

Where Does a Woman Fit in a Mad Man's World? A Textual Analysis of Feminist Motifs Determined by the Production Values in Mad Men

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WHERE DOES A WOMAN FIT IN A MAD MAN'S WORLD?

A TEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF FEMINIST MOTIFS DETERMINED BY
PRODUCTION VALUES IN *MAD MEN*

By

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A Senior Honors Thesis Submitted to the
Department of Communication
of Boston College

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May 2011

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to thank my advisor, Dr. William Stanwood, who was with me for every step of this process. His dedication and unending support in this endeavor gave me the confidence to pursue and complete my work. I thank my friends who have helped me to work harder, stay calmer, and feel good when it was all over. To the creators of *Mad Men*, thank you. You are responsible for my Sunday primetime addiction and a good reason to write a thesis. And finally, I express my deepest gratitude to my family. You have always encouraged me to push myself to my outermost limits on with my quest for knowledge.

ABSTRACT

The textual analysis of season four, episode one of *Mad Men* entitled “Public Relations” study the productions values in terms of feminist motifs. By using social codes developed by Leed-Hurwitz and Barthes’ five systems of meaning in semiotics, observations are made about the elements of the mise-en-scène in relation to the gender roles present in the narrative. If certain codes persist, it is assumed that these repetitive observations reflect the deliberate composition of the mise-en-scène in order to reinforce feminist motifs. The results reveal that the production values in the mise-en-scène indeed reinforce feminist motifs in *Mad Men*, the most comprehensive motif being the male gender as the norm. The messages communicated by this motif include the idea that masculinity is defined by sex and that a women’s worth is defined by masculinity.

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Where Does A Woman Fit In A Mad Man's World?

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INTRODUCTION

“There’s only two kinds of people in the world: men and women.” This age-old platitude still holds meaning in today’s society, especially in the context of gender roles. Biologically speaking, the definition of sex is very different from that of gender. Sex is determined at the moment of conception: XY means male and XX is a female (Hesse-Biber & Carter, 2000). Gender, however, is not scientific but instead quite plastic; according to sociology professors Hesse-Biber and Lee Carter (2010, p. 91), “... society emphasizes particular roles that each sex should play.” Similarly, socialist feminist Lynne Williams (2007) argues that our society is organized by gender roles. She states that there are dominant cultures in society that use “homogenous and destructive force of patriarchy” to rule over the working class (Williams, 2007, p. 21). Williams (2007) uses her workplace as an example, explaining that it is a predominantly male staff and so “hypermasculinity” acts as the dominant culture. She then expands this to demonstrate how a dominant culture overshadows the “diversity of the working class,” creating a split between the dominant and subordinate cultures in her workplace (Williams, 2007, p. 21). In Williams’ opinion, in order to break the barrier between the patriarchal dominant culture and the working culture, society must work as a collective.

Echoing these societal discrepancies, Hammer blames the divide on representations of women in film. “Hollywood manages to pay lip service to feminist themes and issues while at the same time... undermining those themes and demeaning, in

many ways, the image of the ‘new woman’ it seems to present” (Rapping, as Cited in Hammer, 2010, p. 260). Hammer (2010) further explains that a film can influence today’s society via the portrayals of women. She argues that many of these portrayals are counterproductive in a feminist standpoint because they position the female into a role of subordination and “back toward a patriarchal society” (Hammer, 2010, p. 260).

Both Hammer (2010) and William (2007) are concerned with a patriarchal society, which reveals the role of women in respects to a historical context. Their arguments seem to suggest that a patriarchal society is associated with an archaic society in which the female population is dominated by masculinity. This study combines Hammers and Williams ideas by examining the working woman in the context of a television series set in the early 1960s.

This study investigates the representations of gender roles in the context of production values in *Mad Men*. The 2007 drama series *Mad Men* is a drama centered on ad executive Donald Draper and the New York ad agency for which he works during the 1960s (Hornbacher, 2007). This research discusses the portrayals of women in the workplace as reflected by *Mad Men*’s production values.

In order to study such portrayals, I used semiotics to analyze the messages conveyed by *Mad Men*. Semiotics is the study of signs, and in film and television, this is “anything we can see or hear or feel that refers to something we can’t” (Edgar-Hunt, 2010, p. 18). Using semiotics, I will analyze the signs in *Mad Men* and their consequent meanings, specifically signs pertaining to the ways in which gender is portrayed.

In her book *Semiotics and Communication: Signs, Codes, Culture*, Leeds-Hurwitz (1993) analyzes semiotic theories and applies them to communication behavior. In order to do so, she uses three social codes: food, clothing, and objects. She chooses these codes because “all three are basic to human behavior everywhere (everyone eats, wears some form of clothing... and creates some objects)” (Leeds-Hurwitz, 1993, p.75). A person’s preferences in food, clothing, and objects construct the social world around them. The first code, food, can signify critical information such as ethnicity, geography, social status, and gender (Leeds-Hurwitz). When a person prefers one food or drink to other choices, this preference can define personality traits or perpetuate stereotypes. Drinking alcohol, for example, is a social activity associated with friendship and rituals. Drinking in taverns has become an icon of popular culture. Yet, drunkenness itself has a negative connotation and is often associated with immorality and laziness. Furthermore, since drinking is a social activity, drinking in solitude is considered problematic (Leeds-Hurwitz, 1993). Both drink and food are forms of communication. They serve as “visual badges” that can identify social constructions like ethnicity, geography, social status, age, and behavior. Clothing, too, is an important code because can serve as a first impression, as it is the “outermost later of the private self put on public display” that communicates messages about gender, occupation, and social status (Leeds-Hurwitz, 1993, p. 104-105). A person can chose and outfit with the intent to relay a message to others (Leeds-Hurwitz, 1993). And lastly, objects include anything hand-made and used by people. By studying such an encompassing code like objects, there is a wide array of topics to analyze. Semiotician Barthes states “there is always a meaning which overflows the

object's use" (1988, p. 182). In focusing on food, clothing, and objects in episodes of *Mad Men*, it is possible to break down the signs and subsequent meanings about gender roles.

BACKGROUND TO THE PROBLEM

Over the past few decades, TV sets have become a regular household item. According to Mittell, "Television could be defined as the most powerful and prevalent mass communication medium in America" (2010, p. 9). When people watch television, they are learning from television. Portrayals on television can tell audiences about social interactions that exist or have existed in society (Douglas, 1996). When an audience observes a woman in a workplace environment, overt messages, such as the subordination of the female worker, are represented by job position and the relationships among her coworkers (Steeves, 1987). More subtle messages, however, can be detected by analyzing the creator's implementation of production values such as lighting, camera angles, costume, and setting (Guy, 1996). Such messages can be equally telling and at times more powerful than a secretarial position or a love affair with a married boss. Films and television shows can be created to take place in virtually any time period, and so it is important to understand the ways in which the working woman has evolved over the years.

BETTY FRIEDAN AND THE 1960S HOUSEWIFE

In the early 1960s, Gallup polls showed that "7 percent of women said 'they were sorry they chose marriage over career'" (Coontz, 2011, p. 2). These women had witnessed the struggles of their parents during the Depression and World War II. The

polls revealed that many housewives of the early 1960s expressed happiness on a comparative basis. “Almost 90 percent of the married women said that housemaking tasks were easier for them than they’d been for their mothers” (Coontz, 2011, p. 2). The *Saturday Evening Post* reported that housewives of the 1960s had time for hobbies and socializing even with taking care of the house and the children (Gallup, as Cited by Coontz, 2011, p.2). For those who sought work, women could check newspapers for employment ads, which were segregated by gender. The men’s help wanted section included jobs for accountants, chemists, attorneys, and management positions. The women’s help wanted section contained little to no offers in these same jobs. Instead the overwhelming majority for job openings included secretaries, receptionists, and typists. (Coontz, 2011)

Table 1: *New York Times* Sunday Employment Advertisements from April 7, 1963

Position	# Offers in Men’s Help Wanted	# Offers in Women’s Help Wanted
Accountant	281	9
Chemist	153	9
Attorney	11	0
Management Trainee	94	2
Gal Fridays	0	162
Secretary	0	459
Receptionist	0	159
Typist	0	122
Household help	5	119

(From Coontz, 2011, p. 9-10)

Betty Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique* was published in 1963, and it began to circulate among housewives soon after (Coontz, 2010). Some argued that the book upset the content housewives of America because it made the work of housewives seem demeaning; women were made to feel guilty about being “*just* a housewife” (Coontz,

2010, p.xviii). For other women, however, *The Feminine Mystique* made them realize exactly why they could only describe their happiness in relation to their mothers:

The Feminine Mystique did not challenge the assertion that most housewives believed their ‘chief purpose’ was to be wives and mothers. Nor did Friedan complain... that women were *too* content as housewives. Instead, *The Feminine Mystique* argued that beneath the daily routines and surface contentment of most housewives’ lives lay a deep well of insecurity, self-doubt, and unhappiness that they would not articulate even to themselves. (Coontz, 2010, p. 18)

The Feminine Mystique reassured women that there was a collective feeling of emptiness among housewives, and Friedan gave this feeling a name: sex discrimination (Coontz, 2010). Before the book was published, doctors referred to these feelings as “the housewife syndrome” (Coontz, 2010, p. 20). A decade after *The Feminine Mystique* was published, Friedan discussed her feeling about sex discrimination in a 1973 *New York Times* article. “Until I started writing the book, I wasn’t even conscious of the woman problem... I, like other women, thought there was something wrong with *me*” (Coontz, 2010, p. 103). Yet Friedan let women understand that the problem was rooted in society, not in women. This new perspective set the tone for radical feminist movements in the 1970s (Hesse-Biber & Carter, 2000).

THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE

Throughout the 20th century, working women held little value in comparison to their male counterparts. They were regarded as “invisible” workers because their roles in the workplace were less than that of men. In fact, there is altogether a lack of historical records about the involvement of women in the labor-force before the 1970s (Hesse-

Biber & Carter, 2000). After the 70s, however, women in the workplace became a focus in historical research, uncovering the “social, economic, and political factors that have influenced and shaped women’s relationship to the paid labor force” (Hesse-Biber & Carter, 2000, p. 17).

From 1940 to 1950, the number of employed married women rose nearly 10 percent. The majority of these working women were married and in their mid- to late-40s. In decades prior, the majority of labor force participation included the young, single working women who were biding time between school and marriage. (Hesse-Biber & Carter, 2000). At this time, a functionalist paradigm developed, which split gender into two spheres; women stayed in the private sphere tending to the family while men worked in the public sphere as the breadwinner of the family (Hesse-Biber, 2000). During the 1960s, when women looked at employment ads in the newspaper, many requested “attractive” or “pretty” young women in job descriptions (Coontz, 2010, p. 20). A 1960s study showed that nearly 11 percent of secretaries had sexual relations with their employers before age 22 (Lehman, 2007). Data from a 1964 study revealed that 40 percent of “white collar workers under age 35 admitted to office affairs” (Lehman, 2007, p. 37). But despite the objectification in the business realm, the women of the 1970s enjoyed working. In 1976, a poll showed that “75 percent of women would remain employed even if it were not economically necessary” (Hesse-Biber, 2000, p. 7). This was because working improved women’s self-esteem. In fact, “Working increases a woman’s sense of well-being.... The feeling spills over into family life: working women are more assertive with respect to family decision making ... and also demand greater

respect from their children and husbands” (Hesse-Biber, 2000, p. 8). Though the women of the 70s enjoyed their fulfilling jobs, the burden became heavy as women were expected to be a career woman, a mother, and a wife.

In the 1980s, the “Superwoman Ideal” emerged. This ideal is characterized by a woman’s struggle to be both the professional and the caretaker (Messinger, Bonifazi & Larosa, 2007). When women chose to pursue a professional career, they are often times pressured with the “deeply ingrained social and personal obligations as wives, mothers, and caretakers” (Messinger, Bonifazi & Larosa, 2007). Yet the “Superwoman Ideal” sets a standard that is virtually unattainable (Messinger, Bonifazi & Larosa, 2007). Women who try to fulfill this ideal are “overwhelmed by their need to ‘have it all’ – the perfect job, house, husband, family, and, of course, appearance” (Messinger, Bonifazi & Larosa, 2007, p. 558). It conveys the idea that only women with super powers are capable of successfully balancing a career and a family. If a woman fails to be at the top her trade or orders take out for the family for dinner, the superwoman model tells her that she fails as either a career woman or mother, or even both. Since the wife and mother of the family must balance work and home, this model maintains the traditional belief that housework is for females only. (Hesse-Biber & Carter, 2000).

According to Hesse-Biber and Carter, “Between 1890 and the mid-1990s, women’s rate of [labor-force] participation grew from 18 percent to over 60 percent” (2000, p.1). By 1964, 10 percent of American families reflected the “tradition ‘Leave it to Beaver’ family – a male breadwinner, a housewife, and one or more children” (Hesse-Biber & Carter, 2000, p. xiii). A successful woman in today’s society is a symbol of the

significant progress over the years, but discrepancies still exist between genders. A 2010 report showed that “the median annual income for women working full time is 23 percent lower than that for their male counterparts” (Noah, 2010). *New York Times* columnist Maureen Dowd argues that the overconfident and high-achieving woman is sometimes resented by today’s society. According to Dowd, “A 2005 report by researchers at four British universities indicated that a high I.Q. hampers a woman’s chance to marry, while it is a plus for men” (2005, p.4). Is it then possible for audiences in the present to understand feminist messages in a television show that is set in the past?

Since popular television programming is an important factor of American culture, it is necessary to understand the meaning behind portrayals of females in a working environment in order to understand whether we can extract a message that is communicated to today’s audience.

RATIONALE

Gender roles are under constant reconstruction in terms of media portrayals as well as cultural norms. The 1950s domestic comedy *I Love Lucy* was centered on Lucy, a housewife married to a singer and entertainer (Arnaz, 1951). Lucy often times tried to attain stardom alongside her husband (Arnaz, 1951). In the 60s and 70s, Maureen Dowd notes:

The single working woman became a prominent figure due in part to feminist demands for representations that would position women in the workplace and counter stereotypes of women as mere sex objects and hapless housewives. (2005, p. 12)

Five decades later, the continuing progression of gender roles is evident through television drama series such as *The Good Wife*, which follows the struggles of an attorney who must raise her children alone while her husband is in jail (King, King & Zucker, 2009). As societal values change in our world, the representations of social dynamics will naturally progress alongside this evolution.

In discussing gender roles, feminism is a topic employed by various media, and they utilize feminist motifs as a way to create meaning for an audience (Steeves, 1987). A feminist motif is an element that exists repeatedly within a particular medium, which comments on the role of woman in a particular setting or circumstance (Lehman, 2007). These motifs can be all-encompassing themes or adjunct to the main idea of media. In the instance of the 1970s television series the *Mary Tyler Moore Show*, the premise of the show revolves around feminist motifs. The sitcom's protagonist is a single woman in search of romance while still focusing on her job as broadcast writer (Brooks, 1970). The popular women's magazine *Cosmopolitan* provides an audience of women with columns about fashion, love and sex, and beauty tips (White, 2011). While the publication does not provide information directly about feminism, it can be argued that feminist motifs arise because the magazine propels a stereotype of promiscuous, high-heel obsessed women (Dowd, 2005). By examining feminist motifs, audiences are able to better understand the types of messages communicated by a medium.

The way in which women are portrayed can be analyzed within an array of different communications fields. Print advertisements in magazines can be extremely telling based on the time period in which they were published. In studying the portrayals

of single women throughout the 60s and 70s, Katherine Lehman (2007) observed advertising campaigns from these time periods. She was able to reconstruct society's perceptions on single women in the 1970s, noting that advertisers used women as either as "sex objects or competent business women" (p. 6).

Leslie Steeves (1987) studied the medium of television from a socialist feminist perspective. Steeves (1987) includes observations specifically from prime time television. He defines socialist feminists as those who "assume that the class system under capitalism is fundamentally responsible for women's oppression" (1987, p. 43). Socialist feminists, like radical feminists, believe that patriarchy is also a factor in the oppression of women, and so "patriarchy and capitalism must be simultaneously addressed, largely by the eradication of divided labor by both gender and class" (Steeves, 1987, p. 43). Gender oppression is defined by Steeves (1987) as power struggles at home and at work such as "power over sexuality, money, family labor, family or professional decision-making, and appropriate dress and demeanor" (p. 45). Class oppression manifests itself through idea of "domination and subordination" in which a powerful class dominates a less powerful working class (Steeves, 1987, p.45). He ultimately aims to find the overlap of gender and class issues in prime time television. Steeves' (1987) research shows that the majority of the television series observed were "gradational representations," meaning that they demonstrated material possession (p. 49). In an episode of *The Cosby Show*, the father of the family gives his daughter Sondra advice about dating (Steeves, 1987, p. 45). Her father prefers a pre-med student to an ex-boyfriend, which Steeves (1987) interprets as a desire for his daughter to marry within a certain class. In this way,

Steeves (1987) uses a socialist feminist perspective to examine television shows with both gender and class in mind.

Katherine Lehman (2007) has also studied feminist motifs in both television and film, focusing on the single woman in the workplace during the 1960s and 1970s. As context for her research, Lehman (2007) offers a brief overview of the social changes in these decades. In the early 1960s, most women were married at age 20, and the single woman was restricted to jobs with low wages. According to Lehman (2007, p. 7), this was because “employers assumed that single women workers were merely biding their time between schooling and marriage.” Therefore, employers were reluctant to invest in what they assumed to be temporary workers. But towards the late 1970s, more and more women remained single into their late 20s and 30s. These women delayed marriage and celebrated sexual freedom. The consumer market responded to these changes:

By the late 1970s, popular advice literature, novels and films acknowledged the prevalence of casual and promiscuous sex among this group. These trends transformed the single working women from an aberrant, small percentage of the population to a sizeable demographic that was central to economic and consumer life. (Lehman, 2007, p. 8)

The findings in this research are guided by the idea that reforms in the representation of women in media were due to social trends at the time as well as the market’s response to these trends. (Lehman, 2007)

RESEARCH QUESTION

This study investigates feminist motifs in *Mad Men* and how the production values employed by the show's creators reinforce these ideas in order to understand the messages communicated and whether or not they have an effect on audiences.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Television and other media have responded to the social changes in gender roles (Douglas, 1996). Previous analyses have studied women in television, specifically the roles of working women. There also exists substantial research into the idea of semiotics, which extracts meaning from the composition of an image (Leeds-Hurwitz, 1993). This paper attempts to link the idea of gender roles in television to the messages portrayed by production values. In order to study these themes side by side, it is necessary to first consider each separately.

WOMEN IN TELEVISION AND FILM

In her book *Gender and the Media*, Rosalind Gill explains, "Like the media, gender relations and feminist ideas are constantly transforming..." (2007, p. 2). Gill (2007) attempts to study the ways in which these two ever-changing ideas, gender and the media, interact with one another. Media analysts often focus on understanding "how images and cultural constructions are connected to patterns of inequality, domination, and oppression" (Gill, 2007, p.7).

In the 1970s media began to be an integral part of everyday life. All facets of media frequently used representations of gender (Gill, 2007). Since we are constantly bombarded with these representations, portrayals of women in the media became a point

of interest in feminist research (Gill, 2007). A major trend in media was the “male as the norm” representation, which refers to the idea that males represent the human population while women are “invisible” (Gill, 2007, p. 9). Another 1970s study analyzed the representations of women in more than 1, 200 commercials and found that:

...More than one-third of advertising showed women as domestic agents who were dependent on men and nearly half portrayed women as household ‘functionaries’. The study also reported many examples of women depicted as ‘decorative objects’ and portrayed as ‘unintelligent’. (Gill, 2007, p. 10)

In fact, many studies of this time period showed similar results. The constancy of such results allowed for feminists to be “confident” in their analysis, serving as a basis for “feminist media studies” (Gill, 2007, p. 11).

Film, too, reveals trends with respect to gender representation. The “tortured and terrorized woman” is apparent in *King Kong* and *Pyscho* in which a male villain victimizes a woman protagonist (Williams, 1991, p. 5). These women have lead roles in the film, but are often scared, in danger, or “offering love and support to the male lead character(s)” (Gauntlett, 2002, p. 46). We also see the “long-suffering mother” as a trend in film (Williams, 1991, p. 5). In both *Stella Dallas* and *Stella*, the mother sacrifices all for the sake of her daughters’ future (Williams, 1991). Throughout the 60s, film has commonly portrayed the male characters as smarter and more dominant than women. In this way, the women characters still seem submissive without a crass representation of an unintelligent or incapable woman (Gauntlett, 2002). Woody Allen’s 1977 film *Annie Hall* features a “neurotic and un-macho leading man” who falls for the intelligent Annie Hall (Gauntlett, 2002, p. 46). This plotline shook the norm; the leading male of the 70s and

80s film was often heroic with a mission to save the damsel in distress (Gauntlett, 2002). Though it is true that women play strong leading roles throughout the 70s and 80s, they remain unequal to their male counterparts. The leading woman can be intelligent and independent, but still, “she doesn’t make the central decisions, she doesn’t repeatedly save her male colleague and she’s not the star of the film” (Gauntlett, 2002, p. 47). Film of the 1950s throughout the 1980s dehumanizes women to mere objects that are given meaning by her relation to the dominant male (Smith, 1972).

Television often mirrors these portrayals of women in film. A major trend in television is the under representation of women in programming. A study in the spring of 1952 showed that men played 68 percent of the leading roles in television programming (Smith, 2009). Further research in the late 1970s showed a similar trend in primetime and Sunday morning television (Smith, 2009). During this time period, the United States Census reported that the female population was slightly higher than the male population. Yet according to this study, there were three times as many males as females in television programming.

Smith (2009) also discusses the portrayals of working women in television. Researchers have studied working women in television in terms of “organizational activity,” which includes the categories of “interpersonal functions, informational functions, decisional functions, political functions, and operational functions” (Smith, 2009, p. 7). This research shows that women engaged in interpersonal functions the most, which include “counseling and motivating other members of the organization” (Smith, 2009, p. 7). Very few performed decisional functions like problem solving. This research

also found that women were less likely to hold managerial positions (Smith, 2009). For example, the program “The Doctors” featured both male and female M.D.’s, but only the males performed surgeries (Tuchman, 1978). In terms of understanding dominance in gender roles, a character’s occupational status is just as significant as, if not more than, gender (Lemon, 1978). Take for instance a business with a male manager and a female manager. The female manager is more dominant than lower-position men and women yet the male manager is more dominant than the female manager (Lemon, 1978). During this time period, however, high-status females were rare, and working women were commonly “defined by their marital and parental status” (Smith, 2009, p. 7). Therefore, since high-status males are much more common than high-status females, most television programming portrays male dominance in the workplace (Lemon, 1978).

It is critical to understand the portrayals of women in television and film because:

Media and communications are a central element of modern life, whilst gender and sexuality remain at the core of how we think about our identities. With the media containing so many images of women and men... it is highly unlikely that these ideas would have no impact on our sense of identity. (Gauntlett, 2002, p. 1)

The media provides perspectives outside of our own lives, and so it influences our actions as well as our expectations of others’ conduct. This is not to say that the media brainwashes audiences, but rather the media serves as “resources” that people can use to shape their identity and world view (Gauntlett, 2002, p. 256).

IMAGES AND SEMIOTICS

Despite its ability to process written words, the human brain is programmed to respond to images (Gladwell, 2007). In “The Language of Film,” Robert Edgar-Hunt

(2010) discusses the importance of production values in film-making. He argues that film is a language, and like any language it is composed of signs that create meaning (Edgar-Hunt, 2010). Semiotics is the study of signs, and in film, this is “anything we can see or hear or feel that refers to something we can’t” (Edgar-Hunt, 2010, p. 18). A film contains common elements such as characters and setting, but the elements are built from even smaller units. These details are signs, which Edgar-Hunt identifies as the “atomic building blocks from which the complexity or narrative is constructed” (2010, p. 18). In this study, the signs discussed are outlined by the codes of food, clothing, and objects. These elements are commonly found in television programming and can be extremely significant in studying the types of messages conveyed in a single frame. Edgar-Hunt (2010) uses a hypothetical scene from a Western to demonstrate the importance of signs. He asks the reader to imagine a dead man lying in the street, and there is a badge on his shirt. The badge alone tells the audience that this man is a sheriff, and therefore the badge becomes “a sign of his status” (Edgar-Hunt, 2010, p. 19). When implemented efficiently, signs can be very powerful means of communication that allows audience members to “feel something beyond the sign itself” (Wagoner, 2010, p. 78). In this Western scenario, the badge serves as an example of the “ontological” power of a well-placed sign (Wagoner, 2010, p. 78). The badge is not merely a decoration that *stands for* a sheriff (Edgar-Hunt, 2010). The human mind instantly makes the connection between badge and sheriff without the need to conceptualize the badge as a metal piece pinned to a shirt. The badge *appears* to be the object it represents. Wagoner (2010) believes that a successful

implementation of a sign is not a mere representation; the sign will actually appear to be the object it represents.

Semiotics has evolved into a significant area of interest that is no longer a mere “perspective on the world” (Wagoner, 2010, p.40). Wagoner believes that “semiotics cannot be considered a kind of method, a model, a particular philosophical tradition... semiotics must be taken to be a science in its own right” (2010, p. 40). Although semiotics has been studied in relation to many disciplines, it is not commonly applied to the area of communication (Leeds-Hurwitz, 1993). In *Semiotics and Communication: Signs, Codes, Culture*, Leeds-Hurwitz (1993) believes that semiotics is an effective way to analyze communication. “Semiotics is one appropriate tool to use in the endeavor to take apart, to unlock, interactional meaning” (Leeds-Hurwitz, 1993, p. xix). When an audience watches a film or a television program, they are experiencing a seamless motion picture made by individual images (Edgar-Hunt, 2010). The creator uses signs within each of these images in order to portray meaning:

The film-maker’s task is to control and channel this flow of information in order to create the desired illusion and shape the audience’s experience of it. It is a game of consequences – if I show them *this*, then they will think or feel *that*. The way in which you can craft and organize your film’s signs will determine the reality and meaning an audience will attribute to them. (Edgar-Hunt, 2010, p. 22)

According to Edgar-Hunt (2010) everything the audience sees has been placed there purposefully; virtually all elements of a single image are deliberate choices made by the producer. Leeds-Hurwitz similarly argues “people are responsible for creating the meanings they use” and “meaning is often conveyed through minor details of everyday

behavior, nonverbal as well as verbal...”(1993, p. xvi). Thus it is evident that between producers of television are deliberate and purposeful in creating messages and their consequent meanings. As an observer, the use of semiotics helps to break down these meanings by examining signs.

Edgar-Hunt (2010, p. 26) notes the “two levels of signification” that can exist among signs. The first, denotation, refers to the overt meaning while the second, connotation, refers to the implicit meaning the sign “suggests.” For example, a flag can *denote* a particular country, but it can also hold the *connotation* of pride or victory. The connotation of various signs is an important part of constructing meaning in television and film. As Edgar-Hunt (2010, p. 26) puts it, “Meaning does not reside *in* the film like some buried treasure.” Instead, meaning is derived from the audience’s interpretation of the film. It is ultimately up to the film-maker to control these interpretations by “anticipating the range of likely connotations and nudge the audience in the desired direction” (Edgar-Hunt, 2010, p. 26). The idea of semiotics allows film-makers to construct meaning in this way.

ROLAND BARTHES AND THE FIVE SYSTEMS OF MEANING

Barthes (1974) developed five systems of meaning in semiotics that provide different methods with which to analyze signs in film-making and television (Makaryk, 1993).

1. The enigma code describes the signs that build the problem of the narrative and eventually help to solve this problem (Makaryk, 1993, p. 599). Examples of these signs include “identifying the enigma, scattering clues, delaying the answer,

suggesting false lease, forming and discarding wrong answers, and revealing the truth” (Markaryk, 1993, p.599).

2. The connotative code includes signs that “transcend the order of narrative discourse” because they signify a meaning beyond the literal plot of the story (Makaryk, 1993, p. 599). For example, a grand party in a private hotel can be a sign of wealth. This party can be linked to other signs of wealth and grouped together as signs of a recurring theme (Makaryk, 1993). Signs in the connotative code allow for the development of characters, which include dialogue, setting, costume, and movement (Edgar-Hunt, 2010).

3. Proairetic code, or code of action, refers to signs that organize the narrative into a sequence of events. Barthes applies a generic category to characterize each sequence’s purpose such as “murder, date, and leisurely walk” (Makaryk, 1993, p. 599). These sequences propel the narrative forward because they build “suspense and interest” (Felluga, 2011).

4. Symbolic code describes signs that create tension by means of antithetical ideas and rhetoric (Felluga, 2011). Examples include masculinity versus femininity, light versus dark, good versus evil, individual versus group, and nature versus culture (Rodman, 2010).

5. The referential or cultural code includes signs make references to “shared knowledge about the way the world works” (Felluga, 2011). Barthes (1957) describes these signs as ideas that are universally known and do not need further explanation in order to extract meaning.

These five codes create a “network... through which the entire text passes” (Barthes, 1974, p. 20). The codes break down the linear narrative and allow us to see a “braiding of meanings” (Felluga, 2011).

MISE-EN-SCÈNE: WHAT'S IN A FRAME

A motion picture is made up of a series of individual frames, and “each one contributes a specific meaning to the film” (Edgar-Hunt, 2010, p. 119). When studying an individual frame, we are analyzing the mise-en-scène, which refers to the ways in which objects are organized in a frame (Bordwell & Thompson, 1993).

Distance shots also provide the audiences with signs (Edgar-Hunt, 2010). Edgar-Hunt (2010) explains that distance tends to coincide with the narrative, helping to construct a specific meaning in the frame. Hilliard (2008) identifies six types of the distance shots used in film-making: extreme long shot (XLS), long shot (LS), medium shot (MS), full shot (FS), close-up (CU), and extreme close-up (ECU). The XLS shows backgrounds so large that the humans are tiny and “often insignificant” (Edgar-Hunt, 2010, p. 124). In the LS, humans become more recognizable but the background is still a major part of the frame. The MS frames the human figure from the waist up while the FS frames the entire figure or subject. A CU focuses in on the face of a human or other smaller objects while the ECU frames even smaller details such as the mouth (Hilliard, 2008). The distance shot a producer chooses will aid the narrative in some way. An audience expects a CU when two characters are whispering about a secret or an XLS when a U.F.O. is flying into the Earth’s atmosphere from outer space (Edgar-Hunt,

2010). Distance shots are not arbitrary; they serve as yet another conduit for constructing meaning.

The *mise-en-scène* also includes aspects such as “setting, lighting, costume, and the behavior of the figures” (Bordwell & Thompson, 1993, p.145). Bordwell and Thompson (1993) argue that it is important to dissect these four areas in order to understand the functions in the *mise-en-scène*. The first, setting, provides more than a backdrop in the frame; it can play a very active role in the *mise-en-scène*. A producer can specifically chose a location or create the setting in a studio. Setting elements such as props and color palettes can create motifs that provide substantial meaning in the frame. Lighting, the second, can “create the overall composition of each shot and thus guide our attention to certain objects and actions” (Bordwell & Thompson, 1993, p. 152). Lighter areas in a frame reveal action and can also highlight the textures of certain objects, such as the softness of someone’s skin (Bordwell & Thompson, 1993, p. 151). Third is costume and make-up, which often correlates to the setting. Since the focus is usually on the character, “setting may provide a more or less neutral background, while costume helps pick out the characters” (Bordwell & Thompson, 1993, p. 151). Costume can define social status or add to the underlying themes of the narrative such as Guido’s sunglasses in Fellini’s *8 ½*, which emphasize his detachment from the world (Bordwell & Thompson, 1993). Costume can play with colors as villains often wear dark, mysterious colors while the victims wear white, symbolizing good versus evil. Lastly, “figure expression and movement” define the ways in which a director chose to “control the behavior of various figures” (Bordwell & Thompson, 1993, p. 157). Actors have both

“visual elements (appearance, gestures, facial expressions) and sound (voice, effects)” (Bordwell & Thompson, 1993, p. 158). An actor’s performance is commonly judged on a level of realism, in which case it does not seem “too exaggerated or underplayed” (Bordwell & Thompson, 1993, p. 160). These areas of the mise-en-scène help to understand the functions of production values in an individual frame.

The ideas of semiotics and the mise-en-scène help to define certain characteristics of a given image in both film and television. In investigating the findings of past research, there are apparent trends in the role of the working women in the media. Advertising, film, and television constantly bombard us with gender representations (Smith, 2009). From the 1950s to the 1980s, women were under represented in television and film (Smith, 2009). Working women, even those in high-status occupations, existed in male-dominated workplaces (Lemon, 1978). By implementing the production terms as defined by Edgar-Hunt (2010), we are able to further explore these trends specifically in *Mad Men*.

METHODOLOGY

I used both primary and secondary sources for this study. Secondary sources were obtained from the Boylston College libraries, communications and social science databases, reliable websites, peer-reviewed online journals, and print media. Keywords included gender, gender roles, portray*, television, TV, film, feminis*, production, production values, profession*, semiotic*, code*, ontolog*, and work*. Primary sources were the episodes of *Mad Men*. I studied the most recent season of *Mad Men*, season 4. Prior to watching the episodes I used a random number generator to determine which of

the 13 episodes I would watch. The result was episode one, “Public Relations.” This episode is 47 minutes long and available with pause and play controls. Using an exercise provided by Edgar-Hunt’s *Basics of Film-making: The Language of Film* (2010), I created a method for textual analysis. When a scene change took place, I paused the show and analyzed the mise-en-scène. I examined the elements in the mise-en-scène that were relevant to the three social codes of food, clothing, and objects as determined by Leeds-Hurwitz (1993). While conducting the textual analysis I created a fourth code labeled human interactions, which included dialogue and body language.

After examining the food, clothing, objects, and human interactions in the episode, I determined whether or not these signs communicated any messages about gender roles. In order to do so, the three social codes were then analyzed in the context of Barthes’ (1974) five systems of meaning: enigma code, connotative code, proairetic code, symbolic code, and cultural/referential code. For the purposes of this research, the enigma code refers to way in which the problem within the narrative is constructed and eventually solved (Makaryk, 1993). The connotative code allow for the development of characters, which include dialogue, setting, costume, and movement (Edgar-Hunt, 2010). The proairetic code shows the sequences of action within the narrative and the symbolic code refers to the ways in which tension is created by antithetical ideas and rhetoric (Fergulla, 2011). And lastly, the cultural code makes reference to universally known language and ideas (Barthes, 1974).

FINDINGS

Mad Men is set in New York City during the 1960s. It focuses on Don Draper, the creative director of Sterling, Cooper, Draper, Pryce advertising agency. He is a talented businessman with a penchant for questionable moral behavior. Roger Sterling, Bertram Cooper, and Lane Pryce are all executives of the agency who each add an individual flavor to the company. With the focus on Don, however, we see both his life inside and outside of the office. In the season prior, season three, Betty divorces Don and quickly remarries Henry Francis. She is the mother of Don's three children Sally, Bobby, and newborn Eugene Scott. Season four opens with "Public Relations," set in November of 1964. There are additional characters who play important roles in this episode, both inside and outside of Sterling, Cooper, Draper, Pryce. Employees of the firm include Pete Campbell, the account manager, Peggy Olson, the copyeditor, Joey Baird, the freelance artist, Joan Harris, the head secretary, Harry Crane, the head of media, two women, Gladys and Daisy, who are hired to act out a public relation stunt, and lastly, Bob Finley and Jim Hartsdale from the clothing company Janzten. Outside of the firm there is Bethany Van Nuys who Don takes to out dinner and Pauline Francis, Henry's mother. (Weiner & Abraham, 2010)

FOOD

Figure 1: Scenes with Alcohol

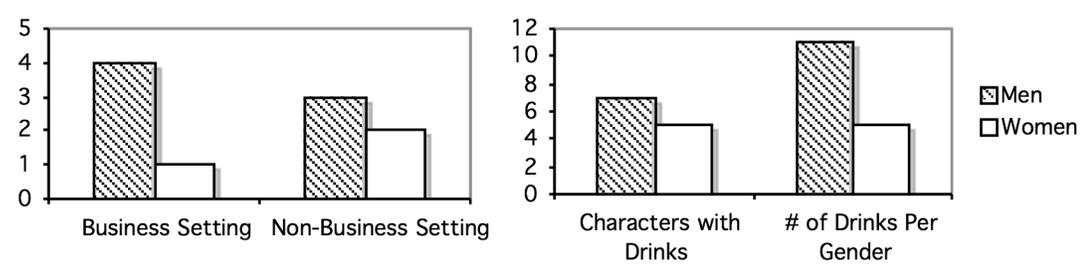
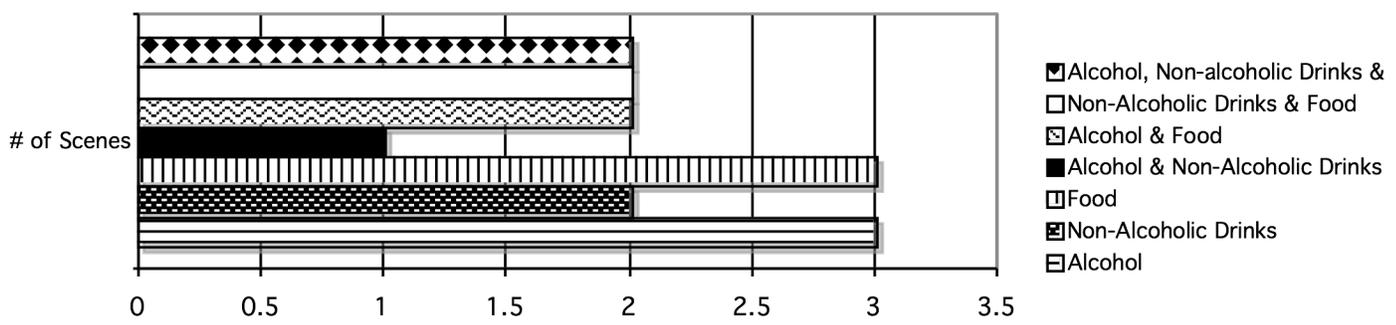


Figure 2: Scenes with Non-Alcoholic Drinks



Figure 3: Breakdown of the 15 Scenes Containing Food and/or Drink



Food and/or drink are observed in 15 scenes in this episode of *Mad Men*, and of these, eight scenes involve alcohol. Alcohol is either consumed or shown in five scenes that are business settings: four times among the male employees and one instance of a woman employee drinking alcohol. The remaining three scenes take place in a restaurant in which Don and Bethany both drink, at a Thanksgiving dinner where wine is served to the adults, and lastly in Don's apartment where only he drinks while working at home. In the entire episode, seven different men and five different women are shown with alcoholic drinks. Each of the five females is seen with alcohol only once. Of these five women, Peggy and Bethany are the only females who actively ingest the alcohol while the other three women are simply depicted with an alcoholic drink next to their place settings at the Thanksgiving dinner. Of the seven men, Don either ingests or has an alcoholic drink in five different scenes, Roger, Joey, and Pete drink once, Henry and an unnamed male guest are shown with wine at Thanksgiving dinner, and the male interviewer from the Wall Street Journal is shown once with an alcoholic drink. In these eight scenes, more than half occur in business settings where men drink more than women. Overall, more men are shown with alcohol than women, and the frequency of males with alcoholic drinks outnumber that of women eleven to five.

Since alcohol plays an integral part in the scenes of *Mad Men*, a lack of alcohol is also important to observe. Non-alcoholic drinks are in eight scenes of "Public Relations." Five scenes are business settings while the remaining three include Thanksgiving dinner, Don's apartment, and a diner. In total, seven males and seven females are shown with non-alcoholic beverages. For both genders, six of the seven are adults while one is a

child. For both males and females, non-alcoholic drinks were shown ten times among the seven people.

Food and references to food are observed in ten scenes. Five of which are business settings: two scenes show food on the table while the remaining three scenes pertain to a client's product, a Sugarberry Ham. The other three scenes include Thanksgiving dinner in which a spread is displayed on the table, three instances of food in Don's apartment, and a restaurant order during Don's dinner date with Bethany. In all but one of these three of these scenes, both genders are eating or talking about the food in the scene.

Of the 15 scenes that include food and/or alcohol, there are three scenes with alcohol only, two scenes with non-alcoholic drinks only, three scenes with food only, one scene with both alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages, two scenes with both alcohol and food, two scenes with both non-alcoholic drinks and food, and two scenes that contained all three elements.

CLOTHING

"Public Relations" takes place over five days. The only character the audience sees daily is Don. In the course of the episode, all males wear pants, and the majority of these men wear suits inside and outside of a business setting. All females wear either a skirt or a dress. Yet, in closely examining the clothes in this episode, there are many details in the color, cut, and even discussion of clothing that reveal more about the characters who wear them.

Although the female characters did not have any particular palette in respects to clothing, their accent colors are important attributes. Peggy and Joan both consistently wear a nude-toned lipstick that is similar to the color of their natural lips. Bethany's lipstick is bright red on her dinner date with Don. This bright red is also seen on the call girl who comes to Don's apartment on Thanksgiving. Both her brassiere and her nails are the same shade of red. Both Gladys and Daisy, the hired actresses for the public relations stunt, both wear lipstick that is a muted, deeper tone of red. Betty's lipstick is lighter and pinker than that of any other females in this episode.

Color also plays an important role in men's clothing, especially for Don and the men with whom he interacts. Don wears deep-colored suits and casual wear in this episode. In Don's five outfit changes, the audience sees him dress in navy blue, charcoal grey, and maroon. Both Roger and Pete dress in a similar palette. Roger wears charcoal grey, dark brown, and navy blue suits. Pete has four different outfits, which include three charcoal suits and a pair of slacks with a navy blue pea coat. Bertram and the clients from Jantzen, however, wear light-grey suits on every occasion they are on screen. When Betty's husband Harry wears a suit it is also a lighter color such as heather or khaki. Some of the businessmen in *Mad Men* wear unconventional colors. Harry wears lavender pants with an olive suit coat, and Joey's clothes are vibrant with accents of yellow, red, and turquoise.

Although the characters change their outfits daily, there are certain pieces of clothing that individual characters consistently wear. With each new outfit, Roger wears a vest underneath his suit jacket. Bertram always sports a bowtie and a pocket square. Joey

wears a long-sleeved button-down shirt with a sweater vest everyday to work. Harry's suit pants are a different color than his jacket. Lane is in the episode just once, but he is the only person in the firm to wear a double-breasted suit jacket. Joan usually accessorizes with jewelry, either earrings or a necklace and sometimes a combination of both. In one scene, Joan is talking on the phone in her office. Once she hangs up, the audience sees her re-insert her earring that had been in the way while the receiver was on her ear. Peggy has three costume changes in the office scenes, and she wears a colored blouse with a bow at the collar in two out of three the outfits. All of the secretaries in the office, including both peripheral characters and main characters such as Joan, consistently wear conservative clothing that reveals only arms and calves. Conversely, Bethany and the call girl each have one appearance on the show, and their dresses expose their shoulders. The call girl is the only female who shows cleavage while dressed, and she and Don are the only characters to be shirtless in the *mise-en-scène*.

In addition to the physical costuming in this show, the characters also engage in dialogue about clothing. For example, when Don, Peter, and Roger meet with the clothing company Jantzen, they discuss the difference between a bikini and a two-piece bathing suit. Since Jantzen is a family company, Bob Finley and Jim Hartsdale want a "wholesome" advertisement for two-piece bathing suit (Weiner & Abraham, 2010). A bikini, Bob argues, is "underwear you wear to the beach." Similarly on Don's date with Bethany, Bethany informs Don that she borrowed a dress for their night out. Don asks to see it even though they are already seated at the restaurant. Bethany stands up and twirls

slightly so that Don can see her back. She sits back down, and after she giggles to herself, Bethany exchanges a few lines with Don about the dress:

Bethany: I can't believe I just did that.
 Don: It's hard to believe there are two girls that can wear that. (Weiner & Abraham, 2010)

In a later scene, Don briefly discusses clothing with his son Bobby. Bobby tells his dad that a button has gone missing on his pajama shirt, and Don assures Bobby that he will sew it in the morning. Bobby looks at this father in disbelief and asks, "You know how to sew?" Don replies, "I can do a button" (Weiner & Abraham, 2010). In these three instances, the idea of clothing is not visual but an auditory component of the episode.

The clothing code in "Public Relations" manifests itself in various ways throughout the episode. Traditionally, the men tend to wear suits and the women wear dresses or skirts. There is also a trend that develops in respects to clothing color such as the men's suits as well as the color of accessories and makeup. Many characters wear the same elements of clothing everyday but in a different pattern or color, and some clothing is more revealing than others. Clothing in this episode is not restricted to the physical pieces themselves; the code of clothing also exists in the dialogue among characters of the show.

OBJECTS

The mise-en-scène of each scene in *Mad Men* is overflowing with different objects that communicate meanings to audience. But for the purposes of this research, there are three main objects relating to gender roles in this episode: Don's briefcase, cigarettes, and interior design.

A briefcase is commonly linked to the idea of business, and Don's briefcase specifically becomes a focal point in four scenes. During the meeting with Jantzen, Don is the only one with a briefcase. Directly after the Jantzen meeting, around minute six of the episode, the camera does a close up of Don's fist clenching the handle of the briefcase as he walks through the office building towards his office. The briefcase also appears when Don is getting some work done at home before his date with Bethany. The briefcase is open, and Don sifts through loose papers with advertisements on them. The following morning after the date, Don arrives at the firm and walks towards his office. The camera takes a medium shot to show Don handing his briefcase and jacket to the secretary in the front of his office. Lastly, the briefcase comes out again at his apartment. At the living room coffee table, Don reads through and writes ideas while his children Bobby and Sally watch television. In these four instances, the briefcase is not merely an accessory of Don; it becomes an object of focus in the *mise-en-scène*.

Table 2: Scenes With Cigarettes

Men		Women	
<i>Business Setting:</i>	<i>Non-Business setting:</i>	<i>Business Setting:</i>	<i>Non-Business Setting:</i>
Don – 5	Don - 1	Peggy – 1	N/A
Bob – 1		Joan – 1	
Roger – 1			
Joey – 1			
# Of Male Characters Smoking: 4		# Of Female Characters Smoking: 2	
# Of Times Males Shown Smoking: 9		# Of Times Females Shown Smoking: 2	

There are nine scenes in “Public Relations” that contain lit cigarettes. Eight of these scenes are in a business setting while the only non-business scene takes place in Don’s apartment. Four men and two women are shown with cigarettes, and of these, men are shown smoking nine times whereas the two women, Joan and Peggy, only smoke once throughout the episode. Don smokes 6 times while Bob Finley, Roger, and Joey each smoke once. The majority of scenes with cigarettes take place in a business setting. Twice as many male characters are shown with cigarettes than female characters, and the frequency of a male smoking outnumbers a female smoking nine to two.

In the textual analysis of “Public Relations,” I found that details in the interior design of both Don’s apartment and his place of work are important signs. The layout of the office building is a representation of the traditional workplace in the 1960s. Observations in the episode allow the audience to visualize the office building’s floor plan. Don, Roger, and Lane each have a spacious office separated from the rest of the building by frosted glass walls. It is unclear whether Bertram has his own office in this building. Bertram is a senior partner who works part time, and so it is possible he does not have an office in the firm. Peggy, Joan, and Pete who can be considered a managerial staff all have their own smaller offices. Peggy is often seen working with Joey in the creative area of the office, a spacious cubicle at the center of the floor with a worktable, a couch, and coffee table. The secretaries of Sterling, Cooper, Draper, Pryce do not have an office or cubicle, only desks. The secretary in the lobby has her own desk off set from the rest of the building, and Don’s secretary is seated at a desk outside of his office against a

fogged glass wall. The other three secretaries are lined behind one another against the walls of the conference room, Joan's office, and the creative area.

The lighting in Don's apartment is drastically different than the interior of Sterling, Cooper, Draper, Pryce. The office building is sleek and modern with a cream-colored palette. Areas in the office with color or wooden paneling have windows that allow for natural light, and ceilings are covered with large rectangle overhead lights. The colors of Don's apartment, however, are dark beige and brown. The first time we see his apartment it is night, and even when multiple lamps are on, it is still dark and uninviting. There is enough light to see most of the detail in his apartment, but shadows cover the corners of the kitchen and the living room. The next scene shows Don's apartment during the day. He enters the apartment, and the television has been left on. There is only one wall with windows to let the sunlight in, and the walls appear to be black. Before Don's night out with Bethany, there is a close up shot on his hands tidying up his already made bed. He smooths out some wrinkles on the maroon comforter and tucks in some excess fabric under the pillows. His room is neat and organized, but the walls are a deep olive green and completely bare. Again, it is evening in this scene and there are two lamps on, but his room is dim and full of shadows.

In the context of gender roles, the most important objects in "Public Relations" are Don's briefcase, cigarettes, and interior design. Don's briefcase is a symbol during his working hours in the office as well as his time at home. More men are shown smoking in this episode than women, and these male characters smoke more frequently than the females. Lastly, the layout of Sterling, Cooper, Draper, Pryce is designed around the

hierarchy of the business while the dark and mysterious details of Don's apartment lend to the aspects of the individual character.

HUMAN INTERACTIONS

The human interactions among the characters of *Mad Men* carry the storylines forward and can reveal various messages about the ways in which men and women treat each other in this episode. Parental roles, personality traits, body language, and gender-related dialogue are at the forefront of human interactions in "Public Relations."

The only characters in this episode that engage in parenting are Betty, Don, and Pauline. It seems that Betty and Don have joint custody over the children, and so, though they are divorced, they must interact with one another as parents. In "Public Relations," Betty is portrayed as a bad mother on two occasions. She cannot control her Sally at Thanksgiving, and it seems as though Sally's bad manners are a result of Betty's poor parenting. Pauline asks Sally if she likes the food, to which Sally bluntly replies, "No" (Weiner & Abraham, 2010). Betty attempts to feed her a spoonful of sweet potatoes, but Sally gags and spits it onto her plate. A few scenes later, Don picks up Bobby and Sally from Betty's, and they arrange a drop-off time. Don is on time must wait for Betty and Henry to return. They are nearly an hour late, and the audience understands that Betty purposefully told Henry a later time so that they may spend more time together alone. Quite conversely, Don appears to be a responsible and caring father who tucks his children in bed at night. After the incident at Thanksgiving, Sally attempts to call her father during the night, and we assume she wants to tattle on her mother. Henry's mother, Pauline acts as a somewhat overbearing, but concerned type who disapproves of Henry's

marriage to Betty. She tells Henry that Betty is a “silly woman” and that the children are “terrified of her” (Weiner & Abraham, 2010). The only two mothers in the episode are in conflict with one another, and it is evident that Pauline’s disapproval of Betty is a consequence of Betty’s seemingly poor parenting skills.

Don and Peggy act as foils in this episode in respects to the ability to take responsibility for one’s actions. Don’s behavior perpetuates the “manly man” stereotype in which a male is too arrogant to admit his mistakes. Peggy acts as a responsible woman who is able to take responsibility for her wrongdoings without resorting to total submission. Don agrees to do an interview with the newspaper *Ad Age*. The executives hope that the interview will create a positive image for the company. However, Don’s lack of interest and inability to provide sufficient answers result in an unfavorable portrayal of Don Draper and his company. Don argues, “My job is to make ads, they’ll be lining bird cages by Friday” (Weiner & Abraham, 2010). In a similar instance, Don’s consultation goes awry when Jantzen rejects his advertisement campaign proposal. Despite Jantzen’s plea for a sex-free ad campaign, Don’s proposal focuses on a suggestive picture that hints at nudity. When he is turned down, he storms out of the conference room. Roger instructs him to calm down, but Don does not listen. Don approaches the men of Jantzen and sternly commands, “Out! Get Out. Get your things and get out of my office. Now,” and snaps his fingers twice (Weiner & Abraham, 2010). Peggy, on the other hand, takes responsibility for her actions. Peggy plans a PR stunt for Sugarberry Ham in which two hired actresses fight over a ham in the grocery store in order to get media coverage. The stunt works, but the fight goes too far and one actress

ends up in jail for assault. Peggy needs to get the bail money from Don, who is unaware of the PR stunt altogether. Don is angry, and Peggy apologizes repeatedly for failing to get the idea approved by Don. Even though the PR stunt is ultimately a great success, Peggy acknowledges her mistakes and apologizes to Don. Interestingly enough, Peggy is one of the few characters who can voice her opinion to Don without receiving his immediate backlash. He reprimands her for potentially ruining the reputation of the company, but she reminds him that the current opinion of Sterling, Cooper, Draper, Pryce is entirely his fault. He does not try to make excuses like the instances before. Instead, the closing scene shows Don at another interview in which he enthusiastically narrates the dramatic story of how Sterling, Cooper, Draper, Pryce came into fruition. Don's masculinity can at times interfere with his responsibility as an executive at Sterling, Cooper, Draper, Pryce while Peggy's vital role is still tempered by her ability to accept her mistakes and move on. Don tends to be defensive when his male coworkers try to tell him he is wrong, but he is more willing to take responsibility for his actions when Peggy prompts him to do so.

Height discrepancies among the male characters are not particularly overt, but often times the positioning of bodies in a room tell the audience who is in charge and who is taking orders. Most scenes in the office are shot at a straight-on angle with everything in deep focus. They are either medium or full shots, with occasional close-ups on facial expressions or certain objects of significance. These shot characteristics allow us to watch the characters interact with one another at work. By observing Don in various shots with his co-workers, it is clear that Don is the tallest of the executives, and he is

repeatedly the tallest person in a scene. Peggy is often times positioned at a higher elevation than her male co-workers. For example, when Peggy, Joey, and Pete are working on the Sugarberry Ham campaign, Joey and Pete are seated side-by-side on a couch while Peggy sits atop the worktable. She is seated across from them so it seems as though she is looking down on the two men. When Pete tells Peggy that the Sugarberry PR stunt is a success, Pete is sitting at his desk, and it cuts to Peggy at a low angle. While Peggy is already standing in this scene, this shot makes Peggy seem even taller and above Pete. While most of the secretaries remain seated at their desks all day, Joan talks on the phone while standing up. She also escorts Pete into the conference room to inform the executives that the firm lost the client Jai-Alai. In addition to Joan, the secretary outside of Don's office is the only other secretary shown on her feet as she stands up to take Don's jacket, hat, and briefcase.

Outside of the office, male characters and female characters are positioned in such a way as to reflect their relationship with one another. When Don and his ex-wife Betty are in confrontation, they stand face-to-face as if preparing for a duel. With Don and Bethany, they are seated across from one another at the restaurant. Bethany stands briefly when Don suggests that she stand up to show off her dress. Don is in a position of submission during the scene with the call girl. While he lies flat on his bed, she is in an upright position on top of Don. The call girl slaps Don's face three times upon his command. Although the call girl seems to be in charge in this situation, Don initiates the sexual act itself. In fact, only the male characters initiate instances of sexual contact in this episode. Henry unexpectedly kisses Betty in the car while it is still parked in the

garage, and he positions himself over Betty as they collapse into the passenger seat.

Similarly, Don sits side-by-side Bethany in the taxi ride home from the restaurant. When they arrive at her residence, Don moves in closer to Bethany and kisses her. The body language between males and females are determined by their relationship with each other.

Much of the body language of this episode is reinforced by dialogue among the characters. In this episode, gender-related conversations among male characters only occur five times and 19 times between males and females. In all but 20 seconds of the entire episode, there are no scenes that show females only engaging in any type of dialogue. Trends among these conversations include males affirming masculinity, males demonstrating gender dominance, males objectifying women, males implying a reliance on women, females demonstrating gender dominance, females acting as caretakers, females demonstrating submission, and females affirming traditional gender ideologies.

In the five gender-related conversations among male characters, one conversation used language that affirmed masculinity, three conversations both affirmed masculinity and objectified women, and one conversation implied a reliance on women.

In the beginning of the episode, the men from Jantzen request that Don consider their family values when creating an ad for their two-piece bathing suit. After the meeting Roger calls the men “prudes” and “choir boys” in regards to Jantzen’s wholesome vision of advertising (Weiner & Abraham, 2010). This implies that a man who does not like a woman’s body is not masculine enough in society. Roger also uses references to food as sexual innuendos as he talks with Don about Bethany. In this scene, Roger successfully

persuades Don to take Bethany out for dinner. As motivation, Roger asserts, “Come Turkey Day maybe you can stuff her” (Weiner & Abraham, 2010). He also advises Don to order the chicken Kiev on his dinner date because “the butter squirts everywhere” (Weiner & Abraham, 2010). These crass lines exchanged between Roger and Don refer to sexual acts and objectify women while simultaneously affirming their masculinity. In the same scene, there is an implicit message of a man’s reliance on a woman. Roger admits that his reason for the matchmaking is that, “I was thinking the other day what happens when you [leave the office], and it made me very upset” (Weiner & Abraham, 2010). While most conversations among the male characters affirm masculinity and/or objectify women, there is one instance in which the men admit to their need for a woman.

Of the 19 gender-related conversations between both males and females, females demonstrate submission five times, females act as caretakers four times, females demonstrate dominance five times, females affirm traditional ideologies twice, men demonstrate dominance twice, and males objective women once. Many example of language in which females demonstrate submission are self-deprecating. For example, at dinner with Don, Bethany calls her work as an opera supernumerary, “Work, but not real work” (Weiner & Abraham, 2010). And when she discusses current events and violence in the world, she becomes flustered and apologetically says, “You’ve made me feel so serious all of a sudden” (Weiner & Abraham, 2010). The secretaries in Don’s office act like his caretaker at times. Peggy defends him when he is not there to do so himself, scolding Joey for an inappropriate comment about Don’s lonely living situation. When the executive board blames Don for the loss of an account, they leave him alone in the

conference room. Joan, however, remains in the doorway to assure Don, telling him, “It’ll pass.” The female characters can also demonstrate dominance over their male counterparts. When Peggy creates a witty slogan for Sugarberry Ham, she looks over to Joey and commands him to “Chop, Chop!” with drawings of her new idea (Weiner & Abraham, 2010). Bethany, too, demonstrates her power over Don when she denies him access to her bedroom on the taxi ride home. After he initiates a kiss in the backseat, Don offers to take her upstairs to her apartment. Bethany coyly replies, “I know that trick,” and she leaves the taxi (Weiner & Abraham, 2010). Pauline, Henry’s mother, is the character who exhibits traditional gender ideologies. Pauline’s conversations with Henry clearly indicate that she believes a man should be the provider within a married couple and that divorce is an act to be frowned upon.

In mixed company, the men’s language becomes less overtly masculine and objectifying. Both Don and Roger use language that shows male dominance over their secretaries. Don calls Peggy “honey” over the phone, and Roger calls a secretary “sweetheart” in the office (Weiner & Abraham, 2010). These pet names are instances of male dominance. The one example of a male objectifying a woman is in the creative room with Pete, Peggy, and Joey. Pete discusses options on how to pay the actresses for the Sugarberry Ham public relations stunt and affirms, “I can use my expense account if I say they were whores” (Weiner & Abraham, 2010). He does not personally objectify a specific female like Roger, but it demonstrates the idea of a woman as a sex object.

There are about three times as much gender-related dialogue between males and females than among males alone. Less than one percent of the episode depicts dialogue

between females alone. In conversations with only males, their language becomes more overtly objectifying and crude. In conversations with mixed company, trends of male dominance, masculinity and female objectivity are still present but more subtle. Women are just as likely to use submissive language as they are to use dominant language when conversing with men. Female characters also commonly act as caretakers while engaged in dialogue and even uphold traditional prescribed gender roles with their spoken beliefs.

The human interactions communicate many messages about gender roles in *Mad Men*. Betty, Don, and Pauline show the different parenting dynamics in this episode and how mother does not always know best. We see how the “manly man” stereotype is both elicited and tempered through Don and Peggy and the ways in which they handle their mistakes. Camera positioning throughout “Public Relations” gives height to characters in command, and the physical body language of characters can have the same effect. And lastly, dialogue among characters reveals the messages concerning perceptions male and female relations both inside and outside of offices of Sterling, Cooper, Draper, Pryce.

BARTHES AND THE FIVE SYSTEMS OF MEANING

The social codes of food, clothing, objects, and human interactions guide the textual analysis of “Public Relations.” These codes ensure relevant observations in that the research is focused only on food, clothing, objects, and human interactions within the narrative that relate to feminist motifs in *Mad Men*. While this allows for a comprehensive and organized framework of research, the above observations are merely a list of gender-related signs in the mise-en-scène. Using Barthes’ (1974) five systems of meaning, we can analyze food, clothing, objects, and human interactions in this episode

in order to determine if these codes becomes signs that communicate messages to the audience. In this way, we are able to break down the categorized observations without following the linear narrative. As Barthes states, the five systems of meaning create a “network... through which the entire text passes” (1974, P. 20).

ENIGMA CODE

The enigma code refers to how the conflicts in “Public Relations” are constructed and eventually solved (Barthes, 1974). There is one conflict that is both developed and resolved within the episode. The first scene of “Public Relations” is the interview with Don and Jack Hammond from *Ad Age*. The signs within this interview help to develop the conflict of Don and his unsuccessful interview. Such signs include Don’s distant body language, his terse and incomplete answers, and the Jack’s facial expressions of frustration and slight distress. The published article does nothing for the face of the company, and Don is portrayed as close-mouthed rogue. After his colleagues reprimand him, Don is able to redeem himself in the last scene. Don has another press opportunity with the Wall Street Journal, and he approaches the interview in the exact opposite way. Though we do not see the finished article, Don’s newfound enthusiasm during the interview clearly shows that he has resolved the conflict. We see clients like Jantzen compliment Don personally, offering him praise for his impeccable reputation in the industry. Even though he is one of four partners, Don is often receives all of the attention. The interview conflict reminds us that being the man of the hour has its downsides. The face of a company also must be able to handle the flack, especially when he is deserves it.

Two conflicts in “Public Relations” are developed in the episode, but only partially resolved. The ham is a sign included in the enigma code because throughout the episode, the audience wonders if the Sugarberry Ham PR stunt will be a success or a fiasco. The plan seems to work until the hired actresses take the fight too far. Peggy keeps peace between the actresses, and soon after the good news arrives; Peggy and the creative team have achieved their ultimate goal - to get Sugarberry to increase its media budget. In this way, the conflict is resolved because the PR stunt seems to be a success. Yet, even with the increased media budget, Don is still upset with Peggy and the creative team for executing the stunt without his approval. His dismay therefore casts a shadow over the Peggy’s winning idea. This conflict shows that even when an intelligent woman like Peggy creates a successful concept, it can be undermined by a glorified catfight between two stubborn women. Even when she finds a way to overcome this obstacle, she is still scolded by Don. It is a reminder that Peggy is still a woman who must answer to a male superior. Similarly, the initial Jantzen consultation contains signs that develop a conflict within the episode. There is tension between the men from Jantzen and those from Sterling, Cooper, Draper, Pryce. The conflict that arises is whether sex has a place in Jantzen’s advertising. Their dialogue focuses mainly on rhetoric, specifically the difference between a two-piece bathing suit and a bikini. They sit across from one another on opposite sides as to exaggerate their different views. Don is listening to Jantzen’s plea for tasteful advertising, but when Jantzen explains that its target audience is “wholesome,” Don replies, “We’ll see about that” (Weiner & Abraham, 2010). These lines of dialogue set up the conflict. Don attempts to resolve this conflict by showing

Jantzen that advertising can use sex in a restrained way that is less subversive than their competitors. The men from Jantzen still object to the presence of any kind of risqué material and reject Don's idea. This conflict is developed at the beginning of the episode, but when it is addressed at the end of the episode, attempts at resolution fail. This conflict is important in terms of gender because it investigates the idea of masculinity in terms of sexuality. Don is unable to persuade these men that sex sells.

The enigma code in "Public Relations" include signs that aid in developing and/or resolving conflicts within the episode. These signs include human interactions like body language and dialogue as well as food, clothing, and objects such as interior design. Don's interview conflict is both developed and resolved in this episode, and this conflict shows that the alpha male has a responsibility to mend his wrongdoings. The Sugarberry ham conflict and Jantzen conflict are developed but only partially resolved by the end of the episode. In the former, Peggy's accomplishments are not only undermined by weaker female characters, but also her own submission to her boss, Don. The Jantzen conflict defines a man's masculinity in the context of his acceptance of sex and the objectification of women.

CONNOTATIVE CODE

The connotative code accounts for the dialogue, setting, costume, and movement that aids in the development of characters (Barthes, 1974). The majority of the observations from this episode are included in the connotative code because most signs from the textual analysis are directly related to the development of the characters in *Mad Men*. In this study, signs that are considered to be in the connotative code follow mainly

two trends: amount of power a character holds and the development of characters in terms of masculinity.

For both the males and females in “Public Relations,” clothing and height determine the authority of a character. The executives of Sterling, Cooper, Draper, Pryce consistently wear certain articles of clothing on a day to day basis much like the redundant wardrobe a cartoon character. This may allude to the fact that these men are at the forefront of this business. This reminds the audience that Sterling, Cooper, Draper, and Pryce are all male co-owners and that the title of the show is, after all, *Mad Men*. In order to maintain a sense of realism, however, these repeated articles of clothing are subtle and accent the overall presence of each individual character. Curiously enough, Don, the central character of the entire show, does not have a signature article of clothing, perhaps to reinforce the paradoxical coupling of Do’s no-nonsense corporate style and overall mystique. Quite conversely, Bertram’s brightly patterned bow ties make for a less professional, even comical, appearance. Colored bow ties are reminiscent of a clown, and this lack of seriousness reflects Bertram’s role as an executive who works only part-time. Similarly, lipstick color in this episode has some indication of a woman’s power. Betty’s bright pink lips lend to her naivety in this episode; she is portrayed as a pretty face rather than a competent mother and wife. The bold, seductive red of Bethany and the call girl plays into their objectification as females, but denotes a certain power over Don because of this sexuality. Lastly, the muted tone of Joan and Peggy are signs of their leadership roles in the office even as females. When the femininity of a character is downplayed, she has more power. When Joan takes her earring off, she is standing while she discusses

business on the phone. Yet, once she sits and puts the earring back on, she gossips with Harry in her office. This example is also applicable to idea of height as a sign of power. Whether height is achieved by physical attribute, body position, or camera angles, the tallest person in a scene tends to be the one in command. Peggy, often times the brains behind male-dominated endeavors, sits on higher pieces of furniture to give her the illusion of height. Both signs of height and clothing are categorized under the connotative code because they develop levels of authority among the characters.

The second trend among connotative code signs is the development of characters in terms of masculinity, which include sex, alcohol, and cigarettes. Dialogue about sex determines a character's level of masculinity in this episode, especially in the case of Roger. His sexual innuendos about food represents a sort of "men's talk" in which masculinity is verified by one's ability to discuss women in terms of sex alone. He is also the first to compliment Jantzen's two-piece bathing suit, yet his approval is more about the women who wear it than the product itself. Roger believes that a man's ability to appreciate sex reflects his masculinity, which is why he calls the men from Jantzen "prudes" and "choir boys" (Weiner & Abraham, 2010). Likewise, the consumption of alcohol indicates a certain level of manliness with the idea that masculinity is superior. We see that the men from Jantzen drink from mugs, suggesting that they are not manly enough for alcoholic drinks. Peggy is the only female who drinks alcohol in the office, and it when she is constructing the PR stunt with Pete and Joey. The alcoholic drink suggests that Peggy as "one of the guys," and therefore she is an intelligent and capable mind on the team despite her gender.

Cigarette smoking is also an indicator of one's masculinity. When male characters come together in the episode, they smoke cigarettes as arbitrarily as they drink alcohol. Smoking and drinking often times represent "gentlemen's time" in which the males discuss matters of business. This also denotes a man's freedom to drink and smoke as they please. Women in this episode, however, only smoke as means for relaxation. Joan tells Harry that she would "love a vacation," and lights one up (Weiner & Abraham, 2010). Peggy smokes as she nervously asks Don for bail money, anticipating Don's disappointment and anger. For Peggy and Joan, cigarettes remind the audience that even though they hold established positions in the firm, their roles are qualified by their gender. They still work under a hierarchy of men, which can cause them stress. Male-dominated themes in "Public Relations" are embodied with concepts such as "gentlemen only" and "men's talk." Sex, alcohol, and cigarettes are all signs in the connotative code that develop both female and male characters in these terms of masculinity.

The connotative code is the most far-reaching code of the five systems of meaning because character development is essential in any narrative. This is especially true with the nature television; each episode develops the character in order to maintain the series' storyline. In this particular episode, we examine the signs that developed the characters in terms of gender roles. In "Public Relations," the signs in the connotative code within follow two trends: the authority of a character and the development of a character in terms of masculinity. These signs specifically include details of color and accessory in clothing, alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks, objects like cigarettes, and lastly, human interactions such as dialogue about sex and body positioning.

PROAIRETIC CODE

The proairetic code makes reference to the signs that organize the narrative into a sequence of events in order to build suspense (Barthes, 1974). Certain subtle signs in this episode are categorized in the proairetic code. These signs link the rise and fall of certain actions in the episode, which allows the audience to anticipate what will happen next. An example of such a sign includes details of interior design like Don's bed. When Don neatens his bed's comforter before his date with Bethany, the audience wonders if Don will bring Bethany home after the date. Don is anticipating her willingness to come home with him, but the audience questions whether Don will get what he wants. This not only emphasizes Don's objectification of women, it also adds more weight to Bethany's refusal to sleep with Don at the end of their date. Bethany is portrayed as dramatic and slightly immature on the date, but her refusal of sex shows that she is able to prevent Don from getting what he wants. Another sign in the proairetic code is a small piece of dialogue during the discussion of the Sugarberry Ham PR stunt. Once Peggy, Pete, and Joey cement the logistics of the PR stunt, Peggy asks them if they should seek Don's permission. Joey and Pete do not see the necessity of Don's approval, but there is a moment of tension that provokes the audience's curiosity. There is reason to believe that Peggy should tell Don and that a certain consequence of the PR stunt may anger Don. When this turns out to be the case, Peggy must answer to Don and take the brunt of his disappointment. Again, we see Peggy's achievement undermined by a male superior. These examples of interior design and dialogue are subtle signs in the proairetic code that build suspense while carrying the action of the narrative forward.

SYMBOLIC CODE

The symbolic code includes signs that create tension via antithetical ideas and rhetoric (Barthes, 1974). It should be noted that the symbolic code of masculinity versus femininity is inherent in the discussion of gender roles in “Public Relations” and relates to all of the observations in the episodes textual analysis. There exists a more specific antithetical idea that is in direct relation to gender roles in this episode: the traditional versus the unconventional. The upholders of tradition in “Public Relations” are the men from Jantzen, Bethany, and Henry’s mother Pauline.

The men of Jantzen are in favor of a traditional ad campaign for their two-piece bathing suit. In Don’s opinion, however, a traditional approach in advertising is boring. When Don presents his somewhat provocative proposal to the men of Jantzen, they are not pleased. Even when Don discusses the potential profit gain with this approach, the men of Jantzen stand by their moral consciousness. Don mocks their traditional views by describing a generic ad, a picture of a family playing on the beach and building sand castles. They do not understand Don’s sarcasm; they prefer this impromptu vision. It is evident that the two will not compromise their beliefs. This tension between the traditional and the unconventional positions Jantzen as a pioneer of tradition, a dying breed of sorts since the “sex sells” concept seems to be on the rise in the advertising industry.

Bethany and Pauline have a negative opinion about divorce, which is a popular assertion during the *Mad Men* era. On her date with Don, Bethany informs him that she is “breaking a lot of rules seeing a divorced man” (Weimer & Abraham, 2010). Bethany is

willing to accept Don's unconventional ways, but at the same time, her confession to Don shows that dating a divorced man is normally unacceptable. Pauline is not as open as Bethany. At the beginning of Thanksgiving dinner, Pauline voices her rather opinionated beliefs at the table. Commenting on the heavy holiday traffic, she says, "That's what's become of this country, everyone has two Thanksgivings to go to" (Weimer & Abraham, 2010). Her son, Henry, understands that this is directly aimed his wife Betty who has been recently divorced from Don. He counters his mother, "Maybe we just have twice as much to be thankful for." Henry and Betty live in Don's house for which Don still pays the mortgage. Pauline comments on this situation while in private discussion with her son. She does not agree with her Henry's decision to marry Betty, and claims that he is living in Don's "dirt" (Weimer & Abraham, 2010). Henry is willing to accept the unconventional while his mother staunchly stands by tradition. In Pauline's eyes, Betty is unfit due to her divorce, and Henry does not fulfill the male provider in the marriage.

For the purposes of this study, the symbolic code in "Public Relations" inherently includes signs that relate to masculinity versus femininity. Human interactions in this episode also develop the idea of the traditional versus the unconventional. Jantzen's generic approach to advertising upholds tradition for the sake of maintaining decency. Bethany and Pauline regard divorce as unfavorable, but only Bethany is willing to accept the unconventional. She goes against her moral conventions by dating Don, a divorced man. Pauline, however, disapproves of her son's choices and does not respect Henry's role in the marriage.

CULTURAL/REFERENTIAL CODE

The cultural/referential code refers to universally known language and ideas (Barthes, 1974). The signs in cultural code generally enhance the realistic features that create the 1960s atmosphere of “Public Relations.” Though it is a fictional narrative, signs in the cultural code add a sense of realism; they tell the audience there is an element of accuracy in the show’s depiction of this time period. With the cultural code in a television show set in the 1960s, the tension between genders in the workplace is in some ways intrinsic; the prescribed gender roles of this era are universally regarded as sexist. For example, while the details of an individual’s clothing can be categorized under the connotative code, the fact that all women wear skirts is cultural. In fact, all female employees in this episode of *Mad Men* wear skirts, and this seems to be more of a comment on fashion trends rather than concepts of submission or objectification. It is commonly known that in American culture, there was an era in which women primarily wore dresses and skirts. Similarly, an all-male executive board is less of a comment about male domination than it is a reflection of the majority of corporate America during the 1960s. It is most likely a cultural reference; during this era, men were in charge and women were secretaries. These general observations in “Public Relations” only skim the surface as compared to the detailed signs in the other four systems of meanings. Women in skirts, male executives, and female secretaries are all signs in the cultural code because they refer to universally known concepts. Their purpose is to enhance the show’s atmosphere in terms of realism and accuracy despite its fictional narrative.

Using Barthes' five systems of meaning in semiotics, we are able to detect trends among the observations from the textual analysis of "Public Relations." This allows for in-depth analysis of categorized data so that we can extract the meaning behind the social codes of food, clothing, objects, and human interactions.

DISCUSSION

These results show that the composition of the mise-en-scène quite deliberately communicates feminist motifs in "Public Relations." The most encompassing motif is that of the male gender as the norm. The title of the show itself lends to this motif. *Mad Men* is more than just a playful alliteration; it seems to refer to the male dominance that exists in the television program. Moreover, not only is the male gender the default in this episode, masculinity is further defined by sex. When Roger sets up the date for Don and Bethany, he is less concerned about the presence of a nurturing soul than he is about a source of pleasure for Don. The men from Jantzen are portrayed as wholesome and decent due to their respect of the female body. Yet, in *Mad Men*, it is clear that these are emasculating characteristics. Don refuses to comply with their demands for clean advertising and sees them as weak. Roger alludes to their lack of masculinity when he calls them "choir boys," which suggests they are not men if they do not like the idea of sex (Weiner & Abraham, 2010). Don is the only main character who engages in sexual activity, which reflects his depiction as the strongest character in the show. In "Public Relations," Don is the man in power, and in terms of sexuality, he is at the threshold of masculinity. In *Mad Men*, to be a man, it is not enough to have a Y-chromosome. Masculinity is defined by the idea of sex.

The motif of the male gender as the norm is also exhibited among the women of the show. The cast is comprised of both male and female characters, but we see that the value of a female character is determined only in the context of masculinity. As an audience, we see that Peggy and Joan are intelligent and powerful women in the offices of Sterling, Cooper, Draper, Pryce. This is because as women, they have the respect of their male colleagues. Their interactions with men show that they are competent enough to work with the male-dominated managerial staff and executive board. In fact, only in the context of masculinity can we value their worth in this show. Peggy and Joan wear nude-colored lipstick as to downplay their femininity. For the audience of *Mad Men*, less femininity equates to more authority. Similarly, Peggy drinks alcohol while she works with Pete and Joey in order to make her seem manlier. Even peripheral characters like Bethany and the call girl appear to be powerful only because of their interactions with Don. Bethany is has the power to deny Don's of what he wants without receiving any protest. The call girl is positioned on top of Don while they have sex, and the audience senses that she is in control of him. Betty's value is actually minimized by the presence of Don in some scenes of "Public Relations." There is an apparent double standard when it comes to divorce. While Bethany accepts Don despite the fact that he is a divorced man, Betty does not receive the same approval from Pauline. For Don, it is something a woman can learn to overlook. Yet, for Betty, she is a flawed woman. This may be rooted from the age-old double standard that women must remain virginal in order to be acceptable for marriage while men's sexual promiscuity is disregarded. All of these female characters in "Public Relations" are only worth as much as their interactions with

men. With the male gender as the norm, a male serves as a litmus test to a female's value in this show; in order to determine her worth, a man must be present to gauge it.

The findings in this research show many trends among the production values of "Mad Men." But in terms of feminist motifs, these observations emphasize a single idea: the male gender is the norm. We see that the male characters in "Public Relations" are defined by sex and their willingness to objectify women. For female characters, their value is determined by their interactions with men.

CONCLUSION

The in-depth textual analysis of this study has shown that the production values employed by *Mad Men*'s creators not only reinforce feminist motifs, they comprehensively underpin the single idea that the male gender is the norm. The production values of "Public Relations" were analyzed in terms of the *mise-en-scène*, a concept that allows for the observation of the social codes of food, clothing, objects, and human interactions. This framework examines the context of commonplace items in order to determine whether they are signs. While studying "Public Relations," I observed numerous examples of food, clothing, objects, and human interactions that were directly related to gender roles in the narrative. These categorized observations were then threaded through Barthes' five systems of meaning in order to determine if these codes become signs that communicate messages to the audience. In this way, we are able to analyze the categorized observations without the restriction of a linear narrative.

The findings of this research show that production values reinforce the feminist motif that the male gender is the norm. This is exhibited in two ways: masculinity is

defined by sex and the value of a woman is defined by her interactions with men. Men are considered manlier if they engage in talk that objectifies women. When men are unwilling to use this language, they are emasculated. Women who hold positions of power in the office often times are less feminine as to suggest that authority is only for men. Often times, female characters are only powerful in terms of men. Bethany's character is silly and naive while the call girl is immoral and impure. Yet in the presence of Don they have power. There exist many trends manifested by production values in "Public Relations." These observations reinforce the feminist motif that the male gender is the norm.

There are some implications in this study that affect the results of this study. The textual analysis is limited to only one episode of a single season. Of the most recent season of *Mad Men*, a random number generator selected episode one, "Public Relations." The first episode of a season can have a slightly different structure since it often times reminds audiences where the last season left off and re-introduces the main characters of the series before introducing new peripheral characters. With "Public Relations," it is possible the narrative of the show is affected by its placement in the season. There are currently four seasons of *Mad Men*, each season consisting of 13 episodes. In order to confirm the findings in "Public Relations," further research could include various episodes across all four seasons. Since the 47 minutes of the episode provided a comprehensive amount of material, the viewing samples could be shortened in order to allow for a wider variety of episode viewing. If the same trends continue to

appear throughout different seasons, it will further validate the findings of this particular study.

Through Barthes' (1974) five systems of meaning in semiotics, we are able to analyze the signs within the social codes of food, clothing, objects, and human interactions in "Public Relations." This in-depth research concludes that the production values in the mise-en-scène indeed reinforce feminist motifs in *Mad Men*, the most comprehensive motif being the male gender as the norm. The messages communicated by this motif include the idea that masculinity is defined by sex and that a women's worth is defined by masculinity. While these findings are restricted to a stylized and dramatized fictional television series, these conventions of a male-dominated society are still applicable to the real world. The 21st century has come a long way since Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*. Yet the cultural implications of a series like *Mad Men* are perhaps still relatable to our tendencies towards a male-dominated society. In *Mad Men*, there is only one kind of person in this world: men. With hope, the messages communicated in "Public Relations" remind us that women, too, are part of this world in a context all of their own.

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Appendix A: Food Social Code

8 Scenes with Alcohol

Business – 5 scenes	Non-Business – 3 scenes
Peggy-1 Roger-1 Joey-1 Don-2 Peter-1	Pauline-1 Female Guest-1 Bethany-1 Don-3 Henry-1 Male Guest-1 Betty-1

Females shown: 5
 # Times females drink: 3
 Males shown: 7
 # Times males drink: 11

8 Scenes with Non-alcoholic drinks

Business – 5 scenes	Non-Business – 3 scenes
Jim-2 Bob-2 Jack-1 Pete-1 Roger-1 Secretary A-1 Secretary B-3 Peggy-1	Bobby- 2 Male guest -1 Sally-2 Female guest-1 Daisy-1 Gladys-1

Females shown: 5
 # Times females drink: 3
 Males shown: 7
 # Times males drink: 11

9 Scenes with Food

Business – 6 scenes	Non-Business – 3 scenes
Jantzen meetings-2 scenes Ham-4 scenes	Thanksgiving Don's Apartment Dinner Date

Appendix B: Clothing Social Code

Time	Observations
1:28	Interview Don=dark, Jack=light suit
2:55	Jantzen=light grey “wholesome” “not a bikini” “it’s hard to make a dent if your ads don’t look like a girly magazine”
5:10	Choir boys – Roger
6:10	Cooper bow tie
15:48	Dress conversation at dinner
21:30	Joan – earring back in
21:35	Harry – lavender pants, olive suit jacket
30:19	Don casual, cranberry polo
36:10	Button and sewing conversation with Bobby and Don
43:08	Jantzen=light suits again

Suits and Office Wear

Don	Navy blue, dark grey, maroon polo, navy blue sweater, dark grey pinstripe
Roger	Dark grey, dark brown. navy blue. Always a vest
Pete	Charcoal, charcoal jacket, charcoal
Cooper	Light grey, light grey. Bowties always
Peggy	Yellow bow, print bow, plain tan, navy blue trench, tweed brown pea coat
Joey	Turquoise vest, maroon button down. grey vest, yellow button down. Always sweater vest.

Lipstick Color

Peggy	Natural and nude toned, every time
Bethany	Red
Joan	Natural and nude toned, every time
Gladys	Dark red
Daisy	Deep red
Betty	Pink, everytime

Appendix C: Object Social Code

Object	Time	Observations
Interior Design:	5:27	Big shots in glassed office Head secretary: own office Pete and Peggy: own office Creative room: Peggy and Joey sometimes PEte Special sec: off set i.e. Lobby, Don's girl Other sec: three desks in a row next to center rooms
Cigarettes:	5:00 9:00 10:20 14:00 21:30 23:40 31:58 40:03	Bob and Don – Jantzen meeting Don at accountant meeting Joey (PR stunt) After work, Don in apt. Joan, office “I would love a vacation” Don and Roger, talking about Ad Age Peggy, asking for bail Don, when Peggy gives him the ham
Briefcase	5:10 14:00 22:00 36:51	After Jantzen meeting Apt before date with Bethany AM of ad age article – hands it to secretary Apt with the kids

Appendix D: Human Interactions Social Code

W: women only	MM: male, masculinity	FD: female, dominance
M: men only	MD: male, dominance	FC: female, caregiver
B: both	MO: male, objectify	FS: female, submission
	MS: male, submissive	FT: female, tradition

Time	Observations	Gender	Significance
6:41	Roger: Prudes, choir boys	M	MM
8:40	Peggy: That's not nice	B	FC
10:12	Peggy: 100 women, not customers	B	FS
11:15	Peggy: should I run it by Don	B	FS
12:05	Roger: Come Turkey Day maybe you can stuff her	M	MM, MO
12:14	Roger: sweetheart to secretary	B	MD
13:13	Cleaning lady: eat something	B	FM
16:20	Bethany: I'm breaking a lot of rules seeing a married man	B	FD, FT
16:46	B: you've made me feel so serious all of a sudden	B	FS
17:00	B: work but not real work	B	FS
17:27	B: I'm a wench, a courtesan, depends on the night	B	FS
19:35	D: let me walk you in	B	FD
	B: no, I know that trick	B	
20:40	Daisy asks Pete to go the market, Peggy has aspirin	B	FD, FC
24:38	Pete: is Joey coming?	B	MD
26:25	Joan: it'll pass	B	FC
25:37	Peggy: Chop, chop, Joey!	B	FD
26:00	Pete to Peggy: I may need you	B	MD
31:50	Don to Peggy: Spit it out, Honey	B	MD
42:00	Don: Comfortable and dead or risky and potentially rich?	M	MO, MM
10:40	Pete: I can use my expense acct if I tell them they're whores	B	MO
11:31	I was thinking the other day what happens when you leave here and it made me very upset.	M	MS
29:11	Pauline: That's what's become of this country, everyone has 2 thanksgivings to go to.	B	FT
	She's a silly woman, living in his dirt	B	FT

Ability to accept responsibility for actions

Peggy	To Don: "I'm so sorry to bother you" To Don: "I'm sorry Don, I should have told you"
Don	"My job is to make ads, they'll be lining birdcages by Friday... I didn't mention anyone. That the reporter's job. We'll survive with Ho Ho off our list" After Roger tells him to cool off: "Out. Get out. Get your things and get out of my office. Now." Snaps twice.

Parents

Mothers	Pauline: overbearing, tough Encourages tradition in Henry's life Thinks Betty is a bad mother Betty: irresponsible, bad mother Sally gags on her food Betty and Sally's conversation when she tries to call Don Home late when Don drops off kids
Fathers	Don: responsible Kids like him Sally prefers him to her mother On time to drop them off Lets Henry and Betty stay in his house