

Memories by *Mad Men*:
Cultural Memory, Television, and early 1960s Domesticity

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A Major Research Paper/Project
Submitted to the Department of Communication Studies and Multimedia
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree
Master of Arts
in Communication and New Media

McMaster University

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Abstract

Memories by Mad Men: Cultural Memory, Television, and early 1960s Domesticity, is an interdisciplinary, major research project that examines how the AMC television series *Mad Men*, uses the early 1960s domesticity as a framework within the created world of the program. The paper then offers a close reading and critical analysis of *Mad Men's* use of television references within seasons one through four that address issues of early 1960s domesticity through the theories of cultural memory, specifically focusing on the works of Marita Sturken, Astrid Erll, Alison Landsberg, Nicola King, Svetlana Boym, and Fred Davis. This paper will conclude by reflecting upon how the role of television within *Mad Men's* representation of early 1960s domesticity itself offers a metacommentary on television.

Keywords: Mad Men, Cultural Memory, Early 1960s Domesticity, Television, Memory Studies, Nostalgia, Prosthetic Memory, Metacommentary,

Acknowledgments

First of all, I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Christina Baade, for all her guidance and support. She has offered a great deal of encouragement, and ability to find my own voice during the MRP process. Had it not been for her supervision, her ability to push me out of my comfort zone, and her incredibly detailed editing, this paper would not achieve all that it does.

Secondly, I would like to thank my family for all their love and support. I would like to thank my sister Mackensey, for suggesting that I watch *Mad Men*, as it was the spark of inspiration I needed to write this paper. I would like to thank my Mom, for her tireless support in all my academic endeavors; she has an amazing ability to help me focus and regroup my thoughts when I am struggling with the writing process. I would like to thank my sister Sierra, and my brother Brett for both keeping it real, and making me laugh when I needed it most.

Finally, I would like to thank my husband Martin, for his strength and support, his love and understanding, and his ability to sleep every night with the lights on. You are my champion and my strongest supporter. Words cannot describe how important you are to me, and how much I need you.

This paper is dedicated to the memory of Michael Brian Bacon.

“Nothing is ever really lost to us as long as we remember It.” - L.M. Montgomery

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INTRODUCTION

Television is a major source of diversion for many. Viewers watch the news, their favorite series, talk shows and other programs. Most television shows are just entertainment, guilty pleasures that offer a means to relax or engage. Some programs, however, capture and express the ideas and beliefs of their times. Such programming affects our language, breaks taboos, and creates new trends, impacting and shaping our culture. AMC's *Mad Men* is one of these shows.

Debuting in 2007, *Mad Men* happened just at the right moment to captivate and resonate with the world. In its first four seasons the show has garnered wide critical acclaim and an unexpected amount of public attention for a series that airs on an American cable television specialty channel. Currently, *Mad Men* is syndicated in seventy-three countries across the globe, and its international reach is constantly growing. *Mad Men* has won four Golden Globes, fifteen Emmys, which includes an unprecedented four consecutive Outstanding Drama Series wins, and the George Foster Peabody Award for excellence in broadcasting. Not surprisingly, *Mad Men's* imprint is evident throughout contemporary culture, inspiring the advertising industry, magazine covers and feature articles, fashions and furniture designs (Edgerton, 2011, xxi-xxii).

This "*Mad Men* Effect" has been cited (I would say over-cited) in the press as the cause for any and all cultural shifts that hearken back to the past. From the revival of the word "secretary" in the workplace (Mielach 2012) to a 13.4 percent increase in whisky sales (Lubomirski 2011), commentators have blamed the *Mad Men* effect. Yet, although *Mad Men* is set in the early 1960s, a period that is generally viewed nostalgically, the series presents a

revisionist vision of this past. How does *Mad Men* affect our understanding and cultural memory of the time it represents?

As a society, we use the media to develop cultural memories of our history. Cultural memories are shared versions of the past that are consistently created by means of “medial externalization” (Erll 2008, 389). Astrid Erll writes, “Cultural memory is constituted by a host of different media, operating within various symbolic systems: religious texts, historical painting, historiography, television documentaries, monuments, and commemorative rituals” (Erll 2008, 389). Because cultural memory is produced through representations in contemporary culture, these representations can change and shape our memory over time.

Although it may evoke a sentimental response, *Mad Men* is not the past, nor should it be approached as an “accurate” depiction of the past. Rather, every historic or cultural reference is a strategic choice to further the narrative, and every representation of the time period helps shape the way that audiences understand this era. *Mad Men* thus offers a representation of 1960s life that would have been impossible in the days before HBO, FX and AMC. It shows us things that could not have been presented in the entertainment television of the 1960s, when television entertainment aimed to distract viewers and offered a chance to escape the realities of every day life. According to Robert Thompson, “We’d grown to expect prime time to act as a sorbet, clearing the palate of all that real world unpleasantness. If the news at eleven took us to Little Rock and Birmingham, prime time took us to Mayberry and Hooterville” (Thompson, 2011, xvii). *Mad Men* is a drama that presents a different vision of the 1960s, one that invites analysis of its implications and impacts on cultural memory of the period.

Mad Men’s complexity has interested scholars in media studies, philosophy, and cultural studies. Between 2010 and 2011, more than fifty essays and articles have been published about

the series, most of which focus on philosophical analysis, gender roles, racism, and cultural memory and nostalgia. Many articles discuss the series in the context of social and political issues of the 1960s (Edgerton, Stoddart), while others review the stylistic and production aspects of the program (Edgerton), or explore the sociological, psychological, and philosophical aspects of key characters (Newman, Carveth and South).

Scholars have overlooked two key aspects of *Mad Men*'s engagement with the past that interest me in this paper: its depiction of domesticity, and the ways the television functions in the series as a recurring theme and object, particularly in the home.¹ Although most of the show's action occurs in the office, it also tells the story of affluent young mothers in the suburbs, with lavish colonial homes kept immaculate by housekeepers, leaving them with little to do. As much as *Mad Men* tells the coming of age story of the advertising industry, it also treats as important the domestic spaces and family life of the 1950s and 1960s, which have been idealized as eras when domesticity was triumphant.

Television was an important part of 1960s domesticity. During the early 1960s, families invested greatly into their homes, buying items that would best showcase their home, such as luxury vehicles and televisions (Peruccio 2011, 65). It is for this reason that television is most often viewed as a 'quintessentially suburban medium' (Hollows 2008, 39). According to Stephanie Coontz, "By 1960, 87 percent of all households had a television, including 80 percent of rural households" (Coontz 2011, 65). This context contributed to the popular consensus that the early 1960s was television's "Golden Age."

¹ In "Learning to Live with Television in *Mad Men*," Horace Newcomb approached *Mad Men*'s use of television through a broad overview of key scenes of the series in which television is present. Newcomb's essay provides a useful foundation for more in depth examinations of the role of television within the show.

Given *Mad Men*'s historical setting, I suspected that televisions and archival television shows would play an important role in its representations of the past. To address *Mad Men*'s use of television, I began by conducting a comprehensive viewing of the series to identify all visual and spoken references to television that were made. During the first four seasons there were 183 separate references to television.² Because the show is set within an advertising agency, it might be assumed that most of the television references would involve the advertising industry, for the early 1960s witnessed the shift from print to an almost complete domination of television as an advertising medium. The references to television within the workplace, which often involved the production of commercials, were minimal, however. The vast majority of the references—135 in all—took place in domestic situations away from the office and the advertising industry.

Although, as I will discuss below, domestic televisions played a central role in the narrative in several instances, many more of the 135 domestic references to television were only passing glimpses. Such representations emphasize the degree to which the television was a ubiquitous object and to which viewing was a routine activity, both of which contributed to the show's verisimilitude for viewers.

My initial viewing of the series led me to the following research questions: RQ1. How does *Mad Men* address early 1960s domesticity? RQ2. How does *Mad Men* confront and use television in its domestic representations? RQ3. How do these representations shape, define or redefine our cultural memory of the time? RQ4. How do these representations resonate in today's culture? To address these questions, this paper will examine how *Mad Men* uses early 1960s domesticity as a framework. The paper then offers a close reading and critical analysis of

² References denote each specific time a television was visible on screen, was watched by characters (meaning that the glow of the television could be seen, but the television was not visible), or referred to by characters within the dialogue.

Mad Men's use of television references within seasons one through four³ that address issues of early 1960s domesticity through the theories of cultural memory, specifically focusing on the works of Marita Sturken, Astrid Erll, Alison Landsberg, Nicola King, Svetlana Boym, and Fred Davis. This paper will conclude by reflecting upon how the role of television within *Mad Men's* representation of early 1960s domesticity itself offers a metacommentary on television.

MAD MEN, THE SERIES

Created by the Emmy and Golden Globe-winning executive producer Matthew Weiner and produced by Lionsgate, *Mad Men* has riveted audiences for the past five seasons with its “authentic” depiction of the roles of men and women in this era while exploring the human emotions beneath the facade of 1960s traditional family values (AMC 2012). Set at the fictional Sterling Cooper/ Sterling Cooper Draper Pryce advertising agency on Madison Avenue in New York City, *Mad Men* revolves around the conflicted life of Don Draper (Jon Hamm), one of the leading advertising creative directors and a founding partner at Sterling Cooper Draper Pryce.

Don is a self-made, “natural” ad man, whose life is nothing more than a fabrication developed through a succession of secrets and lies (Weiner, and Hornbacher. 2007-). In every aspect of his character, Don is the quintessential 1950s/1960s ad man, value-driven and thoroughly masculine; he is also depicted as the product of a bygone era with flashbacks to the 1930s. He is both a brilliant career man and a relentless womanizer who paradoxically also wants to be a loving husband and family man. Don illustrates old-school values, despite the fact that he

³ It should be noted that although at this point in time *Mad Men's* fifth season has aired, this paper will only address references within the first four seasons, as it would be difficult to thoroughly analyze the fifth season at this time.

often fails to meet them himself. This makes Don permanently conflicted over how to reconcile his morals and his desires. It is his flaws that make him so fascinating to viewers. In fact, AskMen.com rated him as 2009's most influential man, beating the likes of Barack Obama, Mark Zuckerberg, and Steve Jobs (askmen.com 2009).

According to Weiner, a friend who while going through a divorce, worked in Manhattan in finance during 9/11 inspired the series. "Two or three days afterwards [9/11] I said: 'How's it going? What's New York like?' He said: 'What can I tell you? I'm still getting divorced.'" (Midgley 2010). *Mad Men* is about telling a story, about portraying how people live and worked during an epoch in transition (Miggelbrink 2012). Its strength lies in the details of "everyday life for regular people: divorce, marriage, love, beauty, and jealousy" (Walden 2012). As the series "mostly remains disconnected from the outside world, the politics and cultural trends of the time are illustrated through people and their lives, not broad, sweeping arguments" (Dehnart 2009). Therefore, it is the characters that showcase the turning points of their era through their daily life experiences. "Their feelings are captured in the midst of historical change" (Miggelbrink 2012). It is through their experiences that we get to be a part of this revolutionary time.

Mad Men has also been described as "science fiction -- but in the past," meaning that just as science fiction uses the future to discuss current issues, *Mad Men* uses the past to discuss issues that persist today but that we are "too polite" to discuss openly (Heidkamp 2007). Emphasizing themes of alienation, fear, social mobility, and ruthlessness, *Mad Men* depicts the American society and culture of the 1960s. The show holds nothing back in its representation of the incessant cigarette smoking, drinking, sexism, adultery, homophobia, and racism of the time. However, *Mad Men* also portrays a period during which major change was taking place, so even

in its darker moments, it conveys an optimistic sense that society will evolve and free the characters from the forces that restrain them.

David Marc views *Mad Men* as the continuation of Marshall McLuhan's "The Objective of Advertising." In 1951 McLuhan wrote, "Advertising is the manipulation, exploitation, and control of the individual" (McLuhan in Marc 2011, 235). Marc believes that by examining, through drama, the personal consequences of believing that the creative act can be devoid of moral consequences, *Mad Men* picks up where McLuhan left off (Marc 2011, 236). This is proven through the use of Don Draper as the embodiment of advertising. Over the course of the series Don is able to reinvent himself from Dick Whitman to the new and improved Don Draper. Because Don is the public image of Dick, his actions are without morals or regret because he sees no consequences for himself (Marc 2011, 234). Don Draper is both a criminal of petty social crimes and a man of mystery with a secret identity.

This revelation leads Marc to see *Mad Men* as a "complex hybrid drawing energy from multiple source: an oddball crime show primarily concerned with misdemeanors; a gothic medical sci-fi series in which a team of specialists are paid by corporations to experiment on the psyche of a nation; and an occult tale where, behind the mounds of data generated by taste test and focus groups, dark arts rule" (Marc 2011, 227-228). Marc's vision of *Mad Men* as a genetic hybrid helped inform this study's consideration of how the show offers a metacommentary on television, particularly in its role as a vehicle for cultural memory.

MAD MEN'S HISTORICAL CONTEXT: EARLY 1960s DOMESTICITY

Mad Men is not the first television show set in the early 1960s. Programs like *Happy Days* and *American Dreams* have portrayed the 1960s as an idealized time full of innocence,

change, beginnings, and hope. In reality, however, the period was full of challenges and limitations, particularly for women and racialized minorities (Taylor; Tudor). In the workplace, the word sexual harassment did not exist (Coontz 2010), company-account call girls were an acceptable business expense, and every office included a fully stocked bar (Bowden 2010). Pregnant women drank and smoked (Bowden 2010), and much of what we now call child abuse was considered a normal part of parental discipline (Coontz 2010). *Mad Men*'s highly stylized and provocative aesthetic captures both the gleaming images of an idealized time and brings to light all that we left in the shadows. It is for this reason that according to historian Stephanie Coontz, *Mad Men* is considered to be one of the most historically accurate television series ever produced, and offers an representation of women's lives that is so authentic it makes it hard for some women to watch (Coontz 2010). Therefore, to fully understand the world depicted in *Mad Men*, it is important to establish a historical context with which the show engages.

The Postwar Cult of Domesticity

During World War II many families were separated. Men were overseas, and women were left to work and increase wartime productivity. Women laboured in factories and on farms, filling in for all of the jobs that had been left vacant by the fighting men. They also ran the household where domestic duties were affected by having to manage the home without the support of a husband, and with the limitations of wartime ration stamps (Lewis 2007).

Towards the end of the war, studies and articles began to appear, informing women that soon they would return joyfully to homemaking. An article published in a shipyard newspaper shortly after V-E Day was entitled, "The Kitchen—Women's Big Post-War Goal." The article assured Americans that women really wanted to "put aside the welder's torch" and return it to the men (Skold 1980, 67). Magazines depicted women in work uniforms and tin hats rushing home

and changing into the “ruffled apron and high heels” that epitomized 1950s femininity (Skold 1980, 67). Many expected this portrayal to be accurate. As Irene Murphy, the secretary of the Detroit Day Care Committee, observed, Americans “cling to the fantasy that women can always be dispossessed of their jobs— that they don't need to work” (Anderson in Hunt 1999). The *Detroit News* suggested that Nature would teach women that their rightful place was indeed the home (Hunt, 1999).

As illustrated by Heather Hunt, these messages were intended to revitalize the previously held “Cult of Domesticity” which was rejected during the 1920s (Coontz 1996). The “Cult of Domesticity” was an ideology about the home that arose out of the newly formed attitudes about work and family among the upper, and newly formed early nineteenth century middle classes. Throughout the nineteenth, and into the early twentieth century, the “Cult of Domesticity” was held as the standard of womanhood, and included four characteristics that any proper young woman should cultivate: piety, purity, domesticity, and submissiveness. To ensure that women understood their new domestic roles, the “Cult of Domesticity” was heavily promoted in women's magazines, advice books, religious journals, newspapers, fiction, and many other areas of popular culture (Lavender 1998). Similarly, during the 1950s, the post-war messages regarding a women role in the home assured a revival of the “Cult of Domesticity” and its four cardinal virtues.

According to the “Cult of Domesticity,” religion belonged to woman by divine right. Therefore, religion or piety was the core of woman's virtue, and the source of her strength (Welter 1966, 152). “It was just what a woman needs, as without it she is ever restless or unhappy” (Welter 1966, 153). Whereas the 1940s saw a major decrease in religious participation, trend changed in the 1950s as religion made a big resurgence in America. In 1940, 64.5 million

Americans were church members; by 1960, the figure had jumped to 114.5 million. This rise was especially noticeable within the newly developed churches of the suburbs (May 2008, 29).

The second virtue was purity, which was considered to be as essential as piety to a young woman, for its absence was viewed as unnatural and unfeminine. A woman was expected to wait until marriage to become sexually active, as sex was considered a wifely duty and invented solely for procreation. Without sexual purity, a woman was no longer considered a woman (Lavender 1998). This led to unwed mothers having to leave town, give up their babies for adoption, and returned home as if nothing had happened (Coontz 1999). Otherwise they would be considered to have brought shame to their families and become disowned; an abortion was not a legal option although it was possible to receive one on the black market (The Birth of an Independent Woman 2009).

The third virtue, submissiveness is considered the most feminine of virtues. As Catherine Lavender explained, "Men were to be movers, and doers; the actors in life. Women were to be passive bystanders, submitting to fate, to duty, to God, and to men" (Lavender 1998). Even the clothing a woman was required to wear reinforced female submissiveness and passivity. The 1950s female figure was created by the foundation of lighter girdles, corselets, slips, conical bras, and garter belts underneath a tailored long slim dress or, combined with a crinoline (also referred to a petticoat or pettiskirt), underneath a Christian Dior's "New Look" dress. In a manner that recalled the Victorian corset, 1950s female fashion also limited physical mobility (Weston Thomas 2012).

The fourth and final virtue was domesticity. During the 1950s, there was an expectation that women would stay at home with the children while the man went to work. Before a (middle class) woman was married she was able to have a career as a teacher, nurse, airline stewardess or

secretary. Once married, however, a woman was expected to leave work, to do housework and raise children (The Birth of an Independent Woman 1999). Women who failed to conform to the June Cleaver/Margaret Anderson role of housewife and mother were severely criticized. The 1947 bestselling book, *Modern Woman: The Lost Sex*, called feminism a “deep illness,” labeled the idea of an independent woman a “contradiction in terms,” and explained that women who wanted equal pay and equal educational opportunities were engaged in a “ritualistic castration” of men (Lundberg, Ferdinand, and Farnham 1947, 143). The expected role of the “domestic goddess” was ubiquitous in popular culture, on television, in magazines, on the radio, and even in textbooks.

The “Cult of Domesticity” worked to keep gender roles distinct, a differentiation best explained by the traditional ideologies of public and private spheres. The private sphere was the home, which was designated as a woman’s responsibility. A woman’s role in marriage was to raise the children and maintain the household so that the husband could focus entirely on his role of economically supporting the family. The public sphere, which included the economy, higher education, and politics, was reserved for men because of the presumed functional nature of the male breadwinner/female caregiver family system (Slattery 2007).

During the 1950s and 1960s, marriage was an institution based on gendered roles and responsibilities. In this system, the gendered spheres were not just a social ideal but also a legal prescription: deviation from the male breadwinner and female housewife roles was not only discouraged but was punishable under the traditional system. Roles were not just gendered; they were also hierarchical, making men the legal representative of the family. This system of patriarchy resulted in women marrying younger, forgoing experiences in higher education and the labor force because of their irrelevance to home-making, and being stripped of any

individuality or ownership, even of self. Women were required by law to take their husband's last name, to be obedient to his wishes on where to live, and to submit entirely to his sexual desires (Slattery 2007, 10).

Once a woman was married, she was expected to accept and be happy within her roles as mother and housewife and focus all of her efforts into her family and home. This led women to view their homes and children as extensions or reflections of themselves, in the process becoming obsessively controlling of the domestic space. However, many women were simply not happy pouring all of their energy into housekeeping. And with the ever-present media messages claiming the satisfaction that came with a pristine home, the task of achieving this goal was impossible without the help of housekeepers. This frustration led to a widespread unhappiness of women that Betty Friedan called in her book, *The Feminine Mystique*, "the problem that has no name." This "problem" could be best described as a form of depression brought on by the lack of personal growth and engagement with the public sphere (Friedan 1963). In the early 1960s, however, the possibilities of addressing this issue were limited and mostly involved seeing psychiatrists, who were unhelpful and patronizing, or self medicating with alcohol or valium (commonly referred to as Mother's little helper).

Mad Men depicts this reality in the person of Betty Draper (January Jones). Betty embodies the quintessential dependent housewife, who is beautiful, stylish, and always at her husband's beck and call. Before marrying Don, Betty attended and graduated from college, and she worked as a model in Manhattan. However, like most women of the time, once married she gave up her career and independence to become Mrs. Don Draper, a mother of two living in the idyllic suburbs outside New York City. When first introduced to Betty viewers quickly learn that something is wrong: she suffers from "the problem that has no name." In the first season finally

of *Mad Men*, “The Wheel” (1:13), Betty states, “My mother wanted me to be beautiful so I could find a man. There's nothing wrong with that. But then what? Just sit and smoke and let it go 'til you're in a box?” (Weiner & Veith, 2007). As the series progresses, Betty becomes more and more frustrated with the severe social constraints, and the choices that are available to her, such as having an affair, divorcing Don, or marrying Henry Francis, do nothing to address or remedy her problems. Her character has been most criticized for the way she treats her children; however, according to Stephanie Coontz, “when Betty plops her children in front of the TV or slaps her daughter, it isn't part of a writer's effort to demonize her. It is an accurate reflection of 1960s parenting” (Coontz, 2010).

For most of the first three seasons, Sally (Kiernan Shipka), and Bobby (Jared Gilmore) are characters whose presence is centered in the family home, often watching television. In fact, one third of the television references noted involve the Draper children watching television. Within the Draper household, the television is a pervasive force, which is used as a system of reward and punishment (Newcomb 2011, 103). On many occasions, the children specifically request to “be excused” to go watch their favourite programming, such as *Shirley Temple Story Book*. On other occasions, Betty demands that they “go watch TV” as a way to remove them from adult conversations and situations in the home. The separation of the worlds of adults and children was a large part of parenting in the early 1960s; in this environment, the television offered many children an escaped in its comforting programming.

The Suburbs and the Television

In the late 1950s, upper- and middle-class families like the Drapers’ joined a mass exodus to settle in the suburbs. A suburb, by definition, “is a community within a metropolitan area outside the core city” (Peruccio 2011, 57). Young, married couples, often with children,

sought to create new lives away from perceived inner-city decay, constructing their own oases in the idyllic suburban areas. The young families grouped together created a bond that led to a set of shared suburban values, such as consumerism and materialism. These emerged out of the basic material needs of suburban households, in which the housewife played a crucial role: “the role of housewife required women to possess knowledge and skills in several fields including interior decorating, washing, dusting, sewing, and cooking” (Peruccio 2011, 65). Suburban living reinforced gendered consumerism, as it was women who were alone everyday in their homes and were expected to ensure that the domestic space was cared for and that the home exemplified the status of the family that lived in it.

In *Make Room for TV*, Lynn Spigel draws our attention to how television’s growth in the 1950s was connected to the mass construction of the suburbs. She argues that the television was conceived as a major appliance designed for the new space of the suburbs (Spigel 1992). Spigel’s study of the domestication of television in the United States in the 1950s demonstrates the relationship between the television and the new suburban domestic life. Media images of domestic culture of the 1950s repeatedly emphasized the value of family “togetherness” while the television was represented as a “new electronic hearth”, where families would gather as a unit (Spigel 1992). Magazine advertisements emphasized themes of suburban domesticity in which the television offered a happier home, with images featuring a mother and father sitting on the sofa (although in many of the advertisements the mother is standing serving beverages) and two children, a boy (always the eldest) and a girl, sitting on the carpet in front of the television watching family-oriented programming (Lenssen 2010). Advertising copy drove home “How TV Makes Home-Life Happier” with claims that “TV adds so much to *family happiness*,” that it “Brings family together!” and offers “*happiness* shared by *all the family!*” (Lenssen 2010). With

representations of the “family circle” gathered around the television set, the television became “domesticated through being imagined as a valued member of the household” (Spigel 1992, 37-40). It was these messages of domestic bliss that led to the astounding growth of television within the American home.

This process of domestication was not automatic, however. Whereas television viewing was represented as an ideal form of family leisure, it was also regarded as a threat to gender roles. With radio, women could listen while doing housework, but television’s visual demands threatened to distract women from their domestic roles as wives and mothers. Meanwhile, if women privileged their housekeeping over watching television in the evening, they would be unable to share in the experience of family togetherness around the television set (Hollows 2008, 99).

In addition, the arrival of television in many American homes offered an opportunity to renegotiate the relationship between public and private life. Although many critics argued that the increasing popularity of the television in the 1950s caused people to become home-centered and turn their backs on the public sphere, it was also represented as offering the possibility of erasing the distinction between the public and private (Spigel 1992). The television was the family’s window to the outside world that would imaginatively transport viewers across the globe (Spigel 1992). Living in the suburbs was akin to living in the wilderness, as their placement outside urban centers left residents with very few amenities or conveniences. By having a television, a family was able to connect to the events that were happening outside their community and keep in touch with popular culture. The ability of the television to connect and inform increased its value as a medium and cemented its place in the suburban home.

During the early 1960s, the television was considered central to the family unit because it brought families closer together and changed the way that information was received into the home. It was through the glow of a television that a new generation experienced the world, and its impact clearly defined the culture memory of the time. Given *Mad Men*'s attempts to portray the reality of 1960s domesticity, the television is thus a significant presence in the homes of its characters.

CULTURAL MEMORY

Through the use of the television as an object and as a vehicle for depicting key historical events, *Mad Men* draws upon, challenges, and reinforces the cultural memory of the early 1960s. By using real footage of actual events and historic programming, such as the White House tour, *Mad Men* gives viewers the opportunity to watch key historic events as they unfold, along with the characters' reactions. The audience thus experiences the historical narrative through the fictional narrative of the series; in essence, it is watching television on television. Theories of cultural memory, particularly concepts of the memory of "where we were," afterwardsness, nostalgia, collective nostalgia, and prosthetic memory, offer key insights into how the series depicts events from the past. I will provide an overview of key concepts in cultural memory and media before discussing scenes in the series where these concepts are at work.

The French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs is considered the founder of collective memory research (Neiger, Meyers, and Zandberg 2011, 3). Halbwachs identified the use of individual and collective memories as tools through which social groups established their centrality in individuals' lives. Collective memories are purposeful, and it is only through their ongoing usage over time that their importance can be seen. However, without public expressions of memory

such as rituals, ceremonial commemorations, and mass media texts, there can be no collective memory, thus making it an “inherently mediated phenomenon” (Neiger et al. 2011, 3). Many scholars, although accepting of the idea of a collective memory, take issue with Halbwach’s conclusion that there are in fact no purely individual memories (Lavenne, Renard, and Tollet 2005, 2). As a result, scholars have redefined collective memory through cultural memory. Cultural memory is based on communication through media. It is created through shared versions of the past that are consistently created by means of “medial externalization” (Erll 2008, 389). According to Erll, “Cultural memory is constituted by a host of different media, operating within various symbolic systems: religious texts, historical painting, historiography, television documentaries, monuments, and commemorative rituals” (Erll 2008, 389).

In her book, *Tangled Memories: the Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic, and the politics of remembering*, Marita Sturken explores what it means for a culture to remember, how American culture processes memory in ways that are bound to its political issues, and what that process reveals about conflicting agendas and divisions. Her definition of cultural memory is one that allows for the study of how popular culture produces memories and how these created memories move between cultural memory and history. It is the purposefulness with which ideas of culture are attached to these objects of memory that leads scholars to use the term “cultural” instead of “collective” (Sturken 1997, 3).

By examining the use of national memorials, photographic images, docudramas, Hollywood film, and television news accounts to make sense of the Vietnam War and AIDS epidemic, Sturken defines what and how we remember in order to understand how the acts of memory and forgetting form our cultural identity. Sturken’s point is not to prove whether our cultural memory might be true or false but rather "what its telling reveals about how the past

affects the present" (Sturken 1997, 2). "Cultural memory is produced through representation—in contemporary culture, often through photographic images, cinema and television" (Sturken 1997, 8). The camera image is a significant technology of memory, as camera images, regardless of their technical or narrative format, are central to the interpretation of the past. It has often been said that photographs embody memory (just think of all the popular songs that make reference to photographs and memory), and that cinematic representations of the past have the ability to become intertwined with our own memories. Therefore, "just as memory is often thought of as an image, it is also produced by and through images" (Sturken 1997, 11).

Erl's research into the mediality of cultural memory explores how certain fictional media can be characterized by their ability to shape the collective imagination of the past. Her key argument is that fictions possess the ability to create and shape "images of the past," which will be retained by whole generations. "Historical accuracy is not one of the concerns of such 'memory-making' novels and movies; instead, they cater to the public with what is variously termed "authenticity" or 'truth-fullness.' They create images of the past which resonate with cultural memory," she writes (Erl 2008, 389).

Mad Men as a fictional text has shaped our perception and cultural memory of the 1960s. It is through its use of period footage that the series has given a new generation the ability to view the past and the portrayed stories of the time. Before *Mad Men*, our cultural memory of the 1950s and 1960s was mostly created by movies and television re-runs that portrayed the two decades as very separate periods. We have come to remember the 1950s, through *Leave it to Beaver*, *I love Lucy*, or *Happy Days*, as a time and place where life was good and people were happy. As Andrea Press observes, "The white suburban sitcom genre of the late 1950s came to be identified (against much of the sociological evidence) with the majority collective American

identity in the 1950s. Some assert that the 1950s white middle-class television family has come to stand in as an icon for the 1950s decade in total” (Press 2009, 140). In contrast, the 1960s are remembered as a time of dramatic change, far removed from the static 1950s, embodied by the Kennedys, the Civil Rights Movement, the Vietnam War, and space exploration. What *Mad Men* has done is shown us that these two times were not so clear-cut. There was overlap, and the 1950s as we remember them actually continued into the 1960s. *Mad Men* shows us that the 1950s were also characterized by fear and that despite substantial wealth and opportunities, people were not necessarily happy.

Mad Men also adds to our cultural memory by depicting the narratives of a segment of people whose stories have been all but forgotten. Many of our cultural memories explore the larger stories of the time: the soldiers of the Vietnam War, the people who fought in the civil rights movements of the South, or the Hippies of Haight-Ashbury in San Francisco. *Mad Men*'s focus on the upper class advertising executives of New York's Madison Avenue is important as it tells the story of a very small group that impacted significantly on our way of life. Advertising in the early 1960s helped shape the all-encompassing media onslaught we now face everyday. With *Mad Men*, for the first time since *Bewitched*, viewers are given a look into the life of an advertising executive and a realistic depiction of what it would have been like to have lived in New York in the early 1960s. With this background on cultural memory, I will explore key aspects of the theory and then use them to examine representations of 1960s domesticity in *Mad Men*.

The memory of “where we were”

Because Americans are increasingly witnessing history through camera images, their memories have become less about the event, and more about the memory of “where we were”

when it happened (Sturken 1997). In many cases, “where we were” was in front of the television screen. Even recent psychological research has showed that people often misremember the moment when they first hear of a national catastrophe by reimagining themselves in front of a television set (Sturken 1997, 25-26). Interestingly enough, I remember the events of 9/11 based on where I was at the time: in front of a television. It is these experiences of watching “national” events that enables us, regardless of our vast differences, to situate ourselves as members of a national culture (Sturken 1997, 26).

Afterwardsness

Another way that an audience is able to connect and negotiate cultural memory is through the idea of afterwardsness (Nachtraglichkeit). Nicola King describes afterwardsness as a sense of knowing now what was not known in the past. Teresa Forde further argues, “A sense of afterwardsness can then work as an act of remembering; but it is a specific form of remembering that enables our own memories to become embedded within our response to historic dramas” (Forde 2011, 69). This specific form of memory thus allows for the responses of “we didn’t know that then but we do now” or “what would have happened if we had know that then?” It could even be a historic situation about which something is known but which becomes changed by the way in which it is remembered within a contemporary context (Forde 2011, 69). Television dramas like *Mad Men*, which depict the recent past, evoke a sense of afterwardsness in order to establish their emotional impact and a social context with which to engage the audience. It is through this sense that many viewers engage with *Mad Men* because it offers a chance to take pleasure in knowing what happens next while experiencing the past as it unfolds. The relationship between our understanding of the past and present is complex and ever changing based on our own (re)interpretations of events. It is only through the negotiation of

memories in afterwardsness or hindsight that we gain a better understanding of events and are able to properly evaluate their importance to our cultural memory.

Nostalgia

The popular press has argued that a much of the appeal of *Mad Men* lies in its use of nostalgia, a sensibility often perpetuated through television and commercial culture (Bowden 2010). As Don explained during in one pitch meeting, nostalgia fosters a “deeper bond with the product.” Nostalgia is a word that has its roots in the seventeenth century. Its origin is a combination of the Greek words *nóstos*, meaning to return home, and *álgos*, meaning longing (Davis 1979, 1). Over the last three hundred years its definition has changed. Morris Holbrook and Robert Schindler generally consider nostalgia to be “a preference (general liking, positive attitude, or favorable affect) toward objects (people, places, or things) that were more common (popular, fashionable, or widely circulated) when one was younger (in early adulthood, in adolescence, in childhood, or even before birth)” (Muehling and Sprott 2004, 26). This definition has been expanded upon by Stern who proposed that nostalgic thoughts may be generated from either a personally remembered past (personal nostalgia) or from a time in history before one was born (historical/communal nostalgia) (Muehling and Sprott 2004, 26).

Svetlana Boym advances this further by detailing two main types of nostalgia, restorative and reflective. Restorative nostalgia stresses the *nóstos* (home), and attempts to recreate the lost home. It does not situate itself as nostalgia, but rather as truth and tradition, and is at the core of recent national and religious revivals (Boym 2001, 13). “The rhetoric of restorative nostalgia is not about “the past” but rather about universal values, family, nature, homeland, and truth” (Boym 2001, 14). Reflective nostalgia thrives in *álgos*, the longing itself, and delays the homecoming. It dwells on the inconsistencies of human longing and belonging and does not shy

away from the “contradictions of modernity.” It explores ways of inhabiting many places at once and imagining different time periods. It can be ironic and humorous, as it reveals that longing and critical thinking are not opposed to one another (Boym 2001, 15). As Boym asserts, “The rhetoric of reflective nostalgia is about taking time out of time and about grasping the fleeing present” (Boym 2011, 14).

Collective Nostalgia

More recently nostalgia has been closely linked with “collective, social or cultural memory as a way of attempting to explain how memories are generated, altered, shared and legitimated within particular sociocultural environments” (Pickering and Keightley 2006, 922). Fred Davis argues, “The media has become our prime source and supplier of nostalgia” (Davis 1979, 135). He theorized that what we remember is not the old times, but, rather, the old songs, old television shows, old movies and old commercials. This type of experience has been defined as a type of collective nostalgia, an emotional state that can cross generations as it is a mediated experience. Diane Furno-Lamude, further argued that television reruns are a “great contributor of collective nostalgia” because they are “symbolic objects that are of a highly public, widely shared, and familiar character, that can trigger a nostalgic feeling in millions of people simultaneously” (Furno-Lamude 1994, 130). By watching television reruns the viewer gains a sense of traveling through time in one's own life and cultural history (Furno-Lamude 1994, 130).

Mad Men's nostalgic strength stems from its use of television reruns as a supplier of evocative memories. In almost every episode there is at least one scene in which Sally and Bobby are sitting in front of the television. In some of these scenes they are watching popular programs like *The Howdy Doody Show* or *Leave it to Beaver*. However, many of these references are of more obscure shows such as *Sky King* or *Shirley Temple Story Book*. This begs the

question of what purpose is served by referencing programming that no one would remember. By including a variety of reruns of varied durations, *Mad Men* conveys a more “authentic” sense of pastness era. It also creates a nostalgic image for audience members who may remember watching these programs—or, more commonly, it offers audience members the opportunity to explore these references and their significance in the history of television.

Prosthetic Memory

One of the most interesting aspects of *Mad Men*’s influence on cultural memory is hidden within the demographics of the show’s audience. One might think that a series like *Mad Men* would be of interest to those who lived during the period it depicts — to people who could watch the show and say, “Yes, that was exactly how it was” or “No, they got that wrong.” In reality, however, the show’s top viewing demographic has been affluent millennials (people born after 1980) (Stebner 2012). This raises questions about how an audience that was largely born around twenty years after the 1960s came to possess cultural memory of the period.

Alison Landsberg argues that memories may be implanted or constructed for audiences. Landsberg describes the way in which the mass media can formulate prosthetic memories, a form of media implanting or refunctioning of memory, which works to improve or even to improvise group identification and memory construction in relation to the past (Forde 2011, 67). Landsberg further argues that prosthetic memory enables spectators to internalize as memories the experiences viewed on screen through “emotional possession” (Landsberg 1995, 29). These viewed experiences have been suggested by Landsberg to be “be as formative and powerful as other life experiences” (Landsberg 1995, 30). Therefore, a prosthetic memory can become as much a part of a viewer as a viewer’s own memories can become part of the viewing experience. “Prosthetic memories are not necessarily from lived experience: ‘they circulate publicly’ so

audiences are ‘taking on memories that are not . . . one’s intended heritage,’” writes Forde (Forde 2011, 68). However, our ability to incorporate prosthetic memory is still fundamentally connected to the level of which our own memories, senses and emotions can allow for, or facilitate such a memory (Forde 2011, 69).

It is within prosthetic memory that *Mad Men* has its greatest strength. Thanks to mediation, everyone has had the ability to virtually experience every time period. Through movies and archival footage, viewers have been able to add their own memories of events of the 1960s; the audience’s enjoyment of the show’s subversive approach to cultural memory depends upon this knowledge of the period. It is also through prosthetic memory that *Mad Men* continues to reshape our cultural memory of the early 1960s, especially in the way in which we remember the domesticity of the time.

It is also through prosthetic memory that *Mad Men*’s depictions of domesticity could become something perilous. Given that prosthetic memories are solely created through narratives and that the top viewing demographic is affluent millennials, one would conclude that for this generation *Mad Men* will define cultural memory of the 1960s. Therefore, *Mad Men* has to take a responsible approach to its depictions of life in the early 1960s. They have to get it right or else a whole generation will miss what the past has taught us—and what we still have to learn.

Unfortunately, this is difficult to achieve. As Max Andrus reported recently on his blog, he spoke to a 23-year-old woman, who told him that *Mad Men* “did not bother her in the slightest, frankly she enjoyed watching it with her fiancé.” She then added that the show is “merely trying to show what life was like so that we as Americans do not repeat those same mistakes with inequality in the work place” (Andrus, 2012). Based on her observations, *Mad Men* depicts the idea of inequality as if it were something that exists only in the past. It is my hope

that more viewers are savvy enough to understand that the series is not simply trying to present a realistic past: inequality and racism were not just problems that existed over forty years ago.

They still exists today, and need to be addressed.

MAD MEN GOES META

It has been noted by scholars that the use of “meta,” or self-referencing, has become increasingly prevalent within our popular culture. Instead of showing or representing the world as seen or experienced by the mediators, journalists, advertising agents, and film directors are referring more and more to what has been seen previously in the arts or media (Nöth and Bishara 2007, v). The term “meta” is a Greek prefix used to mean about itself or self-referential. (meta Dictionary.com). Joan Bleicher views the idea of self-referentiality in television as “closely related to, and intertwined with, intermediality” (Bleicher 2007, 184), which as previously discussed is a strong component of cultural memory. According to Bleicher, one of television’s self-referential strengths lies in its ability to visualize history. In contrast to books, television can transform history into stories that can convey a live experience of past events. For Bleicher, the “representation of history on television involves self-reference insofar as the means of presenting history are historical television documents and history includes the history of television” (Bleicher 2007, 185).

Mad Men is self-referential in the fact that it uses television references from the past to tell a story in the present about the past. However, *Mad Men* is a fictional story placed in a constructed reality of the early 1960s. Linda Hutcheon would define the created historical world of *Mad Men* as a historiographic metafiction. Based on Patricia Waugh’s definition of metafiction, which she describes as a term given to fictional writing which self-consciously and

systematically draws attention to its status as an artifact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality (Waugh 1984, 2). A historiographic metafiction is a text that situates itself within historical discourse without surrendering its autonomy as fiction, where the “intertexts of history and fiction take on parallel (though not equal) status in the parodic reworking of the textual past of both the “world” and literature (Hutcheon 1989, 4).

It is through the fictional world of Don Draper we become privy to all that was real in the early 1960s. However, it is through the representations of television that the series offers a reflective commentary of the time. The series creators “self-consciously and systematically draw attention” (Waugh 1984, 2) to the choices they have made regarding the medium of television. Although they use footage produced, aired, and viewed during the period, their selections of footage for the show is intended solely to further the fictional reality that is *Mad Men*. It is for this reason that the manner that the television is used and represented within the show is so important. The choices that the series makes in the way these representations shape our cultural memory of the time are strategic, and need to be understood. I will now discuss three specific instances where a television serves not only as a background prop but plays a key role in portraying domesticity in the series.

REPRESENTING EARLY 1960S DOMESTICITY IN *MAD MEN*

In a series where television sets are ubiquitous, I have chosen to focus upon three specific scenes that best exemplify the above-discussed theories of cultural memory within the context of early 1960s domesticity. These scenes not only prominently feature the television as a disseminator of cultural memory, but they also specifically serves a purpose to highlight the underlying ideals of early 1960s domesticity.

The Television in Midge's Apartment

In “Ladies Room” (1:2), we are offered the opportunity to see the very first television of the series within the apartment of Don’s lover, Midge. “What’s that?” Don asks, wondering why she has a television, given that Don recalled her “wasting a good piece of a beautiful afternoon reciting a diatribe against television that should have ended with her banging her shoe on the table.” When Midge retorts by asking, “Have you seen *People Are Funny*?” Don becomes angry or annoyed (it is not clear which emotion he is conveying) and finally insults her by asking if she got the television the same place she got her wig. This leads Midge to throw her television out of her apartment window, sending it crashing to the street several floors below, an action that in turn delights Don, and causes shouts from the people below. Midge’s literal throwing out of the television represents the separation between Don’s domestic life with Betty and his time with his lover. Television is part of domestic life home, but it is out of place in Midge’s apartment. Midge’s television situates her apartment as a domestic space, giving hers and Don’s relationship the semblance of a family structure, which goes against Don’s desires. Once the domestic icon is removed from the space, Don’s expectations of Midge as a mistress with no domestic bonds are restored, and their relationship is able to continue.

This scene also conveys ideas of reflective nostalgia because instead of the first television seen in the series being represented in the “traditional” location of a family living room, the television is resting on a stool at the end of a bed in a bohemian apartment in New York’s Greenwich Village. Instead of the “traditional” heavy wood inlay cabinet, as describe by the advertisements of the time, the television is blue, plastic, and portable. Instead of a “traditional” family gathered around the television enjoying its ever-present glow, the television is turned off and only noticed after the passionate love making session of Don and Midge. And, instead of

buying into the “traditional” ideal of consumerism and the value of possessions, the television is thrown out of the window and sent crashing to the streets below. It is this introduction to the television in this fashion that tells the audience that *Mad Men* is a series whose purpose is not to rehash nostalgic portrayals of “traditional” life in the early 1960s. Midge’s smashing of the television is a metaphor for the series breaking of our nostalgic visions of the domesticity of the time.

A Tour of the White House with Mrs. John F. Kennedy

In “For those who think young” (2:14) *Mad Men* depicts the television special, *A Tour of the White House with Mrs. John F. Kennedy*. By including this historic event, the series not only evokes the cultural memory of the period in general; rather, it also highlights the importance of the public and private spheres in early 1960s domesticity.

After John F. Kennedy was elected president, his wife Jacqueline started a campaign to redecorate the White House with authentic furnishings and period pieces (Curtin 2010). Her complete restoration of the house began with her dissatisfaction in “that dreary Maison Blanche,” which she wanted to make into “the most perfect house in the United States” and a museum that reflected the nation's cultural history. “It just seemed to me such a shame when we came here to find hardly anything of the past in the house” (Koo 2008). In just a little over a year she completed her goals and allowed for a televised tour of the residence on all three networks (Curtin 2010). According to Carolyn Koo, “Jacqueline Kennedy's Valentine's Day tour of the newly-restored White House was a major media event in 1962, drawing 56 million viewers and earning the First Lady an honorary Emmy” (Koo 2008).

A Tour of the White House with Mrs. John F. Kennedy was an important television event, not only for its cultural significance but also because it was the “first primetime documentary to

explicitly court a female audience” (Curtin 2010). During the early 1960s, most television documentaries focused on major public issues, such as foreign policy, civil rights, and national politics. These programs, which featured the public sphere, was overwhelmingly dominated by men and exclusively hosted by male journalists (Curtin 2010). Meanwhile, women were beginning to express frustrations with these domestic roles and their limited access to public life. Women's magazine of the period addressed this issue and also began featuring articles about women who played prominent roles in public life. One of these women was Jacqueline Kennedy, who quickly became a significant public figure in popular media and had her every move closely followed by millions of American women (Curtin 2010).

These factors made her television appearance as host of the White House tour key to the development of the women's movement to come because it effectively represented changing attitudes about the public and private roles of American women (Curtin 2010). Not only was Jacqueline fulfilling her “domestic duty” by providing visitors a tour of her home, but she was also performing a “public duty” as the voice of the television program, “providing details on her renovation efforts, informing the audience about the historical significance of various furnishings, and even assuming the position of voice-over narrator during extended passages of the program” (Curtin 2010). Furthermore, Kennedy was portrayed as both a mother and as a modern woman, a duality that allows her to symbolize female aspirations to re-enter the public sphere, an interpretation that helps explain why the documentary was so popular with female viewers (Curtin 2010).

By featuring the tour in the episode, *Mad Men* shows how each of its couples reacted to this mediated cultural event, an experiential trope that is directly related to Sturken's ideas of the memory of “where we were” and the importance that the television plays in the creation of

cultural memory of this event. This style of presentation is also used during the series depiction of the Kennedy assassination and at other historically significant events. By focusing on the reactions of the character that populate the *Mad Men* world, this technique elevates the home tour from “soft” human interest to a key historical event.

Viewers first encounter the tour at the Savoy Hotel, where Don and Betty are sitting in bed ordering room service after a failed attempt at romance. Don, who turns on the television, catches a glimpse of the program but quickly switches the channel. Betty asks that Don turn back to the documentary, and the viewer’s home tour begins. Through the use of the televised event, viewers are taken room by room, not through the White House, but through the rooms occupied by the *Mad Men* characters. In each home, the audience becomes privy to the private, domestic experiences of the characters during the broadcast.

After we leave the Drapers at the Savoy, we are moved into the living room of Salvador and Kitty Romano. Sal wonders, “Where’s her husband?” His comment that has a double meaning. It both represents how revolutionary it was for a woman to be a spokesperson for the White House, and it alludes to the attractiveness of Jacqueline’s husband, John F. Kennedy, and Sal’s closeted homosexuality.

The tour continues to the living room of Joan, who is transfixed by Jacqueline’s presentation but is being ignored by her sexually aggressive fiancée, Greg Harris. Joan tries to stop Greg by saying, “You have to see this,” to which he replies, “No I don’t,” at which he pushes her down onto the couch and begins to make love to her. Joan turns her face towards the television as her gaze and interest is solely focused on the televised special, ignoring Greg’s advances. Greg, however, is undeterred by Joan’s lack of interest and continues his conquest regardless of her feelings.

The tour ends at the home of Pete Campbell who is alone, drinking, and watching a science fiction show. With his wife not in the room, having gone to bed after an earlier fight, we find that Pete has eaten all of the Valentine's Day chocolates that he gave her. With his wife away, Pete has complete control of the television, unlike Don who originally changed the channel to the same science fiction program but was forced by Betty to change it back to the White House tour.

What is telling about this scene is that Kennedy's tours fascinates *Mad Men's* female characters, for whom it is an important television event, whereas its male characters are indifferent. It shows how Kennedy's special planted the seeds of empowerment in the minds of women by demonstrating that a woman could be a domestic entity yet at the same time a public one. The documentary may have been a small step but, as Michael Curtin argues, it was with the fascination of women like Jacqueline Kennedy that women's movement took shape. The scene also demonstrates how television in the series is not only a domestic prop but also provide the audience with historical context and the sometimes forgotten cultural events of the 1960s that impacted a generation of Americans.

The JFK Assassination

Despite the hesitation of Matthew Weiner, as a period drama set in the early 1960s, *Mad Men* was virtually compelled to depict the Kennedy assassination, which it did in "The Grown-Ups" (3:12). *Mad Men* is a series about the social change that came in the 1960s; therefore, it would be impossible to tell this story without addressing Kennedy's death in some way. Yet, Weiner's reluctance was indeed warranted, for the assassination event, how people learned about, and reacted to, has been addressed in popular culture ad nauseam, leaving little for the show's creators to add to or interpret the prevailing discourse of the incident.

Despite this, *Mad Men* was able to address the JFK assassination in an interesting and thought-provoking manner through the use of the television. It is within “The Grown-Ups” (3:12) that *Mad Men* developed a metacommentary on the historic event by using the television to drive narrative and motivate actions. Within the episode, “more images are used, more recognizable faces appear, and more characters are shown sitting before their television set actively watching television as the events unfold” (Newcomb 2011, 112). For *Mad Men* to frame the assassination through television news reports, live footage, and the reactions and emotions of the series characters makes sense. According to Horace Newcomb, “In many ways television came of age, or at least offered a new and significant definition for itself, in the coverage of events surrounding the Kennedy assassination” (Newcomb 2011, 114). During this episode, the viewer is watching a television show featuring characters glued to their television sets.

Similar to the technique used to depict Jacqueline Kennedy’s White House tour, the events of November 22, 1963, are segmented into scenes that address how each character on *Mad Men* was affected by the assassination of JFK. These scenes are short and provide little information regarding the assassination. This format of presentation only adds to the reality of the episode, as during a crisis little information is known or reported, leaving the public with more answers than questions.

The action begins with Pete Campbell and Harry Crane sitting in Harry's office. Harry is the head of Sterling Cooper's television department, and, as such, he is required to monitor television shows for potential sponsors. While watching a daytime soap, a news bulletin graphic flashes across the screen, but they do not notice it as Harry turn down the sound. The camera then shifts to news reports being broadcasted into a hotel room, where Duck Phillips learns that the president may have been wounded but unplugs the television because Peggy is about to

arrive for a romantic rendezvous. It is at this point that we return to Harry's office just in time to see the employees of Sterling Cooper burst in exclaiming that "somebody shot the President," and gather around Harry's television to watch the news and know more about events unfolding in Dallas. With everyone in Harry's office, no one is getting work done, which causes Don to ask, "What the Hell is going on?"

The focus then turns to the Draper home, where Betty is watching the same reports, when Carla rushes in with the children and asks, "Is he okay?" Betty tells her she just heard that the president is dead. Both Betty and Carla, who are noticeably shaken, start to cry while continuing to sit in the living room watching the television for any possible information about what happened. Meanwhile back at the hotel, Peggy and Duck, concerned by the news he learned before, plug in the television and are shocked to hear of the president's death. Duck proclaims, "I gotta call my kids." Meanwhile, Margaret Sterling, the daughter of Rodger Sterling, founder of Sterling Cooper, is devastated as her wedding is planned for the next day. When Don arrives home, Betty and the children are still watching television as more reports keep coming in. "Why are the kids watching this?" Don asks. "What am I supposed to do, Don? Am I supposed to keep it from them?" replies Betty. Don asserts, "Take a pill and lie down. I can handle the kids." When Betty goes upstairs to lie down, Don tells the children to turn off the television; however, when the children do nothing but stare at the television screen, he sits down and comforts them.

During the episode, *Mad Men* takes special care to feature where each character was while watching the events unfold. Harry Crane and Pete Campbell were in Harry's office. Peggy and Duck Phillips were in a hotel room. Betty, Carla, Sally and Bobby were at home. All of them were watching the television. It was this moment that officially ended the ideals of the 1950s, and ushered in a whole new vision of equality, experimentation, and change.

The phenomenon of afterwardsness is also apparent in “The Grown-Ups” (3:12). Thanks to media representations, viewers know how the historical events unfolded and experience feelings of afterwardsness while observing how each character reacts to hearing the news for the first time. We have a cultural memory what happened, how it happened, and what happens afterward. What we forget is what happened before we knew, the unknowing, and the uncertainty. The way that these characters feel about the Kennedy assassination runs deep parallels to how we felt about 9/11. The selection of images for “The Grown-Ups” created an unnerving echo of some of our experiences with 9/11. It makes sense that *Mad Men* would use the feelings, emotions, actions, and memories of 9/11 to inform and guide their description of the events of the Kennedy assassination because 9/11 is something that the viewers can comprehend and access. The events of 9/11 contribute to making this episode all the more poignant and the selected news coverage all the more real. The feelings of fear and unknowing what is going to happen, how did this happen, what happened, are all present in *The Grown-Ups* (3:12). The episode recalls Matt Wiener’s anecdote about the inspiration for the series: his friend in New York during 9/11, going through a divorce.

CONCLUSION

Throughout the series, *Mad Men*’s depiction of domesticity and cultural memory are reliant on the use of the television, a medium that is a key aspect of both early 1960s domesticity and the theories of cultural memory. Televisions in the series offer the opportunity to engage not only with the archived televised materials of the early 1950s but also with the audience, which is able to interpret the medium and its messages. Although *Mad Men* uses nostalgia, evoked in part through archival television footage, as a means to attract viewers, it also takes a realistic and

critical approach in its depictions of early 1960s domesticity, in which the television as an object plays a significant role. Such depictions not only add to our understanding of the times, but they also help shift cultural memory of the period.

RQ1. How does *Mad Men* address early 1960s domesticity? *Mad Men*, compared to all other programming depicting the early 1960s, has been cited as being the most accurate. This accuracy has allowed the audience the ability to further understand what it was like to live (at least if one were white and relatively affluent) during that time. As the majority of the show's audience was born in 1980 or later, the way that *Mad Men* presents the domesticity of the time will dictate their understanding and mediated recollections of the past. Through the series, *Mad Men* offers a highly realistic depiction of what it was like to live in the early 1960s. The series has explored and identified key values and ideals, such as the "cult of domesticity", the public and private spheres, and Betty Friedan's "problem with no name." These key issues of the early 1960s foreshadowed the rise of second wave feminism, the founding of groups like the National Organization for Women, and significant changes in North American domesticity.

RQ2. How does *Mad Men* confront and use television in its domestic representations? Because the television is considered a definitive part of the domestic landscape of the early 1960s, it only makes sense that the series would utilize the television to its full potential. During the first four seasons of *Mad Men* the television was referenced over 180 times, with 135 references within domestic situations. Although most of these references were of re-runs and only lasted a few seconds on scene, they still conveyed nostalgia within the show.

RQ3. How do these representations shape, define or redefine our cultural memory of the time? What *Mad Men* has done regarding our cultural memory of the early 1960s is allowed us to remember all that we wanted to forget about the time. For the last forty years our prevailing

cultural memory was established through the domestic representation of *Leave it to Beaver* and *Happy Days*, shows that where purposefully created to depict a sense of nostalgia for the era.

They allowed us to forget all of the negative attributes that went along with being a woman and/or a racialized minority at the time. *Mad Men* depicts a time before feminism, when women were limited in their choices and when many felt unhappy and unfulfilled in their lives.

RQ4: How do these representations resonate in today's culture?

Mad Men's representations of domesticity resonates with today's culture because many of the issues that are addressed within the series are still challenges that we face today. In the home and in the workplace inequalities and lack of choice continue to exist, particularly for working class women. Recently there has been a backlash against many of the ideas and rights for which women fought in the late 1960s and 1970s. Many of today's youth cannot imagine a time when a woman would be forced to stay at home because as they consider being a housewife a luxury. For such audiences, *Mad Men's* depiction of domesticity represents both the romanticized space of 1960s domesticity and the unhappy lives that filled it, complicating cultural memory of the past—as well as understandings of domesticity and gender roles in the present.

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