupational identity is “a fabric of occupational choices that conveys something about who a person is at particular points in his or her life. Occupational identity does not convey the whole of an individual but it is a core concept of the person as an occupational being.” (12) Thus the authors agree that occupational identity is but a fraction of one’s identity, but there is no denying that it is a vital part of most people’s lives. According to Michael A. Hogg and Deborah J. Terry, “[w]ork-related identities are important to people and often influence their sense of self more than do personal characteristics such as gender, race, or ethnicity.”(qtd. in Johnson et al. 498) This is probably due to the fact that occupational identity more often than not will offer the kind of comfort zone that other characteristics may not: a sense of purpose, social recognition, and personal success. The lack of any or all of these factors may lead to burnout and occupational stigma. Forging occupational identity may take a long time, and it often is a lifetime commitment, especially nowadays, in the light of post-industrial occupational changes and necessity of lifelong learning. The stages in the development of occupational identity were founded on Erikson’s model of identity development (Erikson). Within occupational identity theory, there is a necessity to include gender as one of the factors constitutive of one’s professional persona. **Women’s occupational identity**, sometimes referred to as occupational role identity, has been explored through various studies on particular professions, such as academic librarians (Cravey), women executives in hospitals (Storch), or massage therapists (Sullivan). Katie Rose Sullivan observes that “professions have historically been called out as patriarchal and gendered in ways that privilege men and masculinity” and evokes a number of studies to support her claim (275). Furthermore, based on numerous earlier research works, she contends that “for many women, much of the work of navigating professional identities includes the careful construction of the appropriate feminine body through the disciplinary controls of diet, exercise, proper movements, clothing, and adornments” (276).

4.3 Cultivation theory

The theory was developed by George Gerbner in the 1960s, in the context of the increasing growth of television (Gerbner "Toward Cultural Indicators"). The principles of the theory laid out in the Cultural Indicators Project were as follows: (1) television is responsible for shaping, or “cultivating” viewers’ conceptions of social reality, (2) the combined effect of massive television exposure by

viewers over time subtly shapes the perception of social reality for individuals and our culture as a whole, (3) television has long-term effects which are small, gradual, indirect but cumulative and significant. Initially, cultivation theorists focused on the representations of violence; however, later they "investigated the extent to which television viewing contributes to audience conceptions and actions in areas such as gender, minority and age-role stereotypes, health, science, the family, educational achievement and aspirations, politics, religion, and other topics" (Gerbner *Cultivation Analysis* 178). The methodology of cultivation analysis relies on the identification of virtually inescapable, consistent images, portrayals and values recurring throughout most of the television content. It emphasizes television's role as the primary channel of the culture's mainstream, and brings forth underrepresentation of women in the world of television resulting in relatively narrow range of roles and activities, which tend to be stereotyped (Gerbner *Cultivation Analysis* 181–185). Although the theory is over half a century old, it has been used in numerous 21st-century studies (Signorielli and Morgan, Morgan et al.). Communication theoretician Melvin DeFleur, who considered cultivation theory to be one of four theories on how media shape messages, made an observation directly relevant to the subject of the present study that the televised, dramatized labor force overrepresented law enforcement, managerial and professional roles to the exclusion of less prestigious occupations (64). Incidentally, his observation remains valid; blue-collar workers are common in sitcoms, but workplace dramas tend to be populated by high-flyers, which is why quantitative analysis ought to be supplemented with qualitative analysis. This approach will always be more productive, even though "television tends to make use of stereotyped beliefs and conceptions about a variety of occupations, and to focus upon atypical, dramatic or devious aspects of others…. As a learning source … television content that deals with occupational roles can be characterized as selective, unreal, stereotypical, and misleading." (De Fleur 74). There is little research countering the main tenets of cultivation theory. For example, McCauley et el. purported that their analysis of respondents "did not support the claim that TV is responsible for distorted social perceptions. In fact, respondents' distortions were consistently in the direction of overestimating sexual equality in occupations; that is, they were consistently antistereotypic." (197) Nevertheless, the results of their study have not been supported by other investigations.

4.4 Hegemony/Dominant ideology

The neo-Marxist concept of cultural hegemony, created by Antonio Gramsci, assumed an intellectual and moral leadership which can be formed by cultural and political consensus through such institutions as the church, schools or media. The concept of hegemony, which derives from neo-Marxist theories of society, has been appropriated by mass media and popular culture researchers, especially the ones representing the first wave of British cultural studies (Kellner), and applied in discourse

analysis. Understanding hegemonic discourse in terms of one group exercising power and control over the other by means of effective tools to exert it, ties in well with the perception of gender relations in terms of power struggle and production of meaning through television texts. The media creates a state of domination by focusing on the elites and the dominant ideologies, subsequently neglecting the subordinate groups (Kellner and Durham XV). In the case of gender roles, the societies have established the hegemony of males by institutionalizing of male dominance over women. Although, apparently, the differences between gender roles have diminished, it is widely claimed that mass media, including television, still perpetuates traditional gender stereotypes. Marshall McLuhan claims that apart from providing people with information and entertainment, mass media has the power to affect people's lives by shaping their opinions, attitudes and beliefs. Moreover, it can create a manipulated image of reality consistent with the policy of the dominant group. The dominant groups act through the hands of the TV producers and scriptwriters, the majority of whom are men (Lauzen *The Celluloid Ceiling* 10). According to many theorists, this reflects institutional male dominance over women and leads to an incomplete and distorted view of the world. Finally, in his application of Louis Althusser's theories to the concept of the 'classic realist text,' Colin MacCabe suggests that the ideological work of the narrative is masked by the apparent realism or transparency of cinema and television, transforming the seeming 'truth' of 'common sense' into 'truth' of the dominant ideology (qtd. in Thornham and Purvis 78).

4.5 Gender schema theory

In 1974, Sandra Bem developed an instrument called *Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI)*, widely used to measure gender role perceptions. The original BSRI consisted of a set of characteristics which were considered culturally desirable masculine or feminine traits, but it also allowed to measure androgyny, becoming a favorite instrument for investigating gender role orientation (Hoffman and Borders 39). In 1981, Bem proposed a theory according to which children learned about gender-appropriate occupational roles through their interactions with people in those positions. As a consequence, if an occupation is associated with a man or a woman, the child will more easily accept individuals in gender-prescribed roles, and question or reject those that counter such schemata. An aschematic approach, in which gender is not a salient element of social life, may encourage gender equality and provide a level-playing field for men and women in the labor force. Although Hoffman and Borders criticized BSRI as flawed, outmoded, and no longer useful (49), my small-scale pilot study proved it effective in gauging explicit gender schemata embedded in contemporary prime-time television dramas.

4.6. Intersectionality

This theoretical and methodological framework has been recently rising in prominence in academia, particularly in feminist research and gender studies. The actual term 'intersectionality' was coined in 1989 by Kimberle Crenshaw and referred to the marginalization of Black women within the antidiscriminatory law, the feminist theory, and the antiracist politics. Crenshaw developed the concept two years later in her now classic essay "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color," elaborating on "various ways in which race and gender interact to shape the multiple dimensions" of experience (1244), particularly for American non-white and new-immigrant women. The core tenets of this approach acknowledge the strong presence of multiple, intertwined ways of oppression which cannot be decoded through a single social category of gender, class or race. Such narrow reading, according to Edwards and Esposito, "limits the fullness of our understanding of social experience […] because we cannot choose to only occupy one of these positions at a time. Social categories work in simultaneity – not only at the individual level but also in relationship to the social, economic, and political systems we navigate" (2). In a similar vein, intersectionality theorist Vivian M. May emphasizes that people cannot be reduced to a single marker of identity and that the lived experience is mediated by the interlacing of such factors as race or class or gender, so that "one aspect of identity and/or form of inequality is not treated as separable or as superordinate" (3). Intersectional perspective is applied in investigations of labor market inequality, both in the U.S. (Browne and Misra) as well as in various other countries (Sjostedt et al.). It also has practical applications in promoting diversity and inclusion in the workplace, for example in Australia ("Workplace Equality and Respect").

5. Key terms

Even though no new terms are introduced in the research project and only the existing ones are used throughout it, the essential terminology is hereby defined for the sake of clarity.

Occupational identity. Although some define "occupational identities" as identities that individuals assume when they take on a particular occupation understood as any type of labor (volunteer, domestic, paid or unpaid) (Moore and Robinson 262), I use the term only in reference to paid employment outside the home. In this sense it is probably closer to "worker identity", but since "worker" has a more limiting meaning that does not readily encompass self-employed or career types of work (note that none of the entries for the word "worker" in the Oxford Dictionary refers to an employer or manager, and connotes mostly working class as jobs), I choose "occupational identity" as the most encompassing category.

Femininity. A set of attributes associated with the cultural role of women. Traditionally in opposition to men, a feminine woman will be: physically weak, submissive, self-conscious, emotional, dependant, nurturing, helpful, fearful, a follower, preoccupied with her own physical appearance, asking for or accepting advice or orders etc. Feminine traits are traditionally unwelcome in workplace setting. Also, some television genres and formats are regarded as feminine; according to Dorothy Hobson, they are: comedy series, soap operas, light entertainment and quiz programmes (qtd. in Bignell 2004, 296).

Masculinity. A set of attributes associated with the cultural role of men. Traditionally in opposition to women, a masculine man will be: physically strong, assertive, self-confident, rational, independent, self-serving, brave, a leader, negligent of his own physical appearance, giving advice or orders etc. Masculine traits are traditionally desired in workplace setting. Also, some television genres and formats are considered as masculine; according to Hobson, they are: news, current affairs, documentary, sport. (qtd. in Bignell 2004, 296).

Gender. Different from sex, which refers to the biological differences between male and female bodies, gender is a cultural and social division of people into men and women, or masculine and feminine individuals. Some believe that a more useful concept is that of gendered identities, which embraces other, multiple social identities that interplay with one's gender (Deaux 3). According to Kay Deaux, "[G]ender identity develops not in a vacuum, but in a social context in which representations and beliefs about gender are well established and actively fostered. … Gender identity casts a net far wider than the biological features, including activities and interests, personal and social attributes, social relationships, communications styles, and values." (7).

Gender roles. Cultural constructs or patterns of behavior that determine how men and women should think, speak, dress, and interact within the context of society. When gender roles and social roles, such as occupational roles, do not align, people tend to lean to stereotypes (Eagly and Karau). In turn, a **gendered occupation** is the one in which proportion of one gender is greater than the proportion in the whole labor force (Blackburn et al.).

6. Critical literature review

The extensive research works on media representation of gender nor only cover a wide array of genres and topics but also differ in scope. The literature area that constitutes the broadest foundation for the present study is that concerning female presence in film fiction. Here the most useful have been the works of feminist and post-feminist criticism focused on the "male gaze" in cinematic representations of women (Mulvey *Visual and Other*, "Visual Narrative"), objectification of the female body (Berberick, Gill, Fredrickson and Roberts, Aubrey), the lack of positive women role models (numer-

ous studies conducted at Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media), representations of race (Tajima, Byars and Dell, Hagedorn, Davies and Smith), as well as the cultural scripts of womanhood (romance, motherhood, career, female bonding, sisterhood, lesbianism etc.) (Byars and Meehan, Press "Gender anf Family," Hohenstein and Thalman). Representations of working women and their occupational identities under scrutiny in the present study intersect with all of these areas, and yet they seem to have been of comparatively limited interest to scholars. One possible reason is that films specifically devoted to women in the workplace are scarce, particularly in American mainstream cinema, and in other productions a woman's job is only secondary or tertiary to her other social roles, such as a lover, wife or mother. Also, the narratives about career or working women tend to be skewed; according to Diane Negra and Yvonne Tasker, most contemporary films, especially chick flicks, would play up the conflict between career and romance, but downplay such issues as the gendered pay gap or a need for childcare (108). However, several films did generate critical discussions concerning the representations of career women and working women in general, such as *Fatal Attraction* (1987*), Baby Boom* (1987), *Working Girl* (1988), *Disclosure* (1994), *The Devil Wears Prada* (2006). By far the voices were critical; Martha Nochimson emphasized "Hollywood's usual demeaning portrait of women in the workplace" (48), Negra bemoaned "the chick flick convention of presenting older career women in a negative light" ("Structural Integrity" 54) and accused the industry of always presenting women in the workplace as catty and backstabbing, without a counterbalance in the form of positive images of female mentorship or camaraderie. On the whole, the criticism generated by cinematic portrayals of working women concentrated on such aspects as working woman's body and its excessive sexualization, the necessity for the characters to give up on personal life in order to succeed, and the backlash on women in positions of leadership. It did not, however, focus explicitly on the subject of women's occupational identity.

In television studies, several researchers have consistently focused on representations of women's occupational roles, some of them investigating such representations on daytime or primetime television in general, and others concentrating on selected primetime series broadcast over specific periods of time. Early content studies showed that not only were there few primetime television women in employment outside home, but they were cast in a narrower, low-status, unprofessional, and less prestigious occupational roles compared to men: as secretaries, nurses, teachers, and household maids (DeFleur, Dominick, Jeffries-Fox and Signorielli, Signorielli "Television and Concepts," "Television and Adolescents'," Signorielli and Bacue, Tedesco, Vande Berg and Streckfuss). Additionally, most scholars agreed that the representations of women's occupational roles were limited and highly stereotyped, and thus harmful (DeFleur, Dominick, Jeffries-Fox and Signorielli). It was

only in 1980s, particularly after 1985, that the representation of women in professional roles previously reserved for men started to rise (Atkin et al., Elasmar et al., Signorielli "The Demography," "Television and Adolescents'," Vande Berg and Streckfuss). According to Atkin et al., in 1980s women were mostly shown as higher level white-collar characters (33.5 %), whereas pink-collar characters and law enforcement roles were nearly equal in numbers (22.7 % and 21.9 %, respectively). Nonetheless, echoing earlier conclusions of Joseph Dominick regarding frequent stereotypization of women's roles on television, Nancy Signorielli ("Televisions and Concepts," "Television's Gender Roles") opined that they were conventional and unchanged. According to Escholz et al., cinematic depictions of females in the workplace evolved after 1990s, but they lacked the “quantity and prestige” allocated to male characters. They also noticed that some form of “romantic tension” between the characters within the storyline was a commonplace reason for featuring a lead female character alongside a male one (307).

A number of critical television studies have been devoted to the representations of women in particular occupations, mainly professional, such as lawyers (Escholz et al., Klein), doctors (Lotz, Turow), nurses and physicians (Kalisch and Kalisch "Nurses," "Sex-Role Stereotyping"), investigators (Mizejewski) and law enforcement officials (Clark, D’Acci, Evans and Davies, Lotz). These studies proved useful in that they usually trace the progress in representation of particular occupations over decades, and frequently juxtapose such portrayals against hard census data. Commenting on the limited scope of women’s occupational roles, Signorielli and Kahlenberg ascribe it to dramatic conventions, as:

> [o]nly those jobs that serve a dramatic function in a story are regularly portrayed on prime-time. For instance, the work of law enforcement officers, doctors and lawyers is often more exciting, suspenseful, interesting and prestigious than that of farmers and laborers. The former jobs have good story-telling material. Consequently, television consistently over-represents these types of occupations while it underrepresents blue-collar occupations. (223)

A number of authors have dealt with race or ethnicity in relation to woman’s occupational role as shown on television is (Gerbner and Signorielli, Jefferson, Matabane and Merritt, Seggar and Wheeler, Signorielli "Race and Sex," Signorielli and Kahlenberg). They frequently concluded that the African American female characters tended to have a lower socioeconomic status than white women. They were also more often featured as seeking employment, and in positions with limited decision-making or organizational powers (Matabane and Merritt 332).

A well-researched aspect in the depictions of women's occupational roles is their marital status, especially the situation of being single and having a career (Genz, Negra "Quality Postfeminism," Signorielli, "Marital Status," Signorielli and Kahlenberg). Content analyses of the 1970s and 1980s programming showed that single and divorced or widowed women were more frequently portrayed in occupations that required work outside the home, whereas employed married women were rare (Signorielli and Kahlenberg 5). Additionally, once married women tended to be presented in a less positive light than married and single women (Signorielli "Marital Status"). In their study of the 1990s programming, Signorielli and Kahlenberg concluded that, overall, single and formerly married women were more likely to be shown as working outside the home compared to married women, the ratio being 64.2 %, 59.2% and 39.6 %, respectively (14).

Representations of women's occupational roles in relation to their family lives, especially motherhood, have also garnered a substantial research interest (Byars and Meehan, Heintz-Knowles, Press *Women Watching,* "Gender and Family," Rabinovitz "Sitcoms and Single Moms"). The overall conclusion is that television fiction tends to reflect the sociological changes in women's real lives, but too often the work-life balance is tilted and more difficult to achieve for working women than for men. Moreover, Andrea Press noticed a change in the depictions of the relationship between work and the woman's position in the family. She argued that compared to the 1960s and 1970s, the images of the 1990s' women in the workplace were impaired by the sense of being deprived of love and family life ("Gender and Family"). Also, numerous studies analyzed the depictions of working mothers, in particular the single working ones (Rabinovitz "Sitcoms and Single Moms," Spangler), also drawing the attention of nonacademics (Powell). Furthermore, Kristen Hungerford, who investigated the issue of reproductive rights in medical dramas, found in them an implication that female physicians' ultimate goal was the romantic relationship and motherhood. Although thematically apropos, not all of those contributions were directly relevant to the present project as they were often based on a different genre – the primetime situation comedies.

Women's behavioral, character, and discourse in occupational roles constituted yet another facet in the studies of their representations (De Cicco, Glascock, Japp, Lauzen et al., Vande Berg and Streckfuss, Smith et al.). Phyllis Japp, for instance, who analyzed a variety of prime-time network entertainment programming in the 1980s, concluded that the images of working woman were clichéd and stereotypical, and unable to break away from the cultural tradition separating the concept of "woman" from the concept of "work". Vande Berg and Streckfus (1992) undertook a study of 116 primetime television episodes shown in America on three different networks in 1986–1987, focusing mainly on "equality of representation across industries, occupational roles, hierarchical position, de-

pictions, genre and dramatic tone" (197). The results indicated that female characters were conventionally portrayed in interpersonal, counseling, and motivational functions, as opposed to informational, decisional, political, and operational roles typically played by their male counterparts. Also, they occupied lower positions than men in the organizational hierarchy. The authors posited that despite the increase in the number of female characters shown in organizational settings, the television fictional world of work remained highly masculine (204). Their findings served as a good reference for my own about the analogous situation one decade later.

The works most directly relevant to the present study are those exploring the topical triad of feminism and/or postfeminism, its representation on prime time television, and the construction of women's occupational identities. Applying a historical perspective, Andrea Press identified altered depictions of women, the workplace, and the family across various primetime genres (*Women Watching*); similarly, Bonnie Dow (*Prime-time Feminism*) discussed cases of primetime working women and representations of feminism in both sitcoms and dramas. Jackie Byars and Eileen Meehan studied images of women on a female-targeted narrowcasting channel and discovered that their relationship to work and sexuality shifted from passive to agentic. Both Danae Clark and Julie D'Acci independently engaged in close reading of *Cagney and Lacey* (1982–1988); while Clark discussed the concept of 'new woman' and feminist strategies of detection, D'Acci focused on negotiations of cultural constructions of gender, development of women characters, and representation of feminism. With reference to more contemporary productions, Amanda Lotz opined that workplace dramas, especially mixed-sex ensembles, integrated female professionals and naturalized women into careers that used to be male-dominated. Susan Douglas (*The Rise*) observed an increase in depictions of women in positions of power fusing toughness with femininity, but noted that Black professional women remained largely disempowered.

The imminent turn of the century spurred some critics and researchers to consider representations of femininity and feminism, especially in response to *Ally McBeal* (1997–2002). Ruth Shalit concludes that the series distorts feminist ideals by presenting self-identified feminists as sexy and bubbly, whereas Laurie Oullette suggests these emergent depictions reflect the contradictory discourse of postfeminism and postfeminist subjectivity. Michele Hammers concurred that the intersection of the social and theoretical discourses of the body with the professional discourses as shown in the series are especially problematic for working women. Other scholars focused on the intersections of the characters' professional and private life; for example, Dow ("Ally McBeal") wrote about lifestyle feminism and personal happiness in *Ally McBeal*, Rachel Dubrofsky described the main protagonist as a competent single woman torn between her desires for independence and family, and

Rachael Moseley and Jacinda Read discussed Ally's postfeminist, 'having-it-all' attitude. According to Stephanie Genz, this trap of having-it-all and the tribulations of working singletons were a characteristic phase in many film and television depictions around that time; Lotz, for example, identified this trend in comedic dramas, i.e. *Sex and the City* (1998–2002). Last but not least, Lauren Rabinovitz ("Sitcoms and Single Moms", "Ms.-Representation") offered insights on sitcom representations of feminist women, including single moms; although generically divergent, her findings proved inspirational for my own research.

Finally, feminist theory has also informed the studies of soap operas as feminine genre, as well as female audience studies. Mary Ellen Brown wrote about the sense of female empowerment that female viewers gained from watching that type of shows, whereas Ien Ang claimed that the pleasure female viewers derived from watching them came from their peculiar mix of realism and opportunity for emotional identification with the characters; similarly, Christine Geraghty pointed out that the appeal of the genre lies in the stories being told from the women's point of view. Charlotte Brunsdon and Joanne Hollows independently traced the increasing acceptance of soap opera as a valid object of academic study. Finally, Tania Modleski emphasized the importance of emotional identification between the viewer and the character. The findings regarding the important relationship between watching television for pleasure and viewer's emotional identification with the female characters and their relatable experiences have reinforced my conviction about the validity of my research project.

Although the bulk of research variously combining genre, representation, and gender studies of American television is produced in the United States, Polish scholars have also contributed valuable insights to the field. They are mostly Americanists, whose specific generic and topical interests overlap with various aspects of the present thesis and conceptually inspired its specific chapters. Several works of Polish authors deal with television dramas: Justyna Wierzchowska examined psychoanalytical motifs in the crime series *The Sopranos* (1999–2007) ("Wątki psychoanalityczne") and the distorted myths of middle-class American dream and American hero in *Breaking Bad* (2008–2013) ("Walter White"), whereas Zbigniew Mazur discussed the representations of family and motifs of "regeneration through violence" in television dramas *Ray Donovan* (2013–2020) and *Big Little Lies* (2017–2019). Television representation of racial and ethnic minorities were explored by Małgorzata Martynuska ("Destabilizing") in her discussion on the destabilization of Latino/a stereotype in dramatic comedy *Ugly Betty* (2006–2010), and by Justyna Wierzchowska ("Kto się odważy"), whose reading of the fact-based mini-series *Show Me a Hero* (2015) focused on race-based marginalization, inequality, and prejudice. Aleksandra Musiał applied an intersectional perspective to the analysis of selected characters and story arcs in the crime drama *The Wire* (2002–

2008), while Agnieszka Graff and Olga Szmidt independently explored the themes of female subjectivity and sexuality in comedy-drama *Girls* (2012–2017). Some other authors are even closer thematically to the present study by looking at working women in specific television dramas. Wojciech Boryszewski, for instance, contemplated the liberating transformation of the four female protagonists of *Desperate Housewives* (2004–2012); Nelly Strehlau (""Nieidealna," "(Nie) tylko") looked at contemporary depictions of female lawyers in popular prime-time dramas, while Daria Bruszewska-Przytuła focused on the new type of heroine in *Orange Is the New Black* (2013–2019), rightly predicting its great popularity and cultural poignancy. This brief and, of necessity, selective overview demonstrates that the present project is not an eccentric research venture but that it ties in with American cultural studies as practiced in Poland, and makes a new contribution to the existing scholarship in the field.

Although showing how the portrayals of working women depend on television creative staff structure and business operations is beyond the scope of my study, some authors offer interesting observations on what happens behind the scenes. Atkin et al. present strong evidence that such structural factors as television network and producers influence the portrayals of working female leads. Japp attributes the portrayal of working women as displaced persons to commercial sponsorship and public acceptance, on which television entertainment has always been dependent (72). Martha Lauzen, the author and creator of *The Celluloid Ceiling* and *Boxed In* projects, two over twenty-year-long comprehensive studies of women's employment in film and television, continuously investigates the connections between the quantity and quality of women's on-screen portrayals and the actual numbers of female TV creators and writers. Her consistent conclusion is that the presence of at least one woman in position of power working behind the scenes in American entertainment industry translates into an increase in visibility of female characters on the screen (Lauzen and Dozier, Lauzen *The Celluloid Ceiling*). All this is worth bearing in mind when formulating conclusions based on textual analysis only.

7. Research questions

Situated within the broad context of feminist critique of television, my project is intended to add to the body of work on women and popular culture by close examination of women's occupational identities that, to the best of my knowledge, has not yet been performed on a similar scale. The aim of this dissertation is an attempt an informed reading of a selection of early 21st century American television dramas featuring gainfully employed or self-employed women, to add to the body of existing knowledge and to suggest new pathways for future research. The main goal is to identify and de-

scribe the types of women's occupational identities offered by the American primetime scripted shows selected for deeper scrutiny.

To achieve this complex goal, the following subquestions were formulated and addressed in separate parts of the project. To begin with, what are the occupational and demographic profiles of the working women in early 21st century primetime dramas? Next, what are the tensions between the assumed femininity of the working women and the symbolic masculinity of occupations, work, and workplace environment? Then, what strategies do female characters pursue to secure and advance their positions in the workplace? Last but not least, how do working females reconcile their occupational roles with other social roles? The answers to the narrower questions complement each other in creating a complete answer to the main question about the nature of women's occupational identities constructed in the most popular genre of American entertainment television at the beginning of the new millennium.

Unquestionably, media representations of working women may influence and inform expectations of real-life working women on the one hand, and create unattainable ideals on the other. The awareness of the scope of scripts and frameworks offered by television might encourage the audiences to develop a more critical approach to mediated images of career women, working mothers, and aspiring singles on the whole.

8. Material and method

The project focuses on the programs broadcast originally during prime time on both national and cable networks between 1999 and 2010. Prime time is the part of day when the viewing audience is the largest. The primetime slots Monday through Saturday are 08:00 PM to 11:00 PM, and that number of hours is regulated by Federal Communications Commission. On Sundays, however, prime time starts at 07:00 PM and lasts until 11:00 PM. Due to large audience figures, the advertising time around that period is extremely expensive, even though the usage of DVRs and video-on-demand is on the rise. Because peak numbers of viewer tune in on a daily basis, the cultural impact of the programs aired during that time is considered the most significant. Being interested in the shows with possibly highest cultural impact, I naturally went for prime time.

By far the most popular type of programs broadcast in prime time is a TV drama. It is a type of scripted show where content tends to be realistic and applicable to real life so that the intended audiences can relate to the characters and plots featured in it. It is different from soap opera in its closed narrative structure of episodes with storylines revolving around one specific event, the setting other than domestic, and in its much more moderate focus on emotional ties between the characters. Also, it differs from a situation comedy through a much subtle use of humor or satire, not deliber-

ately employed to bring out the outbursts of uncontrolled laughter in the followers. TV dramas are predominantly broadcast in series, and may come in a variety of subgenres, such as medical or hospital drama, police procedural or crime drama, science fiction or fantasy (Auster 226–246, Casey N. et al. 87–91, Mittell1–28).

On the wave of the celebrations of the new millennium, heralded as a magical date in the history of Western civilization and a new beginning, I got interested in the American TV dramas within the 2000 – 2010 time period. They may have started before 1999 and continued beyond 2010, but it was essential that they had at least two consecutive seasons within that decade. Additionally, even though some of these shows continued for another decade or longer, I made an arbitrary decision to select the year 2015 as the end point for the analysis of the story arcs and character developments within the series. This move has ensured that the female characters in the series that aired between 2005 and 2009 have a comparable on-screen life to focus on in the analysis.

Essentially, the selected dramas consisted of at least two seasons, with the longest-running series at 23 seasons, spanning two decades. Television season is a typically American broadcasting programming schedule which includes between 20 to 26 episodes in a series. Most shows debut in September, thus opening the "Fall Season", and usually run until May, ending with a "season finale".

Due to the main focus of the dissertation on women's occupational identities, I concentrated on the shows that featured at least one female character in a starring role, either as a central character or a meaningful member of the ensemble cast, in gainful employment or self-employment. Female-centered drama is a type of show that revolves around one, two or more main female characters who are granted (nearly) equal screening time and importance to the plot; in other words, they feature multiple lead actresses. In the case of ensemble cast drama, a group of main characters is allowed nearly balanced screening time and given roughly equal importance to the plot. That type of show is favored by both screenwriters and the audiences, as the former may shift the focus on characters and plotlines from one episode to next, whereas the latter appreciate the ability to bond with particular characters over time on the one hand, but benefit from a greater variety on the other. Both types appear in my study sample.

Also, to emphasize the verisimilitude of onscreen representations of jobs/work/occupations, I originally excluded the shows which were primarily humorous, action driven or packed with the supernatural, and only chose the shows which were generically pure dramas. However, I encountered an unexpected challenge: the prevalent hybridity of contemporary television shows means that even conventional dramas may be occasionally or frequently supplemented with the elements characteristic of comedy or fantasy, or employ other narrative strategies that transgress traditional conventions.

Elements from different successful television genres are often merged, which results in a type of program that does not have clear-cut generic boundaries but is popular with the audiences due to its refreshing departures from the convention. Although the practice dates back to the 1970s, it has become especially characteristic of 21st century, spawning such formats as dramedy or comedic drama (a combination of drama and comedy), docusoap (a combination of documentary and soap opera) or mockumentary (a combination of parody and documentary). In such untypical cases the decision whether to include the show or not was based on whether or to what degree those modifications distorted the images of occupations under analysis.

Eventually the sample of the analyzed TV dramas consists of "workplace dramas," family dramas, comedic shows. In workplace drama, the main setting is a particular institution that allows for developing multiple storylines involving professional people who work together. The most popular narrative environments may be hospitals or clinics (medical drama), law practices and courts (legal drama or courtroom drama), police stations (crime drama), crime labs (police procedural) and government offices (political drama). Workplace dramas included in the analysis are: medical dramas, police procedurals, legal dramas, and political dramas. The analysis also includes a number of hybrid dramas (those that verge on dramedy or comedic drama) with a poignant level of verisimilitude (excluding SF, fantasy, and vampire slaying). Also, one comedy-drama was included due to the intensified, albeit often perfunctory, professional activity of the starring female characters in the later seasons of the show. Altogether, a total of 50 TV dramas were subjected to analysis. The detailed list of shows can be found in Filmography.

The above criteria yielded a total of 212 female characters in leading or meaningful roles in the plot. The characters were considered as leading if they were listed as such in official promotional materials pertaining to a show. The characters who were rated as secondary but important to the plot at some point in the series, or elevated from supporting to main cast, were also included in the sample. On closer inspection, it turned out that several characters appeared in spin-off shows, but a technical decision was made to count them only once if their occupation was the same. Additionally, some of the characters performed more than one occupation; in this case, they were counted separately for each occupational role they had. As a result, the number of working female individuals amounted to the total of 223.

Although the scope of the study is broad in terms of the number of shows and characters, the imposed time framework excludes early 21st century productions that aired after 2010 and shared broadcasting space with the ones that started their run earlier and continued beyond the 2009/2010

season. Thus the results based on the ultimate selections might not adequately reflect the phenomena that might have occurred during the 2010–2015 referred to in parts of the study.

Being an interdisciplinary field, cultural studies is characterized by a distinctive, eclectic methodological approach (Wawrzyczek "The Interdisciplinary," Barker, Pickering, Rodman). The interdisciplinary character lies in the fact that it derives from the humanities, in particular literary studies, but it has also drawn on social science and has a clear affinity with sociology (Pickering 3). Though relative merits of most commonly employed research methods are debatable, the main distinction is between quantiative and qualitative ones, with the work centered on textual approach, ethnography, and reception studies (Barker 35–42). According to David Deacon, cultural studies is ridden with qualitative analyses and quasi-quantification, and its rejection of quantitative analysis results in limited participation in broader cultural debates (90–103). Nonetheless, Gilbert B. Rodman advocates that:

> Different cultural studies research projects may use completely different methodologies —including semiotics, ethnography, discourse analysis, focus groups, historical/archival research, ideological analysis, political economy, and rhetorical analysis (to name just a few)—and individual cultural studies practitioners may use different research methods from one project to the next. (1)

The choice of the research method, he adds, is dictated by the posed questions, and depends on the context as well as pragmatic considerations (1).

Cultural studies of television are the area of cultural inquiry that illustrate the need for a mixed methodological apparatus adjusted to the questions asked. The textual analysis, derived from literary heritage and drawing on narrative theory (texts as narratives) and on semiotics (texts as signs) (Barker and Jane 39–40, Bignell 205), is the major approach commonly adopted in the analysis of television texts and images. Undoubtedly, the application of textual analysis to particular television genres, such as soap opera, sitcom, or TV drama, is greatly facilitated by their apparent resemblance to traditional literary genres.

The analytical approaches used in this investigation are quantitative content analysis and qualitative textual analysis. They are both well-established in the analysis of media texts, and effective in scrutinizing commonplace stereotypes concerning gender and social roles traditionally ascribed to men and women. Quantitative content analysis serves to demonstrate the frequency and the type of representation throughout the texts subject to scrutiny, whereas textual analysis involves interpretation of the content, and includes semiotic, discourse, narrative, and ideological analysis.

Quantitative content analysis is applied in Chapters 1, 2, 3 and 4. Its findings allow to form viable conclusions about the “messages, images, [and] representation” (Hansen et al. 95) as well as speculate about the social implications the three might have. The instruments through which the content analysis was executed included coding sheets, which are detailed and explained in respective chapters of this dissertation.

Semiotic analysis, which was originally developed for the study of spoken language (Saussure, Levi-Strauss, Lacan), becoming a major approach to cultural studies due to the works of Barthes (*Mythologies*, *Elements of Semiology*), is now widely used to study aural and visual aspects of radio, print and television. In Chapters 2 and 3, semiotic analysis is used to assess the dimensions of femininity in women’s occupational identities. Finally, in Chapter 4, it enables to study the depictions of work-life balance and the bearing the former has on the latter.

Discourse analysis is a commonly used approach in the analysis of language, including the language of television. In the field of contemporary cultural studies, the meaning of 'discourse' has expanded beyond its original verbal reference to include other languages, that is, systems of conveying meaning, such as, for example, body language (e.g. gestures, facial expressions). The assumption behind the discourse analysis is that underneath the transfer of information lies another layer of meaning, and heavily power-laden one. In Chapter 3, bodily discourse drawing on Foucault's concepts regarding self-surveillance and self-discipline (Bordo, Foucault) is used as a lens through which the construction of women’s occupational identities is examined.

Extended storylines, characteristic of contemporary TV dramas due to their episodic nature and predominantly ensemble cast, unfold over a series of episodes to provide for the continuous development of major characters and allow the entire series to follow through. Also, overarching storylines (in short, story arcs) help the audience to build up greater attachment to particular characters than in the case of series based exclusively on stand-alone episodes. The application of narrative analysis in Chapters 2, 3 and 4 enables to examine selected story arcs, understood as “the principal plot of an ongoing storyline in the episodes of a narrative; the continuous progression or line of development in a story.” ("story arc") The expected effect is better insight into the contexts in which women’s occupational identities are forged within the organizational structure (Chapters 2 and 3) and how the conflict and balance between work and private life, especially relationships and motherhood, is framed (Chapter 4).

The applied research methodology does have a limitation. Being the sole coder in the qualitative research might lead to different results than those obtained in studies with multiple coders. How-

ever, the nature of the dissertation project excludes the possibility of shared authorship and hence solitary effort instead of a group endeavor is the norm.

Finally, while some of the research data could benefit from statistical significance analysis in the process of identification of patterns and trends, none will be performed due to the lack of knowledge and resources on my part.

9. The structural outline

The thesis consists of an Introduction, four Chapters, and Conclusions, followed by Works Cited and Filmography. Chapter 1 provides a structural analysis of fictional women's occupational careers juxtaposed against real-life data on the American women's labor force experience. Chapter 2 discusses the notions of self-creation of women's occupational identities in the contexts of behavior, whereas Chapter 3 focuses on the visual aspects of occupational identities, namely the corporeal and the sartorial characteristics of the working female characters. In turn, Chapter 4 provides an analysis of the tensions that result from the strive to balance working and private lives. The thesis ends with Conclusions, discussing considerations of key findings, implications and limitations of the study, and suggestions for possible future research initiatives.

Chapter 1: Women's Labor Force Participation in the U.S.A. 2000–2010 and its Reflection in the American Primetime Television Dramas

An essential point of departure for any investigation into media representations is a factual context in which the findings will be juxtaposed and interpreted. The present study uses a set of vital demographic, socio-economic, and cultural data referring to the situation of American working women in the early 21st century as the backdrop for comparison with the results of the quantitative and qualitative analysis of analogous elements in American primetime television dramas. Thus the goal of this Chapter is to present an overview of women's actual participation in the American labor force and its fictional portrayal in the TV content selected for analysis in order to evaluate the relationship between the two.

1. Women in the U.S. labor force in the early 21st century: an overview

Women's participation in the labor force had been increasing steadily since the 1960s until it peaked in 2000, with nearly 61 % of American women aged 16 and older in paid employment or actively seeking it (Black et al. 5). According to the 2004 *Women in the Labor Force: A Data Book* report, the entry of women into higher-paying occupations and their nearly doubled presence in managerial, administrative, and executive positions between 1983 and 2002 coincided with their attainment of higher education degrees, which nearly tripled between 1970s and 2001, and matched that of men at the level of 32% in 2002. However, although as many as 55% of women worked in professional specialty occupations, only 11% of engineers were women while they constituted 93% of the registered nurses in 2002 (1). After 2000, the women's participation numbers started to drop, stopping at 57,2 % in 2016 (Black et al. 5), with no visible impact on earlier patterns of occupational segregation by gender. According to Philip N. Cohen (2013), occupational gender segregation in the United States labor market has been stable over the decades; not only was it high and change-resistant, but it did not diminish substantially in the first decade of the 2000s for the first time since 1960. On the other hand, using a different data analysis procedure, Blau et al. (2013) claim that gender segregation decreased between 1970 and 2009, primarily due to the influx of women to formerly predominantly male white-collar and service jobs, and specifically among college graduates, indicating that the changes were correlated with education (489). Unlike the mentioned studies, the present survey is not a result of my own American labor market research. It shows both horizontal and vertical distribution of women in occupations on the basis of the available official data

and takes into account such factors as their race, age, years of experience, level of employment in hierarchical organizations, duration of employment/career interruptions, employment after childbirth, and the opting out phenomenon. The statistical data come primarily from the US Census Bureau and the U.S Department of Labor, particularly the Women's Bureau. Whenever possible, the presented data refer to three distinct periods of the first decade of the 21st century, namely years 2000, 2005, and 2010. They are occasionally supplemented by the pre-2000 census data as well as the 2015 statistics to show the situation in the 2010s in a longer time perspective.

Principal occupations of American women. The data from the 2000 US census indicate that men and women still had different occupations at the beginning in the twenty-first century. According to data quoted by Martha E. Reeves:

> [T]he top occupations for men include drivers, sales workers, first-line supervisors, managers of retail sales, laborers, material workers, carpenters, and janitors. The top occupations for women included secretaries, administrative assistants, elementary and middle school teachers, nurses, cashiers, and retail salespeople. … The top ten occupations for women in 2008, in order from most popular to least, were secretaries and administrative assistants, registered nurses, elementary and middle school teachers, cashiers, retail salespersons, nursing, psychiatric and home health workers, first-line supervisors of retail sales clerks, waitresses, receptionists and information clerks, and bookkeepers, accounting and auditing clerks (US Department of Labor Statistics, 2009). (16)

More statistical insight into specific jobs performed by women in 1999 and in 2010 is provided by the two tables below. Only occupations with over 400,000 female workers are listed. For comparison, the number of men in the same occupations is provided, and all the numbers are given in thousands.

	Occupation	**Women**	**Men**
		in thousands	
1.	Technical, sales, and administrative support	16,863	10,525
1.1.	Technicians and related support	1,749	1,802
1.2.	Technicians, except health, engineering, and science	479	643
2.	Managerial and professional specialty	15,167	15,537
2.1.	Executive, administrative, and managerial	6,992	7,981

	2.2.Management-related occupations	2,349	1,677
3.	Administrative support, including clerical	10,788	3,322
	3.1.Secretaries, stenographers, and typists	2,582	47
	3.2.Miscellaneous administrative support occupations	2,145	448
	3.3.Financial records processing	1,322	157
	3.4.Information clerks	1,285	182
	3.5.Material recording, scheduling, and distributing clerks	700	953
	3.6.Records processing, except financial	582	171
4.	Professional specialty	8,175	7,556
	4.1.Teachers, except college and university	3,129	1,130
	4.2.Health assessment and treating occupations	1,851	368
	4.3.Social, recreation, and religious workers	634	542
	4.4.Writers, artists, entertainers, and athletes	604	722
	4.5.Mathematical and computer scientists	522	1,117
5.	Service occupations	5,632	5,209
6.	Service occupations, except private household and protective	4,918	3,400
	6.1.Food preparation and service occupations	1,607	1,583
	6.2.Health service occupations	1,574	217
	6.3.Cleaning and building service occupations	885	1,303
	6.4.Personal service occupations	852	298
7.	Sales occupations	4,326	5,402
	7.1.Sales workers, retail and personal services	1,849	1,475
	7.2.Supervisors and proprietors	1,351	1,924
	7.3.Sales representatives, finance and business services	798	1,019
8.	Operators, fabricators, and laborers	3,498	11,685
	8.1.Machine operators, assemblers, and inspectors	2,444	4,371
	8.2.Fabricators, assemblers, and hand working occupations	589	1,192
9.	Precision production, craft and repair	1,066	10,861
	9.1.Precision production occupations	774	2,619
10.	Handlers, equipment cleaners, helpers and laborers	737	3,230

Table 1.1 Most common jobs held by U.S. women and men in 1999. Author's own, based on US Bureau of Labor Statistics "Median weekly earnings of full-time wage and salary workers by detailed occupation and sex."

The list of occupations performed by women a decade later is shown in Table 1.2. The number of men in the same occupations is also provided for comparison. As the 2010 Census introduced a new occupational classification, the results are presented in a separate table.

	Occupation	**Women**	**Men**
		in thousands	
1.	Management, professional, and related occupations	20,136	19,009
1.1.	Professional and related occupations	13,040	10,457
1.1.1.	Education, training, and library occupations	4,708	1,826
1.1.2	Healthcare practitioner and technical occupations	4,241	1,437
1.1.3	Community and social services occupations	1,208	702
1.1.4	Computer and mathematical occupations	807	2,395
1.1.5.	Legal occupations	667	581
1.1.6	Arts, design, entertainment, sports, and media occupations	610	822
1.1.7.	Life, physical, and social science occupations	506	622
1.2.	Management, business, and financial operations occupations	7,096	8,552
1.2.1.	Management occupations	4,368	6,376
1.2.2	Business and financial operations occupations	2,728	2,177
2.	Sales and office occupations	14,220	8,840
2.1.	Office and administrative support occupations	10,158	3,782
2.1.1.	Secretaries and administrative assistants	2,297	102
2.1.2	Customer service representatives	1,010	515
2.1.3.	First-line supervisors/managers of office and administrative support workers	889	440
2.1.4	Receptionists and information clerks	815	66
2.1.5.	Bookkeeping, accounting, and auditing clerks	752	89
2.1.6.	Office clerks, general	595	110
2.2.	Sales and related occupations	4,063	5,058
2.2.1	First-line supervisors/managers of retail sales workers	975	1,168

2.2.2.Cashiers	928	370
2.2.3.Retail salespersons	734	1,011
3. Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	2,581	10,453
3.1.Production occupations	1,776	5,085
3.2.Transportation and material moving occupations	805	5,368
4. Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	406	9,464

Table 1.2 Most common jobs held by U.S. women and men in 2010. Author's own, based on US Bureau of Labor Statistics "Median weekly earnings of full-time wage and salary workers by detailed occupation and sex."

The data presented above corroborate the horizontal gender-based occupational segregation, understood as overrepresentation or underrepresentation of men or women in sectors of economy or particular occupations. The other aspect is the vertical segregation, referring to the tendency for women and men to be employed in different positions within the same occupation or occupational group depending on gender, but finding reliable data to illustrate the phenomenon in the study period proved to be too difficult.

Full time and part-time employment. The majority of American women work full-time, that is for 35 or more hours a week. According to Bureau of Labor Statistics, the percentage of full-time employment for females has ranged between 72% and 75% since late 1960s. With regard to the inspected period, 24.6% of all employed women worked part-time in 2000, whereas ten years later the number rose to 26.6%. For comparison, only 10.1% and 13,4% of men were employed part-time, respectively ("Percentage of employed women working full time little changed over past 5 decades"). The increased number of part-time workers of both sexes, correlated with a roughly 2% drop in overall employment, is attributed to the Great Recession lasting from December 2007 to June 2009 (Kalleberg and Von Wachter).

Working women by age. The household data annual averages refer to women of 16 years and older; however, the prime age for women starts around 25 and lasts till about 54. Between 2000 and 2016, participation of prime-age women in the labor market fell by 4.2 percentage points (Black et al. 3). According to another source, the female employment rate in full-time jobs in 2000 was 57%, dropping to 53.6 in 2010 (*Women in the U.S.* 7). Labor participation among the prime-age women peaked at 78% by 2000 and then started to fall, stopping at 74% in 2016; a similar yet sharper trend was observed in the case of women aged 16–24. In the case of 55+ women, the numbers picked up between 2000 and 2010, and remained fairly steady for the next decade (Black et al. 6–7). The Table

below shows the change in women's participation in the U.S. labor force between 2000 and 2010 by age.

	Participation rate, 2000	Participation rate, 2010	Participation rate change, 2000–2010
Women, 16 and older	59.9	58.6	-1.3
16 to 24	63.0	53.6	-9.4
16 to 19	51.1	35.0	-16.1
20 to 24	73.1	68.2	-4.8
25 to 54	76.7	75.2	-1.5
25 to 34	76.1	74.7	-1.4
35 to 44	77.2	75.2	-2.0
45 to 54	76.8	75.7	-1.1
55 and older	26.1	35.1	8.9
55 to 64	51.9	60.2	8.3
65 to 74	14.9	21.6	6.7
75 and older	3.6	5.3	1.8

Table 1.3 Women's participation in the U.S. labor market by age in 2000 and 2010.

The data show that while the participation of younger women in the labor force dropped, the share of women considered past their prime age increased significantly during that decade. The decreased number of the youngest women was partly connected with their more frequent pursuit of college education (Rampell). Meanwhile, the increased participation of older females may be connected with insufficient or non-existent retirement savings and plans resulting from career interruptions or part-time employment ("Women and Retirement Savings"). The average retirement age for women in 2001 was 60, while by 2010 it rose to 62 ("Average Retirement Age for Men and Women, 1962–2016").

Relationship between women's education and labor force participation. Education has a substantial impact on the employment prospects, hence it merits inclusion in the overview of women's labor force participation. In 2000, 8.5 % of women in the civilian labor force had less than a school diploma, and 31.6 % were school graduates without any college degree. At the same time, 29.8 % had some college education without a degree, or an associate's degree, whereas the percentage of college graduates among women in the labor force equaled 30.1%. In 2010, the

percentages for the same categories were 6.8, 26.4, 30.3, and 36.4, indicating a steady rise of women with some college education and college degrees ("Women in the Labor Force" 41). Despite these strides, the participation of women in the labor force fell across all education groups, with the largest decrease among the women with a high-school diploma or less (from 71% in 2000 to 62% in 2016). Labor force participation of women with a college degree no higher than an associate's went down from 81% to 76%, whereas the decrease was less conspicuous in the case of women with a bachelor's degree (83 to 81%) or a graduate degree (87.5 to 87.1%). Additionally, when examined by birth cohorts (six groups of women, born between 1960 and 1984), the life-cycles of women with college degrees show lower participation between the ages 25–29, rising higher between 30–39, dipping mid-career and then increasing again, presumably after child rearing break (Black et al. 8–9). In the case of cohorts without a college degree, their participation in the labor force is relatively steady, with a somewhat higher level of working women aged 30–44. Finally, the 2010 data showed that 37% of women in the employed occupation had a bachelor's degree or more, compared with 35% of men ("More Working Women Than Men Have College Degrees, Census Bureau Reports"); however, there was a persistent gap in men's and women's earnings despite comparable educational attainment. In 2010, the annual earnings of a college-educated woman were at 51 967 $ (compared to an average woman's earnings overall at 38 178 $), whereas the median earnings of a college-graduated man equaled 71 936 $ (compared to overall man's earnings at 50 422 $). According to economist Laura Tyson, the factors that affect the pay gap may include gender differences in occupational choices, part-time employment, and the motherhood penalty (i.e. the opposite of fatherhood premium for men) (Tyson and Parker).

Women’s occupations by race. In the multiracial and multiethnic American society, an important aspect of women’s employment structure to be addressed is the correlation between race/ethnicity and work. Since race tends to be a politically charged and culturally unstable category, often confused with ethnicity (Ford and Kelly 1659–1664), the race categories will be used from now on after the U.S. Census Bureau, that distinguishes the following race groups: White ("having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa"), Black or African American ("having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa The 2010), American Indian and Alaska Native ("having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America (including Central America) and ... maintain[ing] tribal affiliation or community attachment"), Asian ("having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent"), Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander ("having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands"), and two or more races, referring to a combination of any of

the above, or to Some Other Race ("About the topic of race"). Because of the relatively small sample sizes, the official U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports contain no or limited data on American Indians and Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians and Other Pacific Islanders, and people who are of two or more races.

According to the official records, the labor force participation rate of women aged 25–54 varied by race and ethnicity between 2000 and 2015. While the initial participation rate ranged from 67.6 % for Hispanic or Latino women, 71.3 for Asian, 76.8% for White, to 78.9 % for Black or African American, by 2015 a decline in the labor force participation rate was noted in each of the four race and ethnicity groups under scrutiny, with the most marked fall observed among Asian women (–3.5 percentage points), followed by White (-2.9), Black or African American (-2.4), and Hispanic or Latino (-1.3) ("Labor force participation: what has happened since the peak?"). No data are available for the remaining races. Moreover, the official household data annual averages that specify the women's labor participation according to race are only available for the years 2005 and 2010. Table 1.4 below shows the top five occupations, from the most to the least popular, with the percentage of White, Black or African American, Asian, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity women employed in them. As the Hispanic women may be of any race, they are shown as a joint racial-ethnic group. Additionally, the official data do not include the remaining races officially recognized by the Census. Finally, the data refer to working women of 16 years and older; in thousands, in the year 2005, 53,186 were White, 8,158 Black or African American, 2,885 Asian, and 7,295 of Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, whereas the numbers in 2010 were 52,916, 8,145, 3,117, and 8,106, accordingly.

Occupational sector	**Race**							
	White		**Black and African American**		**Asian**		**Hispanic or Latino ethnicity**	
	2005	**2010**	**2005**	**2010**	**2005**	**2010**	**2005**	**2010**
Service occupations	19.0	20.1	27.3	28.3	18.2	21.3	30.5	33.2
Professional and related occupations	25.2	27.3	20.4	23.1	29.0	31.7	14.4	15.4
Office and administrative support	22.6	20.8	22.4	19.4	16.8	13.6	20.7	19.9
Management, business, and financial occupations	13.6	14.2	10.0	10.7	15.6	14.4	7.9	8.7
Sales and related occupations	12.5	11.7	11.0	11.4	11.9	11.7	12.3	11.8

Table 1.4. Percent distribution of females in the workforce by race worked out on the basis of "Household data annual averages, 2005" and "Household data annual averages, 2010".

The data show that in both years, service occupations were most frequent among women of Hispanic or Latino ethnicity (30.5 and 33.2) as well as Black and African American women (27.3 and 28.3). The percentage of persons in professional and related occupations was invariably the highest among Asian (29.0 and 31.6) and White (25.2 and 27.3.) women. Employment in office and administrative support occupations oscillated around 20% among White (22.6 and 20.8), Hispanic/Latino (20.7 and 19.9), and Black/African American women (22.4 and 19.4), and was visible less popular among Asian women. The latter appear to have been more attracted by management, business, and financial occupations (15.6 and 14.4.), similarly to White women (13.6 and 14.2), and unlike Black/African American (10.0 and 10.8) and Hispanic/Latino women (7.9 and 8.7). Finally, the presence of women in sales and related occupations was most stable and showed the least variation, oscillating around 12 % for all racial/ethnic groups, with minor ups and downs over the 5-year period.

Gendered career trajectories. An extensive body of literature indicates significant differences with regard to positions occupied by women in their respective places of employment as well as prospects of career advancement in comparison with men. The 2010 McKinsey report on what motivated middle-management women to "turn down opportunities for advancement, look for jobs outside the company, or leave Corporate America altogether" concluded that they experienced "lack of role models, exclusion from the informal networks, [and] not having a sponsor in upper management to create opportunities." Another reason for lower numbers of women in top positions was their deep sense of making a difference, which they prioritized over corporate politics. Finally, promising female candidates were found to be frequently overlooked for promotion on the assumption that they would be unable to combine the executive level tasks with family obligations (Barsh and Yee). A study probing into the differences in promotion patterns of high-potential women and men conducted by Ibarra et al. revealed that although more women than men get mentoring in the workplace (83% to 76%), it does not bring them the same career benefits; while 72% of actively mentored men received one or more promotions over a two-year period, only 65% of women had a similar experience. The authors also noted that formal sponsorship programs are more effective in promoting women than informal mentoring arrangements; however, the success of formal mentoring depends on the senior leader's sensitivity to gender-related dilemmas, as "[t]he strategies and tactics that help[] the men progress in their careers may not be appealing or even feasible for the women." (83–4). Moreover, a study by Institute of Leadership and Management revealed lower ambitions and expectations of women managers leads them to more cautious career choices; on average, it takes them three years more compared to men to assume a management position (qtd. in Johns). To add race to the equation, even though Black women ask for promotions at the same rate as men, only 58 women are promoted

to manager compared to 100 men; when it comes to hiring, 64 Black women are hired as managers, compared to 100 men. Overall, Black women report that they receive less encouragement and support from their managers; in comparison, White women's experience is comparable to men's, whereas Asian women and Latinas land in between (7–9).

Hiring and promotion practices across different industries and occupations are not free of gendered discrimination. According to numerous research reports, women are more likely to experience discrimination variously called sticky floor, leaky pipe (e.g. Hancock et al., Metcalf), or glass ceiling (e.g. Purcell et al.). These metaphors refer to the obstacles that women may face at different stages of their career: being stuck in the entry level positions (Reichman and Sterling), attrition of females on their way to the top, or the (in)visible barriers they cannot break to reach the top. Additionally, Carli and Eagly suggest that the labyrinth metaphor most aptly reflects the experience of many female employees who face "gender stereotypes that depict women as unsuited to leadership, discrimination in pay and promotion, lack of access to powerful mentors and networks and greater responsibility for childcare and other domestic responsibilities" (514). Moreover, the employment gaps, sometimes referred to as the "mommy track," also have a negative impact on women's career progress (Barnett, Brannon 314–315). A current longitudinal research on women's career paths by Sarah Damaske and Adrienne Frech suggests that they remain diverse, reflecting different strategies used to accommodate the childbearing and childrearing responsibilities, such as working part-time or intermittently, increasing or decreasing work hours, or working full-time in their twenties, leaving the workforce for some time, and then returning to full-time employment by their forties.

2. The portrayals of women's occupational careers in early 21st-century television primetime dramas

Having presented the overview of American women's labor force distribution and experience, I will now confront it with American primetime television dramas of the first decade of the 21st century to find out what aspects of reality got into those popular fictional representations depictions of working women and what "statistics" emerge from such depictions.

Types and frequency of presented occupations. The occupation categories used by the U.S. Census Bureau for statistical purposes were not always suitable as labels for the occupations performed by the female characters in the sample. Therefore, a set of different broad occupational categories was used, borrowed from the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC), which were broken down into subcategories specifying the jobs performed by the characters in the research sample. The data below reflect the characters and their occupations in the dramas shown between 1999 and 2010; even if a

show continued beyond that date and the female character changed or acquired additional qualifications, it is not reflected in the table.

Occupation	SOC code	On screen 1999–2010
Healthcare occupations	**29-0000**	
Doctors: physicians, surgeons, and physician's assistants	29-1210 29-1240	36
Nurses	29-1140	10
Paramedics	29-2040	2
Legal occupations	**23-0000**	
Lawyers	23-1011	39
Judges	23-1020	1
Law enforcement	**33-0000**	
Police and Detective Supervisors	33-1012	8
Police Detective / Inspector	33-3021	23
Police patrol officer	33-3051	8
CSIs	19-4092	10
Medical examiners	13.1041.06	9
Agents	**33-3000**	
FBI	33-3021	10
NCIS	33-3021	5
CBI	33-3021	3
US Marshal	33-3021	1
Education	**25-0000**	
Teachers	25-2000	8
STEM professionals	**19-0000** **15-0000**	
Scientists	19-0000	4
Laboratory technicians and computer analysts	29-2010 29-2012 15-1122	4
Journalists	**27-0000**	
Press editors, columnists and reporters	27-3023 27-3040	6
Public Relations	**27-0000**	
PR professionals	27-3031	5
Civil service	**n/a**	
White House staff	n/a	8
Entrepreneurs	**11-9000** **41-9000**	
HORECA professionals	n/a	6
Real estate agents	41-9020	1
Other	**n/a**	16

Table 1.5 Occupations held by the characters in the sample. The category "Other" comprises such jobs as: advertising executive, art dealer, children’s books illustrator/author, fashion designer, fashion

model, film industry executive, firefighter, grief counselor, life coach, office assistant, psychologist, private investigator, receptionist, secretary, webcam lingerie model.

Unsurprisingly, the three most numerously represented occupations are consistent with the most popular TV genres, that is lawyers (mostly featured on police procedurals and legal crime procedurals), doctors (appearing chiefly in medical procedurals), and police detectives (featured on police procedurals). They are closely followed by agents (featured on police procedurals and forensic procedurals) and by CSIs and medical examiners, two novel and somewhat related occupations that gained popularity due to forensic procedurals, a subgenre of procedural drama. Although all of the above are traditionally male-gendered occupations in traditionally male genres, they are performed by as many as 61 % of the female characters in the study sample.

Each of the women's occupational groups contained in Table 1.5 can be further analyzed with regard to narrow specializations, places of employment, and types of tasks in order to identify the most salient characteristics of their representation.

Healthcare professionals. The specializations of medical doctors vary in the dramas, but the dominant groups are surgeons (general, neonatal, orthopedic, cardiothoracic), physicians (especially emergency medicine) and endocrinologists. Medical students, interns and residents are also included in this category. In 2010, the number of on-screen female doctors and trainees almost doubled in comparison with the 1999–2000 season (see Table 1.6). In the case of nurses, the relative rise in numbers in the analogous period was a stunning 1 to 6. Practically all of the nurses are hospital-employed, and most of them fully licensed; there was but one nursing student. Also, one nurse character resigned from the position of nurse manager, returning to interrupted medical studies.

Two-thirds of the primetime TV medical doctors are hospital-based, whilst the remaining characters are employed in private facilities or a free clinic. As for the nurses, all of them are hospital-based, with two of them featured in power-wielding administrative roles. The two paramedics work at the New York City Fire Department, delivering emergency medical care in fire-related circumstances.

It must be noted that the majority of the doctors in the sample are part of the main cast and are often given leading roles. In the case of the nurses, only two have starring roles on the shows titled after them, whereas the paramedics are both part of main cast until one of them dies a sudden death.

The legal profession. More than half of the female lawyers in the sample are employed in the private sector as practice proprietors, partners, or associates. They mostly work as criminal defense

lawyers and family lawyers. However, female lawyers working for the state enjoy a sizable representation as well, mainly in the capacity of assistant district attorneys (ADAs) specializing in criminal law. In the whole examined sample, there were only two naval lawyers and one in-house lawyer. These results are partly consistent with Diane Klein's (1998), who investigated primetime portrayals of 70 female attorney characters on drama and comedy shows prior to 1997; however, according to her, in-house counsels or corporate lawyers were absent, and none of them were shown as working for "mega-firms" (278).

As a rule, the identified lawyers operate in big cities, with only two based in small towns. Finally, private practice lawyers are more likely to be cast in leading roles than state prosecutors, who are never central to the show despite being part of the main cast. The sample also includes one juvenile court judge based in Hartford, Connecticut, who previously worked as a high-powered corporate lawyer in New York city. The character has a starring role on the show with her first name in the title.

Law enforcement occupations. The most frequent role in this category is that of a police detective, followed by a police supervisor (lieutenant, captain, or chief), and a patrol officer, including one Port Authority officer. Police detectives deal with a variety of violent crimes, such as homicide and sexual offenses. Additionally, both police detectives and patrol officers are most frequently depicted with a work partner, almost always a male. In turn, police supervisors are shown as commonly engaging in the investigations led by their subordinates. Basically all law enforcement professionals are based in large cities. Despite being credited as main cast, relatively few have leading or starring roles on their shows: several police detectives, two police officers and one police captain.

Agents. Female agents mostly hold jobs with such readily recognizable entities as Federal Bureau of Investigation and Naval Criminal Investigative Service. Some females are also shown to work for a fictional version of the California Bureau of Investigation; importantly, nearly all of them have a prior FBI experience. One show features women working for the department of FBI called the Behavioral Analysis Unit (BAU), which solves serial and other extremely violent crimes. Additionally, one character is featured in a less common roles of a U.S. Marshal working for the Federal Witness Protection Program in Albuquerque, New Mexico. This character is the only one with a leading/starring role on her show; most of the other agents are, however, part of main cast.

Teachers. Fictional teacher characters specialize in social studies, art, music, English, and physics. Nearly all females shown in teaching roles perform their work in an inner city high-school, the only exception being an assistant art teacher at a private primary school. An important concern of

the high-school teachers going beyond their job responsibilities is students' welfare. Nearly all teachers are part of main cast, but only half of them get ample screen time to be considered as shown in leading roles. Additionally, the assistant art teacher's job is temporary and part-time, and the character is barely seen at work.

STEM professionals. Nominally, the category includes female characters working in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. However, this category creates classification problems that stem from the discrepancy between qualifications and place of employment. Effectively, the characters identified as STEM professionals chiefly represent applied sciences and mathematics, and none of them holds an engineering job. Additionally, although the American Psychological Association considers clinical psychology a core STEM discipline (APA), in the research sample the psychiatrist was categorized as a doctor, and a psychologist is part of the "Other" group. Similarly, CSIs and medical examiners who completed science-oriented educational programs are not included in this category; however, none of the female characters holds an engineering job. As far as the places of employment are concerned, STEM professionals work for crime laboratories, a fictional Jeffersonian Institute, and a university. Interestingly, even those employed outside crime lab facilities perform forensics-related jobs, such as that of a forensic scientist, forensic facial reconstruction specialist, or a Head of Forensic Division.

Journalists. All the characters included in this category work for magazines or newspapers; while four of them are regular employees, two work as freelance writers. Two of the regular employees hold editor-in-chief positions, with one heading a luxury general interest magazine and the other a glossy gossip periodical. The two reporters work for a Los Angeles-based tabloid magazine and for a Baltimore daily newspaper, respectively. While most of the topics dealt with by the magazine journalists relate to fashion and gossip, the newspaper reporter works for the crime section. Although more than half of the journalist characters are in leading roles, only two of them are regularly shown in their professional capacity, whereas the others are frequently featured in storylines unrelated to work.

PR professionals. The representatives of this occupation mainly work as communication specialists for the White House. Additionally, one character works as a media liaison for the Behavioral Analysis Unit (BAU) at the FBI, and one is a self-employed PR executive. While three characters are in leading roles, only two engage in regular PR operations. Despite being listed as part of the main cast, the remaining characters make sporadic appearances.

Entrepreneurs. The characters identified as entrepreneurs almost uniformly operate HORECA (a syllabic abbreviation for **Ho**tels/**Re**staurants/**Ca**fe or **Ca**tering) businesses; only one is a

self-employed real estate agent. While the featured businesses include an inn, a pizzeria, and a catering company, the occupational roles include a manager, a chef, and a cook. All the businesses ventures except one operate in suburban or provincial areas. Importantly, all the HORECA businesses start as small joint ventures, and only one of them, the catering company, expands into a larger venture. Even though all the characters are credited as main cast, their occupational roles appear to be presented as secondary to their roles outside work.

Civil service jobs. All female civil servants in the research sample are employed as highly qualified staff in the White House, with previous work experience in the media, public relations, or in the legal profession. Their roles include Press Secretary and Deputy Press Secretary, media consultant, Chiefs of Staff (for both President and the First Lady), senior staff assistant, associate White House counsel, and Deputy National Security Advisor. Although all the characters are part of main cast (for various number of seasons), only one was given the leading role.

Other. The occupations listed in this category are usually taken up by various characters as part-time or temporary employment jobs, which is why some of them change their job in the course of the series. Only six of them have leading roles on their shows, and the women's occupational roles are the main focus in the case of the private investigator and firefighter, and, to a lesser degree, the advertising executive and art dealer.

So far the numbers of characters in particular occupations have been presented collectively for the entire inspected period of 1999–2010. Equally important for cultural conclusions is a detection of changes in the frequency of on-screen presence of women in specific occupations. For this purpose, the numbers of characters have been collated across three television seasons: 1999–2000, 2004–2005, and 2009–2010, i.e. the beginning, the middle, and the end of the study period. The findings are listed in Table 1.6 below.

	Season		
Occupation	**1999–2000**	**2004–2005**	**2009–2010**
Doctors: physicians, surgeons, and physician's assistants	9	11	15
Lawyers	8	7	8
Communications / PR / Press secretary	3	2	0
Police detectives	2	7	8
Journalists	2	0	0
Entrepreneurs	1	3	3
Nurses	1	1	6
Paramedics / Firefighters *	1	2 (1*)	0
Judges	1	1	0
Social workers	1	1	0
Police and detective supervisors	1	2	4
Police officers	1	3	1

Art dealers	1	0	0
CSIs	0	5	6
Agents	0	4	10
Medical examiners	0	3	7
Scientists	0	2	3
Life coaches / counselors / psychologists	0	2	1
Laboratory technicians and computer analysts	0	0	3
Teachers	0	0	1
Private investigators	0	0	1

Table 1.6. Quantitative change in the representation of women's occupations across selected seasons.

The results show that the professions which were most frequently portrayed at the beginning of the study period retained their popularity across the examined seasons. However, although the number of lawyers remained the same, the number of female doctors almost doubled compared to the 1999–2000 season, whereas the number of police detectives quadrupled. Moreover, the number of agents went from 0 to 10, which is a significant increase. Another occupational group to go from almost non-existent to quite significant is the nurses, from 1 to 6. Finally, CSI detectives, medical examiners, agents, scientists, laboratory technicians and computer analysts are all among the occupations that registered a numerical leap from 0 to 6 or 8 in the study period. Not only are the majority of these occupations directly linked to STEM disciplines, but they also represent the domains previously regarded as too brutal, strenuous, and demanding for woman, dealing with death, dissecting bodies, and requiring hard science competences. Additionally, several occupations identified in Table 1.5 had no representation at any of the control points indicated in Table 1.6.

The above findings lead to some preliminary conclusions regarding the television depictions of women's occupations. The first observation is the striking scarcity or total absence of lower-class working women performing low profile wage jobs. In the light of real-life statistics (see Table 1.2), substantial numbers of American women work in occupations not represented at all by the main cast characters in the studied dramas, and not even by supporting characters important to the plot development. Bernadette Casey et al. claimed that the American small screen was dominated by representations of middle class people (27), and twenty years later Sarah Attfield observed the same abundance of middle-class professionals in TV dramas (187). Commenting on dramas, Ava Baron observes that working-class women usually appear as background characters (185), while Butsch found that only 10% of families on American sitcoms were working-class (21). In a poignant documentary *Class Dismissed: How TV Frames the Working Class*, Pepi Leistyna opines that:

> The leading occupations for women are all lower middle, and working class jobs. In addition, the majority of jobs at the bottom of the economic scale are held by women, especially women of color. Not only does television disregard these realities, it rarely even depicts work as an economic necessity. The fact is, most women work because they have to. (Narrator on *Class Dismissed*)

The present study confirmed that opinion by finding that working class women and their job-related experiences were marginally present in the sample. A related observation concerns the discrepancy between occupations whose representatives are often featured in starring or leading roles (that is, mainly medical and legal professionals) and those that are mostly cast as recurring (namely the majority of the occupational roles categorized as "Other"). While some shows are female-centered or ensemble-cast shows (see Introduction), a number of female characters in them are cast in less conspicuous roles. When this factor is taken into account, the observed rise in representation of previously absent and underrepresented occupations loses its relevance, as women in these occupations rarely appear in leading roles, even though they are part of main cast. What is more, quite a number of working women characters suffer from superficial characterization, lack depth, personality, and often simply disappear from the shows for trivial reasons or without any explanation.

Secondly, the proliferation of professional women in traditionally masculine occupations as characters in popular TV dramas may imply that the long-standing occupational gender segregation no longer restricts women's career choices and shows them as equally capable of becoming doctors, lawyers, detectives, and STEM professionals. However, the quantitative progress in this respect is not enough to praise the TV dramas as the popular culture leader in fighting gender stereotyping on the American job market. The qualitative aspects should also be taken into account, such as the characters' socio-cultural background, longevity on the show and their career trajectories, all of which have a bearing on the overall picture of occupational gender equality they project. Those qualitative aspects are presented under the headings analogous to those in the factual survey.

Full-time and part-time status. The majority of women in the study sample are shown as working full-time. Women working part-time are usually home-makers with young children, or retirees/seniors. The identified part-time jobs mostly belong to the category "Other": a social worker, a webcam lingerie model, a children's book illustrator etc. Those fictional work schedules and their mutual proportions appear to be consistent with the real-life data.

Education. Determining the characters' educational attainment proved to be challenging and inconclusive in many cases due to the lack of any helpful textual information or hint. By far the most enigmatic are the academic achievements of police officers and detectives. An opposite situation was observed in the female characters working as doctors and scientists, often presented as holders of a variety of academic degrees, qualifications and professional certificates in a relatively young age of thirty-something or early forties. Although the majority of the characters appear to have at least college-degree education, the search did not produce sufficient data to be confronted with the official statistics.

Race. The analysis of the working women characters in terms of racial representation has revealed significant quantitative discrepancies in comparison with the real life data. The details shown in Table 1.7 below indicate that nearly one quarter of working female characters was White, whereas Black characters constituted only 15% of the sample. The representation of Asian characters was a meager number of eight, with Some Other Race (SOR) represented by eighteen women in the research sample. Also, no American Indian/Alaska Native or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander characters were identified.

Race	**Number of female characters**	**Percentage**
White	163	73 %
Black	34	15 %
Asian	8	4 %
American Indian / Alaska Native	0	0 %
Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	0	0 %
Some Other Race	18	8 %
TOTAL	223	100%

Table 1.7. The working women characters by race

The disparities presented in Table 1.7 gain a different dimensions in the context of US demographics over the same period. According to the results of the 2010 Census, the White population of the U.S. in 2011 constituted 78.1 % Black: 13.1 %, Asian: 5 %, American Indian and Alaska Native: 1.2 %, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islanders: 0.2 %, whereas 2.3% of the people reported two or more races. Although the Census race statistics refer to men and women collectively, the current sex ratio in America is nearly 1:1, so they are almost the same for each sex group. Hence, the "fictional" race statistics for working women featuring in the studied dramas accurately reflect the real-life figures, somewhat justifying low or non-existent representation of Asian, American Indian/Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander minority groups. In the light of the Census race statistics, the only truly underrepresented category in the dramas are the SOR characters.

Table 1.8 shows the number of representatives of different races across age groups. Each character's age entered into the count was recorded in both the opening and the closing episode on the show within the inspected period. The difference between the entry and the exit age reflect the age progression that characters experience on the shows.

Race	**Age bracket at the start**				**Age bracket at the end**			
	20–29	**30–39**	**40–49**	**50 +**	**20–29**	**30–39**	**40–49**	**50 +**
White	37	90	25	11	22	84	38	19
Black	2	22	8	2	2	16	12	4
Asian	6	2	0	0	1	7	0	0
American Indian / Alaska Native	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Some Other Race	7	11	0	0	5	11	2	0

Table 1.8. Distribution of female characters by race and age.

The most numerously represented group is the 30–39, with the exception of Asian women, who tend to enter the shows as characters in their twenties and do not appear in them as older than 40. The fact that this age group is well-represented ties in with the numbers of labor force participation in real life. Moreover, although there are relatively few 50+ characters, the increase at the end suggests that the characters are allowed to age on screen rather than be removed from the show. This indicates the trend in the TV dramas to increase the presence of working female characters past their prime, which appears to correspond with the observed data on postponed retirement.

Career level. Tables 1.10–1.12 show the positions occupied by White and minority characters in the first and the last episode they appeared in within the study time span. The point is to see whether the characters of different races differ significantly in terms of career progress. A 4-rung career ladder was used to determine the character's career trajectory: (1) entry, which refers to such positions as intern, associate, and ordinary clerk; it also includes characters made redundant in the course of the series (2) middle, which refers to intermediate positions lower than senior, with limited authority (3) senior, referring to positions which involve being in charge of others, and (4) executive/self-employed, referring to the any position higher than senior, involving being in charge of others, the facility, and/or herself. The decision to count self-employed women as executive is based on the assumption that starting and operating her own business requires from a woman a set of strengths, qualifications, and responsibilities expected of tenured women in corporate executive positions.

White women	Age bracket at the start				Age bracket at the end			
Position level	**20–29**	**30–39**	**40–49**	**50 +**	**20–29**	**30–39**	**40–49**	**50 +**
Entry	16	7	4	0	12	4	5	0
Middle	21	48	7	1	10	53	12	2
Senior	0	20	7	3	0	14	11	8
Executive/Self-employed	0	15	7	7	0	13	10	9

Table 1.9. Distribution of White working female characters by age and career rung

The majority of White women, both at the start and at the exit point from the show, occupy middle level positions. It can be observed that while the youngest women are usually depicted in entry and middle level positions, half of the thirty-year-olds occupy middle positions as the shows begin, with no significant change at the end. On the other hand, in the group of fortysomethings the characters in middle, senior, and executive/self-employed positions are evenly distributed, with some presence at the entry level at both the start and the end of the show. Finally, while no 50+ characters appear in the entry level positions, the rise to senior positions can be observed in this age bracket at the end of the show.

Black women	Age bracket at the start				Age bracket at the end			
Position level	20–29	30–39	40–49	50 +	20–29	30–39	40–49	50 +
Entry	2	2	1	0	2	2	1	0
Middle	0	14	3	0	0	11	5	1
Senior	0	4	1	0	0	2	2	0
Executive/Self-employed	0	2	3	2	0	1	4	3

Table 1.10. Distribution of Black working female characters by age and career rung

The majority of Black women both at the start and at the exit point from the show occupy middle level positions. The youngest women are depicted in entry level positions both at the beginning and the end of the series. The number of Black women of all ages occupying entry level positions does not change over time. The most common level for those women between thirty and forty-nine years of age is the middle one, both as the shows begin and end. The second most popular level for this age group is the executive/self-employed; at the same time, it is the only level occupied by 50+ characters as the shows start. Also, at the end of the show, a single 50+ characters can be identified occupying a middle level position. Overall, career development of Black working female characters in each age group is insignificant; additionally, the results may be skewed by a relatively small research sample.

Asian women	Age bracket at the start				Age bracket at the end			
Position level	20–29	30–39	40–49	50 +	20–29	30–39	40–49	50 +
Entry	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Middle	3	0	0	0	1	3	0	0
Senior	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	0
Executive/Self-employed	1	1	0	0	0	2	0	0

Table 1.11. Distribution of Asian working female characters by age and career rung

The youngest Asian women at the start of the show occupy all position levels except senior. At the end of the show, this age group is only represented by a single character in a middle-level position, and the remaining characters occupy all position levels except the entry one. Moreover, the senior and executive/self-employed position is also occupied by the two 30–39 characters at the beginning of the show. Finally, there are no characters over 40 years of age in this group. Although the identified 8 Asian female characters are clustered within the 20–39 age group, implying poor evidential value of the conclusions based on such limited data, it is worth noting that all the women advance in their careers by at least one level.

Some Other Race women	Age bracket at the start				Age bracket at the end			
Position level	20–29	30–39	40–49	50 +	20–29	30–39	40–49	50 +
Entry	2	3	0	0	2	2	1	0
Middle	3	7	0	0	2	5	1	0
Senior	1	1	0	0	1	3	0	0
Executive/Self-employed	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0

Table 1.12. Distribution of Some Other Race working female characters by age and career rung

The majority of SOR women both at the start and at the exit point from the show occupy entry and middle level positions. Interestingly, in the 20–29 group there is one character at a senior level and one at an executive/self-employed level; at the end of the show, the latter character most likely retains her position as she grows older. It can further be observed that in the group of thirty-year-olds middle positions are the most popular both at the beginning and the end of the shows, although it is quite likely that two of them rise to a senior position at the end of the show. While there are no 40–49 years old characters at the beginning of the shows, there are two when the shows end, at an entry and a middle level position, respectively. Finally, there are no 50+ characters in the SOR group. In summation, the characteristic feature of career patterns within this race group is a relative concentration of characters in entry and middle positions, with nearly complete absence of characters in executive and self-employed positions. Again, the sample size might be said to impede the value of the observations.

The analysis of the above data has revealed some interesting representation patterns. First of all, the majority of women, irrespective of age and race, occupy middle level positions. Secondly, the few Asian women in the sample appear to be unusually accomplished compared to the other races, as most of them end up in senior and executive positions at the end of the shows, and they manage to achieve it under 40. Compared to Black women, who are similarly less numerously represented in the sample, such image may reinforce the stereotype of Asians as ambitious, hard-working, and successful, but also reflect the less favorable stereotype of Blacks as unambitious and less likely to succeed. Thirdly, in both White and Black women groups, the number of characters in executive/self-employed positions is similar and equals 17% at the beginning of the shows and 20% and 23% at their end, respectively. This suggests, at least at this rung, equal promotion opportunities irrespective of race. The picture changes, however, after examining closely which occupations offer such opportunities in the shows. For instance in the legal profession, the few lawyers who manage to attain the highest available positions are without a single exception White women over 50: Shirley Schmidt, the Managing Partner at Crane, Poole & Schmidt in *Boston Legal*, Patty Hewes, a Senior Partner and manager at Hewes & Associates in *Damages*, and Diane Lockhart, a Senior Partner at Stem, Lockhart & Gardner in *The Good Wife*. This suggests that although it is possible for a female lawyer to break the glass ceiling, it takes decades of hard work to achieve it and the effort might still not be enough if she is a non-White.

The data in Tables 1.9– 1.12 also confirm the existence of vertical segregation, a concept reflecting the gendered view of labor, resulting from unspoken barriers to "the advancement of women beyond a certain level of authority, responsibility, and pay in a job classification that is not horizontally segregated." According to Reeves:

> Vertical segregation reinforces the idea that women are suited for lower-level roles with less responsibility rather than managerial or professional roles within the same occupational category because they possess certain innate characteristics (passivity, nurturance, emotional sensitivity, for example), or because they have less cognitive capability or fewer higher-level skills compared to men. (18)

Reeves goes on to explain that, unlike men, women are often encouraged to take up positions that do not offer clear paths to senior management and higher salaries (18), which accounts for vertical segregation in real life. This practice appears to have transpired in the analyzed material as well, even though at a glance the television realm appears to be a place where opportunities for women's advancement abound, and precisely where in the real life they are scarce. After all, not only do

women as seen on television occupy senior managerial positions, mainly in medical work environment, but also hold line positions which entail the exercise of managerial skills, potentially creating opportunities for promotion. The word “potentially” is key, as the practice shows that although in general the movement from entry to middle positions can be observed, most characters do not progress from middle positions to senior or executive.

Table 1.13 shows collectively what career level the characters have at the beginning of the series and where they end up at the end of the series or at the point of departure from the show, or, if the show continued beyond 2010, where they were in the last season subject to analysis, that is 2009 – 2010.

Position level	**Initial rung**	**Final rung**
Entry	39	31
Middle	107	106
Senior	38	43
Executive/Self-employed	39	43

Table 1.13 The number of working female characters at particular levels at the start and at the end point in the series

The data show that the greatest percentage of women's career is located and sustained at the middle level. In relative terms, the most significant progress can be observed in the group of women who enter the show occupying senior and executive level position, or those who are self-employed. To verify this numbers-based conclusion, a selective qualitative inspection of career trajectories in a few most commonly depicted occupations has been conducted.

Career trajectories. To draw more in-depth conclusions about working women's career trajectories, I selected ten long-lived characters featured in leading roles on seven dramas, representing different occupations and starting off at different career rungs. The shows were between four and ten or more seasons long, but the time frame in Table 1.14 covers the seasons aired between 2000/2001 (marked as 1) and 2009/2010 (marked as 10). All the shows except *ER* and *Law & Order: SVU* began in the 2000/2001 season or later, and all of them ran beyond the 2009/2010 season except *ER* and *Boston Public*. The characters' career progress is presented in the Table 1.14 below.

Show	**Occupation**	**Character**	**Career rung/position**									
			Season									
			1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**
ER	nurse/doctor	Abby Lockhart	S	S	S	S	E	M2	M2	M2	M2	

Law & Order: SVU	police detective	Olivia Benson	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M
Boston Public	teacher	Marla Hendricks	M	M	M	M						
CSI	CSI	Sara Sidle	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	L	M
CSI	CSI	Catherine Willows	M1	M1	M1	M1	M1/ M2	M1	M1	M1	S	S
Grey's Anatomy	doctor	Meredith Grey					E	E	E/M	M	M	M
Grey's Anatomy	doctor	Miranda Bailey					M1	M1	M1	M2	M2	S
Bones	scientist	Temperance Brennan						M	M	M	M	M
Damages	lawyer	Patty Hewes								X	X	X
Damages	lawyer	Ellen Parsons								E	M1	M2

Table 1.14. Career trajectories in selected occupations. Legend: entry level (E), middle level (M, M1, M2), senior level (S), executive/self-employed level (X), actress leaving the show (L). The numbers indicate mobility within the same career level

The analysis of women's career trajectories traced in Table 1.14 leads to some interesting conclusions. First of all, the careers of several characters working in different occupations do not show any signs of progress: Olivia Benson starts off as an NYPD one season prior to the period covered in the Table and retains her position throughout the consecutive seasons, as do~~es~~ scientist Temperance Brennan with a triple doctorate, CSI Sara Sidle, and social studies teacher Marla Hendricks. Secondly, Catherine Willows and Miranda Bailey, a CSI and a doctor who start off at middle level positions, manage to attain senior positions of a nightshift supervisor and a general surgeon attending, respectively. Also, Miranda starts as a resident, rising to chief resident in Season 4 (a senior position within the middle level rung); she competes for the position earlier, but she has a baby in Season 2 and her promotion delay could be interpreted as "mommy tracking." In turn, Catherine starts off as a CSI level 3 and an assistant nightshift supervisor in Seasons 1–8, with a temporary function as an assistant swingshift supervisor in Season 5; this means that most of the time her career shows no development. By far the most complicated career trajectory is that of Abby Lockhart, who changes career plans in the course of the show. She starts off as a labor and delivery nurse and a third year medical student at the same time (the student status is not shown in the Table), and she works as a nurse manager in Seasons 2–4,. However, in Season 5 she decides to go back to medical school, becoming an intern in Season 6 and then a resident in Season 7. In comparison, the career path of Meredith Grey is typical for medical training in America, starting with surgical internship and changing to residency in the middle of Season 3. Finally, the two lawyers represent

two ends of the legal career spectrum, with Patty Hewes entering the show already as an experienced lawyer in executive position as the owner of the Hewes & Associates law firm, and Ellen Parsons starting as an associate for the same firm in the first two seasons, before joining the District Attorney's office in Season 3.

To sum up, the two most common career trajectories identified in the sample are a standstill and upward mobility extended in time. The occasional lateral or downward career moves are rare, and fast-track careers do not happen for the characters under study. Although there are three occupations with generally good career prospects i.e. medical professionals, law enforcement, and lawyers, the majority of the characters holding such jobs do not make much progress. The prevalence of characters trapped by the drama scriptwriters in middle level position may in fact reflect the real-life "sticky ladder" or "leaky pipe" phenomena, both referring to a series of obstacles faced by women on the way to top ranks in corporations and businesses. An alternative explanation might be found in real life findings regarding gendered careers, manifesting as indifference to prospects of development or contentment with the current placement instead.

3. Concluding remarks

The women's world of work portrayed in the primetime dramas under study does comply with most of the contemporary real-life demograhpic factors, fails to adequately represent the wide cross-section of American women in paid employment. Moreover, while the overall picture is mostly accurate with regard to racial proportions and work schedules, it leaves much to be desired in representations of older working women, especially from minority groups The scope of occupations and careers presented in the analyzed shows is vastly restricted compared to jobs performed by women in real life. These limitations are not gendered in nature, as women are regularly shown pursuing careers in traditionally male-gendered occupations; instead, the restrictions are connected with their socioeconomic status, framing women's work as middle-class occupations. Interestingly, in their 1979 study, Gerbner and Signorielli reported that primetime TV casting was mostly accurate in representing women at work in terms of census, though most of the TV world occupations were "unrealistically professional and of high status." My study appears to confirm that little has changed since then.

A closer inspection of women's occupations and careers on the TV screen has also resulted in several interesting conclusions. Judging by the drama plots, vertical career mobility of working female characters is feasible though extended in time. A new phenomenon showcasing older women in senior or executive positions has also been observed. Regrettably, the audience sees only the ultimate success without the check points the character had to go through on her way up, the

strategies she employed to meet her goals, and any possible compromises she had to make. A blatant disregard for providing realistic background information about the characters' education is one example of this short-cut approach. Overall, however, the analysis of career trajectories has shown that the preferred model of advancement for a woman is to work hard, be content with the gains she has made, and not to push herself forward.

Another interesting finding concerns noticeable number of women shown in STEM (acronym of **S**cience, **T**echnology, **E**ngineering, and **M**athematics) fields, which are generally less likely to be selected by women as careers in real life, mainly due to institutionalized bias against women and persistent gender myths and stereotypes in education. Although engineering jobs have no representation in the examined period, the onscreen presence of other STEM characters, many in leading roles, is a positive response to concerns raised by the researchers from USC Annenberg and the Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media. They reported a lack of aspirational female role models in three media categories, noting insufficient number of female characters working in STEM fields.

The study did not reveal any traces of racism and ageism in character creation. If anything, prejudicial treatment is sensed in the career stories of working mothers, but a more in-depth analysis would be necessary to prove it. Similarly, a comparative inquiry into career trajectories of working men and women would allow to verify the experience of the "sticky ladder" and "leaky pipe" phenomena by the drama characters.

Although horizontal and vertical segregation appear to be ingrained in the society to the point that representatives of certain occupations are often pictured as women or men depending on the prestige of the job or profession in question, the collated material defies its existence, suggesting greater parity in traditionally male-gendered occupations. A narrow focused qualitative content inquiry into the behavioral patterns of working women characters will cast some light onto how they fare in what has been culturally considered a forbidden realm for the representatives of the second sex, to employ Simone de Beauvoir's term.

Chapter 2: Self-creation of Occupational Identities: the Behavioral Patterns

The investigated TV series display diverse models of working women and the strategies they employ in crafting their own occupational identities, allowing them to function successfully and smoothly in all work environments, including the ones which are still male-dominated. Concurrently, these strategies may violate or clash with their feminine personalities, value systems or other facets of their social and personal identity (e.g. sexuality, ethnic identity, morality, family role etc.). These dilemmas are particularly perceptible in the workplaces that until quite recently were the male domain and are still considered gender-incongruent for women. The topicality and dramatic potential of women's struggles and perplexities in such workplaces make them attractive to screenwriters and producers of American TV dramas. The aim of this chapter is to identify and critically analyze the representations of working women in terms of their characteristics and strategies adopted in the process of developing and manifesting their occupational identities. The analytical apparatus constructed for this purpose is my own combination of a few relevant theories and concepts concerning masculinity and femininity, which jointly may generate valid answers to the research questions concerning the fictional representations of personal and social identity problems of women in the workplace.

1. Hegemonic masculinity and hegemonic femininity in the context of work

Hegemonic masculinity of the workplace is a cultural phenomenon recognized and widely discussed by numerous researchers. Its aspects explored so far have been masculine norms in the professional workplace (Eagly "The rise of female leaders," "Achieving relational authenticity"), spatial relations in the workplace (Spain *Gendered Spaces*, "Spatial Segregation"), and workplace discourses (Mullany). The overall conclusion from such studies is that workplaces are not gender neutral, but largely reflect power relations observable in other gender-related contexts, with ascertained dominant position of men and subordination of women.

A useful theoretical framework for organizing the analysis of self-creation of occupational identities by female workers in various TV series has been developed by many authors around the key concepts of hegemonic masculinity and hegemonic femininity. Importantly, although hegemonic masculinity remains unchallenged in the professional context, hegemonic femininity in popular culture representations gives way to problematic pariah or subordinated femininities, or new femininities.

The initial definition of hegemonic masculinity tended to be very static and phrased in terms of relentless domination. R.W. Connell's early concept of hegemonic masculinity was epitomized by a man characterized by independence, inclination for risk-taking, aggression, heterosexuality, and rationality. She argued that such image of masculinity constitutes a benchmark that keeps other types of masculinity (e.g. gay) or femininity subordinated and peripheral (*Gender and Power* 183–88, *Masculinities* 77–81). In their 2005 paper, Connell and Messerchmidt revised the notion of hegemonic masculinity, acknowledging its propensity for change due to its embeddedness in gendered social practices. However, both authors invariably maintain that since femininity is always constructed as subordinate to men, it cannot be hegemonic. They also propose the concept of "emphasized femininity" (846–48) to describe women compliant with their subordinated role and accommodating men's interests and desires.

In contrast, Pyke and Johnson fathom hegemonic femininity as a set of characteristics ascribed to white women. The respondents in their study perceived white women as "monolithically self-confident, independent, assertive, and successful" (50–51). As such, although confined to power relations among women, white hegemonic femininity mimics hegemonic masculinity through its supremacy over non-white (Asian in Pyke and Johnson) femininities.

Building on Connell's concepts, Mimi Schippers develops her own complex definitions of hegemonic masculinity, hegemonic femininity, and subordinated femininities. She argues that:

> Hegemonic femininity consists of the characteristics defined as womanly that establish and legitimate a hierarchical and complementary relationship to hegemonic masculinity and that, by doing so, guarantee the dominant position of men and the subordination of women. (94)

Moreover, in her novel approach to femininity as a multifaceted construct, or multiple femininities rather than a monolithic structure, Schippers claims that other femininities are also possible and uses a term 'pariah femininities' to refer to women enacting the "quality content of hegemonic masculinity" (95), such as authority, physical violence, taking charge, or non-compliance. Among the elements of pariah femininities, Schippers lists such socially objectionable masculine features as aggression, sexual promiscuity and homosexuality. This perspective on femininity questions and undermines men's dominance through deletion of symbolic complementariness and inferiority entailed by the traditional gender binary. It also encourages a subversive approach to the social relations of ruling (90–91), even though Justin Charlebois argues that Schipper's model does not sufficiently clarify the difference between resistance to and accommodation of the patriarchal order through appropriation of the hegemonic masculinity attributes by the pariah subjects (34–35). I contend that in the

work-related context, pariah femininities might guarantee success for women, though they may also clash with the traditional and internalized notions of hegemonic femininity.

Other discussions of masculinity and femininity have spawned such terms as ‘a new feminine subject’ (McRobbie) and ‘new femininities’ (Budgeon, Paechter), the latter being particularly poignant due to its relation to the image of female success in popular culture. The concept embraces successful femininity together with the contradictions regarding empowerment, choice and freedom stemming from compliance with postfeminist thought. According to Budgeon, “new femininities valorise assertiveness, individuality and achievement, [but] are not regarded as masculine because they maintain powerful markers of conventional femininity” (qtd. in Paechter 122–123). Paechter clarifies and concurs as follows:

> Similarly, women who are professionally successful but see themselves, behave, and are treated, as exceptions, and who do not support other women following behind them, also perpetuate the traditional gender order, however much they overtly ‘break the mould.’ Such women are portrayed, and perform, as successful in their own right (an important contemporary aspiration), while maintaining an aura of conventional femininity. (124)

In other words, Paechter appears to be saying that even though modern cultural models of aspiration are presented as feminist, they encourage the persistence of traditional forms of masculine supremacy.

However, other authors persuasively argue that the societal standards regarding the characteristics that can be linked to masculinity and femininity in America, or in the Western culture generally, are not as rigid as they used to be. Prentice and Carranza, for instance, observe that:

> [a]s women have moved increasingly into the workplace, they have taken on additional, nontraditional roles. To perform these roles, they need to demonstrate many of the traits that the prescriptive female stereotype deems less important for them than for others – to be highly intelligent, efficient, rational, to have common sense, and so on. However, because they have not entirely given up their feminine roles, they need to demonstrate traditionally feminine characteristics as well. (275)

A number of studies deal with descriptive and prescriptive gender stereotypes that appear to impede women’s success in workplaces rather than promote it, particularly in the masculine domains. Heilman, for instance, points out that women are believed to lack in attributes deemed necessary for success in masculine-typed positions and roles (130), whereas Hoeritz contends that women’s success in leadership positions is undermined by ascribing to female employees traditionally feminine qualities, such as being caring, nurturing, and emotional (201–203). However, O’Neill and O’Reilly claim that

the backlash effect on high-achieving, agentic women can be reversed by self-monitoring "assertiveness, confidence, and aggressiveness necessary to conform to masculine managerial stereotype" (2); this is confirmed by Wessel et al. in their study on successful verbal identity management strategies of female applicants. What is more, Helgesen and Johnson argue that such traditionally feminine qualities as "broad spectrum notice" and focus on relationships enhance organizations' performance and inform women's power in the workplace (47–49). Assuming the validity of the reported sociological and psychological findings, I intend to look for the presence of relevant prescriptive masculine and feminine characteristics, their proportions and combinations in the fictional depictions of working women functioning predominantly in a variety of traditionally masculine work domains.

For the sake of clarity, the analysis of the female characters under scrutiny will be organized around three aspects: the traits and skills indispensable for particular jobs, physical characteristics, and sartorial styles these characters are equipped with and use as their identity markers.

2. Gender-congruent and incongruent occupations

The vast majority of working women featured in the analyzed TV shows represent gender-incongruent occupations. The categorization of occupations as gender-congruent or gender-incongruent is related to the belief in natural predispositions of men and women towards certain jobs. Because women were long perceived as natural nurturers involved in raising children, taking care of the household, feeding the family and keeping them clean and happy, the conventional gender-congruent occupations for women are those connected with catering to the needs of others: nurse, teacher, and HORECA (a syllabic abbreviation of the words Hotel/Restaurant/Café) workers and entrepreneurs. Conversely, "breadwinning" occupations performed outside the home, like protective service occupations demanding strength and endurance and involving risk or highly salaried professions requiring education and advanced skills, were traditionally fathomed as befitting men. According to these criteria, the women's occupations identified in the studied TV series are in most cases gender-incongruent and include: doctors, lawyers, police officers, FBI/CIA/BAU agents, medical examiners, CSIs (Crime Scene Investigators), STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) professionals, PR professionals, journalists, and civil servants. Table 2.1 contains the results of content analysis performed in search for the relevant quantitative data. The occupations represented by fewer than 5 individuals were not included in the analysis based on insufficient sample size.

Women's occupations in the study sample

Gender-congruent	No. of characters	Gender-incongruent	No. of characters
Nurses	10	Lawyers	40
Teachers	8	Law enforcement	37
HORECA professionals	6	Doctors	36
		Agents	21
		CSIs	10
		Medical examiners	9
		STEM professionals	8
		Civil servants	8
		Journalists	6
		PR professionals	5
Total	24	**Total**	180

Table 2.1. Female characters in gender-congruent and gender-incongruent occupations.

As shown in Table 2.1, 14 occupations performed by leading female characters have been identified in the sample, out of which three are gender-congruent and the remaining 11 belong to the non-congruent category. Moreover, there is a marked difference regarding the frequency of appearance: women in gender-congruent roles appeared in seven shows altogether, while 49 out of 51 shows under study featured central female characters having gender-incongruent jobs. The latter fit into the role congruity theory (Cejka and Eagly, Eagly *Sex differences,* Eagly and Karau), according to which gender-typed norms reinforce the notion that success in the workplace depends on masculine traits. The data also reveal that the top four of nontraditional occupations performed by female characters are lawyers, police force, doctors and agents, constituting 131 cases out of 204. Meanwhile, the three identified types of gender-congruent occupations are nurse, teacher, and HORECA, coming down to mere 24 out of 204.

3. Occupation-specific traits, skills and competencies

The analysis of the traits observed in the working women characters was conducted using a simplified version of a psychometric instrument developed by Sandra L. Bem in 1974, revised in 1979. Informed by her concept of androgyny, a conviction that an individual possessing both masculine and feminine qualities in various degrees is mentally healthy and able to act competently in contexts requiring the characteristics stereotypical of either gender, the original instrument measured an individual's femininity and masculinity using sixty attributes considered masculine, feminine or neutral. De-

pending on the relative predominance of the traits, self-assessed along a 7-point Likert scale (1=*never almost never true* to 7=*always or almost always true*), the subject may be qualified as masculine, feminine, androgynous (if high in both) or undifferentiated (if low in both). Table 2.2 below presents the attributes used in the descriptions of character types, originally listed in alternating order, conveniently ordered into three separate categories.

Masculine	**Feminine**	**Neutral**
self-reliant	yielding	helpful
defends own beliefs	cheerful	moody
independent	shy	conscientius
athletic	affectionate	theatrical
assertive	flatterable	happy
strong personality	loyal	unpredictable
forceful	feminine	reliable
analytical	sympathetic	jealous
has leadership abilities	sensitive to needs of others	truthful
willing to take risks	understanding	secretive
makes decisions easily	compassionate	sincere
self-sufficient	eager to soothe hurt feelings	conceited
dominant	soft spoken	likeable
masculine	warm	solemn
willing to take a stand	tender	friendly
aggressive	gullible	inefficient
acts as a leader	childlike	adaptable
individualistic	does not use harsh language	unsystematic
competitive	loves children	tactful
ambitious	gentle	conventional

Table 2.2. List of gender-stereotypic characteristics included in the original BSRI.

The application of the scale to the selected female characters allowed to identify different models of occupational identity based on the combination and intensity of the feminine/masculine traits they demonstrate. To form a fuller picture, this step was supplemented by an examination of job-specific skills and predispositions exhibited by the investigated subjects.

The characteristics typically expected on the contemporary job market in persons choosing the occupations investigated throughout in this project have been worked out with the help of relevant job descriptions in the 2014 *Occupational Outlook Handbook*, an official US government career

guidance publication issued annually by the US Bureau of Labor Statistics. Although the skills and predispositions for specific jobs appear in the handbook as gender-blind lists, I purposefully divided them into masculine, feminine and neutral using the BSRI categories that better reflect their underlying gendered nature. The occupations listed in the *Handbook* correspond to the majority of occupations performed by women in the investigated TV shows; however, no distinct match could be established for White House employees. The obtained analytical tool is presented below as Table 2.3. The agentic/communal content of the descriptions has been translated to the masculine/feminine framework of desirable qualities, with two items listed as gender-neutral.

	Desirable qualities		
Occupation	**Masculine**	**Feminine**	**Neutral**
Police, detectives and agents	Ability to decide quickly Leadership skills Physical stamina Physical strength	Communication skills (in speech and in writing) Empathetic Willing to help the public Perceptiveness	Good judgment
Lawyers (public, private and naval)	Analytical skills Problem-solving skills Separate emotions and prejudice Research skills	Interpersonal skills Speaking skills Writing skills Attentive to detail	
Doctors	Effective leaders Organizational skills Physical stamina Problem-solving skills	Communication skills Compassion Detail-orientedness Good at working with hands Patient	
Nurses	Emotionally stable Organizational skills Physical stamina	Communication skills Ability to work in teams Compassion Detail-orientedness	
Crime Scene Investigators (CSIs)	Composure Critical-thinking skills Math and science skills Physical stamina Problem-solving skills	Communication skills Detail-orientedness	
Teachers	Resourceful	Communication skills Patience	

Occupation	Desirable qualities Masculine	Feminine	Neutral
Science, Technology, and Mathematics professionals (STEMs)	Analytical skills Math skills Problem-solving skills Concentration Trouble-shooting skills	Communication skills Detail-orientedness	
Journalists	Critical thinking skills Determination Computer skills Objectivity Persistence Stamina	Detail-orientedness Interpersonal skills Writing skills Adaptability Persuasion Social perceptiveness	Creativity Good judgment
HORECA professionals (Lodging managers & Food service managers)	Business skills Leadership skills Organizational skills Physical stamina Problem-solving skills	Customer-service skills Interpersonal skills Listening skills Communication skills Detail-orientedness	
Public Relations (PR) Professionals	Organizational skills Problem-solving skills	Interpersonal skills (open and friendly) Speaking skills Writing skills	

Table 2.3. Desirable job-related characteristics (based on the 2014 *Occupational Outlook Handbook*).

Several characteristics appear repeatedly regardless of the occupation. The most common masculine competencies include problem-solving and analytical thinking skills, physical stamina, and leadership skills. In turn, the prevalent feminine competencies are communication skills, detail-orientedness, listening skills, and interpersonal skills. At the same time, the majority of the occupations require a combination of both feminine and masculine qualities, implying that both men and women are capable of performing most of the above jobs successfully. Bearing in mind that these descriptions come from the governmental site obliged to observe anti-discriminatory policies, a question arises as to whether the experience of the working women in the analyzed dramas confirms the official assertion.

Hypothetically, characterization of working female characters with regard to long-standing notions of hegemonic femininity or masculinity should vary depending on the perceived job-gender congruence. Female characters performing traditionally feminine occupations might possibly be fit-

ted with predominantly feminine attributes contributing to success in their line of work. In contrast, women working in non-traditional occupations should be likely to either possess a significant number of masculine characteristics ensuring their occupational success in male-dominated professions, or demonstrate predominantly feminine attributes responsible for their career setbacks due to job-gender incongruence. However, in their respective works, McDowell ("Life", "Work") and Connell ("Gender and Power") imply that contemporary economic transformation and the emergence of new jobs have led to re-gendering of old occupations and defining new ones in gender-neutral terms. Thus, another purpose of the ensuing analysis is to verify which of these tendencies entered television fiction.

The results of the qualitative non-statistical analysis of the working women's occupational identities viewed through the gender lens are presented below. Since individual characters have a stronger impact on viewers' perceptions and beliefs than the collective portrayals (Greenberg 98), for each analyzed occupational group at least one representative has been selected for in-depth analysis, embodying the type of identity prevailing across the analyzed programming. However, characters transgressing the standard depictions have also been included as representatives of either repressed or emergent identities. A reasonable number of characters who cannot be labeled as token have been identified in the case of most numerously represented occupations, i.e. medical, legal, or law enforcement. Nonetheless, in the case of occupations with less conspicuous onscreen representation (i.e. STEM or HORECA professionals), the risk of tokenism exists by the sole fact of their limited presence.

4. Masculine and feminine character traits of women in gender-congruent occupations

Teachers. The few identified female teachers are concentrated in one show only, *Boston Public*, set in a fictional public high school in the titular Boston. Among the main characters, four female teachers represent four different identity types: Marilyn Sudor is the sexy yet modest arts teacher, Ronnie Cooke embodies the super-involved teacher, Lauren Davis personifies the stern old-school teacher and Marla Hendricks exemplifies the angry Black teacher.

Marilyn Sudor, both music and English teacher, has excellent singing and acting skills. The subjects she teaches provide her with opportunities to present herself as feminine and sexy during various school events, as in Season 1 Episode 4, when she seductively sings the song "These Eyes" at a charity concert. However, she does not use her attractiveness instrumentally; in fact, she is a rather demure and by-the-book type. Also, Marilyn is highly invested in her students' welfare. Her good instincts combined with sensitivity prompt her to suspect correctly that one of her students is a victim of sexual abuse, judging by the realistic content of her school essay. Following her intuition,

she takes steps ending with the arrest of the girl's abusive father. Thus Marilyn Sudor proves to be a versatile and competent member of the teaching staff rather than just a pretty face and a sexy body.

Ronnie Cooke, a former attorney-turned-teacher, represents a super-involved teacher type. Ronnie resigns from corporate career when she discovers teaching as her true calling. It is not clear whether she is qualified to teach any specific subject, but she is assigned a class of remedial students when she joins the faculty. In her new role, she has an opportunity to use her previous professional experience organizing, upon students' request, a mock trial against a senior teacher accused of emotional abuse by the plaintiffs. Her legal skills are also convenient in two other trials that involve a co-worker in one case and some of the high schoolers in the other, and help Ronnie save her students from law-related predicaments. Compassion is one of her defining features, occasionally making her too inquisitive about her students' private life, as in the case of a pregnant teen who attempts suicide. Due to her outstanding testing skills she earns the position of assistant principal in Season 3; however, in Season 4 she steps down to serve as a school guidance counselor, a position perfectly in line with her intense engagement in the students' life and the ability to pass level-headed judgments.

Lauren Davis, who teaches social studies, is a perfect example of a stern old-school teacher. Her class assignments are so stressful for some students that they even get hospitalized. She also seems inclined to be harsher on students of African-American origin, verging on racial discrimination. Her markedly harsh and serious demeanor earn her the nickname "the Nun". Her attitude becomes aggravated in Season 2 with the arrival of a newly hired colleague, Ronnie Cooke; sensing competition, Lauren takes on a pose of a star perfectionist. Also, she explicitly declares her love for the job, despite insufficient respect for the profession shown by her own parents, students, and students' parents. Her departure from the show is explained by a transfer to a private school, apparently more in tune with her laced-up approach to teaching.

Finally, Marla Hendricks, the only other African-American female teacher apart from Marilyn Sudor, represents the angry Black teacher type. Suffering from bipolar manic depression, Marla frequently exhibits unconventional behaviors, such as exiting the classroom leaving a suicide note on the blackboard (Season 1 Episode 1), or engaging in a fist fight with her male colleague (Season 3 Episode 2). The passionate speech at the school board meeting, prompted by the reference to the aforementioned suicide note, renders Marla as deeply cognizant of the challenges and stress repeatedly faced by the inner city public high school teachers. She has a tendency to preach, not only to her students, but also to her peers and parents, on a variety of school-related topics. Occasionally, she is no stranger to using strong language; during the said board meeting she calls the superintendent "a stuck-up, intellectual, [...] frappuccino bitch." At the same time, Marla is the only teacher whose reli-

giousness is accentuated, e.g. when she encourages students to pray in public after the sudden death of a math teacher on the school grounds. Overall, she is a very compassionate and communicative teacher whose unflinching personality blocks her advancement within the administrative structure of the school, despite her ambitions. Marla is the kind of teacher who has devoted herself to students, and can hardly be imagined as having a life outside the walls of Winslow High School.

All four teachers in the sample display a number of traditionally feminine qualities that correspond well with their job. They are sympathetic, understanding, sensitive to the needs of others, and they love their students. Several neutral qualities can also be observed in all of them, such as being helpful or conscientious. Additionally, Marilyn is theatrical, whereas Marla tends to be moody and unpredictable. As for the masculine qualities, Marla stands out due to her strong personality, use of harsh language, willingness to take a stand and defend her own beliefs, aggressive behavior, and assertiveness. Lauren is markedly ambitious and competitive, which is also considered masculine, whereas Ronnie is analytical and, like Marla, assertive and ready to take a stand. Overall, the most conventionally feminine teacher is Marilyn; Ronnie, Lauren and Marla seem to be rather androgynous, with the latter one leaning towards masculine due to the negative traits characteristic of male gender. It appears that professionalism of those high school teachers manifests chiefly through their investment in the emotional and educational spheres, whereas professional qualifications (i.e. degrees or further professional training) are of secondary importance.

Nurses. The representatives of the nursing profession selected for closer analysis include two pairs of nurses from two different shows: Jackie Peyton and Zoey Barkow in *Nurse Jackie*, and Christina Hawthorne and Candy Sullivan in *HawthoRNe*. Each represents a different type of a nurse character: Jackie personifies the transgressive yet good nurse, Zoey is the rookie nurse, Christina encapsulates the high-achieving yet friendly nurse, and Candy embodies the sexy nurse.

The transgressive yet good nurse Jackie Peyton in *Nurse Jackie* is a medical professional with many years of working experience in the ER. As a long-standing practitioner, she has developed a particular sensitivity to the emergency patients' needs that helps her make accurate decisions and act quickly, a crucial skill in this department. Due to her experience, she knows the ways to cut corners with the official rules if necessary. On the face if it, however, Jackie is an antithesis of a good nurse: impatient, rarely smiling and devoid of warmth expected of her profession. On the job, she often uses language commonly rated as obscene. Her work ethics is flawed, e.g. she forges a dead patient's donor card. Moreover, she is a drug addict supplying herself from the hospital pharmacy. Yet Jackie manages to deliver professional services to those in need without putting their lives at peril, often go-

ing the extra mile to save their lives, and her competence is respected by the hospital staff and patients alike.

As a rookie nurse, Zoey Barkow often shadows Jackie Peyton's job. She is a cheerful, well-meaning character, zealously aiming to please the patients and supervisors alike. Her lack of experience is counterbalanced by her enthusiasm and contentment at every little achievement on the job. Overall, Zoey is a clumsy novice with good intentions.

Christina Hawthorne, the high-achieving yet friendly chief nursing officer on *HawthoRNe*, is a very different professional. She represents the caring type, always benevolent and kind, and passionate about her job. Despite holding an executive position, she is on first-name terms with the staff and the patients alike. The battles she zealously wages against hospital administration or her colleagues, including both other nurses and doctors, are invariably motivated by her patients' well-being. Christina blatantly disrespects the hospital rules if following them may prevent the patients from getting immediate attention. Thus she acts as a rebel within the system, trying to offer adequate care to one patient at a time.

The sexy nurse type is embodied by Candy Sullivan (*HawthoRNe*). Sullivan corresponds to the image of a nurse who is a mere hand to the physician, sweet and obliging to the patients to the point of sexually pleasing an Iraq War veteran in gratitude for his service to the country. Her physique together with her name and behavior constitute a token nurse lifted from cheap comedies and soft pornographic movies. It is only in later seasons that her characterization as the naughty nurse subsides and her professional aptitude becomes foregrounded.

On the whole, the prevailing features of the nursing professionals are feminine: they are almost uniformly cheerful, sympathetic, sensitive to the needs of others, understanding, compassionate, warm, tender, and gentle. Such masculine traits as assertiveness, ability to make decisions easily, and willingness to take a stand can only be observed in nurses with long years of professional experience. The use of harsh language, another masculine trait, is limited to only one. Gender-neutral traits observed in all of them are being helpful, friendly, and amiable.

To the extent that generalizations from a small number of representations are justified, two overarching trends can be distinguished in the characterization of nurses: conventional and subversive. The first trend, represented by the naughty nurse Candy, buys into denigration of working women by inscribing sexual favors into their career. It also fossilizes old stereotypes by emphasizing deference to doctors and framing nursing profession as ancillary. The subversive trend is represented by the three remaining characters, albeit in different degrees. It partly obliterates gender-related traits inscribed in nursing treated as a caring profession for women by juxtaposing inherent caring abilities

with ineptitude (Zoey), or saintlike comportment with defiance to the system (Christina), exacerbated by foul language and lack of passionate commitment (Jackie). In all these cases the saintly nurse stereotype is poignantly challenged, leading to a new take on the occupational identity of a nurse. Thus while the first trend embraces dependence, passivity, and sexual undertones embedded in the naughty nurse stereotype, the other one emphasizes professional independence at the cost of alleged civility, impeccable competence, and compliance.

HORECA professionals. This relatively broad category of occupations is scantily represented on TV screen in the period under scrutiny. Two *Gilmore Girls* characters will serve as its representatives: Lorelai Gilmore as an agile inn-keeper, and Sookie St James as a clumsy chef.

As an inn holder, Lorelai Gilmore is a combination of feminine wisdom and girly wit. While working at the Independence Inn, she gained experience with various aspects of running a hospitality business. The ability to build good work relationships pays off when she opens her own Dragonfly Inn. Empowered, opinionated and assertive, Lorelai successfully navigates the business pits. Moreover, she is intuitive, sociable, and exudes positive energy that draws people and customers in. Together with Sookie St James, her business partner and friend, she focuses on delivering the best quality food and service. Overall, she is a perfect embodiment of a feisty feminine female entrepreneur.

Chef Sookie St James is technically a supportive character, but her arcs show her at actual work in the kitchen, her 'natural' work environment. She is creative, passionate about food and an ambitious perfectionist to the point that she redecorates her own wedding cake the night before the actual ceremony. Sookie is very controlling in her kitchen and finds it difficult to even temporarily delegate tasks. At the same time, she often experiences organizational or management problems, an unwelcome trait in a chef. Also, in the early episodes she tends to be clumsy, e.g. tripping, dropping crockery or setting things on fire. Overall, the strengths of her chef identity lie in her cooking skills; however, she fails to deliver as long as her managerial or organizational competencies are concerned.

As entrepreneurs, both characters show several masculine qualities: they are self-sufficient or self-reliant, independent, and ready to take risks, as well as individualistic and ambitious. They exhibit a number of feminine traits, too: both are warm, cheerful, and loyal to each other, in business venture and beyond. Additionally, they are helpful, likable and friendly; these three neutral qualities create additional value in hospitality business. Overall, they typify predominantly feminine characters in a traditionally female-dominated sort of enterprise.

Significantly, representatives of this category of occupations usually team up with another person, either a friend or the spouse (e.g. in *Desperate Housewives,* Bree Van de Kamp joins forces

with Katherine Mayfair to start a catering business, and Lynette Scavo runs a family restaurant with her husband). Thus the implicit message is that perhaps a woman is not made to succeed on her own in this line of business, despite the evidence of numerous female inn-keepers, publicans and landladies in American history (Mays 389). Alternatively, team enterprise may emphasize the relational, interpersonal aspects of running a hospitality, restaurant or catering business, tapping into conventionally feminine strengths in that regard.

5. Masculine and feminine attributes in gender-incongruent occupations

Police officers. The generic term 'police officer' is used here comprehensively to refer to the representatives of both lower and higher ranks of the police force (e.g. detective, inspector, lieutenant, captain, or a deputy chief). The main identity types that can be discerned within this well-represented category are the by-the-book lady boss (represented here by Lieutenant Anita Van Buren of *Law & Order* and Chief Brenda Leigh Johnson of *The Closer),* the seasoned detective (Olivia Benson of *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit*), and the ambitious over-achiever (Candace DeLorenzo in *The Division* and Riley Adams in *CSI: Las Vegas*). Two less common yet poignant identity types are the maverick detective (Grace Hanadarko of *Saving Grace*) and the lesbian cop (Kima Greggs of *The Wire*).

As the head of the detective squad on *Law & Order*, Lieutenant Anita Van Buren represents the exacting type who takes her duties very seriously. On the job, she focuses on facts, pressing her subordinates to get to the core of every case they handle. Her authoritative, masculinized manner, widely accepted by the staff, is expressed through direct, brusque commands and straightforward communication. Even though she belongs to triple minority as a Black woman in charge, she comfortably inhabits her role at the precinct and resists occasional pressures. Anita's strong convictions about the law only get compromised during her cancer treatment when she eventually turns to medical marijuana though smoking it was still illegal.

The efficiency of Chief Brenda Leigh Johnson from *The Closer* comes from her insight, knowledge, and analytical skills. Similarly to Van Buren, she is also a chronic rule-keeper type, believing that going by the book is more effective – and she delivers. However, she occasionally bends the rules when the cases call for unorthodox approach, which demonstrates her non-routine thinking and willingness to take calculated risks. Brenda's particular strengths include intimidating interrogation techniques and the ability to solve cases, which earned her the nickname "The Closer". She is a workaholic and perfectionist who tends to micromanage and, as a result, take on too many responsibilities. To counterbalance this stern image, she displays a number of conventionally feminine behaviors verging on ridicule (e.g. chocolate cravings, keeping kittens at her office, expressing deep empa-

thy for female victims). Moreover, she uses a lot of smiles and polite terms when communicating with others, a manner which underscores her Southern lineage. In essence, Brenda effectively combines femininity and executive control with her minor, stereotypical, gender-specific flaws, representing the mid-2000 antihero/antiheroine trend that introduced imperfect lead characters of both sexes into prime time TV shows.

Female lower rank police officers tend to combine dedication to their jobs with the focus on advancement prospects. Candace DeLorenzo (*The Division*), an experienced police inspector with a profound knowledge of the trade, works effectively and with great confidence, keeping her career goals in sight. On the job, Candace comes across as cynical and brusque, although she can be friendly and loyal to the people who are meaningful to her. Police officer Riley Adams of *CSI Las Vegas* is similarly competitive and ambitious. Not long after her transfer to the CSI unit, she requests to be relocated to a place with better advancement prospects. In her resignation report, Riley openly criticizes leadership abilities of her immediate superior Catherine Willows and questions the efficiency of the entire unit she is leaving. Apart from the lack of loyalty, her blunt analysis proves that she is willing to take a stand and defend her own beliefs without fear of possible repercussions.

An example of a police officer that stays focused on the job at hand without -concentrating on climbing the department ladder is Olivia Benson of *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit*. Benson starts off as a junior detective and remains in this position for the first 12 seasons; however, in the seasons beyond the time scope of my research her career speeds up and she is promoted to senior detective (Season 13), sergeant (Season 15), lieutenant (Season 17) and, finally, captain (Season 21). Olivia is a tough, very capable and efficient detective. When she handles a case, she is focused, disciplined, level-headed and determined. At the same time, she exhibits a number of traditionally feminine traits: she is compassionate, sympathetic, kind towards others, and loves children. Her tendency to become emotionally involved while investigating sex crimes may be perceived as a feminine weakness, but it becomes her strength when interacting with the victims who survive these traumatic acts.

The antiheroine trend mentioned earlier is also strongly reflected in the last two representatives of the police occupational group selected for close analysis: Grace Hanadarko of *Saving Grace* and Kima Greggs of *The Wire*. Grace is an example of a maverick, sharp-tongued homicide detective. Her forceful and aggressive attitude is partly explained by her being a victim of sexual abuse as a child. It supposedly accounts for her self-sufficiency and independence, as well as the masculine sexual lifestyle verging on promiscuity. Apart from her questionable sexual mores, Grace often disregards the law she is supposed to represent, e.g. through notorious drink-driving, or – more impor-

tantly – by delivering justice herself to her former abuser, a retired priest. Despite those blatant instances of misconduct and questionable morality, she remains to be shown as a capable detective who successfully solves crimes together with the other members of the squad.

Kima Greggs of *The Wire* is yet another unconventional female police officer that represents the antiheroine trend. The defining feature in her case is her explicit homosexuality. According to Amanda Seybold, the show juxtaposes Greggs and Beadie Russell, another female detective on *The Wire*, to "illustrate a discourse on gender norms, racial implications, sexuality, and motherhood". She argues that Greggs displays male patterns of behavior in her same-sex marriage and in her work relationships with colleagues, prioritizing career over her wife's wishes to start a family. Seybold concludes that "[a]lthough the show does not deliberately argue that Greggs' character is the preferred rendering of the female police officer—homosexual, single, non-parent—the viewer cannot help but leave the show with the feeling that in the end she had what was needed to make it [i.e. to succeed], while Russell did not." It is true that Greggs' homosexuality is treated by her male partner detective McNulty as the source of her competence, as in his experience the only other noteworthy female detective was also a lesbian. Thus her non-normative butch lesbian sexuality inadvertently informs her occupational identity as perceived by McNulty, who also invites her to share in the proverbial buddy culture by discussing "pussy". Workwise, Greggs is committed and tireless, working long hours and eager to take risks. When she becomes desk-bound following her injury after being nearly fatally shot, she is clearly discontent with the change to a more passive activity. All of the above underscore her female masculinity, allowing her to enjoy membership to the 'old boys' club'.

Sexuality and sexual mores constitute an important component of Hanadarko's and Greggs's characterization. Although one would not consider these attributes as necessarily relevant to occupational identity, it appears that gender nonconformity in this case does underscore the successful inhabitation of the occupational role as a police officer. At the same time, such rogue characters remain singular phenomena within this occupational group, emphasizing its relative homogeneity and conventional outlook on gender.

Ultimately, the majority of female police officers, including police detectives as well, are uniformly competent and exhibit more masculine than feminine characteristics. They are independent and assertive, eagerly defend their own beliefs, and have strong personalities. It is not uncommon for them to be aggressive and willing to take risk or competitive and ambitious. In general, it can be observed that the higher the position the women attain, the more likely they are to become masculinized and rid of feminine characteristics; they may also be more distanced and less emotionally invested compared to the less seasoned representatives of this line of work. In general, feminine traits are less

likely to be foregrounded in female police officers as the job itself does not seem to promote them. However, understanding and compassion they show towards the victims as well as love for children do not interfere with the professional performance; indeed, they constitute feminine strengths in this line of work. Also, female police officers tend to exhibit a number of gender-neutral attributes, such as conscientiousness, reliability, truthfulness, and likability. Overall, it seems that all those characters are brought closest to the traditionally masculine occupational identity by their career drive, most visible in lower rank policewomen. Another strongly masculine marker is the unconditional commitment to work and immediate availability despite maternal and other family obligations. Such representation unrealistically subscribes to the vision of the female police officer as being a variant of her male counterparts with fewer or no familial responsibilities.

Lawyers. The identity types of female lawyers discerned in the study dramas fall into three main categories, for which the following descriptive, albeit somewhat colloquial, labels are proposed: alpha female lawyers, aspiring newbie lawyers, and bimbo lawyers. The representatives of the first group include Shirley Schmidt of *Boston Legal*, Patty Hewes of *Damages*, and Diane Lockhart of *The Good Wife*. The second character type is best exemplified by Ellen Parsons of *Damages* and Alicia Florrick of *The Good Wife*. The bimbo lawyers, who are not represented by any one principal character, will be discussed collectively based on less conspicuous figures of *Boston Legal*.

Alpha female lawyers constitute the most commanding and yet least numerous group on legal shows. Shirley Schmidt, the only female founding partner of the Crane, Poole & Schmidt law firm in *Boston Legal*, is an accomplished lawyer who enters the scene mid-season to give the business a boost. From the start (Season 1 Episode 11) she reveals herself as bossy, witty and impertinent with her male colleagues. Apart from being a stellar litigator, Shirley becomes a top decision-maker responsible for running the law firm and managing the male partners. In gender role reversal, she uses her sexuality to overpower her male colleagues, which is rather novel for a female character in her late 50s or early 60s. It looks as if the combination of smart and sexy looks with sarcasm, bluntness and political incorrectness -stands behind her professional success in law.

Patty Hewes of *Damages*, another alpha female lawyer, matches Shirley Schmidt's 'bitchiness', but her work style is much more cunning, ice-cold, and manipulative. Due to her determination she has established her own law firm, Hewes & Associates. The flashbacks show Patty as a young woman who self-induces a miscarriage, as the pregnancy and childbearing would have postponed her career plans. Prioritizing career over motherhood is later responsible for the strained relationship with her rebellious adolescent son Michael, resentful that his mother has been putting work before him all his life. Also, she is ruthless when seeking revenge for disloyalty to the point of hiring an as-

sassin in a failed attempt to eliminate her former mentee, Ellen Parsons. Evidently, the masculine career model she has adopted has worked to her benefit. Hewes is a powerful yet flawed figure who remains sharp and effective despite her evident antiheroine traits verging on criminality.

Diane Lockhart (*The Good Wife*) is yet another alpha female lawyer with years of professional experience and a position of a named partner. In contrast to abrasive Shirley and ice-cold Patty, she exudes the aura of femininity through her frequent and honest smile, rejection of harsh language, gentle communication, and noncompetitive attitude. Unlike Shirley and Patty, ruthless and uncompromising in dealing with their female associates, Diane believes in women's solidarity and cooperation, does not perceive female colleagues as threatening her position, and takes mentoring other female lawyers seriously. She also appears to see her own success in a greater perspective, actively using her position of authority to express strong opinions regarding a variety of women's group interests. At one point Diane is sought after by the Democrats as a potential female candidate for the position of a judge, as a token of appreciation for her long history of championing women's causes (Season 1 Episode 10). Even though she would have to divest herself from the practice, she seriously considers running in the elections, thus proving openness to challenges and readiness to take risks. Eventually, however, her strong, idealistic convictions about justice quite unexpectedly compromise her chances of success and the Democratic committee withdraws their support.

The aspiring newbie type is best represented by Ellen Parsons (*Damages*) and Alicia Florrick (*The Good Wife*), two female lawyers who start at the bottom of their respective firms and work their way up. However, Ellen is a fresh law school graduate, whereas Alicia returns to the corporate career after years spent as a stay-at-home mom and wife of a former State Attorney husband. While Ellen forges her identity as a lawyer under the supervision and mentoring of her female boss, Alicia reclaims her identity as a courtroom lawyer, rediscovers her legal talent and successfully reconciles the conflicting roles as a mother and a professional. In the consecutive seasons she is first offered partnership of an established law firm and eventually ventures to set up her own, customarily taking several associates and other employees with her. In a somewhat similar vein, Ellen leaves her mentor's firm as a fully-fledged lawyer, joins the public attorney's office, and finally sets up her own practice. At some point, like Alicia in *The Good Wife*, she puts her career on hold following the birth of her daughter.

The aspiring newbie type inherently assumes the transforming effect of the job experience on the women's identity. Initially, the two discussed examples demonstrate a fair level of naivety about the practice of law. Idealistic and diligent, they are bent on seeing the individual in every legal case they handle, rather than merely following the doctrine. Such humane perception of the law allows

their feminine qualities to shine through: they are sympathetic, compassionate, sensitive to the needs of others, warm and soft spoken. However, as they become more seasoned lawyers, they shed the naivete and begin to act less emotionally, strengthening their professional position and fending for themselves in the highly competitive environment. They become more independent, assertive, and willing to take risks. Their leadership abilities reveal themselves, culminating in breaking away from the mother firm. Overall, they adopt a more masculine approach to law and legal profession.

The last major type of the female lawyer is a bimbo. The characters of this category constitute the bulk of the female lawyers on *Boston Legal.* As most of them do not last for more than a season, the rotation makes it difficult to identify precisely their occupational identity. Their ruptured and incomplete life stories reveal little about their career continuity. They are often inept and their demeanor in the workplace is highly inappropriate. It is also suggested that they do not abstain from using their bodies and feminine wiles to manipulate the clients or otherwise achieve their career goals. It seems that they play a window dressing role on the show, and their occupational identity as lawyers is but a pretence. On the whole, bimbo lawyers have been identified in only one show in the study sample, so their image probably has a minor influence on the overall perception of women representing this occupational group.

The female lawyers represent a fair share of both masculine and feminine characteristics. At the beginning of their careers, they tend to forge their identity by exhibiting more feminine, communal traits, such as compassion, sensitivity to the needs of others, understanding, and warmth. When they increase cumulative work experience or ascend in the corporate hierarchy, female lawyers tend to foreground more masculine traits by becoming self-reliant, independent, assertive, competitive, ambitious, and willing to take risks. They reveal strong personalities and good leadership abilities, and can be dominant and aggressive. The neutral attributes shared by the majority of female lawyers in the sample include conscientiousness and reliability, although some may come across as rather inefficient, though friendly and likeable. Overall, as a group, female lawyers show a tendency towards androgynous type of identity.

Doctors. Like the other analyzed professional groups, female doctors in the study dramas do not constitute a homogeneous group but can be divided into four major identity types: the hard-boiled chief, the young self-driven careerist, the young compassionate doctor, and the fervent private practitioner. The first category is represented by Kerry Weaver (*ER*) and Miranda Bailey (*Grey's Anatomy*); the second is exemplified by Cristina Yang (*Grey's Anatomy*) and Amber Volakis (*House, M.D.*); Izzie Stevens (*Grey's Anatomy*) and Allison Cameron (*House, M.D.*) represent the third type, and the fourth kind is illustrated by Addison Montgomery (*Private Practice*).

Kerry Weaver of *ER* has gone down in the recent history of television entertainment shows as a hard-boiled female chief incarnate in a medical setting. Consistently constructed as a tough go-getter, she gets rewarded for this attitude by promotion to a prominent position in the hospital. At the same time, she is invariably shown as unlikeable and intimidating, constituting a prototypical 'bitchy' female boss. As Susan Douglas puts it, "Kerry Weaver remained the abrasive, power-hungry, career ladder-climbing bitch who was much more keen to impress grant-funding agencies and insurance companies than to have the admiration or respect of her staff" (*The Rise* 283). It is true that Kerry is extremely authoritative in her management style, making decisions quickly and unemotionally, as fitting for emergency care. She is undeniably effective in securing funds for the hospital. Not all her decisions are on the mark, the fact she prefers to overlook or to cover up her mistakes. She shows no remorse and always retains her cool, even when called a 'Nazi dyke' to her face by a colleague she fired. Ultimately, Kerry Weaver stands for a tough lady boss who has traded her femininity for success in a male-dominated profession.

In a similar vein, Miranda Bailey *(Grey's Anatomy*) becomes a chief resident in charge of interns and later Chief of Surgery precisely because she is blunt, principled, hard-working and tough. As a chief resident, she strictly orders her interns around and shows no empathy; this attitude earns her 'The Nazi' nickname expressing the sentiments of the interns she supervises. As a surgeon, Miranda is quick-witted and independent, skillfully performing operations. Although she appears to be majorly focused on her career, she is equally driven by the welfare of the patients. Empathetic and compassionate, she manages to establish a free clinic at the hospital to reach out to the less fortunate ones. 'The Nazi' Miranda undergoes a character change that appears to be triggered by her becoming a mother (Season 2) as well as witnessing the death of one her interns (Season 6), who nursed her through the birthing process. She discovers her softer feminine side and evolves into a more nurturing mentor to the residents. The encouragement not to repress her emotions also comes from her long-time mentor and chief Richard Webber, who reassures her that "[c]ompassion and empathy are a big part of [this] job. … Being a parent makes you a better doctor" (Season 3 Episode 5). This changed attitude continues throughout the consecutive seasons beyond the immediate scope of research, indicating that Miranda's initial aloofness might have been a strategy adopted to strengthen her authority and gain respect of the interns in the male-dominated environment. Additionally, it confirms that femininity and medical career can successfully converge.

Thus although both Kerry Weaver and Miranda Bailey are depicted as (on the whole) competent, level-headed women in positions of authority, the combination of masculine and feminine traits in each of them is different. While Kerry is mainly defined in terms of masculine, agentic traits that

clash with her femininity, Miranda combines the best of the two spheres. In general, however, despite the variations, the message seems to be that higher the position of a female doctor in the hospital hierarchy, the more masculine qualities she tends to possess.

The young self-driven careerist is the type of female doctor likely to end up as a hard-boiled chief in the long run. Cristina Yang (*Grey's Anatomy*) is an iconic embodiment of such identity. She is very ambitious, career-driven, not easily distracted by hospital gossip or romance. Her matter-of-fact approach to patients may be off-putting, as she hardly ever smiles or offers a sympathetic comment. Emotionally detached, Cristina tends to dehumanize the patients and perceive them as cases, valuable or not to her career development. She prides herself on her intelligence and education. When Cristina says, "Oh, screw beautiful, I'm brilliant! You wanna appease me, compliment my brain!" (Season 7 Episode 17), she declares what she considers her highest value and for what she wants to be recognized. Yang pursues medical career with the precision of a surgical knife and confesses that "[her] heart lives in [her] scalpel" (Season 6 Episode 16). Throughout the seasons, she is an undemonstrative and controlled young professional determined to succeed at all costs.

Another example of a young self-driven careerist is Amber Volakis on *House, MD*. Her supervisor, the titular Dr. House, nicknamed her "Cutthroat bitch" in appreciation of her manipulative nature. Highly competitive and bent on winning the coveted fellowship position at all costs, Amber cunningly plans how to eliminate the other applicants. She loses in the final round of the competition because she is too convinced of her infallibility. Thus her alleged asset becomes a liability. She is a professional mirror image of House: blunt, quick-thinking, making decisions easily, questioning authority. The fact that House decides not to hire her might suggest that what is perceived as an emanation of genius in a male doctor is seen as unacceptable or repulsive in a female physician.

The third type of a female medical practitioner, utterly different from the first two types, is a young compassionate doctor. Izzie Stevens (*Grey's Anatomy*) best epitomizes a young intern with an individualized and humane approach to patients. Despite the hectic hospital setting, she comes across as a warm, cheerful, sympathetic, gentle, and soft-spoken doctor eager to soothe the suffering. Yet her strengths becomes her weakness, too. Unable to keep professional distance, Stevens becomes emotionally involved with the terminal patient Denny Duquette, gets engaged to him and behaves unethically to speed up his heart transplant. Duquette's death after surgery has a serious impact on Stevens's personality, her identity as a doctor, and her job performance. She begins to question the choice of the medical profession and temporarily assumes a more cynical and distanced approach to patients.

Allison Cameron from *House, MD,* another example of a compassionate resident, is a deeply sympathetic and understanding character remarkably resistant to her supervisor's acridity. Her gentle and soothing presence on the team placates the fellow doctors and comforts the patients, especially that she is the only female in the group. At the same time, her diagnostic skills are on a par with those of her colleagues, although never equal to those of House himself. Allison has strong ethical convictions and prefers not to breach the professional code. When forced to do so by her unconventional boss Dr. House, she unwillingly obliges, showing that she prioritizes her career development over her internal moral compass. Eventually Allison hands in her resignation from the diagnostic team and continues her employment at the same hospital as the senior emergency room attending physician. This move gives her a better opportunity to express her empathetic nature, even though it involves a lot of emotional strain too.

Addison Montgomery from *Private Practice* (a spin-off of *Grey's Anatomy*) represents the fourth identified type of doctor, one who gives up a prestigious, well-paid job in hospital medicine and moves on to private practice (cf. Sydney Hansen on *Providence*). Her ambition and perseverance result in remarkable credentials: she is a neonatal surgeon with certifications in Obstetrics and Gynecology and PhD in medical genetics. Even though Addison is a world-class specialist, she fails to secure the coveted position of Chief of Surgery at Seattle Grace Hospital and later takes on a job in a clinic in Santa Monica, California. Although the new position is well below her qualifications, she loves challenges and opportunities to prove herself there, despite the unwelcoming attitude of the other employees at the clinic. At the same time, Addison exhibits an array of feminine qualities that win the patients over: she is compassionate, sympathetic, gentle, and soft-spoken. The type of doctor she represents is a more mature version of a career-driven resident who, despite achieving her career goals, decides to down-shift due to lack of satisfaction in professional life, often combined with unhappy personal life. In Addison's case, the news of her infertility becomes a turning point for her career, too.

In summation, although the fictional female doctors selected for close scrutiny possess a variety of feminine and masculine traits, distinct patterns emerge concerning the intensity of these traits within the four identity types. The fervent private practitioner and the compassionate resident are unquestionably feminine, sympathetic, gentle, soft-spoken, and caring. They are focused on the patients' welfare and tend to become more emotionally invested, at the cost of hurting their own careers. They also tend to be more cheerful and tender than the female doctors representing the other two varieties. Such masculine traits as ambition and perseverance are present but less pronounced and mainly related to their educational attainment or professional qualifications. A reverse composi-

tion is observable in young self-driven careerists and hard-boiled chiefs, who exhibit more masculine than feminine traits. Their defining attributes include strong personality, ambition, perseverance, competitiveness, assertiveness, independence, and self-reliance. They also have leadership abilities and are willing to take a stand and defend their own beliefs. As pointed out earlier, their feminine qualities tend to be subdued but may resurface once the position of authority is attained. Overall, both more feminine and more masculine female doctors are construed as professionally successful, yet those who achieve the most prestigious posts display predominantly masculine attributes, while androgynous characters in medical positions of power are virtually non-existent.

Agents. Two agents will be inspected as representatives of this fourth largest occupational group: Samantha "Sam" Spade (*Without a Trace*) as a sharp and gun-toting agent in a subordinate position, and Hetty Lange, an Operations Manager at the Office of Special Projects (*NCIS: Los Angeles*), a unique example of a superb mature female agent in position of authority.

Formerly a New York City police officer, Sam Spade is an FBI Special Agent working at the Missing Persons Unit. She combines a sensitive, caring approach to victims with toughness reserved for perpetrators of crimes. Due to her troubled childhood, Sam is especially empathetic towards children in difficult circumstances. She also comforts the families of the missing, showing compassion and soothing their anxieties. When interrogating suspects, she usually starts out harsh, modifying her attitude if necessary. She is very effective in obtaining the information she needs. Sam is also ready to take on severe risks, as for instance when working undercover in solving a drug trafficking case. After fatally shooting two suspects, she must undergo a mandatory therapy. The job is everything that matters to her, which is traditionally considered a masculine approach to work. Another aspect emphasizing her latent masculinity is her frequent change of sexual partners. Thus not only does she choose them at the workplace, but she also engages in one-night stands without emotional involvement, both practices expected from working men rather than women.

Hetty Lange (*NCIS: Los Angeles*) has earned a special place in popular culture as a unique female agent who managed to achieve a position of authority. Hetty has a colorful yet highly classified past, both educationally and professionally. She is a woman of almost superhuman skills and qualifications: academic degrees from two top Paris universities, fluency in several languages, erudition in a variety of subjects, extreme physical fitness, flying skills, and an Olympic medal in small-bore rifle shooting. In recognition of her superior service, dating back to the Cold War period, Hetty received the Defense Intelligence Agency Award of Merit and a CIA Intelligence Star. Despite her intimidating persona, Hetty is emotionally invested in the well-being of her employees, exhibiting maternal

instincts when any of them is at a peril. In fact, she considers resigning from NCIS twice, traumatized by the deaths of her agents and harboring self-doubt regarding her own efficiency.

Irrespective of the duration of professional experience and the position they occupy within their organizations, female agents appear to possess feminine and masculine attributes alike. They are compassionate, empathetic, caring, and sensitive to the needs of others. Their maternal instincts are expressed as concern for the welfare of those they supervise (Hetty) or deal with (Sam). In counterbalance, the masculine characteristics include physical fitness, ability to handle guns, and willingness to take risks. In Lange's case, strong personality, analytical skills, leadership abilities and ambition, corroborated by her extensive education and multilingualism, stand out as well. Also, the female agents on the shows seem to be married to their jobs, with limited private lives or sexually promiscuous, a long-established pattern for policemen and male agent. All in all, female agent characters are yet another professional group representing an androgynous identity.

STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) professionals. The most notable representatives of STEM professionals include Dr. Amita Ramanujan of *Numb3rs* as a prodigy academic, Dr. Temperance Brennan of *Bones* as a first-rate expert in forensic anthropology, and the extremely capable forensic scientist Abby Sciuto of *NCIS*.

Ambition and professional career drive combined with a scientific mind are the defining features of Dr. Amita Ramanujan, who climbs up the career ladder in academia with the speed uncommon in real life. She starts off as a PhD and, over the course of the series, is promoted to professorship in applied mathematics. Amita holds a double doctorate, in computational mathematics and in astrophysics, both of which are traditionally male domains. Additionally, she is an expert on asymptotic combinatorics and a brilliant programmer, too. Her academic achievements have been acknowledged with a prestigious award and a tenure-track offer from Harvard. Altogether, Amita is exceptionally gifted and focused on her career goals.

As a forensic expert, Dr Temperance Brennan is a similar combination of ambition, career drive and academic accomplishment. She has a triple doctorate in anthropology, forensic anthropology and kinesiology; she speaks several foreign languages and is an author of bestselling books on anthropology. Yet she suffers from communication difficulties verging on autism, a condition stereotypically attributed to prominent scientists. Perversely, her poor communication skills, lack of social imagination and attention to detail predestine her to excel in work, her central life goal; yet it soon turns out that her straightforwardness, bluntness and lack of social skills also block her promotion to the position of the head of the Jeffersonian Institute, where she works. Her personality changes with time. This self-proclaimed atheist convinced of the primacy of rationality over religious beliefs

learns gradually how to suspend her scientific methods and vision of the world and be more attuned towards others, showing greater sympathy and empathy in interpersonal situations.

The last representative in the sample is Abby Sciuto (*NCIS*), who embodies an eccentric lab rat identity. Abby shares a number of characteristics with Temperance Brennan. The similarities include the professional background in forensic science, social awkwardness, and academic accomplishments (a series of lower academic degrees in social and forensic sciences and a PhD in chemistry). Despite a great workload in the lab, she prefers to work alone. In contrast to Temperance, Abby tends to be wittier with words, more hyperactive, overtly enthusiastic about her work, and inclined to joke around. Despite her eccentricities, Abby's perfection and dedication to work in the government agency are unquestionable. Although sought after by private companies, she does not leave the NCIS lab to pursue more lucrative careers elsewhere. Her loyalty and top-class performance are appreciated by her superiors, who entrust her with special tasks kept secret from the rest of the team.

All in all, female scientists are endowed with numerous masculine traits: they are — first and foremost — ambitious, self-reliant, independent, and individualistic. Moreover, they have excellent analytical skills, strong personalities, and do not hesitate to act or make decisions. They also tend to lack in a number of typically feminine attributes, such as sensitivity to the needs of others, compassion, conciliatory disposition, communicativeness, or naivety. None of them is shy, flatterable or affectionate. The only feminine trait that is especially visible in Abby Sciuto is her childlike quality, which could, however, be attributed to her young age. The neutral traits they possess include conscientiousness, reliability, and sincerity. The in-depth analysis reveals that a female scientist identity is based on extraordinary scientific and technological skills, invariably accompanied by various social deficits which impede her everyday life.

Medical examiners. The characters that will serve as two very different representatives of this profession are Alexx Woods of *CSI: Miami* representing a motherly pathologist and Jordan Cavanaugh of *Crossing Jordan* as a pragmatic autopsist.

As an embodiment of a motherly pathologist, Alexx Woods (*CSI: Miami*) presents an exceptionally caring, sympathetic, almost maternal approach when working with and on corpses, treating them with utmost delicacy and respect. Nevertheless, it does not interfere with her full professionalism and control even when autopsying the corpses of the people she has known. However, her negative sentiments and little compassion for the victim are showcased in the episode when she examines the body of her former co-worker responsible for crashing a car under the influence. In this particular

situation, her motherly persona vents her anger and grievance in the form of a cautionary parable as she presents the corpse to a group of recovering alcoholics visiting the laboratory premises.

The other, more common identity type is a pragmatic autopsist, whose approach is instrumental and marked by emotional detachment from the victim, represented by Jordan Cavanaugh (*Crossing Jordan).* To her, corpses are the carriers of evidence to be revealed in the process of autopsy, leading to apprehension and incarceration of the criminal Jordan usually discusses details dispassionately over the victim's body, perceiving it as an object of analysis rather than an individual, additionally distancing herself by wearing a protective mask and routinely recording the autopsies she performs. To supplement hard evidence, Jordan effectively uses role-play to gain a better insight into the victim's last moments before death and thus to successfully resolve the crime. Her workplace relationships are often impeded by her anger management issues that once result in a court-mandated remedial class.

These two characters, both of whom are highly capable and successful in their line of work, represent two contrasting models with regard to the intensity of feminine and masculine traits. It is the attitude to the corpses that female pathologists examine that reveals these traits most strikingly. The motherly pathologist is chiefly defined through feminine attributes: affectionate, sympathetic, compassionate, sensitive to the needs of others, soft-spoken, warm, tender and gentle. It is only her excellent analytical skills that can be identified as masculine in her characterization. In contrast, the masculine traits that define the pragmatic autopsist are being independent, ambitious, assertive and analytical, having a strong personality, and making decisions easily.

CSIs. Although technically CSIs are part of the police force, the nature of their job situates them between police officer and scientist, thus forming an interesting and comparatively fresh occupational group that deserves a separate treatment. The majority of female Crime Scene Investigators appear in three shows run by the same creative team, which results in their somewhat similar characterization. The canonical figures are second-in-command facilitator represented by Catherine Willows and a married-to-her job investigator Sara Sidle of *CSI: Las Vegas.* Apart from these two, Lindsay Monroe-Messer of *CSI: NY* deserves attention as an enthusiastic girl-next-door techie, a departure from the conventional characterization of female CSIs across the franchise.

Catherine Willows *(CSI: Las Vegas)* holds the position of a senior investigator, specializing in blood-spatter analysis. She is a cool, competent interrogator capable of unconventional questioning methods if necessary. Building on her experience as a lap dancer, she transfers the confidence to use her body into her CSI-related tasks. A good example of this technique is shown in Season 7, Episode 11, when she teasingly unbuttons her blouse in front of an inmate in return for answers. The situation

is one of many to prove Catherine's professional determination. She also applies her maternal instinct and experience to win trust of the witnesses and encourage potential suspects to confess (Dillman 90). Moreover, she tends to act as a mother figure towards her colleagues and play a part of a protective workplace wife to her male boss, patiently lending a sympathetic ear and comforting them all and constantly taking the burden of clerical duties off the latter.

Sara Sidle *(CSI: Las Vegas)* is a married-to-her-job investigator focused on her work rather than relationships with colleagues, who reads a forensic journal as a pastime. Sara is a physicist, and a materials and elements analyst who is very meticulous and attentive to detail during field work, aptly operates the laboratory equipment and swiftly identifies connections between the findings. Her laid-back attitude facilitates contacts with witnesses at the crime scene. However, Sara becomes over-emotional when investigated cases involve domestic violence and female victims. In one case, her fierce reaction leads to an argument with the supervisors, resulting in a weekly suspension. Other than that, Sara is a cool and career-oriented type who is convinced that a fulfilling job erases the need for social or family life outside the workplace.

Lindsay Monroe-Messer (*CSI: NY*) represents an enthusiastic girl-next-door techie. As a Montana native, she exhibits several qualities that are alien in the New York workplace, such as endurance, physical strength, or deference to authorities. Lindsay is very enthusiastic about her work, and she characteristically engages others into interactive display of her findings in the lab. She is also exceptionally attentive to detail, noticing items or pointing out facts that others have overlooked. Her amicable, tomboyish, girl-next-door personality makes her a popular colleague on the team.

In terms of masculine attributes, CSIs are uniformly equipped with excellent analytical skills, willingness to take risks, and the ability to make decisions easily. Moreover, they are ambitious, as each of them has a university degree and a specialty that is nontraditional for a woman. Also, senior CSIs show leadership abilities and willingness to take a stand. Female CSIs successfully merge the masculine characteristics with such feminine attributes as being sympathetic, sensitive to the needs of others, understanding and communicative. Even though they may occasionally be over-emotional, their efficiency does not ultimately suffer. Overall, they constitute a group of extremely competent women who can comfortably fit in a highly unfeminine crime-related work environment.

Civil service jobs. This occupational group consists entirely of characters featured in the political drama *The West Wing*. Female civil servants employed at the White House tend to hold positions in which they either handle the media (e.g. as press secretaries or spokeswomen) or the staff (e.g. as chiefs of staff or assistants to chiefs of staff), with two women involved in national security. The selected representatives are C.J. Cregg as the White House Press Secretary embodying an un-

conditionally supportive spin-doctor and the self-made administrator Donna Moss as the senior assistant to the Deputy White House Chief of Staff.

C.J. Cregg is a sharp Press Secretary/PR specialist promoted to the position of Chief of Staff later in the series. Her qualifications include a master's degree in political science and previous work experience from a renowned California public relations company, where she was much better paid. C.J. displays excellent communication skills, in both speech and writing, and remarkable problem-solving skills. Despite her unquestionable competences, she is occasionally depicted as struggling to establish herself as a respected professional, especially in Season 1. Ultimately, he six-year service as the Press Secretary has proven her impressive expertise, leading to the offer of a position of her choice by President Elect in his new administration. This demonstrates that not only is she a passionate, well-intentioned, hardworking female aide, but also an invaluable asset to the country.

In contrast to Cregg, Donna Moss has neither got a proper degree nor relevant work experience when she haphazardly lands a job as the assistant to the Deputy White House Chief of Staff. Once she begins her employment, she displays a lot of determination, quickly becoming a paragon of loyalty to both her immediate superior and the party. However, she is not hesitant to declare her own views and to occasionally criticize the party politics. Also, she openly requests to be offered an opportunity for professional growth, which shows her as self-driven and focused. Her career at the White House culminates in the position of the First Lady's Chief of Staff in the final season of the series.

The most salient feminine attribute that those two and other female civil servants have in common is their commitment and loyalty to the President and the country, even against their personal political preference. Moreover, they are consistently ready to forego their personal achievement or benefit when required by the good of the country. Other feminine traits-they exhibit include sensitivity to the needs of others, understanding, and compassion. It appears that the only masculine trait shared by the women of the White House is ambitiousness, narrowly limited to delivering excellent service to the President. Overall, they epitomize a female public servant as an individual devoid of personal ambitions and fully devoted to the country.

Journalists. Similarly to HORECA professionals, this category has relatively poor representation on screen. The three representatives in the sample include Lucy Spiller (*Dirt*) as a ruthless editor-in-chief, Carrie Bradshaw (*Sex and the City*) as an ultra-feminine columnist, and Alma Gutierrez (*The Wire*) as a conscientious reporter.

Lucy Spiller, formerly a stringer for the New York *Post*, is the editor-in-chief of a tabloid magazine *DirtNow,* a result of a merger of two titles she has previously managed: *Now* (a glossy

magazine) and *dirt* (a tabloid). She has a strong, cold, uncompromising, bold, and foul-mouthed personality. As the head of the magazine, Lucy is heavily driven to overcome the competitors in pursuit of newsworthy facts about topical celebrities, shows little consideration for the people whose stories she prints, and often takes pleasure in the ability to manipulate and destroy their lives. In the process, Spiller does not abstain from blackmailing, lies or threats. On the other hand, her commitment to publishing the truth instead of gossip and scoop makes her an uncanny moral authority in the world of mucky celebrity journalism.

Carrie Bradshaw of *Sex and the City* is a household name for a columnist. Her weekly columns in the fictional newspaper *New York Star* focus on love, sex, and thirty-something singleness in New York. As a fashionista, she also contributes freelance articles to *Vogue*. Carrie mainly works from her bedroom, often smoking cigarettes or sipping alcohol while typing, thus underscoring the archetypal writer's creative process. Her writing style reflects her cheerful attitude and is full of puns, witticisms, and autobiographical elements. Her skillfully written columns have a huge following, culminating in a book deal offer in Season 6. To sum up, Carrie is an ultra-feminine type of columnist expressing her opinions on topics traditionally of interest to women and — as it turns out — also to gay men.

Alma Gutierrez (*The Wire*) is an investigative reporter who works for *The Baltimore Sun,* a major newspaper. Alma exemplifies a typical rookie journalist, relatively inexperienced but eager and ambitious, open to criticism and focused on self-improvement. She quickly receives positive feedback from the senior editors who praise her tenacious attitude and strong work ethics. Her ability to encourage people to talk is one of the vital competencies in this line of work. Although Alma is conscientious, diligent, and service oriented, her journalistic honesty results in demotion and relocation as a perverse token of appreciation for her excellent work. Despite the backlash, she is unwilling to cave in under pressure and give up her ideals.

The characters discussed above accumulate different shares of masculine, feminine, or neutral traits. Lucy Spiller's defining characteristics are uniformly masculine: she is assertive, forceful, domineering, aggressive, ambitious, competitive, as well as independent and decisive as a leader. In contrast, Carrie Bradshaw is defined by quintessentially feminine attributes: cheerful, affectionate, flatterable, sympathetic, and compassionate. Finally, Alma Gutierrez stands out as a character who is conscientious, reliable, truthful, sincere, adaptable and likeable, all of which are considered gender-neutral traits. These divergent characterizations suggest that there is no one gender-related formula in the TV dramas for the female media professional.

PR professionals. Although this occupational group is yet another one with limited representation in the analyzed period, Samantha Jones of *Sex and the City* has become the most readily recognizable PR specialist figure. The other representative is JJ Jareu (*Criminal Minds*), who is a media liaison at the FBI's Behavioral Analysis Unit.

As a PR specialist, Samantha Jones (*Sex and the City*) runs her own business that mainly involves organizing events for VIP clientele and occasionally representing celebrities. Interestingly, she performs her work-related duties single-handedly, at times having an assistant on site. Samantha is confident, outspoken and efficient, generating high demand for her services. She is not afraid of taking risks to get ahead with her business, although most of the time her duties involve looking chic, drinking cocktails and enjoying the company of celebrities. As such, she projects the image of a PR specialist as a glamorous party girl.

In contrast, JJ Jareau is a dedicated media liaison employed by the federal agency, who occasionally assists with profiling. Her aptitude and great self-confidence commands respect of her colleagues, at least in the early seasons. JJ has excellent communication skills, excels as a storyteller, and is very persuasive in contacts with the media. On the other hand, when she comforts the families of the victims, she exudes calm, patience and sensitivity.

To conclude, PR specialists are mostly endowed with numerous feminine traits: excellent communication skills, sensitivity to the needs of others, and loyalty. The masculine traits shared by PR specialists include independence and availability, but there are several others, especially salient in Samantha Jones: strong personality, willingness to take risks, self-sufficiency and individualism.

Notably, the image of the latter as a PR specialist has become so ingrained in popular culture that the term 'The Samantha Syndrome' has been coined to refer to the misconceptions about this profession that commonly persist among the young entrants (Johnston). Ultimately, it is the Samantha Syndrome endorsing a more masculinized image of the profession that has captured the popular imagination and holds sway, even though a more lifelike representative is *The West Wing'*s C.J. Cregg.

All things considered, on-screen characterizations of working women with regard to their traits, skills and competencies do not completely abandon the traditional gender-related attributes, but the female characters exhibit them with different intensity and in various combinations. Relatively little creative attention is given to working women in gender-congruent employment. Instead, showrunners and series creators focus almost entirely on women entering gender-incongruent occupations as their fictional depictions can be more interesting and dramatic by showing working females who balance masculine and traditionally feminine traits. This results in heterogeneous charac-

terological models of female professionals with different goals, forging their occupational identities in different contexts, and with different outcomes.

Certain regularities have been found in the domination of masculine traits in the analyzed dramas featuring working women. Most pronounced masculine traits are exhibited by women in positions of power or authority in various occupations. Of all the occupational types, female characters in law enforcement jobs most often exhibit masculine traits, especially with negative social connotations. Although the predominance of masculine traits tends to be positively correlated with a woman's advancing age, 'masculine' women are also found within the younger cohort of doctors and law enforcement professionals determined to climb the career ladder.

Overall, the majority of female characters are pictured as combining the traits associated with masculinity (agentic) with selected femininity (communal) traits in a way that enhances their professional performance. Which traits prevail depends on the occupation, for instance female nurses and doctors are shown as more compassionate than their male counterparts, and female police officers and CSIs are more attuned to crime victims. This kind of sensitivity does not usually get in the way of their duty, although emotional investment does occasionally put strain on female characters, leading to self-doubt or ethical dilemmas. Interestingly, the majority of the working women demonstrate a combination of predominantly positive feminine and positive masculine traits. As a result, the feminine input becomes endorsed and valorized in the traditionally masculine workplace, while elements of the masculine workstyle are internalized by the working females. However, female STEM professionals in computing roles depart from the identified pattern by visibly queering traditional femininity. It might result from the lack of specific social expectations and, consequently, prescriptive codes for cultural representation of this relatively novel group, which allows the showrunners to experiment with the boundaries of gender and professional roles in the process of creating a new occupational identity for such characters.

Thus it can be concluded that in terms of feminine and masculine attributes and skills, the analyzed characters selectively conform to the traditional occupational identity norms established for various jobs in American society and do not as a rule suppress their own feminine characteristics. Nevertheless, despite this fresh approach, the analyzed dramas ultimately endorse the stereotype that detachment from femininity is a prerequisite for professional success in heavily structured, highly masculinized careers, and promote the belief that 'feminine' women can only be professionally successful in gender-congruent occupations.

6. Concluding remarks

In this chapter I attempted to show the strategies that are used to construct occupational identity of female workers and to investigate the extent to which they can practise femininity on their own terms in both gender conforming and nonconforming occupations.

The first unexpected outcome is the realization that the occupations in question are not fictionally constructed as strictly masculine or feminine. The professional requirements of nearly all occupations appearing in the study material call for the androgynous identity, one that successfully combines traditionally masculine and feminine traits, skills and attributes. It is a departure from the normative career scripts that embrace traditionally masculine characteristics as more valuable than feminine ones and constitute a standard for workplace success that needs to be adopted by women.

In line with the above, the majority of the examined working female characters exhibit occupational identities that tend to be androgynous. The masculine traits and roles do not contradict or diminish their femininity; they succeed at competently performing their jobs, effortlessly fusing diverse gender codes.

To a certain degree, femininity has become an optional facet of women's occupational identity. The depictions of successful career women who are high in masculine attributes and low in feminine ones have traditionally persisted, but the portrayal of accomplished females who micromanage gender traits in other proportions are a novelty. However, performing femininity at work remains overwhelmingly conventional, implying that the most rewarding combination for a working woman is to be androgynous in character and feminine in appearance.

Theories of professional or occupational identity formation posit the inherent fluidity and adaptation resulting from people's learned experiences and incessant negotiation of one's own personal identity in relation to the work contexts (Ibarra "Provisional Selves", Vondracek). This fluidity of occupational identities is not pronounced forcefully enough in on-screen characters, whose identities tend to be static, with little attention to their possible re-shaping and evolution due to external factors. However, one can observe that certain characters do in fact change their professional persona in the course of events, provided they spend ample time on the show.

Finally, the variety of the character building strategies in the analyzed dramas does not change the fact that personality traits, talents, potential, and meaningful life goals constitute the core occupational identity components of the working women constructed in television fiction. Equally interesting, however, are also secondary identity building elements used by female characters in their work environments. Two of them — corporeal and sartorial practices — are the objects of analysis in the subsequent Chapter, with special reference to the ideals of femininity and workplace conventions.

Chapter 3: The Female Body Dressed for Work

By nature, television is a medium of visual communication whose power lies in multimodality. Hence an essential element of the analysis of women's occupational identities in primetime dramas is the reading of the literal images. It concentrates on two major elements that contribute to the construction of these identities, namely the physical characteristics of the working women and the clothing that the analyzed characters are equipped with to perform tasks in their work environments. These corporeal and sartorial variables, ostensibly secondary to the previously discussed behavioral patterns, constitute the object of analysis in this Chapter, focusing on the meshing of the cultural norms of femininity and organizational masculine norms.

Although representation, underrepresentation, and misrepresentation of women in various mass media have been the focus of numerous studies, the analyses of the portrayal of working women in prime time TV dramas tended to overlook the intricate connections between their occupational identity and corporeality. The lack of such studies is surprising in the context of performativity theory of gender, which focuses, among other things, on bodily acts of experiencing and maintaining gender identities, and has been used successfully in critically assessing gender performances in specific patriarchal workplace environments, such as newsrooms (Jenkins and Finneman), investment management (Sheerin and Linehan), academia (Lester), or tourism industry (Wang). In an attempt to fill this lacuna in reserach, the present chapter focuses on the embodied female subjectivity by examining corporeal representations of working females

Critical assessment of gender performances in patriarchal workplace environments has become a popular theme in the context of gendered behavior and performativity theory (Foucault, Butler Judith), examining, among other things, the role of clothes and related paraphernalia in constructing ideas about gendered appearance. Both scholars and practitioners have expressed research interest regarding attire in various occupational groups, e.g. physicians (Jenkins, Gherardi et al., Petrilli et al.), nurses (Clavelle et al., Hatfield et al., Lehna et al.) dentists (Furnham et al.), lawyers (Furnham et al., McNamara), teachers (Rutherford et al, Weber and Mitchell), academic teachers (Green, Eileen, Kaiser et al.), or banking sector employees (Barnes and Newton). While some researchers examined the relationship between the clothes worn by medical professionals and patient perceptions (Clavelle et al., Gherardi et al., Lehna et al., Petrilli et al.), investigated how uniforms project authority and power (Bickman), or the ways corporate uniforms contribute to an organization's success (Barnes and Newton), others explored how women's gender identities are experienced and main-

tained through sartorial practices (Entwistle, Green, Eileen, Goodman et al., Guy and Banim, Kaiser et al.). However, despite the well-documented examination of primetime portrayals of working women (Atkin et al., Byars and Meehan, Vande Berg and Streckfuss), the relationship between the clothes worn by such characters in primetime dramas and their occupational identities has been significantly neglected. Thus the aim of this Chapter is not only to examine what clothing practices are used and how, but also determine whether female characters performing traditional and non-traditional occupations are shown as manifesting or suppressing their femininity through sartorial choices available to them.

The analysis of clothing in various types of film fiction goes beyond the mere concept of outfit and must always recognize its role of the costume along with its artistic and ideological purposes. The creative work of the costume designer and members of the costume department, who must acknowledge and balance fashion trends, physical reality, and budget constraints, has an immense bearing on the visual aspect of contemporary TV characters and may affect the reception and success of the series. However, as the audiences rarely understand and reflect on the complexities of costume creation, average viewers perceive the appearance of the characters as their autonomous decisions that reflect their attitudes, ambitions and values. Contrary to such popular assumptions, the sartorial choices of the female characters discussed throughout the paper always refer to the costumes selected for them by the people behind the scenes, i.e. costume designers, actors who portray the characters, show runners, writers, directors, and other individuals involved in the production of the show (Lawson).

1. Corporeality — the feminine body

The strategy of building an occupational identity through one's corporeality is especially particular to women. They are culturally forced to intentionally police and overpower their bodies in order to comply with the demands of the job or the workplace, which is tremendously challenging owing to the fact that the female body is immensely diverse across the general population and may fluctuate considerably throughout an individual woman's lifespan. The role of the body within the workplace as inextricably linked to the demonstration of professionalism has been discussed in numerous studies (Crompton, Gini, Grey, Tyler and Abbot). The analysis that follows concentrates on the representation of the tensions between these two dimensions of women's bodily existence by looking at the female working characters' physical shapes and sizes, race/racial categories, grooming and beautification practices as well as the accommodation of pregnancy in their careers.

1.1 Workplace body norms

The theoretical premises informing the focus on working women's corporeality derive from Angela Trethewey's seminal essay "Disciplined Bodies: Women's Embodied Identities at Work," exploring the role of the body in relation to women's occupational identity in real life. She observes that "[h]istorically, discourses of professionalism have privileged formal terms such as male, public, mind, and rational over their informal opposites – female, private, body, and emotional" (426). This perspective casts working women as trespassers or barely legitimate pretenders, held to an unattainable standard of masculine professionalism. This is why "women continue to approach the problem of 'fitting in' as a personal and individual problem best addressed through strategies such as dress, style, and image" (426). In a similar vein, Katie Rose Sullivan contends that, based on her own observations as well as numerous referenced research, "for many women, much of the work of navigating professional identities includes the careful construction of the appropriate feminine body through the disciplinary controls of diet, exercise, proper movements, clothing, and adornments" (276). Thus the strategy of building an occupational identity through one's corporeality is especially particular to women. They are culturally forced to police and overpower their bodies in order to comply with the demands of the job or the workplace, which is tremendously challenging owing to the immensely diversity of female bodies across the general population and their fluctuation throughout an individual woman's lifespan.

The role of the body within the workplace as inextricably linked to the demonstration of professionalism has been discussed in a number of studies (Grey, Tyler and Abbott, Gini). The asymmetrical scrutiny and policing of women's bodies compared to men is manifested through the workplace norms regarding the physicality of the female employees. Not only is it reflected in the dress codes of numerous business establishments, as testified by lawsuits connected with differing dress codes for men and women, e.g. Jespersen v. Harrah's Operating Co., but in countless latent body-related standards as well (Bartlett, Dellinger and Williams, Malos). Trethewey and other authors she acknowledges claim that the reason why women invest so much energy into professionalization of their bodies is because their promotion prospects or competence are often judged through the attire they wear. She concludes that "professional women […] use a variety of strategies to navigate the minefield of choices about how to dress, display, reveal, perform, in short to discipline, their own and other women's bodies at work" (Trethewey, 426–428). Significantly, the scope of these practices goes beyond the attire and involves the prescriptive standard of the female body as fit but submissive. As far as garments and accessories are concerned, the vast majority of the workplaces tend to tread a very conservative path in defining what is appropriate and acceptable for a female worker

or employee. For example, tattoos and piercings, although gaining in popularity in the U.S., are not welcome (Swanger 71), and neither are ribbons or flowers in adult woman's hair (cf. *Texas Woman's University School of Physical Therapy Professional DPT Program Student Handbook* 53).

Dealing with TV dramas one should bear in mind that despite the profusion of multimodal elements in today's television, the visual component remains central for its entertainment content. Hence, the physical portrayal of the working women's characters discussed below is equally important for the show's popularity as their psycho-social characteristics. This is one more reason to take a close look at the shapes, sizes and race of the women's bodies, their functionality, sexuality, and transformation due to pregnancy, physical disability, slimming or putting on weight. Closely related factors concern the characters' grooming practices, i.e. their hairstyles and make-up. All of them are analyzed in the thematic sections below.

1.2 The shapes and sizes

The prevalence of body shapes and sizes has been determined using a silhouette-based tool developed for assessment of body size perception by Stunkard et al.. This Figure Rating Scale consists of nine female silhouettes lined up in a progressive mode from extremely thin (1) to extremely obese (9). According to Bhuiyan et al., they can be classified as underweight (1–2), normal weight (3–4), overweight (5–7), and obese (8–9). Although the scale has been criticized for the coarseness of the figures, restricted range of options, and lack of variability in the silhouette's height (Gardner et al. 389–390), it is one of the most widely used assessment devices in body-image and psychometric research.

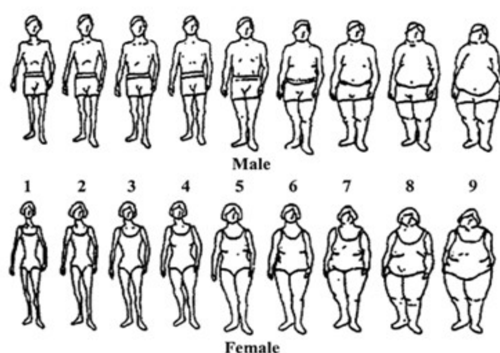

Fig. 3.1 Stunkard's Figure Rating Scale

The bodies of the analyzed female characters have been ascribed to the above categories based on their first time appearance on the show. Consequently, the results presented in Table 2 below do not account for possible fluctuations in the characters' weight and body shape in consecutive seasons.

	Body types				
Race	**Underweight**	**Normal weight**	**Overweight**	**Obese**	Total
White	73	76	12	2	163
Black	12	18	3	1	34
Asian	6	2	0	0	8
Some Other Race	8	9	1	0	18

Table 3.1. Prevalence of working women's body shapes and sizes by race.

In all represented racial groups but Asian, about half the women tend to have a normal weight (53%, 50% and 47% for Black, Some Other Race and White, respectively). However, in the case of White and Some Other Race women, the number of underweight characters is dramatically high, and is nearly on a par with the number of those within the normal weight range (45% and 44%, respectively), whereas for Asians the underweight characters constitute 75%, with only 25% within the normal weight range. Interestingly, the percentage of overweight or obese characters is nearly the same for both White (8%) and Black (10%) group, whereas the combined presence of such characters in the Asian and Some Other Race group equals 6%, with a single overweight character belonging to Some Other Race in the investigated sample. Overall, the number of overweight and obese characters constitute 12% of the analyzed characters.

The investigated prevalence of body shapes and sizes of the female working characters in particular occupations has also yielded interesting results.

	Body shape and size			
Occupation	**Underweight**	**Normal weight**	**Overweight**	**Obese**
Lawyers	20	15	4	0
Law enforcement	15	21	1	0
Doctors	16	17	3	0
Agents	12	8	1	0
CSIs	3	7	0	0
Nurses	4	4	2	0
Medical examiners	3	5	1	0
Teachers	3	4	0	1
White House staff	2	5	1	0
Entrepreneurs	3	3	0	1
Journalists	3	3	0	0
PR specialists	1	4	0	0
Scientists	2	2	0	0

Laboratory technicians and computer analysts	1	2	1	0
Secretaries and receptionists	1	2	1	0
Psychologists, life coaches, and counselors	1	1	1	0
Paramedics	2	0	0	0
Models	2	0	0	0
Firefighters	1	0	0	0
Fashion designers	1	0	0	0
Private investigators	1	0	0	0
Advertising specialists	0	1	0	0
Judges	0	1	0	0
Film executives	0	1	0	0
Art dealers	0	1	0	0
Social workers	0	0	0	1
Total	97	107	16	3

Table 3.2. Body shapes and sizes of working female characters by occupation.

In occupations represented by at least three characters, the highest percentage of underweight women was found, in descending order, among the agents (57%), lawyers (51%), scientists (50%), doctors (44%), law enforcement and nurses (40% in each group), entrepreneurs (43%), teachers (38%), medical examiners (33% in each group), and CSIs (30%). Thus the female characters featuring in the most popular types of shows (police procedurals, medical dramas and legal dramas) tend to be shown as unnaturally thin. Interestingly, only the nurses, who constitute a relatively small group in the sample, have a fairly balanced representation of body types: 40% of these characters have normal weight, 40% are underweight, and 20% are overweight. It has to be emphasized, though, that the real numbers are almost negligible as the whole group consists of ten female characters altogether. Finally, individual obese characters can only be found among the teachers, chefs, and social workers, amounting to the total of three.

The message that follows from such representations is that the workplace favors the unnaturally thin physique over normal or overweight body shape. It is especially poignant in the case of high-profile, prestigious careers, such as doctors and lawyers, and the occupations requiring physical fitness, namely the police force and agents. Obese characters are virtually banished from the professional sphere, and their limited presence is allowed only in the broadly defined category of caring occupations, i.e. nursing, teaching, and cheffing. It seems that the traditionally feminine nurturing connotations of these jobs make the enlarged female body acceptable

Plus-size women (i.e. overweight or obese) constitute a fraction of the total number of characters in the sample, which complicates attempts at generalising about the possible connection between their weight and occupational identity. However, their non-conformance to the widely held "norm" is never an issue and does not render them unprofessional. Although excessive body weight

is stereotypically associated with laziness, negligence or lack of control, it is not framed this way in the examined cases. Moreover, it is by no means a subject of jokes or derogatory comments, nor is it presented as incapacitating. The established underrepresentation of above-average weight characters confirms findings by other researchers (Fouts and Burggraf "Female Body Images," "Female weight"), and even though their depiction is positive, the endorsement of a thin body as the standard of female attractiveness contributing to women's success at work remains unchallenged.

Considering the available US statistical data regarding the prevalence of body types in women of different ethnic backgrounds in the cohort aged twenty and over, one can conclude that the way the working women's bodies are represented is drastically unrealistic. According to the 2012 National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES), in 1999–2000 about 28.6% of women aged twenty and over were overweight, 33.4% obese, and 6.2% extremely obese. The figures for the respective weight categories in 2009–2010 were 27.9, 35.8 and 8.1% (Fryar et al. 6). Moreover, the survey showed that 32.2 % of non-Hispanic white women were obese, whereas obesity among non-Hispanic Black women was as high as 58.5%. What is more, according to the 2007–2008 NHANES, the prevalence of underweight women aged 20–74 was 2.3 % (Fryar and Ogden 2). Thus the findings about the fictional TV representations presented in Tables 2 and 3 stand in stark contrast to the statistical data in the analogous period, with the number of overweight and obese women in different occupations at only 8.5%, and the number of underweight and normal weight women amounting to a staggering 91,5%, nearly evenly distributed between the two categories (47,5% and 52,5%). The obliteration of the plus-sized female body and promotion of the trim, underweight physique in the narratives of working women is a strong statement and a clear prescription for the female success in the workplace.

The implausible, normative body ideals disseminated by the analyzed TV shows do not accommodate for diversity in yet another sense. Findings by authors working with African Americans reveal that there is a bigger acceptance of a larger-frame female body among Black women and men alike. They tend to select heavier silhouettes as ideal, and perceive themselves as lighter than their BMIs suggest (Bhuyian et al. 795). This preference, however, is not reflected in the representation of Black working women in the study sample, constituting an example of whitewashing, that is the projection of White ideals on Black characters, and, by extension, on all non-White ones.

1.3 Sexual bodies

As a rule, the expression of sexual identity in the workplace is carefully controlled, though not necessarily suppressed. Additionally, it operates within the heteronormative power structure characteristic of the majority (if not all) occupations. The analysis has sought to establish whether and how institu-

tional heterosexuality is reflected in the corporeal practices of heterosexual and homosexual working women under study. The other aspect concerned the reconciliation of the need for professional female bodies to stay fit without compromising their femininity. Being fit shows the endurance and ability to meet the requirements of the job as well as the capability to bring work-related tasks to completion (Trethewey 433). However, a super-fit athletic female body may be recognized as a lesbian body, and consequently undermine the working woman's professional status as counter to the compulsory heteronormative culture (Rich qtd. in Trethewey 433).

In the examined sample, working women's bodies are predominantly heterosexual. Straight characters work in both traditional and non-traditional occupations, and there is no significant difference in the manifestation of their sexuality regarding this aspect. The way their heterosexuality is expressed presupposes and reflects the presence of the male gaze and the ensuing self-objectification. Even though the onscreen workplace milieu is equally fraught with caveats regarding romance as the real-life one, the rules of attraction remain operational. Hence the bodies tend to be conventionally attractive, unequivocally feminine, and heterosexually appealing.

Lesbian characters in the sample include doctors Kerry Weaver of *ER*, Maggie Doyle of *ER* (last appearance in March 1999), Erica Hahn and Arizona Robbins of *Grey's Anatomy,* Liz Cruz of *Nip/Tuck*, assistant district attorney Serena Southerlyn of *Law & Order*, a nurse Kelly Epson in *Hawthorne*, and a police officer Kima Greggs of *The Wire*. In turn, bisexual women are represented by doctors Remy Hadley of *House, M.D.* and Callie Torres of *Grey's Anatomy,* entreprenuer Katherine Mayfair of *Desperate Housewives*, forensic specialist Angela Montenegro of *Bones*, and PR specialist Samantha Jones of *Sex and the City*. Needless to say, with the exception of a nurse and a caterer, the majority of non-heteronormative characters perform nontraditional jobs. In none of the cases would their bodies be recognized as butch lesbian – they are all quite feminine-looking femme lesbian and conventionally attractive, even hot and sexy, perhaps with the exception of Weaver (chronologically the earliest character in the sample). This finding resonates with the earlier observations made by Ann M. Ciasullo, claiming that media tend to reproduce the model of a lesbian body that is less challenging to mainstream cultural visions of female homosexuality (578). The absence of more provocative butch lesbian bodies eliminates a potential threat to masculinity and creates space for heterosexual attraction.

In the examined sample, regardless of sexual identity, there are no women whose heterosexuality could be questioned based on their too athletic body. As the lesbian and bisexual characters are embodied by feminine-looking women, there are no instances of discrimination against them due to their non-heteronormative physique. Moreover, in none of the cases is the characters' professional

status endangered, even though they are quite frank about their sexual orientation in the workplace, either by openly stating that they are lesbian or by having a romantic and sexual relationship with a workmate. The prevalence of women's heterosexually-feminine bodies could be interpreted as a strategy for constructing occupational identity by connecting professionalism with hegemonic femininity. That such image of the woman and female body remains dominant in American popular culture is only confirmed by the present study.

1.4 Pregnant bodies

The shape-changing effect of pregnancy on the female body makes it depart from the normative trim, slim, and fit professional ideal. This could be the reason why pregnant bodies are nearly erased from the picture, even though women of reproductive age constitute the vast majority of the workforce in the analyzed shows. During the 1999–2010 period, a total of 28 pregnancies appear on screen. In all cases but one, the character becomes pregnant only once during the examined period, except for one co-protagonist expecting three times between 2003–2007. Bearing in mind that as many as 188 characters are of reproductive age, only 15% of them experience pregnancy over the period in question, mostly doctors and police officers. Other cases include, for instance, a paramedic, a CSI, an advertising specialist, and a chef. Evidently, the highest numbers of televised pregnancies in medical and law enforcement occupations coincide with the overall number of characters in the sample. On the whole, the visibility of pregnant working women is low and restricted.

Early stage pregnancies tend to be invisible and have little or no impact on working women's performance at work. A small yet important subcategory of early gestation pregnancies are pregnancies that ended before the body of the character has been markedly transformed. There are six such cases in the examined material; four pregnancies end early in miscarriage, and two are aborted, either electively, as in the case of police officer Faith Yokas on *Third Watch*, or due to medical reasons, as regards doctor Cristina Yang on *Grey's Anatomy*. Interestingly, four cases involve doctors, out of whom three miscarry and one terminates her malformed pregnancy. The complications enable the characters to expose their abdominal areas for ultrasound scans. Their bared flat stomachs by no means indicate impregnation, and there are no other bodily signs of the changed condition. Such treatment reinforces the idea that the professional female body puts its reproductive functions on hold, thus framing the lost pregnancies as a glitch in the system.

A different take on the body in the early gestation period is exemplified by the pregnancy of Lynette Scavo (*Desperate Housewives*), played by an actress conforming to the professional bodily norm. In her case, the giveaway symptom are the enlarged breasts, not the stomach area; however, she is believed to have had a bust augmentation surgery when in fact she is pregnant with twins (Sea-

son 6). Her cleavage becomes the point of conversation between her boss Carlos Solis and a male co-worker. The former does not hesitate to ask her for the name of the plastic surgeon to recommend his/her services to his wife. This exchange between the supervisor and the subordinate in the work-place is an example of sexual harassment, though long-term friendship with the boss's wife as well as shared neighborhood constitute attenuating circumstances. Nevertheless, the discussion and comment upon the female employee's body emphasizes her role as a sex object available for the male gaze and comment.

The changes in the appearance induced by later or full time pregnancies similarly do not affect women's professional performance. A case in question is, for example, Lindsay Monroe (later Messer) in Season 5 of *CSI: NY*, who continues to perform her lab duties with her relatively frequently pictured expanding abdominal area. Quite conveniently, the baby's father is her colleague, which produces opportunities for both of them to interact with the belly in the workplace by casually caressing it, talking to the unborn baby, or even reading a comic to her. This case proves that showcasing an enlarged physique of a formerly petite woman in the workplace is feasible yet uncommon.

Pregnancies of larger frame characters, who are less numerous in the investigated sample, appear to receive more attention. When Miranda Bailey on *Grey's Anatomy* expects her first child in Season 2, her body does not change dramatically as the pregnancy progresses because she has been a short, stocky figure to begin with. In Episode 12, Season 2 she is seen breathing heavily and touching her bulging stomach barely discernible under scrubs and doctor's coat. In the scene, the interns following right behind her exchange hush comments about her condition ("Look at her belly. She's almost as wide as she is tall", "Are her ankles swollen? Is that why she is waddling?" "What do you think happens when people push babies out of their vagina?"). Thus although Bailey's pregnant overweight body is doubly deviant, it is precisely her pregnancy that makes it a point of discussion. When she finally gives birth in Season 2 Episode 17, she is accompanied and comforted throughout the labor by one of her young male interns. Such poignantly intimate interaction between the delivering superior and a subordinate indicates how the workplace roles and hierarchies can be redefined beyond the default, patriarchal, vertical setup. Additionally, this plot shows that although pregnancies in overweight and obese characters render their bodies doubly deviant, the anatomical and physiological changes ostensibly redeem their full-figured presence in the professional environment.

The distribution of pregnant bodies shows a certain concession to this altered condition within the medical and police professions; however, it may be the effect of the general prevalence of these occupations in television dramas. Women working in other occupations, both traditional and non-traditional, appear to be devoid of their reproductive capacity. However, while TV's fictional

pregnant bodies are for the most part absent from the workplace, real-life data show that between 2001–2008, over 50% of women pregnant with their first child worked full time, with well over 60% remaining in part-time jobs (Gao and Livingston).

Pregnancy epitomizes femininity in its fullest. It entails the expansion of the female body in the abdominal area, and augmentation of other parts, e.g. breasts, thighs, and glutes. The physical enlargement of the female frame symbolically threatens hegemonic masculinity on two counts. First, the undisciplined female body going through the natural yet often unpredictable physiological process requires special treatment and occupies more space, competing with the "ordinary" male bodies. Secondly, this natural realization of hegemonic femininity becomes a subversive transgression in the workplace, especially one that is traditionally masculine. Apparently, female sexuality in the workplace is only welcome as long as it does not entail the reproductive consequences. Moreover, the observed displacement of the pregnant body from the workplace communicates that it does not naturally belong in the corporate world. The findings resonate with Kristina Eriksson's conclusions on the workplace presence of the pregnant surgeon's or physician's body:

> Visibly pregnant physicians thus challenge and transgress professional and cultural gender norms prescribing how much – or little – space an actor with female body signs is allowed to occupy and how (un)controlled she can be when, or without, challenging the boundary between the private and the professional. In various ways they challenge symbolic boundaries for women and the socially and professionally defined room they – as women – are to manoeuvre within. (105)

Although Eriksson builds her argument with reference to real-life physicians, her conclusions can be applied to mediated representations of pregnant women in general. According to her, pregnant female body at work signifies women's sexual and emotional availability, which, although naturally or conventionally feminine, is at odds with the requirements entailed by the professional context (92–93). Thus the identified strategies of positioning pregnant professional bodies in the dramas preserve the traditional gender order in the workplace, rendering them as deviant or transgressive, and all that in the country where the fertility rate was 2.05 in 2005 (currently at 1.84), with 89% of all births given by women in the age group between 20 and 34 years old (in 2015).

The paucity of working women's pregnant bodies harks back to the early times of television when the sole mention of pregnancy as a consequence of sex was generally avoided. The sitcom *I Love Lucy*, the second to incorporate and the first to follow real-time pregnancy in 1953, notoriously omitted the word "pregnant" throughout the seven episodes covering the process (Adams et al.). Today, although pregnancy is no longer a taboo, the pregnant body on prime time TV remains

markedly obscured, setting the tone for the culturally acceptable norm of full commitment in the work-related contexts, and upholding the separation between the private and the public.

1.5 Disabled bodies

According to some theorists, such as Joan Acker, the working person's body, sexuality, relationship to procreation and paid work are implicitly male (149). Her ideas of the workplace masculinization were extended by Cynthia Cockburn to include people with disabilities, emphasizing their disenfranchisement in the workplace organized by and for the able-bodied. She argues that because the model is the white physically fit male, disabled women's bodies are seen as weaker and less effective. A productive way to revoke the model is to increase the workplace visibility of disabled bodies, both female and male (209).

The visibility of working women characters with physical disabilities is highly restricted in the study sample. Only two characters have been identified as such, namely doctor Kerry Weaver on *ER* and nurse Bobbie Jackson on *HawthoRNe*. The former is a character with mobility impairment who uses a forearm crutch to steady her limping gait, whereas the latter is an amputee with a prosthetic leg. Neither of the disabilities encumber the women's performance at work; one is perceived as a competent and

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Thus the dominant discourse of physical femininity in the workplace presupposes its embodiment by an able-bodied woman. The exclusion of working women with disabilities across the American mainstream TV entertainment may reflect their absence on the real life labor market. Although the two mentioned exceptions ring as positive, they do little to challenge the all-pervasive ableism.

1.6 Personal grooming

Another aspect of women's conformity to workplace standards of appearance is related to their grooming practices. According to the Foucauldian concepts of self-surveillance and self-discipline, everyday rituals serve individuals to "internalize and reproduce hierarchies of social status and

power, transforming their bodies into 'carriers' or representatives of prevailing relations of domination and subordination" (Dellinger and Williams 152). In this perspective, the hairstyles and make-up of the working female characters encode the underlying gendered power structures at work and can be analyzed as such.

Long hair on a woman has been traditionally associated with heterosexual femininity and sex appeal. It is even applauded by St Paul himself in the following passage: "Does not the very nature of things teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a disgrace to him, but that if a woman has long hair, it is her glory?" (1 Cor. 11: 14–15). And yet, this Biblical rule does not seem to apply to 21st century women when it comes to the regulations of their hairstyles appropriate for the workplace context. The available studies on the subject have established that in today's American corporate culture the optimal professional hairstyle for working women is a low-maintenance, classic bob, constituting a middle ground between a cropped men's haircut and more feminine, lengthier hairstyles. For professional women, long hair is deemed appropriate if and only when it is well-kempt and done up in a low ponytail, bun, Gibson tuck, or tight braids at the very least. If left hanging loose or messy, long hair is considered to project an unprofessional image and act as a powerful sexual distractor, allegedly sidetracking heterosexual male co-workers. Other general rules regarding women's hair advise that it needs to be kept clean and neatly styled, dyed hair must be regularly refreshed, and dramatic or severe cuts must be avoided (Eyring). Koppelman suggests that "bald women and women with gray or white hair defy the social construction of female beauty and are thus subject to social punishments (because they are viewed as threatening) (86)." In effect, women are encouraged to masquerade as youthful in order to avoid negative perception in the workplace.

The results of the investigation regarding the hair lengths and colors of the female characters in the inspected sample (221) do not confirm the reported prescriptions regarding workplace coiffures. The overwhelming majority of the working female characters wear long (146) or medium-length hairstyles (63), with only twelve characters sporting a short haircut and one opting for ethnic braids. As regards hair shapes, straight hair is most popular (133), significantly outnumbering both the wavy (45) and curly (31) types. Although there is no significant correlation between the characters' occupations and choice of longer hairstyles, police officers constitute half the number of those opting for short hair (6 out of 12). Also, the vast majority of characters tend to wear their hair down, with occasional exceptions among police officers and doctors, especially surgeons. Overall, such aspects as functionality of hairstyles or their conformance with the generally accepted workplace standards are vastly neglected, while the conventional femininity of the working female characters gets foregrounded and reinforced.

Moreover, although long hair is an extremely important marker of heterosexual femininity, it is sported by both heteronormative and non-heteronormative characters. In fact, eight identified homosexual or bisexual characters wear long straight or curly hair, medium-length hairstyles are visible in three, whereas the rare short haircuts are worn by heterosexual females only. It appears that as far as hairstyles are concerned, lesbian and bisexual working female characters unanimously conform to the conventional feminine beauty norms, upholding the hegemonic patriarchal order despite their non-heteronormative sexual orientation.

Interestingly, several medium or short-haired women grow their hair longer as the series progresses. Such tendency could be observed in the police detectives Olivia Benson (*Law & Order: SVU*) and Kate Beckett (*Castle*). The more feminine hairstyles serve as counterbalance to their traditionally masculine occupations, accentuating the fact that their professional successes do not diminish their femininity.

Hair color is the other aspect heavily regulated in professional settings, with bright or unnatural hues prohibited as a rule. In the analyzed sample, the vast majority of characters can be classified as brunettes (122), with blondes and redheads falling far behind them (73 and 25, respectively), and only one gray-haired representative. Thus characters with brown or black hair dominate in most occupational groups, with only three exceptions: nurses, PR specialists, and White House staffers. Notably, all the colors belong to the palette of natural hues, projecting characters' professionalism by conforming to the ingrained conventions. The virtual absence of gray hair also subscribes to the entrenched norms of feminine beauty, communicating that natural signs of aging are to be strictly controlled if a woman wants to remain successful in the corporate environment.

There are but two professionally accomplished characters who exhibit blatant disregard for the established corporate norms regarding women's hair. Abby Sciuto (*NCIS*) and Penelope Garcia (*Criminal Minds*), a brunette and a blonde, wear their hair in punk-rock or boho/pin-up style, respectively. Notably, both characters pursue careers infrequently chosen by women, that of a forensic scientist and a technical analyst/agent. Hence, their unconventional hairstyles, combined with young age and exceptional competencies, may be interpreted as rebellious and empowering symbols of their non-standard occupational identity. On the other hand, they both perform back-office tasks, which may simply excuse a more lenient approach to the appearance. Regardless, the way they wear their hair in the professional setting breaks the mold.

The second major component contributing to women's professional appearance is make-up. Although it is hardly ever listed as a specific job requirement, Dellinger and Williams found that women are institutionally pressurized to wear makeup appropriately at work in order to establish

their credibility and heterosexuality in the workplace (174). The authors claim that lack of make-up makes women look unhealthy, questions their heterosexuality, and undermines their credentials, all of which may negatively influence their professional image. As in fimmaking maquillage constitutes a necessary part of character creation and all women on TV screen wear makeup, the only possible conclusions regard its quality. Overall, working characters in the analyzed sample tend to wear neutral, unostentatious daily make-up, which conforms to the unwritten standards of appearance in professional setting. However, in some cases the durability of make-up becomes ostensibly unrealistic. For example, CSIs and the medical examiner on *CSI: Miami* tend to wear tons of mascara and lipstick that somehow survive the outdoor heat of the fieldwork. The already mentioned Sciuto and Garcia also stand out in the sample, as they complement their unorthodox hairstyles with matching theatrical, bold or garish make-up. These exceptions, however, do not undermine the conclusion that the working women's make-up styles connote heterosexual femininity as well as meet the standards conventionally expected from women in professional setting as signifiers of their occupational credibility.

1.7 Bodies as tools of marginalization

The representations of the working women's bodies available on the TV screen are far from unbiased. As demonstrated above, the dominant shapes and sizes not only tend to be vastly unrealistic, but they also subscribe to the white Western heterosexual beauty ideals, excluding veritable representations of other races or ethnicities. Bodies that are slim and fit constitute an unquestionable majority across the whole spectrum of jobs and professions, while only a handful of those may explicitly require such physique. Disciplined, well-groomed and conventional female bodies are communicated as professional bodies, constituting the norm reinforced by the limited presence of deviant bodies, namely those that are large, pregnant, disabled, or otherwise different.

Although motherhood is in harmony with the ideal of hegemonic femininity, the reproductive function of the female body hardly ever makes it to the screen. Pregnant women and complication of their work by pregnancy tend to be kept out of sight or minimized. This marginalization contributes to an unrealistic construction of the female professional as devoid of sex life leading to procreation. Banishing pregnancies of working women off the screen can be interpreted as yet another facet of the imposed hegemonic order, emphasizing the antithetic character of an agentic woman operating in the public sphere. Conversely, the absence of pregnant bodies could be viewed as contesting hegemonic femininity, but only if the reproductive decisions were actively discussed by the working female characters, leading to informed decisions on pregnancy options.

To conclude, the commonly recognized standard regarding the female body in the workplace is highly consistent with the attributes traditionally associated with white, Western, heterosexual femininity. Despite superficial variety, representations of working women in the examined TV series are constructed according to the cultural pattern embedded in the workplaces still governed by masculine rules. Any departures from the norms of white Western heterosexual femininity in the work-related context are marginal. Although working women as a whole have gained more visibility and agency as a group, close inspection reveals persistent facets of exclusion. The disturbing tendency to valorize young, White, able-bodied, heterosexual and child-free women in the TV workplace in both traditional and non-traditional occupations remains vastly unchallenged.

2. Fashioning the professional

The subsequent analysis concerns the depictions of the creative use of sartorial elements by female employees for self-expression in three situations: when they are obliged to wear professional uniforms, when they have to obey quasi uniform rules, and when they enjoy total sartorial freedom

2.1 Sartorial identity markers

Sartorial identity markers are often self-explanatory, as they are deeply embedded in the work environment. The identity kits may consist of clothes, name tags or badges and any other paraphernalia that are signs or symbols of a particular occupation. In the *Introduction to the Sociology of Work* (2001), Rudi Volti emphasizes the importance of a distinctive uniform as a marker of occupational identity. He mentions, among other things, police uniforms which "are meant to convey authority", white outfits worn by nurses and doctors that connote "strict attention to cleanliness and hygiene", or the pocket protectors characteristically used by engineers and computer programmers (138). Volti points out that jackets and ties may also be construed as a uniform, as the set expresses a "fairly high-level status," setting the wearer apart from the lower level employees toiling at mundane every-day tasks their non-corporate jobs involve. Overall, uniforms serve to express corporate identity over personal identity. They eliminate the possibility of personal choice of clothes and allegedly level out the differences between men and women performing the same tasks, constituting "totemic emblems" (Joseph and Alex 720). According to some researchers, though, the lack of standard uniforms intended for women, e.g. in business, requires that they put more effort into their self presentation (Beatty 51, cf. Kimle and Damhorst).

The subsequent analysis concerns the ways in which fictional female employees use sartorial elements for self-expression in three situations: when they are obliged to wear professional uniforms, when they have to obey quasi uniform rules, and when they enjoy total sartorial freedom at the work-

place. The related goal is to assess the degree to which clothes serve in the analyzed dramas as tools to construct women's femininity or masculinity in work-related contexts.

2.2 Professional uniforms

In the examined sample, professional uniforms are chiefly worn by police officers, paramedics, a military lawyer, and a firefighter. Apart from the representatives of law enforcement and emergency services, uniforms are also worn by female members of the medical profession, namely doctors and nurses. Crime Scene Investigators (CSIs), the majority of women in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) jobs and a chef also don uniforms as they perform their work-related tasks

Although police officers have a significant representation in the sample, only those who work as regular beat officers are regularly shown wearing a uniform. An example in question is Faith Yokas (*Third Watch*) who wears a season-appropriate dark uniform, virtually identical for police officers of both sexes. In the warm period, the uniform consists of a short-sleeved shirt, belted trousers, and black plain-toe boots. Characteristically, while male colleagues on her team usually wear neckties, Yokas is seen with the shirt collar casually open, exposing bare skin. In cooler periods the shirt gets replaced by a black, mock turtleneck shirt and a winter jacket. Different distinctions are clearly visible, such as her city affiliation patch as well as the rank insignia. Another important element of the identity kit is the police badge, dubbed as the shield, which she usually wears in the designated area above the left chest pocket. Her patrol officer status is signaled by a police radio strapped to her left shoulder. Finally, Yokas is often seen with two unmistakable, powerful symbols of the law enforcement profession and actual instruments of coercion or defense: a baton and a gun. She usually carries the former on her left side, whereas the latter rests in the holster on her right hip.

Another representative of the uniformed services is Kimberly Zambrano, a paramedic in Third Watch. Zambrano wears a navy-blue uniform that consists of a jacket and trousers, with the sign "Paramedic" in white capital letters above the right chest pocket and "FDNY" over the left one. Moreover, the right sleeve has a paramedic certification patch, whereas the left shoulder patch bears the sizable emblem of the New York City Fire Department. When on call, Zambrano also wears a stethoscope around her neck. Her uniform is unisex in type, consisting of a jacket-like shirt and belted trousers. Although the unisex uniform allegedly underplays her gender, her feminine curves are accentuated through tight-fitting pants and the tucked-in shirt. Zambrano's occupation is clearly stated by the word "paramedic" on the front and back of her jacket, as is her New York City affiliation. However, her personal identity is de-emphasized as no name badge is visible.

The only firefighter in the sample is Alexandra Taylor (*Third Watch*), who happens to double as a paramedic. Taylor can be seen wearing different types of uniforms depending on whether she waits for a call, performs her duties as a paramedic, or extinguishes fire in emergency conditions. One variety of the uniform she appears in consists of a short-sleeved shirt and trousers; her surname is printed in red capital letters over her right breast, whereas "FDNY" runs above the left. Another uniform she is frequently seen in is a fireproof and waterproof suit consisting of a coat and trousers with suspenders, accompanied by heavy boots, protective gloves, and a helmet fitted with a face shield. It is only her blonde hair, blue eyes and angelic face visible under the helmet that mark her out as a female. As Taylor is a small-framed woman, the uniform looks oversized and suggests her fragility

The homogenizing function of the uniform originally meant for men makes female police officers, paramedics, and firefighters blend into a squad, virtually erasing their femininity and turning them into "one of the boys" in their teams. The prominent source of the shared identity in these occupations is the city or unit affiliation and the performed tasks, whereas the exposed rank insignia enhance professional credibility, emphasizing meritocracy irrespective of gender. Both personal and gender identity are repressed in the process, as the outfits of female professionals are not visibly modified in order to enhance the femininity of the wearers.

Women serving in the US army are represented by Sarah MacKenzie (*JAG*), the sole female Marine Corps lawyer in the sample. She is usually featured wearing either of the two varieties of navy uniforms: khaki or navy-blue. They both come with pencil skirts and peaked hats, or, alternatively, a garrison cap. Wearing a dress uniform, MacKenzie also has her orders' ribbons and awards pinned above her left breast. Also, when appearing in the military court, she is often seen carrying a briefcase. Unlike the uniforms discussed above, the army uniforms differentiate heavily between the sexes, maintaining credibility in relation to the lived sartorial reality as stipulated by *Army Regulation 670-1. Uniforms and Insignia. Wear and Appearance of Army Uniforms and Insignia* (2005). The fact that a skirt rather than pants is the default component of the woman's uniform in this highly masculinized profession immediately marks out MacKenzie and other female army officers on the show. Moreover, although the skirts the colonel gets to wear are knee-length, they tend to expose half her thighs when she is seated. Thus, even though MacKenzie's professional merits are well-advertised by the ribbons on her chest, the lower part of the uniform denotes her physical femininity.

Among the medical doctors, scrubs and coats create a high level of professional uniformity irrespective of gender. Although the white coat symbolically denoted medical authority and respect throughout the last two centuries (Hochberg 311), doctors' garments differ now in colors and pat-

terns. This change has also been observed in the analyzed material, where medical scrubs in different colors serve as indicators of the TV doctors' area of specialization, or the ward or unit where they perform their chores. For example, on Grey's Anatomy, neurosurgeons on duty wear various shades of blue short-sleeved V-neck scrubs with matching drawstring pants and a white lab coat on top, whereas neonatal surgeons are dressed in dark green. On the same show, the colleagues from the dermatology unit wear pastel, pink blush scrubs, believed to correspond to the serenity enjoyed by the medical staff of their ward (Season 4 Episode 5). The shoes of the female doctors are mostly comfortable sports shoes or sneakers sustaining their mobility during a busy hospital workday. A common piece of the doctor's equipment is a stethoscope typically hanging around the neck to communicate the on-duty status. On close examination, stethoscopes, like uniforms, come in different colors, which makes them yet another element distinguishing one from other similarly clad medical professionals.

The uniformed identity of surgeons becomes even more pronounced when they enter the operating theater to perform surgeries. While operating, they must wear gowns and surgical gloves, cover their mouths and noses with masks, and cover their hair with surgical caps. Although their individuality becomes lost under the garments, they attempt to partly reclaim it through the choice of the surgical cap. Doctors of both sexes in the analyzed medical dramas display a variety of scrub hats to communicate their identity and express their personality when other sartorial means of distinguishing themselves from others are unavailable. At times, this piece of garment becomes an important symbol of the character's trials and tribulations. For example, Meredith Grey wears her deceased husband's lucky surgical cap upon returning to work after extended absence following his tragic death. The cap becomes a symbolic link between their shared past experience as surgeons and spouses and the new reality within which she needs to reinvent and reestablish herself as a surgeon. The episode in which Grey wears an ordinary cap marks the moment when she moves on and becomes more focused on her work and career than on grieving. A designer Hyakkaryouran bouffant surgical cap selected for the guest star surgeon Margaret Campbell (played by Faye Dunaway in Season 5 Episode 16) emphasizes her reputation and prestige as the first female surgeon in Seattle Grace Hospital. The brown and gold hues coupled with a pattern of chrysanthemums traditionally representing the fall season appear to correspond well with the character's status and age, but also symbolically convey an imminent end of her career. Indeed as the episode closes, Dr. Campbell decides that the failed surgery she has just performed is her last one before retirement.

The other group of scrub-clad female medical professionals are nurses. Their uniforms may also come in different colors depending on the ward, and this fact is sometimes used in the shows to

signal important aspects of the character's professional identity. Zoey Barkow of *Nurse Jackie* is especially discernible by her various colorful, printed scrubs which emphasize her immaturity and inexperience in contrast to the other medical professionals in the emergency department. In fact, these playful scrubs are so definitive of Barkow's nursing student status that when she accidentally causes a patient to overdose and puts him in a coma, they are exchanged for plain grey ones to emphasize the grief she expresses over the situation. Similarly, Kelly Epson, a pediatric nurse working at the children's ward on *HawthoRNe*, is shown wearing colorful printed scrubs, e.g. with ducklings, the choice most likely motivated by an attempt to prevent the 'white coat syndrome' (Hochberg 312). Moreover, nurses are regularly shown sporting two important attributes, that is a pair of rubber gloves and a stethoscope. The former, usually tucked into one of the many scrub pockets, are meant to ensure protection against the patients' bodily fluids and save the patients from infection during administration of various procedures or medicines. In turn, the stethoscope reminds the viewer that that nurses often assess many vital parameters of those committed to their care. Because this tool has traditionally functioned as a doctor's attribute (David and Dumitrascu), the fact that more and more TV nurses carry a stethoscope around their necks undermines the degrading myth about their professional subordination to doctors. On the whole, sartorial strategies intended for the nurse-characters in the examined TV series are markedly different from the earlier popular culture image of the nurse as a sexy object of desire of her male colleagues and patients.

The uniforms currently worn by the fictional TV nurses do not have the same popular culture connotations that the older and very feminine nurse uniform consisting of a dress, pinafore apron and a cap has. The innuendos related to the traditional uniform make Abby Lockhart (*ER*) a self-aware transgressor when she dresses up as an old-fashioned naughty nurse during the Halloween episode (Season 9 Episode 5). Her colleague's remark that she looks like a slut does not displease Lockhart, whose strong occupational identity allows her to deliberately play with the ambiguous imagery and humorously explode the over-sexualized stereotype of the nursing profession.

In relatively few occupations, the depicted female characters are shown as switching between uniforms and personalized clothes, depending on what job tasks they perform. CSIs, medical examiners and STEM professionals belong to this group. The TV series that demonstrates the work of female CSIs employs a standard repertoire of sartorial indicators of these women's professional identities used according to the tasks at hand. During fieldwork, they typically involve ball caps and forensic vests, with a name tag over the right breast pocket and the unit patch on the left. The vests are worn over T-shirts and other casual tops, depending on the time of day (or night) and weather conditions. When necessary, CSIs may also don windbreakers with the police insignia. The identifying

credentials badge is usually pinned down to the belt rather than hung around the neck. They may occasionally wear protective gear to avoid cross-contamination of evidence at the crime scene. In laboratory work they wear protective gloves and white lab coats, with their names embroidered on the left breast and the logo on the right (*CSI: Miami*) or just the sign “NY Crime Lab” across the left breast (*CSI: NY*). Curiously enough, they do not get to wear hairnets, a mandatory accessory in actual crime labs. Although no formal requirements appear to regulate their dress for office duties, they wear casual or smart casual clothes for the occasion.

The costumes of medical examiners and forensic anthropologists reflect similar clothing strategies that correspond with the dual functions of their jobs, namely fieldwork and morgue or laboratory duties. While engaging in fieldwork, medical examiner Alexx Woods (*CSI: Miami*) usually wears a white trouser suit, a V-neck blouse showing cleavage or a sleeveless tank top, stilettos, and sunglasses. Working at the dissection table, Woods wears blue, green, or bordeaux scrubs and disposable rubber gloves, and never uses a hairnet to cover her long tresses while leaning over the corpses with a sponge, scalpel, forceps, or other similar utensils. In a similar manner, Temperance Brennan (Bones), a forensic anthropologist, is usually shown as opting for more casual look that consists of comfortable slacks and fitted jackets, often belted, or a long buttoned-up coat, plus kneehigh boots. Working in the lab, Brennan usually dons a buttoned-up teal lab coat with her name embroidered over the logo of the Jeffersonian Institute on the left breast and a name badge attached to the right side. The coat only partly covers up dresses, flared skirts or black jeans, paired with feminine tank tops or button-down shirts underneath. However, starting from Season 5, her flowy apparels are replaced with more tailored, conventional office cuts. Characteristically, Brennan is very particular about her accessories, choosing bold statement necklaces and earrings, often ethnic in origin. Both Woods and Brennan are shown as alternating between two looks mandated by the dual nature of their tasks, that is fieldwork and lab work, balancing sartorial self-expression with the necessity to yield to internal dress policies. Importantly, these clothing strategies allow the characters to distinctly yet effortlessly emphasize their femininity while applying advanced scientific methods and techniques in their respective, traditionally “unfeminine” professions.

Female computer technician characters present a completely different slant on performing professionalism in terms of clothes. Rather then project an image of adult femininity, forensic specialist Abby Sciuto (*NCIS)* and computer technician Penelope Garcia *(Criminal Minds)* opt for unorthodox, almost teenage look in their dress choices, revealing fascination with youth subcultures. Even though Abby dons a white lab coat when working with high-end and cutting-edge equipment, her goth tattoos and spiked choker necklace blatantly defy the conventions of age-appropriate work-

place attire. Unorthodox screenplay ideas of this kind produce a rather infantilized image of femininity projected by specialists whose scientific knowledge, high-tech skills and competencies are well above average.

A uniform is also worn by the only chef in the cohort. In early seasons Sookie St James is usually seen wearing a white double-breasted jacket and her hair in low pigtails. In the later seasons, the array of jacket colors expands to include red, blue and lilac. Instead of a white hat that is considered part of the chef's uniform, Sookie sports wide, ornamental headbands or bandanas. They do not effectively keep the bangs off her face when she handles the food, but these pieces bring out her feminine hairstyles. One other element that is not an obvious part of a uniform are the bandaids and bandages on her hands and fingers. Their stark visibility communicates two things about her occupational identity, namely that as a chef she constantly handles sharp or hot objects while preparing food and that she is accident-prone.

A uniform is also worn by the only chef in the cohort, Sookie St. James in Gilmore Girls. In the early seasons she is usually seen wearing a white double-breasted jacket and sporting her hair in low pigtails. In the later seasons, the array of jacket colors expands to include red, blue, and lilac. Instead of a white hat considered part of the chef's uniform, St. James's look is completed with wide, ornamental headbands or bandanas. Although they fail to keep the bangs off her face when she handles the food, they do help bring out her feminine hairstyles. One other item, technically not an element of her job outfit, is the Band-aids and bandages on her hands and fingers. Their frequent presence and stark visibility communicates two things about her occupational identity, namely exposure to job hazards such as handling sharp or hot objects typical for all chefs, and her accident-prone nature. On close inspection, some of the sartorial choices made by costume designers, writers or directors for the working women characters in the TV dramas appear purely nonsensical, as they clash with the commonsense knowledge of the workplace contexts. Notably, opting for stilettos where mobility is one of the priorities, or letting one's hair hang loose over the crucial part of crime scene evidence or the victim's body are most likely informed by the visual conventions in representation of women on television, emphasizing their attractiveness at the cost of realism and credibility

2.3 Quasi-uniforms

Companies, schools, agencies and many other establishments tend to have specific dress code for their employees to adhere to. For this reason, the work clothes selected according to such guidelines can be considered quasi-uniforms – their function is to mold employee outfits (and, oftentimes, hairdos and nails) without making them dress identically. The term encompasses traditional suits and skirted suits common in business, corporate and government settings. It most typically applies to the

workwear in the law enforcement sector, such as higher-ranking police officers and detectives, agents, lawyers, and White House administration staff.

Female police lieutenants and captains in supervisory roles as well as police detectives are dressed according to similar clothing strategies, displaying a conservative corporate look in line with their office duties. For example, lieutenant Anita Van Buren (*Law & Order*) and captain Claudette Wyms (*The Shield*) most often appear in collared shirts with trouser suits, or jackets paired with dress pants in darker hues; they sporadically appear in pencil skirts or simple tube dresses. Similarly, detective Olivia Benson (*Law & Order: Special Victims Unit*) is casually dressed in belted slacks, casual tops or T-shirts, and suit jackets made of various fabrics. The female characters in this category are featured wearing comfortable, flat, or block-heel, black, no-nonsense shoes. They mostly keep their badges or shields tucked behind the belt, and occasionally one can also get a glimpse of a holstered gun. Additionally, when participating in police action, they don bulletproof vests. The last three elements best express their distinctive occupational identity; other than that, their outfits represent a classic, smart casual office look stripped of feminine components. However, cautious experimentation with shirt or blouse colors, patterns, and necklines, accentuating their bosoms can be interpreted as an attempt to reclaim their femininity.

Female agents are yet another occupational group conspicuous by appearing in highly homogeneous outfits. Sam Spade (*Without a Trace*) performs most of the job-related tasks wearing a dark or grey trouser suit coupled with a white shirt, whose collar is usually kept open to expose cleavage. Alternatively, she is seen wearing tops or blouses with deep decolletage producing a similar effect. She usually does not wear any jewelry, except for an occasional simple silver chain and hoop earrings. Casual clothes consisting of lace trim tops, leather jackets, and jeans are a preferred option while conducting surveillance operations or making arrests. An indispensable element of the female agent's identity is a badge, attached to a pocket or tucked behind the belt, or a plastic-covered identity card pinned to the lapel. The above quasi-uniforms replicate masculine-style wardrobe, with the wearer's femininity played down in effect. The inherent masculinity of the occupations in question is additionally emphasized by guns as essential working tools. However, such modifications of the masculine standard as bold colors, plunging necklines and jewelry effectively serve the female working characters in restoring their femininity.

Female lawyers in the study sample constitute a group of characters conspicuous by their attire, meticulous about their outfits, and extremely salient for their power-dressing skills. According to Entwistle, these could be perceived as a 'technology of the self', popular in the 1980s among the women attempting to break the so-called 'glass-ceiling' in professional careers (312). Three such

strategies have been identified. The first is the conservative, masculinized office look, mostly sported by the older generation female lawyers, and occasional young imitators such as Ellen Parsons in *Damages*. The second is the conservative, yet feminine, look achieved through carefully chosen accessories, characteristic of the middle-aged to older demographics. The third one is the sexy style characteristic of the younger cohort of *Boston Legal* lawyers, whose sex-appeal is enhanced by plunging necklines, miniskirts, and stiletto pumps.

The importance of the sartorial style for the symbolic articulation of female lawyers' professional identity in the shows can be illustrated by juxtaposing Sally Heep of *Boston Legal* and Diane Lockhart of *The Good Wife*. The professional failure of the first one is conveyed by her extravagantly feminine style violating the established conventions. After one ignored warning by the firm's senior partner, herself very strict about appropriate attire, Heep, whose professional competence is unquestioned, gets fired for unsuitable garb, mostly consisting of short, tight-fitting skirts and revealing blouses. In contrast, Lockhart's professional status and authority is strengthened by power-dressing without compromising her femininity. She wears figure-hugging suits and sheath dresses, in unorthodox colors and reflecting latest fashions, and her outfits are accessorized with eye-catching earrings, pendants or brooches. These elements create a compelling look that speaks authority and feminine power, drastically different from the masculine manner of dress characteristic of women in positions of power popularized in the 1970s (Rubinstein 115).

As already pointed out, breaking the masculine outfit conventions by female lawyers may occasionally have a negative consequence for their professional performance. Such insight into the wardrobe tensions is offered in Season 2 Episode 4 of *The Good Wife*. A presiding male judge interrupts Alicia Florrick's courtroom speech and begins to interrogate her about her outfit. In reply, Florrick offers the name of the designer, specifically Ralph Lauren. The unimpressed judge insists that female lawyers must wear skirts, and not pants, in his (sic!) courtroom. In this deeply disturbing scene, Florrick's authority and competence as a lawyer are undermined, and she herself is reduced to her womanhood. What is even more troubling, she does not challenge the male judge, but meekly promises to wear a skirt next time.

The costumes of women employed in the White House (*The West Wing*) also follow the quasi-uniform dress code. Since these characters represent a presidential administration, their clothes reflect a high level of formality: blouses and shirts, trouser suits or skirts and jackets, communicating seriousness, sternness, and professionalism. Their groomed looks are partly necessitated by the constant presence of the media around them, and the possibility of their visual image being circulated in the media for different purposes. Thus, the sartorial manifestation of their occupational identity is

tied to the public image of the White House and, by extension, of the President and the First Lady at the national and international level as well.

2.4 Sartorial freedom

As in real life, the freedom to choose one's work clothes is exercised freely by the drama characters representing self-employed women in HORECA industry (with the exception of chefs), women in fashion industry, journalists, and social workers. Also, partly restricted sartorial freedom is exercised by teachers, STEMs, and PR specialists, whose choices may be subject to institutional workplace regulations.

The costume decisions made for the heroines and secondary female characters in HORECA occupations differ depending on the type and size of the businesses they operate. For instance, the wardrobe of the inn keeper Lorelai Gilmore (*Gilmore Girls*) blurs the boundaries between her work attire and everyday clothes. She mostly wears a variety of Diane von Furstenberg wrap dresses, but she does not abstain from pants, blouses, and cardigans either. Her casual clothes exude the aura of homeliness, which is in line with the type of business she operates. On the other hand, the professional strengths of Bree Van de Kamp (*Desperate Housewives*), a lifelong housewife who runs a budding catering business, consist of her capacity as a cook directly involved in food preparation and as a manager who represents her company in business situations. This is why she is shown wearing classy aprons and oven mitts when baking cakes and pastries in her kitchen, communicating dedication to cleanliness, hygiene, and safety. Additionally, the clothes she wears underneath paired with her signature string of pearls and matching earrings exude the aura of refined elegance, conjuring the nostalgic image of a submissive and docile Stepford housewife. When she attends business meetings with her clientele, Van de Kamp most often wears a smart dress paired with a cardigan or blazer, or a twinset coupled with a pencil skirt or conservative pants, all in styles reminiscent of the 1950s. These sartorial choices successfully communicate her dual identity as a homemaker and a feminine businesswoman, which she manages to mesh perfectly.

The costume choices for women characters working in the fields of science, technology, and mathematics appear to depend heavily on their work environments and the institutional constraints on their sartorial freedom. The newly appointed professor Amita Ramanujan (*Numb3rs*), apparently quite free to create her professional image, is, however, shown as rather clueless about it. Her casual and youthful wardrobe consists of jeans, tops (often times low cut ones), cardigans and scarves, entailing a risk of being mistaken for a college student or a doctoral candidate. In fact, her male colleague Dr. Larry Fleinhardt advises Ramanujan to refashion her image so as to be accepted as a professor by other colleagues, whereas the female Chair Dr. Mildred Finch bluntly scolds her for choos-

ing unprofessional clothes totally inappropriate for a person of her standing. Clearly, Ramanujan is institutionally expected to go up a notch, add gravity to her workplace persona, and create some distance between herself and her students to counterbalance her young age. Similar concerns regarding "the need to negotiate an optimal level of identification and differentiation" were commonly expressed by academic women interrogated by Kaiser et al. (126). However, the budding professor does not yield to pressure, retaining her youthful and carefree look.

As an occupational group, STEM professionals exemplify an interesting strategy of costume designers in constructing professional identity through sartorial choices. It seems to result from two interrelated reasons: personal eccentricities of the characters and the lack of sartorial conventions in their novel professions. The aforementioned predilection for clothing and accessories characteristic of goth or pin-up subcultures visible in costume choices made for Sciutto and Garcia implies their sartorial immaturity, apparently clashing with their professional status. However, the lack of prescriptive dress code creates leeway for experimentation, suggesting that women in STEM jobs actively shape clothing practices in these new work environments, making unconventional and eccentric apparel the actual convention

Fashion choices made for female media professionals also reflect a similar freedom of self expression, albeit adjusted for a particular character's rank and position. The costumes designed for Lucy Spiller, a powerful tabloid editor-in-chief in *Dirt*, such as low-cut V-neck tops or blouses, chiefly in black and occasionally in red, paired with tailored jackets and slim leg trousers, emphasize her position of authority. The laid-back columnist Carrie Bradshaw (*Sex and the City*) wears outfits and designer shoes that make her look as if she has just stepped off the runway. Bradshaw's love of fashion and penchant for designer shoes (Bruzzi and Church Gibson 117) have little to do with her work routine. Her work clothes when writing in the comfort of her bedroom are quite often pajamas, revealing tops paired with boxer shorts and other lingerie-like clothing. On the other hand, as evening and night social hours inform her column, these wardrobe choices can be interpreted as an extension of her work attire. Finally, the daily newspaper reporter Alma Gutierrez (*The Wire*) wears simple shirt-like blouses with an open collar, white or patterned, combined with dark or khaki pants. Her work clothes resemble those of her male colleagues, with a slight feminine concession regarding the top part.

The costumes of female teacher characters on *Boston Public* imitate the outfits that are commonly deemed appropriate for representatives of this profession. Although dress code regulations for American high school staff are not stringent and tend to be geographically diverse, with considerable latitude as to what constitutes professional attire, one of the key requirements is reasonableness

(Sternberg). In the case of the *Boston Public* female teaching staff, it translates into blouses or shirts paired with cardigans or jackets, whereas the preferred bottoms are pants, occasionally exchanged for skirts. The color schemes are neutral and toned down, and the jewelry pieces tend to be inconspicuous. The characters are seen wearing sensible flats, comfortable while traversing the school corridors for long hours. The only teacher who stands out from the rest is the music teacher, whose garb consists of feminine wrap dresses, form-fitting dresses, with V-necks and delicate patterns. Overall, the female teachers' costumes appear practical and correspond to their authority as educators to high school students. The selected fashions appear to be motivated by the intention to represent this group of professional women as accessible, respectable, and desexualized.

Varying degrees of sartorial freedom can be also observed in the clothing choices made for the female PR professionals, with the exception of those employed at the White House. Jennifer "JJ" Jareu form the FBI Behavioral Analysis Unit (*Criminal Minds*) is regularly shown talking to the press in a casual blouse or a lilac turtleneck sweater, or wearing a suit and white shirt, or a belted trench coat for outdoor meetings. Her apparently inconsistent wardrobe reflects the fact that her stint as media liaison officer is only part of what she actually does on the team. A different clothing strategy is exemplified by the dressing style of Samantha Jones (*Sex and the City*), notorious for her glamorous, sexy dresses and short skirts paired with high-heeled shoes which she wears day and night. Such outfits are in line with the fairy-tale realities of her PR executive job as a renowned party planner. In fact, the costume designer on Sex and the City declared that Jones's outfits were heavily indebted to the 1970s and 1980s and modeled after Dynasty's Alexis portrayed by Joan Collins (qtd. in Sohn 74–75).

2.5 Clothes and femininity in the televised workplace

The classification of women's sartorial styles observed in several types of fictional workplaces in the TV dramas under scrutiny has revealed an array of representation strategies ranging from limiting the characters' self-expression by highly restrictive rules to allowing them, what can be interpreted as, absolute freedom of choice. However, a closer analysis of those representations reveals that they are governed by a few rules in costume design. The most general one is the correlation between the level of sartorial freedom, the socioeconomic status of an occupation, and the level of its masculinization/ feminization. The higher the rank and occupational prestige of a job, and the tougher the competition with men for professional recognition, the more contained the working women are in the manifestations of their femininity through clothing. Moreover, women's higher positions within the occupational hierarchy appear to entail more cautious sartorial choices and restrictions. Nonetheless, no matter what level of uniformity is in place, the inclination is to emphasize the physical attributes of

the working women's femininity. Their uniforms are fitted, the skirts and dresses accentuate bosom and waist, and expose shapely legs. The headgear, even protective, allows for some exposure of the hair. If such modifications are unrealistic, at the very least the costume designs involve experimenting with colors and patterns, or accessorizing outfits with feminine jewelry and shoes.

It is worth noting that the examined characters manage to regulate their femininity by highlighting some traits and playing down others by means of corporeal practices regarding dress, make-up and hairstyles. In several cases, they toy with the ideals of femininity and come up with their own, queered version of it.

3. Concluding remarks

The analysis has revealed that certain issues regarding images of women on television remain unresolved and debatable. First of all, female bodies tend to be unrealistically slim and trim. Secondly, the vast absence of pregnant female bodies suggests the impossibility of combining career with family life. Last but not least, the scripts for performing femininity in the workplace do not account for representation of non-heteronormative characters, cramming them into a femme physique conventionally attractive to the heterosexual male gaze.

The above findings appear open to dual interpretation in the wider context of women's experience on the non-fictional American labor market. On the one hand, they reflect the still strong tendency to control or contain women who enter traditionally masculine occupations by heavy policing of their workplace attires. Through the symbolic use of clothes, they indicate that gender inequality persists in certain professional environments. On the other hand, they show women characters who increasingly resist such attempts, do not intend to forsake their femininity at the cost of careers, and do not obligingly abide by the workplace conventions created mostly by men. The mass viewing public of primetime dramas revolving around the dilemmas of women in paid employment receives the message that working women should refuse to masquerade and live a double life; instead, they should attempt to be themselves, to perform their gender by experimenting with fashion, and enhance their sexual attractiveness without fear of jeopardizing their professional standing.

Television has always been a powerful tool for the dominant groups in society to enforce and preserve ideologies guarding their interests on various levels, including the issue of women's work. The continuous practices of marginalization could be overcome provided that the underprivileged groups gained access to the media-filtered reality by increasing the number of women in positions of power in the media industry.

Chapter 4: Women's Occupational Identity: an Intersectional Perspective

While working women's occupational identity is the main focus of the present research project, it remains but one of many identities through which they define themselves. These other sources of self-identification lie in the so-called private sphere, mainly home and family, which sociological studies long considered to be relatively unaffected by the public realm, including employer-employee relationships. The increased participation of women in paid workforce has entailed a redefinition of their traditional social roles and generated new points of tension, which have found their way to TV screens as well. This development has inspired new analytical approach in women's social and cultural studies through the theoretical lens and methodology of intersectionality. The main focus of the present Chapter, located within this framework, is on how the marital, sexual, mothering and racial modalities of the working female characters under consideration intersect with their occupational identity. The goal is to diagnose the overriding representation of women's work-life balance jointly projected by the studied dramas, regardless of their generic and thematic differences. As it is impossible to address the entire currently available scholarship informed theoretically by intersectionality in the fields of education, economics, politics, and many more, I'll situate my argument narrowly within the works applying the insights of intersectionality to the analysis of women's representation in TV dramas. The findings of their authors inform my own methodological apparatus and set the backdrop against which my results are read.

In her 1991 essay, Kimberle Crenshaw proposed the term "representational intersectionality", particularly useful for the present study. She pointed out that:

> current debates over representation continually elide the intersection of race and gender in the popular culture's construction of images of women of color. Accordingly, an analysis of what may be termed as "representational intersectionality" would include both the ways in which these images are produced through a confluence of prevalent narratives of race and gender, as well as a recognition of how contemporary critiques of racist and sexist representation marginalize women of color. (1282–1283)

In other words, feminist representational intersectionality involves the type of critical analysis of various media texts exposing narrow, inaccurate, and stereotypical images or tropes which are taken to be representative of the group but in fact ignore or distort its complexity. It is especially poignant

when it entails the enforcement of oppressive stereotypes regarding minority women, particularly in visual media.

Some of the most valuable scholarly contributions to discussions on intersectionality concern the representations of Latinas in film and television. For example, Debra Merskin claims that the Gabrielle Solis trophy wife character on *Desperate Housewives,* with her sensual appearance and lines of dialogue, perpetuate the 'hot Latina' stereotype, reinforces the notions of Latinas as exceptionally voluptuous, promiscuous, sexually available, and exotically dangerous in comparison to White women, and identify three major categories of Latina images in the contemporary media: the hot, sexually available cantina girl, the sexy and manipulative vamp, and the faithful, self-sacrificing señorita (133–147). Mastro and Behm-Morawitz also observe that the depictions of Latinos are tied to similar stereotypes. Focusing on two Latina actresses, Jennifer Lopez and Salma Hayek, Małgorzata Martynuska observes that although the main focus is often on their bodies, exoticization, and tropicalization, their roles have a transnational and bicultural character, bridging Latino heritage and American mainstream culture ("The Exotic Other").

The threat to White women's sexual attraction or the absence thereof is also present in Black tropes of jezebel and mammy identified by Patricia Hill Collins (*Black Feminist*). While jezebel is personified by a lustful and sexually available Black woman, the mammy figure – with her large body and chubby cheeks – is its desexualized counterpart. Collins calls both of them "socially constructed controlling images of Black womanhood, each reflecting the dominant group's interest in maintaining Black women's subordination" (*Black Feminist* 72). Two other constructs she identifies are the Black households matriarch (75), and the welfare mother, typically portrayed as unwed and rid of work ethic (79). Collins points out that these four images represent Black womanhood through issues of sexuality and fertility, and "help justify the social practices that characterize the matrix of domination in the United States" as a result of "intersecting oppressions of race, class, gender, and sexuality" (84). The last stereotype referring to depictions of Black women in the sapphire, also known as the angry black woman, who is "evil, bitchy, stubborn and hateful" (Yarbrough with Bennett 638). They conclude that all of these stereotypes – the jezebel, the angry black woman, the mammy, and the matriarch persist in American cinematic and television productions alike.

The representations of Asian American women have also been heavily stereotyped. According to Chang et al., the five most important fictional depictions include: the China doll and the geisha girl as subservient and dependent women; the lotus blossom image of a woman "deferential, sexually pleasing, and servile, specifically to White men"; the exotic and manipulative

dragon lady, and the controlling and relentless tiger mom (262). Notably, the research on American Asian women stereotypes in cinema and on television is rather scarce.

Intersectional perspective goes beyond mere identification of women's stereotypes. It allows the researchers to reveal more complex and nuanced representations of women in today's film fiction. For example, Jillian M. Baez uses the films *Selena* (1997), *Girlfight* (2000), and *Real Women Have Curves* (2002) to argue that they transgress and challenge historical representations of Latinas in cinematic productions by portraying women with complex hybrid subjectivities (122–124). Hayley A. Crooks and Sylvie Frigon argue that the depictions of incarcerated women on the TV production *Orange is The New Black* also transgress conventions by showing "marginalized women often invisible in popular culture: women of color, poor and working-class women, queer women, older women, and women with disabilities" (74). Inspired by this line of inquiry, an attempt is made here to evaluate how the working women characters' occupational identities are shaped at the intersection with their other identity aspects in the surveyed TV dramas.

Despite the changing patterns of the American family and various models of motherhood in the early 21st century, the ideal of hegemonic motherhood appears to be unchanged. Having reviewed sociological research on motherhood spanning the last decade of the 20th century, Terry Arendell concludes that an intensively mothering, full-time mother continues to be hailed as the dominant ideal. Theories of motherhood as white, heterosexual, and middle class are "the normative standard, culturally and politically, by which mothering practices and arrangements are evaluated" (Arendell 1195). Such approach renders single mothers, working mothers, lesbian mothers, Black mothers, or their combinations, deviant.

Corresponding patterns have been found in research on film and television fiction. Regarding images of motherhood in popular culture and melodrama, E. Ann Kaplan discusses "master discourses" prevailing in American 20th-century cinema and concludes that most films affirm the domestic sphere by binding the woman through love and family responsibilities and construct the alternatives as a threat to the social system (152). Similarly, analyzing the images of single women forced into motherhood in early 21st-century romantic comedies, Irmina Wawrzyczek claims that the symbolic rejection of the independent, career-oriented singleton model favors the domesticated and family-oriented type of femininity ("Poskromienie singielki" 243). Examining the presence of the traditional stay-at-home motherhood ideology in television productions, Heather Dillaway and Elizabeth Pare name *Leave It to Beaver* character June Cleaver as the representative of the "golden" 1950s era TV mothers who "cemented this hegemonic social construction and have been woven into the ideology surrounding motherhood, family and home ever since" (440). In the words of Kathy

Cacace, “[t]elevision has reinforced the connection between women and domestic labor, centered the white, middleclass experience of motherhood, neglected or stereotyped mothers of color, and helped negatively frame mothers who “choose” to work against mothers who work as unwaged fulltime caregivers.” (3).

The discussion around working women’s occupational identities cannot leave out the dilemmas pertaining to motherhood. The relationship between the two spheres is not simple, as pointedly explained by Kim Akass:

> …as a [American] society, we view childrearing as one of the most important jobs a woman can do. Everyone has an opinion. For example, mothers should not work, as children of working women are more likely to be overweight and less educationally able. Mothers that do stay-at-home should not over-protect their children for fear of tying them to their apron strings. Women should have their children early, in case their eggs become stale, but women should not have their children too early, as the state cannot afford to support teenage mothers. And single motherhood should be avoided at all costs, because everybody knows that single mothers are a sure fire route to juvenile delinquency. ("Motherhood and myth-making" 137)

The list highlights a set of binary oppositions that continue to dominate social discussions of motherhood: working vs stay-at-home, young vs mature, and single vs married. It also puts to doubt a chance for success of women who depart from the model of the White, suburban, middle-class stay-at-home mother.

However, already in the last quarter of the 20th century several primetime depictions of working motherhood attempted to show that a combination of career and family is plausible. Before they entered dramas, working mother characters originally appeared in sitcoms. Since situation comedy is a genre with relatively high representation of female characters, especially leads, compared to other types of prime time programming (Glascock, McNeil), it constituted a convenient formula for testing the audience reaction to the historically unconventional combination of work and motherhood. Soon, as noted by Rabinovitz, “the situation comedy constructed around a single white career woman or mother emerged … as a preferred fictional site for a 'feminist' subject position" ("Sitcoms and Single Moms" 3). As a step forward, the majority of 21st-century primetime dramas have an ensemble cast formula that enables the showrunners to create an opportunity for female characters to be shown in multifaceted narratives and in a variety of roles, including working mothers.

The sitcom representations of working mothers of different classes and races received mixed responses from media critics and scholars. *Murphy Brown* (1988–1998) and *Cybill* (1995–1998), both showing White middle-class professionals and mothers, were praised for endorsing "a new, nontraditional definition of women while reporting conflict between the reality of their personal and professional lives and traditional gender definitions" (Collins C. 109), and criticized for the masculine compartmentalization of the characters' professional and private life, instead of promoting the more feminine overlapping model (Dow *Prime-time Feminism* 158). *Alice* (1976–1985) *Roseanne* (1988–1997) were well received not only for showing White working-class mothers, but also for realism and the endorsement of their mothering skills (Bettie 142). *The Cosby Show* (1984–1992) is probably the most memorable fictional Black working mother on television showing a professionally accomplished fortysomething lawyer and a mother to five children. The sitcom was received as openly progressive on questions of gender politics, not only breaking social stereotypes but also departing from the conventional depiction of African-American women as single mothers or low-skilled workers. Yet it also produced critical reactions for consistent sidetracking of the racial and class issues (Nelson and George 59). As for Latina mother characters, there were none in leading and secondary roles prior to the beginning of the 21st century. The first noticeable sitcom Latina working-class female character appeared on *Modern Family* (2009–2020) and was mostly shown as a stay-at-home mother who, untypically, returned to workforce as the series progressed. With regard to Asian mother characters, they were never cast in sitcom starring roles, but a noteworthy secondary character appeared on *All-American Girl* (1994–1995) as a stern, traditional bookstore owner and disciplinarian mother, whose main concern was to have her daughter marry a Korean professional. Although the sitcom representations of working mothers might have been selective, unrealistic, caricatural, or stereotypical, their popularity and critical acclaim they received encouraged the incorporation of similar themes and characters into other mainstream genres, including primetime dramas.

The most comprehensive and informative study exploring representation of balancing work and family responsibilities on prime time TV comes from Katharine E. Heintz-Knowles. Her 2001 research covered a selection of situation comedies, dramas, and made-for-TV movies aired from March 1 to 14, 1998. The results indicated that although marital status was distinctly identifiable in only 18% of characters of both genders were identified as married and 15% of characters of both genders were identified as parents across the genres, the marital and parental statuses were more evident for 68% and 47% of women in the sample, meaning that their identity is more often defined through relationships to others than in the case of men. They also revealed that while the full

employment rate for TV parents was 57%, it was under 33% for TV mothers; furthermore, nearly half of the TV mothers had no clear employment status. TV families across the genres mainly consisted of one (53%) or two children (40%) sharing the household. In the case of working parents of preschoolers (21%), the child care arrangements in their absence were unclear for 42% of the characters, whereas nearly 40% had their offspring looked after by one parent at home (8 mothers and 2 fathers). As regards the parents of school-age children (43%), only 37% of mothers were employed full time, one mother had a part-time job, and five (19%) were stay-at-home moms. In the case of dramas, 47% of mothers with dependent children were shown as working full time, while the employment status was unclear for 41% of them; two mothers were identified as unemployed, and two as homemakers. Across the genres, the child care arrangements were unspecified for the majority (60%) of working mothers and none of the children attended a daycare facility while their parents were at work. Heintz-Knowles concludes as follows:

> The world presented in prime-time entertainment programming is one in which work and family rarely come into contact, in which children — and their activities and care — are managed easily and mostly off-screen, and in which older adults are virtually nonexistent. It is a world heavily populated by single working adults with virtually no family responsibilities. ... [T]elevision's representation of work and family as separate spheres that rarely intersect is not only a misrepresentation of the lives of most American adults, but it can send powerful messages to viewers struggling with these collisions, and to their employers and colleagues. Showing conflicts as primarily family-initiated for men and work-initiated for women reinforces traditional stereotypes that link men with work and women with family. (197)

This highly critical conclusion about the American television in the decade directly preceding the period under investigation in the present study calls for revisiting the questions related to representation of working women, both with and without family obligations. My subsequent analysis covers prime time dramas aired after 1999, but the sample includes only those women characters whose life stories developed over several seasons, providing a longer and deeper perspective on the treatment of work-life balance in television fiction.

1. Working singles, wives, and mothers: quantitative findings

The first step in my two-step analysis was the quantitative estimate of working women types in the dramas by their marital and family status. Three principal categories were adopted: single childfree women, married mothers, and single mothers. The basic intersection between female characters in paid employment and their marital and family status was extended in the present quantitative

research by additional categories of race and age to see if any visible intersection patterns emerge along these lines.

Officially, the US Census Bureau uses five marital status categories: never married, married, separated, divorced, widowed ("Marital Status in the US"). For the sake of coding, they have been simplified to "single" and "married" to accommodate various less usual situations. Hence "single" refers here to women who never married, were widowed or divorced. Moreover, seemingly unattached characters whose true legal status was revealed as a surprise element late in the plot (e.g. an estranged husband, or unfinalized divorce) have been qualified as "single". Likewise, characters in informal long-term relationships have been treated as single (dating). The term "married" refers to those women who were in a formalized relationship; women currently separated from their husbands have also included in this category.

With reference to the "motherhood" category, a female character has been qualified as a mother if she has given birth to a child and raised it, or has become an adoptive mother; non-birthing women who raised a child as a parent in the same-sex couple have also been included in this subcategory. Alternatively, female characters who did not give birth, gave birth as surrogate mothers, or gave up their children for adoption prior to their screen time or immediately after birth have not been coded as mothers.

The necessary data on each character has been determined using visual and verbal information as well as backstory information provided by the program creators, companions to the TV series, or retrieved from fan forums and other dedicated websites. The characters' marital and family status was checked at two points: the introduction of the character into the series (entry point) and her final appearance in the series or, in the case of longest-running shows, her standing in the 2015 season (exit point). Such arbitrary technical decision was made to ensure that the characters' screen lives could be observed for a comparable period of time. Although the project concerns the working women characters appearing on the television screen between 1999 and 2010, the extension of time beyond the closing date was indispensable to observe the development of the characters on the shows that entered the primetime slot shortly before 2010. Nonetheless, the analysis does not include any new working female characters introduced after that date. As a result, some of the studied shows have a screen history preceding the year 1999 (e.g. *Law & Order, ER*), while a number of them ran beyond 2010 (e.g. *The Good Wife*, *Nurse Jackie*, *Castle, The Mentalist*), some as long as 2022 (*Law & Order: SVU*, *Grey's Anatomy*, *NCIS: Los Angeles*).

One variable that posed a challenge during coding was the character's age at the exit point. This was not a problem for the majority of characters, who remained in the same age category

throughout the show. Those in the long-running dramas did age but due insufficient information the data presented in Tables 4.1–4.14 do not reflect the aging process. As a result, the age category only refers to the characters' initial age.

The obtained data are presented in Tables 4.1–4.13 for each occupation separately; the least represented and/or ephemeral occupations are collected in Table 4.14. Additionally, Table 4.15 presents aggregate data regarding the female characters' marital and motherhood status with reference to age and race.

Occupation		Entry point				Exit point			
Law enforcement		Marital status		Motherhood		Marital status		Motherhood	
Race	Initial age	Single	Married	Yes	No	Single	Married	Yes	No
White	20–29	2	0	0	2	1	1	0	2
	30–39	12	4	7	9	12	4	11	5
	40–49	2	0	1	1	2	0	1	1
	50+	3	0	2	1	3	0	2	1
Black	20–29	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1
	30–39	4	2	1	5	5	1	2	4
	40–49	2	0	1	1	2	0	1	1
	50+	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0
Some Other Race	20–29	2	0	0	2	2	0	0	0
	30–39	2	0	1	1	1	1	1	1

Table 4.1. Marital status and motherhood of female law enforcement characters

This occupational group is quite diverse, although it lacks in representation of Asian women. The data show that the staggering majority of the characters, irrespective of race or age, are conceived as singles. Moreover, they appear to retain that status throughout the series. As regards motherhood, there are quite a number of mothers at the entry point, both among the White and the Black cohort, but new mothers mostly appear in the group of 30+ White characters. Significantly, the majority of mothers in law enforcement are single. Overall, the majority of women remain childless. As explained above, one White police officer who gave birth as a surrogate has not been counted as mother.

Occupation		Entry point				Exit point			
Doctors		Marital status		Motherhood		Marital status		Motherhood	
Race	Initial age	Single	Married	Yes	No	Single	Married	Yes	No
White	20–29	7	0	1	6	6	1	3	4
	30–39	12	1	0	13	8	3	10	1
	40–49	3	1	1	3	4	0	2	2
Black	30–39	2	2	1	3	1	3	3	1
	40–49	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	0
Asian	20–29	2	0	0	2	2	0	0	2

Some Other Race	20–29	3	0	1	2	2	1	1	2
	30–39	2	0	0	2	1	1	2	0

Table 4.2. Marital status and motherhood of female doctor characters

This occupational group is diverse in terms of race and less so in terms of age. No female characters are conceived as older than 49 and relatively few of them reach this age as they grow older on screen. Also, the majority of characters, regardless of race, are unmarried and childless at the entry point. None of the Asian or Some Other Race doctors is conceived as married, but one of them is a single mother. The coding of the data at the exit point in this occupational group proves challenging due to some dramatic turns in the-in the lives of the characters. For example, one White character in her late twenties and another one in her thirties get married in the course of the series, but following the death of their spouses they become single mothers to children born in marriage. The other White twentysomething character marries twice and gives birth twice, too; the first baby dies after birth and the other one is born post-divorce. Finally, one Some Other Race character gets married, but the death of her husband makes her single before the end of the series. The situations reflected in the Table quantitatively but not qualitatively are that of two female doctors (a White 30+ and a thirtysomething Latina) who raise a daughter together until they divorce each other, and of a White 40+ female doctor raises a daughter with her girlfriend. Moreover, one single Asian character gives up her baby for adoption and her short-lived motherhood was not registered in the Table; similarly, the background information on a similar act by a then 16 year old White twentysomething character could not be included the Table either. What is clearly visible, however, is that there are ten White 30+ mothers in the sample; Throughout the course of the series the number of White mothers rises from two to 15, most significantly in the group of 30–39 women, notably, four of whom become adoptive parents. The number of married women among the Black doctors at the exit point is marginal (three out of four in both age groups), despite complications on the way.

Occupation		Entry point				Exit point			
Lawyers		Marital status		Motherhood		Marital status		Motherhood	
Race	Initial age	Single	Married	Yes	No	Single	Married	Yes	No
White	20–29	11	1	1	11	10	2	2	9
	30–39	8	3	0	11	8	3	3	8
	40–49	2	2	2	2	3	1	2	2
	50+	4	1	3	2	4	1	3	2
Black	20–29	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1
	30–39	3	0	0	1	3	0	0	3
	40–49	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	1
Some Other Race	20–29	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1

	30–39	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	1

Table 4.3. Marital status and motherhood of female lawyer characters

The majority of all the female lawyer characters are conceived as single, predominantly in the Black cohort, with certain differences among age groups. The number of single versus married characters in the group of White women aged 40–49 is most balanced, half of them being also mothers. Meanwhile, in the 30–39 group of White women, the ratio of unmarried versus married female lawyers is nearly three times higher, with no mothers at all. In the youngest White cohort there is only one married lawyer out of the total twelve, and only one mother. The situation at the exit point is different, however, with three 30–39 characters and one twentysomething becoming mothers. Meanwhile, none of the Black or Some Other Race characters is or becomes a mother throughout the duration of the show. The collective data in the Table do not reflect the fact that two White thirty-something characters and two women in the 50+ group get married or divorced during the show, as their marital status changes balance out.

Occupation		Entry point				Exit point			
Agents		Marital status		Motherhood		Marital status		Motherhood	
Race	Initial age	Single	Married	Yes	No	Single	Married	Yes	No
White	20–29	6	0	0	6	3	3	4	2
	30–39	8	0	0	8	7	1	1	7
	50+	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1
Black	30–39	2	2	3	1	2	2	3	1
Some Other Race	20–29	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1
	30–39	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0

Table 4.4. Marital status and motherhood of female agent characters

Female agents represent one of the youngest demographics in the entire research sample, with the overwhelming majority of characters below forty years of age and only one character over fifty. Also, these characters tend to be predominantly single and childless at the entry point, with the exception of two Black female characters 30–39, who are and stay the only married characters in the whole group. The White female agents are neither married nor mothers at the beginning of the series. Meanwhile, three out of four Black characters have children: two of them are married and one is a separated single mother. The only Latina agent in the sample is a single mother. At the exit point from the series the situation of the female agent characters changes considerably, but only in the White group: half of the youngest agents get married, as does one 30+ character. Also, four youngest White characters become mothers, and one 30+ agent gets pregnant.

Occupation		Entry point				Exit point			
CSIs		Marital status		Motherhood		Marital status		Motherhood	
Race	Initial age	Single	Married	Yes	No	Single	Married	Yes	No
White	20–29	3	0	0	3	3	0	0	3
	30–39	4	0	0	4	3	1	1	3
	40–49	2	0	1	1	2	0	1	1
Some Other Race	30–39	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1

Table 4.5. Marital status and motherhood of female Crime Scene Investigator (CSI) characters

Crime Scene Investigators (CSIs) form a very homogeneous group in racial terms, almost entirely White, with one Latina character representing Some Other Race and no Black or Asian representatives. Moreover, this occupational group consists of relatively young characters, most of them below the age of forty. Also, all the characters are conceived as unmarried, and only one of them is a mother. At the exit point, the situation remains unchanged for the majority of the characters; in fact, two of the White characters get married, but only for one of them it is a lasting relationship leading to motherhood, while the marriage of the other ends in divorce.

Occupation		Entry point				Exit point			
Medical examiners		Marital status		Motherhood		Marital status		Motherhood	
Race	Initial age	Single	Married	Yes	No	Single	Married	Yes	No
White	30–39	2	1	1	2	2	1	1	2
	40–49	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1
Black	20–29	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1
	30–39	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1
	40–49	1	2	2	1	1	2	2	1

Table 4.6. Marital status and motherhood of female medical examiner characters

Medical examiners constitute yet another occupational group with zero representation of Asian or Some Other Race characters, but a nearly equal number of Black and White characters of different ages. Moreover, two of the Black characters are married mothers, as opposed to only one married mother in the sample. However, all the characters are under 50, two oldest of them between 40 and 49 years of age. The situation at the exit point remains practically the same; the only difference is that the only White mother, though still technically married, is separated. Overall, three mothers out of nine characters in total is an unusually high percentage.

Occupation		Entry point				Exit point			
Nurses		Marital status		Motherhood		Marital status		Motherhood	
Race	Initial age	Single	Married	Yes	No	Single	Married	Yes	No
White	20–29	3	0	1	2	3	0	1	3

	30–39	3	0	0	3	3	0	1	2
	40–49	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	0
	50+	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0
Black	30–39	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	0
Some Other Race	30–39	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1

Table 4.7. Marital and motherhood status of female nurse characters

This occupational group consists of mainly White characters, with only two Black and Some Other Race representatives, and no representatives of Asian race. Nearly all characters are conceived as single. Among the four mothers in total, there are two White single ones and one married, and a Black widow raising her daughter alone. The situation of the characters at the exit remains almost the same, with the exception of the White 40+ character who gets divorced and engages to be re-married at the end of the series, and one Black character getting married.

Occupation		Entry point				Exit point			
High School Teachers		Marital status		Motherhood		Marital status		Motherhood	
Race	Initial age	Single	Married	Yes	No	Single	Married	Yes	No
White	20–29	2	0	0	2	2	0	0	2
	30–39	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1
	40–49	2	0	2	0	2	0	2	0
Black	30–39	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1
	40–49	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1
Some Other Race	20–29	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1

Table 4.8. Marital and motherhood status of female high school teacher characters

This occupational group is characterized by a conspicuous absence of older characters and a total absence of Asian characters. The characters are uniformly conceived as unmarried and mostly childfree, with only two older mothers in the sample, both single. The most significant fact about this group is the total lack of change in the characters' status at the exit point, meaning that they have not experienced any personal life-transforming developments over the course of the series.

Occupation		Entry point				Exit point			
STEM professionals and technicians		Marital status		Motherhood		Marital status		Motherhood	
Race	Initial age	Single	Married	Yes	No	Single	Married	Yes	No
White	20–29	2	0	0	2	2	0	0	2
	30–39	3	0	0	3	2	1	1	1
Black	30–39	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	0
Asian	30–39	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	0
Some Other Race	20–29	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	1

Table 4.9. Marital and motherhood status of female Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics (STEM) professional and technician characters

Although not very numerous, this occupational group consists of racially diverse though mostly very young characters. While all the characters at the entry point are single and childless, three of them are married at the exit point, even though the wedding of the Some Other Race character is a so-called 'makeshift wedding' in the show's finale due to its impending cancellation. Also, three characters become mothers: the White and the Asian characters bear children by their husbands, whereas the Black character adopts the daughter of her deceased ex-partner. The high ratio of family status change might be attributed to the collectively young age of the characters.

Occupation		Entry point				Exit point			
Journalists		Marital status		Motherhood		Marital status		Motherhood	
Race	Initial age	Single	Married	Yes	No	Single	Married	Yes	No
White	20–29	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1
	30–39	1	1	0	2	2	0	0	2
	40–49	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Some Other Race	30–39	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1

Table 4.10. Marital and motherhood status of female journalists

The numerically small group of journalists is predominantly White, with only one representative of Some Other Race and zero representation of Black or Asian minorities. The situation of the female characters at the entry and exit point is nearly identical, with one White woman becoming a widow. Finally, there is only one mother in the sample and she is married, while the other characters are single and childfree.

Occupation		Entry point				Exit point			
PR professionals		Marital status		Motherhood		Marital status		Motherhood	
Race	Initial age	Single	Married	Yes	No	Single	Married	Yes	No
White	20–29	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	0
	30–39	4	0	0	4	4	0	0	4

Table 4.11. Marital and motherhood status of female PR professional characters.

The characters in this group are exclusively White and relatively young. They are all conceived as single and childfree; in the course of the series, only one of them becomes a mother and wife at the exit point and gives birth to two sons of her partner-husband. It is worth noting that this character is not only a BAU's communications liaison but also the youngest in the sample to start a family.

Occupation		Entry point				Exit point			
Civil servants		Marital status		Motherhood		Marital status		Motherhood	
Race	Initial age	Single	Married	Yes	No	Single	Married	Yes	No
White	30–39	7	0	0	7	7	0	0	7

Black	50+	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1

Table 4.12. Marital and motherhood status of female civil servant characters

First and foremost, all the characters in the sample appear on the same show (*The West Wing*), which automatically eliminates creative diversity and undermines the comparative value of the sample with reference to the other occupational groups. The striking similarity between this occupational group and the PR professionals. That said, all female characters but one are White, with only one Black character in the sample. These women are uniformly single and childfree, experiencing no significant changes in their personal lives throughout the series.

Occupation		Entry point				Exit point			
HORECA professionals		Marital status		Motherhood		Marital status		Motherhood	
Race	Initial age	Single	Married	Yes	No	Single	Married	Yes	No
White	20–29	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0
	30–39	2	0	1	1	0	2	2	0
	40–49	1	2	3	0	1	2	3	0

Table 4.13. Marital and motherhood status of female Hotel, Restaurant, Cafe (HORECA) professional characters

This is yet another group that is conspicuous by its racial uniformity, with no representation of minority groups. At the entry point, all but on character are mothers: three of them single and two married. The situation at the exit point changes in that four characters are married with children, while two remain single mothers. It is the only occupational group with 100% of female characters experiencing motherhood at some point in the series.

Occupation		Entry point				Exit point			
		Marital status		Motherhood		Marital status		Motherhood	
Race	Initial age								
Advertising specialist		Single	Married	Yes	No	Single	Married	Yes	No
White	40–49	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	0
Paramedic									
White	30–39	2	0	1	1	1	1	1	1
Firefighter									
White	30–39	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1
Art dealer									
White	30–39	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	0
Social worker									
White	50+	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0
Psychologists									
White	30–39	2	0	1	1	2	0	2	0

Some Other Race	20–29	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1
Fashion designer									
Asian	30–39	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1
Film executive									
White	40–49	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	0
Private investigator									
Some Other Race	20–29	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1
Model									
White	40–49	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0
Some Other Race	30–39	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	0
Real estate agent									
White	40–49	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0

Table 4.14. Marital and motherhood status of female characters in sporadically represented occupations

The general observation about the miscellaneous working characters in this group is that they first appear in the series as single and childless. In addition to six mothers at the entry point, four more characters have children before the end of the series, but not necessarily in marriage as the number of single characters drops only by two.

All occupations		Entry point				Exit point			
		Marital status		Motherhood		Marital status		Motherhood	
Race	Initial age	Single	Married	Yes	No	Single	Married	Yes	No
White	20–29	39	1	4	36	32	8	12	28
	30–39	73	10	11	72	65	18	29	54
	40–49	16	9	16	9	19	6	17	8
	50+	10	1	7	4	10	1	7	4
Black	20–29	3	0	0	3	3	0	0	3
	30–39	15	6	6	15	14	7	7	14
	40–49	5	3	4	4	4	4	4	4
	50+	2	0	1	1	2	0	1	1
Asian	20–29	2	0	0	2	2	0	0	2
	30–39	2	0	0	2	1	1	1	1
Some Other Race	20–29	12	0	1	11	10	2	1	11
	30–39	7	2	2	7	6	3	5	4

Table 4.15 Aggregate data for working women characters of all represented races and ages

The collective data presented in Table 4.15 show little dynamic regarding personal lives of the working female characters under scrutiny. Relatively few characters marry; the change in marital status most often happens in the youngest White cohort (growth from 1 to 8 married women) and in

the 30–39 age group (growth from 10 to 18); however, this does not apply to either Black or Asian characters of the same age. Moreover, the representatives of these two White age groups most frequently become mothers (nearly threefold increase in numbers). Interestingly, the comparison of the data regarding White and Black working mothers shows that while the total percentage of mothers at the entry point equals 24% and 32%, respectively, the difference at the exit point is reversed and nearly balanced out, with 40% for the White cohort and 35% for the Black one. None of the youngest Black females experiences motherhood, which may partly result from the small sample size (only three characters compared to forty White ones). Also, the data shows that there are relatively more mothers aged 40–49 than aged 20–29 in both White and Black groups.

The most common pattern of motherhood is a woman with only one child. Multiple mothers most often likely have a combination of biological and adopted children. In the sample, the 50+ mothers have grown-up children, usually at college or university. There are but a few grandmothers in this age group, one acting as mother to her granddaughter placed in her custody.

The above findings lead to several important observations regarding the representations of working women's marital status and motherhood. First of all, the majority of working women characters, regardless of race and age, are conceived as singles. Proportionally, this type of representation is 100% true for popular among the CSIs, high school teachers, PR professionals, and civil servants, with very high percentages among the nurses and agents (90%), law enforcement and doctors (84%), and lawyers (80%). The highest proportion of married working women is found among the medical examiners, HORECA professionals, and media and press professionals (33%). Mothers most frequently appear among HORECA professionals (67%), nurses (40%), and law enforcement (38%); they are also collectively numerous in occasionally represented occupational groups (around 43%). Meanwhile, there are no mothers among STEM professionals, PR professionals, and civil servants. The data suggests that the single status is a standard characteristic of female characters in both traditional and non-traditional occupations. The established proportions of mothers across the examined occupational groups send an ambiguous message, with high representation of mothers in two traditionally female occupations and one non-traditional one, but none among one traditional group and two non-traditional ones. On the one hand, the traditionally feminine HORECA and nursing occupations are presented as allowing women to combine work and family obligations, thus reinforcing stereotypical expectations regarding the nurturing nature of these professions. On the other hand, a significant percentage of mothers in law enforcement, a traditionally masculine career, appears to challenge the social stereotype of women performing this occupation. In real life, all three occupations have very demanding work schedules, e.g. shift work

and irregular availability for work, which seriously disturb the work-life balance of mothers, especially of young children. Yet the overall number of television mothers in these lines of work appears to disregard this fact. Additionally, while the absence of married women and working mothers in the group of STEM professionals and civil servants appears to conform to the stereotypically masculine norms for these occupations, the poor representation of married women and mothers among the school teacher characters goes against the stereotype of the feminine nature of the profession and its family-friendly work-schedules.

When shifting the focus to the racial factor, it appears that White working women are slightly less likely to be shown as married (13%) and as mothers (24%) compared to Black working characters, 26% of whom are married and 32% are mothers. Also, the females identified as Some Other Race (mostly represented by Latinas) are mostly conceived as single (90%), with 14% presented as mothers, whereas Asian working females always appear as single and childfree.

The above findings suggest that working women characters tend to be presented as postponing marriage and motherhood while investing in their careers first. Moreover, the discrepancy between the number of married characters and mothers indicates that if they do decide to start a family, they do not necessarily consider being married as an indispensable condition. Presumably, their positive occupational identity based on job security, career prospects, and a stable salary disposes them to take on the challenges of single motherhood.

The finding about marriage as a possibility rather than an ultimate goal, at least for younger working females, agrees with American real-life demographic data. In 2000, the estimated median age for women's first-time marriage was 25.1, rising to 26.1 in 2010, and to 28.4 in 2019 ("Estimated median age"). Also, the historical marriage trends that focus on race difference show that by 2010, the median age at which Black women married for the first time was 30.0, while it was 26.4 for White (Elliott et al. 13). Additionally, the 2010 proportion of never married 35+ women was 25% for Black females, and only 8% for White ones; the analogous data for the 45+ cohort were 20% and 7%. According to Raley et al., the levels of marriage among Black women are lower than among White and Hispanic women. Moreover, Black married women enjoy more marital instability than White or Hispanic women, with 45% of them staying married in their early 40s, as compared to 60 % of White women and 55 % of Hispanic women (92).

The presented quantitative results accord with the marital behavior of American adults in general. For instance, the 2017 Pew Research Center study shows that the Americans get married later in life or not at all, with 50 percent of adults over the age of 18 never having married compared to 28 percent in 1960. The theories about people choosing to be single are different, but when it

comes to women, Rebecca Traister, the author of *All the Single Ladies: Unmarried Women and the Rise of an Independent Nation*, claims that "Across classes, women are living more years independent of marriage both because it is now possible to do so, and because it is often the emotionally and economically more sensible choice" ("Single Women"). To what extent her observation is true for the working females in the studied dramas cannot be established by descriptive statistics and requires qualitative analysis.

2. Working singles, wives, and mothers: qualitative findings

The main goals of the analysis in this section are 1) to identify the prevailing patterns of managing one's sexual and reproductive needs and goals by women in regular employment in the studied dramas; 2) to find out whether the characters in the studied dramas challenge or perpetuate the popular stereotypes about working women. Comparative close reading of sexual, reproductive, and work-life balance practices of the inspected working women characters revealed a few major patterns and their variants characteristic of two principal types of working women, namely childfree singles and mothers. The principal categories for single childfree characters have been labeled as follows: married to her job, dating in the workplace, falling in love with a colleague or boss, and contemplating single motherhood. The overarching categories as regards working mothers are: the struggling mother, the bogus mother, the put-together mother, and the opting out mother. The behavioral patterns identified above are described using selected storylines and take into account such factors as their age, race and sexual orientation of the characters under scrutiny.

2.1 Single childfree working women

As stated earlier, the categorization adheres to a strict definition of single as „unmarried," and thus includes never-married, dating, widows and divorcees. The majority of the working women characters, regardless of occupation, start off as single and never married – they mostly begin their careers as fresh university or medical school graduates, ready to take on new responsibilities at work, make friends, and perhaps enter a romantic relationship. Other single women include divorcees, with a small subset of those who married young or on impulse and annulled their nuptials shortly; this information is usually revealed when a character is on the brink of the current relationship leading to a new marriage. Finally, some of the older working women characters with successfully established careers also start off as single. Although many characters date colleagues or, occasionally, their superiors, most of them do not end up getting married. However, a substantial number of single working women appear to be in a stable, long-lasting romantic relationship, even though the prospect of marriage is not in the books. Also, some characters do get married while on the show, but either

divorce or are widowed and thus end up as single at the end of the show. Finally, some single women appear to abandon the search for a romantic partner and opt for single motherhood instead. As regards the single women's race and sexual orientation, they appear to be of secondary importance to the plots centered around them.

The central theme in categorization of the most common depictions of single childfree working women in the analyzed primetime dramas is the character's potential interest and commitment to romance and/or potential motherhood, including the existence of the romantic object within or outside the confines of the workplace. This approach has produced four main variations on the single childfree woman trope: married to her job, dating in the workplace, falling in love with a colleague or boss, and contemplating single motherhood. While the first three categories focus on the women's sexual practices, the focal point of the last one is their reproductive behavior.

Married to her job. Women in this subcategory are presented as typical career-oriented singles prioritizing work over personal commitments. In the majority of cases, there is little to no information about their personal life beyond work. Some of them tend to compartmentalize their occupational and private lives, living their short-term sexual and romantic affairs outside the immediate workplace. In terms of demographics, these women are predominantly 30+ heterosexuals, White or Black.

The theme of private life is generally underdeveloped in the case of both White and Black single childfree women in the sample. One tendency is to show them exclusively in professional roles while only hinting at their personal lives outside the office walls. Another trend is to have these characters engage in brief relationships with partners unrelated to their work, as in the case of Black police officers Raina Washington (*The Division*) with a baseball player, or Monique Jeffries (*Law & Order*), going for one-night stands. A quintessential professional who keeps romance at bay is Olivia Benson (*L&O: SVU*), a single White heterosexual woman in her 30s who briefly dated a total of five men throughout the seasons, and whose relationships follow the same pattern, with little variation. The chief reason for their termination was the conflict of interests and her determination to keep professional and personal life separate.

Being married to one's job may also take the form of a very close yet not intimate relationship with one's boss, reminiscent of a work spouse status. Such is the case of Stella Bonasera (*CSI: NY*), a single White heterosexual CSI in her late 30s, whose occasionally pictured romantic interests outside work are either tragic or extremely short-lived, involving violent behavior on the part of the partner as well as the use of the service gun by Stella (Season 2). The strongest and steadiest bond Stella has is with the introvert Head Supervisor of the NYC Crime Lab, Mac Taylor.

Being the other most senior person on the team, she often acts as his right hand, inhabiting the workplace wife persona defined by McBride and Bergen as “a special, platonic friendship with a work colleague characterized by a close emotional bond, high levels of disclosure and support, and mutual trust, honesty, loyalty, and respect” (492). Importantly, their relationship does not have sexual overtones, and thus cannot be conflated with an arrangement potentially leading to Stella's promotion or preferential treatment due to sexual favors.

Dating in the workplace. Women in this category may be engrossed in work, but they refuse to abandon their personal or sexual lives altogether. Instead, they casually flirt with co-workers, engage in casual sex with colleagues, or embark on a workplace romance to accommodate their busy schedules. This group appears to be more demographically varied in terms of age, race, and sexual orientation, with a greater share of younger women compared to the previous category. Some older characters also belong here, offering a glimpse into the possible future of their younger counterparts. Overall, while some characters flirt or switch from one partner to another, some eventually fall in love and marry their love interest.

Despite being a common occurrence, workplace romance invariably raises moral dilemmas. A specific intersection of public and private life with ethical questions occurs in the case of teachers, who are carefully scrutinized by their students. The sexual/romantic adventures of White teacher Lauren Davis of *Boston Public* illustrate some such dilemmas**.** She dates and has a sexual relationship with fellow teacher Harry Senate in Season 1 and becomes a sensation when their kiss is videotaped and publicized by students on the school website. According to Mary Dalton and Laura R. Linder, the Harry Senate story arc “adds a greatly missed look at the private life of a woman teacher in popular culture” (154). Moreover, young and attractive Lauren becomes an object of infatuation for her gifted student John LeBlonde. Her apparent problem with drawing the line between her professional and private persona leads to another sexual episode with the school's former student Daniel Evans, who turns out to be a dangerous stalker. These incidents show that workplace affairs in certain types of jobs may spoil the woman’s professional reputation.

Secretive serial workplace relationships are well illustrated by the romantic odyssey of Camille Saroyan, a Black pathologist and Head of Forensic Division at the Jeffersonian Institute (*Bones*). Concerned about not becoming a target of workplace gossip, she keeps her relationship with FBI agent Seely Booth a secret. After it ends, she starts seeing the Iranian intern Arastoo Vaziri, a devoted Muslim and multiple father, also keeping their relationship a secret for quite a while. When Arastoo decides to look for a position elsewhere, Camille does not stay heartbroken for long and soon initiates a casual relationship with a photographer whom she meets through work. Thus most of

the relationships she has, whether short- or long-term, originate through work, suggesting that it is a pragmatic way of satisfying one's romance and sex needs for professionally involved women too busy to look for dates in the outside world.

While some female characters openly engage in flirtatious relationships at work, they remain reluctant to commit. The two White techies in the sample, Penelope Garcia (*Criminal Minds*) and Abby Sciutto (*NCIS*), have quite similar love lives. They both remain single, dating, and childless throughout the series. When Garcia receives a marriage proposal from her boyfriend, analyst Kevin Lynch, she turns it down and their relationship dissipates, though they continue to cooperate professionally as friends. A workplace relationship of Abby Sciuto and Timothy McGee also does not reach the stage of serious commitment, but but later in the series they develop close sibling-like relations, looking out for each other. Stories like these imply that breaking off a workplace relationship need not have a negative impact on the women's professional performance and may in fact strengthen her a sense of emotional security.

For some women in the studied dramas, immediate biological satisfaction of the sexual act is more important than emotional involvement. Sex drive is what appears to motivate Black medical examiner Lanie Parish (*Castle*) to engage in a purely sexual relationship with her colleague, Javier Esposito, the two having sex also in the morgue, their workplace. They continue to see each other, trying to keep it a secret from the rest of the team, but Lanie appears to be less invested in the relationship than Javier, treating it as a non-exclusive and noncommittal arrangement. All that time they cooperate as colleagues, and Lanie is never shown with another partner, which paints a picture of a woman who prioritizes work and pleasure over commitment, but is not promiscuous.

An extreme case of a single woman bent on sexual fulfillment without any intention of commitment is Kalinda Sharma, an Indian private investigator at a law firm (*The Good Wife*). She is a bisexual character who engages in casual sex with both married and unmarried individuals of both sexes. She does not hesitate to use her sex appeal at work as her intelligence skill and interrogation technique. Kalinda's nonchalant bi-sexual sex affairs and her unwillingness to commit is a recurring theme in the show and a source of its dramatic excitement. Her character might be interpreted as evidence that primetime dramas get permeated by post-feminist ideas regarding instrumental and recreational use of sex by women.

One other subcategory is made of older characters who face the consequences of prioritizing work over personal, but react to them differently. For instance Renee Jackson (*Any Day Now*), a Black Washington-based attorney who returns to her hometown and take over her deceased father's practice, regrets not having a family of her own despite having a successful career as a lawyer. Her

first relationship in the series breaks up due to the partners' unease to be married to a wealthy and professionally established Black woman. In Season 4 Renee meets judge Clyde Terhune and, after dating him for a while, she marries him in the series finale, at last finding happiness with a Black, educated, well-to-do partner in the same professional field. White lawyer Diane Lockhart of *The Good Wife* is another example of a single professional with an established career who has never been married, but unlike Renee Jackson, she has no regrets about it. She develops a crush on a man whom she meets while working on one of the cases. Their relationship is atypical as they have opposing political views, her being an anti-gun liberal Democrat and him a firearms expert, White conservative Republican, Kurt McVeigh. After a long and passionate romance, they eventually get married in a small ceremony during Season 5. Such portrayals of older single women send two contrasting messages, namely that career women might experience future regrets if they overly identify with their professional roles, but on the other hand they stand a chance of landing a loving and appreciative partner at older age.

Falling in love with a colleague or a boss. This group resembles the previous category, except that the characters take their workplace romances to another level. Partly driven by convenience, they initiate relationships with colleagues or bosses as a way to resolve time constraints on dating imposed by their busy schedules. The amount of time spent together at work facilitates development of romantic feelings based on similar interests and working towards the same goal. Moreover, some of the women appear to develop fascination with more accomplished co-workers, bonding with their partners on a deeper level through shared passion for the job they both do and/or admiration for their partner's achievements. Such intense love affairs occasionally lead to more committed and durable relationships likely to culminate in marriage.

Perhaps owing to the ubiquitous presence of the myth of the triumph of true love in popular culture, this subcategory is quite numerously represented in the research sample. One such portrayal is through Angela Montenegro, the Asian forensic artist on *Bones*, who — driven by convenience — develops a close relationship with her colleague Jack Hodgins (Season 2). Over the seasons, their eventful storyline develops from dating to engagement, through break-off to eventual marriage. It involves the appearance of Angela's estranged husband never properly divorced (Season 3); two temporary partners (one work colleague, the other same-sex friend) while on break from Hodgins (Seasons 4 and 5), and a pregnancy scare. It all culminates in rebuilding the relationship with Hodgins, her work colleague all the time, marrying him and announcing pregnancy in Season 5. Although it may look like the triumph of old true love, Michaela D.E. Meyer unmasks the heterosexual marriage of bisexual Angela as "an ideological preference for pronatalist, mainstream

heterosexuality" ("The "Other" Woman" 910). Notably, her numerous affairs with co-workers do not affect her performance and are not reprimanded by the supervisor with anything more than a joke.

Equally eventful on-the-job love affairs are those of is Callie Torres, a Latina senior orthopedic resident on *Grey's Anatomy* and another single woman character whose life revolves around work. Initially, Callie is presented as a young single woman open to dating and uncommitted sex with different partners working in the same hospital. Further in the show she genuinely falls in love with and marries a hospital intern, whom she quickly divorces hurt by his infidelity. Not long after the divorce, Callie gets attracted to women and enters two consecutive relationships with White female doctors, one of whom she eventually marries in Season 7 Episode 20. Callie's record shows that she is bent on having it all, that is being in casual or committed relationships (two marriages) and experimenting with her sexuality, while maintaining a successful career despite occasional negative impact of her romances on her job performance, place her among the most unconventional female characters in the sample.

Dating in the workplace does not automatically entail having multiple sex partners and is also shown as a more conservative and conventional situation, while still allowing a woman to benefit from the convenience of finding a partner during working hours. Such representation is exemplified by the story of the relationship between the White CSI Lindsay Monroe (*CSI: New York*) and her White colleague Danny Messer developing over the course of the series. As for the beginning of the 21st century, the stages of the "love story" are quite conventional: friendly teasing and flirting, an intimate relationship (Season 3), temporary break- off in Season 4 due to Danny's infidelity episode, reconciliation, Lindsay's pregnancy leading to Danny's proposal (Season 5), and a marriage ceremony in Season 5 Episode 17. Most of the time Lindsay manages to separate the relationship with Danny from her professional obligations, even though the two tend to work together a lot. Additionally, the fact that their bosses Mac Taylor and Stella Bonasera, act as their wedding witnesses and Mac becomes their baby's godfather conjures a strong image of a workplace family.

Some characters enter in romantic relationships with their bosses out of admiration and respect for their professional accomplishments. This is how the Asian American surgeon Cristina Yang (*Grey's Anatomy*) gets attracted to the Black surgeon Preston Burke, who represents all she hopes to achieve professionally. After the initial ups and downs in the relationship they move in together and engage to be married (Season 3 Episode 13). Apart from being emotionally and sexually involved, they share a professional passion for cardiothoracic surgery, which ultimately ruins their marriage plans as it appears to be the ultimate love object in their relationship. Moreover, Cristina's strong professional ethic leads her to report to their chief Preston's hand tremors during operation,

which shows that in her case, professional commitments outweigh the personal ones. On their wedding day, Preston leaves the minutes before their wedding ceremony, having realized that their relationship, based on strong intellectual and professional bond laced with good sex, could not fit into the trappings of marriage. Cristina happily pulls off the diamond choker bestowed to her by Preston's mother and screams "I'm free!" (Season 3 Episode 25). Her coveted freedom is the liberty to become an accomplished surgeon without sacrificing her ambitions for the sake of a man.

Other long-term relationships with superiors may unknowingly start off as one-night-stands, too. Meredith Grey (*Grey's Anatomy*) meets her weekend night hook-up in a subordinate/supervisor capacity only a day after. The complications of Meredith's relationship with Derek Shepherd include the appearance of his wife in the final episode of Season 1, several casual sexual encounters while on break due to Derek's unfinalized divorce in Season 2, temporary reconciliation in Season 3, and another break up in Season 4. Despite all these challenges in the private sphere, they work together and appreciate each other's neurosurgical skills. The relationship with the boss occasionally produces tensions between Meredith and her colleagues, who undermine her competence by ascribing her successes to her close relationship with Derek. Additionally, in Season 5 Meredith discovers that Derek has appropriated and published a modified version of what was her original idea without crediting her contribution; even though she confronts him about it, no consequences follow. After sharing a house together with two other residents from the same hospital, the couple eventually get married by exchanging post-it vows in Season 5 and then legalizing the marriage in Season 7 in order to adopt an African child patient. By the end of Season 11, they have three children together, including one born posthumously after Derek's death.

Entering a relationship with a boss entails complications and challenges connected with a potential abuse of power, which might explain why such arrangements are infrequently depicted. Sara Sidle (*CSI Las Vegas*), infatuated with Gil Grissom, her 15 years older boss, would like to take the flirty yet platonic relationship further, but initially gets rejected (Season 3). The two of them continue to work together, and their romantic relationship develops between the lines to be revealed in Season 6 finale to the audience, but remaining unknown to coworkers until Season 8. The clandestine character of their relationship is further maintained when the couple is revealed as married in Season 10 premiere. In Season 13, the couple get divorced following a strenuous long-distance relationship experience, and Sara immerses herself in work as a way of coping with the emotional burden throughout Seasons 14 and 15. The couple are shown to have been reunited in the series finale. The reason for such fragmented depiction of their relationship, much of which developed off-screen, might lie in the problematic nature of subordinate/supervisor relationship, the

inherent conflict of interests, as well as the age difference and the reverence the young heroine had for her mentor, suggesting limited cultural tolerance of similar arrangements.

Contemplating single motherhood. Single women in this category have years of experience in their well-established careers, and most of them have engaged in serious, long-term relationships as well. Being between late 30s and late 40s, they arrive at the point when they wish to become mothers, which suggests that their reproductive decisions are dictated by their "ticking biological clocks". Also, they tend to perceive their colleagues as potential sperm donors, possibly due to their professional accomplishments, without the intention of including the man as part of the prospective child's life.

A typical representative of the category is Addison Montgomery (*Private Practice*), a White divorced doctor who decides to embark on the IVF treatment with donor sperm, as her steady partner is not interested in becoming a father again. The procedure is unsuccessful, but Addison fulfills her plan by adopting a baby whose birth she has assisted, and, having married her fertility specialist, becoming an adoptive mother to his young daughter. The intersection of Addison's professional and private identity has several manifestations. One is the clash between her OB/GYN specialization in maternal/fetal medicine, fetal surgery, and neonatal surgery, and her personal fertility problems. Next is her access to a prospective adoptive son through her position as a trusted obstetrician delivering the baby. Finally, she re-establishes herself as a wife and reasserts her role as a mother by marrying a man who works at the private medical practice which she runs. Thus while her previous career decisions might have contributed to fertility struggles, they have also offered a viable solution and closure.

The stories of other women in this category follow a similar pattern. As a rule, these women are White, unattached medical doctors (Kerry Weaver on *ER,* Lisa Cuddy on *House, MD*, Liz Cruz on *Nip/Tuck*), both heterosexual (Lisa Cuddy) and non-heterosexual (Kerry Weaver, Liz Cruz), who undergo artificial insemination or IVF. Their endeavors are almost unanimously unsuccessful; however, they mostly manage to fulfill their maternal roles through adoption (Kerry Weaver, Lisa Cuddy). The only doctor who manages to carry the baby to term is Dr O'Hara (*Sister Jackie*).

The character who stands out due to her race, occupation, and financial concerns is Marla Hendricks, a single Black teacher on *Boston Public*. Bent on becoming a mother, Marla asks the school's Black principal, Stephen Harper, to be a sperm donor for her upcoming in vitro fertilization; the man, however, declines (Chapter 73 episode). At fertility clinic she learns that her teacher's salary may not suffice should she need more than one round of the costly treatment. After Marla miscarries in Chapter 79 episode, she considers adopting her student, expelled from a foster home.

Thus the overlap between Marla's public and private life is shown both through the semen request directed at her boss and her direct access to the student as a potential adoptive daughter. The way Marla's story is framed contributes to the image of a Black, nurturing, educated yet financially challenged female teacher unable to find a suitable partner with whom she could start a family.

With this exception, the fertility issues and plotlines are most commonly linked to women in medicine, which might suggest that female doctors experience exceptional difficulties when trying to combine their professional and maternal role. It also indicates that the long years a woman puts in to build a medical career might impede her chances of natural conception and birthing. Importantly, the unsuccessful IVF treatments plotlines appear to suggest that other paths to motherhood are more socially acceptable.

The majority of the working single childfree women in the study sample do not discriminate between public and private spheres. The two permeate each other and function as a space to realize their professional potential and develop personal relationships. Their professional and personal lives overlap, with positive and negative consequences. The analysis has revealed the most frequently shown inconveniences experienced by single working women when meshing their professional and personal lives: keeping the relationship a secret in the workplace, being the object of gossip, continuing cooperation after a break-up, and the conflict of professional and personal roles.

Positive aspects of the overlap seem to outweigh the negatives in the studied dramas. Workplaces are presented in them as convenient hunting grounds for sexual or romantic-sexual partners. Women initiate sexual relationships rather than wait to be approached; they are not passive objects but active agents in control of their sex life. A novelty is the gradual introduction of female characters open to same-sex relationships. Moreover, most of the analyzed women do not worry about the so-called reputation and frequently choose partners within the same pool, even though such behavior may still be perceived as promiscuous. Finally, when or if they become involved in relationships or sex in the workplace, it is recreational in nature rather than instrumental in pushing their career forward.

Another frequent fact is that when the relationship becomes unsatisfactory, they are not afraid to leave it. This might result from the fact that they are financially independent and their professional success contributes to self-efficacy, giving them a confidence boost. It transpires that marriage is shown as women's lifestyle choice, not a necessity or an ultimate goal. When unable to form a stable committed relationship, some single women shift their focus to setting up a single-parent family in lieu, to realize their potential as mothers. All the observed strategies created by the scriptwriters for

single working women who try to handle their intimate lives appear to be universal and not sensitive to race or sexuality.

2.2 Working mothers

Unlike single childless women, the characters in this category accommodate motherhood into the intricate network of career and intimate relationships, either allegedly or genuinely. Since the main focus of the analysis is on the interplay between motherhood and professional life, the presence or absence of a spouse or another romantic partner in a working mother's life becomes secondary but still significant due to its effect on her ability to fulfill her motherly obligations. In terms of support system, the sample includes depictions of both single and married mothers, including those whose marriages disintegrate in the course of the series, mostly due to the impact of work-related issues on spousal relations. Also, the age of children ranges from babies through teenagers to adults, with each category producing a different set of work-family conflicts. As mentioned earlier, the identified categories include: the struggling mother, the bogus mother, the put-together mother, and the opting put mother.

The struggling mother. The mothers who belong in this category find it difficult to adequately respond to two major types of conflicts — those induced by work and affecting family, and the ones that impact work but stem from family. These challenges are encountered by women of different age, marital status, and ethnicity; however, mothers of older children and teenagers are more likely to experience difficulties of the first type, whereas the second type is more commonly linked to new mothers. Overall, mothers are more frequently depicted as handling the work-family conflict, as the selected storylines show.

Miranda Bailey is a Black married resident whose pregnancy and early motherhood constitute an important story arc in Season 2. As she points out herself, she "tried for seven damn years and a month before [her] fellowship notifications the stick turns blue." This shows that Bailey is aware of the precarious situation she is in, becoming a mother just as she has completed residency and proceeds to the next level of her medical career. She experiences negative implications of mommy tracking, as she loses out the promotion to a single, childless female colleague (Season 2). Eventually the new mom Miranda turns out to be much more effective in carrying out chief resident duties than the other woman, but she finds it difficult to juggle the resident/wife/mother roles. In Season 3, Episode 5, a male peer suggests that new motherhood, specifically hormonal instability and sleep deprivation, have impaired her professional competence, which leads Bailey to question her ability to coordinate work-life balance. The traditional roles are already reversed in Miranda's household, with her husband, Tucker, being a full time stay-at-home dad. When her little son is trapped under the

bookshelf housing Miranda’s medical books, Tucker blames the accident on his wife, claiming that it is the result of her focus on work, expressed by her study materials and her physical absence from home. Soon after Tucker moves out to a hotel, and although they try marriage counselling in Season 5, the two achieve little success. When Miranda announces her plans to start a pediatric surgery fellowship, Tucker forces her to choose between career or marriage. Miranda ultimately chooses the third way – she leaves her husband and resigns from her ambitions to meet the demands of single motherhood.

Jackie Peyton on *Nurse Jackie* is a White married mother of two school-aged daughters. Both parents appear to be similarly involved in raising the girls; e.g. both attend a parent-teacher meeting to discuss their older daughter’s anxiety problem (Season 1 Episode 4). Jackie's dismissive reaction to her daughter's issues is most likely the result of her own problems and drug addiction, framed as corollary to her competence as a brilliant nurse; according to Radha Chitale, she uses opioids "to help her stay alert and manage her emotions through the harrowing days in the emergency room." This suggests that Jackie’s professional commitment has detrimental effect on her health, maternal competencies, and marriage; her children complain about her constant absence, and the discovery of Jackie's affair with a hospital pharmacist leads her husband to file for separation and divorce, taking custody of both girls in Season 5. When her older daughter grows up and begins to emulate Jackie's dependence on medications, the implication is that Peyton's overburdening work has contributed to intergenerational substance abuse, implicating her as a bad role model and negligent mother.

White single working mothers also face problems while trying to combine their work duties with child care. For example, White CSI Catherine Willows (*CSI*) regularly works night shifts, and it is not exactly clear who looks after her daughter, Lindsey, in Catherine's absence. At least once Lindsey’s life is in peril when she almost drowns in her father’s car in Season 3. On the other hand, Lindsey is abducted from her mother’s car after a T-bone collision as part of the elaborate attack on her maternal grandfather’s family (Season 7). After the events of Season 3 the writers advance the character’s age to teenager and the relationship between Catherine and her rebellious and risk-taking daughter clearly deteriorates. Throughout the series, Catherine remains very protective of her unruly daughter and her CSI background appears to inform her concerns and pedagogic strategies. When Lindsey is detained for hitch-hiking in Season 5 Episode 3, Catherine leads the girl to the morgue to show her the consequences of the risky decisions made by young women. Believing in the value of preventive measures, she enrolls Lindsey in a private school to keep her under control (Season 5). When Catherine discovers that Lindsey is using a fake ID card in a bar, she has her escorted home by an officer (Season 9). Overall, Catherine's struggles stem from the fact that she has a very demanding

job with family unfriendly work arrangements, but they are further exacerbated by single motherhood. However, she strives to raise her daughter by quickly reacting to arising problems, sparing no expense when it comes to her education.

A White, highly successful lawyer Patty Hewes (*Damages*) starts off as a married mother of a teenage to young adult son, Michael, who divorces her adulterous husband in Season 2. Patty's strong lawyer identity can be said to inform her parental practices; in reaction to her son's reprehensible school behavior, she refuses to protect him and practically encourages expulsion despite the principal's leniency (Season 1 Episode 3). Her relentless attitude contributes to her professional success, but creates a strained relationship with rebellious Michael, whom she eventually places in a facility for troubled teens. When she later has custody of her baby granddaughter (Seasons 4 and 5), one can observe that she delegates childcare to nannies, in all likelihood replicating her parental style. It appears that motherhood (as well as grandmotherhood) is a social role forced upon the woman who has always prioritized career and success over private life, consequently unwilling to make any concessions.

The motherhood adventure of Miranda Hobbes, a White single lawyer on *Sex and the City*, involves accidental pregnancy, potential abortion, and raising a baby on her own. When she discovers she is pregnant as a result of one-night stand with ex boyfriend, she initially sees it as the obstacle to her high-powered career, but eventually has the baby and takes on full responsibility as a single working mother, even though the father is willing to be present in their life. Although Miranda's housekeeper helps her tackle the work and family obligations, her supervisors admonish her for repetitive tardiness, allegedly resulting from her maternal duties (Season 6 Episode 6). She retorts that work is her priority, but simultaneously harbors self-doubt as to her life choices at the moment. Miranda, once the most outspoken single feminist on the show, eventually marries the baby's father in Season 6 and assumes the role of a wife and a mother.

The bogus mother. The motherhood of women in this category is elusive in nature and often enacted by the children being mentioned, but never or hardly seen. Demographically, these women are exclusively White or Black heterosexuals, with different marital status; importantly, they tend to be older and, consequently, have children who are either in college or grown up. Nonetheless, some women are said to have young children, in one case as many as three, and yet they are never shown as handling or involved in any child-related situations.

During the examined period, Anita Van Buren, a Black Lieutenant (*Law & Order*) is a divorcee and a mother of two boys, Ric and Stefan. Not much is known about either of them: one is pictured in Season 20 Episode 3, but not identified by name; several episodes later, one of them

offers his mother medical marijuana to alleviate the side effects of chemotherapy (Season 20 Episode 7). Gloria Akalitus (*Nurse Jackie*) is a White Nurse/Nursing Officer and a mother to an adult son, Michael. This information is only revealed in the concluding season of the series in Episode 7 through a reference to his former or current drug addiction, as an explanation for her distrust in possible reformation of her other drug addicted colleague. Melinda Warner, a Black medical examiner (*Law & Order: SVU*) is a married mother of an unnamed daughter who is only mentioned twice throughout the series, namely in "Juvenile" (Season 4 Episode 9), when a reference to her grade and school menu is made, and "Blast" (Season 7 Episode 13), when she needs to be picked up from school. Finally, the three children of Nola Falacci (*Law & Order*), a White married police detective in her early thirties are never referred to by name nor by any other detail that would cast any light on her obligations as a mother. Granted, the character was part of the main cast for 5 episodes only, but according to the actress playing the role, the detective was to be written as "somebody who loves her job, loves the intellectualism of it, wants to do the best possible work she can so that she can get home to her kids and shed all of that and just be — just be mom" (Harris), but the goal has not been accomplished.

The put-together mother. The mothers in this category are usually White and single heterosexuals, with some married and non-heteronormative representatives as well. Characteristically, most of them have adolescent children, with several women being mothers to young adults or adults. These women appear to have achieved a reasonable compromise between their occupational and familial roles, comfortably inhabiting both identities and experiencing none or relatively few work-family conflicts.

The motherhood story of Lorelai Gilmore, a White laid-back single mum of a teen girl, Rory, started off as when she was a teen who moved out of her parents' house and has gradually worked her way up to the manager's position at the inn to support her daughter and herself. Coming from a wealthy background, she has the opportunity to rely on her parents when in need, e.g to cover the tuition at her daughter's private school. This is why I cannot but agree with Danielle M. Stern's analysis of *Gilmore Girls* who argues that Lorelai's single-mom status is singular due to the support she has not only from her mother and father, but also the community she is surrounded by, which Stern dubs as a "heteronormative utopian village" (167). Stern points out that Lorelai's depiction of single motherhood seems oblivious to such facts as that "most single working mothers do not have the luxury of affluent parents, nor a fairy godmother at a country inn to provide a job and discounted living space when sacrifice is not enough" (177). Financial questions aside, the depiction of the bond between the mother and the daughter is exceptionally commendable. As a single parent, Lorelai

strikes the right balance between leniency and strictness, raising Rory to be an ambitious, self-reliant, responsible young woman.

Nurse Samantha Taggart, a single mother to a teen son, Alex, got pregnant as a teenager and has mostly raised her son on her own. Sam prioritizes his well-being over personal relationships, which is why she only forms a family-like arrangement with dr Kovacs following her son's approval. Among the complications she needs to face as a mother is the boy's urge to reconnect with his criminal father (Season 11), the breakup with Kovacs following his conflicts with the boy, and the abduction of her son and herself by her ex-husband (Season 12). In Season 13, Sam sends her seriously misbehaving son to a school for troubled youths and starts training as an anaesthetic nurse; this shows that educational system offers the support she needs in order to improve her work situation as a single mother.

Alicia Florrick is a White character shown in a variety of roles: as a troubled wife of an unfaithful husband, a separated mother to two adolescent children, a woman engaging in an extramarital affair in the workplace, and a successful lawyer. Career-wise, Alicia resumes employment to fend for herself and the children, and despite considerable workload and pressure, she manages to stay available for them, even if she occasionally turns for help to her mother-in-law or hires a sitter. The challenges of being a somewhat single mother with an incarcerated husband and dating her boss force Alicia to navigate four major roles: maternal, occupational, sexual, and marital. When her daughter Grace goes missing, she reproaches herself for being imprudent and decides to forego the affair, showing where her priorities lie.

Starting from Season 6, Angela Montenegro’s story arcs focus on her as a maternal figure, during her pregnancy (Season 6) and as a new mom (Season 7). Initially, Angela is represented as a happy new mother who secretly smuggles her baby to work to overcome separation anxiety. In Season 8, however, feeling that her life as an artist and a mother has become off-balance, she decides to reduce the number of working hours. Allegedly, this decision has a limited economic impact owing to the fact that her husband comes from a wealthy background and could alone support their family. Hence Angela is comfortable to give greater priority to her artistic pursuits without neglecting the role of a mother, and still maintaining her employment.

Meredith Grey has three children in the course of the series; a girl she adopts in Season 8, a boy she gives birth to in Season 9, and a daughter born in Season 12 after her husband's death. Having been brought up by an ambitious, mostly absent neurosurgeon mother, Meredith has a clear vision of what she wants to avoid in her motherly role. However, she is oblivious to the impact the family-related adjustments have on her professional role. A poignant conversation between her and

her friend Cristina, in which the latter explains: "You have different priorities now. ... and you want to be a good mom. ...You made your choices, and they are valid choices. But don't pretend they don't affect your skills." (Season 10 Episode 5), is a wake-up call for Meredith, who has her husband assume more childcare responsibilities so that she can advance her career to a desired level. In the later seasons, concerned about her professional standing at Seattle Grace Mercy West Hospital, she encourages her husband to move for career to Washington, D.C., and she embarks on a single parent life, maintaining busy schedule at work with help and support from her friends.

Similar coping mechanisms are employed by a non-traditional family formed by a bisexual Latina Callie Torres, an orthopedic surgeon, and Arizona Robbins, a White pediatric doctor and fetal surgeon at the same hospital. The women raise Callie's birth daughter together, with Arizona being an adoptive parent, however, following a number of conflicts unrelated to work, the women decide to split. The legal battle for custody of Sofia is one of the most poignant stories in Season 12. In court, hospital colleagues shed some light on parental arrangements and the challenges faced by two mothers in highly competitive careers. It transpires that fellow female doctors have created a "seamless support system" that helps them to tackle emergency situations at work as well as allow them to take time off. Eventually the judge grants full custody of Sofia to Arizona, deciding that "the village" created by the Seattle community is more favorable to the child's development than a sudden move to New York with her birth mother (Season 12 Episode 22); outside court, Arizona agrees to share Sofia's custody, as the girl “deserves to have two happy mothers.”

The success of mothers in this category lies in the support system they turn to, such as parents, mothers, mothers-in-law, husbands, or friends. Their economic situation is usually stable, which means they can choose to focus on their goals without feeling desperate. In none of the cases is the material well-being of the women or the children threatened. Moreover, these mothers tend to be close with their children, meaning that they have invested as much time into parenting as they have in their careers. Interestingly, there is little difference between single and married women as to efficacy of the arrangements they make in order to keep their work-life balance.

The opting out mother. The term "opt-out" was coined by Lisa Belkin (2003) as a reference to the exodus of professional women from the workplace. However, I define the opting out mother as a working woman who makes a binary choice between her job and motherhood, as opposed to a working mother. Hence the women in this category opt out in a twofold manner — either by rejecting motherhood to maintain the status quo, or by leaving the workforce to become, temporarily, stay-at-home mothers. Consequently, the rejection of motherhood can be realized either through abortion, relinquishing a baby for adoption, or abandoning the baby with the other parent, whereas

the career break is exclusively framed as a woman's conscious decision to devote herself to raising children. Although the category is not a broadly represented one, it includes a variety of women in terms of age, race, sexual orientation and marital status.

When Faith Yokas (*Third Watch*), a White police officer and a mother of two primary school children, discovers that she is pregnant again, she withholds the information from husband, but revealsit to the male partner at work. Based on the insufficient funds despite living on two incomes, Faith decides to terminate the pregnancy. She pretends to have a miscarriage while on duty and never reveals the truth to her husband. having had the experience of growing up in relatively deprived household herself, Faith undergoes abortion for the benefit of her two other children (Season 2 Episode 2). This storyline is also one of the few that show how social issues intersect with economic ones (the other is, for example, Marla Hendrick's IVF story).

In other cases the motivation lies in prioritizing career over motherhood, often coinciding with the characters' young age. Such choices are made by two Asian doctors, Jing Mei Chen (*ER,* Season 7) and Cristina Yang (*Grey's Anatomy*, Season 2 and Season 8). Chronologically, Chen's pregnancy story aired in 2000 while Yang's stories took place in 2005 and 2011. Chen is a single resident who carries the pregnancy to full term, gives birth to the baby, and even breastfeeds the infant before releasing him to adoptive parents. She is aware that as a single parent and a busy professional she would not be able to mother the child, despite sufficient material means. In turn, Yang, also a single intern, decides to abort both pregnancies; she eventually miscarries the first one and terminates the second. Even though during her second pregnancy she is no longer a young, single intern, but a very experienced, married surgeon, she rejects motherhood, loving her job more than potential children. The stories of Chen and Yang show a gradual progression in acceptance of professional women's choices regarding their reproductive decisions. According to Elizabeth Levy, Cristina's abortion broke the taboo on American TV, but at the same time reinforced the stereotype "that abortion is a decision made by ruthless women" (37).

A different slant on the opting-out from motherhood is exemplified by the case of a police detective Kima Greggs (*The Wire*), a Black lesbian, who reluctantly agrees to have a baby with her partner. When the baby is born in Season 3, Kima's ambivalence towards domesticity and parenting leads her to abandon her partner and their son; she does pay the child support though. The decision to opt out stems from the continuous frictions the two women had over the nature of the high-risk and time consuming police work. Additionally, working overtime and earning an insufficient salary, as illustrated by the overdue child support in Season 4, highlight the economic tension between Kima's professional role and her (absent) mother (and partner) role.

The mothers opting out to focus exclusively on childcare are even less numerous in the sample. Dana Stowe (*Strong Medicine*), is a White single doctor and scientist running breast cancer clinical trials. When she adopts an HIV-positive girl and her sister following the death of the girl's mother, she leaves the hospital and moves to a different state to raise the children. The storyline does not offer explanation as to what prompted this decision, nor any reflection on the economic circumstances she will face as a single mother, nor her sentiments about curtailing her professional career as a doctor and researcher.

The opting-out story of Alexx Woods, a Black medical examiner on *CSI: Miami*, is completely different. Her mid-teen son and daughter may not need her undivided attention, but after her son becomes a murder suspect in Season 6 Episode 19, Alexx decides that her family should take precedence over work. Initially, it is not clear whether the career break is temporary or permanent, or whether she plans to seek a more family-friendly job. In later seasons she is occasionally seen working as a hospital doctor, meaning that she has adjusted her career trajectory rather than quit the workforce.

Finally, a character with an intermittent career, depending on her mothering responsibilities, is Lynette Scavo (*Desperate Housewives*), a White high-powered advertising executive who became a full-time mother of four young children, including a set of twins. In Season 1, Lynette is a harried mother who can barely cope with childcare obligations in the constant absence of her businessman husband. Her abundant struggles as a mother offer an exclusive insight into the situation of a career woman who decides to opt out. In Season 2, Lynette and her husband switch roles, but later both of them work for the same advertising agency and need to avail themselves of nannies and daycare. In order to achieve a better work-life balance and address the emerging childcare problems, they open a family restaurant in Season 3. In Season 5, Scavo returns to advertising job, only to discover that she is pregnant with twins. She keeps the information a secret in order to retain her job, and after losing one of the babies as a result of an accident, she is adamant that she will not return to being a stay-at-home mom once the other baby is born. True to her word, Lynette starts an interior design business with another female partner in Season 7, whereas in the final season she accepts a job offer involving a move to New York, together with the dependents. In her discussion of *Desperate Housewives,* Andrea Press observes that Lynette stands out due to her breakthrough image on this show as an on-again, off-again working mother who left a successful advertising career to become a full-time stay-at-home mother. "Unlike the television of an earlier era, motherhood in this instance is not idealized, as Lynette is shown having many regrets about her choice, and then trying to go back to her career

and realizing the difficulties involved in this choice as well" ("Gender and Family" 147). This career trajectory reflecting the periods of opting out and opting in is unique in the research sample.

The observed categorization of working mothers retreats from the plain division into single or married mothers, or the conventional 'bad mother' and 'good mother' opposition. Working mothers can be single due to different life circumstances and fare well, whereas married life does not automatically denote a stable family situation. A 'good-enough' mother, on the other hand, may be exemplified by working mothers independently of their marital status or employment situation.
Most working mothers actively pursue their careers, combining professional lives with the personal ones, especially if the former involve prestigious positions. Upon closer consideration, very little is is shown how they manage to combine the roles, and occasional glimpses tend to focus on domestic problems and crises, which – despite their dramatic value in the plots may have a backlash effect against working mothers.

Single motherhood is often presented as problematic, but there are instances of successful independent mothers who manage to combine careers with child rearing without being penalized for their choice. The total self-sufficiency expected of single working mothers is presented as unrealistic, and an extended network of support is promoted as a viable solution to the work-life balance problem. Significantly, single working motherhood is not usually represented as a woman's default choice, but as a transitional phase until the character's impending marriage to the child's father or another life partner. On the other hand, married motherhood also gained new images, with some working mothers forging careers while maintaining healthy bonds with their children on the one hand, and frazzled career women treating motherhood as a socially imposed burden.

The mothers might thrive professionally, but they are frequently presented as having little control over their private life. The tendency is to show the traditional tension between work and motherhood through child-rearing problems, with few instances of positive relationships working mothers have with their growing up children. In this sense, these representations subscribe to the ideology that one cannot have it all, and that a working mother has to constantly juggle the responsibilities of family life and job.

Working mothers occasionally put their careers on temporary hold to raise small children, or adjust their professional lives to align better with the family demands. The cases of working women resigning from motherhood for professional reasons are infrequent; also, it is inherently implied that women who opt for such solutions suffer from lifelong regret.

Overall, it appears that while prime time depictions tend to normalize working motherhood on the one hand, they do not entirely abandon its backlash tendencies. More numerous and positive

portrayals of working women raising children in a variety of family settings would contribute to a more progressive vision in the future.

3. Concluding remarks

The analysis shows several challenges to the working woman stereotype. First of all, the majority of female characters see their careers as a permanent fixture in their adult lives, driving them to build personal relationships in a way that incorporates their occupational identity. Secondly, the characters are usually shown as investing as many hours in their work as their male colleagues. It is most obvious in the case of childfree singles, but working mothers are pictured as similarly involved. In their case, however, this situation is likely to produce negative effect on their families, suggesting that extreme devotion to a career is only commendable for women without dependents. On the other hand, the stereotype of a working mother as a 'bad' mother is averted by the arrival of a 'good-enough mother,' as a response to the oppositional tension between motherhood and employment.

My analysis of the story arcs referring to women of different races does not indicate a systemic, qualitative discrimination. Women of all races are offered equally interesting plots, if they are offered any at all – as shown above, there are cases when working women's occupational identities dominate and erase any other identities they might have. This lack of balance, however, applies to all female characters, irrespective of their race. Thus although undeniably the White female characters are most numerous, they do not appear to have preferential treatment based on race.

However, one might argue that racial minority characters are represented in the same manner as the White characters, that is, the dominant notions of femininity and motherhood are projected onto non-White characters without much consideration for individual background cultures. This simplification is, quite naturally, facilitated by the fact that the characters are predominantly shown in isolation from their extended families.

The analysis indicates an increasing inclusivity of non-heterosexual characters on screen. Although limited in numbers, bisexual and lesbian characters are endowed with compelling storylines exploring their love life, motherhood, marriage, and divorce. This is why I can only partly agree with Meyer's observations about "one specific type of intersectional television representation: the "Other" woman who is revealed to be bisexual and/or queer, often dealing with class disparity. This image centralizes issues of race, ethnicity, sexuality, and class within a narrative to one character, ultimately "positioning that character as a token representative for all discourses of cultural struggle" ("Representing Bisexuality" 381), especially that she also claims that „[t]hese women are not the protagonists of television drama — they function on the margin, as wise counsel

and comedic foil to the (strong) White female lead" ("The "Other" Woman" 911). Based on the fact that the spectrum of satisfying partners has been shown to expand beyond the binary choice, with women forming more or less satisfying relationships with other women, and occasionally raising children together, I contend that the strength of these narratives lies in the fact that they are often built around universal insecurities and struggles, and thus act as normalizing the non-heterosexual relationships.

Despite a chiefly positive and fair representation of characters with diverse racial and sexual identities, the sample has also revealed important deficiencies. One of them is a significant underrepresentation of Asian working mothers, both single or married. Another case of double marginalization is a serious lack of older female characters that combine work with family obligations, be it as mothers, grandmothers or carers for family seniors. The few examples in the sample have been either prejudiced or underdeveloped.

Above all, the significant absences emphasize the male-centrist workplace setup. No workplace daycares, no bring-your-child to work events. The only instances are family-type businesses, as in *Gilmore Girls*, giving a teen child an opportunity to drop in on her mother and have more access to her as a result. The images of working women are mostly one-dimensional – they are not shown as having life outside work, be it in the form of family or pursuit of hobbies. This includes persistent lack of information on childcare arrangements, an important omission pointed out by Heintz-Knowles.

The actual visibility of working motherhood is, again, vastly limited. The majority of depictions replicate the pattern pointed out by Bonnie J. Dow in her discussion of *Murphy Brown* (and echoed by other critics), namely that maternity has little impact on the working women's professional lives, and that their children as well as plotlines centered on them are actually rarely featured (*Prime-time Feminism* 158). Similar observations were made by respondents in Rebecca Feasey's study, summarized by her as follows:

> Women made the point that the representations of motherhood on television were pitched at the extremes, with maternal figures being routinely written, and written off, as one-dimensional figures with little scope for growth and little room for complex characterisation. At one end we have the figure of the professional working women remaining just that, with storylines revolving around her working life with the occasional nod to the struggles of juggling the personal and professional arena. At the other end we have the well-meaning stay at home wife and mother who struggles to discipline her children and hapless husband with the occasional failed foray into the world of work.

> There is very little sense that these women might be, have been, or look to be both the stay at home and the professional woman, with storylines exploring more seriously (with or without comedic relief) the difficulty of balancing a myriad of personal and public responsibilities. (117–118)

On the one hand, I concur with Dow's observation that the women in my research sample are the characters in primetime dramas focused on work, not family, hence the limited textual evidence to explore motherhood and childcare-related issues represented in them. Some characters disappear after they become mothers, or become mothers after they disappear from the shows. Thus the demand for more balanced, authentic, and true to life depictions of working motherhood.

The omissions resulting from the constraints of the genre are understandable, but their nature is subject to interpretation. Even when showed at the workplace, female characters are mainly exploited for their sexual and romantic potential, while projections beyond this sphere are of limited interest or non-existent in the scripts. Such practices reinforce preconceived notions of femininity and preclude a more rounded image of a working woman that could potentially become relatable to the experiences of vast female audiences. Whether there is a need for such approach in mass entertainment productions is open to debate, but if workplace dramas were organized according to feminine and feminist values and concerns, the portrayals might have been finally more diverse.

Still, the image of a working woman who cannot have it all pervades. The majority of women characters are forced to choose between work and personal/family life, and the consequences of these choices are predominantly harmful to their families, resulting in relationships breaking up, children being abducted etc. This somewhat exaggerated reflection of the reality means that prime time representations of working women feed off and into the patriarchal structures and hegemonic practices of work and workplace success. Work-life balance was not accommodated for by the American prime time dramas under study.

On a final note, the primetime representations of working women juggling intersecting identities discussed above are by no means representative of all social classes. One must bear in mind that the characters in the sample consist mainly of highly educated professionals in prestigious careers or government and service jobs, thereby projecting the image of working women privileged by their economic and social status, with both White and minority characters enjoying similarly advantageous position. The situations reminiscent of real-life struggles of Black or Latina single mothers, for instance, are present through minor characters and single story arcs, but being so ephemeral, they might simply remain overlooked and underrepresented. Nonetheless, the observed tendency to offer more diverse female perspectives, especially in more up-to-date productions,

suggests a possibility of a substantial progress towards fuller depictions of women balancing different identities as working women, wives, and mothers.

Conclusions

The study aimed to critically examine the ways in which women's occupational identities were constructed in television fiction and map the scope of scripts and narrative frameworks offered by early 21st-century primetime dramas in that respect. The goal was to gain a better understanding of media representations of career women, working mothers, and aspiring singles on the whole, and their compatibility with the women's experience on the non-fictional American labor market. The specific research questions referred to occupational and demographic profiles of the working women characters, the tensions between the assumed femininity of working women and the symbolic masculinity of the world of work, the strategies pursued by female characters while shaping their careers and reconciling them with other social roles.

Summary of the key findings

Returning to the questions posed at the beginning of this study, it is now possible to state that although depictions of the working women in primetime dramas mostly complied with the real-life demographic factors, they failed to adequately reflect other important socio-cultural factors that sheer demography does not reflect.

The investigation revealed significant underrepresentations, absences, and marginalizations with regard to a variety of aspects. First of all, the female characters are mainly highly educated professionals in prestigious careers or government and service jobs, privileged by their economic and social status, with both White and minority characters enjoying similarly advantageous position. As a result, this tendency frames women's work as middle-class occupations; furthermore, the scarcity of examples of downward social mobility, in real life often affecting e.g. single mothers with dependents, exacerbated selective character of representations. Next, the depictions of women's reproductive roles and choices were similarly differential. Motherhood, pregnancy, and complications of women's work thereof tended to be marginalized, contributing to an unrealistic construction of the female professional as devoid of reproductive function. On the other hand, several non-heterosexual characters gained their representation in the examined period, endowed with compelling storylines exploring their identities beyond the occupational ones, on a par with those of heteronormative females. Moreover, the depictions included adoption as an alternative pathway to motherhood, and extremely cautiously presented abortion as a viable option. Additionally, although most working mother characters combined professional lives with the personal ones, very little was known about how they manage to mesh the roles; for this reason such

depictions might be interpreted as backlash on working mothers, derivative of the imposed hegemonic order. As a rule, the working motherhood subplots and adequately developed back stories, which allegedly have less dramatic potential than romance and dating, but would probably be more interesting for wide female audiences of all classes, facing similar dilemmas on a daily basis, were seriously lacking. Another finding refers to an emerging trend observed in the investigated material, namely an increased popularity of female characters past their prime and instances of showcasing older women in senior or executive positions. Although the observed tendencies expanded the range of female perspectives, a lacuna continues to exist with reference to depictions of older women balancing their identities as professionals, wives and mothers.

The study has also yielded a number of findings related to the tensions between the masculine and the feminine qualities in the analyzed characters. The first and somewhat unexpected observation was that the successful performance of nearly all occupations featured in the study material required from the women an androgynous identity – one that combined traditionally masculine and feminine traits, skills, and attributes, yet in slightly different proportions. Working women in positions of power and authority tended to exhibit most pronounced masculine traits, even those socially perceived as negative, especially in law enforcement jobs. Although in general 'masculine' women tended to be older, they could also be found among young ambitious doctors and law enforcement professionals. Yet careerism — often regarded as a typical masculine style of professional advancement — was not found in the analyzed women's career trajectories. Overall, the majority of female characters were pictured as combining agentic traits with selected communal ones in a way that enhances their professional performance.

This study has also revealed the persistence of stereotypes with reference to visual attributes of women at work. First of all, the dominant shapes and sizes of the female bodies tended to be unrealistically slim and fit across the whole spectrum of jobs and professions. Disciplined, well-groomed, and conventional female bodies were communicated as professional bodies, while the presence of deviant bodies was vastly limited. Moreover, the majority of the bodies subscribed to the white Western heterosexual beauty ideals, excluding other veritable representations. This observation also applies to the non-heteronormative characters, who were not allowed by the scripts to depart visually from a conventionally attractive femme physisque. Thus, the disturbing tendency to valorize young, White, able-bodied, heterosexual, and child-free women in the fictional TV workplaces in both traditional and non-traditional occupations was found to persist. The findings also show less obvious challenges to the working woman visual stereotype. Despite the strong tendency to control or contain women who enter traditionally masculine occupations by heavy policing of their

workplace attires, women characters increasingly resisted such attempts and did not intend to forsake their femininity to abide by the workplace conventions created mostly by men. Not only were they shown as refusing to masquerade, but also actively experimenting with clothing, footwear, jewelry, and hairstyles to express their identity and enhance sexual attractiveness without fear of jeopardizing their professional standing. Even though femininity has become a somewhat optional facet of women's occupational identity, performance of femininity at work remained largely conventional. In fact, the majority of the depicted working women fused diverse gender codes, while few others queered traditional femininity, quite likely due to the apparent lack of prescriptive codes for cultural representation.

The final conclusions refer to the personal-sexual-family sphere of the heroines in the studied material. The workplaces were appropriated by women as convenient hunting grounds to find sexual or romantic-sexual partners; they were not passive objects but active agents in control of their sex life. Notably, their intimate relationships were recreational in nature rather than instrumental in pushing their career forward, and their financial independence and professional success let them leave relationships if they found them unsatisfactory. Based on the fact that the spectrum of satisfying partners expanded beyond the binary choice, the strength of these narratives lay in the fact that they were often built around universal insecurities and struggles. The other findings show that for the majority of female characters their careers were a permanent fixture in their adult lives and they invested as many hours in their work as their male colleagues. Moreover, findings suggesting that working women characters tended to postpone marriage and motherhood, preferred to commit to their careers first, and treat marriage as a possibility rather than an ultimate goal were also in line with American real-life demographic data. Finally, while working mothers were thriving professionally, they were frequently presented as having little control over their private life, supporting the traditional oppositional tension between work and motherhood or family. As the majority of women characters were forced to choose between work and personal life, with harmful consequences to their families should they choose work, it might be concluded that image of a working woman who cannot have it all pervaded. Also, although the 'bad working mother' stereotype was mostly averted by the 'good-enough working mother' image, as a response to the oppositional tension between motherhood and employment, the impossibility of having-it-all and perception of work as a threat to motherhood persisted.

Finally, the analysis of the story arcs referring to women of different races did not indicate a systemic, qualitative discrimination. Equally interesting plots are offered to working women regardless of race, provided they are offered any at all. Thus although the White female characters

prevailed in numbers, in direct proportion to the national demographics, their preferential qualitative treatment was not observed.

The contribution to the existing literature

These findings make several contributions to the current literature. To the best of my knowledge, the present project is the first comprehensive investigation of women's occupational identities based on the analysis of early 21st-century American primetime dramas from a variety of angles. The results yielded by the research add to the existing body of criticism of women's TV representation in general, and their occupational identity in particular. The fact that it spanned a relatively long period of time, namely a decade of TV dramas that featured working women, made it possible to capture a process of cultural change, which would not be viable provided a shorter period of studies or a smaller research sample were at stake.

The study has confirmed some of the findings reported by authors looking at the TV dramas preceding and following the 2010's shows. For instance, it corroborates the enduring validity of the findings by Gerbner and Signorielli, who established that primetime TV casting was mostly accurate in representing women at work in terms of census, though most of the TV world occupations were "unrealistically professional and of high status." The observed absence of working-class characters and dominance of middle-class professions and occupation is also in line with similar observations made by Bernadette Casey et al., Sarah Attfield, Ava Baron, Richard Butsch, and Pepi Leistyna. At the same time, my findings partly challenge the joint observations made by USC Annenberg and the Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media regarding lack of aspirational female role models in the American media. Moreover, they demonstrated that the representation of bisexual and/or queer characters was more than token, as claimed by Meyer ("Representing Bisexuality," "The "Other" Woman").

In opposition to the claim about the inherent identity fluidity resulting from people's learned experiences and its incessant negotiation in relation to work contexts made by theories of occupational identity formation (Vondracek, Ibarra "Provisional Selves"), the studied on-screen characters lacked such fluidity and mostly retained static and fixed identities. The modifications of the professional persona only happened in the case of long-lived characters. My findings concerning the majority of working motherhood depictions mostly replicate the pattern observed earlier by Bonnie Dow and echoed by Rebecca Feasey, of showing little influence of maternity and childrearing on working women's professional lives in primetime shows. My conclusions regarding the demand for more true to life exploration of working motherhood and childcare-related issues are similar to those independently expressed by Katharine E. Heintz-Knowles and Latham Hunter.

Limitations of the study

Although broad in terms of the number of shows and characters, the project is limited in several ways. The imposed time framework excluded early 21st-century productions that aired and continued to run after 2010, not allowing to include new working female characters in the sample, despite the fact that they shared the broadcasting space with those conceived earlier and inspected in parts of the study. Thus the findings are limited due to the lack of comprehensive data on the 2010–2015 period.

With regard to the research methods, the constraints are related to the fact that the sole coder and the use of non-probability sampling in qualitative research constitute a potential source of bias for the study. Additionally, since no statistical significance analysis was used in the process of identification of patterns and trends, the generalizability of the obtained results is subject to certain limitation as well. The research could also benefit from a more detailed inspection of the characters' casting, function within the show, type of cast, screen life, and the type of show. Since these aspects were not thoroughly investigated, some of the study findings need to be interpreted cautiously. Some of the weaknesses could have been avoided by employing coding assistants and a professional statistician, both impossible due to the lack of funding.

Practical applications of the research findings

The insights gained from this study may be of particular relevance to academics who are interested in popular culture, television studies, women's studies, gender studies, and identity theorists. The overall findings as well as particular case studies lifted from the study might serve as adaptable workshop material useful for occupational trainers or career coaches, especially those working with young girls and women. Some of the identified emerging trends and significant absences could also inspire script writers, show runners and producers to consider the possibility of reconfiguring the depictions of working women to promote diversity and inclusivity.

Recommendations for future research

The results of the present study encourage further research into fictional representations of working women's occupational identities in visual media, not only American. One possibility for further investigation would be to extend a research sample to include the primetime dramas and characters produced and running after 2010. Alternatively, a follow-up comparative study covering the 2010–2020 period using the same research setup could be conducted, ideally with an improved coding procedure and applying more sophisticated statistical analysis. Finally, even though this particular research dealt with American primetime productions and was primarily grounded in the American literature, cross-cultural projects comparing analogous representations in particular national

television dramas, a globally popular genre in television entertainment, could be equally interesting ventures.

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