MY DAMSEL IN… MADAM PRESIDENT:
Veep's Concept and Representation of a Woman as The President of The United States

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Tiivistelmä – Abstract

Vielä vuoden 2020 presidentinvaalien jälkeenkin saadaan Yhdysvalloissa odottaa ensimmäistä naispresidenttiä. Naispresidenttiys on kuitenkin taas askeleen lähempänä, kun Kamala Harris liittyy Joe Bidenin hallintoon varapresidenttinä. Edellisten presidentinvaalien aikaan vuonna 2016 Yhdysvalloissa keskusteltiin taajaan naisjohtajuudesta, kun vaaleissa olivat vastakkain Hillary Clinton ja Donald Trump. Vaaliväittelyt ja mediakeskustelut keskittyivät paljolti naispresidentin konseptiin ja siihen, oliko Clintonilla sukupuolensa takia ylipäätään mahdollisuuksia voittaa.

Vaikka Yhdysvallat ei saanut ensimmäistä naispresidenttiään vuonna 2016 – tai edes 2020 – naispresidenttiyden konsepti on ollut läsnä populaarikulttuurissa jo vuosikymmeniä. Viimeisen vuosikymmenen aikana naispresidenttejä on nähty esimerkiksi sarjoissa *House of Cards*, *Isänmaan puolesta*, *Rouva Ministeri* ja *Rouva varapresidentti*. Naisten kohtaamia ennakkoluuloja ja puolueellisuutta politiikassa on tutkittu paljon. Hieman on tutkittu myös sitä, kuinka viihdeteollisuus esittää johtoasemassa toimivat naiset, ja miten se vaikuttaa ihmisten asenteisiin. Tutkimukset eivät kuitenkaan ole keskittyneet siihen, millaisina fiktiiviset naispresidentit esitetään, ja kuinka heidän sukupuoli-identiteettiään rakennetaan diskurssien avulla. Kysymykset siitä, millaisia presidenttejä nämä naiset ovat ja kuinka – jos ollenkaan – heidän sukupuolensa vaikuttaa heidän presidenttiyteensä, ovat jääneet vaille vastausta.

Tämä tutkielma pyrkii vastaamaan näihin kysymyksiin kriittisen diskurssianalyysin avulla. Tarkoituksena on selvittää, millaisia diskurssien keinoja TV-sarjan *Veep* (*Rouva varapresidentti*) presidentti Selina Meyer käyttää, miten hahmo on rakentunut ja miten hän suhtautuu virkaansa. Diskurssien tarkastelemisen jälkeen on mahdollista tarkastella, millaisin keinoin hahmo rakentaa presidentti-identiteettiään, ja miten hahmon sukupuoli vaikuttaa tähän rakennusprosessiin.

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1   INTRODUCTION

Even after the 2020 Presidential election, a woman leading the United States still remains to be seen. However, a woman as the President of the United States (POTUS) is now one step closer, as Kamala Harris accompanies Joe Biden as the Vice President (VP). During the previous elections in 2016, the matter of a woman leading the country was discussed diligently as Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton ran against Republican candidate Donald Trump. The debates and media attention focused much on the concept of a woman as president and the overall possibility for Clinton to win or not to win the election because of her gender.

Although the United States did not get its first woman president in 2016 – or even in 2020 – the concept of a woman POTUS has been represented in popular culture in various TV shows and movies for decades. During the past decade alone, woman as a president has been seen on, e.g. *Homeland*, *House of Cards*, *Madam Secretary*, and *Veep*. A lot of research has been conducted on what kind of prejudice and bias women face when seeking political office. Additionally, some research has been conducted on the phenomenon of how representing women in leadership positions in popular culture affects people's attitudes. However, studies have not specifically focused on the representation of fictional women presidents and how their gendered identity is constructed through discourse. The question of what kind of presidents these fictional characters are and if/how their gender is shown to affect their characterization as president has been left unanswered. To investigate the matter, this study uses critical discourse analysis to examine the rhetoric of and the discourse around Selina Meyer, the president of the United States in the TV series *Veep*. The purpose of this study is to find what kinds of discourses the character uses and how the character is portrayed, and what kind of an attitude she has towards presidency.

This study aims to examine how the character builds her identity as a political leader through discourse, and how, if at all, this identity-building process is influenced by gender. After studying the discourse features used in this process, the aim is to clarify what kind of building blocks and rhetoric the character uses to construct her identity.

2 GENDERED IDENTITY IN POLITICS

Performing an identity in the political field is a complicated process. Candidates, with their actions and rhetoric, must constantly try to convince the voters. Politics has been described as men doing manly things (Meeks, 2012), so women in politics face various difficulties. These difficulties stem from a long tradition of male leadership and people's perceptions of gendered identities. The formation and effect of these gendered issues can be examined through social role theory. It introduces the concepts of gender roles, character traits, gender stereotypes, role congruity, and the issue of a double bind, all of which can help to understand the underlying causes for the difficulties that women in politics encounter. Additionally, critical discourse analysis can be used to examine relationships and structures of power, especially in media and politics (Blommaert, 2005: 21). It can also be used in identifying identity building processes and how media represents women in politics (Blommaert, 2005: 26).

2.1 Social role theory

According to Eagly and Wood (2012) differences and similarities in human behavior in certain situations can be explained with social roles and how those hierarchical roles interplay. People have different kind of social roles depending on their situation in society. In enacting these roles of employees, friends, parents, and children, they also perform their gender roles. Eagly and Wood argue that sex differences influence the way in which people behave in certain situations and reflect to other people's perception of the individual based on gender role beliefs. The roles are always dependent on the society, and different systems can have different kind of roles assigned to different genders (Eagly & Wood, 2012).

2.1.1 Gender roles

Eagly and Wood (2012) argue that the difference between social roles and gender roles is that gender roles are viewed as innate. To be able to act as parents or lawyers, people must have gone through a social process of becoming one; people must acquire their social roles. Gender roles are different because people are assumed to play certain roles

based on their sex. According to Eagly and Wood (2012), gender roles are built from biological and psychological blocks. Through socialization process, people are assigned roles based on their sex. These roles enforce specific personality traits and skills and affect the behavior of individuals. Similarities and differences in behavior reflect beliefs on gender roles. People's perceptions of the roles of women and men in society are represented by these beliefs. People base their views of others on presuppositions of what kind of attributes people of different gender possess (Eagly & Wood, 2012). As gender roles are based on people's perceptions of others and what is typical to a gender, these roles have assumed character traits.

2.1.2   Character traits and issues

Meeks (2012) describes character traits as behavioral qualities associated with being feminine or being masculine. Feminine traits are, for example, warmth, compassion, and emotionality, whereas masculine traits can be strength, assertiveness, and confidence (Meeks, 2012). According to Dolan (2010), these traits are associated with political issues accordingly. Issues that are perceived to require certain traits become either feminine or masculine issues, depending on the nature of the issue. For example, education is a feminine issue because voters believe warm and compassionate candidates are good at handling issues of education. Similarly, military and defense issues are viewed as masculine, because they are perceived to require assertiveness and aggressiveness. These kinds of shared beliefs, along with the assumption of gender roles, form gender stereotypes (Eagly & Wood, 2012).

2.1.3   Gender stereotypes

Eagly and Wood (2012) explain that gender stereotypes are beliefs people have about other people based on their sex. These stereotypes are formed when people observe the behavior of others and infer that certain kind of behavior is representative to one gender or another (Eagly & Wood, 2012). Dolan (2010) stresses that gender stereotypes influence people's judgement and affect the decisions they make when they interact with others. It also affects people's decisions in choosing between political candidates.

For example, the stereotype of "think leader, think male" can influence the way voters perceive women candidates running for office. Dolan (2010) explains that gender stereotypes are then built thought the socialization process of gender roles and gender stereotyping is a self-enforcing process. Certain traits and skills are assigned to a gender and the perception of the gender is molded by the expectation of these traits and skills. As people who identity with that gender try to adjust to those expectations, they alter their behavior to match the assumed traits and skills, which enforces the stereotype. The need to adjust behavior according to expectations stems from role congruity.

2.1.4   Role congruity and double bind

If people's behavior contradicts with their social or gender roles, they are likely to face prejudice. When the stereotypical attributes associated with a gender somehow clash with the social role they are attempting to perform, the issue of role incongruity arises (Eagly & Karau, 2002). People perceive role incongruity as something that challenges the norms associated with gender roles. When a gender is believed to possess certain skills and traits and a person identifying with that gender fails to represent said skills and traits, their behavior poses a threat to role expectations. However, in some situations breaking the role expectations can be the only option for trying to redefine gender stereotypes. These kinds of situations are common in politics. It is more difficult for women to reach high office because politics has become innately masculine: men have a long history of being leaders, so leadership has become a trait associated with men and masculinity (Clark, 2019). Women then face the issues of role incongruity when trying to appeal to voters by presenting themselves as good leaders. While they should alter their gender role behavior to accommodate the social role of "being a leader", they should simultaneously maintain their gender role behavior to accommodate the role of "being a woman" (Meeks, 2012). This brings up the issue of the double bind.

A double bind, according to Koenig et al. (2011), depicts a situation in which two roles are in opposite end of the traits and skills spectrum, and presents a conflict of roles. The political double bind situation is common for women, as the

gendered role of being a woman consists of different kinds of traits and skills compared to the social role of being a leader, which has been traditionally perceived to consist of masculine traits and skills. As stated earlier, character traits are connected to character issues, so to be able to deal with an issue, a candidate must portray certain kind of traits. In the case of running for president, the double bind of women is most conspicuous. As Meeks (2012) explains, presidential leadership is very much connected to masculine traits of being confident, strong, and assertive. Voters believe being a president requires these kinds of traits to be able to handle issues of foreign policy, defense, and crime. Feminine issues are perceived as less important for president (Meeks, 2012). Women seeking the presidency must then portray these kinds of masculine traits to seem credible. However, in doing so, they risk losing their credibility in enacting their social role as a woman. They become inauthentic as women and are prone to face skepticism and criticism (Meeks, 2012). Women in politics must then constantly balance between being "man enough" and "woman enough".

2.2   Critical discourse analysis

Blommaert (2005: 24-27) describes critical discourse analysis (CDA) as a method that can be used to examine relationships of power, control, and inequality on a structural level. The main areas in investigation are media, politics, and other ideological and institutional discourses, such as gender, education, and social relations. CDA aims to illuminate these aspects of discourse, because discourse is socially constructed and can be used as an instrument of power. Due to the analytical and interpretative nature of critical discourse analysis, it is possible for the interpreter of discourse to project their own ideological perspectives in their analysis. However, CDA allows the connection between researching language and social sciences, and with sensitivity to discourse, can be used to increase critical language awareness and examine the institutional aspects of language use and power (Blommaert, 2005: 31-34). Litosseliti (2006: 22) explains that from the point of view of feminist linguistics, the aim of critical discourse analysis is to identify, clarify, and provide tools to change the ways in which language creates and helps to maintain gender inequality. Gender and discourse are intertwined

because both gender and language are social constructions. The most conspicuous aspect is that gender is "done" or "performed", not something people "have". As such, it is socially constructed and complex (Litosseliti, 2006: 44). Due to its social nature, gender identity is co-constructed: identity is formed through performance and perception.

2.2.1   Construction of gendered identity

According to Blommaert (2005: 203-207), identities are constructed by enacting and performing in social situations. Due to their social nature, the successfulness of the construction process depends on the uptake and is dependent on the perception of others. Identity building depends also on context and purpose and requires resources (Blommaert, 2005: 203-207). Gendered identity is formed similarly, and gender is also something that is constructed and performed. However, as identity construction resources can be limited, so are gender building resources. As Litosseliti (2006: 63) explains, in the construction process, identity building blocks must be selected from appropriate and available choices, and not everyone can make the same choices. Meeks (2012) argues that men and women alike have the possibility to choose from masculine and feminine gendered identity building blocks, but that women must be more careful with their choices so that they do not break the role congruency norms and face the issue of double bind. Even though it is possible to perform multiple identity positions at the same time (Blommaert, 2005: 236), the credibility of the constructed identity is still dependent on others.

2.2.2   Representation of women in politics in the media

Blommaert (2005: 26) introduces critical discourse analysis as one possible tool to do research on gender issues regarding the representation of women in the media. Litosseliti (2006: 92) lists the four questions feminist linguistics should ask regarding the subject:
- how are men/women represented?
- what femininities/masculinities and gender relations are constructed?

- who is the ideal reader, what kind of subject positions are available?
- what power relations are created (inclusions and exclusions)?

Analyzing the media is important because it can help to understand what kind of signifying power media has and how media discourse works from the perspective of ideology and power relations (Litosseliti, 2006: 92). Media's constructions of gendered identities have the tendency to emphasize gender differences and disregard similarities (Litosseliti, 2006: 94).

Meeks (2012) elaborates on how the media in the United States uses mainly three gendered rhetorical domains most conspicuous in politics: novelty labels, political issues, and character traits. Novelty labels implicate gender-based newsworthiness and stem from social significance and deviance. Women are portrayed as deviants when they are seeking to enter masculine domains. Deviance can be either positive or negative as women can be represented as trailblazers or troublemakers. Women in politics can then be newsworthy just because they are women. Political issues reflect the way candidates handle political matters. This is connected to voters' perceptions on the candidates' character traits, the femininity/masculinity of said traits, and how role congruent the candidates are. Media tends to represent gender-congruency more positively, despite the candidates' expertise. However, incongruencies often get more coverage, which means more coverage for women candidates due to their tendency to seem more role incongruent than men. Character traits, the kinds of personal qualities associated with candidates, are displayed in different ways in the media. Because voters seem to value masculine traits over feminine ones, especially in high office, masculine traits receive more coverage. This can lead to less coverage for women candidates should they appear to possess dominantly feminine traits. Consequently, women candidates can be compelled to display more masculine issues to appeal to voters. This, accordingly, increases gender incongruency, and can lead to increased news coverage (Meeks, 2012).

2.2.3 Representation of women in leadership positions in entertainment

Prior research has concentrated on various angles of gender representation in entertainment. Clark (2019) studied the framing of main female characters in TV shows, concentrating on Olivia Pope, a successful entrepreneur in *Scandal*. Hoewe and Sherrill's (2019) study concentrated on how the influence of female characters in political TV shows links to viewers' political engagement. Painter and Ferrucci (2017) researched the portrayal of female journalists on *House of Cards*. In addition, according to research by the Geena Davis Inclusion Quotient (2016), women are still underrepresented in films: men receive almost twice the screen time and consequently, women are also heard less. However, the films led by women seemed to gross more. Gender imbalance in entertainment is still prevalent. That is why it is important to examine the situation and representation of gender issues in entertainment, especially in cases of powerful woman lead characters. Prior research has paid little attention to the influence of a fictional woman presidents, even though presidents are the most powerful figures in US politics and president is the embodiment of the country's leader.

3   THE PRESENT STUDY

This study investigates the gendered discourses around a fictional woman president of the United States in the TV show *Veep*. The research focuses on the how the concept of woman as the President of the United States is represented in the series, most importantly because there has never been a 'Madam President' in the United States. Entertainment imitates reality but can also set examples. The way in which woman presidents are portrayed in entertainment matter because the presentation familiarizes people with the overall concept of a woman as the leader of the country.

3.1   The aim and the research questions

The aim of this study is to understand how woman presidency is represented and how Selina Meyer's character reacts to being the first woman as POTUS. This can also help

to understand if/how her position as the president is influenced by her gender. The research questions are:

1) How does the character deal with the issues of role congruity and double bind?
2) How does the character construct her gendered identity through discourse?

3.2   The data

The data consists of selected scenes of *Veep* and their transcripts. Veep was chosen for the analysis, because President Selina Meyer is one of the most conspicuous and long-lasting woman presidents in 21st century TV shows. The data will be collected by viewing a set of episodes in which Meyer is the president and searching for scenes relevant to gender discourse. Mayer receives the information of having to take over presidential duties in the ninth episode of season three and is seen as the president the last time in episode ten of season five. This way, the most relevant scenes can be found, and it is possible to use the English subtitles as basis for the transcripts. The results should be generalizable to some extent, at least with political drama/comedy, as the characters have linkages to real-life equivalents and situations.

3.3   Methods of analysis

Critical discourse analysis will be used for analyzing the data. Because critical discourse analysis is most often used to illuminate discursive practices in the use of power, it is the best suitable option for studying political discourse and gender equality. With CDA, relevant discourses in the chosen scenes can be analyzed to illuminate gender issues surrounding women in politics and utilized to examine the issues related to social role theory.

4   ANALYSIS

There are several recurrent themes in the dialogue and interaction of the characters. These themes can be divided into categories based on their language use. The analysis will follow these categories, moving from the most general to the most detailed, and uses five excerpts to provide examples of gendered discourse around President Meyer.

The analysis begins with how women in leadership positions are displayed in the media, which will be the basis of the whole analysis. The next categories added to that are gender roles, character traits, gender stereotypes, and lastly role congruity and double bind. Construction of gendered identity will then be discussed using the data from the examples.

4.1 Representation of women in leadership positions in the media

As the sitting president, President Meyer is also campaigning as she is her party's candidate in the upcoming elections. On election night, as the votes are being counted, it begins to seem likely that the result will be a tie. Everyone is confused as they try to figure out what happens next. What her vice-presidential running mate Tom James already knows, but the others do not, is that in a tie situation, each state gets one vote in the House of Representatives. If the House result is also a tie, the vice president-elect – in this case Tom – will be president. As a former senator, Tom has connections to the House, and believes he has a chance to be president, and decides to go out and talk to the crowd at the rally downstairs. The president is in a hotel room with her staff and Tom. Amidst of all the confusion, Tom leaves the room despite Meyer's prior order not to do so. She realizes this moments later, and she is furious because she knows Tom is trying to turn the spotlight on him, so she decides to go to the rally too:

President: All right, fuck all of you. I'm going to the rally.
Kent: Ma'am, ma'am, that would be unprecedented.
President: No, I'll tell you what's unprecedented, Kent. A tie is unprecedented. So is becoming the first lady president. So is that jackoff becoming president through the back door. Okay? The rule book's been torn up now and America is wiping its nasty ass with it! Get the fuck out of my way!

(Season 4, episode 10)

Meyer's Senior Strategist Kent Davidson gives the impression that the presidential candidates do not usually talk to their supporters on election night before the final result is in. He mentions this to her, but she is not concerned about breaking the rules. In the situation, Meyer acts as a troublemaker, a deviant, when she refuses to abide with the code of conduct. Meeks (2012) describes being a troublemaker as one novelty

label for women in politics. Women become newsworthy because they somehow destabilize the system. Meyer refers to 'becoming the first lady president' as being the most unprecedented thing she has done so far, as if to justify her current behavior. She has done something much more unprecedented in the past, so she feels comfortable "breaking the rules" again.

4.2 Gender roles and character traits

In the second episode of the fourth season, President Meyer, as a still rather new president, has been able to negotiate "an historic" peace treaty in the Middle East. However, the media is more interested in a painting that was removed from the White House. Meyer did not like the painting, so her personal assistant, Gary, decided to get rid of it. It later turns out it was the only piece of Native American art in the White House. The artist interprets this as a racial issue and the media creates big headlines about the situation. Meyer hears the news from Kent during a celebratory dinner:

> President: So, I have just brokered a peace deal with Israel here. I, as President of the United States, have actually achieved something…
> Kent: Which is virtually unheard of.
> President: Yeah. And yet I'm sharing headline news with a painting because of that guy right there? [looking at Gary on the opposite side of the room]
> Kent: Yep.
> President: Okay, got it.

> (Season 4, episode 2)

In the described situation, the media coverage of the first female president concentrates more on a single piece of artwork than an historic achievement in foreign policy. Décor and appearances as feminine issues, also in the White House, have traditionally been the woman's responsibility: one of the first ladies' responsibilities has been the interior of the White House and especially art (The White House Historical Association, 2019). Foreign policy, as a masculine issue, has been the responsibility of a man, i.e. the president. In this situation where both issues arise simultaneously, the media chooses to connect Meyer more to the feminine issue rather than the masculine one, regardless of the magnitude of the issues. This can be interpreted to reflect the media's gendered view of feminine and masculine traits and

issues. There is also less role incongruency with the painting issue, since homemaking is considered to be a feminine trait.

Another example of gender roles and characters traits is from the fifth episode of the fourth season. President Meyer's Campaign Manager Amy Brookheimer confronts the president about the current issues going on in the campaign. Meyer har brought her old friend Karen Collins to help her campaign as a Senior Advisor. However, Amy has grown tired of Karen's futile advice and the way Meyer trusts Karen but disregards Amy. As Amy is about to quit and leave the room, she gives Meyer her final remarks:

Amy:	You have achieved nothing.
President:	Uh-huh.
Amy:	Apart from one thing. The fact that you are a woman means we will have no more women presidents, because we tried one and she fucking sucked. Goodbye, ma'am.

(Season 4, episode 5)

In this excerpt Amy grounds her argument on people's perception of Meyer's presidency. The fact that Meyer is the first woman as a president means that she represents all of womankind in the office. Amy's argument shows how people view women in powerful, male-dominated positions. Since there have been many men as presidents, one poor performance means only that one particular man has been a bad leader, not that all men are bad leaders. However, if a woman fails, she fails because all women are poor leaders, not because she, as an individual, is a poor leader. This is because some social roles are traditionally associated with men, whilst with women, those roles are perceived as role incongruent (Eagly & Wood, 2012). Being a leader is one such role. Amy's rant suggests that Meyer would have had to go beyond good performance as a president to prove the nation that a woman is capable, as a president, of running the country. Essentially, a woman needs to work twice as hard as a man to be equal.

4.3 Gender stereotypes, role congruity, and double bind

President Meyer seems to take advantage on her position as a woman. She can use sexist and gendered talk, because it must be interpreted as a joke (asking a man if he is pregnant, for example). On the other hand, men must be extra careful around her to be politically correct. Such an occurrence takes places when Meyer finally meets her choice for her VP. She finds herself in a difficult situation, because she cannot find a suitable candidate to join her on the ticket. Finally, former Senator Tom James is thought of, and he "saves" Meyer, as she at last finds an appropriate VP candidate:

> President: Oh, come on, Tom James. My knight in shining armor.
> Tom: My damsel in... Madam President.

> (Season 4, episode 5)

In this excerpt, Meyer refers to Tom as her 'knight in shining armor', as she sees Tom as a person who can save her from a difficult situation. In many classic fairytales, there is a 'damsel in distress' who needs rescuing and eventually a 'knight in shining armor' saves the her from danger. The gender role structure in fairytales is rigid: the woman, usually a princess, is helpless and needs saving from a man, usually a knight or a prince. The modern metaphorical expressions, which refer to a person who needs help from another in a difficult situation, are derived from this old gender role structure. Tom is about to utter 'damsel in distress', which is the corresponding idiom to describe the woman who is saved by the 'knight in shining armor'. Meyer is allowed to call Tom her knight, but it would seem appropriate for Tom to refer to her as 'damsel in distress'. Meyer is the president of the United States, while Tom is a former senator who is under consideration to be her VP candidate in the upcoming election. In the power hierarchy of these two characters, Meyer is well above Tom. Although she is in desperate need of Tom's help, Tom cannot place himself above her in the situation because of their power relation. Thus, he decides to cut his utterance mid-sentence, and replace 'distress' with 'Madam President' to show respect.

Aspects of gender stereotypes, gender roles, and role congruity can be found in this excerpt. The fairytale reference represents typical gender stereotypes in

which women are helpless and cannot solve their problems without the help of men. From this stereotype stem the social roles for Meyer and Tom: Meyer, as a woman, takes the role of the victim, while as a man, Tom is the hero. However, Meyer's role is immensely incongruent: while she does need a man's help, she is also probably the most powerful person in the world. Tom realizes this and changes the social role to which he is referring mid-sentence: from victim (my damsel in…) to POTUS (Madam President).

Another good example of role incongruity and double bind is from the third episode of the fifth season. President Meyer has started dating a man who she met at an economy event. She asked for his assistance because her economic policies where criticized. After their relationship is made public, a reporter at a press conference asks Mike McLintock, the White House press secretary, about the president's capability to do her job because of the new relationship:

Reporter: Mike, how is she able to focus on the economy if she's running around with her new boyfriend?

(Season 5, episode 3)

The question conceals prevalent gender stereotypes. The reporter talks about focusing on the economy, which can be considered to be a masculine trait (Dolan, 2010). Using the term 'running around with her new boyfriend' suggests that the reporter views Meyer not as the leader of the country, but more as an infatuated young girl who has been enchanted by a boy. This suggests that as a woman, she cannot control her emotions and neglects her responsibilities. It is not made obvious if the reporter knows how the two met, but if so, the reporter's comment could also suggest that she went to seek advice, but instead fell in love with the man from whom she sought advice from.

The situation is a good example of role incongruity and double bind. Warmth, compassion, and emotionality are considered feminine traits (Dolan, 2010). These are things associated with relationships and something that are more openly displayed in a new relationship. Meyer is also displaying these qualities in her new relationship, or at least that is what the media expect her to be doing as being a woman who has fallen for a man. However, now that the topical issue is economy, and Meyer's

new boyfriend is connected to economic issues, her two roles – POTUS and a person in love – collide. The double bind comes from Meyer performing these two roles simultaneously. However, the reporters remark suggests that she cannot do that but must choose one or the other.

4.4   Discussion

President Meyer's character in presented through mostly traditionally masculine traits. She shows very little warmth and compassion, and only a moderate amount of emotionality, qualities which are usually regarded as feminine. Additionally, she is not a traditionally motherly figure to her daughter Catherine, but repeatedly disregards her. She continually faces situations in which her capabilities and aptness are questioned or at least scrutinized. Her most utilized way of dealing with role congruity and double bind is to disregard them. However, she usually pays no attention to gendered talk, but takes it as given. She also uses the same kind of rhetoric herself. She has built her political character using masculine traits to succeed in the male-dominated area of society: she is confident, assertive, and talks "the guy-talk" and uses a lot of sexually explicit language and lewd jokes. Additionally, she does not seem to be aiming to change things so that politics would change to a be more tolerant to women. She uses her femininity to her advantage when it suits her needs but otherwise plays the game of politics by men's rules. That is not to say that Meyer does not see being the first female president as an historic achievement. But, in Meyer's mind, having a female POTUS is secondary to *her* being the first female POTUS. Her ambitions then seem to be in personal success, not changing the system:

Staffer: Congratulations, ma'am. First female president.
Woman: I'm so happy to be alive to see this.
Meyer: I'm so happy it's me.

(Season 3, episode 10)

5   CONCLUSION

As POTUS Selina Meyer is often strong, assertive, and confident. She uses very coarse language and often speaks in gendered rhetoric. In the show, Meyer is not so much the target of gendered/sexist talk, but the one using it. It is possible that she has developed into this kind of character through years in politics as she has been trying to adjust to gendered stereotypes: politics, as a masculine arena, demands masculine traits. In order to fit in and succeed, she has adopted those traits. This would mean that she has intentionally constructed her gendered identity to match the demands of politics: she has suppressed traits that are perceived as weaknesses for a leader and enforced those that seem beneficial. That is why she has opted for the masculine traits, and that is the reason why she faces the issues of role incongruity and double bind. Her best way of dealing with these issues is disregarding them and paying as little attention to them as possible. Her policy with gendered discourse surrounding her – as with her policy as the president – seems to be the mentality of 'offense is the best defense'.

To better understand Meyer's character, more attention should be paid to her past. In the series, she is POTUS from the second to last episode of the third season to the last episode of the fifth season. Thus, the character's development during the first three seasons was not within the scope of this thesis. This analysis also disregarded all non-discourse elements of character building and concentrated on the language use of the characters. Character building can also include physical performance, which would require other methods to process. Additionally, it would be productive to concentrate on another fictional female president and compare the way her presidency is portrayed to Meyer. Through that, it could also be easier to determine whether the fictional woman president characters are supposed to be an example and an inspiration, or to be taken more as a warning.

To better understand the ways in which reality imitates fiction – and vice versa – comparative research between a fictional and real-life woman president would be required. No such research is currently physically possible, but it could be in the near future. A good starting point would also be the comparison between Selina Meyer

as VP and Kamala Harris, as she will be the first woman vice president of the United States. This could be a fruitful topic of research from a viewpoint of gender in politics.

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