

**MURPHY BROWN AND ROSEANNE:
A COMPARISON OF LIBERAL FEMINISM
ON PRIME TIME TELEVISION**


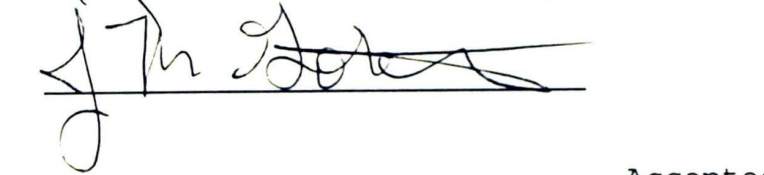
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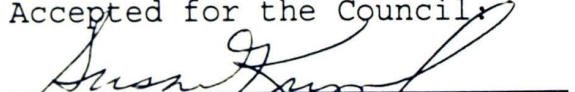
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Murphy Brown and Roseanne:
A Comparison of Liberal Feminism
On Prime Time Television

A Thesis
Presented for the
Master of Arts
Degree
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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to the American woman. May we always hunger to learn of the great women who came before us and always strive to become great women ourselves.

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Abstract

This study attempted to determine what prime time television, in the early 1990s, offered to its audience as example of liberal feminism. A list of liberal feminist behaviors was developed by the author and was used to compare two prime time female characters. These characters were selected because of their ever present strength on the networks and because of their controversial nature. The characters, most importantly, are very different and come from very different backgrounds and lead different lives. The hypothesis is that both of the characters represent liberal feminism but from a totally different perspective.

Each character was viewed for a one month period at the very beginning of the 1992 Fall season. A summary of each program was documented along with the liberal feminist behaviors represented by each character.

Behaviors were compared through the use of a liberal feminist behavior list. The list was formulated from information gathered out of the National Organization for Women's statement of purpose.

It was concluded that CBS's Murphy Brown represented true liberal feminism while ABC's Roseanne displayed liberal feminist behaviors along with certain radical tendencies.

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Chapter I

Introduction

During the feminist revolution of the 1970s, liberal feminism was perceived as an attempt to safeguard for women the political, economic, and social rights that have always been provided to men. But in the 1980s, that perception of feminism seemed to vanish. Many of the headlines from the 1980s called liberal feminism "the great experiment that failed" (Gibbs, 1992, p.50) and slandered mothers who pursued "selfish goals and wore business suits" (Gibbs, 1992, p.52). Feminism in the seventies was fashionable, but it was anti-feminism that became socially acceptable in the eighties.

Susan Faludi (1992), a Pulitzer-prize winning reporter, states that the 1980s saw women coming to condemn feminism because it was made clear to them from sources they trusted that this was the cause of all their problems. It would seem odd that feminism might cause an uprising of discomfort among women, since its goal, as a political ideology, is to attain equality for them in all aspects of society. Regardless of its political agenda, however, the goal of feminist criticism should be that of consciousness raising. In other words, its criticism should strive to alert women and society to the problems caused by devaluation if present (Zoglin, 1992).

This study has one main objective: to evaluate what prime time television is offering as representation of

liberal feminism in the 1990s. An important research arm of the objective is how prime time television is exploring the issue of feminism in society.

Television's women are viewed regularly by an audience of millions. This statistic would make it reasonable to comprehend why contemporary communication researchers are concerned with how the images of women are presented by the electronic media (Lull, 1980).

Two prime time television programs were selected as examples of liberal feminism: CBS's Murphy Brown and ABC's Roseanne. Both of the programs are situation comedies and have females as their lead characters. These two programs continue to have the highest ratings among prime time and also continue to tackle controversial subject matter (Gibbs, 1992). But most importantly, Murphy Brown and Roseanne display variations on the liberal feminist theme.

For instance, it has been said that Murphy Brown relies on liberal feminist premises that assume the erosion of barriers to women in the public sphere is the ultimate goal of feminism (Dow, 1992). This is not true according to Roseanne. This program fights for equal rights and opportunities within the household ... the private sphere. It seems the common interpretation that once women receive equal opportunity in the work place, then feminism has won is the easiest for television to incorporate. All too often, the concept of equality in the home challenges the

very core of domestic structure (Dow, 1992).

Therefore, comparing liberal feminism between Murphy Brown and Roseanne opens up a unique opportunity... following prime time's interpretation of the fight for equality both in the work place and in the home. Although much has been written about both programs, no studies could be found that compared feminism between these two television characters. In fact, feminism, particularly as it applies to the prime time series program, has been scarcely tested.

An obvious question might be why have there not been more examples of feminists on prime time television. Both Roseanne and Murphy Brown came on-air after the Equal Rights Amendment was defeated in 1982. Following the defeat, an unsettling trend began. The number of women seeking out battered-women's shelters soared, but federal funding shrank and the office of Domestic Violence was shut down.

What also shut down was acknowledgement of the movement by television series executives. Executives opened back up and took notice, however, after Murphy Brown aired (Gibbs, 1992).

The character of Murphy Brown falls under what has been the typical feminist image in the media. She is a very successful, savvy, and professional journalist who also happens to be a very slender, perfectly organized, independent woman (Corliss, 1992).

It did not seem that any other type of feminist existed on prime time television until Roseanne entered the picture. Now audiences have the opportunity to see another kind of feminist who, obviously, is not slender, successful, or organized. Roseanne is married with three children, and has no formal education outside of high school (Gibbs, 1992).

It would be beneficial at this time to define the following terms in order to better understand the structure and content of this study.

Feminism: The principle that women should have political, economic, and social rights equal to those of men (Mitchell & Oakley, 1986).

Liberal: Liberal ideas stress the importance and autonomy of the individual and were developed during the bourgeois revolution. These ideas, which took root in seventeenth and eighteenth century England, are now the dominant political ideology of twentieth-century Western society (Eisenstein, 1981).

Liberal Feminism: Liberal feminists attempt to establish the ideology that equality is the highest human ideal and that the state should act to assure equal opportunity for all who pursue this goal. The right to vote and to own property were goals of liberal feminists in the nineteenth-century and modern liberals pursued the Equal Rights Amendment (Eisenstein, 1981).

The terms defined above will aid in the application of content analysis. This method will be used in determining the feminist images found in each program.

Hypothesis

One hypothesis was developed for the purpose of this study. It is: Prime time television is offering to its audience images of liberal feminism, although from different perspectives, through the television characters of Murphy Brown and Roseanne.

In addition to the hypothesis, the following research questions were explored:

1. What types of liberal feminist behaviors does Murphy Brown exhibit?
2. What types of liberal feminist behaviors does Roseanne exhibit?

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

Liberal Beginnings

Throughout history, women have fought to gain equal ground with their male counterparts. It has been documented that feminists existed in America and England as early as the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and that their voices served as the foundation for later women's groups (Vonnegut, 1992).

Mary Wollstonecraft, who lived from 1759 to 1797, wished to open new freedoms of middle-class society to women. It should be remembered that the bourgeois revolution asserted the importance of the individual, stressing independence and freedom. Mary Wollstonecraft was an English woman who applauded the liberal values of economic independence, individual achievement, and usefulness (Eisenstein, 1981). She questioned the value of woman's confinement to the domestic sphere and saw increased public participation by women, which included political citizenship (Blackwood, 1984). Because she was a woman, she was unable to achieve the above liberal values and was, therefore, committed to extending the newly-won rights of the middle-class man to the middle-class woman (Eisenstein, 1981). It has been noted that Wollstonecraft's commitment was "a remarkable and open account of female response to the exhortation and promises of liberal individualism, of one woman's demand for equal opportunity for self-creation"

(George, 1970, p. 6). She has also been referred to as the harbinger of the women's movement, a female John the Baptist who heralded what was to follow (Taylor, 1984).

To fully understand Wollstonecraft's political priorities and to determine the relationship she sets into place between liberalism and feminism, her liberal challenge to aristocratic and male rule must be examined. She used the idea of liberal individualism to criticize the privilege of rank, inherent in station, unrelated to individual merit (Eisenstein, 1981). In her A Vindication of the Rights of Woman, she argues that only by there being more opportunities for equality in society will society progress in virtue, and she now extends the absolute necessity of this equality to women (Spender, 1983). Wollstonecraft outlined how affluence worked against eighteenth-century married, middle-class women. She compared these privileged women, whom she hoped to inspire into a fully human realm of existence, to birds confined to cages who have nothing to do but plume themselves (Poston, 1975).

Wollstonecraft applied the demands of the bourgeois revolution of reason, personal independence, and individual freedom to women on the same basis that they were given to men. She argued that men have obeyed kings, and that did not mean that they were inferior as men. Women obey men, and it does not mean that they are inferior as women. She felt that women should only submit to reason and never to a

man simply because of his rank as a man. According to Wollstonecraft, the fact that woman's submission to man exists is no justification for it. She understood that rule by rank no longer fits the political needs of bourgeois society and liberal ideology. She felt that the basis of this rule between men and women had to be challenged.

The accepted model of women, during her time, pictured females as frivolous and ignorant. According to Wollstonecraft, to be a middle-class lady meant sacrificing health, liberty, and virtue for whatever prestige, power, and pleasure a husband could provide. Women were not allowed to exercise outdoors lest they tan their lily-white skin, and, therefore, they lacked healthy bodies. They were not allowed to make their own decisions, therefore they lacked liberty. They were discouraged from developing their powers of reason, given that a great premium was placed on indulging self and gratifying others, especially men and children; therefore, they lacked virtue (Poston, 1975). Wollstonecraft believed that this picture of women as frail and weak was debilitating to the progress of society because it kept women passive. She argued that women should be active, like men, and should be alert, independent, and free. She reasoned that if men were confined to the same cages women found themselves locked in, they would develop the same characteristics of hypersensitivity, excessive self-indulgence, and extreme narcissism (Poston, 1975).

Wollstonecraft's main thrust in the Vindication is that as members of the human species, and in the interest of their own development, women should have the same considerations applied to them as are applied to men (Strachey, 1978). Her goal was to claim the ideology of liberal individualism for women (Eisenstein, 1981).

To gain this individualism, Wollstonecraft believed women must first be educated by the opinions and manners of the society they live in. Therefore, a change in education necessitates a change in society itself, and this education, in its broadest meaning, will involve a revolution in the manners of women (Kelly, 1982). Wollstonecraft most wanted personhood for women, which should come from being able to take care of themselves. Unless women became wage earners, they would simply remain economically dependent on their husbands. The basis of Wollstonecraft's feminism originates in her demand that the new woman of bourgeois society be a useful woman (Eisenstein, 1981). Women needed the same opportunities as men to develop to their full potential and then their talents could thrive. Wollstonecraft believed in the equality of opportunity between men and women, and this was her liberal feminist formulation (Spender, 1983).

Lucy Stone, who lived from 1818 to 1893, was a magnificent light in the woman's movement. Her early life was characterized by a growing awareness of the roots of woman's oppression and by a personal struggle to overcome

the obstacles that lay in her path because of her sex. Although her family was a prosperous one, her father's tight control over finances placed Lucy's mother in the humiliating position of having to beg for the smallest amounts of money (Wheeler, 1981). By the time Lucy was born, her mother was already an old woman, worn out by years of hard work, the births of nine children, and the caring of those who survived. Stone herself sought a way out of the degradation of her mother's situation through education. Her father refused to give her money to go to college, even though he paid for her brother's education (Stannard, 1977).

By 1843, when she was 25, Stone had managed to save enough money to cover the cost of a single term at Oberlin College in Ohio, the first institution of higher learning in the country to open its doors to both women and Blacks (Spender, 1983). Practicing debating in secret, because the college did not approve of women speaking in public, Stone became skilled in her rhetoric. Upon graduating from Oberlin in 1847, she delivered her very first public address - a woman's rights speech - from the pulpit of her brother's church in Massachusetts. The intensity of her convictions, combined with a powerful voice, served to make her one of the foremost women speakers of her day. But as a lecturer on such unpopular subjects as woman's rights, she aroused amazing hostility; people tore down posters advertising her talks, burned pepper in the auditoriums where she spoke, and

threw things at her (Kraus, 1971).

Lucy Stone rejected the doctrine of separate spheres for men and women. She believed that women would be able to find their appropriate sphere if they were given equal educational opportunities with men, and by equal she meant coeducation. She believed education was a key to woman's advancement in society and looked forward to the day when such universities as Harvard and Yale would open their doors to women (Hays, 1978).

The major thrust of Stone's public attack on traditional marriage was directed against its economic aspects. She was active in the campaign for liberalized married women's property legislation; when she married her husband, they both publicly repudiated the laws which gave the husband control of his wife's property and earnings, engaging instead to hold property separately, and to share the earnings derived from the exercise of their professions. Stone wrote:

Of all the little foxes that help
destroy the domestic vines... the worst
is that which makes it necessary for the
wife to ask her husband for money to
supply the daily recurring family
necessities and her own, thus fueling
her sense of humiliation, degradation
and separation. (Spender, 1983, p.128).

Central to the goal of economic autonomy was the issue of woman's right to work outside of the home. Stone sought to demonstrate that a woman could successfully combine marriage and motherhood with a career outside the home (Stannard, 1977). She also fought against wage discrimination and called for equal pay for equal work. Stone believed that a woman must have the right to her own body and her strong feelings for birth control reflected her concern for woman's health. Regarding the touchy question of divorce, Stone advocated this option in cases of drunkenness, and privately spoke of her belief in divorce as a way of ending a loveless marriage (Hays, 1978).

The marriage question was one upon which Stone herself was particularly vulnerable. She refused to take her husband's name because of her strong belief that a woman's loss of her name in marriage was a symbol of the totality of her subjugation (Stannard, 1977).

The vote, she believed, should bring about a concrete improvement in woman's legal status and would educate society to the principle of sexual equality. For Stone, the vote came to represent the vehicle through which women would be accepted in the public realm and treated as equals (Spender, 1983).

Contemporary feminists appreciate Lucy Stone's efforts to inject a greater sense of equality into the institution of marriage and to demonstrate that a woman was capable of

combining marriage and motherhood with a career outside the home. This, along with her strong belief that a woman should have an individual identity through education, the vote, equal wages, and birth control, marks Stone's liberal feminist formulation (Spender, 1983).

John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor Mill argued that women's freedom of choice must replace the arbitrary rule of men. They criticized, in the second half of the nineteenth century, the absolute power of husbands and likened it to the absolute power of kings (Eisenstein, 1981).

They argued that society should realize that to be born a girl instead of a boy, just like being born Black instead of white, or a commoner instead of a nobleman, should not decide a person's position throughout life. They also stated that the Declaration of Independence must apply to women as well as men, and that a true democracy recognizes the citizenship of all its members. They wrote, "We do not imagine that any American democrat will evade the force of these expressions by the dishonest or ignorant subterfuge that 'men' in this memorable document, does not stand for human beings, but for one sex only..." (Mill, 1971, p. 221).

Mill and Taylor's struggle for the greater opportunity for women should be examined against the backdrop of the Victorian society in which it took place. The Victorian age took place in the last two-thirds of the nineteenth century. This was an era that experienced the full effects of the

eighteenth century inventions: the spinning jenny, the steam engine, and the cotton gin. The second half of the century had its own inventions: the steam turbine, the telephone, the gas automobile, the sewing machine, and refrigeration (Allen, 1956). All of these discoveries had a direct effect on domestic life and the image of the typical Victorian woman as wife and mother first (Jorgensen-Earp, 1990).

Mill and Taylor believed that economic dependence of woman on man stemmed from her cultural training that she needed a man to provide for her. They wrote how women would never be what they should be until they were given the power to gain their own livelihood, and this power included the opportunity for education (Eisenstein, 1981). Such empowerment would afford women the possibility of crossing over from the private sphere, which included the home and family, to the public sphere, which had been the male domain of society (Crow, 1971).

Mill and Taylor believed that a woman should have the opportunity and the liberty to choose a life outside of motherhood and marriage if so desired. Their belief in the enfranchisement of women and in the ideology of liberal individualism extending to women through citizen rights were their political concerns and their liberal feminist formulation (Rossi, 1970).

Elizabeth Cady Stanton was born in 1815 and died in 1902. She has been called the philosopher of nineteenth-

century feminism (Dubois, 1978). Stanton believed that personal merit and not artificial inheritance should decide a person's place in life. "Nothing adds such dignity to character as the recognition of one's self-sovereignty; the right to an equal place, everywhere conceded - a place earned by personal merit ..." (Buhle, 1978, p. 327).

Stanton argued that woman had been reared for obedience and for self-sacrifice to others rather than taught how to assert her own needs. A man's notion of womanliness required a woman's submissiveness, and this was appalling to Stanton (Sanday, 1981).

In 1869, Stanton helped to organize the National Woman's Suffrage Association (NWSA), which focused on achieving a national suffrage amendment to the Constitution (Schneir, 1972). She stressed the importance of citizen activity for women. Republican theory defines the virtuous being as one who takes part in society's public duties (Eisenstein, 1981). Stanton argued that no government could be called republican in which one-half the people are forever deprived of all participation in its affairs (O'Neill, 1981).

The basic idea of self-government requires that citizens should have a voice in the laws under which they live. This right could only be exercised by the ballot being in the hand of every qualified citizen. Therefore, Stanton fought for woman's suffrage along with the other

rights, including the right to own property, the right to the wages they earn, and the right of personal liberty, that would allow women to become active, participating citizens (Eisenstein, 1981).

The Stanton Amendment was introduced into Congress in 1878, and it was this proposal that would be ratified more than forty years later as the Nineteenth Amendment. The Nineteenth Amendment was passed in Congress in 1918 and ratified by two-thirds of the state governments by August 26, 1920. American women could finally vote (Bernard, 1971). Elizabeth Cady Stanton's demand for woman's self-sovereignty, economic independence, and individuality formulated her liberal feminism (Sanday, 1981).

Contemporary Liberal Feminism

Contemporary liberal feminists often continue the task begun by those before them: to extend liberal principles to women, not only when they enter the so-called public realm, but also within the family. It is argued that equality can never be realized for most women if they are forced by society to choose between parenthood and a career, while men can have both (Bem & Bem, 1978).

The idea behind the standard marriage left the entire responsibility of child care and household tasks falling on the mother, and the opportunity of developing a career and economic independence open to the father only. A liberal solution to the problem is the equal sharing of housework

and child care and the shared responsibility to support the family economically (Pierce, 1973).

Liberal feminists also call for the equalization of women and men in the areas of political life and economic activity. The liberal tradition should be seen to suggest that women have an equal right to as much education as men to develop an occupation that is as fulfilling, to hold public office, to choose to have or not to have children, and to be a parent with opportunity for further self-development. Among the strongest arguments feminists can make is that the traditions of liberalism and democracy inherently require the changes being sought (Eisenstein, 1981).

Feminists can usefully turn to some arguments made by one of the greatest philosophers of all, Plato, the teacher of Aristotle in ancient Greece. Plato was, to some extent, an early feminist. Plato did not think democracy was the best method of bringing about a just society. He did, however, think rulers should govern in ways that would be best for everyone in a community (Pierce, 1973). He argued, in The Republic (Lee, 1955), that in choosing rulers, only relevant characteristics should be considered, and whether one bears or begets children is not relevant to whether one is fit to govern. Relevant characteristics included a developed intelligence, courage, and the ability to resist the temptation of selfish gain. Some women would possess

more of these characteristics than some men and, therefore, should be considered as candidates (Pierce, 1973).

The liberal tradition offers the basis on which our ideas of freedom and equality might be developed. This allows women to enjoy the individual rights to which men have long been thought to be entitled (Held, 1978).

The Women's Liberation Movement started in the mid-sixties and one very important organization was established during this time. Motivated by a dissatisfaction with early women's commissions, like the National Commission on the Status of Women, the National Organization for Women (NOW) was founded in 1966 (Hole & Levine, 1971).

Betty Friedan was one of the most influential founders of NOW. Her liberal analysis captivated the attention of women who were both inside and outside the movement of the 1960s and 1970s. Friedan believed that society could adjust to equality between men and women (Eisenstein, 1981).

Friedan and the liberal feminist position she represented had such a powerful force in the 1960s and, to a lesser extent, in the 1970s. Friedan's work appealed to women who identified with middle-class values and the liberal ideas of equality of opportunity and independence. A person did not have to be white or middle-class to aspire to these values, and therefore, the ideas of liberal feminism have been claimed by more women than might be imagined (Eisenstein, 1981).

Like Stanton before her, Friedan referred to the women's movement of the sixties and seventies as the second American Revolution (Friedan, 1977) because women were, once again, applying the ideas of political participation and self-determination to themselves. Women were demanding their inalienable human right to the opportunities that would allow them to achieve equality. According to Friedan, it is "the right of every woman in America to become all she is capable of becoming on her own and/or in partnership with a man" (Friedan, 1977, p. 33).

Friedan believed that women must be involved in the political process. In this way, she felt women could affect both party platforms and society in general. Friedan was able to contain her feminism within liberalism, and her demands were what she thought were politically feasible. For Friedan, feminism is not a theory about the oppression of women, but a theory of human rights. It is "a stage in the whole human rights movement" (Friedan, 1977, p. 317) designed to bring women into the mainstream.

Before Friedan helped establish NOW in 1966, she was known for her controversial writings. In 1963, she wrote The Feminine Mystique which was a discussion of a woman's femininity defining her identity. The problem, as Friedan saw it, was a woman being defined as "the children's mommy, or the minister's wife" and never in terms of her own identity (Friedan, 1977, p. 23). She believed that the

feminine mystique limits and reduces a woman's development as a person with a separate ego and identity, in much the same way that the nineteenth-century feminists feared Victorian ideology's impact on woman's sexuality (Friedan, 1977).

Friedan (1977) emphasized the great importance of education as a way of broadening a woman's choice. Through education, she believed women are able to widen their horizons and become more involved in society.

Clearly, Friedan (1977) was not asking women to sacrifice motherhood and marriage for a high-powered career. She suggested that women need to see marriage and family as a part of their life, but not all of it. Then, and only then, will women find the time and energy to develop their creative work outside of the home.

The National Organization for Women (NOW) was founded three years after Friedan's Feminine Mystique and is now the largest feminist organization in the United States (Eisenstein, 1981). It is important to recognize that NOW, as a national organization, does adopt a liberal feminist analysis. Its statement of purpose remains unchanged since its formulation in 1966: "... take action to bring women into full participation in the mainstream of American society NOW, exercising all the privileges and all the responsibilities thereof in truly equal partnership with men..." (Carden, 1974, p.104).

The liberal roots of NOW are distinctly expressed. In its statement of purpose, it speaks of the worldwide human rights revolution, that women must "advance the unfinished revolution of women toward true equality, NOW" (Friedan, 1977, p. 125). NOW wishes to delete "conditions that prevent women from enjoying the equality of opportunity and freedom of choice which is their right as individual Americans, and as human beings" (Friedan, 1977, p. 124). The goal of NOW is to fight for women's equality of opportunity. The commitment is to create an equal partnership with men. This involves, mainly, the struggle for woman's equality with the law (Friedan, 1977).

Equal partnership with men also includes the reorganization of housework and the rearing of children. Men, as well as women, are to become responsible for these areas. NOW's liberal politics originates from its attempts to deal with woman's life as it crisscrosses between male and female spheres (Eisenstein, 1981).

Soon after its conception, NOW became a strong political lobby for issues of child care, abortion rights, and the Equal Rights Amendment. In 1972, Congress passed a constitutional amendment guaranteeing equal rights under the law to all, regardless of gender (Hartsock, 1981). Because the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) passed the House and the Senate with large majorities, no difficulty was anticipated with ratification by the necessary thirty-eight, or two-

thirds, of the states. Thirty states had ratified by the end of 1973. The process then slowed down and by the end of 1975, five more states had ratified, but the controversy over enactment now developed (Newland, 1979).

The opposition centered in ultra conservative groups, including the American Legion, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Catholic Daughters of America, and the Ku Klux Klan. For them, the ERA became a symbol of disturbing social change that threatened the very structure of the American family (Newland, 1979).

Despite all the opposition the amendment faced, opinion polls in 1981 showed a clear majority of Americans favoring the passage of the Equal Rights Amendment. It proved impossible, however, to marshal that support because by the end of June 1982 the limit for ratification, already extended by Congress, ran out (Clymer, 1982).

The rejection of the ERA by the Republican party in the elections of 1980 and its subsequent failure to be ratified left the media screaming that feminism was dead. The media did more than a quiet burial; they went on a rampage and bashed the slick portraits of liberated women they themselves had created. Headlines read that the women's movement was over and by the mid-1980s, the central question on network television and in print media asked what had happened to American women (Faludi, 1992).

Liberal feminists, in recent years, have been reassessing their own position and realize that they have many challenges ahead of them. By looking back to those who came before them, the Betty Friedans, the Mary Wollstonecrafts, the Harriet Taylor Mills, the John Stuart Mills, and the Elizabeth Cady Stantons, they can find the thread that holds liberal feminist ideology together. That thread is the equality of opportunity for women.

Chapter 3

The Portrayal of Women on Prime Time Television

The image of women portrayed in the media has been mainly that of wife and mother and/or sex object, but American women are obviously much more than this. They work in increasing numbers and in a variety of occupations outside of the home (Faludi, 1992).

The 1970s

In past years, the women's movement bombarded television executives with charges of continued depictions of women in stereotypical roles such as sex objects and servants to their male counterparts. It seemed that in the 1970s, executives responded with programs where women were portrayed as more dominant characters (Haskell, 1978).

Haskell's study (1978) looked at prime time programs during the months of July and August, 1977. Thirteen shows were viewed and of the thirteen, two were dramas and the others were comedies. The following programs were included: Alice, All's Fair, Charlie's Angels, Feather and Father Gang, Good Times, Jeffersons, Laverne and Shirley, Mary Tyler Moore, Maude, One Day at a Time, Phyllis, Police Woman, and Rhoda.

Five episodes of each program were viewed. This amounted to 34 1/2 hours of programming. The study covered all programs that ran during the specified time range in which women were the principal characters or had featured

roles. Haskell's hypothesis was that these programs reflected the changing status of women. Her findings seemed to indicate the public's image of the American woman was changing. Women were being depicted more fairly than in the past and were shown holding jobs and supporting households without the help of a male. They were even moving into occupations that were previously reserved for men, such as police officers, lawyers, physicians, and managers. Haskell concluded that the results, at least in the programs viewed, showed the television medium helping to adjust the public's image of the American woman.

With so many principal female roles existing on situation comedy programs, another study was designed to determine whether or not the female was, indeed, made the butt of comedy more frequently than the male. Sapolsky, Stocking, and Zillman (1977) looked at one week's prime time offerings on the three major networks. Programs were analyzed for sexual hostile humor, nonsexual hostile humor, sexual nonhostile humor, and nonsexual nonhostile humor.

Results from the study concluded that men made more disparaging remarks than women, but also received the butt of hostile humor more often than women. Women participated in disparaging men as frequently as men disparaged women. The study demonstrated that sex discrimination did not exist in frequency of sexual humor, although sexual humor appeared most often during prime family viewing time.

Another study by Joseph Dominick (1979) looked at programs spanning from 1953 to 1977. He remarked that the most noteworthy piece of data to come out of the study was the little change regarding the number of females in prime time starring roles. It seemed the numbers from the 1970s were consistent with those twenty-five years previous. Dominick noted that shows featuring only women as their stars have seldom exceeded 10% of all network dramatic series. Moreover, most female starring characters were still, in the 1970s, found primarily on situation comedies like they were in the 1950s and 1960s.

Also noted was the fact that occupations of women in the 1970s have changed somewhat over the years. The percentage of women shown as housewives and household workers had decreased, and fewer women were being shown in clerical work. More women were being shown in the service category, but the majority of these were portrayed as detectives and police officers. To summarize Dominick's data, the results seem to suggest that women in the 1970s were underrepresented in TV programs and were still subject to some stereotyping just as in years past.

Another study conducted during the 1970s of American girls between the ages of thirteen and eighteen, looked at their conception of the typical American female. Their answers came from situation comedies. Mary Tyler Moore was the favorite, with Rhoda also frequently selected. Mary

Tyler Moore was never ranked less than third on any dimension in the study. She was perceived by the girls as the typical American female, someone like me, someone I want to be like, someone I would want as a friend, and someone I would want as a mother (Lull, 1980).

The 1980s

If the seventies saw television as beginning to show some progress toward equal treatment, what of the 1980s? In the 1987-88 season, only three of twenty-two new prime-time dramas featured female leads. Sixty per cent of the shows launched as series in this same season had either no regular female characters or only included women as minor background figures. Twenty per cent of the programs had no women at all (Faludi, 1992).

The 1980s saw women losing ground in the one television genre they had always claimed: situation comedy. It seemed that television writers were uncomfortable with working mothers. Bachelor buddies took up house together without adult women in the picture and single-parent household sitcoms found children living with dad or with a male guardian (Faludi, 1992).

One popular series that featured women, ABC's Dynasty, did exercise feminine power, but this power was all about excessive and demanding passions and ambitions. The female characters were invested with power and were, all too often, extremely unapproachable. The women shown as strong and

successful were depicted as villains, while the good women were seen as being extremely vulnerable and naive (Schwichtenberg, 1983).

The eighties also saw the beginning of Music Television (MTV) and, as some studies show, sexism seemed to soar. A study conducted in 1985 looked at music videos aired on MTV during the summer of that year. The researchers found that sexism is high in this type of entertainment. Females are portrayed as submissive and passive and as sexual objects (Boruszkowski, Dennis, & Vincent, 1987).

The latter 1990s saw TV programmers bringing in the he-men. Popular demand could not have been their reasoning because audience surveys showed viewers to be least interested in police dramas and westerns (Lipton, 1990). Television producers were very blunt about their strategies. Glen Charles, coproducer of Cheers, said he turned his show's bartender, Sam, into a chauvinistic womanizer because "he's a spokesman for a large group of people who thought that the woman's movement was a bunch of bull and look with disdain upon people who don't think it was" (Faludi, 1992, p. 144).

Women represent not only the majority of television viewers, but, more importantly, they represent the viewers that advertisers most want to target. When television programmers tried to force its cast of macho guys and wimpy gals on viewers during the 87-88 season, a huge proportion

of the female audience simply turned off their sets. None of the twenty-five new shows made it into the top twenty except for A Different World, which was one of the rare new shows that featured a female lead (Ziegler, 1988).

By December, the networks' ratings had dropped nine points from a year earlier and experienced the lowest rated TV season ever. While younger men increased their weekly viewing time by more than two hours in the fall of 1987, younger women decreased their viewing time by almost an hour in the same period (Ziegler, 1988).

By the following season, TV programmers backed off a bit to introduce a couple of strong female leads to the prime-time scene. Roseanne and Murphy Brown both featured outspoken women and became tremendous hits (Waters, 1989).

From its debut in 1988, Murphy Brown was well publicized and this publicity focused on two major themes: the show's focus on the strong woman and Murphy's relationship to another legend in situation comedy, The Mary Tyler Moore Show (Dow, 1992). Press coverage saw Murphy as an example of woman power taking hold of prime-time.

From its debut, Roseanne has represented the neglected underside of the polished and savvy professional above. She represents the themes of middle class, obesity, and defiance (Ehrenreich, 1990).

The 1990s

Proceeding into the early half of this decade, Murphy Brown and Roseanne continue to lead in the polls and continue to rank high in audience surveys. Roseanne has been one of the most successful series launched in the history of television (McWilliams, 1990). Although different, both the characters of Murphy Brown and Roseanne have taken hold of prime-time.

This study aims to focus upon each character and to suggest that, although different, both characters stand as varieties on the liberal feminist theme.

Chapter 4

Methodology

It is no secret that television has become the public sphere for Americans in the twentieth century. Researcher George Gerbner adds, "The television set has become a key member of the family, the one who tells most of the stories most of the time" (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1980, p. 14). Television is the one source of information and public debate of controversial and contested topics. Ninety-eight per cent of us live in homes where the TV set is on, and therefore, in one way or another, being experienced or absorbed an average of seven-and-a-half hours a day; sixty-seven per cent of us get all our information from TV (Rapping, 1991).

This would seem to explain why modern feminists are so concerned with the images of women on television. As best put by June Dye (1993), board member of Nashville's National Organization for Women.

We must challenge the assumptions and stereotypes of women. Women's social roles are severely limiting to our individual freedom and very effectively stifle our power. For instance, in our role as supporter and nurturer of others, we often lose personal power and must rely on derived power instead. An example of this would be being Nancy Reagan instead of Margaret Thatcher.
(Telephone Interview)

These words echo a common concern among modern feminists who believe television can damage woman's image by stereotyping them in limiting roles. This study aimed to focus on the early 1990s and the image of liberal feminism on two network situation comedies.

The research method most often used to study images in the media is known as content analysis. Content analysis is a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication (Berelson, 1952). This method will be used for this study and will serve as a descriptive outlet for analyzing the feminist content found in each program.

Liberal feminism is filled with an intense amount of rhetoric, so the great challenge of this study was to translate such analyses into concrete behaviors. Once reaching this point, a proposed liberal feminist behavior list was created and the characters of Murphy Brown and Roseanne were compared.

Bringing the technology for the outline to an active tense was essential. An activist is a person who takes positive, direct action to achieve a political or social end. Certainly, the National Organization for Women (NOW) is the most clearly identifiable liberal feminist organization, but it is also an activist organization.

The first step was contacting the Nashville branch of NOW. Contact began with one of the board members for

Nashville NOW and took place on March 25 and 31, 1993 by telephone. June Dye (1993) was able to send the complete NOW Statement of Purpose and offered insight to the liberal feminist cause.

The previously unexplored concept of creating liberal feminist behaviors came from these two discussions. It was agreed that a list of behaviors that challenged assumptions and stereotypes would be fairly easy to generate. By using NOW's Statement of Purpose (1966) as a guideline, the following behaviors of a liberal feminist were generated. These behaviors acted as the foundation from which the two characters were compared.

Liberal Feminist Behaviors

- 1) Rejects domesticity: Domesticity meaning the private sphere of home, husband, and children being a woman's only contribution to society.
- 2) Pursues Career in the Public Sphere: Public sphere means the business world.
- 3) Attains advancement in society through education: Education is the key to effective participation in the economy today.
- 4) Has reached a level of economic independence.
- 5) Exercises a democratic political platform: Democratic means treating persons of all classes in the same way.
- 6) Endeavors to change the false images of women: This includes prevalent images, like that of sex object.

- 7) Views marriage as an equitable sharing of responsibilities.
- 8) Protests the idea that a woman must choose between marriage/motherhood and a career.

Procedure

The eight liberal feminist behaviors were taken individually and applied to the actions and statements of each character during the eight programs viewed. It was decided that eight programs would satisfy the study's needs. Since this type of comparison had never before been attempted, one month's programming seemed adequate without being overwhelming. The viewing period took place during September 1992. Each program was recorded in its entirety and labelled by number according to the week it was broadcast. An overall summary of each program was recorded in a journal along with the liberal feminist behaviors represented by each character.

Upon viewing each program, the number that corresponded with a particular behavior was documented as to the frequency it appeared: Very Often: 10 or more actions/statements fitting behavior. Sometimes: less than 10 actions/statements fitting behavior. Not at all: Zero actions/statements fitting behavior.

Summary of the Eight Programs Examined

Program #1: Murphy's Baby Shower

(September 7th, 1992)

In this episode, Murphy is given a baby shower by her colleagues. She feels totally out of place and uncomfortable at the party. In fact, the guests have to explain every gift because Murphy is so out of touch with items pertaining to motherhood. The guests are all professional journalists who are also mothers: Joan Lunden, Katie Couric, Faith Daniels, Paula Zahn, and Mary Alice Williams. In a quiet moment, after the guests have left, Murphy expresses her fears of juggling motherhood and career as a single woman. She is inspired when she realizes that she has always done things her own way and that she can handle this situation as well. Murphy acknowledges that her guests are not "superhuman supermoms" but merely professional working women who handle their careers along with raising their children.

Program # 2: Murphy's Delivery

(September 14th, 1992)

Murphy goes into labor during a live newscast and is not even prepared for the event. She has a very long and arduous labor but gets through it with the help of her friends and colleagues. There are many liberal feminist statements made by Murphy throughout the delivery. At one point, she screams at her female colleague, Corky, to get

the baby out by using any device she can find. Murphy says, "Do it for sisterhood; do it for Betty Friedan." Murphy is nervous after the delivery when her newborn son is wheeled in for a visit. She speaks quietly with him about her doubts of being a mother, and a single one at that. "I'm not going to be like other mothers. I don't cook; I don't sew, and I am going to make mistakes." There is, in this episode, the beginning of a change for Murphy. She is now a mother and this will alter her world. Her audience and colleagues will see how she handles career and motherhood. In the final moments of the show, Murphy quietly sings an Aretha Franklin song to her son. "Now I'm no longer doubtful of what I'm living for, and if I make you happy, then I don't need to do more. You make me feel like a natural woman."

Program # 3: Murphy Brings Baby to Work

(September 21st, 1992)

Murphy brings her baby to the studio on her first day back at work. She tries to be both a mother and a journalist on the job. Murphy comes to the realization that some reorganization needs to take place. She makes plans to take some time off to find a nanny for her son. She says to Miles, her producer, "If I ever try something like that again, I want you to promise to cram me into a stroller and push me in front of a bus." Murphy goes on to say, "It was a little scary coming in here today, and I guess I felt I

had a lot to prove to myself, but it felt right. Yes, I'm going to be okay."

Program #4: Murphy and Election Day

(September 28, 1992)

This program is full of evidence of Murphy's liberal political stance. She fondly remembers the presidential vote of 1968 in which she went to a polling place to cast her ballot and demanded the equal opportunity to vote even though she was not of age. This episode was filled with Murphy's Republican heckling. She calls the White House at four o'clock in the morning and says she is with the Clinton administration and wants to come over and take measurements of the White House rooms for remodeling. Murphy then asks the staff if they really want to have some fun. "You want fun?" she asks. "Send Dan Quayle a Where's Waldo book and watch his head explode."

Murphy's day of election coverage is extremely busy, but she does make it home to pick up her baby to take him with her to vote that evening. In the polling booth, she shows him to his first voting experience. The baby, like most babies do, grabs down on the lever and pulls it before she can stop him. Murphy exclaims, "Oh no, not him!" There is no doubt who she is referring to.

Program # 1: Roseanne's Daughter Elopes

(September 8th, 1992)

This first episode dealt with Roseanne's daughter

running away to marry her boyfriend at seventeen years of age. Roseanne is extremely strong through this turmoil and handles the situation while her husband runs from the issue. It is Roseanne who deals with the young couple when they return, and it is she who tells her new son-in-law that Becky wants to finish high school and go to college and that if he stands in the way of that he will have her to deal with. Roseanne never went to college, but she seems to possess an extreme will that her daughters should be able to and that education will give them more opportunity than she ever had.

Program #2: Roseanne Deals with Younger Daughter

(September 15th, 1992)

Darlene is Roseanne's younger daughter and shortly after the oldest daughter eloped, there is an incident where Darlene and her boyfriend fall asleep in her bedroom and Roseanne finds the boy sneaking out the next morning. Even though it was a harmless mistake, Roseanne has a very difficult time believing this. The stress of Roseanne and her husband being unemployed, Becky eloping, and now the possibility that Darlene may be sleeping with her boyfriend is more than Roseanne can handle at one time. Roseanne confronts Darlene and realizes that she cannot compare the two girls. In Darlene, Roseanne has raised an extremely independent thinking girl. Like Roseanne, if Darlene doesn't want to do something, she simply won't. Darlene

does not want that type of relationship with her boyfriend and Roseanne realizes that no lie was told when the girl said that the two had simply fallen off to sleep. If this mother and daughter have trouble getting along, it is because they are very much alike. Roseanne goes to extremes, she will say anything, and she has a wicked sarcastic humor. Like mother, like daughter.

Program #3: Roseanne Wants to Open Restaurant

(September 22nd, 1992)

Roseanne has been dealing with unemployment and she and her husband have hit rock bottom. Her mother comes to visit and because of a recent house sale is able to give Roseanne and her sister, Jackie, two checks in the amount of \$10,000 a piece. This opens up new opportunity and Roseanne, along with her sister and another friend, decide to open up a "loose meat" restaurant. The three choose a location, but find out that the \$30,000 they have between them is not enough to start the business. Another \$10,000 is needed, so they decide to go to a small business administration to apply for a start up loan. They have heard that this administration gives special consideration to businesses run by women. The representative is male and says that they do have special provisions for minorities and for the handicapped. When he assumes that none of the women are handicapped Roseanne says, "Well, I have three kids." He then asks if they have had any previous experience running a

restaurant. Roseanne replies, "Well, yeah, I was the best waitress at a local restaurant, and I should have been put up into management, but they held me back because I am a woman." The women are turned down by the agency because they are considered a bad risk. Roseanne is extremely down and when she gets back home Darlene asks her what the big deal was about being turned away. "This means a lot to me; okay, Darlene? I'd like to have something to show for my life besides stretch marks." In the end, Roseanne's mother gives them another \$10,000 and becomes the fourth partner in the business.

Program #4: Roseanne's Opening of Business

(September 29th, 1992)

The restaurant opens and Roseanne is already complaining about her long hours. She comes home on a dinner break, puts four frozen dinners in the microwave and says, "I get an hour off so I can come home and make dinner for my family. Now, what am I supposed to do with the other fifty-six minutes?" The restaurant is coming along fine, but other events happen that make things interesting. Roseanne finds out that her business partner, Nancy, is a lesbian. This doesn't bother Roseanne in the least. In fact, when Roseanne's husband asks her how her day was she says, "Well, Dan, Nancy is a lesbian and we got a new Lens Crafters. That's right, Dan, glasses in only an hour." The women decide to take a self-defense class after Roseanne is

harassed at the restaurant. She doesn't want Dan staying at the restaurant all the time because he doesn't think she can defend herself. Roseanne gets a real kick out of beating up the bad guy in her class and asks is it fair to do the same thing at home to her husband while he is sleeping. Roseanne is always sarcastic.

Chapter 5

Results and Conclusions

To answer the research questions, 1. What types of liberal feminist behaviors does Murphy Brown exhibit? and 2. What types of liberal feminist behaviors does Roseanne exhibit?, the television character of Murphy Brown possessed all of the behaviors of a liberal feminist, except item seven which stated that marriage was seen as an equitable sharing of responsibilities. During the programs viewed, Murphy never mentioned her opinions of marriage. In every other circumstance, however, Murphy fit the liberal feminist behavior list almost perfectly, very often displaying the behaviors with actions or statements more than 75% of the time. Throughout the four programs, her rejection of the domestic sphere was evident and was particularly prevalent in programs number one and three. Murphy has carved a strong and successful place for herself in the public sphere.

As lead news anchor at FYI, Murphy was a powerful force and knew influential people. Murphy has gained advancement in society through higher education and has certainly reached a level of economic independence. She challenged the traditional images of women by breaking the rules that say women should stay in the background. Murphy did not stand in any person's shadow and she obtained her power and notoriety from herself. She also challenged the assumption that women must choose between marriage, children, and a

career. No matter what a person's opinion might be on single motherhood, it cannot be argued that Murphy does not represent woman power. She challenged the assumptions and stereotypes of women and did not let traditional social roles limit her. Murphy Brown, as portrayed on these television programs, represented a liberal feminist.

The character of Roseanne, on the other hand, was more difficult to identify. She displayed liberal feminist behaviors under 25 per cent of the time.

Roseanne rejected domesticity through her complaints. It has been said that Roseanne possessed a sarcastic wit. Her rejection of the domestic sphere came from her loud put-down of the work she did at home. She stressed how marriage should be an equal share of responsibilities. Her sarcasm stressed the point that she did everything around the house and got no help from her husband or children. Roseanne wanted more for herself and was able to pursue a place in the public sphere by opening a restaurant with her sister, mother, and friend. In this respect, she did try to carve a place in the business world.

Roseanne may be brash, but she seemed not to judge others because of who they are or what they stand for. Roseanne seemed to display some liberal feminist behaviors but could not be classified as a true liberal feminist in that she possessed some radical feminist tendencies. She seemed to adopt an "us against them" attitude. She

expressed, on a few occasions, how women should band together against men, which is a more radical philosophy. This was also found in program three when Roseanne went to the loan administration with her sister and friend to apply for small business assistance. The loan representative was male and, upon turning them down, the women came to the conclusion it was because they were women they were turned down by male establishment. She also commented of doing physical harm to men and enjoying it. Allowing for her sarcastic wit, these male-bashing comments still seemed a bit radical.

One very noticeable item seemed to appear as the two characters were being viewed for the one month time period. As the programs progressed, the characters began exploring other spheres that were not natural to them. For Murphy Brown, the domestic sphere opened up to her through the birth of her child. In the past, it seemed that television's approach to feminism had been to allow women to act like men (Dow, 1992). The problem was that for a woman to act like a man meant her total dedication to the public sphere and her total rejection of the private sphere. A case in point was Murphy Brown until the Fall season of 1992. The television character of Murphy Brown has supported the concept that the public and private sphere can be compatible.

Roseanne tested the waters of the public sphere through the opening of her restaurant. The private sphere of house and family did not seem to be enough for Roseanne and through her desire to make this new business work can be seen Roseanne's need to be more than what she has been.

These crossings of spheres have an interesting impact on liberal feminism. As stated earlier, liberal feminist success has long been described as equality in the public sphere. However, that very division of the public and private sphere has forced women to choose between one or the other, thus all too often, sacrificing complete opportunity.

Murphy Brown and Roseanne, therefore, offer a unique glimpse into the worlds of two liberal feminists crossing boundaries and re-defining their roles.

The interesting concept was that both characters had a strong voice in television. Roseanne's radical tendencies seemed to be distributed over the subjects of female gender and the working class. She seemed to confirm the resentments of the underdog majority.

Murphy Brown represented competitiveness and ambition in women, and is an intriguing reminder of what women can do. Both characters stand as an example that women do want more. The ability to have a career and family was important to the writers of the two television programs.

Television, through the character of Murphy Brown, offered true images of liberal feminism. In Murphy,

audiences saw a successful, independent woman who made her mark in the public sphere on her own. Murphy, as a television character, has equal standing with men and stands as a model to the liberal feminist beliefs of woman's place in American society.

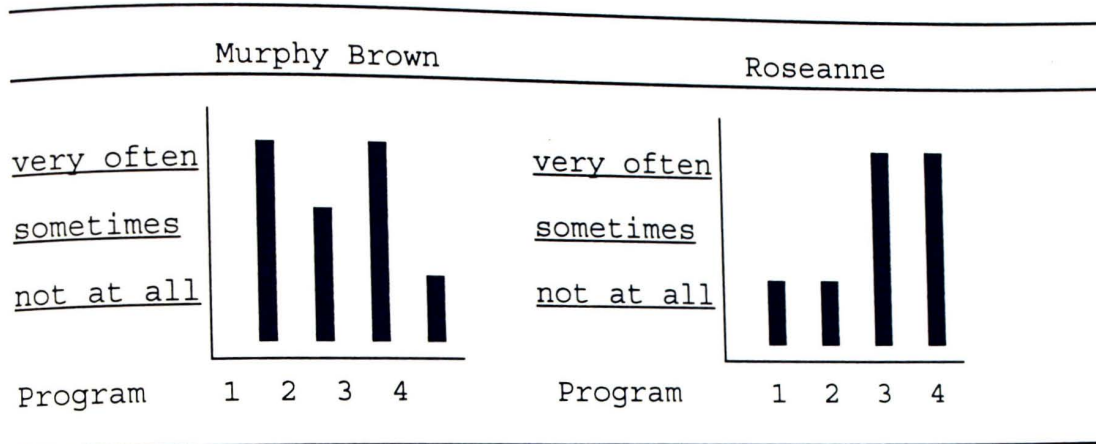
Television, through the character of Roseanne, has offered what might be called middle-class feminism. Roseanne's liberal feminist beliefs did exist; however, there was a tendency towards more radical statements and behaviors, including male-bashing. Roseanne seemed to represent the unsettled working-class.

The hypothesis developed for the purpose of this study: Prime time television is offering to its audience images of liberal feminism, although from different perspectives, through the television characters of Murphy Brown and Roseanne was supported in the fact that both characters did display liberal feminist behaviors...only Murphy Brown displayed more than Roseanne.

The outcome can be further demonstrated by the bar graphs on the following pages (Tables 1-8).

TABLE 1

BEHAVIOR 1: REJECTS DOMESTICITY



As Table 1 demonstrates, the behavior of rejecting domesticity meaning the private sphere of home, husband, and children being a woman's only contribution to society, was displayed slightly more by Murphy Brown than Roseanne.

Murphy Brown very often rejected the private sphere in programs 1 and 3. Program 1 saw Murphy feeling uncomfortable and fearful of her upcoming motherhood. In fact, during Program 1, Murphy is given a baby shower and during the event rejects the idea that motherhood will change her. She sees no need for fancy baby gifts or items to help mom get back in shape. During program 3, Murphy brings her newborn baby with her to work almost as if he is an extra briefcase. In both of these programs, Murphy seems to think motherhood won't phase her. In her mind, she is invincible and will handle motherhood like she does her career... organized and like a pro.

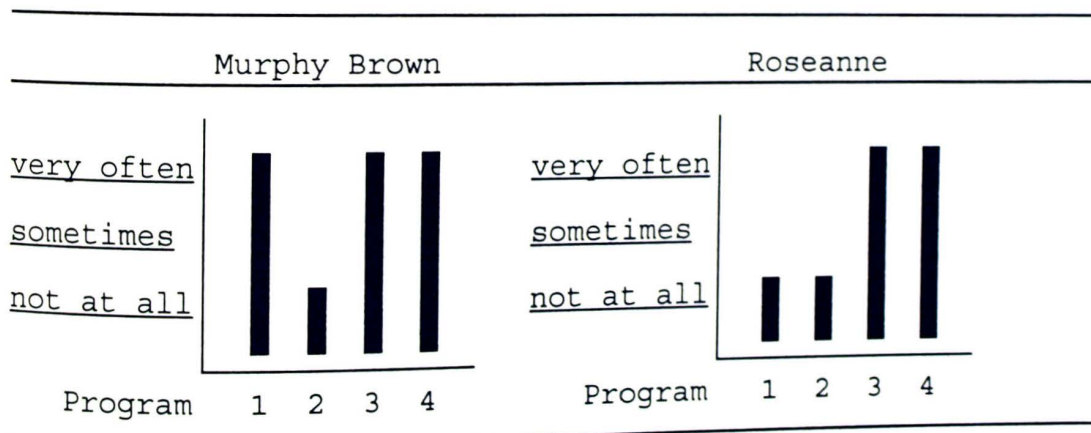
Program 2 saw Murphy only sometimes rejecting domesticity. In this program she delivers her child and we do see the beginnings of change in her. Though she still rejects certain aspects of motherhood, there is no doubt this child will alter her world.

Roseanne displayed no objections to domesticity during Programs 1 and 2, but by the third and fourth programs, there was an interesting change.

Programs 3 and 4 saw Roseanne very often rejecting domesticity. Her ever increasing desire to enter into the public sphere became more evident. These two programs saw Roseanne's desires become reality as she opens a restaurant and becomes a business woman.

TABLE 2

BEHAVIOR 2: PURSUES CAREER IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE



As Table 2 demonstrates, the behavior of pursuing a career in the public sphere, or business world, was once again displayed slightly more by Murphy Brown than Roseanne.

During programs 1, 3, and 4, Murphy Brown very often referenced to her position in the business world of television news. Whether it was how motherhood would never change her career motives in Programs 1 & 3, or her great enthusiasm when covering elections as in Program 4... Murphy strongly embraces the public sphere.

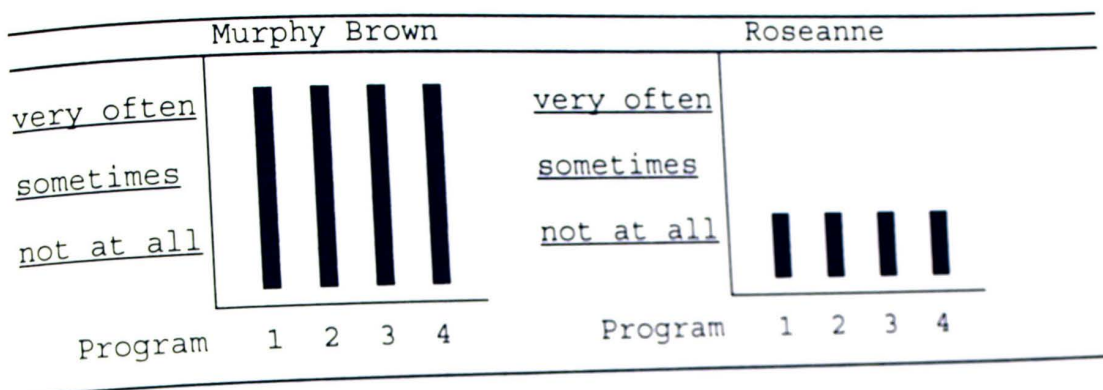
Roseanne's pursuit of the public sphere showed up very often by the third or fourth programs, but not at all in programs 1 and 2. This demonstrates Roseanne's growing desire to enter into the public sphere.

As she told her daughter Darlene in program 3, "I'd like to have something to show for my life besides stretch marks."

Roseanne embarks on making a different type of mark on the world during programs 3 and 4 as she establishes her own business... a restaurant.

TABLE 3

BEHAVIOR 3: ATTAINING ADVANCEMENT IN SOCIETY
THROUGH EDUCATION



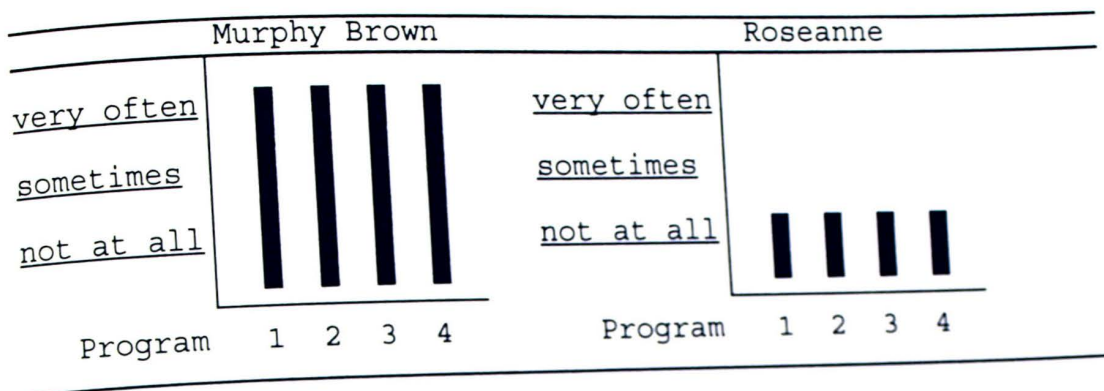
As Table 3 demonstrates, the behavior of attaining advancement in society through education was overwhelmingly displayed by Murphy Brown, but not at all by Roseanne.

This behavior was very often referenced to in all four Murphy Brown programs. In fact, this trait is quite evident with Ms. Brown. Everything about Murphy, her career, lifestyle, friends, and associates demonstrate the high level she's reached in her life through education. During Murphy's baby shower in Program 1, the guest list reads like a who's hot in television news. Powerful female journalists like Joan Lunden, Katie Couric, Faith Daniels, Paula Zahn, and Mary Alice Williams showed up to wish Murphy their best.

On the other hand, Roseanne demonstrated the struggles felt from lack of education. In all four programs, Roseanne struggled with unemployment, lack of finances, a desire to be more than what she was, and a desire for her children to have a better life.

TABLE 4

BEHAVIOR 4: HAS REACHED A LEVEL OF ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE



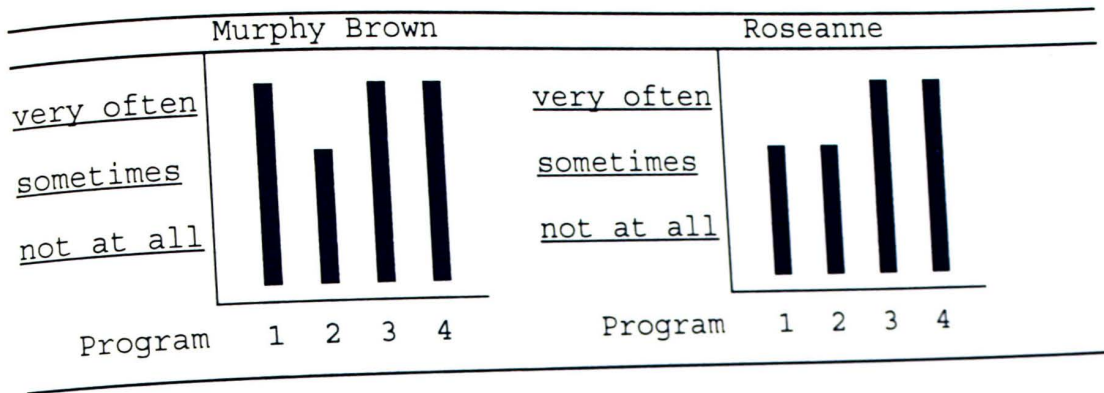
As Table 4 demonstrates, the behavior of reaching a level of economic independence was also overwhelmingly displayed by Murphy Brown, but not at all by Roseanne.

This behavior was very often referenced to in all four Murphy Brown programs. Once again, her career as a top television journalist, her lifestyle, friends, and associates demonstrated the rewards of economic independence. In fact, Murphy's decision to be a single mother is directly affected by her economic status. She had the money, power, and position to raise her child without the father's assistance.

On the other hand, Roseanne displayed no signs of economic independence. She was a blue collar worker who struggled daily with finances and a rocky job history. In the four programs viewed, it seemed Roseanne took for granted that struggle, on some level, would always be there.

TABLE 5

BEHAVIOR 5: EXERCISES A DEMOCRATIC POLITICAL PLATFORM



As Table 5 demonstrates, the behavior of exercising a democratic political platform was only slightly more represented by Murphy Brown than Roseanne.

Murphy Brown very often showed her democratic beliefs in programs 1, 3, and 4, and only sometimes in program 2. In programs 1, 3, and 4 Murphy often spoke of equal opportunity for all. She referenced to her support of liberals like Betty Friedan in program 2 and offered up her disdain for the Republican political party in program 4.

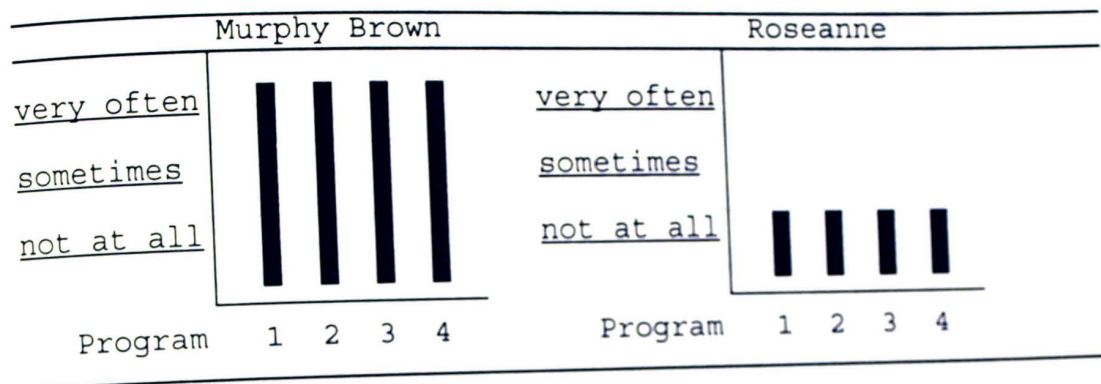
Roseanne sometimes made references to a democratic political platform in programs 1 and 2 through her desire to see her daughters have the opportunity to advance in society through education.

By programs 3 and 4, Roseanne's democratic stance seemed to strengthen. Her desire to enter the public sphere increased her opposition to what she claimed the male establishment. Roseanne voiced her demands for equal

opportunity in these programs and even showed support for a female friend who announced she was gay.

TABLE 6

BEHAVIOR 6: ENDEAVORS TO CHANGE FALSE IMAGES OF WOMEN



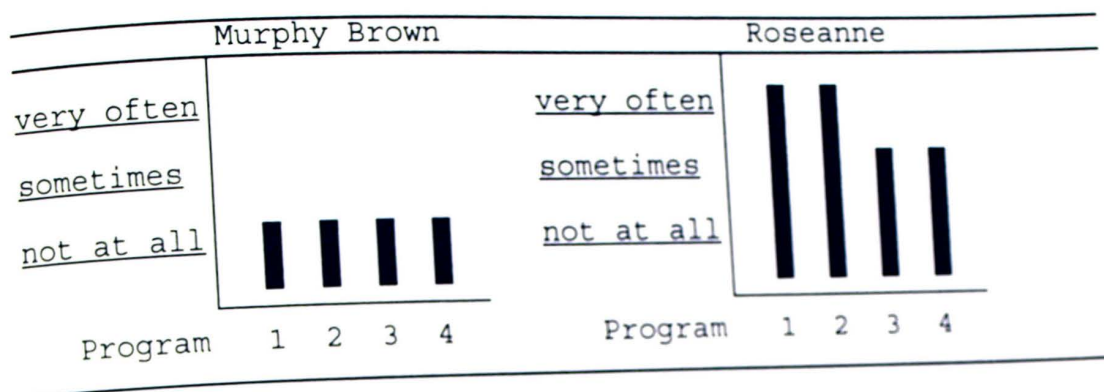
As Table 6 demonstrates, the behavior of endeavoring to change false images of women including images like that of sex objects, was overwhelmingly represented by Murphy Brown, but not at all in the four Roseanne programs viewed.

In all four of the Murphy Brown programs, Murphy challenged female stereotypes. She very often dressed in masculine clothing and was thought of by her work associates as strong and in control. These traits, characteristically, would be thought of as masculine ones. Murphy represented woman power and this was evident in all four programs.

Roseanne, however, never challenged these false images of women. Her challenge could be found more within the realm of fighting the blue collar, underdog syndrome.

TABLE 7

BEHAVIOR 7: VIEWS MARRIAGE AS AN EQUITABLE SHARING
OF RESPONSIBILITIES



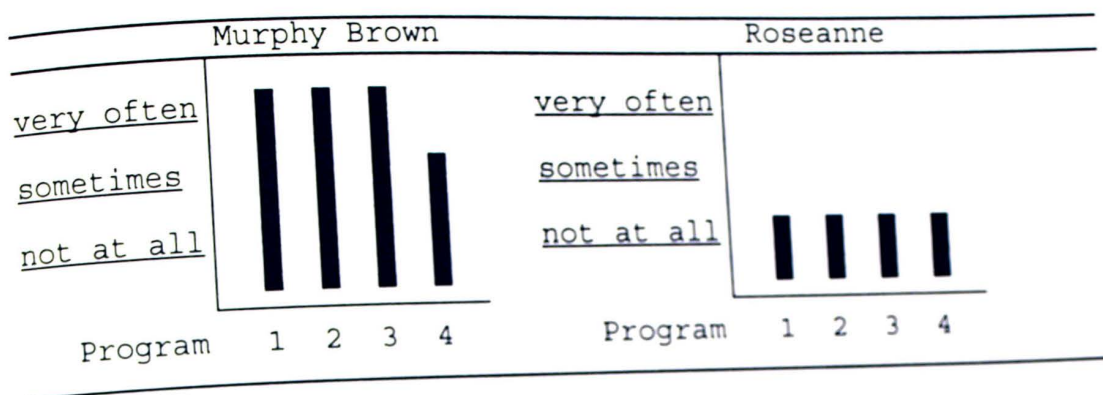
As Table 7 demonstrates, the behavior of viewing marriage as an equitable sharing of responsibilities was never referenced to in the four Murphy Brown programs, but was very often and sometimes referenced in the four Roseanne programs.

This is an interesting outcome because it displays Roseanne's push for equality in the home, but more so in the first two programs which were before she opened her business. In programs 3 and 4, her push for equality in the home fell from very often to sometimes. These programs illustrate how Roseanne's entrance into the public sphere began to decrease her demands for an equitable sharing of responsibilities on the homefront.

Since Murphy Brown is not married and does not have to share responsibilities with a husband, this behavior was never referenced to in the four Murphy Brown programs viewed.

TABLE 8

BEHAVIOR 8: PROTESTS IDEA THAT A WOMAN MUST CHOOSE
BETWEEN MARRIAGE/MOTHERHOOD AND A CAREER



As Table 8 demonstrates, the behavior of protesting ideas that women must choose between marriage/motherhood and a career were, once again, overwhelmingly displayed by Murphy Brown and not at all by Roseanne during the four programs viewed.

This behavior was very often referenced to in programs 1, 2 and 3 of Murphy Brown and only sometimes in Program 4.

The first three programs of Murphy Brown dealt with her decision to become a single mother and she often made reference to the fact that she could have both a career and a child. She was adamant about proving that neither sphere, public or private, would infringe upon the other and that she could find growing success in both.

The same behavior was never referenced to in the four Roseanne programs viewed. These programs suggested that Roseanne never made this type of conscious decision. In some respects, it seemed life led Roseanne and not vice versa.

It would be beneficial to document where television is going in regards to feminist images. Future research should examine one or both of the characters that were focused upon in this study and gather the earliest of the programs dating back to the 1980s. Compare the earliest programs with the most recent to see how each character's feminist beliefs have changed.

For example, this study showed that each character began crossing over into a sphere that was foreign to them. For Murphy Brown, the birth of her child opened up the private sphere to a woman whose life had been dedicated to the public sphere.

For Roseanne, her growing desire to be more than what she was led her to open the door to the public sphere through the opening of her restaurant. Her life, before this, was mainly dedicated to the private sphere of family and home. Examine these changes from when they first took place (September 1992) and document them to date. How has the crossing of spheres affected the feminist beliefs of these two characters?

One might also explore the implications these crossings have had on society. Has society been affected in a positive or negative light? For instance, has the character of Murphy Brown as career woman and single mother become a positive role model or are our children negatively affected

by images of one parent households?

Another suggestion for future research is comparing feminism on a larger scale. Compare more female characters on prime time television in the 1990s and evaluate feminist images. Suggestions of programs to consider would include Wings, Who's the Boss?, Sisters, Married with Children, Coach, and The Simpsons among others.

One situation comedy recently aired, Grace Under Fire, might be an interesting program to evaluate. There is no denying than Mary Tyler Moore laid the foundation for programs like Murphy Brown and Roseanne. On the same note, Murphy Brown and Roseanne lead the way for many television programs on the air today. Grace Under Fire is no exception.

It would be interesting to compare the main character on Grace Under Fire with the characters of Murphy Brown and Roseanne. Is this character a combination of traits represented by Murphy and Roseanne?

She is no doubt a blue collar worker with a sarcastic wit like that of Roseanne. However, she is a single mother like Murphy Brown and holds a position of power at work.

How are the images of equality represented at home and at the workplace? Is there a growing trend toward showing equality on the homefront or are television executives portraying feminism as distinct only to the workplace?

These are only a few suggestions to further the research explored in this study.

It is important to note that because of the study's selectivity it does not compare other female characters on prime time television. Therefore, a complete analysis of the images of liberal feminism on prime time television cannot be assumed. However, at least in the eight programs viewed from these two top prime time television series, we do get a feel for television's depiction of early 1990s feminism.

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