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Spring 5-1-2019

## The Power and Importance of Women in Television and Film

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### Recommended Citation

MacKinnon, Rachael, "The Power and Importance of Women in Television and Film" (2019). *Syracuse University Honors Program Capstone Projects*. 1101.

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*Glazed*

The Power and Importance of  
Women in Television and Film

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## **Abstract**

*Glazed*, the pilot episode of a situation comedy series, is just beginning to explore what the world of television has in store for women in 2018. At a time like now where women across the nation are feeling the important effects of entering the Fourth Wave of feminism, there is no time like the present to celebrate the beautiful mind that is that of a woman.

For far too long, women in television have been just something to merely look at. More often than not, the crew would be comprised of mostly men: the strong-willed directors, the scandalous producers, the joke writers at the table. What are some of the goals that women in the industry are aiming to accomplish? What are the effects of having women present based on talent and merit, as opposed to having them around for just something to “look at?” During an exciting time for women everywhere, we embark on a journey to a land previously held by mostly men. Our time is now, and there’s no time like the present.

## Executive Summary

When two post-grad best friends start their journey in New York City, the hub of opportunities, things don't exactly go as planned. Daniela, a straight-A honors student, rational and level-headed, is determined to make a name for herself, but somehow life keeps dealing her the wrong cards. Renée, Daniela's total foil character, is her partner in crime. The two women are totally different in the way that they think, but that's why they work so well together.

Aiming to create the most realistic relationship as possible, it was necessary to draw upon real-life relationships of my own. There is something so special about two women that are best friends, but entirely understand each other. We have all been there.

One of the main focuses of this endeavor was to stray away from the common stereotypes that people in the television and film industry often face. There are even stereotypes within stereotypes. That is to say, the women of color are treated far differently than white women, though they each are fighting a similar battle of being a woman alone! In regards to the way women are usually cast in traditional television and film roles, I knew that it was imperative for the plot and characters I made to pass the Bechdel Test. The Bechdel test, something that will be explored throughout, is a test for television and film works where there has to be: 1. At least two (named) women in the work, who 2. Talk to each other, 3. About something other than a man. Many of your favorite movies and television shows are brutally unable to pass this test.

How do people stereotype women in television in general? How do people stereotype women from the Hispanic/Latina population? How often do we see a portrayal of Hispanic/Latina, claiming to be feeding into the diversity need that American works are so direly hungry for, but the only thing these women are ever cast as is the maid or the feisty enemy? How often are they

seen as “less than” that of their whiter counterparts, or their male counterparts? Through the creation of one of the two women in *Glazed*, the mission was to break down some of these stereotypes and have Daniela be the level-headed, non-feisty, bookworm between the two women.

In works such as *Sex and the City* and *Friends*, I found that, though they are extremely successful shows, and though they do *technically* “pass” this Bechdel test, there is not a lot of depth to the female characters. In *Sex and the City*, the only thing these women can talk about is their ongoing pursuit of men. In *Friends*, the male characters have far more access to jobs than their female castmates, as we never see any of the women in a personal office quite in the same way we see Chandler and Ross in that office. In *Glazed*, the goal is both to have the women be able to talk about something other than finding a husband, and to even the playing field for women and men in the workplace.

## Table of Contents

<b>Abstract.....</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>Executive Summary.....</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>Acknowledgements .....</b>	<b>viii</b>
<b>Chapter 1: Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Chapter 2: The Bechdel Test.....</b>	<b>3</b>
What Is It? .....	3
Common Failures.....	4
Inspirations.....	6
Moving Forward.....	8
<b>Chapter 3: Conquering Stereotypes.....</b>	<b>8</b>
Stereotypes Against Women.....	10
Stereotypes Against Hispanic/Latina Women .....	12
Stereotypes Against Certain Jobs.....	13
<b>Chapter 4: Conclusions and Takeaways.....</b>	<b>14</b>
The Writing Process.....	14
Personal Accounts.....	16
<b>Works Cited.....</b>	<b>18</b>

## **Acknowledgements**

When I first came to Syracuse University, I was a lost, little Broadcast Journalism major. My passion for exploring the boundaries beyond that of Broadcast Journalism first arose in my COM 107 class per Professor Rubin. I thank him for digging me out of the confines that would have left me miserable at a news desk.

The man that really pushed me into making my decision to switch over to Television, Radio, Film is Professor Evan Smith. To him, I owe the majority of my education at Syracuse University. Professor Smith has seemingly believed in me since day one, a time when I wasn't really even sure I had believed in myself. My major advisor, my professor, and now my Honors Thesis advisor, all of what I have become here is so largely credited to you. Thank you, Professor Smith.

Lastly, I have never surrounded myself with a group of people that wants me to succeed more than those that make up the Renée Crown Honors Program. You all have made me feel so powerful, so welcomed, and so inspired. This thesis would not have been possible without the absolutely amazing support system with which I surround myself.



## **Chapter One**

### **Introduction**

I have always longed to lead a life of entertainment; making people laugh, making people think. My mission statement has always been to entertain others and to provoke some sort of emotion within them. My favorite part of all the possible parts of entertainment has always been the part involving making others laugh. Comedy has been a tool of mine for as long as I can remember, and I knew that my life would be most fulfilled if I could make other people laugh as an everyday job.

After having applied to Syracuse for Broadcast Journalism, I was a little confused about where exactly I wanted to take my life. Was I really able to see myself sitting at a desk and reporting on the traffic for the rest of my life? Did I really want to be standing out in a snow storm with a ruler, explaining to loyal viewers that the worst of the storm was yet to come? I sought out the help of two of my favorite professors, one of which is my Thesis advisor now four years later. The two professors that I admired so much were able to guide me in the right direction of where I wanted to take my life, and of course that path led me straight to Television, Radio, and Film.

I took a Production class sophomore year, called Sight, Sound, and Motion. I was so eager to take one of my first major requirement classes. I was a bit disheartened when we really got into the “meat and potatoes” of the class and found myself not truly fulfilled. Was this not the major for me either? I found that being on set in this manner was a bit overwhelming, and I remember hearing about how much more advanced a real film shoot is in comparison to our mere college try. Where we had to film over the course of 4 weeks, some film shoots can go on for months and months at a time. Is this what I really wanted to be doing?

I continued on in the major, thinking that there had to be at least one class that floated my boat. I took my first screenwriting class in the Spring of Sophomore year, and I was instantly hooked. I felt like I had all the power in the world in just my fingertips. I could create, write, formulate any list of characters, places, storylines that I wanted. For the first time, things really started making sense. In the Fall of 2017, I really decided to ramp things into high gear.

In Professor Evan Smith's Comedy Writing for Television class, we were tasked with creating our own story and script, and prepare it as a pilot episode of television. Sparking an idea based off of me and my sister's time working at a local coffee shop, I knew I wanted my leads to be women. In trying to base them off of my own aspirations, I knew I wanted them to live in New York City. Lastly, I knew they had to be compelling enough female characters to challenge viewers to think differently about the way they have accepted television for so long.

I, for the first time, had power in a way that granted me freedom to change people's minds; options to create new characters, chances to write new and exciting situations that these characters get themselves into, and opportunities to change the way women were so frequently viewed in the media realm.

After having written the first draft starting over a year ago in Fall 2017, the development of the characters I have chosen has come a long way. Starting out, I had two white women from where I had imagined to be fairly comfortable and privileged households. They were able to almost breeze through college and the only adversity they had yet to face in their lives was to come in the months right after college. Boring, right? It needed to be tweaked and refined to not fit a common narrative.

I thought that an awesome way to incorporate my minor into this project would be to write one of the leads as a woman from Spanish descent. I threw out the character named Rebecca, and

thus, Daniela was born. In relation to Daniela, I needed a stronger counterpart, and I edited much of Renée's character to better fit the crazy, action-packed, care free companion style that Daniela needed. They needed to be bigger, louder, and more "real" in order to break away from the normal stereotypes surrounding women. After virtually rewriting the entire episode about 3 times over, I think I have finally found the exact message I was looking to portray in *Glazed*.

## Chapter Two

### The Bechdel Test

#### What is it?

The Bechdel Test is a tool used measure patterns that are too often accepted in all forms of media. One of these patterns is treatment of women and what a woman's job is in television. Are they there because women are a crucial part of every day life, as they do make up 50% of the world's population, or are they there just to augment upon a man's virtue and his power?

The Bechdel Test, Bechdel-Wallace Test, or the Mo Movie Measure, is a litmus test for female presence in fictional media. The test is named for Alison Bechdel, creator of the comic strip *Dykes to Watch Out For...* In order to pass, the film or show must meet the following criteria: *It includes at least two women, who have at least one conversation, about something other than a man or men.* If that sounds to you like a pretty easy standard to meet, it is. That's the point! Yet, try applying the test to the media you consume for a while. There's a good chance you'll be surprised; mainstream media that passes is *far* less common than you might think.<sup>1</sup> (TV Tropes).

That being said, female characters can still be present for the entirety of a film or piece of television, even outnumbering the amount of men, and it still can be a poor portrayal of women as a whole. The Bechdel Test is not the end all of altering the way women are portrayed in all forms of media, but it is certainly a step in the right direction. Hans Kieslowski, a character in *Seven Psychopaths* portrayed by Christopher Walken, hits the nail on the head while discussing the presence of female characters in entertainment. Kieslowski says, "Your women characters are

awful. None of them have anything to say for themselves, and most of them either get shot or stabbed to death within five minutes... and the ones that don't probably will later on." This is alluding to the fact that even though a piece of media may pass the Bechdel Test, things can still be a little murky with the female characters involved.

The same goes for the reverse though, meaning even though something does not pass the Bechdel Test, it doesn't automatically mean that it is trash entertainment. For example, *Gravity*, a blockbuster film from 2013, does not pass the Bechdel Test because the entire movie is Sandra Bullock's character trying to survive a space-mission gone wrong, and entirely alone. So under the rules stated above, it would not be able to pass because there isn't even another person she could talk to. A piece of media not passing the Bechdel Test is not what's wrong, "What's a problem is that *so many* movies fail the test, creating a pattern which says uncomfortable things about the way Hollywood handles gender" (TV Tropes).

### **Common Failures**

There are a lot more failures in the Bechdel Test than people originally believe. Starting off, it is a seemingly very simple test to pass. How hard could it possibly be to have two named female characters that talk to each other about *literally anything* other than a man? For starters, we are a lot more accepting of this brainwashing than most people think. That's because the treatment of male characters as the most important feature has been engrained within us from even the content we watched at a young age.

Starting with Disney Pixar films, films that I and everyone else my age had grown up alongside, is alone indicative of where these patterns in media have gotten us. For example, *Monsters University*, *Ratatouille*, *Up*, and *Wall-E* are among a group of children's movies that cannot even pass the seemingly simple test. In regards to *Up*, the Ladies of Comicazi state that,

“Of the two female characters who get major screen time in the film, one is dead by the end of the prologue and the other is a bird.” For *Monsters University*, a movie with two male-character leads taking on college, a place that presumably has equal parts females and males, “The only thing that even comes close to two female characters conversing is a very brief exchange between two sorority girls during the Scare Games” (The Ladies of Comicazi). Taking this one step further, this seemingly creates a recipe of understanding and interpreting that male characters are more important in the various forms of media, something that we are brainwashed from the age we start digesting entertainment.

Even a television series as epic and notable as *Game of Thrones* comes very close to failing the Bechdel Test. With an overwhelming number of episodes failing it, the series has merely, “18 episodes out of the 67 to date pass the test, with seasons one, five, and seven all managing four Bechdel-approved episodes apiece” (Dibdin). There have been a plethora of articles published on the topics of the nitty gritty details of this test, many with an overwhelming amount of support for a full “pass” meaning that every single episode of the series needs to pass the test individually. This is to be listed, in my books, as an overall failure as the vast majority of episodes cannot pass.

Then there are shows like *Sex and the City*. Is this something we really want to consider as passing? One of the issues with the Bechdel Test is that it is *so* not all-encompassing as a measurable treatment of women as a whole as mentioned earlier by the fact that some awful movies and television series with awful portrayals of women can pass by taking those simple steps. In regards to *Sex and the City*, the entire exoskeleton of that show is based around the ongoing hunger of four women in their pursuit to merely find a man. The amount of times a woman mentions that she moved to New York City to find love with a man as opposed to make a name for herself in her chosen career path is staggering. The entire series is rooted in this strange and never ending hunt

to find “the perfect man,” many times putting that hunt over their jobs. Furthermore, how painful it is to watch these women endure this seemingly emotional abuse from all of these men, and still maintain that need to find “the perfect man” because what even is a 1990s/2000s woman in television without a man to hold her? So though it technically *passes*, is that something we want to seriously consider as *passing*?

### **Inspirations**

So, its clear that there are a whole bunch of movies and television series that do a not-so-great job at portraying women. Alternatively, it is necessary to discuss certain examples of media that have inspired me to write *Glazed*.

First things first, I gained a lot of respect for *Broad City*. Not only is the basis of the show exactly what good television is, but it is also such a portrayal of a strong female relationship and empowering for women as a whole for all walks of life. I knew that with *Glazed* I wanted the women to be just as dynamic and strong as both Ilana and Abbi in the show. Similarly, I wanted them to work towards the goal of living their own lives to the best that they can be, as opposed to revolving their entire existence around finding a man.

The great thing about *Broad City* is how accurately it is able to prime its viewers to fully understand what having a female best friend is like. There is something so powerful in finding a platonic soulmate in another woman, and *Broad City* is able to illustrate that in a way that many forms of media are unable to do. The way the show so openly talks about the sexualities of these two women, the sexual spectrum itself, and all the good, bad, and ugly details about being a woman in 2018 America is unparalleled; I am yet to see a show that can even come close to accomplishing the image of womanhood quite like *Broad City* can.

Another inspiring show that helped me develop the path I wanted to take *Glazed* was the television series *Brooklyn Nine-Nine*. This show is often applauded for its nature of inclusivity, steering clear from generally accepted stereotypes, and for having some of the strongest female characters on air.

One viewer comments on the overall inclusivity element of the show, hitting as many bases as possible in casting a wide variety of both men and women, saying,

This isn't the first time that this aspect of the series has been pointed out, but it's something worth celebrating in a television landscape that's broadening its horizons at a maddeningly slow pace. The show is, firstly, great at breaking typical archetypes. Terry Crews plays Terry, an overall good natured softie who uses his twin daughters as ways to bestow lessons on behavior on his team. More than once he's been written as more as a parental figure to the Nine-Nine. Terry is this towering, imposing figure who contradicts this by being possibly the nicest soul on the show, one who loves love and his yogurt parfaits.<sup>5</sup> (Johnson).

Another commendable aspect of this series, as mentioned earlier, is the strong portrayal of women characters as a whole. Usually, women don't get to play the role of stern cop, or any authoritative figure at that, but *Brooklyn Nine-Nine* aims to break down the barriers surrounding what is generally accepted. Rosa Diaz, a character who recently came out as bisexual in the 99<sup>th</sup> episode, is not diminished to stereotypes of what it means to be a non-white woman in the workplace, and it not merely seen as an object of sexualization. Johnson, on Rosa Diaz, goes on to say,

Not only does her characterization avoid any stereotypes, she's also been written into a role typically reserved for men. She gets to play the no-nonsense, bad ass cop and there's no tragic backstory to explain it away, she isn't tough with a heart of gold or ever softened by any one person she's dating.<sup>5</sup> (Johnson).

*Brooklyn Nine-Nine* takes the cake in terms of television shows that are here to push some boundaries. In a time where not a lot of series are delivering a fair image of what 2018 America should be looking like, shows like *Brooklyn Nine-Nine* should be respected by everyone as the

direction in which we should be headed. Even though that pace may be slow now, I hope that the future brings more content similar to this series.

### **Moving Forward**

Well, we've made it this far in television, so as to create shows like *Broad City* and *Brooklyn Nine-Nine*, something I presume would have been unimaginable just 30 years ago. So, what's next? Now is not the time to remain stagnant.

The time is now to make entertainment accessible for all viewers watching. It is okay to acknowledge the path television has taken to get us to the point we are at now, but it is necessary to point out that we have watched white male-dominated television and films since the beginning of media entertainment. It is okay for them to see some of what we have to say, too. We have been watching their content since the beginning of its creation, I am sure they could stand to learn a few things from the content that women and people of color are trying to put out.

It is everyone's specific and individual duty to not allow television and film to revert back to its old ways, and to furthermore advance it to where it should be. Think of all the characters everyone wants to see, needs to see, and how much we, as a world, can benefit from all understanding each other a little better through more representation in television. When the goal is shared between those in power of creating these entertainment pieces and those who are consuming it, there's no doubt about it that we will continue into advancing the content that is available. The day of total and accurate representation in television is closer now than ever before.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Conquering Stereotypes**

A huge part of creating television and film in the past has been attributed to the use of stereotypes for certain characters. Again, in commending *Brooklyn Nine-Nine* in breaking away



from the norm, Captain Raymond Jacob “Ray” Holt, played by Andre Braugher, is a large man who oozes “boss man” style, who is, “Outwardly he is strict, hardworking, stoic, staunchly professional and a stickler for the rules” (*Brooklyn Nine-Nine Wiki*).

However, *Brooklyn Nine-Nine* pulls the rug out from under us and breaks away from what viewers would generally gather about his character based off of appearance and job title alone. In reality, he is,

a warm, empathetic, devoted and kind-hearted man who cares deeply about the officers and employees under his command and frequently participates in office antics, competitions and pranks. Though he is often lampooned by his colleagues for his lack of displaying emotion or facial expressions, he is held in the highest regard by them and has developed close relationships with most of them. (*Brooklyn Nine-Nine Wiki*).

An example of what most sources of media are caught doing would be if Captain Holt was a hot blooded, fiery boss who abused his power as Captain and had a back story that alluded to the idea that his leadership style is a result of an early-childhood drama. He, as a large, hulking man, would usually not be considered to hold any sort of emotional capability, and would usually be extremely condescending towards women. That’s a generally accepted stereotype for the kind of character a Captain of a police department in Brooklyn, NY would play, right?

It is an admirable move and such a big step in television to see an African American man who, in addition to even being a gay character in the show, holds a position of power not only in the workplace environment, but in an environment that would usually allude to aggression or following a certain narrative that we have deemed “acceptable.”

In *Glazed*, the narrative plays out in a way that leaves Daniela and Renée feeding off of each other’s differences. Instead of reducing Daniela to a stereotypical manner of being the crazy, loud, “spicy Latina” with a temper, it was my mission to portray her as a stoic, level-headed

thinker, forcing us to take into account what she has to say instead of merely looking at her as an object to sexualize.

So why are stereotypes still used if they are detrimental to large communities of people? Annie Murphy Paul, in describing stereotypes as a mental shortcut, says it is, “The simple but profound point that we all use categories—of people, places, things—to make sense of the world around us.” In an attempt to help better categorize and understand the world around us, does it make sense to harbor certain reactions against certain groups of people to help better interpret the world in which we live? Annie Murphy Paul goes on to explain,

In the course of stereotyping, a useful category—say, women—becomes freighted with additional associations, usually negative. ‘Stereotypes are categories that have gone too far,’ says John Bargh, Ph.D., of New York University. “When we use stereotypes, we take in the gender, the age, the color of the skin of the person before us, and our minds respond with messages that say hostile, stupid, slow, weak. Those qualities aren't out there in the environment. They don't reflect reality.<sup>7</sup>” (Paul).

So, what's the big deal if Latina and Hispanic women are constantly being illustrated as sex goddesses, always poised and ready for another spicy encounter for one lucky male? Isn't that a good thing to be seen as “desirable?” Well, when taken into account that not every woman of Latina or Hispanic roots wants to be merely reduced to be stared at as a sexual object under the male gaze, it is simply debunked that there is no such thing as a “good” stereotype.

### **Stereotypes Against Women**

Women as a whole have been categorized into being the homekeepers, the cooks, the cleaners, the submissive parts of any relationship. Rooted in post-World War II ideology of women being confined to the home as the men return from war and take their jobs back, we are just now calling to light all the issues surrounding that, in what has been a battle since the beginning of the Women's Liberation Movement. The 60s were a pivotal time for many women gaining a voice, realizing how truly depressed they were when they could only exist when jailed in the home of a

man's world. Male doctors had begun prescribing women intense drugs to alleviate the pain of being depressed day in and day out. Most women had the rational thinking of, "Is this really it?"<sup>8</sup> (Wagner). However, that precedent of the male-dominated world where women are just present to support them has trickled down into the media we are still consuming today.

The pinnacle of the male-dominated industry is making women feel uncomfortable in order to give themselves more power. Whether it be categorizing women by the clothing they wear, the hairstyle they choose, their ability to cook, there is so much hinged upon the definition of true womanhood. Why is it that a woman can't just *be* a woman, but has to fulfill this "standard" of femininity?

Professor Wagner of Syracuse University's Honors Program recalls getting ready for her prom in the 50s, saying, "I feel strangely satisfied in this uncomfortableness, which doesn't let up for a minute. It is somehow a proof of my being grown-up. I have joined the sisterhood of the miserable. I am now a part of the group. I feel like a woman" (Wagner).

As we enter this Fourth Wave of Feminism, one of the things we are seeing more and more of is the presence of female empowerment in understanding they are more than whoever their male counterpart is. We are moving further and further away from "needing a man," as they say, to feel defined. One of the goals as I begun *Glazed* was to make it about their careers first. These two women just finished their higher education at what I imagine is a prestiged university, and it is now time for them to settle into a career. Who seeks out higher education, spending somewhere around \$200,000, for the sole purpose of finding a mate? That sounds absolutely ridiculous, and even Elle Woods of *Legally Blonde* learned that lesson.

Women are so frequently cast as the supporting characters in regards to the lead male, usually white, and people have begun to notice and say, "Enough is enough." It is so heartwarming

to see movies like *Bridesmaids* with a majority-female cast, female writers, and an all around goal of female empowering friendships coming before those of relations with men. The merit of *Bridesmaids* far overshadows that of its neighboring movies released around the same time, one of which is *21 Jump Street*, which is basically a 2-hour macho fest where the only usage of female characters is to support the antics of Jonah Hill and Channing Tatum in their predictable quest through flirting with high-school aged students.

When writing both the characters of Daniela and Renée, I wanted to make it clear that they were there not to be pretty or simply looked at, but to exist and prosper under their right as human beings to not be objectified by the male gaze. It is clear from the beginning that they are not your average standards of unaccomplishable beauty, but instead are hinged upon their merit as smart and free thinking women. Beautiful is beautiful in so many different ways, not only to be summed up by physical features.

### **Stereotypes Against Hispanic/Latina Women**

How often will we all see a Hispanic or Latina woman cast in a movie for the sole reason of being the sex-crazed prop? Think “Jennifer Lopez in *Maid in Manhattan*, and Sofia Vergara in *Modern Family*” (Anderson) and that just about sums up America’s understanding of what a Hispanic or Latina woman’s role is in television and film.

Many Hispanic and Latina actors have discussed what sacrifices they have to take in order to continue getting paid. It is not like they actually enjoy being consistently depicted as the maid or the sex siren, but in this endless cycle that we have inflicted upon a group of marginalized people, many will take the job even if it means collapsing and forfeiting into that stereotype.

But the cycle remains constant, because, “Hollywood loves Latinos as janitors or maids. From ‘Family Guy’s’ Consuela to Jennifer Lopez in 2002’s ‘Maid in Manhattan,’ such characters

have inundated pop culture... Eva Longoria's 'Devious Maids' was criticized when it debuted as a 'wasted opportunity,' though it lasted four seasons" (Anderson).

I saw an opportunity in *Glazed* to steer clear of each of those negative tropes. While writing Daniela's character, I was tasked with thinking in a way that I had never seen a Latina portrayed on television before. I thought that it would be a very fun and collaborative way of integrating my Spanish minor into the television series, and also give the story a fresh "zing" in comparison to what it would be competing against. I had imagined Daniela as moving here from Spain when she was very young, and being a prosperous first-generation college student with huge dreams, and nothing is in the way of stopping her from reaching them.

### **Stereotypes Against Certain Jobs**

This is something that really has hit home for me while writing this series. Again, as humans we feel a need to categorize people and things into different slots in our heads to help us better interpret the world around us. This relates even into the jobs that people are able to get, and certain feelings we harbor towards those people in those positions.

Since the foundation of this story is rooted in two women working at a doughnut shop in New York City, it was certainly a goal of mine to break down the stigma surrounding minimum wage workers. From a personal account, having worked at Dunkin' Donuts for 3 years as my summer job, it is absolutely excruciating to be treated with the level of disrespect that I have to endure on a regular basis. Though this series is loosely based on my experiences there, I wanted to break down that wall of treating minimum wage workers like less-than human merely because of what their job title is. That being said, I felt like it was imperative to illustrate the two women and what they are fundamentally like as human beings *before* they get the job at the doughnut shop in order to show that they are college educated go-getters with the goal of making it in New

York City, not to be diminished by the fact that this job is simply a stepping stone in their journey.

I have always thought that as long as you're working hard, that is important enough. People have always kind of assumed that working a minimum wage job equates to laziness or lack of self-worth, and I have seen far too many people treat myself as well my coworkers with an entire lack of respect in that regard. Viewers will get to watch Daniela and Renée as human beings, as women in the workplace, as opposed to summing them up to be "lazy" or "stupid" or "belonging in the home as sex symbols."

## **Chapter Four**

### **Conclusions and Takeaways**

Over the course of the year that I have been writing this, I have absolutely learned not only so much about the process of what it takes to be committed to writing a television series, but I also learned so much about myself as a student and a person. When I first began taking on this project, it felt like I was tasked with chipping away at a 2-ton ice block to find the gold in the center. It seemed like so much at first, but all it took was the determination and perseverance of understanding that everytime I chipped away at it, I was getting closer and closer to my goal, the gold.

### **The Writing Process**

I think back to what my first draft of this series was circa 365 days ago and I cannot help but chuckle a little bit. Every project has to start somewhere, and I acknowledge that I would not have reached this end destination without using the tools from earlier in my journey, but wow, this is so much better now!

The first draft of this was about two women who had *already* been working at this doughnut shop in New York, and how their daily lives were burdened by the bad cards they had been dealt. In an effort to spice up their lives, they decided on getting a pet, but they didn't have enough money to get a cat or a dog. They decided on a bird, they named it Avocado, Avocado had allegedly died, but was just in the laundry hamper the whole time which comes to light at the end of the episode. Sounds pretty bland, yes? What could I do to make things more realistic, more believable, and how can I make these characters more likable?

Still in the beginning, I had written two white women into the story. Their names were Rebecca and Renée, named loosely after my sister and I, my real name being Rachael and hers Rose. The priority of one of those women was to find love in New York City while the other was a studious book worm focused on advancing her career. But we've been there, right? Something needed to change.

I sought out help from both my peers and my advisors, and finally decided something that should have probably come easier to me all along; one of the characters would be so much more interesting if I could incorporate my minor into this! And thus, Daniela was born.

I threw the entire original beat sheet out the window with a new zest for creativity, and starting recalling on my own summer in New York City and the actual adversities one may face there. After dodging an actual pyramid scheme myself, I decided it was absolutely mandatory that I portray my horrors through the lives of Daniela and Renée. The opening scene where viewers can see them escaping the reigns of capitalism is one of my favorite scenes I have ever written. This was sitting a lot better than the first draft in Fall 2017, when the opening scene involved a drab laundry clean-up in the living room.

I found that the hardest part about the writing process was transitioning from the beat sheet to the outline. The outline is the first time that I was able to get the ideas that were swimming in my head out and onto paper. Sure, the beat sheet is difficult because that is the first time I am planning the arc of the story, but there is something so refined about planning the actual actions and dialogue these characters were saying and doing.

When I had first started, I had really no idea who Rebecca and Renée were. I suppose they were my sister and I, but something really wasn't clicking. There was something so special about writing Daniela and Renée in the later drafts, because I finally felt like I had a grasp on these characters. Daniela is a mix between three of my friends, while Renée is a mix between two others. I feel like I really know them now; they aren't just names on a black and white canvas. There is a strong connection between myself and these women, and this was a connection that didn't come immediately in that first draft. I had to work for it, develop it, and appreciate it in order to fully understand even the words I was writing.

### **Personal Accounts**

To me, it seems kind of obvious that most of what goes on in this series is a direct result of my own life experiences leading up to this. I have taken things from my own life and applied them into lives of others with the hopes that everyone who reads this or, better yet, watches this latches on to something they can relate to. Whether that is an extreme inability to cook, the stress of job hunting, the pains of working a minimum wage job with special attention to that of the coffee/doughnut shop lifestyle, or the everyday love of spending time with a woman who empowers you, I hope that everyone can see a little bit of themselves in Daniela and Renée.

When I think about where I began as a writer in my Sophomore year screenwriting class, to where I have ended up now, moments from graduating from Syracuse University, I can't help



but feel so much pride in myself and the community that got me to this point. Writing can be so hard sometimes, but it is the passion for storytelling that kept me going in conjunction with the power of change I have in my own two hands. The creation of this sitcom, though a small step, is a step in the right direction. This is never something I would have been able to embark on merely 2 years ago, and I am so glad to have surrounded myself with the people that gave me the tools to get to this point. Creating and writing *Glazed* is something I didn't know I was capable of, but I am eternally grateful for all those who believed in me and supported me through every step of the journey. This is everything I could have dreamed of and more.

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