FASHIONING THE *CRAZY EX-GIRLFRIEND*:

COSTUME DESIGN AS MAD RESISTANCE IN THE POST-NETWORK ERA

by

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ABSTRACT

Until the relatively recent proliferation of feminist criticism, television studies and fashion studies have both been marginalized as frivolous and unimportant. Mental health research, now known within Disability Studies as Mad Studies, considers alternative methodologies rooted in anti-oppression against the representation of madness on television. These various fields, particularly research on madness, have been hidden discourses—whether feared (disability) or gendered feminine and therefore identified as non-consequential (fashion and television). Within these areas of research, intersectional perspectives have been neglected, which has allowed popular culture to perpetuate tired tropes and stereotypes in relation to the way mad individuals have been depicted, written, and importantly, costumed.

I unpack these complexities through *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* (2015–2019) as a subversive example of costume design's resistant possibilities. I analyze pivotal themes in the series by putting episode scenes, specific 'looks,' and an original interview with costume designer Melina Root into dialogue. Ultimately, as I argue, fashion on television, with its rising budgets and production quality, is complicit in the construction of on-screen female identities, particularly in regards to problematic 'crazy woman' tropes and othering representations of madness.

KEYWORDS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

On serialized scripted programming, we are gifted with a continuous relationship with its characters—the protagonist in particular. Narrative realism aside, we witness their love, success, and failure over the courses of years or sometimes decades. We become intimately acquainted with characters through the way they are meticulously constructed with the use of objects: in their domestic interior and lived spaces (set design), but particularly through how they are fashioned (costume design, including beauty and hair). Both active and passive viewers of television unconsciously 'read' their appearance to form opinions on their psychology, reaching far beyond simple aesthetics, but a nuanced space of television that remains mostly unscripted. In its current widespread form, television is ripe with opportunities, with a record number of new scripted series airing each year—487 original scripted series aired in 2017 (Figure 1). Television's diversification in the 21st century occurred in part through the personalization of characters, the exploration of their minds, evolving from the perpetuation of problematic depictions of insanity, madness, otherness, etc. (Harper 2009; Wahl 1995).

And yet, the academic literature on television, costume, and identity is inadequate given the significant shift in our contemporary television landscape, and television's influence on the fabrication of (costumed) stereotypes with real-life consequences for individuals living with those realities. There is little research to demonstrate a link between the representation of mental health and constructions of clothed mental health identities on-screen, despite seminal sociological theories on 'performance' of the self by Judith Butler and Erving Goffman.[1]

The primary purpose of this Major Research Project is to bridge the fields of Fashion Studies, Television Studies, and Mad Studies for the first time in academic scholarship. Mad

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[1] In my glossary (Appendix C), I articulate the way I use the words fashion/costume/dress/etc. interchangeably in this project, in order to break down fashion industry hierarchies. See more on page 103.

Studies, or the study of mental health through a cultural lens, is at the core of this project. To

connect these distinct areas, I forge new paths within my literature review and methodology to

analyze *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* (2015–2019) through its representations of madness and its

protagonist, Rebecca Bunch (played by Rachel Bloom). The result is a critique of normalcy

through the lens of Feminist Disability Theory, in which fashion on television is both a lens and

vehicle for communicating discourses of subversion and resistance. To probe, I shape two central

research questions around the themes that emerge:

1. What are the gaps and relationships between the fields of and methodological approaches in: Fashion Studies, Television Studies, Mad Studies, Disability Studies, and feminist theory?
2. How can fashion/costume/dress be utilized as a lens into identity representation for female protagonists on contemporary, 'post-network' television, and as a tool for anti-oppression? How do they contribute to unpacking or reinforcing normalcy?

In my literature review (Chapter 1), these various fields, particularly research on mental

health, have been hidden discourses—whether feared (disability) or neglected through its

gendering as feminine (fashion and television). Within these areas of research, intersectional

perspectives have been neglected. This has allowed popular culture to perpetuate tired tropes and

stereotypes in relation to the way mad individuals have been represented. Costume, or the way a

character on scripted television is fashioned, is a critical vehicle for representation and

communication. As Annamari Vänskä notes:

> The communicative nature of fashion is no new invention – it has been observed by the majority of writers and theorists addressing fashion and clothing since the early stages of industrialization and mass production in the 19th and 20th centuries (See e.g. Barnard, 1996; Crane, 2000; Entwistle, 2000). When fashion is understood as communication, researchers look at the processes by which various meanings, including class, gender, sexuality and ethnicity, are constructed by clothing and other forms of bodily decoration.[2]

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[2] Annamari Vänskä, "'I am Lenni': Boys, Sexualisation, and the Dangerous Colour Pink," *Sexualities* 0, no. 0 (2017): 4.

These characters are too often fashioned to communicate violent inclinations, mental distress and the state of unraveling, or in psychiatric uniforms and straitjackets. Contemporary television, in light of niche audiences and the current diversification of series produced for streaming, is a gold rush for nuanced content. Network executives are increasingly interested in the monetization of niche stories by pushing boundaries and including intersectional representations. To separate fashion from the bodies and minds on television is to neglect a rich space of analysis, in which we can include representations of mental health with *identity*—mind and body, beyond Cartesian myths of their separation.[3]

Methodologically (Chapter 2), I prioritize Feminist Disability Theory and Cultural Studies knowledge to provide a new alternative approach to hierarchal methods of analysis. My data-collection for this project, through an original qualitative interview with costume designer Melina Root, pushes for more than simply a textual approach to the study of television. The field has historically prioritized audience-based research in 'sanist' ways, to uncover how audiences may be cultivating attitudes based on televised content. Along with feminist television scholars, I contend that this method is insufficient. In this section I am critical of Helen Warner's work within the area of fashion on television.[4] Her celebrity-driven analysis perpetuates hierarchies in the 'capital F' fashion industry. By speaking to a costume designer directly, I am able to clarify the discursive context in which costume is made, performed, and linked to character mind-body identities.

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[3] I reflected on the implications of this theoretical framework for transgender and non-binary identity, but I landed on similar conclusions: the mind and body are in sync, in which we experience the world through both, simultaneously. This occurs regardless of how we feel our body is representative of our mind. In fact, that identification only proves *corporeal consciousness* to be an important lens of analysis: our mind is able to understand if our bodies are in sync with our self-conception of gender identity. To suggest they are separate entities feels transphobic and dismissive, in my opinion, though this project is primarily concerned with women-identified protagonists and the way mental health intersects with that particular identity.
[4] As I note in this chapter, her work is nonetheless groundbreaking and the first attempt to analyze fashion on television.

A critically acclaimed contemporary television series, *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* (2015–2019) is an ideal case study in regards to fashioning mental health identity (Chapter 3). I focus primarily on protagonist Rebecca Bunch—a cisgender, white woman diagnosed with Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) in the third season. There are potentially thousands of threads, narratives, and scenes to analyze in the forty-four episodes that have aired thus far. In my hour-long interview with Root, five major themes emerged. First, the negotiation of fictionalized *real (material) space* and *metaphorical space* between Rebecca's lived existence and 'music videos' that occur in her mind. Second, the gendered nature of *hysteria*, and how this characterization is subverted in the television title sequences (TTS) and the series itself. Third, intended colour symbolism in the series as embodied through dress, and its relationship to Rebecca's mental health. Fourth, Rebecca's multiple makeovers as an attempt to wedge herself into her perception of normality. Finally, I compare her BPD diagnosis with her suicide attempt, and tackle the romanticizing of mental health in relation to Rebecca's quest to find her true or 'natural' identity.

Throughout this project, I am guided by my lived experience as an able-bodied, cisgender male, operating in areas of privilege. As Carla Rice thoughtfully explores in *Feminism & Psychology*, "issues of interpretation intensify when researching and writing across physical differences distorted by colonial and other hegemonic histories and legacies."[5] Within researcher-participant dilemmas of ethics, power, and difference, I strive to remain as critical and self-reflexive as possible upon discussing the representation of women and mental health.[6] Thus, I feel comfortable declaring myself as a self-identified mad scholar, who has had experience in multiple psychiatric spaces (therapy, group therapy), the outcomes of a biomedical chronic

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[5] Carla Rice, "Imagining the Other? Ethical Challenges of Researching and Writing Women's Embodied Lives," *Feminism & Psychology* 19, no. 2 (2009): 245.
[6] Ibid, 245.

depression and anxiety diagnosis, and the way I have gravitated towards 'mentally ill'

protagonists on television.[7] Rice centres personal history in the research process:

> Because subjectivities are neither disembodied nor detached, researchers' personal histories, physicalities and positionalities necessarily inform the theoretical stories they tell. When emotion, perception, imagination and other dimensions of the bodily self are the main instruments of data creation, dilemmas of researchers' embodied subjectivities are not resolved but become central ethical considerations in research.[8]

My knowledge is subjective and from my lens as the vehicle delivering an analysis of *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* and Rebecca Bunch's costumed identities on television.

To conclude this project, a culmination of a two-year Master's degree in fashion at

Ryerson University, I posit my literature review, methodology, and case study analysis

contribute to advancing knowledges of the mind-body paradigm as it is understood and

represented on television. Further, I insist on integrating this discourse and research perspective

into fashion and performance pedagogy, in order to provide a more nuanced understanding of

costume as integral to our reception of television. Unlike film, television and the costume

designer have been neglected due to screen hierarchies of low culture. In a 'golden age' of 'peak

television', we must not discount the effect of representation during a mental health crisis

exemplified by school shootings and barriers to resources and access for addiction and poverty.

As Mad Studies and Feminist Disability Theory encourages, we must unpack mental health

beyond a biomedical or psychiatric perspective. Through fashioning the female protagonist on

contemporary television, this MRP seeks to unpack areas of resistance against the structures and

systems that affect our mental health.

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[7] The ironic, comical relationship between an 'episode' of television (the very definition of television) and the 'depressive episode' is not lost on me.
[8] Ibid, 246.

CHAPTER 1

BRIDGING THE GAPS BETWEEN TELEVISION STUDIES, FASHION STUDIES, AND MAD STUDIES

Previous research reveals we perceive *certain* identities through dress, a unique space of resistance against normative and often oppressive structures—gender, sexuality, hegemony, normalcy, and psychological stability. In order to understand how costume designers may use this space as resistance in this literature review, I examine the gaps and possible connections between feminist television criticism, the rise and responsibilities of the costume designer, frameworks on fashioning the body and the implications of Cartesian mind/body dualities, and finally, Mad Studies or mental health research and its tense relationship with television and media. Throughout and central to my intersectional research approach, I outline the profound marginalization of mad women on television. Television, fashion, women, and mental health have all been historically linked through parallel struggles, at some point each deemed unimportant, frivolous, or unstable.

The goal of this literature review is to bridge the gap between these distinct fields, in order to pave the way for future research and inquiry into the relationships between television, madness, and fashion. This yet unexplored area is crucial to understanding how madness is constructed on television through the female protagonist. More than a path forward, I provide a needed toolkit or framework on how to 'read' and conceptualize the dressed representations of characters and madness within an academic context, informing my analysis of *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend*.

Feminist Television Criticism and 'Fashion Television'

The literature on fashion and television is scarce and representative of only a small selection of series, many of which have concluded. Unlike film, fashion on television is a much smaller, newer area of scholarly inquiry, despite the sheer volume of costumes required for each series. Costume on television is typically considered as part of production design, and rarely afforded more than a few paragraphs in a book for its creation process (Butler 2002; Byrne 1993; La Motte 2010). Its intersection with Cultural Studies took place through feminist television critics in the 1960s–70s, who "developed a strong interest in relating television to its wider discursive, social, institutional, and historical contexts."[9] Feminist criticism strives to critique stereotypes, expand and celebrate the expansive definition of 'woman' (Kaplan 1992). There is a significant scholarly legacy for research on female-led scripted drama series since Julie D'Acci's *Defining Women: Television and the Case of Cagney & Lacey* (1994). Case studies and anthologies have explored the female hero (Barnes 2007), African-American women on-screen (Springer 2008), agency (Finding & MacLachlan 2007), broader historical insights (Lotz 2006; Spangler 2003), intersectional representations (Meyer 2015), and even mental health in relation to nationalism and *Homeland*'s protagonist (Bevan 2015). However, there has been little focus on wardrobe and its relationship to the female lead character as a *central* lens beyond mise en scene.

Like fashion (Wilson 2003), television has often been marginalized as low culture in comparison to film's prestige. They both represent domestic spheres; television has historically been consumed in the home (Kilborn 1992). Television's homogeneity as a 'central cultural forum,' observed through audience reception, has taken precedence over a Cultural Studies

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[9] Charlotte Brunsdon and Lynn Spigel, *Feminist Television Criticism: A Reader*, 2nd ed. (Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2008), 8.

inquiry due to television's marginalization as mass culture, feminine, and therefore unworthy of analysis beyond its effect on audiences.[10] In 1981, sociologist Jean Baudrillard declared television as no longer spectacular, but "the mutation of the real into the hyperreal" as part of his theories on the simulacra. He claimed television manipulates us into submission.[11] More recently, Michael Z. Newman and Elana Levine have argued that television's early cultural significance was "a commercial medium in domestic feminine spaces [that] led to its 'negative associations on the perceived class and gender identities of the mass audience.'"[12] Other scholars have used frameworks on audience analysis, network strategies, the sole focus on 'quality' or 'prestige' TV, and marketing to "validate their feminized object of study."[13] In each of these cases, television is framed as mass culture, therefore reducing its potential for nuanced 'reading' on carefully-crafted, artistic output.

In light of rising television quality, production budgets, and competition between networks and series, costume on television has become a crucial aspect of television content's 'look' and identity.[14] The Fashion Institute of Design & Merchandising Museum in Los Angeles curates a yearly television exhibition in order to display the year's top costume creations.[15] The gallery's simple space serves as a visual reminder of the methodical thought process behind the aesthetics of each series, and the work involved in building or assembling the wardrobe of each character. Helen Warner's *Fashion on Television,* published in 2014, represents the first attempt

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[10] Elana Levine, "Teaching the Politics of Television Culture in a 'Post-television' Era," *Cinema Journal* 50, no. 4 (2011): 177.
[11] Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans. Sheila Glaser (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1994), 55.
[12] Taylor C. Miller, "The Fashion of Florrick and FLOTUS: On Feminism, Gender Politics, and 'Quality Television,'" *Television & New Media* 18, no. 2 (2016): 5.
[13] Taylor Nygaard and Jorie Lagerway, "Broadcasting Quality: Re-centering Feminist Discourse with The Good Wife," *Television & New Media*, June 2016: 3.
[14] Jonathan Gray and Amanda Lotz, *Television Studies* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2012), 53.
[15] Valli Herman, "FIDM Continues to Celebrate Costume Design Fit for the Small Screen," *LA Times*, September 16, 2016.

to develop a methodology for researching dress on television, the first significant call for new methods. She touches on series famously known for their costume design and relationship to the fashion industry: *Sex and the City* (1998–2004), *Ugly Betty* (2006–2010), *Gossip Girl* (2007–2015), and *Mad Men* (2007–2015), as main examples.[16] Warner draws conclusions based on scene-specific moments in relationship to character, narrative, and overall themes and contributions. She extends this analysis to cover some celebrity culture, although this is outside of the scope of my research. Perhaps inspired by these early, fashion-conscious series, scripted television is *leading* in its ability to capture public attention and mass, as well as niche, viewership.

Television's ambitious present is intertwined with its ability to produce costumes to satisfy the viewer, and provide "film-like" depth to cinematography and overall narrative. Previous cultural theory has suggested "film and television are profoundly different" on their respective audiences.[17] These mediums are most often viewed in opposing sites (the cinema versus the home), and therefore embody opposite experiences in regards to gaze and "spatial relationships."[18] Sandy Flitterman-Lewis argues television viewing captures us with its *presentness* and fragmentation, a mode meant for distracted viewing (also referred to as 'the glance'). As she writes:

> The unstable, reversible, and circular movement of this type of program thus frustrates our desire for closure, for it embeds interruption into the very heart of the discursive structure. Therefore, even in TV's most fictional forms—those places to which we would most readily look for the similarities between television and film—the TV apparatus organizes spectatorship quite differently, relying on proliferation rather than plenitude, perpetual deferral rather than fulfillment.[19]

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[16] Helen Warner, *Fashion on Television: Identity and Celebrity Culture* (London: New York, 2014).
[17] Sandy Flitterman-Lewis, "Psychoanalysis, Film, and Television," in *Channels of Discourse, Reassembled: Television and Contemporary Criticism*, ed. Robert Clyde Allen, 2nd ed. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 152.
[18] Ibid, 162.
[19] Ibid, 166.

Flitterman-Lewis's point of view may read as pessimistic of television's "perpetual deferral" structure, but it is precisely its strength. "Embed interruptions" in its programming is becoming less relevant in light of online streaming (though this comes with its own interruptions). Television's domesticity has led to both its marginalization and our mass cultural identification with the characters on-screen. This reality is, in part, constructed through the costume designer.

Moving Fashion: The Costume Designer

At the turn of the twentieth century, the escalator, the motion-picture camera, the rollercoaster, the assembly line, and other movement-based mechanical inventions began shifting the possibilities of physical movement.[20] Fashion auteur-designer Lady Duff Gordon, known as Lucile, was the first to build an indoor modelling stage in her salon to showcase what she called her "gowns of emotions" during this period.[21] She believed in the 'psychology of dress,' the embodiment of desires and personalities through clothing, as imagined through her moving fashion shows. A cultural relationship between movement, dress, and emotionality began to sweep the Western world. Previous access to fashion had been limited to: paintings, portraiture, magazines, fashion plates, theatre, musicals, or books of swatches in the case of Marie Antoinette (Weber 2007). Georg Simmel has argued that fashion spreads to the masses through a hierarchal trickle-down from the upper classes (Simmel 1957). Herbert Blumer later rebutted this notion by pointing to the formation of *collective taste*, suggesting cultural mediators and subjectivities play an under-research position in fashion's fast-changing model (Blumer 1969). Blumer explores these ideas in the 1960s during the emergence of colour television. He fails to

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[20] Caroline Evans, *The Mechanical Smile: Modernism and the First Fashion shows in France and America, 1900-1929* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013), 29.
[21] Ibid, 41.

mention fashion on-screen. Media, film, and television are integral to *collective taste.*
Industrialized department stores and high-end fashion shows gave clothing a new dimension, but
film and television disseminate "a Look or a message faster than any other medium except the
internet," according to Cinema Studies scholar Drake Stutesman.[22] Television, like film, has held
a symbiotic, mutual connection with fashion.

Fashion on television represents a very small disciplinary link between Fashion Studies
and Television Studies. Its more prestigious predecessor, Film Studies, has pushed against the
discipline's lack of scholarly inquiry in aesthetics and costume design. A gap in criticism has
remained since Clare West's involvement in *Birth of a Nation* in 1912 as the first known
costume designer (Bruzzi 1997; Gaines and Herzog 1990, Munich 2011; Pidduck 2004). West
popularized the practice, despite the implications of her disturbing role in the resurgence of the
Ku Klux Klan in the United States. These viewers identified with the film's white supremacist
ideals and its embodiment through costume. As Ruth D. Johnston notes:

> *The Birth of a Nation* demonstrates how blackface performance may advance a racist
> agenda … Doane describes the white robes of the Ku Klux Klan as "a form of
> masquerade which conceals an identity" rather than a "non-identity" as in the case of
> female masquerade, thereby suggesting that, like blackface, masquerade in *The Birth of a
> Nation* also serves to preserve an intact white male identity.[23]

Still, the role of the costume designer in the creation of on-screen identities and its repercussions
has not been properly researched due to hierarchies and gendered production. The (historically
female) costume designer is considered a "below-the-line" worker, whereas "above-the-line"
directors, writers, and actors (historically masculinized professions) are credited for the critical

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[22] Drake Stutesman, "Costume Design, or, What is Fashion in Film?," in *Fashion in Film*, ed. Adrienne Munich
(Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2011), 18.
[23] Ruth D. Johnston, "The Construction of Whiteness in the Birth of a Nation and the Jazz Singer," *Quarterly Review
of Film and Video* 28, no. 5 (2011): 382.

success of a film.[24] The line refers to contributions to the 'symbolic meaning' of a product, and those below specialize in technical skill (Hesmondhalgh 2007).[25] These hierarchies have informed studies on costume and cinema (classical and contemporary), which have been "guided by more traditional screen hierarchies which privilege narrative over mise en scene" (Berry 2000; Cook 1996; Harper 1987; Street 2002; Wollen 1995).[26]

According to these scholars, costume design is overpowered and ignored in favour of the film itself—despite the fashion industry's occasional involvement in costume production, and bringing Hollywood couture to the masses (75 million Americans went to the movies weekly by the 1930s).[27] Costume design on film is now known to play "on our deepest responses to clothes and all their aspects (shape, colour, texture), aspects which augment, indeed almost stand in for, our perceptions of sex, authority, comfort/discomfort, and stature."[28] Film scholar Jane Gaines suggests the glamourization of film through fashion in the 1930s served as an attempt to massage the economy following The Great Depression, prompting a fraught relationship between the haute couture fashion industry and costume designers (Berry 2000; Gaines and Herzog 1990).[29] In some cases, 'artist' fashion designers have been unable to comply to the demands of the screen. Costume designers have had to re-work contemporary designs to fit the needs of a film and receive inadequate credit.[30] Coco Chanel famously did not complete a $1 million Hollywood costume design contract in 1931, returning early to her atelier in Paris; she was unable to fulfill the labourious production schedule.[31]

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[24] Warner, *Fashion on Television,* 41.
[25] Ibid*,* 41.
[26] Ibid*,* 6.
[27] Stutesman, "Costume Design", 33.
[28] Ibid, 20.
[29] Warner, *Fashion on Television*, 33.
[30] Ibid, 33.
[31] Ibid, 33.

Scholars and journalists identify contemporary costume design as styling, associating the career with shopping and consumption versus art production, "clearly coded as feminine practices."[32] On-screen costume is commercially rich with opportunities, and fashion designers are able to inscribe their objects with logos or signatures to designate it with value (Bourdieu 1993).[33] Outside of the museum setting, the costume designer is denied ownership of their objects for "narrative realism": a viewer can easily identify a real-life fashion brand in a film or series.[34] Costuming is therefore "purely creative," and not primarily motivated by financial gain. For instance, *Felicity* (1998–2002) costume designer Linda Serijan-Fasmer refused gifted wardrobe from Calvin Klein considering its monetary and symbolic value did not align with the narrative or protagonist.[35] I hesitate to position costume designers as completely inhibited from economic repercussions of their designs, but I contend costuming is far more complex than a simple arrangement of luxury brands in its relationship with identities and the body.

Fashioning Bodies on Television

Mental health is one of many facets of our identity. Erving Goffman (1971) has theorized extensively on the psychoanalytic process of normalizing clothing and appearance in order to mediate the "presentation of the self."[36] On the other hand, Joanne Entwistle suggests the study of dress as *situated bodily practice*, or a more wholesome methodological framework to understand "the body, dress and culture" as a simultaneous relationship—a more intersectional approach.[37] Unfortunately, traditional studies in the fields of Art History and Cultural Studies

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[32] Ibid, 44.
[33] Ibid, 44.
[34] Ibid, 45.
[35] Ibid, 47
[36] Joanne Entwistle, *The Fashioned Body: Fashion, Dress, and Modern Social Theory*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2015), 11.
[37] Entwistle, *Fashioned Body*, 11.

separate adornment from the body by looking at dress as a system of signs (Hebdige 1979) or as

texts (Barthes 1983). As Christopher Breward explores in his comprehensive history of fashion

during the Elizabethan Era (1558–1603), dress in visual culture communicates complex visual

symbols on personal identity, wealth, status, etc.[38] These emblems are visible and invisible

knowledge made 'readable' through Michel Foucault's theory of *resemblance:*

> Up to the end of the sixteenth century, *resemblance* played a constructive role in the
> knowledge of Western culture. It was resemblance that largely guided exegesis and the
> interpretation of texts; it was resemblance that organized the play of symbols, made
> possible knowledge of things visible and invisible, and controlled the art of representing
> them.[39]

Near the end of the sixteenth century, self-presentation and physical/emotional naturalism began

to take precedent in portraiture. Etymological change in the meaning of *fashion* began to shift

from a verb or action to a "way of designating the forming of a self."[40] Portraiture became less

about *resemblance* and symbols, but as "vehicles of human emotions and feeling."[41] Breward

cites melancholy as an example, which has been conceptualized through untidy, negligent

clothing. The shift is remarkably important in considering dress as inseparable from the mind,

and extension, the body—a simultaneous relationship.

Public arenas nearly always require clothing (with some rare exceptions), and television

is historically one of the most clothed of these arenas. Foucault has written on censorship and

repression as a form of power, sex becoming a "public issue" and "a whole web of discourses."[42]

Strict broadcast standards and censorship have long hid the nude body under clothes, sheets,

towels, or other objects. Censorship maintains a broad audience appeal given its advertising-tied

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[38] Christopher Breward, *The Culture of Fashion* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1995), 66.
[39] Ibid, 69.
[40] Ibid, 69.
[41] Ibid, 68.
[42] Michel Foucault, *The Repressive Hypothesis*, trans. Robert Hurley, vol. 2, 4 vols., The History of Sexuality (New York, NY: Vintage, 1985), 26.

programming. Television is also complicit in its depictions of normative bodies. Typically, slender, white men and women in order to satisfy the idea of 'quality TV' and its predominantly white audience (McCabe & Akass 2007). Contemporary ideals of beauty requires strict self-discipline, of which Elizabeth Wilson (1992) argues is "more powerful and demanding" than nineteenth century corsets, "requiring great effort and commitment on the part of the individual which was not required by the corset wearer."[43] Conditioning the body as a project, Entwistle argues, is not simply about health, but about "feeling good: increasingly, our happiness and personal fulfilment is pinned on the degree to which our bodies conform to contemporary standards of health and beauty."[44] Thus, like gender, dress and the body is also located in the mind through cultural mediation. By using references to *mind*, *consciousness*, *mood,* and *happiness*, Entwistle invests power in the relationship between dress and mental health identity, and how these elements are negotiated by our socio-cultural environment. As Foucault argues, "those whose bodies are invested in by power can therefore subvert that same power by resisting or subverting it."[45] As bodies occupying space, our mental health is policed and disciplined through the status quo and expectations of heterosexual patriarchal hegemonies. The separation of mind and body has been historically popularized by Cartesian dualisms, a binary in which the mind is associated with thinking and reasoning, and the body as a separate, material entity.[46]

A number of concepts have rebutted this dualism, including *corporeal consciousness*, in which our "perception (of the world) is not cognitive … but rather occurs through a 'thinking' body, which is seen to have particular kinds of intelligences and competences."[47] Anthropologist

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[43] Entwistle, *Fashioned Body*, 20.
[44] Ibid, 19.
[45] Ibid, 13.
[46] Lisa Blackman, *The Body: The Key Concepts* (Oxford, UK: Berg, 2008), 84.
[47] Ibid, 83.

David Howes suggests industrialization and contemporary urbanity has caused a rift in our everyday experience of *corporeal consciousness*. For instance, Howes understands skin or the sensation of touch as "a form of intelligent bodily knowing that forms an important component to our sense-making activity."[48] I propose we consider clothing as an integral aspect of the human-mind-body connection. We experience our *corporeal consciousness* in tandem with *situated bodily practice*: clothing and the body's context and our minds as one. This idea is not new, as identity scholars have long argued the effects of clothing on identity and behaviours, or vice versa (Goffman 1959; Stone 1962). Hajo Adam and Adam D. Galinsky coined *enclothed cognition*, or the relationship between physical experiences of clothing and embodied symbolic power—not only over others, but over ourselves. They argue, "the effects of wearing a piece of clothing cannot be reduced to the wearer simply feeling identified with the clothing. Instead, there seems to be something special about the physical experience, and this experience constitutes a critical component of enclothed cognition."[49]

In this research inquiry, I will not attempt to navigate *enclothed cognition* or *corporeal consciousness*. Rather, I am using these frameworks to highlight previous investigations on the link between mental health, the body, and clothing. The minds of characters on film and television are fictionally imagined by writers and interpreted by viewers. However, actors themselves have bodies, and these bodies are nearly always clothed. In fact, actors report they feel they understand their character's psychology and identity once having worn their costume—bringing to life a psychologically complex character.[50]

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[48] David Howes, "Skinscapes: Embodiment, Culture, and Environment," in *The Book of Touch*, ed. Constance Classen (Oxford, UK: Berg, 2005), 27.
[49] Hajo Adam and Adam D. Galinsky, "Enclothed Cognition," *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 48, no. 4 (2012): 922.
[50] Stutesman, "Costume Design", 21.

Reclaiming Madness and Intersectional Identities in the Media

My research aims to bridge the gaps between mental health representation in media, Television Studies, and fashion. Due to audience-based research's centrality as a data collection method in the early inception of Television Studies, a majority of research on mental health depictions are filtered through a focus on mass media's impact on the viewer.[51] Television Studies has prioritized audience reception over textual or aesthetic consideration, with seminal ideas around broadcast flow and cultivation analysis (Fiske and Hartley 2007; Williams 1974), and more recently in conjunction with mental health (Connor-Greene 2006; Diefenbach and West 2007; Heaton and Wilson 1995). These studies sought to draw conclusions on collective attitudes through quantitative survey data to determine "realities" legitimized by "mainstream rituals and mythologies…along socially functional and conventionally accepted lines."[52] Many of these inquiries on television and mental health reveal inaccurate, ableist, and problematic overgeneralizations.

Jum C. Nunnally began this scientific tradition at the University of Illinois in 1961, publishing the findings of a six-year study in *Popular Conceptions of Mental Health, their Development and Change*. The book intended to "report basic research relating to opinion-attitude investigation findings" and provide mental health professionals with a "practical guide."[53] The study examined public levels of information and attitudes by using scenes, newspaper clips, or other media samples. By analyzing initial public opinions, Nunnally developed ten 'information factors' that would be used as coding categories for a "content

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[51] This is also referred to as Reception Studies, Reception Theory, Audience Reception, Cultivation Studies, Cultivation Theory (each varying ways of approaching the idea I explore here).

[52] Gerbner, George and Larry Gross. "Living with Television: The Violence Profile." *Journal of Communication* 26, (1976): 176.

[53] Jum C. Nunnally, *Popular Conceptions of Mental Health, their Development and Change,* (New York, NY: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1961), 1.

analysis" of the media. The first three categories are representative of tropes and perceptions of

the early 1960s:

> I. Look and act different (subhuman). The mentally ill are recognizably different in
> manner and appearance from normal persons.
> II. Will power. Will power is the basis of personal adjustment. Person who remain
> mentally ill do not "try" to get better.
> III. Sex distinction. Women are more prone to mental disorder than men are. Women
> worry more than men and more often have "nervous breakdowns."[54]

In his conclusions, Nunnally hopes "the public will come to devalue the mentally ill *less*."[55] He

surmises widespread stigma to be "unreasonably extreme."[56] However, he shares his view of

mad people as being unpleasant, having violent inclinations, and being unproductive are false

mischaracterizations and overgeneralizations.

Subsequent research on media, television, and depictions of mental health concluded

their complicity in the perpetuation of negative stereotypes and tropes (Fruth and Padderud 1985;

Wahl and Roth 1982). As television proliferated in popularity and the VCR prompted

opportunities for more in-depth content analysis, scholars pursued sample studies. Media

communications scholar Nancy Signorielli drew on 17 week-long program samples collected

from 1969–1985, resulting in 71.1% of prime-time dramatic adult characters portraying mental

illness as hurt or killers.[57] In 1997, mass communication scholar Donald L. Diefenbach "found

that characters who were portrayed as mentally disordered were 10 times more violent than the

[real-life] general population."[58] Content analysis, survey research, and criminology literature

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[54] The responses received from a "Champaign sample" were "factor analyzed," according to Nunnally, "a
mathematical procedure for grouping items so that the items in each group show a relatively high correlation with
one another and a relatively low correlation with items in other groups." (p. 17)
[55] Nunnally, *Popular Conceptions*, 50. Added emphasis in italics.
[56] Nunnally, *Popular Conceptions*, 50
[57] Nancy Signorielli, "The Stigma of Mental Illness on Television," *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 33,
no. 3 (1989): 327.
[58] Donald L. Diefenbach and Mark D. West, "Television and Attitudes Toward Mental Health Issues: Cultivation
Analysis and the third-person Effect," *Journal of Community Psychology* 35, no. 2 (2007): 182.

(Teplin 1985) all point to television as a main source of information on mental health for viewers and the general population in North America, shaping attitudes and perceptions through often damaging representation.[59] As Diefenbach and West write, some mental disorders *do* correlate with real life violence, but disproportionately on television.[60] This discrepancy, compounded with criminology literature (Walsh and Fahy 2002), imply these characterizations are dangerous to continue perpetuating.

According to Otto F. Wahl's *Media Madness* (1995), a turning point in scholarly work on madness in the media, "television is certainly the medium about which I am asked the most concerning media depictions of mental health."[61] By 1995, and still to this day, many (if not all) television series across genres include short-term or long-term depictions of mental health. Building on Wahl's research, Stephen Harper's *Madness, Power and the Media* (2009) claims a list of such depictions could never be exhaustive.[62] According to a survey released by the Time for Change Campaign in the United Kingdom in November 2014, 54% of 872 respondents "said that seeing a well-known character on screen with mental illness improved their understanding of mental health problems."[63] Time for Change's findings conclude representations of mental health have the power to normalize an otherwise 'abnormal' illness or disability.

These representations take place, in part, through *media appearance perception*, or "the process of observing and making evaluations or drawing inferences based on how people

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[59] Ibid,183.
[60] Ibid, 184.
[61] Otto F. Wahl, *Media Madness: Public Images of Mental Illness* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 5.
[62] Stephen Harper, *Madness, Power and the Media: Class, Gender and Race in Popular Representations of Mental Distress* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 11.
[63] Rowena Carter, "How to Stop Making a Crisis Out of a Drama: Towards Better Portrayal of Mental Ill Health in Television and Film." *BMJ: British Medical Journal* 350, (2015): 1-2.

look."[64] This includes dress and the constructions of identity on the part of the costume designer. Though this is a psychoanalytic theorizing of dress and identity (Davis 1982; Flügel 1950), I am less concerned with the attempt to uncover the conscious and unconscious processes of a television viewer, which returns us to problematic audience-based methodologies. In her book, *The Social Psychology of Clothing: Symbolic Appearances in Context*, Susan Kaiser contends "case studies of psychologically disturbed individuals may not be indicative of the general public's conscious or unconscious thinking about clothing."[65] By making this vague claim and omitting madness from her analysis, Kaiser leads me to question the validity of approaching dress through psychoanalysis at all; for individuals who identify as mad, where does a researcher ethically draw the line between *psychologically disturbed* and *psychologically sound*? The cultural construction of the *psychologically disturbed* upholds the civilized/primitive binary, vastly limiting potential findings—all ableist ways to analyze dress, bodies, and varied lived experiences.

Mad Studies grew out of discourses during "the ever-shifting relations between psychiatry, society, the individual, and the state" in the 1960s-70s (Foucault 1964).[66] In a contemporary context, its central claim has been a "radical reclaiming of psychic spaces of resistance against the psychiatric domination of Mad people as a collection of chemical imbalances needing to be corrected in a capitalist system that prizes bourgeois conformity."[67] Even its identification, *mad* or *madness*, suggests a subversive alternative to the more common 'mental illness', "as a way of naming and responding to emotional, spiritual, and neuro-

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[64] Susan B Kaiser, *The Social Psychology of Clothing and Personal Adornment*, (New York: Macmillan Pub. Co, 1985), 7.
[65] Ibid, 20.
[66] Brenda A. LeFrançois, Robert J. Menzies, and Geoffrey Reaume, *Mad Matters: A Critical Reader in Canadian Mad Studies.* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press, 2013): 3
[67] Ibid, 2

diversity."[68] Its etymological roots belong in the 14th century, but have infiltrated contemporary activist and scholarly work worldwide, and follows other Foucauldian "strategic reversibilities of power" or reverse discourse identity reclamations: *queer*, *black*, and *fat* activism.[69] Each of these umbrella terms encompass a range of experiences, positionalities, and social categories in opposition to normality or the status quo. Rosemarie Garland-Thomson coined *normate* as the "constructed identity of those, by way of bodily configurations and cultural capital they assume, can step into a position of authority and wield the power it grants them."[70] The term encourages a self-reflexive point of view on *normal* as the designated cultural standard, a standard reflected in government policy, media representation, and the dehumanizing of those designated *other*. Mad Studies is built on the legacy of a number of established branches of knowledge: "labour studies, women's studies/gender studies, LGBTQ studies, equity studies, sexuality studies, black studies, disability studies, deaf studies, queer studies, black queer studies, dementia studies, fat studies, religious studies, postcolonial studies, transnational studies, diaspora studies, and communication studies."[71] This holistic perspectives looks beyond symptoms or a diagnosis, but at discursive social and economic contexts.[72] While fashion studies is not included on that list, current scholarship is pushing for intersectional critique of the fashion industry's perpetuation of hegemonic ideals in regards to gender, race, queerness, and disability (Barry 2015; Klepp, Grimstad and Rysst 2017; Mears 2010; Stokes 2015; Wissinger 2015). Therefore, it is crucial for my current and future research to overlap with binary systems of gender, race, and disability through the lens of fashion.

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[68] Ibid, 10.
[69] Ibid, 10.
[70] Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature* (New York, NY: Colombia University Press, 1997), 8.
[71] LeFrancois et al, *Mad Matters*, 12.
[72] Ibid, 3.

Madness's gendered construction became clear during second wave feminism and Phyllis Chesler's *Women and Madness* (1972), "advancing the thesis that women were held to different and higher standards of reason and normalcy than were men … the very constitution of sanity and 'mental illness' in the 20th-century society were anchored in the bedrock of male normativity."[73] The fashion industry has commonly constructed mental health as a feminine obligation through magazine emphasis on 'self-care' and 'balanced living,' and often as a promise of patriarchal subversion of the 'crazy woman' stereotype—duplicated through media representation.[74] On the other hand, male characters often beat their way through "psychic adversity by sheer strength of will," relying on their aggression and purposiveness, deemed psychologically capable via hegemonic masculinity.[75]

People of colour, notably Black identities, represent the least explored intersection in mental health and television research, overall.[76] On these representations, bell hooks writes, "the field of representation remains a place of struggle is most evident when we critically examine contemporary representations of blackness and black people."[77] Mass media, particularly television, socializes its audiences to internalize white supremacist agendas through these tropes; but what hooks calls "a culture of domination" can indeed be resisted.[78] Michel Foucault calls for "the critical thinker to search those margins, gaps, and locations on and through the body where agency can be found."[79] I contend dress (on the body) and mental health (through/in the body) are *readable* margins of representation crucially important for the critical communication of

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[73] Ibid, 6.
[74] Harper, *Madness*, 189.
[75] Ibid, 190.
[76] My original proposal aimed to analyze costume on *How to Get Away With Murder*. Although I was only able to focus on one series, I maintain intersectional analysis is needed within this research, whether or not it is beyond the scope of this specific project.
[77] bell hooks, *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (Brooklyn, NY: South End Press, 1992), 2.
[78] Ibid, 18.
[79] Ibid, 116.

historically white patriarchal supremacist mass media structures (television, in this case). Robert

McRuer's *Crip Theory: Cultural Signs of Queerness and Disability* (2006) works to denaturalize

and "question the order of things, considering how and why it is constructed … how it is

embedded in complex economic, social, and cultural relations; and how it might be changed."[80]

By grounding my research in Cultural Studies reveals how these facets of oppression are deeply

connected to one another. Moreover, these spaces offer opportunities for oppositional discourses.

      Mad Studies and feminist writers and activists work to bridge the gaps between clinical

psychology, Disability Studies, Cultural Studies, and away from purely audience-based

research.[81] Socially constructed barriers that disable individuals with impairments (physical

and/or mental) reverberate through media, and especially television. These barriers or structures

are continuously enforced through representation. Unlike film, which provides a 'tripartite'

"equilibrium-breakdown-recovery" in its representation of madness, television's continuous

format allows for dozens, if not hundreds, of episodes to explore nuanced, complex, and unique

narratives.[82] By focusing on the subversion of these conventions, my research aims to illuminate

the nuanced fluidity of madness as a facet of identity. These depictions provide depth and

complexity to the characters we follow on television, leading the viewer to a more empathetic

and wholehearted understanding of their mental state of mind. As Elizabeth England-Kennedy

writes on televised depictions of Attention Deficit Disorder, mindfulness is increased in

entertainment with the use of realism:

> Mindful viewers reflect on what they see and attempt to integrate it with other knowledge
> and cues. Stereotypes can be questioned in such cases and new attitudes can be constructed

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[80] Robert McRuer, *Crip Theory: Cultural Signs of Queerness and Disability* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 2.

[81] Jane Simpson and Carol Thomas, "Clinical Psychology and Disability Studies: Bridging the Disciplinary Divide on Mental Health and Disability," *Disability and Rehabilitation* 37, no. 14 (September 22, 2014): 1301.

[82] Harper, *Madness*, 103.

[…] Media representations of characters with disabilities can provide new, more humanizing representations and counteract negative models and stereotypes.[83]

An analysis of on-screen constructions of identity and representation are insufficient without a discussion of clothing and the body—the first visual cue for a viewer, but also the most intimate, socially-dependent representation of self.

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[83] Elizabeth S. England-Kennedy, "Representations of Attention Deficit Disorder: Portrayals of Public Skepticism in Popular Media," in *Mental Illness in Popular Media: Essays on the Representation of Disorders*, ed. Lawrence C. Rubin (Jefferson, London, CA: McFarland & Company, 2012), 28.

CHAPTER 2

ON A NEW METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH TO FASHION ON TELEVISION

There is a significant gap in approaches to fashion on television. Without a canon to draw from, part of this research aims to pave the way for future researchers who wish to study fashion on television through interdisciplinary modes. In my methodology, I provide a new framework for pursuing an interdisciplinary, Feminist Disability Studies analysis. I begin with a summary and justification of *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend*, followed by self-reflexivity to position myself as a mad-identified scholar. My methodology brings together radical disciplines rooted in activism and anti-oppression, positioning fashion as a tool in resisting constructs of normalcy and objective cultural truths. Finally, I break down my mixed methods approach to my findings: a qualitative interview with *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend*'s costume designer, Melina Root, a careful scene selection, and textual analysis informed by feminist television criticism and Mad Studies.

On Selecting 'Crazy Ex-Girlfriend'

On the heels of sexually progressive dramedy series the likes of *Girls* (2012–2017), *Broad City* (2014–2018), and *The Mindy Project* (2012–2017)*,* comedienne Rachel Bloom met with *The Devil Wears Prada*'s screenwriter Aline Brosh McKenna to develop the romantic comedy musical, *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* for The CW. Originally created for Showtime, the series had a subversive cable network appeal in mind before it aired between teen-oriented dramas such as *Supergirl* (2015–), *The 100* (2014–)*,* and *iZombie* (2015–). A shift from Showtime to The CW, or cable to broadcast, is still significant in our 'post-network' era. Broadcast networks remain highly censored and mediated due to commercials and advertisers, but series are no

longer confined to three major networks, or even cable programming with streaming's current popularity for viewers.

The CW did not reach any significant award acclaim until *Jane the Virgin* (2014–)'s first Golden Globe for Best Actress in a Comedy in 2015. The network has since developed series that reach beyond the expectations of teen genre television. The executive decision to greenlight a potentially subversive musical is a product of 'post-network' niche audience targeting as well as the diversification of contemporary televised content.[84] The series continuously pushes for intersectional representation in its cast, including various sexualities, nationalities, ethnicities, religions, and episodes/scenes on how they come together. Its narrative strength and critical acclaim has, since its first episode, been located within representations of mental health identity in its protagonist. Its first season earned Rachel Bloom a Golden Globe for Best Actress in a Comedy in 2016, and the series has been lauded by critics since its pilot. [85] *The New Yorker*'s Pulitzer-winning television critic Emily Nussbaum writes, "this show is just too juicy, and too bold, to nitpick."[86] The series concluded its third season in 2018, and despite dangerously low viewership ratings, it remains a critical success. Prolific media studies scholar Michael Z. Newman, the only scholar to publish a short review of *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* in *Film Criticism*, called it a "a show-stopping bright spot on the broadcast schedule":

> What gives *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* a subversive charge of uncomfortable satire is the tension between, on the one hand, the unfolding of the serialized rom-com/sitcom story, and on the other, the outrageous musical numbers made for YouTube as much as for airing on The CW on Monday nights at 8pm EST.[87]

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[84] I use televised here broadly as including streaming and broadcasted content. Television, in its current liminal iteration, is defined by its episodic nature rather than its relationship to ever-changing technologies.
[85] James Poniewozik, "'Crazy Ex-Girlfriend': Everything It Promised, and Then Some," *The New York Times*, April 18, 2016, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/18/arts/television/crazy-ex-girlfriend-season-1-finale.html.
[86] Emily Nussbaum, "Glee Club: Fresh Starts on 'Crazy Ex-Girlfriend' and 'Younger'," *The New Yorker*, January 25, 2016, https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2016/01/25/glee-club.
[87] Michael Z. Newman, "The Rom-com/Sitcom/YouTube Musical: Crazy Ex-Girlfriend," *Film Criticism* 40, no. 3 (2016).

Previous to its Golden Globe award, I admit I hesitated in adding the series to my weekly diet; my biases on its title and network associations clouded my ability to consider it with seriousness until it achieved considerable critical acclaim. This speaks to my pre-conceived assumptions on a series tackling the Crazy Ex-Girlfriend tropes: that it may present them simply, frivolously, and I would leave my watching experience disappointed. Fortunately, *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* has had a profound impact on me and my mental health during the crux of my Master's degree.

The protagonist's push-and-pull with mental instability inspired me to look at my own. I underestimated the impact of seeing madness represented as subversive. Television has been grossly congested with stereotypes and tropes that intersect with gender, race, disability, and other identities. *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* is far from perfection. That said, within its network moderations/censorship of language and content, the series left me empowered to take ownership of my own madness. Importantly, the series fashions its protagonist in thoughtful, nuanced ways in relation to identity. The costumes puzzled and challenged me to rethink the way mental health is represented and identified, leading original interview with series costume designer Melina Root, who previously costumed 200 episodes of *That 70s Show* (1998–2006), a coming-of-age sitcom from my youth.

The goal of this chapter, beyond identifying tropes or specific costumes, is to position *fashion* (costume, dress, clothing – all in some way, part of the fashion system) as integral to television's unique long-form identity storytelling. Further, I wish to provide clarity on fashioning beyond the body and Cartesian separations of the mind and body. This establishment of the relationship between madness, the body, and clothing leads us to a more nuanced understanding of the way actors use their dressed bodies to embody a fictionalized psychology—

this lends every on-screen 'look,' carefully and thoughtfully fashioned, as part of a puzzle in the viewer's 'reading.' Crucially, these 'looks' are opportunities to subvert and fight against tired tropes of mad people on television and beyond.

Rebecca Bunch is often frustrating to watch; an antihero who continuously manipulates those around her in order to gain. She is highly educated, whip-smart, and massively successful as a lawyer. She often cites feminist rhetoric and points out problematic behaviours in others, until she finds a way to justify the same behaviours within her own context. In season three, she goes as far as to identify herself as "the villain in my own story, the witch in my own tale, though I insist I'm the protagonist, the bad guy in my TV show" ("I'm the Villain"). Throughout this evolution of identity and eventual self-reflexive discovery leading to a Borderline Personality Disorder diagnosis, Rebecca's wardrobe evolves distinctively. Thus far, forty-four episodes of *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* have aired, with an upcoming fourth and final season. A textual analysis requires a careful selection of scenes.

Overall, the series works to bring together costume and mental health through the way the protagonist is costumed, commenting on the gendered associations of 'crazy' and hysteria. My selection of this series is strongly located in access: Root agreed to an hour-long phone interview. Her perspective in my analysis is crucial to my findings. Further, my own experience as a mad-identified scholar guided my selection of scenes, episodes, and areas of inquiry.

Beyond Self-Reflexivity

My lived experience as a mad queer cisgender male guides every step of my research and analysis. It is through my identity and experience that I am able to question these fields and how normalcy has been constructed—both within and outside of academia. Without divulging more

detail, I have been in psychiatric spaces, received a diagnosis, and continue to navigate madness

in structures (i.e. academia) that often alienate and stigmatize my experiences. During my search

for solace, television and the female protagonist have been sources of relatable comfort. I began

cultivating a vested interest in their tribulations with mental health as a narrative arc in most of

these series. As a graduate student, I began moving beyond this lens and identity, in order to

position myself to research outside of my own experience. In her research on positionality and

feminist methodologies, Carla Rice stresses 'strong reflexivity', or the "hope to move beyond

simple acknowledgement of social identities to interrogate complex effects of differences on data

produce, *without centring or suppressing their subjectivities in the process*."[88] I incorporate

aspects of this positionality in my research as a lens, but with a firm push towards moving

beyond my lived experience. Rather, I prioritize the critique of normalcy and how it has been

constructed on television. I aim to utilize methodological approaches on fashion and television

that do not uphold hierarchies, binaries, and other oppressive structures.

Past Methodological Approaches

At the turn of the twenty-first century, fashion studies faced interdisciplinary and

transnational developments, moving beyond theories of class (Thorstein Veblen, Georg Simmel,

Herbert Blumer), gender (John Carl Flügel, Simone de Beauvoir), and history (Stella Mary

Newton, Elizabeth Wilson).[89] This "new" approach on dress/fashion/clothing follows "anti-

positivist, theoretically-informed interest in meaning, identity and reflexivity."[90] In *The Fashion*

System (1967), Roland Barthes proposed a model for reading fashion images as language through

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[88] Carla Rice, "Imagining the Other? Ethical Challenges of Researching and Writing Women's Embodied
Lives," *Feminism & Psychology* 19, no. 2 (2009): 250. Original emphasis.
[89] Lise Skov and Marie Riegels Melchior, "Research approaches to the study of dress and fashion," *Creative
Encounters Working Paper* 19, (2008): 4-6.
[90] Ibid, 9.

semiology, or a system of signification. Importantly to my research, he argues the language associated with fashion dominates over the image and reality itself.[91] While this may be true for magazine-specific imagery in the late 1960s, Barthes did not consider television as part of the fashion system, though it too, participates in the visual representation of clothing.

The costume designer selected for my case study dresses her characters in predominantly contemporary clothing and often utilizes high-end brands. In this imagined reality, the protagonist is a participator of *the fashion system*, often making references to brands, films, celebrities, fashion designers, or clothing pieces. Viewers of the series 'read' the characters according to their wardrobe, enhanced by realism the contemporary series provides. Further, the female lead character is seldom in states of 'poor' dress; the use of over-glamourized gowns in *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* activates an active, analytic gaze through the use of spectacle.

Warner suggests "stars and celebrities to be the organizing principle within fashion television."[92] Celebrities, in film and television, have been instrumental to the meaning-making process of on-screen content through intertextual materials such as advertising, product placement, and press. This identity is linked to discourses of both value and gender.[93] Previous studies on costume and cinema (classic and contemporary) have been "guided" by hierarchies often deeming mise en scene secondary or as a spectacle and distraction to narrative (Berry 2000; Harper 1987; Cook 1996; Street 2002; Wollen 1995). Thus, on-screen costume has faced a steep journey to scholarly worthiness, particularly in light of fashion's relationship with celebrity, femininity, and frivolity.

Articulating costume as fashion, we marginalize costume designers and showrunners who

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[91] Ibid, 8.
[92] Helen Warner, *Fashion on Television: Identity and Celebrity Culture* (London: New York, 2014), 7.
[93] Ibid, 8-9.

wish not to engage with it in an overt way. I posit we resist limiting our analysis of television to "capital F" fashion-based discourses. The fashion industry—in its current colonial model, colonial history, and overall toxicity toward identities—should be critiqued closely. Mythologies of exclusivity in luxury fashion perpetuate the idea of "fashion programming." Assuming series related to the high end industry (directly or indirectly) are the only worth noting for their use of costume is problematic. Pierre Bourdieu articulates this phenomenon through capital and habitus.[94] Joanne Entwistle and Agnès Rocamora built on Bourdieu's ideas in coining "fashion capital"—a cocktail of economic, cultural, social, and symbolic capital, all specific to the field of fashion.[95] At fashion runway shows, the "commercial dimension of fashion" is presented in tandem with the collections—the runway presentations of 'art' and the buyers in the audience.[96] Costume design on television is contextually removed from considerations as 'art.'

The rise of 'prestige,' 'art TV,' or 'quality TV' has been written about repeatedly since its so-called arrival in 1999.[97] This discourse encourages the idea the idea that 'quality' television originated, and is still located, with niche cable networks that dedicate themselves to positioning their content at a higher level than the rest of 'commercially-driven,' 'non-art' television. In a sense, television has artistic separations that mirror those in the fashion industry: 'quality' programming would be the equivalent of haute couture or high luxury runway, both identified as artistic by those within their specific habitus. 'Quality TV' has been researched endlessly from varying perspectives within recent television scholarship, and has resulted a

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[94] Joanne Entwistle and Agnès Rocamora, "The Field of Fashion Materialized: A Study of London Fashion Week," *Sociology* 40, no. 4 (2006): 746.
[95] Ibid, 740.
[96] Ibid, 730.
[97] Joshua Rothman and Erin Overbey, "How TV Became Art," *The New Yorker*, August 29, 2017, , accessed November 28, 2017, https://www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/how-tv-became-art.

highly divisive discourses of value, gender, and taste.[98] Most dramas identified as 'Quality TV'

previous to the 'post-network' era have featured predominantly straight, white men. Some

scholars have examined 'Quality TV' as a detachment from the feminine. *The Mary Tyler Moore*

Show (1970–77) and programming of that era began to position television as an avenue for

serious, legitimate storytelling, or to become "better, more sophisticated, and more *artistic* than

the usual network fare."[99] Ironically, the 'Quality TV' term originated as an "industrial

buzzword" from "series that spotlighted women, gender issues, and female interests (notably

fashion)."[100] Mary Tyler Moore was fashioned in order for viewers to relate to her character,

identity, and idealized world.[101] Importantly, this fashioning has been re-purposed for male-

centred series now identified as 'artistic' (*The Sopranos, The Wire, Mad Men*). From this

perspective, we able to contextualize costume as one of the most important elements in a series

(regardless of its cultural standing, or relationship to the fashion industry and celebrity culture).

Costume, in all iterations (dress, fashion, clothes), stretch far beyond 'capital F' fashion,

and have the potential to be (in some cases) more subversive, complex, and nuanced than series

molded according to anxiety-ridden cultural mediators responsible for a predominantly white,

heterosexual, patriarchal, exclusionary industry. It is no surprise to see these toxic factors

represented through Warner's case studies—*Mad Men* in particular. I propose a new

methodology for fashion on television, disconnected from practices in which high fashion and

celebrity is the gold standard for interdisciplinary research in the field. These methodological

approaches do not centre how culture is created, and instead rely on a neoliberal capitalist

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[98] Janet McCabe and Kim Akass, *Quality TV: Contemporary American Television and Beyond* (New York, NY: I.B. Tauris, 2007): 2.
[99] Ibid, 3.
[100] Taylor Cole Miller, "The Fashion of Florrick and FLOTUS: On Feminism, Gender Politics, and 'Quality Television,'" *Television & New Media* 18, no. 2 (2017): 151.
[101] Ibid.

framework, critiquing on an individual basis rather than discourses that affect our culture. To do so, I propose centring Cultural Studies, Mad Studies, and feminist interpretations.

Situating a New Methodological Approach

Due to the gap in literature and previous attempts to study fashion on television, I contend we position the study of fashion on television within Cultural Studies and critical theory, interrogating how culture produces certain knowledges. Through this methodological approach, researchers can begin to unpack the discursive implications of dress on television. The following framework of interpretation is rooted interrogating the structures that produce certain 'truths' in regards to madness on television that contribute to the construction of normalcy. The result is interdisciplinary, building on past activism and enriched by their accomplishments. As Rosemarie-Garland Thomson writes:

> Charged with the residual fervor of the Civil Rights Movement, Women's Studies and race studies established a model in the academy for identity-based critical enterprises that followed, such as gender studies, queer studies, disability studies, and a proliferation of ethnic studies, all of which have enriched and complicated our understandings of social justice, subject formation, subjugated knowledges, and collective action.[102]

The most 'sophisticated' research comes out of the symbiosis of feminist research and Disability Studies, according to her—and in my case, the emerging field of Mad Studies.

Previous to these radical ways of thinking, positivist and scientific definitions from nineteenth-century Enlightenment attempts to find 'objective truths' in the name of 'rationality.'[103] Using psychiatric/biomedical positivist research as an example, Michel Foucault has pointed out that these definition-shaping 'truths' (i.e. a diagnosis) are "far from being purely

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[102] Rosemarie Garland-Thomson. "Integrating Disability, Transforming Feminist Theory." *NWSA Journal* 14, no. 3 (2002): 1.
[103] Paula Saukko, *Doing Research in Cultural Studies*, London, UK: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2003, 28.

a matter of linguistic definition, as it entailed locking the madmen up into asylums, of stripping

them of any basic rights and of condemning them to a life-time of physical, social and emotional

deprivation."[104] Feminist scholars have critiqued positivism, aiming to utilize less dominant,

hierarchal methodologies in order to remain accountable to structures of oppression.[105] Sherry

Gorelick positions experiential data and descriptive statistics as insufficient, stating "feminist

research must be part of a process by which women's oppression is not only described but

challenged."[106] In other words, the insistence on a single cultural truth by predominantly "white,

privileged, Western men," shapes our social reality, imparting consequences on the lives of

marginalized identities.[107]

As an alternative, Paula Saukko writes on three distinct methodological focuses rooted in

research validity, that "correspond to the 'humanistic', 'structuralist' and New Leftist of

'contextualist' bents in early cultural studies."[108]

1. **Dialogic** validity: Evaluates research based on how "truthful" it details the lived experience of those being studied.
2. **Deconstructive** validity: "Poststructuralist research and the accompanying deconstructive validity evaluates research in terms of how well it manages to unravel social tropes and discourses that, over time, have come to pass for a 'truth' about the world."
3. **Contextual** validity: "Research on social context and concomitant contextualist validity refer to the capability of research to locate the phenomenon it is studying within the wider social, political, and even global, context."[109]

At the root of each of these interpretations is the critique of normalcy, binaries, and colonial

ways of thinking. Culture is "both a language and practice in use," shifting and changing in

"meaning, values, norms, belief, actions, and so on that make up the stuff of everyday life for

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[104] Ibid, 28.
[105] Sherry Gorelick, "Contradictions Of Feminist Methodology," *Gender & Society* 5, no. 4 (1991): 461.
[106] Ibid, 462.
[107] Ibid, 26.
[108] Ibid, 19.
[109] Ibid, 20.

some social group."[110] My research projects utilizes each of these approaches. **Dialogic** in my literature review, observing the ways in which research and discourse on television, fashion, and mental health has marginalized the lived experience of mad individuals both in its execution and results. **Deconstructive** through my analysis of *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* and specific scenes or characters that subvert or align with dominant 'truths'. **Contextual** in positioning my literature review and case study with Mad Studies and a critique of normalcy as it is represented through identities of characters costumed on television as a complex social phenomenon. Evidently, there is no single, universal truth to artefacts in media and popular culture. My approach emphasizes a multitude of interpretations (or polysemy), based on the lens my mixed-methods data collection shape.

Mixed Methods Approach

Qualitative Interview

      Ryerson University's Ethics Board approved my use of qualitative interviews in context with my research inquiry. Unlike other series I had considered for this study, Melina Root has been involved with *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* since the creation of its pilot episode. She works closely with the executive producers, writers, and actors, and she was able to divulge information on her design work and the show itself. To create my interview guide (see transcript in Appendix B), I relied on my research questions and themes I wanted to explore based on my preliminary research and watching of the series itself. Given my position as an academic researcher, I focused on open-ended questions in order to explore Root's overall knowledge in the

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[110] Thomas A Schwandt, *The SAGE Dictionary of Qualitative Inquiry*, 3rd ed (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2007), 59.

intersections between fashion, mental health, and gender. From there, I probed deeper to focus her responses on single 'looks' or items the protagonist wears, and their subjective meanings. I explored my own analysis with her intention as qualitative evidence, illuminating new possibilities for her current and future design work.

Scene Selection

Unable to write on all 44 episodes of *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend*, nor each of its characters and narratives threads, I re-watched the series in order to select specific sequences and costumes to analyze. I focus specifically on Rebecca Bunch (Rachel Bloom), and narratives in which her mental health, gender, and ideas of normalcy intersect. Based on scenes I had selected to discuss with Root, and other scenes she discussed, I formed five distinct themes to analyze, each comprising of 3-5 individual scenes. Aware of my own biases and the possibilities of cherry-picking for analysis, I allowed my self-reflexivity and positionality to guide the stories I identified with as a mad-identified scholar. From this perspective, I am able to craft nuanced arguments with concrete examples to use as supporting evidence.

Analysis

Textual analysis, or the formal visual analysis of a 'text' (i.e. a specific frame of television) is a primary method of examination in television studies. It consists of a "close reading of programmes for their narrative structures, iconography, symbolic codes, themes, and their solicitation of pleasure, identification, and subjectivity."[111] According to Warner, it has seen a renewed interest since the early 2000s from scholars like Jason Jacobs (2001), Sarah Cardwell (2006), and Glen Creeber (2006).[112] Scholars have also encouraged extratextual consideration,

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[111] Charlotte Brunsdon and Lynn Spigel, *Feminist Television Criticism: A Reader*, 2nd ed. (Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2008), 6.
[112] Warner, *Fashion on* Television, 13.

combining interdisciplinary methods with the use of press clippings, images, promotional

materials, and so on. Beyond combining visual analysis, close-reading of specific 'looks,' and

interview quotes, my analysis is rooted in interrogating structures and how normalcy has been

defined, in part through clothed representations. I contend this analytical approach is necessary

as a feminist television critic and Mad Studies scholar, both positions that inform and enrich

knowledges of fashion and representation on television.

Feminist television critics have prioritized theories of performance to supplement the

"hermeneutics of textual analysis and close textual/ideological readings in feminist TV

scholarship."[113] According to television scholars Charlotte Brunsdon and Lynn Spigel, this

approach was foregrounded due to television 'heroines' and their relationships to fashion. Thus,

these female-driven series (*The Mary Tyler Moore Show, Sex and the City, Desperate

Housewives*) placed an emphasis on mise en scene.[114] This successful emphasis may have paved

the way for the current diversification of 'heroines' on television, including my case study.

Further, the production and performance of gender and sexuality are of concern to these scholars,

parallel to "the struggles within feminism – struggles over who exactly counts as a 'woman',

who belongs, who is excluded."[115] Feminist activists critiqued stereotypes in the media of the

1960s, with television considered as "part of the media and image-making industries" and "seen

as instrumental in *misrepresenting* women."[116] I would be remiss to include Garland-Thomson's

full definition of feminist theory and its intersection with Disability Studies/Mad Studies, here:

> One way to think about feminist theory is to say that it investigates how culture saturates
> the particularities of bodies with meanings and probes the consequences of those
> meanings. Feminist theory is a collaborative, interdisciplinary inquiry and a self-
> conscious cultural critique that interrogates how subjects are multiply interpellated: in

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[113] Brunsdon and Spigel, *Feminist Television,* 4.
[114] Ibid, 4.
[115] Ibid, 4.
[116] Ibid, 6. Original emphasis.

other words, how the representational systems of gender, race, ethnicity, ability, sexuality, and class mutually construct, inflect, and contradict one another. These systems intersect to produce and sustain ascribed, achieved, and acquired identities-both those that claim us and those that we claim for ourselves. A feminist disability theory introduces the ability/disability system as a category of analysis into this diverse and diffuse enterprise. It aims to extend current notions of cultural diversity and to more fully integrate the academy and the larger world it helps shape.[117]

Garland-Thomson succinctly and beautifully links these modes of scholarship by pointing to their similarities: intersectional research on bodies. My analysis adds both fashion and television to a Feminist Disability Theory approach.

The result of this area of scholarship is work on visibility, objectification, and contradictions with 'post-feminist' criticism, among others. Moreover, the critique of whiteness, by which women of colour "are the counterpart against which white female characters are 'defined and refined."[118] Stuart Hall's 1980 seminal essay "Encoding/Decoding" argues media (television) producers "draw on cultural understandings and working practices to create textual meanings, but that audiences do not always 'decode the text in line with the intentions of its producers."[119] The essay is significant in encouraging watching television for potentially subversive representations, and to interpret or critique these texts from a multiplicity of methods. By incorporating a Mad Studies perspective with this feminist lens, I draw crucial conclusions between these interpretations.

My priority is to illuminate the ways in which gender and mental health intersect, and unpack how televised representations of madness, tropes, stereotypes, and biomedical constructs have dominated our culture. Mad Studies is the incorporation of various radical, progressive approaches rooted in anti-oppressive practices. The result is an "alternative community … where

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[117] Garland-Thomson, "Integrating Disability", 4.
[118] Ibid, 25.
[119] Ibid, 12.

people can get a sense of who they are and what madness is about without being automatically pathologized."[120] Madness is now used as an alternative to 'mental disorder' or 'mental illness' as a rejection of clinical labels that have been used to pathologize and institutionalize individuals. Identifying madness over 'mental health' or 'psychological stability' aligns this research with "advancing the position that mental health research, writing, and advocacy are primarily about opposition oppression and promoting human justice."[121] Problematic, psy-informed television representations of madness are roadblocks to mainstream cultural understandings. As such, it became more productive in this study of *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* to focus on the way the 'mad' protagonist is costumed and constructed, versus her occupation within psychiatric space. There are few examples of how this mode of analysis is applied to scripted television or fashion. But overall, Mad Studies is defined as "a project of inquiry, knowledge production, and political action devoted to the critique and transcendence of psy-centred ways of thinking, behaving, relating, and being."[122] A number of these are articulated and modeled by fictionalized identities in programmes. Through an understanding of the relationship between mind and body, or *corporeal consciousness*, my contribution to Mad Studies is to transform and critique the way characters are fashioned and their relationship to madness.

These two primary frameworks—Mad Studies and feminist television criticism—are both rooted in anti-oppression, a necessary contribution to our understandings of normalcy, binaries, structures, and how they must intersect with (clothed) identity construction on television.

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[120] LeFrançois, Menzies, and Reaum, *Mad Matters*, 2.
[121] Ibid, 10.
[122] Ibid, 13.

CHAPTER 3

COSTUMING MADNESS ON *CRAZY EX-GIRLFRIEND*

"I guess in the back of my head, I think, if you're not being groundbreaking, then what are you doing? If you're not being ballsy and honest and vulgar, then what are you doing?"
— Rachel Bloom for *The New York Times* Magazine, January 19 2016

This chapter focuses on positioning fashion studies, television studies, and Mad studies in conversation with textual analysis from *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* and an original interview with the program's costume designer, Melina Root. Beyond identifying specific tropes, I centre *fashion*—costume, dress, clothing, all part of the fashion system—as an integral lens of analysis into identities; particularly gender and mental health. To do so, I establish five distinct themes. The first, *Negotiating 'Crazy' Space: An Opportunity for Subversion?* relies on a *real* and *metaphorical* theoretical framework established by York University scholar Andrea Daley to frame the distinction between Rebecca Bunch's fictionalized 'real life,' and the various musical scenes or music videos that occur within her mind, as costumed *metaphorical space*—as well as how this binary converges and mutually inform each other. In *Hysterical Television Title Sequences*, I explore the etymology of hysteria and crazy to support my analysis of three title sequences, each featuring an original song that re-appears in each episode. I follow with *Blue is the Warmest Colour: Colour Symbolism, Costume, and Mental Health*, in order to unpack blue and its associations with gender, mental health, and the way it is used thoughtfully by the costume designer as a reoccurring symbol. In *A Journey to Identity?: Rebecca Bunch and the Makeover*, I investigate the use of fashion in on-screen makeovers to normalcy and the way in which it is constructed with the body and adornment. Finally, I place two pivotal mental health-related scenes in opposition in *Diagnosing Rebecca Bunch*: Rebecca's suicide attempt and her subsequent Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) diagnosis; looking at the ways in which she is

fashioned in the two scenes; and how BPD has been gendered and constructed by the medical community—problematizing the use of the diagnosis on the series.

Overall, I wish to provide clarity on fashioning beyond separations of the mind and body. Through the theoretical concept of *corporeal consciousness*, we can begin to understand how 'bodily knowing' interacts with Joanne Entwistle's clothing as *situated bodily practice*, the context in which a body is dressed and mediated by, around, and within our minds. The establishment of the relationship between mental health, the body, and clothing leads us to a more nuanced understanding of the way actors use their dressed bodies to embody a fictionalized psychology. Every on-screen 'look', carefully and thoughtfully fashioned, as part of a puzzle in a viewer's 'reading' of the series. Crucially, these 'looks' are opportunities to subvert and fight against tired tropes of mad people or mental health identities on television and beyond.

As I make clear through interview quotes with Root, Rebecca is costumed carefully to denote or 'perform' the layers or facets of her identity in these two spaces: gender and mental health. Judith Butler details identity as performance, particularly in relation to gender. According to her, gender is a series of 'acts' repeated and 'performed' over time. The use of the word *performance* is key to understanding the relationship between *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend,* mental health, and costume. Rebecca Bunch consistently 'performs' mental stability or normalcy in her life in order to conceal her mental health from her unsupportive mother and the high-intensity corporate law environment she works in. She 'performed' mental stability until her late twenties, and the subsequent three seasons showcase both an 'unravelling' into 'hysteria' and coming to the core of her identity as removed from numbing through work, love, or friendship. The series identifies a clear link between each music video and her inner psyche, often breaking the fourth wall and addressing the camera or background dancers/characters. But rather than speaking to us,

(the viewer) she is speaking to herself. Her costumes are 'imagined,' and quite literally

performed, establishing a clear convergence between her costuming and mental health.

Negotiating 'Crazy' Space: An Opportunity for Subversion?

Although there is ample material to extrapolate from in the series and its narrative, *Crazy*

Ex-Girlfriend's musical elements are of particular interest; an imagined space in which Rebecca

attempts to make sense of the world around her. I argue that these 'music videos' represent her

mental processes—often romanticized scenarios of her real life, in which she is hyper-

glamourized, physically transformed, and blatantly honest about her intersections of

womanhood, mental health, body ideals, relationships, etc. My goal in isolating these pivotal

moments is to use costume—designed by Melina Root and her team—as a lens for Rebecca's

fluctuating identities, particularly in regards to the construction of her mental health and inner

psychology:

> That was the hardest thing for us to figure out: what's the tone of the show? Does she
> wear the same dress the whole time? How realistic is it? We came up with vocabulary
> that her truest place is in those fantasies. That's when she's the most truthful to herself. A
> lot of it relates to Rachel's feeling that emotion and song can carry truth in ways that
> language can't, and visual things can't.

In a proposed theoretical framework on space as experienced by queer women navigating

psychiatric structures, Andrea Daley draws on Butler and Parr's (1990) ideas of *body space,* or

the "immediate envelope of space which the body occupies."[123] The *body space* is experienced

within *real (material) space* and *metaphorical space*. The former calls attention to "dominant

discourses, concrete practices, and power relations in the construction of gendered and

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[123] Andrea Daley, "Spaces in Place: Negotiating Queer In/visibility within Psychiatric and Mental Health Service
Settings," in *Mad Matters: A Critical Reader in Canadian Mad Studies,* eds. Brenda A. LeFrançois, Robert J.
Menzies, and Geoffrey Reaume (Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press, 2013): 299.

sexualized subjectivities."[124] *Metaphorical space*, on the other hand, alludes to figures of speech conceptualized as psychological and social spaces. For example, Daley suggests 'the closet' as an example of a common *metaphorical space* as a psychological/social space. Daley explores this queer-informed theoretical framework in context with psychiatric and mental health services. Through an analysis of a series that expressively distinguishes 'real-life' characters from their 'musical/metaphorical' acts, I would be remiss to exclude applying this framework to *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend*. Rebecca's *body space* is negotiated between her *real (material) space* (life in West Covina, law firm, her trials and tribulations with Josh Chan and other lovers) and *metaphorical space* ('music videos' in which she attempts to make sense of the world around her). I further posit we add costuming as integral to both spaces. How Rebecca is costumed by the costume designer, writers, and executive producers in her *real* and *metaphorical* spaces differ, primarily in relation to her identities (gender and mental health). That said, I do not wish to establish a binary with this research inquiry. Evidently, both spaces occur in the same body—Rebecca frequently breaks the fourth wall and speaks directly to the audience in her various *metaphorical spaces*, suggesting she is simply speaking to her *real (material)* self. These two spaces often converge, and Rebecca will remain costumed in the same 'look' for both. In some cases, she breaks out into brief songs during conversations or scenes unrelated to the more detached music videos. Additionally, the way Rebecca is costumed in both spaces are mutually exclusive—both represent her equally; however, in different lights. Although 'the closet' may eventually converge with *real (material) space* (i.e. coming out), the *metaphorical space* often remains in

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[124] Dyck 1995, pg 308

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pieces through trauma; choosing when and where to embody queer identity, or to remain 'closeted' in a potentially dangerous context.[125]

Just as the 'the closet' can be an alienating and othering *metaphorical space*, it may also be a unique space of expression, creativity, and imagination. During my lived experience in 'the closet', I performed heterosexuality in all areas of my life in order to protect my intersecting identities. Until this convergence, I felt most comfortable within my own mind. As long as my thoughts and desires remained in the protection of 'the closet', I would be able to revel freely, with no real-life dangers or consequences of disappointment, shame, or violence. I do not wish to negate the stigmatizing, traumatic experience of 'the closet', but rather understand how it can function as a *metaphorical space*. For Rebecca Bunch, her 'music videos' are spaces of vulnerability and shame ("You Stupid Bitch"), romanticized depression ("Sexy French Depression"), and double-standards of feminized expectations of self-presentation and body modification ("Sexy Getting Ready Song"). In *real (material) space*, Rebecca's identify and self-presentation have consequences. The tension between 'normality' and 'crazy' takes place between these two spaces, and further in the way she is costumed. There are 'real-life' moral codes required to be followed that are modelled after our own in *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend*. These codes require conformity to the moral order in those spaces.[126] That said, these codes do not necessarily apply in *metaphorical spaces*; Rebecca is fashioned in everything from ball gowns to a cactus costume. Daley writes that the "usefulness of the construct of 'real' space is its strength to capture the interactions between questions of the performative construction of gender and

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[125] As per Daley's example. I do not wish to essentialize any single experience here. This point of view is my own, though I believe I am speaking generally enough to get at my point.
[126] Joanne Entwistle, *The Fashioned Body: Fashion, Dress, and Modern Social Theory*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2015), 32.

sexuality and questions of institutions."[127] The *metaphorical space* for Rebecca, then, represents

an opportunity to be mad with no 'real-life' consequences—though this evolves and shifts

leading up to her diagnosis, in which she begins to embrace and understand her mad identity as

distinct and separate from mental health statistics and a diagnosis. For most of the series, this

space is multi-faceted for Rebecca, representing an escape, a coping mechanism, and a

manifestation of her current mental health. For the viewer, these 'music videos' serve as an

opportunity to understand her character more deeply, leading to a more wholehearted

understanding of Rebecca's tribulations as a mad woman navigating complex webs of shame,

love, trauma, and the oppressive structures ('sanism') that do not allow her to be herself.

Costume designer Melina Root describes Rebecca's wardrobe as a search on how "to

become a fully realized person."[128] According to her, Rebecca's external achievements in her

mid-20s have not sustained her mental/psychological well-being, and is thus an important aspect

of Root's design process:

> She presents well, but underneath there's a lot of unhappiness, incompleteness, a life that
> is not rich—emotionally or psychologically. In a way, she's missing out on the things that
> many many people have. She'll look at Josh Chan [in the Thanksgiving episode]—she
> has no idea how to be in that world. She doesn't even dress as herself, she puts on a
> parent-pleasing dress. So yeah, it's that inability to live in your own skin, whatever that
> is—not knowing yourself well enough to just sit in a room in comfort.

The tweed "parent-pleasing" dress in question is pale blue and conservative, including pearls and

an owl broach (Figure 1.1). The blue colour of this dress is of note, and a repeated motif in the

series. The way she is fashioned in this scene—one with an apparent disconnection from the

mental health narrative that fills the heart of the series—is still imbued with meaning relating to

her 'instability' or 'distress'. It is an attempt to conform to the expectations of normality to

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[127] Daley, "Spaces in Place," 300.
[128] Interview with Melina Root conducted by researcher on October 21, 2017. See Appendix B.

navigate the space of Josh Chan's family Thanksgiving celebration by *performing* conservative femininity in order to find community and connection. We are reminded of the moral order as Rebecca continuously identifies as *crazy* through her character foil, Josh's girlfriend Valencia Perez (Gabrielle Ruiz), as she is the only character able to see through Rebecca's performance (Figure 2). On performance, Judith Butler contends that we "Consider gender, for instance, as *a corporeal style*, an 'act,' as it were, which is both intentional and performative, where *'performative'* suggests a dramatic and contingent construction of meaning."[129] In this case, the 'performance' extends beyond the *corporeal*, and extends to *corporeal consciousness*: a connection between mind, body, and fashion.

Rebecca understands the extent of feminine performance as it can be used to her advantages—here, to win over Josh's family. Lastly, it connects to a thread of blue 'looks' throughout the series worn during pivotal moments throughout her mental health chronology. As Joanne Entwistle explores in *Fashioning the Body*, an analysis of fashion must take place through situated bodily practice. I suggest this framework applies to fictionalized contexts that mimic our own—including the recreation of power structures that disavow *hysteria*, or preventing you from "knowing yourself well enough to just sit in a room in comfort," as Root explained. According to Entwistle, Goffman (1971) "has described forcefully the ways in which cultural norms and expectations impose upon the 'presentation of self in everyday life' to the extent that individuals perform 'face work' and seek to be defined by others as 'normal'."[130] Rebecca's context deeply affects her costuming, from *real (material) spaces* to *metaphorical spaces*.

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[129] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, 2nd ed (London, UK: Routledge, 1999), 139. Italics from the text.
[130] Entwistle, *The Fashioned Body*, 11.

Hysterical Television Title Sequences

The 'television title sequence' or TTS on *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* is a 'music video' presented in each episode, changing per season. The TTS as an object of research has been analyzed from the point of view of marketing (Mistry 2006), general function (Burton 2000: 75), and quantitatively amalgamated in the hopes of comparing common characteristics (Bednarek 2014). Predictably, costuming is not considered as a legitimate element in over-arching studies.[131] The TTS is arguably the most grounding element of a series, a short meditation on the season at hand. Though for an audience the TTS may be an opportunity for momentary distracted viewing (snacking, texting, etc.), it remains the most reliable segment of an episodic series; the most "crucial part of the multimodal discourse of fictional television."[132] Some series omit the sequence completely for budget or time allocation, instead opting for a brief logo. *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* is a rare case to include an original song with lyrics that accompanies its TTS with each new season. As Rebecca Bunch reaches newfound depths as a character, the sequence shifts to accommodate with its visuals and costuming.

A series opening theme grounds the viewer in its continuing ethos. The first season's partially animated TTS chronologically recounts the pilot: from "working hard at New York job making dough, but it made me blue," to moving to West Covina. Rebecca is the only character unanimated in the 30-second long clip, which establishes a very clear binary between her "depressed" life in New York and the opportunities of happiness in California. Furthermore, the use of the word 'blue' instead of sad, melancholic, or depressed, points to a self-awareness of

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[131] Some series-specific case studies have considered the opening sequence's fashion, such as Helen Warner's analysis of *Sex and the City* and Carrie Bradshaw's vintage skirt.
[132] Monika Bednarek, "'And they all Look just the Same'? A Quantitative Survey of Television Title Sequences," *Visual Communications* 13, no. 2 (2014): 126.

colour and mood. This notion is further demonstrated through the blue frock dress she wears in the TSS and in the pilot, and in subsequent episodes related to her mental health.

Rebecca remains in this blue dress for the entirety of the sequence, which differs from the original look in the pilot (Figure 3), lending itself to a reading removed from the show's seriality. In other words, it applies to each episode. Her covered shoulders, coiffed hair, and makeup adheres to 'working standards' while seated at her animated office, but her circle skirt—made visible in animated West Covina—recalls the romantic playfulness of the pilot's idealization of West Covina as a city for new beginnings. She arrives in West Covina full of joy and excitement, until the animated cast begins to chant "she's the Crazy Ex-Girlfriend." She retorts with, "no I'm not, that's a sexist term." The cast continues to critique her decision by pointing out the intense denial of her mental instability—"the situation's a lot more nuanced than that," Rebecca assures us with gravitas. We are then positioned within the primary narrative arc of the series: negotiating Rebecca's mental health, her descent into madness, and her various attempts to romanticize how "she's so broken inside," as the sun sings. Crucial to the nuance of this character, the TTS as a 'music video' provides the viewer with a weekly reminder of Rebecca's attempt to escape the distress that haunted her in New York. Animated West Covina may be bright and sunny, but physical reminders of her 'craziness' surround her; her coworkers, friends, and even a televised butter commercial continuously appearing throughout the first season to ask Rebecca (and the viewer) "when was the last time you were happy?" (Figure 4). Importantly, her dress reminds us that "feeling blue" is in fact beyond a separation of mind and body. As Entwistle explores, "Understanding dress then means understanding this constant dialectic between body and self: it requires, as Merleau-Ponty suggests, recognizing that 'The body is the

vehicle of being in the world."[133] For all characters on television, dress is constructed or

designed in order to position the actor in a lived identity. For Rachel Bloom, Rebecca's dress is

the vehicle, not Rachel's body, even though the body gives shape to the clothes. From this point

of view, we can begin to see how her embodied performance plays into binaries of hysteria.

Crazy Ex-Girlfriend's first season TTS brings Rebecca's mental health, the blue dress,

and subversions of the word 'crazy' into conversation. In historically entrenched binaries of the

civilized and primitive, madness has always been positioned as the latter. According to Mark

Antliff and Patricia Leighten's art historical account of the "Primitive," distinctions of gender

has always been "fundamental to the notions of the primitive."[134] Moreover, scholars draw on

Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949) to elaborate on the association between women

and their close proximity to the 'natural.' Historically, 'mental instability' for male artists

(among other professions) has been positioned as crucial to their creativity. As Antliff and

Leighten suggest:

> Unlike their male counterparts, women could not channel their madness into creative
> activities, for their imaginative capacities were not harnessed and regulated by the
> intellect. Whereas the frenzied state of a male artist could result in mystic insight, mental
> transcendence of the material realm was totally inaccessible to a woman, whose madness
> was evidence of the overpowering of her mind by the base instincts and drives of her
> sexuality.[135]

Madness has also been identified as 'hysteria' for women, which had been thought to originate in

the womb up until a medical re-evaluation in the 18th century. In fact, this conception has been

traced back to Plato, who equated the womb with a violent animal.[136] Rachel Bloom discusses

her understanding of the relationship between hysteria and the womb in an interview with *Access*

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[133] Entwistle, *The Fashioned Body*, 30.
[134] Mark Antliff and Patricia Leighten, "Primitive," in *Critical Terms for Art History*, eds. Robert S. Nelson and Richard Shiff (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press), 198.
[135] Ibid, 174.
[136] Heather Meek, "Of Wandering Wombs and Wrongs of Women: Evolving Conceptions of Hysteria in the Age of Reason," *English Studies in Canada* 35, no. 2/3 (2009): 109.

Hollywood on *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend*'s third season, pointing to a self-reflexivity to the way she embodies Rebecca Bunch—"when it comes to mental illness and women, [there is] a lot of stigma because it was seen as a failing of the gender for a long time."[137] Given the connections between hysteria, madness, and the primitive, we can begin to unpack the ways in which this Othered, gendered perception shapes the way women have been portrayed in media, particularly on television.

During its third season, *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend*'s TTS depicts four different generic 'pop icons', dressed in four different variations of gender (Figure 6): 1) A clear reference to Eminem, hair hidden in a grey hoodie paired with khaki pants, who raps "don't mess with a bitch who's crazy in the head." 2) A feminine pop starlet, who conflates romance with madness by declaring "crazy is how your loving makes me feel … this is what I always wanna be." She is dressed in a sheer, flowing blue gown, her hair blowing in the wind. 3) A short-haired rock star, aggressively sharing that they "like when a girl gets crazy in bed", wearing a black leather jacket and denim. 4) A blonde country star, avenging her lost love by smashing in the window of a car and saying "crazy is when I go off the rails, this is what you've done to me". She wears short denim shorts, tall red cowboy boots, and a loose white shirt. In concluding the short segment, they all stand to sing on stage together, arguing over whether or not you 'want' to be crazy. Of course, they are each played by Rachel Bloom. This TTS's condensed and splintered symbolic meaning foreshadow Rebecca's Borderline Personality Disorder diagnosis. Each archetype is costumed uniquely and carefully to represent the variety of conflicting messages and images we receive from pop culture and how *hysteria* is culturally constructed. By focusing on the way pop icons perform, dress, and speak, *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* foregrounds cultural commentary on the

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[137] Rachel Bloom Reveals How She Overcame Depression & Sleep Anxiety, perf. Rachel Bloom, Natalie Morales, Kit Hoover, *Access Hollywood*, October 15, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=86THdb9ljb8.

civilized/hysterical binary ahead of reproducing these tropes. Furthermore, along with the previous two seasons, this TTS stresses the gendered associations with 'crazy' and how the term is used to both dismiss and sexualize women; in this case, when it is convenient. Lastly, the way these archetypes are dressed provide us with additional insight into Rebecca herself. It reasonably suggests her identity has been defined by the way contemporary culture defines madness. The sequence ends with "we hope this helps" from a large stage—pointing to the perceptively inconsequential result of receiving these mixed messages for a 'reader', viewer, or receiver (Rebecca Bunch). Negative and stigmatizing representations of madness tend to return to Antliff and Leighten's discussions of the primitive/natural/hysteria—whether these take place through the TTS (e.g. *American Horror Story: Asylum*) or normalized through a character in a series.

Series such as *Homeland* (2011–) costumes its female protagonist (Claire Danes as Carrie Mathison) in straitjackets, repeatedly returning her to psychiatric hospitals in order to contain or fix her 'hysteria' of Bipolar Disorder—also emphasized by bulging eyes, disheveled hair, and a common state of 'unraveling'. Danes's character often sexualizes herself in order to achieve a mission's goal, and although the show's creators frame it as empowering through her eventual success, it often serves to re-affirm her 'hysteria' and connection to the primitive and 'natural base instincts.' Certain scenes throughout *Homeland* suggest that Carrie gets closer to her mission's truths by not taking her prescribed medicine, during which she physically and psychologically 'unravels' and aligns herself closer to what is 'natural,' and therefore, 'correct'.[138] Online publications like *Vulture* have compiled Carrie Mathison's "crying faces," each of them including the ways in which the character has been costumed to represent an

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[138] *Homeland* is further problematized when contrasting the white, 'unraveling' protagonist with the 'Arab terrorists' she plots to uncover and destroy—though this could be a thesis of its own.

unraveling psychological and physical state (Figure 5).[139] These negative stereotypes have the risk of normalizing these representations, which have material repercussions for disabled individuals in their daily lived experience. According to television studies research, deviating from stereotypes and tropes have in fact led to more mindful viewership, an 'agent' of change.[140]

From its pilot and first opening sequence, *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* persists in its effort to challenge stereotypes of 'hysteria' through Rebecca Bunch. Although at times imperfect, particularly in its racial representations, the series has made significant strides towards representing mental health in nuanced ways.[141] Root commented on the title of the series itself, often referred to as "My *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend*":

> [Rachel Bloom] and Aline say—no no, *My Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* is from another point of view. *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend*, that's who I am, and I have to figure it out. I've put this label on myself. It's a nuanced moment.

The careful consideration of the series title challenges the ways in which 'crazy' and its extended iterations (hysteria, insanity, etc.) have been gendered through popular culture and media. From its pilot, the writers, executive producers, and production crew have thoughtfully challenged persisting stereotypes of mental health through reclamation in Rebecca Bunch. This continues during season two and three, each commenting on 'crazy' in overt, subversive ways. In fact, Michael Z. Newman "would have thought that any show that uses the terms 'sexist' and 'nuanced' in an animated musical credits number would be doomed to quick cancellation."[142]

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[139] Ester Bloom, "Homeland's 17 Best Carrie Cry-Faces," *Vulture*, October 08, 2014, http://www.vulture.com/2014/10/homeland-best-carrie-mathison-cryfaces.html.
[140] Elizabeth S. EnglandKennedy, "Representations of Attention Deficit Disorder: Portrayals of Public Skepticism in Popular Media," in *Mental Illness in Popular Media: Essays on the Representation of Disorders*, ed. Lawrence C. Rubin (Jefferson, London, CA: McFarland & Company, 2012), 28.
[141] By this, I mean the appropriative "Good at Yoga" music video in season one, and faux Filipino accents (Amy Hill as Josh Chan's mother), among other scenes. This may seem like a nitpicking for political correctness, but I would argue they point to a gap in intersectional awareness, though the series has been lauded for its Filipino representation.
[142] Michael Z. Newman, "The Rom-com/Sitcom/YouTube Musical: Crazy Ex-Girlfriend," *Film Criticism* 40, no. 3 (2016).

The TTS, then, can be an important tool for show-runners and costume designers to foreground each episode in a subversive approach and challenge tired media tropes that uphold the civilized/primitive dynamic.

Blue is the Warmest Colour: Colour Symbolism, Costume, and Mental Health

At its core, *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* aims to subvert dominant cultural assumptions of the very gendered *crazy*. Arguably, a pilot typically pales in comparison to the rest of a series for establishing narrative and character depth. Television's strength is continuity, a slow build of context, nuance, and history behind its protagonist. Often influenced by fan cultures and their reception to paratextual materials such as posters, trailers, and advertising, some series find their voice in the second or third season. From a costuming perspective, a pilot is the viewer's first 'meeting' with a character, marking a crucial moment for the way a character is fashioned.

On *The Good Wife*'s premiere, Taylor Cole Miller writes, "The first shots of the Florricks cropped only to their clothes foreshadow the unarticulated presence and centrality costuming continues to play in character development throughout the series … *TGW* uses fashion in numerous ways as a story-building device."[143] As a viewer, we begin our process of identification the moment Rebecca Bunch appears on screen. In this case, we are first introduced to her younger self, through a flashback scene at a summer camp she attended because "I told my dad I was having suicidal thoughts—and ta-da, here I am!" She is glowing, happily participating in musical theatre performances, until her summer boyfriend, Josh Chan, declares her "too dramatic" and "weird" to continue dating. We then flash to a decade later, or 'present day' Rebecca. Rather than *The Good Wife*'s cropped costume introduction, our first frame with

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[143] Taylor C. Miller, "The Fashion of Florrick and FLOTUS: On Feminism, Gender Politics, and 'Quality Television,'" *Television & New Media* 18, no. 2 (2016): 3

Rebecca in adulthood is through the face. Here, through a different kind of fashioning—hair and makeup—the series attempts to convey the deterioration of her mental health through the single frame, drenched in a dark, blue hue and drained from the yellow/red tones from her last enjoyable summer in camp (Figure 7). Thus, mental health is positioned as our first resonating characteristic with the protagonist. Her bedside table reveals Gabapentin, an anticonvulsant medication used to relieve nerve pain and seizures, next to a bottle of opened red wine and other medications. She closes the internet browser windows open from the night before on how long she can survive sleep deprivation and online dating. In the subsequent wide shot, her apartment is bare, and her floor is littered with varied items of clothing. The series quite bluntly suggests that her clothing is the only aesthetic connection Rebecca has to her life in New York; the only 'décor' in her apartment (Figure 8). Importantly, the blue lens creates a visual link to her blue dress in the subsequent scene. As a viewer, I began drawing connections between blue, Rebecca's dress, and the way in which mental health and femininity interconnect for the series. Historically, blue is a significant colour for the 'performance' of femininity, linked to the Virgin Mary since the Middle Ages (5th–15th century).[144] Red, on the other hand, was "connected to strength and decisiveness"—while pink, the weakened or 'watered down' version of red, for growing boys.[145] This history reversed during the Second World War, when gay men were branded with a pink triangle while in concentration camps, symbolizing weakness and artifice— whereas blue became a popular choice for military uniforms. Though contradictory to Rebecca and blue, this history points to how hegemonies shape colour symbolism as important identity markers—constructs such as gender or heteronormativity, or in this case, mental health.

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[144] Annamari Vänskä, "'I am Lenni': Boys, Sexualisation, and the Dangerous Colour Pink," *Sexualities* 0, no. 0 (2017): 8. For more on this, see also: Garber, 1997; Koller, 2008: 403; Pastoureau, 2004: 26–28.
[145] Vänskä, "'I am Lenni'", 7.

Additionally, numerous Disney films utilize a blue dress to represent the pinnacle of a princess's

femininity. 'Disney blue' is indeed the colour Melina Root refers to for Rebecca's blueish

wardrobe.[146]

Rebecca's intimate relationship to material culture primarily forms through her self-

fashioning, a relationship that continues to evolve as she creates space in her life to explore her

identities. In the following scene, she arrives at her New York law firm in a tight blue pencil

dress, a constricting black blazer, and black heels—the first complete outfit introduced to the

audience, and one that eventually bridges her story between New York and West Covina. In our

interview, Root compares her work attire to a uniform.

> It is pretty much that metaphor of being in a uniform and somehow the uniform gives you a sense of
> external place; you know where you are in the world when you wear a uniform, no one looks inward,
> no one questions anything. She slowly comes apart. For her, her intense sensitivity to the things
> through her own particular psychological state, is always when we put her into those skinny little
> pencil dresses.

The thoughtful selection of this 'look' for Rebecca's uniform is notable. In future episodes,

particularly in season three in which we witness her 'unraveling' or 'going off the rails', she

returns to this aesthetic and is dressed in variations of the pencil dress. Here, the blazer, dress,

and heels in the context of her firm works to signify conspicuous consumption within capitalist

America.[147] Rebecca's ivy league education, her top-tier law position, and her salary all point to

an American Dream: hard work at any level will ultimately result in success and growth.

Evidently a bankrupt concept reserved for those with significant privilege, it is relevant here in

relation to mental health. Success is not synonymous with 'stability' or 'functionality' and a

sustainable lifestyle (however that may be embodied for an individual). Though speaking on

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[146] Melina Root shared a story in which she visits a fabric store in order to find this particular hue of blue, only to hear it has been completely bought out by a Disney production. She told me that is how she knew they were on the right track, in tracing blue and femininity.
[147] Thorstein Veblen, "Dress as an Expression of the Pecuniary Culture," in *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 1994[1899]), 103-116.

Western perspectives on the dark Other, bell hooks provides a useful framework in thinking about difference and the American Dream:

> When the dominant culture demands that the Other be offered as sign that progressive political change is taking place, that the American Dream can indeed be inclusive of difference, it invites a resurgence of essential cultural nationalism. The acknowledged Other must assume recognizable forms.[148]

Rebecca Bunch has access to a litany of privilege: her white skin, her upper-middle class status, education, and monetary wealth. Her invisible Otherness, in the form of her mental health, must continuously be re-evaluated in regards to her self-presentation in order to remain invisible. Madness may be framed as 'invisible,' but fashioning and dress is a visible vehicle of communication. Despite the progress made in psychiatric realms on the treatment and diagnosis of mental illness, this 'progress' does not negate the structures still in place among consistent mixed messages on popular culture and Western society's definition of *crazy*. How Rebecca embodies the American Dream through her fashion consumption is a conscious decision by Root. For instance, as she enters her new law firm, paralegal Paula Proctor (Donna Lynne Champlin) immediately points to Rebecca's red-bottom Louboutin shoes and assumes they are fake ("I'm not buying any of this," she says with a double entendre). It is implied that Rebecca 'does not belong' in West Covina, away from her assumed capitalist obligations—Paula hopes to 'uncover' Rebecca through luxury fashion embedded in the narrative, in order to get to the core of her goal in California. The audience learns that Rebecca moves to West Covina in order to seduce Josh Chan, shaping the primary narrative arc of the series. Underneath is a less marketable narrative: madness and its different iterations.

After she is offered a promotion at her New York firm, Rebecca begins to unravel in a state of distress. She struggles to breathe, and her uniform constricts her lungs; it is rigid, line-

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[148] bell hooks, *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (Brooklyn, NY: South End Press, 1992), 26.

based design and construction is not suited for a silhouette crouched in a garage (Figure 9).

There is literally no space in her costume for her body to expand and contract. Coincidentally,

she runs into Josh on the streets, who is about to move back to West Covina after a failed stint in

New York. The series opens its first *metaphorical space* with "West Covina," transporting her

real-life dress across time and space:

> but suddenly, the dress gets a slit on the side. This all happens in song, so we allowed the song to give us a magical thinking of openness. When she lands in West Covina, she's still in fantasy. What used to be a simple blue sheath office dress with a black jacket has now turned into a blue dress with a circle skirt and rhinestones; it becomes a dancing dress.

Rebecca "comes apart" from the standardization of her life and the capitalist pressures that had

been directly affecting her mental health and ability to function in a sustainable way. Her pencil

dress receives three iterations: a full skirt, a slit once freed from the blazer, and a final sequined

dress with an open circle skit in its final 'West Covina' iteration (Figure 10). In our interview,

Root identified the colour as "Disney princess blue":

> That's what I always called it, because it's that perfect mix of slightly fake and slightly cheery and universally recognizable. In fact, I was recently shopping for fabric: I needed that similar shade, and the salesperson said 'oh, all those bolts are gone, the Disney imaginary people took them.' Oh, we're on the right track. And they research that stuff really relentlessly—there's a whole corporate reality about what those things are like.

The colour blue becomes a repeated motif in the series, re-appearing in both idealized version of

her own life ("West Covina") and when coming face-to-face with her own 'instability'. After an

anxiety attack in episode seven, with the use of *real* and *metaphorical spaces*, a guest appearance

by Dr. Phil—playing himself as the real-life, popular television therapist—and overt costuming

of the colour blue, we begin to see how fashioning and mental health identities come into

conversation to provide viewers with a nuanced understanding of Rebecca's psychology.

Upon witnessing Josh and Valencia moving into a shared apartment together, she storms

into the office declaring she "respectfully declines this feeling" of sadness, depression, anxiety,

etc., and is immediately confronted by the name partner of her new law firm, who reminds Rebecca of "the most important potential client we have ever had." While attempting to prepare for her presentation and simultaneously process her heartbreak, she begins to experience a panic attack reminiscent of the pilot. In order to numb her pain and waves of anxiety, she reaches for a bottle of vodka in her office drawer, and self-medicates out of a metal pen cup (Figure 11). As she drinks the vodka, which turns blue due to pen ink, a Dr. Phil video appears on her computer, asking Rebecca if she knows the symptoms of the "dreaded" panic attack. In the process, both her crisp white blouse and white teeth dip into her cup, leaving behind a blue stain. The subsequent failed meeting leads her into a depressive episode—with her boss asking her to return on Monday as "the happy Rebecca we all know and love." In an attempt to procure the medication she prematurely threw out upon her move from New York, she appeals to a therapist for a prescription. After a failed attempt, Rebecca swallows a pill found on the bathroom floor (Figure 12). The scene is framed through the lens of *Alice in Wonderland* with the checkered floor and rabbit-covered wallpaper. To add, Rebecca wears a blue dress reminiscent of Alice herself. She 'descends' into madness, down the 'rabbit hole' of self-medication. Following the blue stain in the office, Rebecca is intentionally dressed in blue for the remainder of the episode.

Some of the connotations of blue are quite evident—the title sequence announces Rebecca was "feeling blue" in New York, and it is a colour commonly associated with melancholy or sadness. Its intended connections to the Disney princess and femininity point to a complex costumed dynamic between her mental health and gendered identity. We further begin to understand how Rebecca's notion of romance is intentionally wrapped in the web of an attempt to uncover her own identity, based on internalized cultural values around happiness and

romantic love. As season two's TTS announces, "if you call her crazy, you're just calling her in love."

A Journey to Identity?: Rebecca Bunch and the Makeover

The makeover, in both reality television and scripted media, has been researched extensively through various methods including textual analysis, but neglected in conjunction with mental health and from a costume designer's perspective. Film studies scholar Tamar Jeffers McDonald has written on eleven of these transformations, which Helen Warner applies to her case study on *Ugly Betty* in *Fashion on Television*. To Jeffers McDonald, "'false transformations' appear to include a 'radical transformation [of the central protagonist], but this is in fact not so; the change is only feigned, the new persona a masquerade."[149] Warner contends the 'false transformation' is employed frequently in 'fashion programming', calling into question fashion's relationship to authenticity and expression of identities.[150] *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend*, on the outskirts of Helen Warner's 'fashion programming' canon, engages with repeated short-lived 'false transformations', revealed to be consciously costumed by Melina Root and her extended team. Importantly, Warner explores the way these makeover/transformation scenes often point to an attempt to uncover the 'natural self.'

I do not want to dwell on the dichotomies between femininity, fashion, and the self. In this case, *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend*'s false transformations point to an attempt to *perform* within the constraints of normality, or as Rosemarie Garland-Thomson terms, as a "normate."[151] In this

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[149] Tamar Jeffers Mcdonald, *Hollywood Catwalk: Exploring Costume and Transformation in American Film* (New York, NY: I.B.Tauris, 2010), 73.
[150] Helen Warner, *Fashion on Television: Identity and Celebrity Culture* (London: New York, 2014), 62.
[151] Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature* (New York, NY: Colombia University Press, 1997), 8.

section, I piece together the way the series subverts and adopts tropes from the 'makeover' in order to develop Rebecca's inner psychology and her series-long hope to find fulfillment. Rebecca willingly subjects herself to these makeovers in the hope of achieving a sense of normality, which has been deemed as 'natural.' Garland-Thomson succinctly writes that "One testimony to the power of the normate subject position is that people often try to fit its description in the same way Cinderella's stepsisters attempted to squeeze their feet into her glass slipper," Garland-Thomson succinctly explores.[152] These makeovers occur in small and large-scale installments—throughout seasons, during individual episodes, and in single 'music videos'.

In the following examples, the labourious steps of the transformations visually manifest through *metaphorical space*. The spectacle, here, is located through the campy nature of each 'music video', rather than the final reveal. In the pilot episode, Rebecca's "Sexy Getting Ready" video showcases the individual steps necessary to 'transform' herself for a party, in order to ultimately seduce Josh Chan. I had initially discounted the video as a 'makeover' until Root explained the way disciplining Rebecca's body through transformation works to bring her closer to a sense of normality.

> It's her trying to fit in to some sort of group identity. What makeovers always say—even in the "Sexy Getting Ready" song—the amount of effort it takes to change yourself externally, and the notion that you're doing for yourself—it's really hard work. In romantic comedies, it's always pulled off like an *Eat Pray Love*—starting my life over again, dye my hair blonde, go somewhere else, and then things will change. I think what she's trying to say is that things won't change until you decide to change them. It's not a change of hair, it's not a change of locale, it's not a change of clothes. I think it goes back to that issue of self-esteem and self-awareness happening from within, first.

Rebecca opens with her 'pre-transformation', 'raw' self in her bathroom mirror: "Hey Josh, I want to look good for you tonight—so I'm going to get in touch with my feminine side."[153] The

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[152] Garland-Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies,* 8.
[153] The music video has accumulated 1.2 million views to date on The CW's official Youtube channel, a testament to its relatability through humour and double standards of what is expected in 'getting ready' for women and men.

makeover scene intentionally picks apart the relationship between disciplining the body and femininity and its purpose to satisfy a male gaze. Makeover scenes typically involve 'painful' steps, but are always positioned as ultimately 'worth' its final result. In this case, through pointed humour, the video depicts the self-transformation process as *repeatedly necessary* in order to achieve the final 'look'.[154]

Similar to all three of my examples, "Sexy Getting Ready Song" is separated into two halves. The first depicts the 'real' montage of the self-makeover: plucking, exfoliating, and a blood-splattered bathtub from waxing sensitive areas ("bye-bye skin", "ass blood", the background vocalists sing). The transformation has already taken place in the candle-lit boudoir half of this scene, leading to a sensually confident Rebecca in lingerie and high heels. She seductively sings about "plucking and pulling", juxtaposed against clips of the physical labour. The halves blend together, confirming they are in fact a *metaphorical space*, when a background dancer from the boudoir enters the bathroom to help Rebecca fit into her SPANX, or shaping leggings (Figure 13). Near the end of the video, a male rapper enters the bathroom, adding in verse beginning with "turn that ass around like you tryin' to impress," and ending with "this is some nasty-ass patriarchal bullshit," once he takes note of the blood, hair, and other fashioning tools on the bathroom counter. The short interlude speaks to the labour as hidden or secretive, and how these fashioning practices may in fact perpetuate misogyny and double-standards due to lack of knowledge. Fashioning is positioned as frivolous rather than empowering, but ultimately necessary in order to achieve a goal. Although Rebecca is bluntly open and honest in this *metaphorical space*, the moment she returns to her *real (material) space* she fears the consequences (rejection, isolation) associated with revealing too much or straying too far from

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[154] Hence my initial dismissal of its consideration within the 'makeover' trope.

the confines of her conception of contemporary beauty ideals. The video ends with Rebecca walking out of her home in a skin-tight pink dress, announcing to her date that she has just awakened from a nap.[155]

"Sexy Getting Ready Song" speaks to the way Rebecca continues to reinvent herself to suit a particular context and its expectations according to the factors that shape normalcy: structures of patriarchy and the male gaze and being perceived as psychologically 'stable' (or the opposite of unraveling – usually the state before the makeover itself). These oppressive standards of conformity take place, in part, through media representations. Many of *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend*'s musical elements parody contemporary pop singles or artists. "Put Yourself First" in episode ten pushes these themes further by introducing more literal symbolism. After bribing an expensive entry to a summer camp Josh Chan volunteers with, Rebecca—giving advice such as "when we focus on men, we just make them more powerful" as 'Director of Female Empowerment')— attempts to recreate their fond childhood in a similar context. After Rebecca experiences allergic reaction to mosquito bites, a rejection from Josh, and breaking down during her 'Women's Empowerment' lecture ("I'm the one who needs to be empowered," she cries), she receives advice on how to "Put Yourself First" by the young girls attending the camp. They directly say: "what you need is a makeover."

We do see some of the 'real' steps: lipstick, foundation, and concealer (Figure 14)—but the focus here is on the Fifth Harmony parody of popular songs "B.O.S.S." and "Worth It," which propelled the girl group into stardom in 2014–2015 (Figure 15). The parodied version

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[155] The video was released in October 2015, two years after Beyoncé popularized the common social media caption or expression, "I woke up like this"—perhaps originally intended to uplift 'unadorned' beauty, but often used ironically to point out they in fact, did not wake up with a 'full face' of makeup. I believe this scene is a reference to this. The line might be interpreted literally by her date, but Rebecca and the viewers are 'in' on the stages of the transformation.

suggests that Rebecca's *metaphorical spaces* are highly influenced by popular culture, perhaps more so than traditional musical theatre. The video further suggests that the various acts of 'putting yourself first for him'—getting a tattoo on your lower back, getting fake eyelids, piercing your ears—caters to the patriarchal male gaze, even though the intention is focused on the self. Near the end of the video, a man dressed as Terry Richardson appears to be photographing the camp girls in their Fifth Harmony parodied glamorized looks, with MALE GAZE written on his sweater (Figure 16). Whether or not this contradicts with the moralities of post-feminist theory and self-fashioning as self-empowerment, the 'false transformation' empowers Rebecca. The focus is less on her immediate appearance, or a culturally appropriative 'look' accented by hoop earrings and a side-angled hat, or "Becky from the Block" as Josh later identifies. Rather, on a sense of belonging and connection, to feel her 'otherness', 'hysteria', or 'madness' not as a roadblock to connection. That message is muddled here due to a perceived need to self-discipline and attain an image in order to feel 'authentic.'

In the fourth episode of season two—"When Will Josh and His Friend Leave Me Alone?"—shows Rebecca's most dramatic makeover, in which she attempts to embody a 'social media' ideal in order to become the spokesperson for a douche product and company. The accompanying video, "Makey Makeover" takes us through the process: the wardrobe itself, platinum hair, and a spray-tan (Figure 17).

> Rachel is like 5'4", she's petite with big boobs, she's not your sort of fashion ideal. That whole effortless, 'I can go to Coachella in a tank top and no bra and cut-off shorts and big shoes, and be so cool. I think she feels like she can never be that person, Rebecca—everything is a costume, everything is a construction around her.

Similar to earlier episodes, the bohemian makeover becomes an attempt to construct or costume herself closer to desirability toward an 'authentic' self-representation. Madness, hysteria, and primitivism have been placed culturally in opposition of the civilized alternative. These notions

have been upheld by the able-bodied, heterosexual, colonial, patriarchal values systemically

perpetuated in the Western world. The pressure to conform, self-discipline, self-monitor, and

'perform' facets of our identity closest to the hegemony is engrained in our daily behaviours.

Rebecca's blonde makeover is a turning point for the series and her search for authenticity.

Furthermore, the series is not contributing to "a broader agenda of both challenging and

privileging the practice and consumption of fashion," due to its ability to look beyond simple

explorations of "postmodern models of identity."[156] Instead, lending a focus at how a character's

fashioning (removed from spectacle) can reveal a new dimension of their mental health in a

search for mental wellbeing and fulfilment.

Diagnosing Rebecca Bunch

When asked to select a 'look' symbolic of Rebecca Bunch's unmediated self, Root

selected the costume from "Love Kernels" in season two's premiere episode, in addition to the

blue sequined dress from the pilot, saying that they are "the two images that serve best to

describe her, and the process of unfolding" (Figure 18). Unlike the multiple iterations of

problematic long-standing history of mental health representation on television, Rebecca has

never been the "embodiment of a disorder or impediment… thus borne little to no resemblance

to actual human beings."[157] For nearly three seasons, Rebecca operates outside of a definable,

biomedical diagnosis. In episode four, her neighbor Heather Davis (Vella Lovell) adopts

Rebecca as the case study for her behavioural psychology course in order to explore Rebecca's

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[156] Warner, *Fashion on Television*, 73. To add, the series also does not suggest *luxury fashion* as the vehicle for this change—which differs from many makeovers on 'fashion programming'.

[157] Jeffrey K. Johnson, "The Hero With a Thousand Dysfluencies: The Changing Portrayals of People who Stutter," in *Mental Illness in Popular Media: Essays on the Representation of Disorders*, ed. Lawrence C. Rubin (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2012), 11.

diagnosis. Heather forms a fascination and bond towards Rebecca for her perceived madness: "this woman's choices are nuts." Nevertheless, she declares her case study to be 'inconclusive', opting to not label Rebecca for her perceived 'irregularities'. Here, Heather operates from the point of view of the series viewer: four episodes into the first season, with no diagnosis, we follow Rebecca with curiosity and compassion. We are drawn to the series through her perceived *craziness* and *hysteria*, and return to it for empathy driven through subversive humour and musical.

Crazy Ex-Girlfriend, following low ratings and critical acclaim, likely would have been cancelled after its first or second season. But the post-network era grants series with opportunities to grow beyond the limitations of a large viewership—in which acclaim, social media, and other factors have begun to outweigh the importance of Nielsen ratings. As a result, we witness Rebecca fluctuate between the highs and lows of mania, depression, and anxiety, despite an expectation of the eventual "equilibrium-breakdown-recovery" arc typically represented in Hollywood film.[158] The series also risks filling a fictionalized televisual space of "patient porn," by revealing the "intimate personal details" of Rebecca Bunch's tribulations as a mad person. In other words, "others achieve relief through passive watching, while still others profit from the collaboration of those on the front lines in compromised positions."[159] The commodification of mental health stories or 'patient porn' is notable, particularly in Rebecca's diagnosis of Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD), characterized by impulse and 'uncontrolled' anger. For example, Rebecca aims to 'destroy' Josh in the third season, threatening to murder his family members and mailing him feces. That said, the psychiatric community has concluded that

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[158] Stephen Harper, *Madness, Power and the Media: Class, Gender and Race in Popular Representations of Mental Distress* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 103.
[159] Lucy Costa, Jijian Voronka, Danielle Landry, Jenna Reid, Becky Mcfarlane, David Reville, and Kathryn Church, ""Recovering our Stories": A Small Act of Resistance," *Studies in Social Justice* 6, no. 1 (2012): 86.

a gender disparity exists for the diagnosis of BPD for women, pointing to a diagnosis bias based on "stereotypical female characteristics (e.g., emotionality)."[160] The rare depiction of a BPD diagnosis on television is significant, as the way it is represented works to shape a cultural perception. In "Making Bipolar Britney [Spears]," Jijian Voronka compares images and tabloid clippings from 'before' and 'after' her culturally-imposed diagnosis to determine the ways in which "the celebrity body becomes the template from which any deviation is remarked upon, troubled, noticed. There is a demand for self-governance, a call to both starlets and their followers to call on technologies of the self in order to maintain that primary body."[161] Though not explicitly stated, Britney's fashioning during her 'descent into madness' became integral for the public's perception of her body: her wigs, shaved head, or outfits that showcased her deviant body and 'hyper-sexuality'. Like the makeover, the diagnosis or conforming to psychiatric practices, is an attempt to produce and maintain normalcy. As Voronka writes, "The notion of 'normal' has been used against those who are determined 'abnormal' as a powerful tool to exclude, marginalize, and oppress, not only in the dividing realm of sanity/insanity: but also within the dividing practices of race, class, gender, sexuality, and ability."[162] The subjective meaning of Rebecca's suicide attempt and subsequent diagnosis can be difficult to scrutinize without the conclusion of the series (2018–2019). Regardless, I contend that we can begin exploring this dynamic by contrasting both scenes through the fashioning of Rebecca's physical body.

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[160] Carla Sharp, Jared Michonski, Lynne Steinberg, J. Christopher Fowler, B. Christopher Frueh, and John M. Oldham, "An Investigation of Differential Item Functioning Across Gender of BPD Criteria," *Journal of Abnormal Psychology* 123, no. 1 (2014): 235.

[161] Voronka, Jijian. "Making Bipolar Britney: Proliferating Psychiatric Diagnoses Through Tabloid Media." *Radical Psychology* 7, no. 2 (2008): 4.

[162] Ibid, 12.

The suicide scene finds Rebecca at a crossroads of identity after feeling alienated—and forcefully medicated—by her mother in New York. She swallows a bottle of pills with a glass of Merlot on the plane back to West Covina. The scene presents little comedic relief or romantic appeal, and strips the spectacle of previous depictions of her state of mind ("Sexy French Depression" or Dr. Phil's intervention). Dressed in a simple blue hooded sweater, Rebecca gazes out the window—in a scene reminiscent of a 'music video' from the fifteenth episode of the series. In the episode, she is also on a plane in order to escape a recent heartbreak in West Covina, as she attempts to once again use geographically relocate herself in the hopes of regaining control over her life. Coincidentally, she is seated with her therapist, Dr. Noelle Akopian (Michael Hyatt):

> She panics because she's suddenly trapped with somebody who knows she's avoiding the truth, know she's hiding, knows she's secretive. Rebecca's release of anxiety is to look out the window, and in the outer space she sees her therapist as a dream ghost. In a sense, it is the anxiety being pushed out of her visually. We had the whole 60s dream ghost number, where the therapists are all in white gowns.

During "Dream Ghost," Akopian sings a Dream Girls-inspired performance while directly addressing the purpose of Rebecca's reverie (Figure 19)—"I'm just your mind working things through." Rebecca tells her she is at her lowest and that her life is "loveless." During the final sequence, Akopian and her two back-up singers perform while wearing white sequined gowns, detailed with pearls and feathers. Although the white gowns point to both institutionalization and purity, the Dream Girls number and choreography is riddled with notions of the spectacle. In its first season, *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* could not yet delve into the seriousness of Rebecca's mental health. The contrast between her fashioned body during the suicide attempt and her subsequent diagnosis points to an attempt to comment on the fallacies of psychiatric expectations of a label.

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Rebecca's 'look' in episode following her suicide attempt contrasts starkly against the muted, dark athleisure-wear of the plane scene. Here, Rebecca wears a bright yellow dress through both the *real (material) space* of the psychiatry offices and her *metaphorical* 'music video', blending both together. The heavily romanticized scene includes Rebecca opening a glowing gold enveloped labelled with "diagnosis". The *metaphorical space* is often heavily romanticized for Rebecca, in order to function as a coping mechanism of truth and vulnerability, and 'move through' her emotions or state, and thus remain successful in her every-day life. Robert McRuer, a foundational theorist bridging queer theory and disability studies, describes this phenomenon through the lens of neoliberal 'flexibility', in which heterosexual able-bodied individuals are required to be "flexible enough to make it through a moment of crisis."[163] To perform 'wholeness', or adapt to the crisis in question and carry on successfully, is thus considered within neoliberal 'flexibility'. Rebecca, who learned how to approach love through popular culture, takes advantage of her 'flexibility' to move through each depressive episode or moment of distress—"Sexy French Depression," her various makeovers, and "Dream Ghosts" as examples. The suicide attempt on the plane—in contrast with her previous abilities to maneuver around the crux of her pain—is her only chance to escape her current circumstances, now that the 'flexibility' she previously utilized is extinguished. In this scene, we are able to 'read' Rebecca's mental health. In fact, the way Rebecca is fashioned with a sweatsuit and no makeup, in conjunction with the added affect of the blue lens and hue, is reminiscent of our introduction to the character in the pilot (Figure 7).

The suicide attempt contrasts the subsequent episode's diagnosis of her 'condition' by the hospital's psychiatrist. Without knowing her official 'label', she sings on the possibilities ("who

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[163] Robert McRuer, *Crip Theory: Cultural Signs of Queerness and Disability* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 16.

says there isn't an easy fix") in a floral yellow dress, her exhaustion no longer visible after her

recovery. Through comedy, the diagnosis is positioned as an epiphany for the character (Figure

20). As McRuer explores through the 'flexible body', the epiphany in Hollywood film has held

significant currency, in which "an individual is said to lose himself or herself briefly, tends to be

a moment of unparalleled *subjectivity.* As the music swells and the light shifts, the moment

marks for the character a temporary consolidation of past, present, and future… to carry, to the

close of the narrative, a sense of subjective wholeness that he or she lacked previously."[164] From

a Mad Studies perspective, this *subjective wholeness* is inherently problematic, as it suggesting

an *incompleteness* of mad individuals—as though their biomedical diagnosis is the final step

towards achieving a *normate* subject position.[165] This facet of normalcy is evidently subverted in

Crazy Ex-Girlfriend, as Rebecca first rejects the diagnosis, and eventually 'goes off the rails' in

future episodes, diving impulsively into a new relationship, though aware of the implications of

BPD. Further, her yellow dress and feminine presentation suggests the diagnosis is an "embodied

comeback," in which it is not singularly her mood that has shifted, but her outward appearance:

beachy hair, feminine floral dress, a cross-body purse.[166]

As the series continues to unravel her identity, the nuances of her mental health are

developed through her costuming. When asked on how a diagnosis would affect her wardrobe,

Root identifies it as "a journey of accountability" rather than a solution to an *illness* or *hysteria*.

> It goes back to that issue of self-awareness happening from within, first. We sit around
> [discussing] what she'll end up looking like, at the end of this—what are the characters,
> and all their searches for identity, end up looking like? We joke around in the end they'll
> end up looking normcore-boring.

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[164] Ibid, 16.
[165] *Normate* according to Rosemarie Garland-Thomson. See page 21.
[166] Voronka, "Making Bipolar Britney", 17.

Root, the showrunners, and the writers envision "'boring' normality" as the final vision for the characters, who each use external objects, such as wardrobe, to shape, cover, and shift their perceived subject position. Although she names *normality* as a joke or fantasy for the writing team, she suggests that Rebecca's current state of dress—slip dresses and the repeated makeovers—are inherently 'abnormal.' As I probed further, Root revealed "there's a sense that somebody always has something that you want that will define you, and you don't have that thing." Fashioning then becomes less about the authentic or 'natural' self, but rather about Rebecca's attempt to look outwards for her self-definition—whether this is her self-fashioning or a diagnosis.

Summing Up: Exploring Mental Health in the 'Post-Network Era'

As far as the series pushes its protagonist's perceived *craziness*, it has never surpassed its original premiere ratings. The series is therefore positioned in a creative space shaped by unique conditions of the current post-network race to craft groundbreaking, 'artful' television; given opportunity to grow and shift in a smaller margin of mediation. Its boundaries are shaped less by viewership, and more by network sponsors or advertisers. Although the show likely still gains profit, it operates as 'niche television', thus occupying a very minimal space. My concern here is the impact on costuming. Though I had not originally considered it, The CW's relationship with advertisers affects the portrayal of characters in order to avoid alienating the viewer and thereby having less commercial impact. This is the primary limitation to content explored and depicted—including the way the characters are costumed, according to Melina Root.

> You have to understand—we're on a network show. My leeway to do stuff…it's taken a softer edge at The CW [than] it would've at Showtime—although I'm pretty surprised with the things they let us get away with … I'm doing a network TV show, I'm not doing an independent movie or a Netflix show. I think I would be able to express her mental

state and her mismatched dissociative thing a bit better – but now, because I have a network, I'm selling toothpaste in commercials in-between.

Root's insight into network censorship points less to Rebecca's sexualisation or foul language—the series has broken through these rules with the use of the rarely mentioned word 'clitoris', frank discussions about the body and anatomy ("Period Sex"), and sex-related 'music videos' ("Sex with a Stranger", "Let's Have Intercourse", "Strip Away My Conscience"). However, a frank, stripped depiction of mental health seems to cross boundaries beyond sexuality. That said, the series *has* presented Rebecca in unflinching realism, particularly in the third season's suicide attempt. Ultimately, through the themes I presented in this chapter, we can begin to see how vast the connections made between a female protagonist, her mental health, and the way she is costumed reflects these identities. Furthermore, I explored how this historically problematized space can be reclaimed and subverted, thus shifting our cultural perceptions of normalcy.

CONCLUSION

As this research project molded and shifted according to the research I uncovered and connections I drew, its primary contribution led to the advancement of knowledge on how the mind-body is fashioned on scripted television. Specifically, the threads of research and new methodologies that emerge to craft new, interdisciplinary ways of thinking. The result is the first cross-hatched project between three distinct domains: Mad Studies, Television Studies, and Fashion Studies. By connecting each stream and following the work of radical scholars, I was able to begin paving a path for a new way of conceptualizing the mind-body-clothing relationship as far as it is represented on television.

My work builds on fashion and television research by Helen Warner by radicalizing her methodologies beyond hierarchies perpetuated in celebrity culture and the high-end fashion industry. The literature on fashion and the body by Joanne Entwistle was crucial to my lens, with the added dimension of on-screen representations. Overall, I searched beyond Cartesian dualisms, to suggest approaching fashion on television from *corporeal consciousness*, *situated bodily practice*, and finally, madness. This framework informed my case study, and the future of research in this area.

The support of a qualitative interview with costume designers is also a neglected approach, but we must begin by centring costume design as an inseparable element in identity construction. We must consider how characters are represented based on their fashioning, and be mindful of its discursive impact. Costume designers may not have the academic rhetoric to explain their methodologies, but they bring a valuable perspective to the research and writing process. Root's quotes were honest and unmediated by censorship of information in the press. I could not imagine this project without the quotes Root provided.

Furthermore, this research forges connections between Andrea Daley, Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, Judith Butler, Michel Foucault, and others who have worked within the realms of performance, madness, gender, and space. Importantly, they share commonalities on the critique of normalcy, crucial to this research. Television is so often relegated in this discourse, as this research establishes. In an era of exponential television production growth and simultaneous and continual political unrest, I strive to question the status quo as it is being 'fed' to the viewer.

The newest and most important lens to this project is the emerging field of Mad Studies and the scholars and activists working within. My recent introduction has inspired and excited me for a future focus on madness and its countless representations on television. There are many female-led series on 'post-network' television I considered as case studies for this project or future work: *Girls*, *UnREAL*, *Jessica Jones*, *Homeland*, *United States of Tara, Lady Dynamite, Grey's Anatomy, You're the Worst, Orange is the New Black, Transparent, Shameless, Black-ish, Love, Kimmy Schmidt, Broad City, Insecure, 13 Reasons Why.* I was limited and unable to touch on most of these, nor the nuances of privilege and madness in relation to intersections of age, class, race, ability, etc. I had originally aimed to research two to three case studies, and had received email interview quotes from Lyn Paolo, the costume designer for *How to Get Away with Murder* (2014–). My goal was to incorporate Black feminist work to break down how certain bodies are privileged over others in being interpreted through the civilized/primitive binary. In other words, stereotypical representations of Black women as 'angry' or 'crazy' are immediately rooted in this dynamic. My interview with Root was lengthier, and filled with important details I would have had to omit in favour of an additional case study. However, as a feminist scholar, it is my lifelong goal to continue to push for intersectional analysis in the fields I explore.

Additionally, I had hoped to include a close-reading analysis of objects designed for the body of the protagonist in these pivotal scenes I analyzed. Unfortunately, due to time, budget, and space, I was unable to do so. This additional method would provide a tactility to future material inquiries. My narrower lens will hopefully open opportunities for future research, and begin the development a community of mad-positive or mad-identified fashion scholars who are actively concerned with how madness is represented on television.
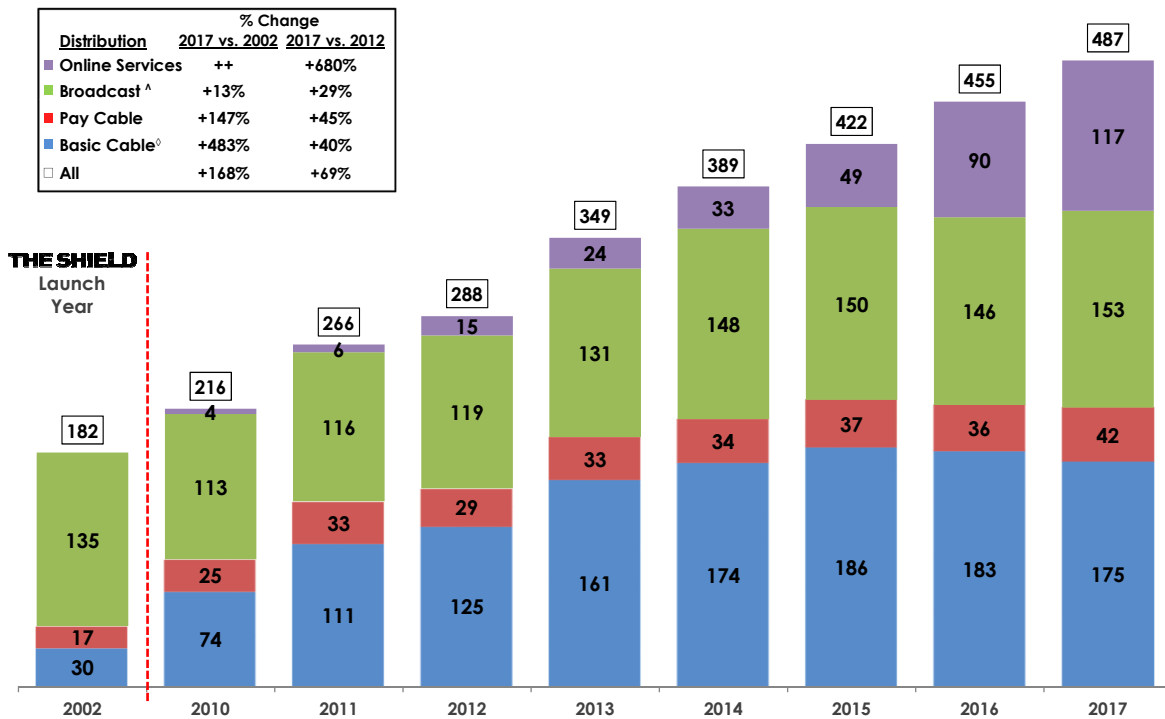
Overall, this MRP is a call to action to diversify the ways we approach fashion on television, particularly on the construction of intersectional identities. I insist on integrating this discourse and research perspective into fashion and theatre pedagogy, to teach students on the implications of costume design in relation to madness, and other facets of identity. Gendering madness through the 'crazy' trope occurs mostly through fashioning or its associated beauty, diet, and exercise industries. Television, accessible by millions, delivers these cultural 'truths' and messages that are easily internalized. On scripted television, they begin with the representation of costumed identity. Rather than pathologizing the viewer, we can critique these representations directly, with anti-oppressive Feminist Disability Theory at our disposal. An entire course could be devoted to fashion and television, and the countless ways to approach writing and designing costume. Unlike film, television and the costume designer have both been neglected due to screen hierarchies and mass culture—the lack of academic texts and course availabilities in these intersections is indicative of this marginalization. In a 'golden age' of 'peak television,' we must not discount the effect of representation on such a widespread medium. As Mad Studies encourages, we must look beyond biomedical statistics, data, or diagnoses. Rather, a focus on structures and systems of oppression and the tools at our disposal to resist and subvert them. From the result of this project, what I do know is this: television and

fashion are both highly rigid structures, resistant to 'democratization' and significant change. On the other hand, they are also open fields for disruption and resistance. Opening this dialogue is crucial for change, and to move beyond heteronormative, patriarchal, colonial, ableist representations that work to shape normalcy.

Estimated Number of Scripted Original Series*
Broadcast, Cable, and Online Services

Distribution	% Change 2017 vs. 2002	% Change 2017 vs. 2012
■ Online Services	++	+680%
■ Broadcast ^	+13%	+29%
■ Pay Cable	+147%	+45%
■ Basic Cable◊	+483%	+40%
□ All	+168%	+69%

Source: *Estimated by FX Networks Research as of 1/2/18; culled from Nielsen, Online Services, Futon Critic, Wikipedia, Epguides, et al. ^Includes PBS. ◊Includes Audience Network (DIRECTV).
Online Services = Amazon Prime, Crackle, Facebook Watch, Hulu, LouisCK.net, Netflix, Playstation, Seeso, Sundance Now, Vimeo, Yahoo, and YouTube Red.
Excludes library, daytime dramas, one-episode specials, non-English language/English-dubbed, children's programs, and short-form content (< 15 mins).

Figure 1
Estimated number of scripted original series, FX Networks Research. January 2, 2018.

Figure 1.1
Crazy Ex-Girlfriend. "My First Thanksgiving with Josh!" 6. Directed by Joanna Kerns. Written by Rene Gube. The CW, November 16 2015.

Figure 2
Crazy Ex-Girlfriend. "My First Thanksgiving with Josh!" 6. Directed by Joanna Kerns. Written by Rene Gube. The CW, November 16 2015.

Figure 3
Crazy Ex-Girlfriend. "Television Title Sequence." 1-18. Directed by Marc Webb. The CW,
November 16 2015.

Crazy Ex-Girlfriend. "Josh Just Happens to Live Here!" 1. Directed by Marc Webb. Written by
Rachel Bloom & Aline Brosh McKenna. The CW, November 16 2015.

Figure 4
Crazy Ex-Girlfriend. "Television Title Sequence, Season 1." 1-18. Directed by Marc Webb. The CW, October 12 2015 to April 18 2016.

15. The *Girl, Interrupted* Cry-Face

11. The Jack Nicholson Cry-Face
"One flew east, one flew west, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* ..."

Figure 5
Bloom, Ester. "Homeland's 17 Best Carrie Cry-Faces." Vulture. October 08, 2014.
http://www.vulture.com/2014/10/homeland-best-carrie-mathison-cryfaces.html.

Figure 6
Crazy Ex-Girlfriend. "Television Title Sequence, Season 3." 32-44. Directed by Marc Webb.
The CW, October 13 2017 to February 16 2018.

Figure 7
Crazy Ex-Girlfriend. "Josh Just Happens to Live Here!" 1. Directed by Marc Webb. Written by
Rachel Bloom & Aline Brosh McKenna. The CW, November 16 2015.

Figure 8
Crazy Ex-Girlfriend. "Josh Just Happens to Live Here!" 1. Directed by Marc Webb. Written by
Rachel Bloom & Aline Brosh McKenna. The CW, November 16 2015.

Figure 9
Crazy Ex-Girlfriend. "Josh Just Happens to Live Here!" 1. Directed by Marc Webb. Written by Rachel Bloom & Aline Brosh McKenna. The CW, November 16 2015.

Figure 10
Crazy Ex-Girlfriend. "Josh Just Happens to Live Here!" 1. Directed by Marc Webb. Written by
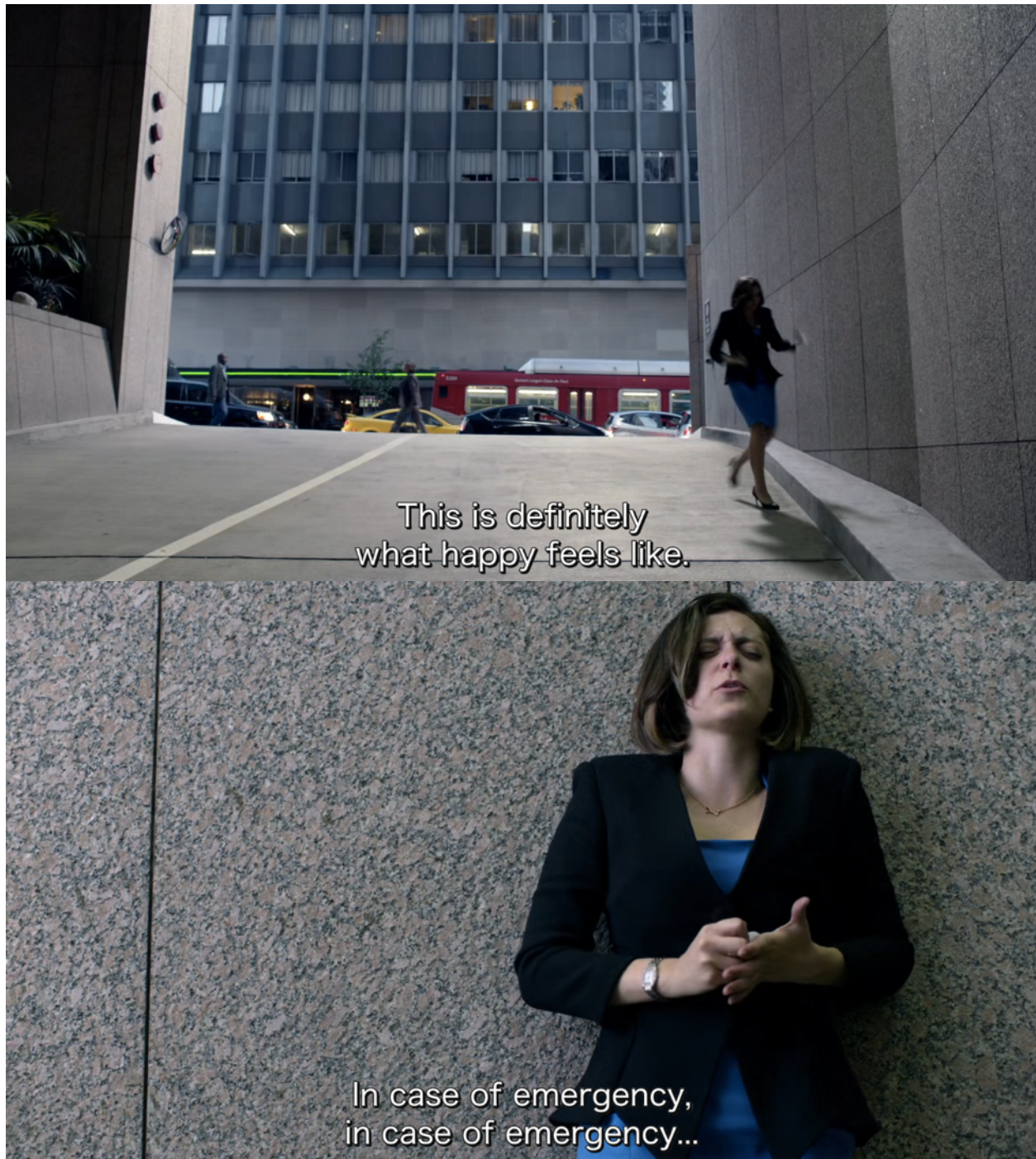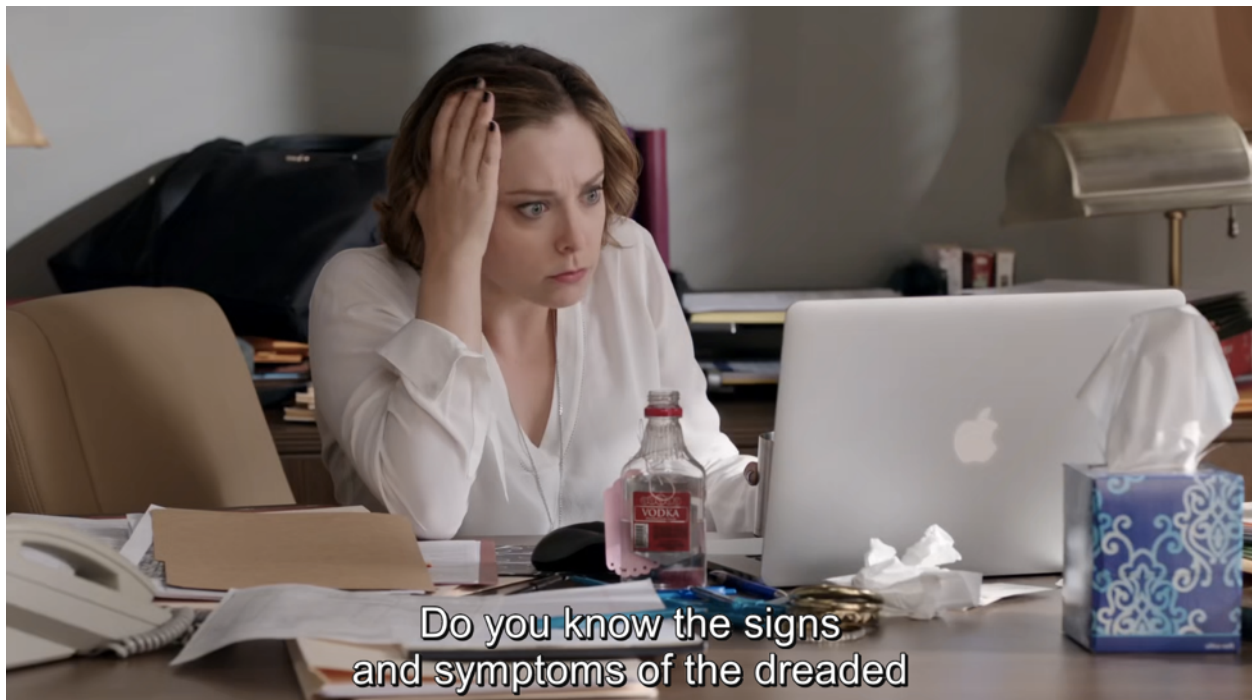Rachel Bloom & Aline Brosh McKenna. The CW, November 16 2015.

Figure 11
Crazy Ex-Girlfriend. "I'm So Happy that Josh Is So Happy!" 7. Directed by Lawrence Trilling. Written by Sono Patel. The CW, November 23 2015.

You ever think about maybe
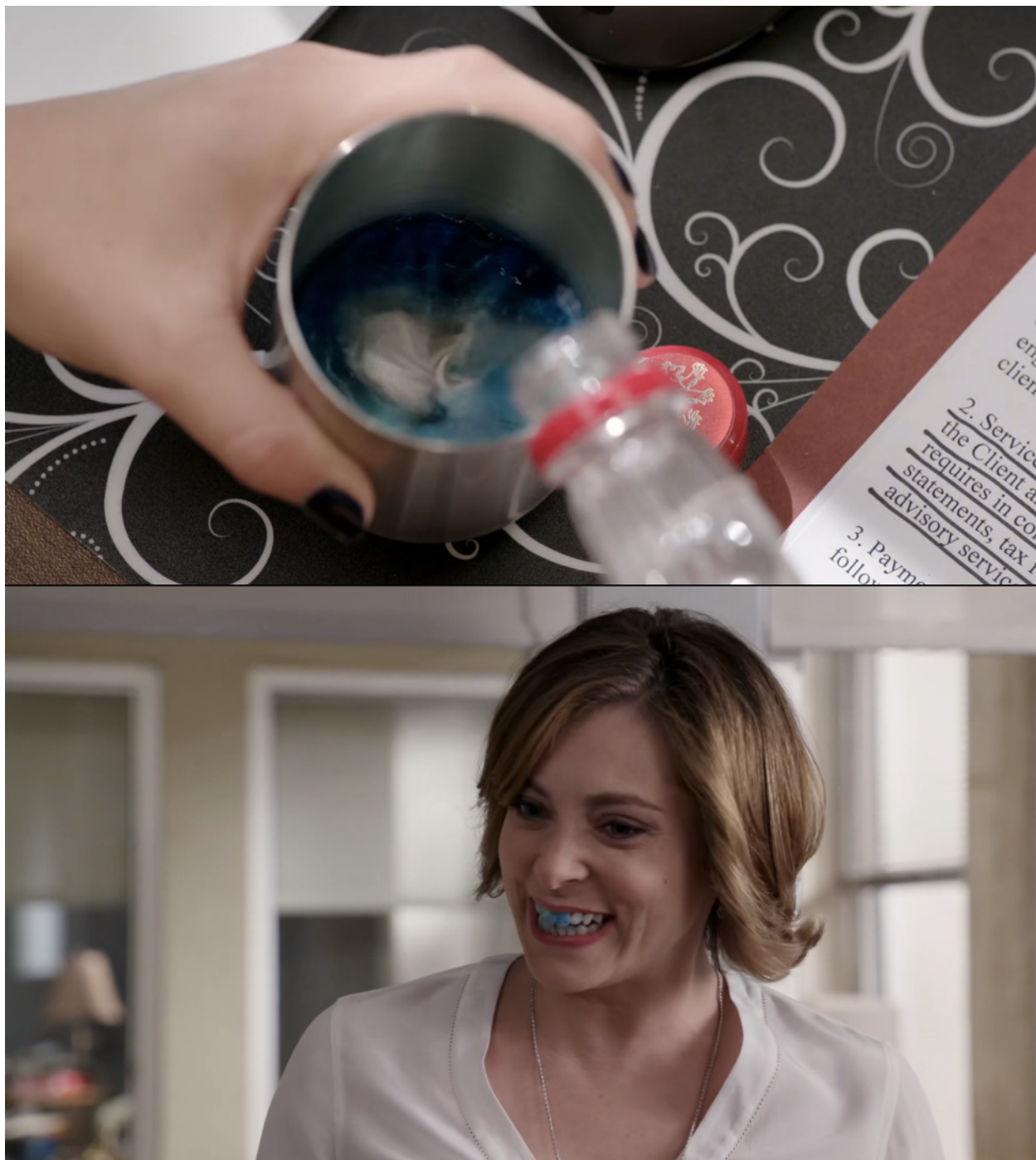hanging a little art in here
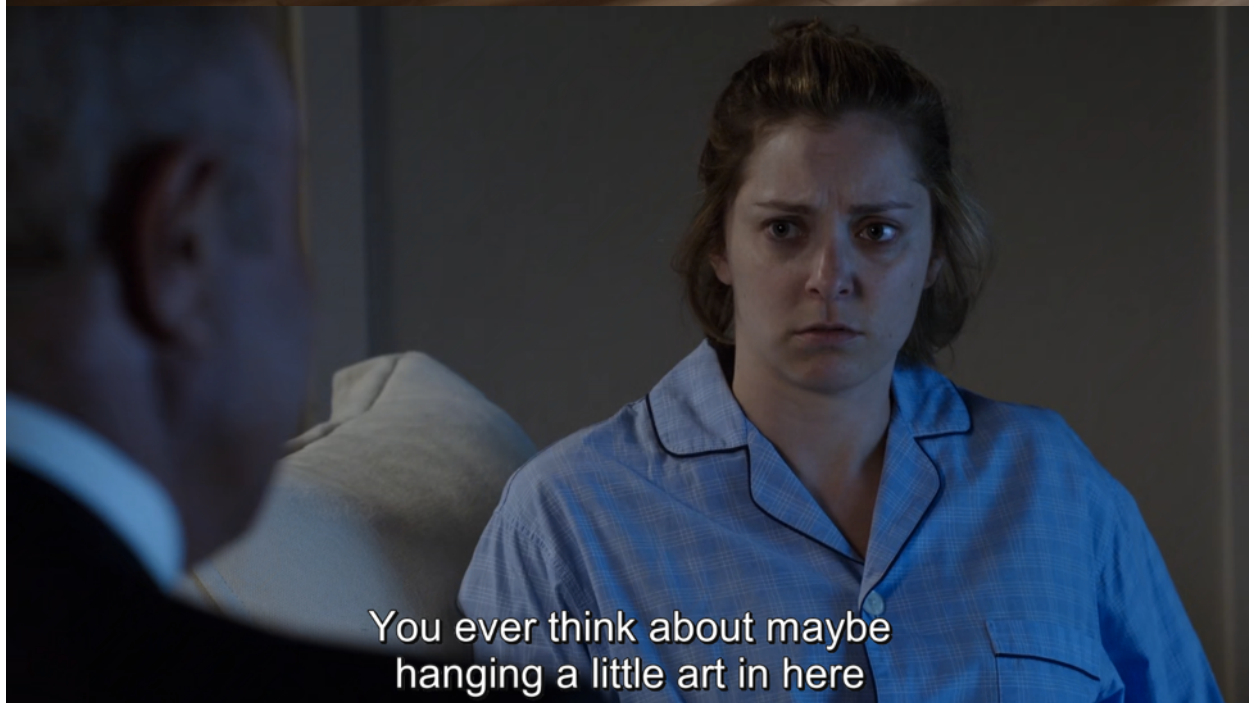
Figure 12
Crazy Ex-Girlfriend. "I'm So Happy that Josh Is So Happy!" 7. Directed by Lawrence Trilling.
Written by Sono Patel. The CW, November 23 2015.

♪ the sexy getting-ready song ♪

Figure 13
Crazy Ex-Girlfriend. "Josh Just Happens to Live Here!" 1. Directed by Marc Webb. Written by
Rachel Bloom & Aline Brosh McKenna. The CW, November 16 2015.

Figure 14
Crazy Ex-Girlfriend. "I'm Back at Camp with Josh!"" 10. Directed by Michael Schultz. Written by Jack Dolgen. The CW, February 1 2016.

Figure 15
Crazy Ex-Girlfriend. "I'm Back at Camp with Josh!"" 10. Directed by Michael Schultz. Written
by Jack Dolgen. The CW, February 1 2016.

BO$$ (BOSS). Performed by Fifth Harmony. Directed by Fatima Robinson.
FifthHarmonyVEVO. July 8, 2014. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y4JfPlry-iQ

Figure 16

Crazy Ex-Girlfriend. "I'm Back at Camp with Josh!"" 10. Directed by Michael Schultz. Written by Jack Dolgen. The CW, February 1 2016.

Figure 17
Crazy Ex-Girlfriend. "When Will Josh and His Friend Leave Me Alone?" 22. Directed by Paul Briganti. Written by Erin Ehrlich. The CW, November 11 2016.

Figure 18
Crazy Ex-Girlfriend. "Where Is Josh's Friend?" 19. Directed by Marc Webb. Written by Rachel Bloom, Aline Brosh McKenna, and Marc Webb. The CW, October 21 2016.

Figure 19
Crazy Ex-Girlfriend. "Josh Has No Idea Where I Am!" 15. Directed by Steven Tsuchida. Written by Rachel Bloom and Aline Brosh McKenna. The CW, March 21 2016.
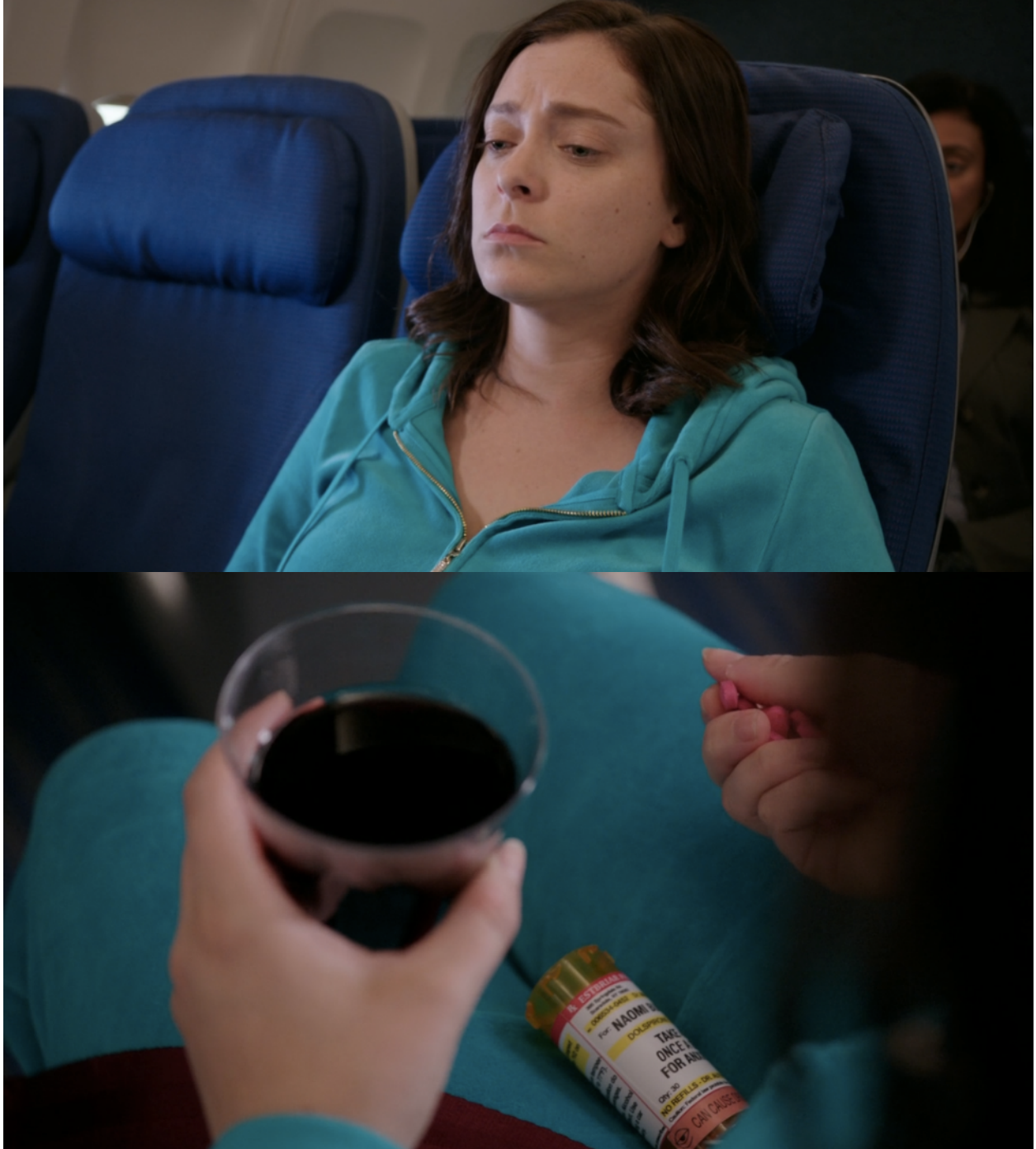
Figure 20

Crazy Ex-Girlfriend. "I Never Want to See Josh Again." 36. Directed by Stuart McDonald. Written by Jack Dolgen. The CW, November 10 2017.

Crazy Ex-Girlfriend. " "Josh Is Irrelevant." 37. Directed by Max Winkler. Written by Rachel Bloom, Aline Brosh McKenna, and Ilana Peña. The CW, November 17 2017.

Interview Transcript

The following interview transcript with Melina Root took place on October 21, 2017. The interview took place in my apartment and over the telephone, and recorded on speaker phone with a small recorder. The interview was then transcribed for quotes I planned to use. I decided to include the full transcript here for the possibilities of future research and reference. This interview is a single session, and the timestamps correspond to the time in the recording. The interview has been approved by the Ryerson University Ethics Board. I initially aimed to conduct two interviews, which I narrowed down to Root. The quotes integrated into the body are those that will be used for future conference presentations. The following transcript has been mostly unedited, with some edits for pauses, laughter, etc.

(0:50) "Well I'm glad someone's watching."

(1:00) interviewed for the show, had already worked with Sarah Caplin (producer?), after a couple of rounds I ended up getting the job (never worked with Aline or Rachel before)

(1:35) Design process: "Everything for me starts with the script. My job is to make words palpable. Everything I do is in service first, to the script, and then the actor. So, I always start with a script breakdown and I figure out the structure of the story; how many days, what the action is, what specific action needs the characters might have. After that, I go into a visual presentation. I put together "mood boards", but I put together a series of looks that might represent the character, feeling, colour...I usually present that at the interview, that's how early it starts. I almost pitch an idea to them.

Michel: How many of these decisions are through a symbiotic relationship with the executive producers? Costume is such a visually important part of this show, I would imagine it's something that's discussed a lot, especially for this show.

(3:10) "I mean, you know, it's sort of tricky in television. I was trained as a theatre designer, so it's a really different approach; you have a long process where you're primarily working with the director, and usually the writer is not around. A director and several other designers are sort of interpreting the world of the show. In television, the writers are really the first person you go to. I think most writers aren't visual—though, in my case, Alina McKenna is very fashion-savvy. She has a really good sense of not just fashion but the way clothing works for people. What I felt like they didn't have, which was sort of an odd process—on the pilot, with Mark Webb, is a highly highly visual director. So there was the visual element of Mark Webb, the writerly literary analytical sense of fashion coming from Alina, and then there was Rachel, who comes from musical theatre comedy background. There were three really different points of views that I had to incorporate, and it was really important that it was visually appealing and that the visuals could tell a large portion of the story, but that we kept the comedy, which is the thing that Rachel does. At the end of everything, there's a bump, where she breaks the fourth wall and looks at you. There's always a wink at everything she does; everything is super super sexy and at the end she'll say 'my boob hurts'—she'll undercut something at the very end, which is her comedy perspective. Then, Aline, really rich narrative storytelling abilities. It was a lot to put together in the beginning."

Michel: I guess this show in part a show about mental health, or I would consider it a show about mental health. What kind of conversations did you have on creating a style and aesthetic for Rebecca Bunch that would fit this theme? I know you've mentioned in the past that her wardrobe has been in transition, and i know a lot of her pieces don't fit perfectly—she has a haphazard way in putting outfits together.

(6:26) "When we talked about it originally, we all sat down and said: in this person's real life, where did she get her clothes? What's her clothing sensibility? We all agreed, ultimately, that she's the kind of woman who would go to a department store and hire somebody who was a personal shopper, and that person would drag her around. It was

always somebody else's idea of what she should look like, or be like. Just like her mother thinks she should look a certain way and be a certain way. She knows what the external package should look like, so it's easy for her to know that she has to wear a little skin-tight sheath dress, but she doesn't actually own any of those things. She doesn't inhabit them, they're just phases she goes through.

We started with a really simple idea that when she was in New York, she had a very black-and-white universe. It was very muted. The hardest thing for us to ever figure out—it set the tone for the show—the whole opening sequence in the pilot, when she has her panic attack and she's in the garage. She walks out in the street and she sees Josh Chan, she throws her jacket off, and her dress starts to come apart. It's really subtle: but suddenly, the dress gets a slit on the side. This all happens in song, so we allowed the song to give us a magical thinking of openness. She's suddenly in West Covina, it's like she's moved through her fantasy to one place to another. When she lands in West Covina, she's still in fantasy. What used to be a simple blue sheath office dress with a black jacket has now turned into a blue dress with a circle skirt and rhinestones; it becomes a dancing dress. That was the hardest thing for us to figure out: what's the tone of the show? Does she wear the same dress the whole time? How realistic is it? We came up with vocabulary that her truest place is in those fantasies. That's when she's the most truthful to herself. A lot of it relates to Rachel's feeling that emotion and song can carry truth in ways that language can't, and visual things can't."

Michel: I rewatched the pilot this week, and it's such an important episode in establishing Rebecca Bunch's first impression as a character to the audience. It struck me to how directly it dealt with mental health, right away pretty much. Can I ask more specifically about the first outfit we see her in: the blazer and blue dress. Why those items paired together? I remember seeing how tight the blazer fit on her, and I was wondering if that was kind of a visual symbol to show how constricting her life was in New York. When she takes it, it's kind of a release for her.

(10:24) "It is pretty much that metaphor of being in a uniform and somehow the uniform gives you a sense of external place; you know where you are in the world when you wear a uniform, no one looks inward, no one questions anything. She slowly comes apart. She gets a borderline personality disorder diagnosis in this third season. For her, her intense sensitivity to the outside world, her tendency to misjudge things and misunderstand things and only understand things through her own particular psychological state, is always when we put her into those skinny little pencil dresses. We put her in spank, we do the whole thing: then we ended up with the spank dance. She's always shoved into those dresses trying to be something that she's probably not. That's what we were trying to do in the pilot episode."

Michel: Before it became the West Covina dress, what did the slit represent?

(12:07) "It depends: you could say it was her unravelling, or it was the beginning of her self-exploration, it could be all those things. But it's the beginning of opening herself up to something. She's always lived a life...there have been a lot of external demands, without a lot of internal support: her mother wasn't there for her, or was there for her but the things that mattered to her mother didn't matter to Rebecca, her father was absent most of her life. She doesn't have that endless internal resource."

Michel: Will the diagnosis change your design process going forward? A diagnosis is a very inward-reflecting process for a character or a person, to go through. So will that change the way that she dresses?

(13:30) "We're sort of at that place now; we're not really sure. Last season she went through a bunch of different looks. She tried to be the bohemian Southern California girl, she tried to be a bunch of things. In the first season, we always did this thing: if someone said to her, let's go skateboarding, instead of just putting on her sneakers and going out skateboarding, she'd go to Digs Sporting Goods (?) and buy five skateboards, three pairs of sneakers, two shorts...so we've dialed back from that now. She's now in therapy, in treatment. She still has a lot of work to do. What we're doing with her clothes right now; we're returning her back to her first season look, which is more streamlined (pencil dresses) - a little more cut and dry. In the first episode of the season she dyes her hair black, she's in black and white clothes, she becomes a little bit more predatory—driven/predatory. I think the biggest change will be towards the end of this year (we're filming episode 11), so we have three more episodes and then hopefully we come back next year. The biggest change will happen next year. Hopefully at the end of this season, she will have been through most of her therapy. We'll see how well it sits with her."

Michel: I remember reading Rachel Bloom had a four-year plan for the show; so I suppose the fourth season would be the culmination of the last three seasons of her life?

(15:42) "It's really a journey of accountability; she can no longer blame her parents, mother, herself, her circumstances. She has to learn to let go for the need of five pairs of skateboarding shoes, and trying to be what other people—relentlessly chasing after a man who's wrong for her. Or in the case with Nathaniel, she starts dating her boss a little bit, whether that's a healthy relationship or she's reliving destructive patterns."

Michel: How would you describe Rebecca Bunch's femininity, and the way she expresses it? Is her femininity a conscious design choice for you, something you keep in mind?

(16:38) "Yeah...it is. When I first when in for the interview, she seemed a little theatrical, there's a theatrical femininity to her always—her boobs, her sexuality, she uses that pretty openly. So I dressed her in a more...I mean I hate to use the word feminine, but romantic. A little more romantic. In her head there's a bit of a romcom playing, she has these princess notions of love and finding the one. Primarily she wears that 'Disney princess blue' - the colour we used in the pilot - but she wears a lot of blue, and ruffled feminine things. Circle skirts, we use a lot of designers. The designers we tend to buy for her have a feminine, girly quality to them."

Michel: Who are the designers you use?

(18:19) Off Duty: Rebecca Taylor, Joie
Office looks: Taharee, Max Mara, "pretty conservative lady dress labels"

"When we did the pilot, we had a long discussion - she's never had a pair of jeans. It was a long, long discussion: do we ever see her as a regular girl? In the pilot, we never did. I never saw a place where she'd wear jeans. She was either in New York, arriving in West Covina, at the law office, going to Greg's party. We never see her as a regular jeans-and-tshirt kind of gal."

Michel: I guess that fits in well with a romantic idea of dressing. I was thinking about what you were saying about the musical elements earlier, and how they're this exaggerated romanticized version of her life; I even thought they're a manifestation of her anxiety, and how she tries to make sense of the world. The fashion is always versions of her real life style but more exaggerated; all the gowns, the cheerleader outfits, the jewellery. We know based on her past interest in performance that this musical element is very intimate to her; so can you talk a bit about the contrast between her real life style and the musical scenes? And maybe how they overlap, at times?

(20:20) "We have different approaches to the musicals. Sometimes the music just happens organically in the scene, and they break into song and dance within the scene, and there isn't a costume change - sometimes just a lighting change. Other times, there's a complete transformation. We try and find the best way to tell the story, sometimes a visual change in all the clothes helps, and other times it's jarring. So, it can be sometimes through her head, or the perspective of another character; like the sequence where she ends up on the plane, and she runs into her therapist on the plane. She panics because she's suddenly trapped with somebody who knows she's avoiding the truth, know she's hiding, knows she's secretive. Rebecca's release of anxiety is to look out the window, and in the outer space she sees her therapist as a dream ghost. In a sense, it is the anxiety being pushed out of her visually. We had the whole 60s dream ghost number, where the therapists are all in white gowns."

Michel: How did you decide to dress Rebecca's therapist, actually? What were you trying to communicate through her aesthetic?

(22:20) "I work a lot with the set decorators: we put these external lives of the characters together. She's a therapist, she's Dr. Acopian - I was like oh, is she Armenian? And they were like no, she's African American. I'm like oh, okay, is she married to Armenian, is that why she's called Dr. Acopian? That's it, she's married to an Armenian. We make up the story in the fitting room. Based on therapists that I know, and a woman of that age and size, where she would shop. Those are more ethnic stores, not department stores or high-street mall stores. Small individual stores that cater to women of a different size, of a different perspective. Where would she actually go to get clothes when

you're a size 20? You don't want to go to Target or Macy's, you want something more intimate. So I shopped at a lot of stores in South Pasadena where I live, and Studio City where we film, where I know women who are in their postmenopausal years go buy nice, loose, linen, comfortable clothes."

Michel: I wanted to ask about the dress in the opening sequence of the second season, which I love, and accompanies some tongue-in-cheek references to the word crazy and underlying issues she 'definitely doesn't have' - what did the fashion of that sequence say about her character in season 2?

(24:50) "Oh, the 30s dance number sequence? That came late - they wanted a new opening sequence, nobody wanted liked the first season animated one. Because Mark Webb was directing the first episode of the second season - originally it was going to be a Mary Tyler Moore, 70s sequence, where she throws caution to the wind, a whole new start. I don't know why it went away - I think Mark Webb thought it wasn't visually interesting to film, and he said why don't we do a ?? Berkely ?? number with her. That's how it happened. They're in little shirtgirl costumes and we want giant hearts in the back - it was really based on Golddiggers 1933 (??)—a cheesy, external fantasy, meant to entertain and distract you."

Michel: It was interesting how the opening sequence also broke the fourth wall - you see it in every episode, so it has a very strong reinforcement of where she's at as a character, and where the show is at. It had such a lovely red colour, very visually appealing.

(27:12) "A lot of it is to how Mark shoots those things."

Michel: I found it much more romanticized than the first season, it was like a hyper-romanticization of what was going on with her as a character. I was wondering, the way this (Miss Douche) makeover is communicated through costume, can we talk specifically about the blonde wig? And what was it meant to represent for Rebecca?

(27:38) "It actually was her hair dyed, believe it or not. We dyed her hair in the middle of shooting an episode, which is really technically difficult, and was really stressful for all of us. We had to re-shoot stuff in the middle of it. For her, the makeover, the whole point of the makeover, is you can have an external makeover, but until you have an internal makeover, it doesn't really matter. She goes through this long, elaborate journey of trying to fit in externally, and it backfires on her. In a way, she's trying to turn herself in this Coachella-bohemian easy going kind of gal that she perceives as her competition. That's the way she perceives Josh's reluctance, she feels like she's not the right woman for him, so she's going to change herself to make herself more appealing to him. In the process, she and Valencia end up in a burning man-type of experience, and they realize through it, they have been wasting their time on some guy who's not returning what they need, what they want."

Michel: I was comparing the makeover to the makeover in the first season, in the video for 'Just for Yourself' - they're both similar in concept, in a way, but this makeover is a step further, I think, in the context of the competition and the very intimate change of hair colour. So, what was the decision behind the blonde specifically? Dyeing it was probably a huge decision? Is it just tied to the bohemian identity? Or is it because it's a more permanent change?

(30:50) "She has a sort of medium brown hair, Rachel, and that's always been her hair colour on the show. Going blonde was in a sense, what's the ideal? Blonde, tall, lean. It really was for her, looking at all sorts of 'girl squads' and packs of women who dressed a certain way, who were all easy and comfortable with each other - she's never had that relationship with any other woman. Her first friend is Paula, and her second friend is Valencia, who they bond over the fact that they were both dating the wrong man. In her mid 30s, she actually develops friends. It's her trying to fit in to some sort of group identity. What makeovers always say—even in the Sexy Getting Ready song— the amount of effort it takes to change yourself externally, and the notion that you're doing for yourself—it's really hard work, to pluck your eyebrows, get waxed, all the maintenance. In romantic comedies it's always pulled off like an 'Eat Pray Love' - starting my life over again, dye my hair blonde, go somewhere else, and then things will change. I think what she's trying to say is that things won't change until you decide to change them. It's not a change of hair, it's not a change of locale, it's not a change of clothes. I think it goes back to that issue of self-esteem and self-awareness happening from within, first. We sit around what she'll end up looking like, at the end of

this—what are all the characters, and all their searches for identity, end up looking like? We joke around in the end they'll end up looking normcore-boring."

Michel: Is that because they'll be so developed on the inside that they won't feel like they need to present a certain way?

(33:40) "There's this thing with Daryl Whitefeather, her boss. In his search for who the hell he is, finds out that he's 1/8th Chippowa. He decorates an entire house, wears a Western belt buckle, has turquoise and silver jewellery—external props that explain who they are. That was one of the original concepts of the series, is that these characters are all searching, restless, incomplete, searching for something."

"In Paula's early clothes, we always joked about (it probably didn't read) as an actor she had Jessica Simpson shoes, Nicki Minaj skirt from Kmart—everything had a brand or status to it, no matter how cheap it was. Katy Perry jewellery, for Claire's, or Proenza Schouler for Target. She knew there was a status and desirability, and she had to buy that item because it gave her a bit of glitter from the other side. That's what Rebecca represents for her—she walks in and she's like nothing she's ever seen in West Covina. There's a sense that somebody always has something that you want that will define you, and you don't have that thing. For Paula, it's realizing that Rebecca has fancy shoes, but underneath it all, she's just a heartsick girl. That's what bonds them."

Michel: It's interesting how you spoke about Darryl's external symbolism for who he is—for Rebecca, it's more associated with what she wears specifically. I'm thinking back to her apartment in the pilot and how empty it was, she only had a bed and TV. Even in her house that she buys, it's very large and doesn't have that much that's directly personal.

(36:59) "But she doesn't know who she is - so she can't just go and pick five things and put them in a room and have people over, she can't do that. Those things that are so simple for most people are very difficult for her, those social connections, and for a lot of the other characters. For Valencia, they have a thing in the first or second episode of the first season, where she comes over and they drink wine, and she goes: I've never had a girlfriend, girls have always hated me because I gave the eighth grade math teacher a blowjob. She's used her power in sexuality to gain power with men, which is what she thought she needed. She's never been able to develop supportive relationships. She's planned it all out (Josh's marriage) - underneath it all, Josh doesn't really want Valencia. Who knows what Josh wants. At the end of the second season he thinks he wants to be a priest."

Michel: Back to the Miss Douche competition just for a moment—I wanted to ask about the denim jumpsuit. It's the first time we see her in denim, or at least a jumpsuit - was that piece tied to those ideas you were talking about in terms of being the tall, slender ideal?

(39:35): "Rachel is like 5'4", she's petite with big boobs, she's not your sort of fashion ideal. That whole effortless, 'I can go to Coachella in a tank top and no bra and cut-off shorts and big shoes, and be so cool. I think she feels like she can never be that person, Rebecca - everything is a costume, everything is a construction around her. The denim jumpsuit was requested by Aline, she said I want in one of those 70s jumpsuits. It just had to happen, and I was like okay, we'll make it happen! Rebecca's is one from the 70s, that maybe on some other body would've looked great, but on her it was like 'what is she wearing'? That's what we're trying to do - 'what the hell is she wearing?' - it kinda looks okay but then you're like, why are you wearing that? It continues to raise questions."

Michel: Historically, on television, mental health has been portrayed fairly stereotypically. We know that Rebecca has struggled with mental health since her childhood, and it's an integral part of who she is - I'm assuming when we find out about her diagnosis, especially. But we never see her in a straitjacket, or anything that's too conventional. Her mental health is actually represented in a kind of empowering way through comedy, but also romanticized—lacy black dress in *Sexy French Depression*, or the glamorous evening gown she wears in *You Stupid Bitch*, or the equally glamorous red dress in *Tell Me I'm Okay Patrick*. Are these tropes and stereotypes you keep in mind as you're dressing her, especially in these videos so directly related to her mental state of mind?

(42:24) "Yeah - *Sexy French Depression* is a take on all those 60s-70s movies where the women are weak and mentally questionable but look beautiful, and everybody's walking through the streets in a state...making us look at

the romantic notion of depression. The Dr. Phil episode - she comes off all her meds, she throws all her meds away. Also in that episode, she's in a funny little blue house dress - blue t-shirt dress, crawling around the floor, and takes the wrong pill or something like that. That was a direct allusion to Alice in Wonderland (blue dress), the checker floor, going down the rabbit hole, it was all those connections. The red dress 'Patrick I'm Okay' is a fabulous Baker's Boys version, that was the visual allusion for that. That she was crawling around the piano. Instead of the loose hair, romantic, sexy Michelle Pfeiffer, her hair is all done and she's trust up in this tight red dress, and awkward and uncomfortable on the piano. It was taking that visual reference and turning it on its head. *You Stupid Bitch* was the classic torch song - the woman who's involved with the bad man who sings a heartbreaking song about pain and heartbreak but it really is about her. She doesn't really have to be with that bad man, that's what I think that song says - you're the one who fucked up, she made the wrong choice, she did/said the wrong thing. That song is so sad. That and settle for me."

Michel: I guess in a way, the three videos we talked about, are taking a stereotype or a trope, and turning on its head—which, I suppose, ties back to the whole thesis of this show, in terms of commenting on the word 'crazy' and how Rebecca embodies or doesn't embody that.

(45:40) "Often times it's called *My Crazy Ex-Girlfriend*, which both she and Aline says—no no, *My Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* is from another point of view. *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend*, that's who I am, and I have to figure that out. I've put this label on myself. It's a nuanced moment."

Michel: I guess it's almost even a reclamation of the term and I guess that's even embodied in these three videos—a reclamation of the French women in the films, an empowered reclamation.

(46:43) "There's this romanticized notion of women and mental health - the *Ophelia*, Streak, the weakness. For her, there's nothing soft or romantic about it, it's really painful."

Michel: If you had to pick one look on the show that embodied Rebecca to her truest self thus far, is there something that comes to mind?

(47:20) "In a way, the cactus dress says it all. She's a cactus, she's a creature who survives on one tiny drop of water, one tiny drop of hope or love or whatever. She's survived and thrived, on some level, and existed in a harsh terrain. She continues to exist, and survive, on that tiny little amount of nutrient that she gets. Hopefully, eventually, will be able to be a self-sufficient creature. I think the cactus is the symbol of who she is."

Michel: How was that costume acquired, was it built?

(48:33): "I designed it and made it. It takes a long time to conceive it, so we're like...is she really a cactus? Is soft foam, a costume, a dress? What kind of dress is it? So really what I wanted was a beaded gown, but that her arms became the branches of the cactus, the limbs of the cactus. It would be that, and the blue dress from the pilot; the two images that serve best to describe her, and the process of unfolding."

Michel: Blue seems to be a very interesting colour in the show; especially how the colour's meaning changes depending on the context of her character. We see her in the blue dress at her lowest point, but it also becomes a fantasy colour, and so it changes symbolically for her.

(50:00) "It was a long, hard search to find the fabric and the right colour. It's really Disney princess blue, I don't know how else to describe it. That's what I always called it, because it's that perfect mix of slightly fake and slightly cheery and universally recognizable. In fact, I was recently shopping for fabric: I needed that similar shade, and the salesperson said 'oh, all those bolts are gone, the Disney imaginary people took them.' Oh, we're on the right track. And they research that stuff really relentlessly - there's a whole corporate reality about what those things are like."

Michel: I know blue has a very interesting history in terms of gendered connotation. I have a tougher question, I think my last question. It's something I'll be exploring myself in my analysis of the show, it's what I'll be focusing on exactly. To you, what would you describe as the relationship between Rebecca, her femininity, and mental health in terms of fashion? I guess I'm asking because of historical associations with a

woman dealing with her mental health and its immediate associations with being 'crazy' and the emphasis on all these elements that come together on the show.

(51:44) "I think Rebecca knows there's something wrong with her. She says I'm broken, this is my fear that I'm broken inside. Anything she surrounds herself with, including her clothing, is a way of warding off anybody looking too closely at her, or seeing the things she doesn't want seen, or covering up the things she's uncomfortable with. She's very sexual, and there's a difference between her notion of sexuality and intimacy."

Michel: It's a really abstract, difficult question, and something I'm still grappling with. I guess I believe, just as we craft our outfits to perform a certain gender, I think there's an element of performance with clothing that ties back to her mental state of mind. I'm interested in how that's put together on a show - maybe not directly.

(54:33) "You have to understand - we're on a network show. My leeway to do stuff...it would've been a slightly different show if we would've stayed at Showtime. It's taken a softer edge at The CW if it would've at Showtime - although I'm pretty surprised with the things they let us get away with. A lot of the discussion, for her, how to become a fully realized person. She has no pattern for it - no role model, she's really arrived at her mid-30s with not a lot of resources, though she has a lot of external achievement. She presents well, but underneath there's a lot of unhappiness, incompleteness, a life that is not rich - emotionally or psychologically. In a way, she's missing out on the things that many many people. She'll look at Josh Chan [and Thanksgiving episode] - she has no idea how to be in that world. She doesn't even dress as herself, she puts on a parent-pleasing dress. So yeah, it's that inability to live in your own skin, whatever that is - not knowing yourself well enough to just sit in a room in comfort."

Michel: I guess it's funny because Josh Chan is maybe the most normcore dressing character on the show.

(57:00) "He used to be more West Covina - in the first season he had flip flops and stitchy jeans, and too tight tshirts. He's gotten a little bit more normalized. I guess - I'm doing a network TV show, I'm not doing an independent movie or a Netflix show. If I was doing a Netflix show, the show would look a little different. You would see, I think I would be able to express her mental state and her mismatched dissociative thing a bit better - but now, because I have a network, I'm selling toothpaste in commercials in-between. Things are a little bit more visually pleasing, a little bit more aspirational than I would want them."

Michel: Is that specifically because of the visual effect of the show? Or budget and time?

(58:13) "I think it's related to likability. I can't make Rebecca so unappealing that you don't want to turn on the TV to watch her every Friday night. She has to have some external attractiveness in order for me to get away with the other stuff she does. She's a pretty unlikable character -if you look at behaviours and the way she treats people. She's always able to double-back and fix something. In this third season she quits at some point, or her mother quits for her, and the whole office is like...yes we missed you but it was so much calmer, there was no drama."

APPENDIX C
Definition of Terms

Fashioned: I use the word or action of fashioning (hair, makeup, prosthetics, wardrobe itself) interchangeably with fashion, dress, costume(d), and adornment, in order to break down hierarchies around 'capital F' Fashion.[167]

Post-network (era): My use of post-network is to designate a move away from the "Big Three" broadcast networks that dominated television watching and television studies up until the 1980s.[168] Evidently, I do not position television in the same light as post-racial or post-feminist designations. Instead, I use it interchangeably with 'contemporary television', as a way to designate the influence, activism, and work by feminist critics to begin breaking down hegemonic ideologies and intervene. I wish to focus less on the problematic perspectives of the *use* of the term post-network, and focus instead on the issues at hand: intersectional perspectives that have been paved our current era by feminist scholars and critics.

Woman/female: While many television-related terms will be defined throughout my MRP, 'female' and 'woman', usually, refers to all cisgender, transgender, or non-binary female-identifying representations. The television landscape has yet to include a trans woman in a primary lead role, often sharing screen time with a cisgender ensemble; recent examples include *Orange is the New Black* (2013–), *Transparent* (2014–), and *Sense8* (2015–). While mental health and its relationship with non-binary identity is crucial to mention here, it is outside the scope of this research account. In this case, I will focus on one cisgender female roles considered groundbreaking examples of mental health representation on television, and how fashion works to construct this identity.

Madness: A broader, more socially historically inclusive way to approach 'mental health'. A promise to look at systems and structures that affect mental health, rather simply psychiatric/biomedical approaches.[169] For the use of this term, I must credit the emerging interdisciplinary field of Mad Studies, out of Toronto, Ryerson University, mad movements, and disability studies.

Mental health: In the 1990s, the Glasgow Media Group established 'mental distress' as an umbrella term instead of the potentially stigmatising 'mental illness' or 'mental health problems', which imply "that madness is a dangerous condition."[170] While describing *a state of distress* is particularly useful within television textual analysis in a given scene, identifying a character as *having* 'mental distress' resonates too closely with the common 'damsel in distress' as a television trope, further suggesting mental health's gendered nature (explored further in this

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[167] For more on this, see: Woodward and Fisher, 2014.

[168] Elana Levine, "Teaching the Politics of Television Culture in a 'Post-television' Era," *Cinema Journal* 50, no. 4 (2011): 180.

[169] Andrea Daley, "Spaces in Place: Negotiating Queer In/visibility within Psychiatric and Mental Health Service Settings," in *Mad Matters: A Critical Reader in Canadian Mad Studies,* eds. Brenda A. LeFrançois, Robert J. Menzies, and Geoffrey Reaume (Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press, 2013): 218.

[170] Stephen Harper, *Madness, Power and the Media: Class, Gender and Race in Popular Representations of Mental Distress* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 25.

project), as well as the need to be saved or rescued by the show's romantic lead.[171] I will instead rely on the overarching term 'mental health', which has resonated within Canadian media since Bell Let's Talk Day and Justin Trudeau's administration.[172] I have found personal comfort and resonance with its holistic connotations, and feel much more comfortable writing it versus 'mental illness'. However, I have grown to use the word madness as a reclamation.

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[171] Stephen Harper, *Madness, Power and the Media: Class, Gender and Race in Popular Representations of Mental Distress* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 189.

[172] CNW Group, "Bell Let's Talk Day 2017 Is One For The Record Books With 131,705,010 Total Messages Of Support - And $6,585,250.50 More Funding For Canadian Mental Health," *Globe and Mail*, January 26, 2017, , http://www.theglobeandmail.com/globe-investor/news-sources/?mid=cnw.20170126.C7152.

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