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Mad Men, Corporate Culture, and Violence against Women

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Abstract

Synthesizing Pierre Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence and Rosabeth Moss Kanter's framework of corporate roles to examine *Mad Men's* representation of women's work, Tracy Lucht and Jane Marcellus investigate the show's construction of the Secretary, Corporate Wife, and Token High-Level Woman in relation to symbolic violence, which looks beyond physical manifestations of violence to consider social relations that deny women's subjectivity. Viewed through these paired theoretical lenses, the narrative arcs of women on *Mad Men* illustrate how work, appearance, social position, sexuality, and material property are appropriated and exchanged for male gain. Addressing the connections linking gender, status, capital, power, and social practice, Bourdieu's notion of symbolic violence and Kanter's corporate work roles serve to illuminate the oppression embedded in corporate practices on *Mad Men*.

Disciplines

Domestic and Intimate Partner Violence | Family, Life Course, and Society | Film and Media Studies | Gender and Sexuality | Journalism Studies | Women's Studies

Comments

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***Mad Men*, Corporate Culture, and Violence against Women**

Tracy Lucht and Jane Marcellus

In an episode provocatively titled ‘The Other Woman’ during the fifth season of *Mad Men*, up-and-coming Sterling Cooper advertising agency¹ is desperate to secure an account with luxury automobile firm Jaguar. In the office, male creative executives brainstorm tag lines likening the car to a man’s mistress. Meanwhile, in a restaurant, account executives Pete Campbell and Ken Cosgrove try to woo Herb Rennet, the portly head of the Dealer’s Association, into supporting the agency’s bid (5.11).

During an earlier office tour, Herb had noticed office manager Joan Harris, whose red hair and curvaceous figure typically draw more attention than her skills and intelligence. Herb makes it clear to Ken and Pete that he will help them get Jaguar only if they arrange for him to spend a night with Joan.

‘You’re talking about prostitution’, Joan exclaims when Pete suggests the idea to her.

‘I’m talking’, Pete says, ‘about business at a very high level’.

Although prostituting Joan is one of the most obvious examples of how violence against women functions in relation to business on *Mad Men*, it is hardly the only one. Physical force is rare, but women are exploited in numerous ways in the interest of corporate competition and money-making. This becomes particularly clear if we expand our definition of ‘violence’ to include its etymological kin, ‘violate’. As the *Oxford English Dictionary* says, the most common definition of ‘violence’ is ‘The deliberate exercise of physical force against a person, property, etc.; physically violent behaviour or treatment’. However, it can also mean ‘Violation or breach *of* something’ (s.v. ‘Violence’, italics original). Violate, meanwhile, is not only ‘To rape

or sexually assault (a person, esp. a woman)' but 'To interfere with (another's property) by taking or using it as one's own; to appropriate'. And, importantly, 'To treat (a person, a person's feelings, etc.) with contempt or disrespect; to offend, affront. Also: to use or treat inappropriately or without due regard' (s.v. 'Violate'). Viewed this way, violation is a form of violence. On *Mad Men*, violence against women in the form of violation occurs regularly, demonstrating that scholars must expand their definition to understand the spectrum of violence against women on television and in the workplace.

We use 'symbolic violence', articulated by Pierre Bourdieu, paired with Rosabeth Moss Kanter's framework of corporate work roles, as heuristic lenses through which to examine *Mad Men*'s representation of women in corporate culture. Like the *OED* etymology, Bourdieu invites us to consider violence beyond its physical manifestations, as a set of social relations that confer power or capital on a dominant group through exploitation or manipulation. Bourdieu argues that symbolic violence occurs when women are denied their subjectivity within a market of symbolic capital that makes them objects of exchange: 'symbols whose meaning is constituted outside of them and whose function is to contribute to the perpetuation or expansion of the symbolic capital held by men' (Bourdieu 2001, 43). Kanter (1977) contends that women in corporate culture are assigned roles that reinforce masculine power, with "'masculine'" and "'feminine'" images embedded' in roles that are 'inherent neither in the nature of ... tasks themselves nor in the characteristics of men and women' (5). Arguably a manifestation of symbolic violence, these roles reify male-centered perspectives, inviting violation of women. When viewed through these paired theories, the narrative arcs of female characters illustrate how women's labour, appearance, social position, sexuality, or material property are appropriated and exchanged for male gain in the workplace. Linking gender, status, capital, power, and social practice,

Bourdieu's notion of symbolic violence and Kanter's framework of corporate work roles illuminate how hegemonically naturalised forms of violence subjugate women. Although rarely physically assaulted, the women of *Mad Men* are victims of routine violence. Nevertheless, unlike shows that uncritically reinforce violence and traditional gender roles, *Mad Men* critiques the hegemony it depicts. Our goal, thus, is not to uncover hegemonic representations; rather, it is to use critical theory to offer a deeper understanding of ways the show illuminates subtler forms of gender violence in relation to business.

Bourdieu's Symbolic Violence

Bourdieu's work on symbolic violence articulates the presence of invisible structures that guide individual behaviours, prioritising power in social relations. Symbolic violence occurs when overt domination would be unacceptable. It takes the form of gifts, loyalty, promised protection, loans, gratification, or 'enchanted relationships'—seemingly benign, often consensual practices that undermine the authority or subjectivity of the oppressed party, creating a deficit in legitimacy. Euphemistically overpowering or exploiting another, it serves the same structural function as physical violence—sometimes operating in tandem with it—although more insidiously because it is socially sanctioned, requiring 'a collective denial of the economic reality of the exchange [that] is only possible because ... there is neither deceiver nor deceived' (Bourdieu 1977, 196).

Kanter's Corporate Work Roles

Unlike Bourdieu's theory, Kanter's work is based on a social scientific study done in a large corporation not long after the time *Mad Men* depicts. Kanter (1977) argues that 'women populate organisations, but they practically never run them' (16). Her research found that managers were almost always male, a role imbued with a 'masculine ethic', because men were seen as naturally

‘tough-minded’ and analytical, with ‘cognitive superiority in problem-solving and decision-making’ (22). Seen as more emotional, women were relegated to auxiliary (usually secretarial) roles, where their relationship with male bosses was ‘patrimonial’ (73).

Besides the Secretary, Kanter (1977) identifies two other female roles: the Corporate Wife, whose job was to provide a sign of ‘stability and maturity’ (104) for her husband, appearing at corporate dinners and social occasions while sacrificing her own ambitions, and the Token High-Level Woman, who served as a symbol of ‘how-women-can-do, stand-ins for all women,’ at once highly visible and a lonely outsider (207).

Erika Engstrom (2014) notes that Kanter ‘provides a framework for exploring the depiction of women in the business setting as envisioned on *Mad Men*’ (15). We build on her work, using the business roles ascribed to women in the show’s narrative structure to examine different forms of symbolic violence. To move beyond individual personalities, we focus on pairs of women in Kanter’s roles, analysing how prescribed roles enable women’s autonomy to be violated for corporate gain. Specifically, we pair Peggy and Joan, who both start as the Secretary and become the Token High-Level Woman; Betty and Trudy as the Corporate Wife; and Rachel and Bobbie, whose attempts to take the role of Token High-Level Woman a step further—actually subverting male dominance—are ultimately dangerous. Applying Bourdieu’s theory of symbolic violence to each pair, we see how violence/violation functions in relation to each role.

Joan and Peggy

Although both Joan and Peggy end up as the Token High-Level Woman, they begin as the Secretary, with Joan as head secretary/office manager and Peggy the new hire. As secretaries, they are expected to sublimate their needs and desires, personal and professional, to those of

male bosses. This begins with their bodies. As Joan tells Peggy on her first day, she should not only think about her 'darling little ankles' and how to 'make them sing' but go home, take her clothes off, put a bag over her head with eyeholes cut out and evaluate her body. Helping Peggy secure birth control from her own gynecologist (who warns Peggy not to be a 'strumpet'), Joan stresses that a secretary must anticipate her boss's needs and be prepared to meet them (1.1. 'Smoke Gets in Your Eyes'). The interchange illustrates how the Secretary is situated. Her authority, subjectivity, and creativity undermined by the job's gendered structure, she is promised both her male boss's protection and potential release from the role through marriage to him or another businessman. In this sense she functions as an Office Wife, a term coined in the early twentieth century (Kanter 1977, 89-91; Marcellus 2011, 72-74) to describe the 'corporate domesticity' (Kwolek-Folland 1994, 118) of the boss-secretary relationship. Like Kanter's Corporate Wife, an Office Wife was expected to be what Marjorie Davies calls a male boss's 'loyal extension' (1982, 155), exhibiting what Kanter calls 'fealty' (84). Thus, the Office Wife role can be seen as training for the Corporate Wife role. As Joan tells Peggy, if she makes the 'right moves,' she eventually will be married and won't have to work at all (1.1). Because the role of Secretary empowers men, women's creativity and needs are never part of the equation.

Early in the series, Joan sees attracting men as a form of empowerment and uses her body to do so. Joan's views are similar to that of *Cosmopolitan* magazine editor Helen Gurley Brown (Ouellette 1999; Scanlon 2009), who urged women to 'make the most of their feminine assets in order to achieve financial and professional security' (Lucht 2014, 71-72). As Brown (1964) writes in *Sex and the Office*, 'By being a deliciously successful career girl you can collect fabulous men as lovers and friends', explaining how one 'tycooness' did so (59). Joan seems to have followed this advice. She has an affair with agency owner Roger Sterling and until she is

promoted to Token High-Level Woman in season five—a promotion she negotiates in exchange for sex with Herb Rennet in the episode that leads this chapter—she functions as a kind of über-Secretary, prescribing and policing other secretaries' behaviour. For example, when Peggy approaches Joan for advice on how to be taken seriously, Joan tells Peggy to 'stop dressing like a little girl' (2.6 'Maidenform'). The episode ends with Peggy sitting on a client's lap at a strip club, earning her entrance to the literal and figurative 'men's club' in the only way possible. The scene illustrates the requirement that women allow themselves to be objectified if they hope to succeed, though 'success' is male-defined.

Both Joan and Peggy bear the consequences for the power imbalance and implicit sexuality embedded in the Secretary role. On the evening of Peggy's first day on the job, Pete Campbell comes to her apartment seeking sex (1.1). Although she consents, she has little choice. This type of submission, Bourdieu argues, could be described as 'both spontaneous and extorted' and can only be understood if one takes into account the social order (Bourdieu 2001, 38). If Peggy refused, Pete could—and likely would—have retaliated, costing her the job. In a world where the term 'sexual harassment' had not been coined, Peggy is violated in the most personal way as a result of her work role, becoming pregnant.² In season two, Joan is raped. One of the few acts of overt physical violence against women on *Mad Men*, the rape occurs when she brings Greg, her new fiancé, to the office. After the other staff leave, he forces himself on her in Don Draper's office. The location is no accident. 'Pretend I'm your boss', he tells her, pinning her to the floor despite her protests. Although there is nothing sexual between Don and Joan, Greg correctly identifies Don as the office's sexual alpha male. In response, he marks his territory in an act of masculine hegemony that has everything to do with Joan's role in 'corporate domesticity' (2.12 'The Mountain King').

Joan is objectified throughout the series. Although she is essential—her office is literally in the middle of the agency—her labour and sexuality are in the hands of male executives. Her feminist consciousness is gradually raised as she realises ‘Cosmo Girl’ power is not real power. Her shifting awareness is clear when Joey, a junior copy writer, displays a pornographic cartoon of her having sex with Lane Pryce, paradoxically one of the few men who value her professionally. Yet it is Peggy, not Joan, who complains to Don. ‘Boys will be boys’ he replies, then tells Peggy to fire him. When she does so, Joan is angry. ‘No matter how powerful we get around here’, Joan says, ‘they can still just draw a cartoon. So all you've done is prove to them that I'm a meaningless secretary, and you're another humorless bitch’ (4.8 ‘The Summer Man’). Whatever women do, they are disempowered by a gendered structure that reinforces symbolic violence.

Both Joan and Peggy move from Secretary to Token High-Level Woman. Peggy does so first, when Don promotes her to junior copy writer, though the change does not ensure respect. Brought in whenever an account needs a ‘girl’s’ perspective, she is otherwise marginalised. The men violate her in multiple ways. After ridiculing her body throughout her unacknowledged pregnancy with Pete’s baby, they assume she was promoted because the baby is Don’s, not because she has talent. Negotiating for the Playtex account, they ask what kind of bra she wears, as if her body is agency property (2.6). When they seek an Ann-Margret lookalike to star in a diet cola commercial, her insights are silenced when she suggests feminine, rather than masculine, fantasies might be better suited to advertise a product for women. Don paternalistically explains the rules: Men want to look *at* the model, while women want to look *like* the model (3.2 ‘Love Among the Ruins’). Peggy suffers other indignities at the hands of Don, who refuses to give her a raise and literally throws money in her face after she proposes an

ad be shot in Paris and assumes she will oversee it. ‘You want to go to Paris? Here, go to Paris!’ he yells. Don’s eruption represents the darker threat of physical violence that manifests when corporate women assert themselves outside the bounds of masculine authority—a point that will become clearer in the discussion about Rachel and Bobbie. Pushed to her limit by these behaviours, Peggy finds a better job at another agency (5.11).

Joan’s considerable behind-the-scenes power is tied to her objectification. She gets little credit for her work—a common problem for the Secretary at a time when job ads were legally segregated and, as Scanlon (2009) writes, “‘secretary’ actually encompassed many different job titles and many different job descriptions’ (126). After Joan becomes partner and assumes the role of Token High-Level Woman, she is marginalised just as much, if not more, since the men are threatened by her professional role. They already have, after all, a token in Peggy. When Joan brings in Avon, creative supervisor Ted Chaough assigns the account to Pete (6.10 ‘A Tale of Two Cities’). Losing her status when the agency is taken over by McCann Erickson, Joan finds herself again valued only for her body when Dennis, assigned to oversee her accounts (a humiliation the men do not have to endure), fumbles a phone meeting and makes sexual innuendoes. Her consciousness raised by this time, she complains to agency head Jim Hobart. ‘I wonder how many women around here would like to speak to a lawyer’, she says, referencing Betty Friedan and the burgeoning liberal feminist movement. Finally taking a feminist stand, she is fired (7.12 ‘Lost Horizon’). Again, workplace structure denies her legitimacy: Tokens appear powerful, but only as long as they enforce male dominance.

Throughout the series, symbolic violence perpetrated against women takes multiple forms. Joan is repeatedly violated sexually—her body objectified and traded like currency among men in the corporate environment—while Peggy is frequently silenced, her subjectivity

constrained through the denial of her voice. Heterosexual male fantasies are reproduced, with women serving as the objects of men's imaginative pleasure.

Betty and Trudy

Mad Men further illustrates male appropriation of women's labour and sexuality through its depiction of the Corporate Wife, best exemplified by Betty Draper and Trudy Campbell. Polished and educated, each serves as an accomplice to her husband's career ambitions, using beauty, grace, and social connections to secure accounts, facilitate office relationships, and enhance his image (while, of course, ensuring paternal heredity by bearing his children). Whether adorning her husband's arm or bringing allies together at a dinner party, the Corporate Wife's job is to increase her husband's social and symbolic capital, her only reward being his success. Both Betty and Trudy are exceedingly competent in this role, though they are taken for granted.

With her education, taste, and beauty, Betty is a social asset to Don and to second husband Henry Francis. When it suits him, Don reminds Betty of her important role as 'the glamorous Betty Draper' who accompanies him to galas (3.10 'The Color Blue'); hosts dinner parties (2.8 'A Night to Remember'); and woos and soothes clients at home and abroad (2.3 'The Benefactor', and 3.8 'Souvenir'). Indeed, Don needs Betty to keep up the false identity that is so profitable for him—a point not lost on Betty's father, Gene, who lets it be known that he sees Don's disregard for Betty: 'Nobody has what you have. You act like it's nothing. My daughter's a princess, you know that?' (2.10 'The Inheritance').

This father-daughter dynamic is echoed in Trudy's storyline, since her father's position helps Pete secure the Vick Chemical account. Unlike Don, Pete comes from 'old money', although his name is primarily a source of social rather than monetary capital, and it is Trudy's

‘nouveaux riche’ parents who help the couple financially. Emulating Don’s dysfunction, Pete steps out on his marriage, showing blatant disregard for Trudy. They maintain appearances until Pete’s infidelities literally show up on their doorstep. After Pete’s tryst with a neighbor, the woman’s husband finds out and beats her. She flees to the Campbells’, where it is Trudy, not Pete, who tends to her injuries and insists Pete drive her to a hotel rather than home to her abuser (6.3 ‘The Collaborators’).

The sight of a physically battered woman presents a concrete portrayal of the symbolic violence that female characters suffer on *Mad Men*. It also provides Trudy the evidence she needs to leave Pete. Shortly after, he learns the professional cost of his actions when Trudy’s father pulls the Vick account after seeing Pete in a brothel—though of course they’re there for the same purpose (6.6 ‘For Immediate Release’). Pete has lost a crucial social and financial partner in Trudy, whom he treats like a prop in his performance of masculinity. Eventually, Pete does process the personal cost of losing his marriage. In their last scene of the series, they disembark from a private jet to start a new life in Wichita, Kansas, where Pete has procured a coveted job at Lear Jet and Trudy will again play the role of Corporate Wife—though presumably with her eyes open (7.13 ‘The Milk and Honey Route’).

While Betty and Trudy occupy positions of privilege and affluence, the strain of maintaining the illusion of matrimonial harmony manifests on their bodies. Early in the series, Betty develops a nervous tremor that leads her to psychoanalysis (1.2 ‘Ladies’ Room’), while Trudy has difficulty conceiving a child (2.10). Betty’s figure demands she forgo meals, often in favor of cigarettes, ultimately costing her life when, at series’ end, she contracts lung cancer. Her food restriction is made explicit when Don spontaneously invites Roger Sterling to dinner and Betty is forced to nibble at salad so Roger can enjoy the steak that should have been hers.

Significantly, it is in the kitchen—the site of Betty’s deprivation and labour—that Roger makes a pass at Betty, apparently testing how securely Don’s assets are controlled (1.7 ‘Red in the Face’). Betty rejects Roger but Don yells at her anyway, blaming her for his boss’s aggression. The verbal battering leads Betty to make a connection between symbolic and physical violence: ‘Do you want to bounce me off the walls? Would that make you feel better?’ The scene illustrates the double bind of the Corporate Wife, who must present her body as ‘at once offered and refused’ in order to add ‘the price of exclusivity to the effect of “conspicuous consumption”’ crucial to her husband’s masculine credibility (Bourdieu 2001, 29-30).

A Corporate Wife’s allure adds to her husband’s symbolic capital in the eyes of his male colleagues. While wives are *seen*, they are scarcely *considered*. Their sexuality does not belong to them; it belongs to their husbands. For example, when Pete wants to get a short story published to compete with his office nemesis Ken Cosgrove, he asks Trudy to approach a former beau who works in publishing (1.5 ‘5G’). Trudy dutifully arranges the meeting, where she has to refuse her ex-boyfriend’s advances, and gets her husband’s story accepted to *Boys’ Life*. She is hurt when Pete views this publication as a failure. ‘I could have gotten you in *The New Yorker* or in the Encyclopedia Britannica if I wanted to’, she retorts. Pete responds coldly: ‘So—why didn’t you?’ In horror, Trudy realises his implication. ‘Why would you do that to me? Why would you put me in that position?’ This episode illustrates another way patriarchy uses ‘the legitimate circulation of legitimate women’ (Bourdieu 2001, 44) as a symbolic exchange that benefits men.

Rachel and Bobbie

Rachel Menken and Bobbie Barrett occupy unique positions on *Mad Men*. Involved sexually (though at different times) with Don Draper during his marriage to Betty, they not only play the role of the adulterous ‘other woman’, but are made ‘Other’ in ‘a system that has

historically asked [women] to choose between work or sex, creating internal conflict' (Marcellus 2014 , 125). Along with Don's other 'other women', Midge Daniels and Suzanne Farrell, they are 'Other' not only because they partake in extramarital affairs, but because they refuse to be defined by society's prescriptions ... negotiating sexuality and independence in a world where they are expected to choose between the two' (Marcellus 2014, 134). Although neither is a Token High-Level Woman, they seek to claim their *own* power rather than shoring up men's, a move that proves dangerous for both.

Just as Joan's and Peggy's roles are structured by their initial role as the Secretary and later as Tokens, and just as Betty and Trudy are Corporate Wives, Rachel and Bobbie play roles structured by symbolic violence. Unlike Midge, an artist, and Suzanne, a teacher—both of whom construct their lives outside corporate culture—Rachel and Bobbie operate in a male-dominated world where they must struggle between their own desires and their ability to wield power in a culture that defines it (Kanter's 'masculine ethic'). Business power is seen as masculine, Rachel and Bobbie are women, and therein lies the tension. Token High-Level Women in the sense that they are among the few women in managerial roles (Rachel manages her family's department store and Bobbie manages her husband's media career), they are both 'highly visible' and 'lonely outsiders' (Kanter 1977, 207). Yet unlike Kanter's Token, Rachel and Bobbie truly *challenge* masculine hegemony. This is unusual. As Daly (1978) writes, men in power typically 'choose their token women to represent the 'female half of the species' in the territories of male prerogative' so they are 'tokenized, cosmeticized, and most identified with male purposes' (335). Although they share some characteristics with the traditional Token, Bobbie and Rachel seek *genuine* power in business. Bucking male domination, they suffer the consequences.

Women like Bobbie and Rachel have historically been reviled. In the 1920s, when more women entered the workplace, popular magazines ran headlines such as ‘I Won’t Work for a Woman! Woman Does *Not* Like Her Sister as a Boss’ (Rollins 1924, 43). In 1962, *The Nation* decried the persistence of ‘career woman’ stereotypes, blaming a ‘cultural lag’ for the argument that career women ‘steam-roll’ men, dislike other women, and neglect their families (Merriam 1962, 564). Given long-held antagonism, it is not surprising that violence against women like Bobbie and Rachel would be more vehement than the relatively covert violation of the Secretary, the typical Token, and the Corporate Wife. ‘Enchanted relationships’ and other consensual practices that Bourdieu articulated are ineffective here. Whereas the traditional Token’s power is undermined when she attempts to equal the men’s contributions, the woman who seeks autonomous business power *beyond* tokenism finds herself in true danger.

Rachel’s independence is apparent from the outset. Seeking a forward-thinking agency to create ads for her family’s department store, she makes an appointment at Sterling Cooper, where she is treated with contempt as a woman and a Jew. Don stumbles when he mistakes the low-level male employee brought in to have another Jew in the meeting for the client. (‘You were expecting me to be a man. My father was, too’, Rachel notes coolly.) When she objects to suggestions for the store’s campaign, Don storms out, shouting, ‘You’re way out of line here. I’m not going to let a woman talk to me like that!’ Anticipating the respect afforded any client, Rachel is particularly offended when the creative executives suggest coupons, an unimaginative approach that would reify gender and ethnic stereotypes. She is offended again when Don, who has invited her for drinks to apologise, asks why she is not married. ‘Are you asking what’s wrong with me? If I weren’t a woman, I wouldn’t have to choose between putting on an apron

and the thrill of making my father's store what I think it should be' (1.1). Rachel's independence is incomprehensible to Don. As a store owner, Rachel is not the Secretary, and she has no aspirations to become the Corporate Wife. She is a Token, yet she does not see her value in the male-centered corporate structure that undermines women's creativity. As she says, working in her family business is a 'thrill'—literally in her blood. She thus positions herself outside corporate work roles in a direct challenge to masculine dominance.

Don grows to respect Rachel and then to fall in love with her. When he suggests they run away together after Betty learns his identity, Rachel rejects him, horrified that he would leave his family. They meet again when he is in a bar with Bobbie and she is there with her husband (2.5 'The New Girl'). In the final season, Don learns that Rachel has died of leukemia. When he drops by to pay his respects, Rachel's sister tells him she 'lived the life she wanted to live. She had everything' (7.8 'Severance'). Her statement is ironic. Although we never learn about Rachel's continued work in the department store or whether she became a Corporate Wife, the implication is that she has compromised at least some of her independence to conform to expected roles. That she dies of a type of cancer formed in the blood and bone marrow suggests symbolically that she no longer felt that 'thrill' in her bones. In the prevailing business and social structure, there is no place for women like Rachel. Intriguingly, while Betty learns she has cancer at the very moment she is reclaiming her power by returning to school, Rachel dies, also of cancer, after apparently sublimating hers. With their mirrored experiences, Rachel is 'other woman' to Betty in more ways than one.

That Don encounters Rachel while he is in a bar with Bobbie is paradoxical, for the women are both alike and different. As noted above, each seeks to transcend the traditional Token role to claim actual power. Yet while Rachel's power is inspired by her desire to combine

love for her family and love for business, the loveless Bobbie uses hers to promote the sardonic wit of her obnoxious husband, comedian Jimmy Barrett. She is thus a perversion of the Corporate Wife, whose role Kanter (1977) describes as traditionally discreet, serving as gracious hostess when need be and yet remaining 'on the other side of the door' to the business (104). Bobbie is neither discreet nor gracious, and she does not stand outside any man's door. Once they become sexually involved, Don comes back to his office to find she has literally let herself in. Although Bobbie is ultimately violated, she also violates, as if playing out the role suggested by 1920s magazine stereotypes.

Besides the rape of Joan in Don's office and the domestic violence waged against Pete's neighbor, one of the few women treated with overt violence is Bobbie. Her husband, hired to star in an ad for Utz chips, compares the client's obese wife to the Hindenburg and a buffalo. Seeking to apologise and secure the account, Don arranges a dinner with the client and the Barretts. Betty is there, playing the Corporate Wife, though she becomes Jimmy's prey, too, when he flirts with her. Knowing that Bobbie can make Jimmy apologise, Don urges her to do so. She refuses, and in a scene outside the ladies' room, he shoves her against a piece of furniture, pulls her hair, and reaches under her skirt in a way that is clearly a sexual violation. Subdued, she gets Jimmy to apologise (2.3).

The scene is disturbing. As Maureen Ryan (2008) writes in the *Chicago Tribune*, 'His action solved several problems for him: It made Bobbie back down and toe the line, it produced Jimmy Barrett's apology to important Sterling Cooper clients, and thus it prevented Don and other Sterling Cooper employees from getting into serious hot water with their bosses'. That is true, and because Bobbie is incorrigible, it is tempting to applaud. Yet this is overt sexual violence. That it might be applauded stems from misogynistic attitudes toward women who seek

power outside Kanter's 'masculine ethic'. Although Rachel also seeks power outside that structure, she is more conflicted. For example, she resists the affair with Don until she gives in to her attraction and burgeoning love for him. Bobbie instigates the affair to gain the upper hand and then uses her power manipulatively.

That said, Bobbie is a complex character. When Peggy, now a junior copy writer but still calling Don 'Mr. Draper', takes Bobbie into her apartment to recuperate after Bobbie and Don wreck his car, Bobbie seeks to mentor her. Rebutting Peggy's claim that she is loyal to 'Mr. Draper' because he made her a copy writer, Bobbie objects: 'I'll bet you made yourself a copy writer'. She offers advice: 'You're never going to get that corner office until you start treating Don as an equal. And no one will tell you this, but you can't be a man. Don't even try. Be a woman. Powerful business when done correctly' (2.5). Business power and femininity are not opposite for Bobbie. Nor are they for Rachel, but while Rachel's drive for autonomous business power is grounded in her sense of family, Bobbie seeks power for its own sake. In the end, she pays the price. One afternoon in bed, she tells Don that she has been bragging about his sexual prowess. Angered by her sardonic attitude, he ties her to the bed, a move she confuses with sadomasochistic role-playing. 'I want the full Don Draper treatment', she says (2.6). He, however, leaves her there—bound and laid bare, a reassertion of masculine hegemony.

Conclusion

Offering a window into corporate and domestic life just before Women's Liberation, *Mad Men* shows how overt—but more often covert—forms of violence systematically work to undermine and marginalise women, helping viewers understand both the period in question and the revolution beginning to brew. As Haralovich (2011) notes, *Mad Men's* female characters 'exhibit moments of solidarity as women, although not with the feminist consciousness characteristic of

the Second Wave' (161). By series' end they *are* conscious, articulating their needs for equity and respect, with varying consequences.

By illuminating symbolic violence and establishing the historical need for feminist activism, *Mad Men* demonstrates the relationship between the material world of the corporation and symbolic forms of violence and oppression. By expanding our definition of violence to include violation, we contend that even in situations where women are not battered or raped, deep damage is done to their autonomy and sense of self-worth. Such violence is not necessarily planned. As Bourdieu (2001) argues, symbolic violence does not happen at a conscious level, but rather makes up a pattern of reflexive discriminatory acts, such as excluding women, focusing only on their appearance, treating them less formally than men, or 'reducing their demands to whims that can be answered with a mollifying word or a tap on the cheek' (59). As Kanter shows, roles created within workplace structure make such acts natural, expected, and difficult to avoid. Moreover, this structure naturalises more overt forms of violence, such as prostituting Joan, and makes the violation of women who try to work outside prescribed roles appear acceptable. Violation of and violence against women not only empowers men but constructs masculinity in relation to business so that women cannot construct autonomous selves. Those who try pay the price, sometimes with their lives.

Notes

¹ The agency is known at various times as 'Sterling Cooper', 'Sterling Cooper Draper Pryce', and Sterling Cooper & Partners.' We use 'Sterling Cooper' for simplicity.

² The earliest use of 'sexual harassment' in the OED is from 1971 (s.v. 'Sexual harassment').

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