

Adopting and Challenging Traditional Gender Roles in 90s Sitcom *Friends*

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ABSTRACT

Sitcom has been worldwide famous since the 1950s. *Friends* is one of the most well-known sitcoms, telling the story of friends who lived in New York City during their youth. I will analyze gender roles issues in *Friends*. In this study, I will analyze how the six main characters adopt traditional gender roles and how the six main characters eventually challenge them. I use several theories, such as traits of traditional gender roles, theory of gender roles orientation, and theory of egalitarianism. My analysis demonstrates that each of the six main characters adopted at least one trait of traditional gender roles at the beginning of the series. The traits they adopted will be categorized by their personal attitude, social behavior, value, self-concept, and career choice. By the end of the series, the six main characters had eventually challenged traditional gender roles and adopted more to the Egalitarianism theory.

Keywords: gender roles; traditional gender roles; gender roles orientation; egalitarianism

INTRODUCTION

According to Mendrinos (2004), Sitcoms, or situation comedies, are half-hour mini-stories featuring the same characters every week. Sitcoms, which originated from the US, were developed for radio in 1922. Still, family sitcoms became very popular in the 1950s, and the format of sitcoms was finally adapted to television in the 1960s (Wamsler, 2007). According to Dalton & Linder (2005), the popularity of the genre in the 1950s made society commonly use the terms "situational comedy" or "sitcom." The American entertainment industry and its entertainment programs seem to be a center and trendsetter. For this research, the writer chose *Friends*, an American sitcom that can be considered their most successful work as the series becomes one of the most popular television shows of all time ("The 100 Best TV Show of All-Time", 2009). *Friends* is an American television sitcom created by David Crane and Marta Kauffman, which aired on NBC's prime-time schedule from September 22, 1994, to May 6, 2004, lasting ten seasons with 236 episodes. According to the writer, *Friends* is heavily influenced by the concept of traditional gender roles, yet people only focus on the funny jokes and beautiful storylines. Therefore, the writer chose to analyze how the six main characters of *Friends* adopt and challenge traditional gender roles.

Gender role refers to the behaviors, attitudes, and dispositions typically associated with either the male or female social role (Money et al., 1955). It means that the traditional gender role refers to men who must behave, act, dress like men, and women must behave, act, and dress like women. Each of the six main characters somehow had their own ways of embracing and adopting traditional gender roles in the earlier seasons. It was suitable for the conditions Americans were in during those periods. However, as time passed, the concept of traditional gender roles became toxic. Eventually, the six main characters also found their own ways of challenging them in the later seasons of their ten years' journey in the series, just like how Americans also found their ways of living their life free from the strict traditional gender roles. The examples given by the six main characters showed that when they still adopted and embraced the traditional gender roles, they were not happy and pressured. When they started challenging them, audiences could see how their characters developed to be more themselves, and they were more content and more accessible.

The theories used consist of Gender Roles Orientation theory by Beutel and Marini (1995), Traits of Traditional Gender Roles by Robert Brannon (1976), and also Egalitarian Gender Roles Attitude by Lorber (1994). The traits of traditional gender roles will be the main framework in this study, accompanied by a theory of the gender roles orientation as explained by Beutel and Marini (1995) and the theory of egalitarianism as one of the characteristics of modern days' gender roles as stated by Lorber (1994) to analyze how the six main characters adopt traditional gender roles as their ways of living and how the six main characters eventually challenge them in *Friends*.

ANALYSIS

The analysis consists of how the six main characters in *Friends* adopt traditional gender roles through their values, career choices, personal attitudes, self-concept, and social behavior. And how they eventually challenge the traditional gender roles through their values, career choices, personal attitudes, self-concept, or social behavior as time passes. Each of the six main characters adopt and challenge traditional gender roles differently, no matter how big or small they adopt and challenge them. Their character development and growth will be noted to see how they change as individuals.

Rachel's Ways of Adopting Traditional Gender Roles

Rachel adopts traditional gender roles through a couple of ways. Firstly, Rachel adopts traditional gender roles through her social behavior. Rachel's way of adopting traditional gender roles is by practicing the examples from her mother and society. Rachel's mother implicitly teaches Rachel to be like her, dependent on men. Dependency on men means getting married to them and living from their pockets. Her mother's behavior creates such a mindset in Rachel that women should just get married after college. Growing up with a mother who never worked and instead of getting married immediately, Rachel thinks it is normal and is what women are supposed to do after college. Other than her mother, her old circle of friends' behavior also plays a role in creating Rachel's mindset. Rachel's old friends show pride in getting married or even pregnant. They believe that their lives are completed if they manage to get married, especially to men with big money and status. With society's behavior like that, Rachel grows up believing the same mindset. Born in a wealthy family, Rachel was raised to think that marriage was the solution to all women's problems and the goals of their lives. While status and money symbolize men's dignity, marriage seems a women's symbol.

Then, Rachel also adopts traditional gender roles through career choices. Rachel chose not to have any career choice. Her history of growing up in a wealthy family makes her not understand the value of money and that money has to be earned. It is connected to the previous traditional gender roles where Rachel grew up believing that women depend on men, that in the case of career, she does not need it as long as she has her father or husband. Having a job to survive is not even an option for Rachel because she has seen many examples from their society that after college, women just get married and depend on men to live. The setting in *Friends* is after all of the main characters graduate from college, so technically, it is time for Rachel to stop depending on her father for her life. However, since having a career choice was not even an option, Rachel does not say anything about having a career choice, not even a job. Instead, she plans to get married. Rachel has considered carefully that instead of having a job or career to be independent of her parents, another option is to get married and depend on her husband. She already arranges that she will not have a career choice since she is marrying Barry. It also means that Rachel's decision to marry is not based on love. Rachel's decision to get married is because she needs Barry to pay for her living.

When her social behavior shapes her mindset to get married and not have career choices, she implicitly chooses to value dependency, which is a characteristic of one of the four virtues of

True Womanhood, submissiveness. In Rachel's situation, she adopts dependency by choosing to be a daughter or a wife, having no other job but to live depending on her parents or husband. She decides to live her life like her mother and her friends.

Monica's Way of Adopting Traditional Gender Roles

Monica adopts traditional gender roles through her values. Value is a person's principle or standards of behavior; one's judgment of what is important in life. In Monica's case, her value is only to keep her virginity for her special one. Monica's value is suitable with one of the four virtues of True Womanhood, purity. According to Welter (1996), purity was as essential as piety to a young woman, where without it, she was considered a member of some lower order. Purity comes in many forms, but purity symbolizes virginity in Cult of True Womanhood. It is implied from what Welter (1996) said in her work, "The marriage night was the single great event of a woman's life when she bestowed her greatest treasure upon her husband, and from that time on was completely dependent upon him, an empty vessel, without legal or emotional existence of her own." It means that a woman's virginity is so important to prove her value as a woman, and it should be given to her husband because, after that, she belongs to her husband.

Monica believed and valued this principle, that she would give her virginity to someone special (probably her husband); therefore, she never made such physical contact with random guys. Other than that, Monica did not seem familiar in sexual field. I think Monica's choice not to be familiar in sexual field is because she was afraid that she would be less pure. Monica thought that she could execute her value well because she was not familiar with flirting and seducing men, she was not familiar with men touching her breast, and she was not familiar with saying the literal meaning of a human's vital organs, and most importantly, she was still a virgin. That shows how successful Monica was in adopting purity through her value in the past.

Phoebe's Way of Adopting Traditional Gender Roles

Phoebe adopts traditional gender roles through her values. Phoebe has a lot of values she believes in, but Phoebe values Buddhism the most. Phoebe practices a couple of values in Buddhism throughout the series; being vegetarian and believing in karma.

The first Buddhist value Phoebe practices is vegetarianism. Being a vegetarian and an animal and plant lover, Phoebe can be seen as a person who is so thoughtful to the living creatures. She thinks that animals and plants should not be hurt only to fulfill humans' satisfaction. It suits Buddhism's values that the spirit of Buddhism is compassion and equality. To embody this spirit, first, they must not kill; second, they must save and protect lives; third, they must practice vegetarianism. If they accomplish all three, their compassionate mind will manifest, and a compassionate mind is the Buddha's mind.

Another Buddhist value Phoebe practices is believing in Karma. Karma is a spiritual belief where the intent and actions of an individual influence the future of that individual (cause-effect). It means that Phoebe believes what she does will come back to her. If she does something good for others, she will get something good, too.

Although Phoebe's religion is vague, all her values about Buddhism lead Phoebe to adopt one of the Cult of True Womanhood virtues, Piety. Piety was considered the core of women's virtue and the source of their strengths (Welter, 1996). In *American Quarterly*, Welter (1996) mentioned that Dr Charles Meigs explained why women were naturally religious. He said that women had a pious mind, and women's confiding nature led them more readily than men to accept the proffered grace of the Gospel. In my opinion, the reason for choosing Phoebe as the character who values Piety the most was her gender. It is because women tend to show Piety more than men, and even though *Friends* did not capture many religious issues, Phoebe, as a woman, was chosen to portray a more pious character than the others. Welter (1996) also quoted

a reassurance from Mrs S. L. Dagg, "as no sensible woman will suffer her intellectual pursuits to clash with her domestic duties, she should concentrate on religious work—which promotes these very duties." Phoebe said she did not believe in gravity and evolution. Gravity and evolution are science, and science work is considered intellectual stuff. This suits Phoebe's value to adopt Piety as she focused more on her spiritual work—being vegetarian, being selfless to others so she would not get bad karma, etc., rather than pursuing scientific wonders.

Ross' Ways of Adopting Traditional Gender Roles

There are several ways in which Ross adopts traditional gender roles. First of all, Ross adopts traditional gender roles through his social behavior. Ross' way of adopting traditional gender roles is by following what most men do in the series, being masculine. Ross is portrayed as a sensitive guy. However, he is not quite fond of being one because, during the time period of *Friends*, sensitivity is considered something feminine—since there is a common assumption that women are more sensitive and emotional than men. He then tries to hide his sensitivity by following his social behavior. His social status comes from several men in his life that show masculinity, aggression, and toughness. He thought that he would look more masculine than feminine if he followed them. People will no longer look down on him as a sensitive guy, and his masculinity will be more secure. Many times, Ross tried to prove his masculinity as a man by being aggressive and daring, which are suitable with the trait of *Give 'Em Hell*. If he could show the trait of *Give 'Em Hell*, he would feel relieved because he had kept the pride of his masculinity despite his physical pain. By practicing aggression, daring, and violence, Ross felt more like a masculine guy.

Other than his social behavior, Ross adopts traditional gender roles through his personal attitude. Ross' personal attitude is to keep away feminine stuff from men. By men having feminine stuff, Ross thinks they will also be considered feminine. Personal attitude primarily was formed through values and beliefs, but factors other than values and beliefs can still influence a person's attitudes at the decision-making point. The aspect of Ross ending up having such a personal attitude toward feminine stuff has to do with his background as a sensitive guy who was considered more feminine than masculine. Ross' personal attitudes toward feminine stuff were not formed by his values and beliefs but by her father figure—which is also an example of how social behavior affected Ross. Pressured by his father and what he valued and believed in, Ross had to grow up to be an individual that must force himself not to be close to feminine stuff. His father's personal attitude shaped Ross to become an individual who has the same personal attitude as his father toward feminine stuff. By having a personal attitude to avoid all the feminine stuff, he grows up adopting *No Sissy Stuff*.

Chandler's Ways of Adopting Traditional Gender Roles

There are two ways Chandler adopts traditional gender roles. First of all, Chandler adopts traditional gender roles through his career choice. Chandler chooses a career that provides the most money and the highest status for him, to be a Statistical Analysis and Data Reconfiguration in a multinational company. The pay was good, and he saved a lot of money for years. Chandler probably has the most money from his job than the other five. Even though he dislikes the job (Episode 15 of Season 1, Minute 2:16), he still chooses to stay there. It is because money and status are more important than his passion.

Chandler feels inferior when he cannot be the home's breadwinner; therefore, he will do anything to keep his status as the breadwinner. Otherwise, if Chandler keeps the job, he will have status and money, and he will be considered the most successful among the others. He will be able to provide and be the breadwinner in the household. When he can offer and be the household's breadwinner, he will feel more secure. It means that the money and status he has is very important to keep Chandler from being inferior. That makes Chandler choose to keep the job, even though he dislikes it. This choice Chandler makes about his career makes Chandler

adopt one of the male traditional gender role traits, The Big Wheel, where men need to have status and success.

Secondly, Chandler also adopts traditional gender roles through his personal attitude. Chandler's personal attitude is that he does not want to commit to a relationship. It is mainly based on Chandler's childhood when his parents got divorced. The divorce affected Chandler's mentality as a child that he started smoking and, worse, became afraid of commitment. The rough childhood shaped Chandler into having a personal attitude that he would not get married because if he did, he would end up getting divorced—just like his parents did. Other than that, the grief from his parents' divorce made Chandler afraid to rely on his happiness on someone else. It shaped Chandler to rely on himself only. By having a committed relationship, not only does Chandler have the potential to repeat what his parents did in the past that traumatized him, but also, he is going to lose all his freedom in his life. Chandler always manages to have several romantic relationships but always ends up breaking up with them because of small details that do not matter. It is just an excuse Chandler made to make sure that he was not going to step forward into the committed one. He always hurts women just because he does not want to commit to them anymore. Therefore, I say that Chandler's personal attitude toward commitment is mostly negative.

Chandler's personal attitude toward committed relationships makes him implicitly adopt self-reliance, which is one of the traits in *The Sturdy Oak*. There is evidence of how Chandler's personal attitude toward committed relationships forces him to end his relationships because of small things.

Joey's Way of Adopting Traditional Gender Roles

Joey adopts traditional gender roles through his self-concept. Self-concept is an idea of the self, constructed from the beliefs one holds about oneself and the responses of others, and Joey's self-concept is that he is attractive. His attractiveness is recognized by many characters in the series and by himself—that it boosts his confidence. Having a self-concept as a handsome guy, Joey thought that he was able to attract many women he wanted only to sleep with them and dump them the day after. He enjoyed being single and just thought of women as his sleep partners. He even referred to women as ice creams with many different flavors that he had to try. He also never had a serious relationship throughout the series. He thought that he did not need to settle down with a woman. He was happy with his independence as a guy who could sleep with as many women as possible without having any responsibilities. Being confident with how he looks and his ability to drag women to bed without having committed relationships afterwards make Joey adopt the traits of confidence and self-reliance from *The Sturdy Oak*. All this self-concept Joey had that he was good-looking and attractive made him believe that he could be so ignorant of women's feelings and enjoy his life full of women without settling down. Little did he know that he adopted *The Sturdy Oak* when he had this kind of self-concept.

Rachel's Way of Challenging Traditional Gender Roles

Rachel, as one of the main characters in *Friends*, eventually challenges the previous traditional gender roles she had been adopting. As time passes by, Rachel eventually challenges traditional gender roles through her career choice. She challenges the dependency she used to adopt. She challenges dependency by having a successful career journey in the fashion industry. She started at the very bottom but eventually managed to climb up her career to be acknowledged by the most prestigious fashion brands globally, such as Gucci and Louis Vuitton. With her career choice, Rachel proves that without her father or being married to someone she did not love, she, too, could survive. Rachel confirms that she can be equal to men in the career field as at the end of the series, Rachel is considered one of the most successful among the other five in the career field. Being independent of her father and marriage, Rachel also managed to be independent even from her boyfriend she loved, Ross. She chooses her job over Ross, which is a big step for

Rachel, who was once a girl who could not live without the protection of men. It means that Rachel put her career over men or partners in her life, and that is one-way women in the past could not do because of the traditional gender roles.

Rachel's way of challenging traditional gender roles brings more joy for her than when she adopts them. When she adopted traditional gender roles, she could buy anything she wanted (from her father's wallet), go anywhere, and get married. However, she was also pressured because of the partner she did not love, and her life was controlled. She was not happy with her condition. After she challenges the traditional gender roles, she has to work for her life, she has to do anything by herself, but she is happier. Despite the breakdown she had at the beginning of the series, she eventually grew up into an individual who was very different from when she was first introduced to the audience. She was at first spoiled, but she managed to be independent as she was successful in her career field and even succeeded in being a single mother for her daughter, Emma, in the ninth to the tenth season. Most importantly, she transformed from an individual who had always been controlled to someone who could do what she truly wanted in her life. To move to another country and leave everything you know in your entire life is a big step, but Rachel was also brave enough to do that. All the independent things she does in the series are hard to do, but Rachel's ability to encourage the items and even be excited and happy for them indicate how challenging the old traditional gender roles was the best way to live her life.

Monica's Way of Challenging Traditional Gender Roles

Monica also eventually challenges traditional gender roles. She challenges traditional gender roles through her values. Monica valued purity so much in the previous subchapter that she wanted to give her virginity to her special one only. However, she challenges it by having sex with men other than her husband. In her younger years (shown in flashback episodes), she believed that a woman's virginity was only to be given to the husband. However, even at the beginning of the series, Monica seemed to change her belief in such things. Not only she is not a virgin anymore, but she also even teaches Chandler (a man) sexual stuff to satisfy women. Her knowledge in the sexual field indicates that not only men but women too can have sexual interests and expertise and that it is not degrading for women to have those. In fact, it can be helpful for both men and women.

Monica also feels more like herself by challenging the traditional gender roles. When she still adopted the value of purity, she whispered so that no one would know she talked about sexual stuff, she symbolized humans' sexual organs because she thought it was taboo to say the names out loud, and she was proud to save her virginity. Her life was fine, but after her value changed, she was better. She had sex in her first date, she dated and had sex with someone much younger than her, she wanted to be a naked friend (sex partner) with someone as old as her father, she taught Chandler the seven spots to satisfy a woman in bed. Monica even helped Joey make a fake penis for his job. All the examples above are that Monica is a woman who embraces sexual things and is quite an expert on those things. Despite her expertise in sexual fields, Monica is a caring and lovable character, and no one in the entire series mentioned that Monica is a member of some lower order because of her current value.

Phoebe's Way of Challenging Traditional Gender Roles

Phoebe also eventually challenges traditional gender roles. She challenges traditional gender roles through her value of piety. Phoebe challenges them by being more realistic and logical. She is always the most spiritual and pious character in the series. However, Phoebe changes over time, especially in the later seasons. She becomes more realistic and logical that if she adopts her value of piety too much, she will make herself suffer to live in the world. Phoebe challenging piety does not mean she becomes a devilish sinful creature. She challenges it by not obsessively practicing her values without thinking realistically about them. That indicates that

men and women can think realistically and logically in life. By being more logical and realistic, Phoebe does not 100% abandon her value of piety. She shows a more mature and wise character that combines her spiritual values and logic in the later seasons of the series.

Because of the combination she applies to her life, Phoebe is happier than she was when adopting the traditional gender roles. She is happier even though she has to disobey some of her values. She is more content, but she also manages to do things wiser than if she adopts piety obsessively. The decisions Phoebe makes affect not only her but also other people—even her baby. This shows that adopting traditional gender roles too much and naively can be toxic to that person's needs and happiness, and by challenging them, that person can be at least a happier human being. There is some evidence of how Phoebe challenges her values of piety.

Ross' Way of Challenging Traditional Gender Roles

Like the other main characters, Ross also eventually challenges traditional gender roles. He challenges traditional gender roles through his self-concept. His self-concept is that he is more confident with his true identity. After several early seasons of Ross trying so hard to act masculine, he eventually accepts who he truly is. He admits that he likes feminine stuff. Because he is more confident in buying feminine stuff, he manages to challenge traditional gender roles he previously adopted, *No Sissy Stuff*. Women tend to take care of their appearances more than men. Other than that, He also becomes more nurturing to babies than before. This probably has to do with having a son in the first season of the series. However, taking care of a baby is commonly a women's job, but Ross seems to be a master in that field. Taking care of his appearance and being responsible for a baby, Ross does not feel that those activities threaten his masculinity. When the others mock him because of what he does, he ignores them and stays doing what he thinks is okay. The self-concept Ross plants for himself makes society's opinion matter less. He believes more in his self-concept that doing and having feminine stuff is okay and that they do not affect his masculinity. His new self-concept of accepting himself despite his masculinity makes him challenge *No Sissy Stuff*. Ross doing all the feminine stuff and not even bothering to worry about his masculinity is surely progress and character development for Ross. It also shows that Ross also adopts an Egalitarian Gender Roles Attitude where he believes that a man like him can do feminine stuff and still not degrade his masculinity. The turning point was when he was with Emily at the end of Season 4. He got a piercing and got mocked by Chandler and Joey. However, Ross did not care because Emily liked it. It means that his partner's opinion was more important to him than his friends' opinion and because his partner seemed okay with Ross doing such feminine stuff he liked, his confidence grew. After his divorce from Emily, he seemed to do such feminine stuff more frequently by taking care of his appearance.

Challenging *No Sissy Stuff*, Ross seems to become more of himself. When Ross tried to be masculine by practicing aggression, violence, and dangerous stuff, he hurt himself—mentally and physically. However, his behaviors become more real when he plants a self-concept to himself that it is okay to do and have feminine stuff. His character develops, even though it is not the common characteristic of a guy the audience often sees. But that is the point. By challenging traditional gender roles, Ross becomes his unique self, and he is more content with it. There is much evidence that Ross takes care of his appearance to symbolize him doing and having feminine stuff. He tries to wear leather pants, whitens his teeth, has a pink shirt, and gets a spray tan.

Chandler's Way of Challenging Traditional Gender Roles

As time passes by, Chandler also eventually challenges traditional gender roles. He challenges traditional gender roles through his social behavior. He challenges them by getting married and starting a family. In my opinion, for someone like Chandler to get married and start a family is something amazing. It seems like it has been set from the start that Chandler will be the last to

get married, or perhaps no marriage at all. However, his drastic changes from Season 5 also change everyone's perspective on him and change himself. Chandler, who previously enjoys being alone, and is scared of commitment, falls in love with Monica. Their relationship is a roller coaster, but after one fight, Monica tells Chandler that they will not break up because of that fight. Monica's patience and awareness of Chandler's commitment issue eventually help Chandler change his self-concept. Chandler becomes more relaxed and comfortable whenever he is on a date or talking about relationships with Monica. Finally, Chandler manages to challenge his issue and his self-concept toward it. It is all because of his social behaviors, which is Monica. Chandler slowly shows some progress by firstly asking Monica to move in, proposing, and eventually getting married to her. The noncommittal Chandler in the first half of the series, who made fun of people being in relationships, turns out to be the first male character to get married in Friends. Surprisingly, with Chandler doing the commitment stuff with Monica, he is happier. He experiences a love that does his job that symbolizes status and success matter less, which also means he challenges The Big Wheel. It portrays that a man can experience love, an emotion that is stereotyped as a woman's virtue. Also, by doing all of these, Chandler challenges one trait of Male Traditional Gender Roles, The Sturdy Oak. It does not make Chandler happy, but it makes Chandler more comfortable than he ever thought he could be

Joey's Way of Challenging Traditional Gender Roles

Last but not least, Joey also eventually challenges traditional gender roles. He challenges traditional gender roles through his personal attitude. Even though, in the end, he failed, the most important thing was that he happened to challenge traditional gender roles by falling in love. Falling in love is something normal that happens to many people. However, for Joey, it is special. With his history of being the playboy of the series who enjoys his freedom of being single, Joey falling in love surely can be considered a character development for him. Like Chandler, Joey falling in love with someone and even wanting to settle down with her is a big step. He implicitly challenges The Sturdy Oak, where he enjoys being with himself and only thinks of women as sleep partners. Joey's personal attitude when he falls in love is completely different from his previous attitude toward the girls he slept with. When Joey first falls in love, he feels weird about it. It means that he is not familiar with the feeling of falling in love with someone. He feels more protective, caring, and patient toward the girl he falls in love with. Those feelings make him sacrifice more of his activities and needs as he has to take care of the girl he loves and put her before himself. That shows how he challenges The Sturdy Oak in the smallest possible way. The point is that Joey, too, turns out to be capable of love. He even said he thought of settling down. How Joey ends up falling in love and wants to settle down destroys the traits of The Sturdy Oak he adopted in the earlier series. Even though, in the end, Joey is still single, at least he has experienced love and even thinks of settling down, which at the beginning of the series, he did not even want to do.

CONCLUSION

By challenging traditional gender roles, we can see the storyline goes more mature in the late series. Their transformations also show that traditional gender roles are not permanent and can be challenged by society. They make it like that as several examples for the audiences that challenging the toxic traditional gender roles is okay, and it even gives you happiness. The six main characters can be people's role models in challenging traditional gender roles in their society. Each of the six main characters portrays different ways of adopting and challenging traditional gender roles, so surely audiences can relate to at least one of them. Their results are all the same; they are happy or more of themselves. Therefore, if the audiences see many examples each of them portrays and relate to at least one of them, they too can experience the same thing.

The creators and producers' decision to make the six main characters end up challenging traditional gender roles is a good way to implement how traditional gender roles can be toxic and that challenging them can be good. Men and women had experienced being heavily judged differently because of their gender in the past. The limitation created by the traditional gender roles creates a boomerang for themselves that many rebels against for equality. For *Friends* to capture more events of gender equality by making the six main characters challenge the traditional gender roles also make the series gain more respect and perspectives from others that *Friends* is not an old series that values the toxic traditional gender roles. The decision to transform the characters from adopting to challenging traditional gender roles benefits the series itself.

The decision made by the creators and producers to make each of the six main characters challenge different kinds of traditional gender roles in different ways is also a good idea. With each of them challenging different traditional gender roles in different ways, they open an opportunity to reach broader audiences for the series. The series gains respect and perspectives, but the series also gains relatability from the audiences to at least one of the main characters in the series. Relatability brings audiences fonder of the series; therefore, they build a deeper connection with it that they can influence others to watch the series, watch the series for themselves over and over again, and implicitly promote the series to their circles.

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