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The Ghosts of Mad Men: Race and Gender Inequality Inside American Advertising Agencies

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THE GHOSTS OF *MAD MEN*: RACE AND GENDER INEQUALITY INSIDE AMERICAN ADVERTISING AGENCIES

Christopher Boulton

"You walk into agencies and it's still *Mad Men*, you know?"
("Susan," HR Manager)

In a thought-provoking column entitled "*Mad Men* and Society's Race Problem," Tamara Winfrey Harris (2010) recounts a scene from the popular AMC drama, set in a fictional Manhattan advertising agency in the 1960s. Peggy Olson, an up-and-coming copywriter, is on a date with Abe, a radical activist, when the conversation turns to politics. Abe criticizes Peggy's agency for taking on Fillmore Auto Parts, a company that won't hire Blacks[1] in the South. Annoyed by the patronizing tone of Abe's civil rights lecture, Peggy decides to teach him a lesson about sexism. It doesn't go well:

Peggy: I know. But I have to say, most of the things Negroes can't do, I can't do either. And nobody seems to care.
Abe: What are you talking about?
Peggy: (Exasperated) Half of the meetings take place over golf, tennis, and a bunch of clubs where I'm not allowed to be a member—or even enter! The University Club said the only way I could eat dinner there was if I arrived in a cake.
Abe: There's no Negro copywriters you know.
Peggy: I'm sure they could fight their way in like I did; believe me, nobody wanted me there.
Abe: (Sarcastically) All right Peggy, we'll have a, uh, civil rights march for *women*!
(Waller and Weiner 2010)

In contrasting Abe's inability to recognize glass ceilings with Peggy's naïveté regarding her own White privilege, this scene nicely illustrates how a show that ostensibly

represents the 1960s can also critique overlapping inequalities that persist some 40 years later, in both advertising and society at large.

This chapter will argue that the twin specters of sexism and racism in *Mad Men*, far from merely flattering the present by condemning a less-than-enlightened past, point towards the structural roots of contemporary problems that continue to haunt the advertising industry today. To do so, I will summarize a body of work quantifying advertising's current race- and sex-based disparities, and then draw on interviews with human resources practitioners and others working inside the industry to explore how race and gender function and intersect on the level of the everyday.[2] Following Giddens's (1979) notion of "structuration," I argue that the oppressive dynamics of racism and sexism manifest themselves less through explicit discrimination than through the more hidden "common sense" of unreflective habits—social action that feels autonomous even while it structures behavior through a process of conforming to established social norms. I conclude that, despite various efforts to increase racial diversity and promote women within advertising, entrenched social networks essentially function as affirmative action for White men.

The Diversity Crisis

It's a terrific show. I watch it religiously.
(Mullen CEO Joe Grimaldi, quoted in Diaz 2011)

Apparently, lots of ad men like *Mad Men*. According to one industry observer, 2008 was the year of the *Mad Men* video holiday card, with agencies mashing up animation and music from the opening credit sequence with the names of their own executives (Robertson 2009). In another instance, an agency spoofed the popular television show in their annual holiday card, dressing up as the cast (see Figure 18.1).[3] Though clearly intended as a harmless retro-chic homage to an imagined past, this photo, as we will soon see, presents a remarkably accurate depiction of the industry's current leadership structure: all White, mostly men. Other *Mad Men* tributes have created similarly awkward moments of truth telling. One of my Black informants recounts how, when his agency invited staff to come watch the season premiere and dress up as a character from the show, "a couple of the minorities had a little issue with that" and sarcastically asked one another, "Should we find some janitors' uniforms for this party?"

Though some have criticized *Mad Men* for not featuring any significant characters of color, for Winfrey Harris (2010) this is precisely the point. The show's "unyielding Whiteness and casual racism" illustrate Ralph Ellison's notion of Black invisibility: "the way race is there, but not there in the lives of [the] White protagonists," whether it be a minstrel at a garden party, a Black elevator operator in the office or a Black maid at home. Race in *Mad Men* is like a telltale heart, often out of sight, yet always beating just below the surface. Matthew Weiner, *Mad Men*'s creator and head writer, contends that the show's depiction of race is not only true to its own time but still reflects advertising today:

> It changes socially. It does not change in advertising. It still has not changed. I defy any of these companies outside of their corporate retreat photos to show me people of color in positions of power. And those people who are out there,

Figure 18.1 *Mad Men*-themed holiday postcard, 2009

> who have positions of power, who are of color, I have been in contact with and none of them think there should be more Black faces in that office.
>
> (Quoted in Itzkoff 2010)

Matthew Weiner is not the only one calling attention to the persistence of racial inequality within advertising. In what may have been an unintentionally honest moment of self-branding, the 2011 CLIO Awards, "the world's most recognized global awards competition for advertising" (CLIO Awards 2011), chose a *Mad Men* theme featuring images of four White men (see Figure 18.2).[4] Like the *Mad Men* holiday cards and costume parties, the CLIO Awards' high-profile exclusion of both women and people of color from their promotional campaign is oddly fitting given the current context of a long-brewing diversity crisis rapidly coming to a head.

Mad Men's third season is set in 1963. In that same year, the Urban League of Greater New York released a three-year study condemning systematic race discrimination within the ten largest advertising agencies based in New York City. The NAACP's Roy Wilkins even threatened to launch a boycott. Four years later, in 1967, the New York City Commission on Human Rights (NYCCHR) conducted an investigation and found that people of color represented only 5 percent of advertising industry employees versus 25 percent of the city's total labor force. In 1978, the NYCCHR criticized the industry's chronic failure to employ African Americans and issued a call for government intervention. Finally, after almost three decades of broken promises and failed reforms, the

Figure 18.2 The 2011 CLIO Awards' *Mad Men* theme

NYCCHR tried a new tactic: shame. In 2006, the Commission subpoenaed top advertising executives to testify before a public hearing on the diversity crisis in the middle of Advertising Week, a high-profile annual marketing convention based in New York City. In order to avoid appearing, 16 agencies entered into a memorandum of understanding with the Commission, pledging to meet diversity hiring goals in professional and management positions over the next three years (Chambers 2008: 128–164).[5] By 2008, the pressure was building, inspiring the trade journal *Advertising Age* to opine: "No one should be surprised if they do take the next step they've been threatening for the last 40 years: lawsuits and regulation. Agency execs, you can't say you weren't warned" (Wheaton 2008).

In January of 2009, the NAACP stepped into the fray. Partnering with Cyrus Mehri, a civil rights lawyer who has won hundreds of millions of dollars in class-action race discrimination settlements from Texaco, Coca-Cola, and Smith Barney (Helm 2010), they launched the Madison Avenue Project to pressure the industry through litigation. At the opening press conference, Mehri released a new report detailing how the industry's underpayment, under-hiring, and underutilization of African Americans has led to a Black–White gap that is 38 percent larger than the labor market in general—a divergence that has doubled over the past 30 years (Bendick and Egan 2009). Blacks in advertising now earn $0.80 on the dollar when compared to equally qualified Whites and represent only 5.3 percent of managers and professionals instead of the expected

9.6 percent according to numbers from the US Census Bureau and US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission—a shortfall which amounts to 7,200 "missing" Black advertising professionals and managers. The report also charts patterns of "occupational segregation" resulting in both "glass ceilings" that limit advancement and "glass walls" that disproportionately place Blacks in less prestigious support functions. In sum, the report condemns the industry's four decades of seeking to "expand the pipeline" of Black employees through small, targeted scholarships and internships as a failed strategy and calls instead for management to look in the mirror, confront their own biases, and "change their behavior as employers" (51). As one observer put it, the diversity numbers in the Madison Avenue Project report are so similar to the NYCCHR's 1967 study that "you could have swapped out the executive summaries." Mehri describes the phenomenon as "a freeze frame," imagining that, if "an anthropologist wanted to come back and see what discrimination [was] like in 1970, you've got it right here in the ad industry" (Mehri, quoted in Chow 2010). Put another way, to paraphrase Matthew Weiner, nothing has changed.

The Gender Gap

At first blush, it would appear that the figure of Peggy Olson has come a long way. According to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, women in advertising actually outnumber men, accounting for 66 percent of the total workforce in agencies with 100 or more employees (Bosman 2005a). But all is not well and, again, *Mad Men* provides material to dramatize the problem. For instance, echoing Peggy's complaint, one of my female informants recounts how top management at her agency held a business meeting in a men's club where women were not admitted without a date. In another example, *Advertising Age* commissioned a cover-page "portrait" of figureheads from the top ten ad agencies (see Figure 18.3). As though the preponderance of ad *men* weren't obvious enough, the artist placed them in a mid-century modern setting complete with tumblers and cigars. For Linda Sawyer, CEO of Deutsch, Inc., and the lone woman in the picture, the reference was crystal clear:

> As part of the publication's concept to showcase the top 10 agencies, it used the trendy *Mad Men* theme to illustrate the point that as much as things may have changed since 1961, much has not. . . . If *Ad Age* was trying to highlight the void and lack of diversity, I am happy to help.
>
> (Sawyer, quoted in Niles 2009)

Despite strong gains in advertising over several decades, "the status of women declines with each step up the corporate ladder," with women holding 76 percent of all clerical positions in advertising but only 47 percent of mid- to upper-level management positions (Bosman 2005a: 2). The trend is also visible in the United Kingdom. A recent study by the trade group Institute of Practitioners in Advertising (IPA) found that females were about half of the total workforce but occupied only 22 percent of management positions (Sweney 2011). In the United States, men outnumber women in creative at a rate of over 2:1, and the director level is over 80 percent male (Broyles and Grow 2008; Mallia 2009). As Bosman (2005a) points out, "the dominance of men on the creative side of the business is even more striking, considering that women commonly make up to 80 percent of household purchasing decisions." Indeed, a recent study

Figure 18.3 *Ad Age* "2008 A-list" illustration

found that 94 percent of the lead creative directors of Super Bowl commercials were male, despite women making up 45 percent of the game's viewing audience (Lapchick et al. 2010; Nielsenwire 2010). Carol Evans, president of the Advertising Women of New York, points out that "there's still rampant sexism in our business . . . there is a problem in women creatives not getting the spotlight" (Bosman 2005b). Cindy Gallop, former chairwoman of BBH New York, concurred, saying flatly, "Senior female creatives are virtually nonexistent. . . . It's an incontrovertible fact" (Bosman 2005b: 2).

Thus far we have seen how the legacies of racism and sexism in advertising have helped perpetuate systematic inequalities that still plague the industry today. I have argued that *Mad Men* may indeed point us back toward a sordid past, but also toward a complacent present of denial, where agencies can embrace the show's nostalgic world of White male privilege even while in the midst of a contemporary diversity crisis. Moreover, the quantitative evidence suggests that, despite some notable advances for women, discrimination based on race and gender is alive and well in the American advertising industry. But, while the numbers can help us to understand what is happening and to whom, what they can't do is tell us how or why. The next section will argue that contemporary forms of discrimination in advertising may not be as direct, or punitive, as they were in the *Mad Men* era, but the power of patriarchy and White supremacy in the workplace is still active, albeit in the form of what Giddens (1979) calls "structuration," a kind of "common sense" that drives most of our daily "decisions" and occurs below our level of awareness through the momentum of habit and routine. These habits, in turn, are developed, reinforced, and internalized over time in response to existing social norms. To get a better sense of the subjective, day-to-day experience of these norms, I

now turn to my interviews with advertising industry practitioners. Most of my informants are women and work in human resources, a highly gendered department often tasked with hiring more candidates of color to improve their agency's diversity numbers. As a group, they are uniquely positioned to shed new light on the overlapping inequalities of race and sex in advertising.

The Boys' Club

Though the gender gap is certainly not unique to advertising,[6] the industry tends to structure sex inequalities along the departmental split between account and creative—an infamous rivalry cultivated by management and agency personnel alike (Cronin 2004). While the account management aspect of advertising—which interfaces directly with the client—has become increasingly gendered as a female space over time, creative—which generates the ideas for campaigns—has remained stubbornly male. According to my informants this drama hinges on traditional gender roles: men make the product (creative) while women do the paperwork (account). This relationship was often described in maternal terms, with female account executives having continually to "nag" the male creatives to meet deadlines and even show up at meetings. "Female Manager" estimates that her large agency has only one senior female creative and says, "there is no question that there's a gender bias in that department." "Jennifer" reports similar numbers, noting that all six of her agency's executive creative directors are White men. "Male Manager" sums up the dynamic as a network of favoritism and social reproduction, harkening back to the *Mad Men* era:

> I think it was easier for women to transition from the roles of secretaries and assistants in whatever the sixties or seventies to, you know, the account side . . . the creative side is more male dominated. . . . I mean, look at *Mad Men*, it's a boys' club, it's been a boys' club, it will always be a boys' club until something drastic happens . . . it works like this: I get my executive creative position at an agency, so what do I do? I hire all my boys, so it will be a fun atmosphere, you know? So that's what happens. Everyone hires their boys, those boys go somewhere else and they hire their boys and they hire the juniors that they liked.

Gregory (2009) argues that the predominance of men in ad agency creative departments cultivates an exclusive locker-room style of homosociability, reminiscent of formal old boys' networks, where men bond through humor and banter. Furthermore, Nixon (2003) describes the culture of creatives as marked by "laddish" behavior that is both willfully immature and hyper-masculine. In such an environment, managers treat the creative department as a "Never Never Land" where women are not welcome lest they "force the young male creatives to grow up and thus erode the essential juvenility" of their creative role (105). For example, a junior advertising executive told me about a male/female art and copy (creative) team who went in to interview at an agency and were told, "I can't hire you because women aren't funny." According to my informants, the widespread belief that women can't do creative, combined with the common expectation that women will choose motherhood over their career, makes male domination of creative and management appear to be both inevitable and perfectly natural.

One of the consequences of gendered office roles is how they can encourage men to treat women, no matter their function or title, like glorified secretaries. For Female

Manager, this plays out on the job in the minutiae of the everyday; men come in late to a meeting, put their feet up on the table, interrupt when women are speaking, and then expect them to clean up afterwards: "Very rarely do they have notebooks, very rarely do they write anything down . . . and they say, 'So you're taking all the notes, right?'" Crucially, these notions of "common sense" are not just imposed from without; some emerge from within. Many of my female informants promulgate clichéd gender essentialisms, arguing that women are naturally "less competitive," "better organized," and "more collaborative" than men—a set of "soft" skills that makes them better suited for account and project management functions, not to mention HR. Thus, in contrast to the more explicit chauvinism depicted in *Mad Men*, gender roles in advertising now tend to be more internalized than enforced, though some sexist assumptions are still simply stated outright.

Opting Out

When I ask my mostly female informants to explain the lack of women in creative and upper-management positions, many suggest that this is less the product of sexist discrimination than a process of self-selection. Female Manager describes how she and many of her female colleagues choose to avoid meetings with senior leadership at her agency because they don't feel comfortable around loud, aggressive men who yell and bang on the table—adding that "women who do have a seat at the table have very similar personality types." This sets up a complex dynamic. On one hand, the very presence of women in these senior settings suggests a degree of agency in determining one's own life chances: women are free to "opt in" and climb the corporate ladder, or "opt out" and seek a more "comfortable" career path. On the other hand, the more blatant discrimination of the *Mad Men* era built up a durable gender role infrastructure, whereby upper management remains a "male space" because of not merely its population, but also the tacit rules and cultural norms that have developed over time. This creates a setting that simultaneously advantages men, who have been socialized to perform this role without a second thought, and disadvantages women, who as we saw above must work to overcome the presumption that their gender makes them more naturally suited for secretarial functions.

Another clear theme emerges around motherhood. Many of my informants note that the unpredictable and often long hours of advertising force most junior ad executives to postpone children—especially if they are women. And, when they do have kids, women tend either to leave the industry or to avoid roles that require excessive travel. Citing herself as an example, "Elizabeth" says she decided to be "a mom first" and passed on opportunities for career advancement to spend more time with her daughter. Of course, this choice is not always so freely made, since the responsibilities of the home and housework remain highly gendered. According to the recent report *Women in America* (White House 2011), "employed wives spend more time in household activities [including childcare] than employed husbands" (35). Along similar lines, a recent study of the European Union reports an entrenched "lifestyle divide" where the burden of domestic duties prevents women from advancing their careers and "creates a vicious circle as they are then less able to work the long hours needed to win top jobs" and therefore "earn less and are reinforced as responsible for household tasks" (Ward 2007). Mallia (2009), in her investigation of the lack of female creative directors in advertising, concludes that "the incompatibility between motherhood and agency creative jobs" means that

most successful women are either "the 'secondary' parent [with another at home] or not a parent at all" ("Conclusions"). In other words, for a woman to succeed at work, she must forgo children, pay for childcare, and/or find a supportive spouse. Thus, despite egalitarian platitudes at work, or even the accommodations of a flexible work schedule, the rigidity of gender roles in the home can force mothers to self-select out of key roles at the office.

Again, the contemporary situation recalls *Mad Men*'s fictional past. Late in the fourth season, Dr. Faye Miller, a psychologist and market researcher, tells Don Draper, the agency's lead creative and series protagonist, that she loves children but "chose" not to have any of her own in order to pursue her career (*Mad Men*, 2010). But, as Coontz (2010) observes, this was hardly a choice since "Faye's sacrifice was one that women with professional aspirations were often forced to make in 1965: Employers, after all, were well within their legal rights to fire women who had babies." And, though current legislation now affords mothers certain protections in the workplace, the structure of gender norms and tacit expectations persists, directing women to rank their priorities (i.e., "mom first") in ways that rarely apply to men. Indeed, for men who choose to be fathers, success in advertising begins at home; a spouse leaving work early allows them to stay late. And so the vicious circle takes another turn: the irregular hours that career advancement requires produce a general neglect of home life, and custom makes this neglect more permissible for men, who then advance, thus reinforcing the male gendered spaces of upper management and creative. So, while there may be more Peggy Olsons working in creative departments today, they are rarely in charge. And, while the Faye Millers of the world can now gain entrance to the boardroom, they will still need to adapt to the social norms of a mostly male space.

Social Reproduction

And yet being a woman in advertising can have its advantages, especially if you're White. As Patricia Hill Collins (2004) reminds us, race, class, and gender tend to form junctures of "intersectionality" that can mutually construct each other in unexpected ways. For example, a woman might be simultaneously oppressed by one intersection of her identity (living under patriarchy) and yet privileged by another (being White and affluent). Though Collins often writes about how such intersections can further marginalize women of color, we can also see a clear example of this dynamic in the case of two young men of color, whom we will call "Darius" and "Bill." Both work for advertising agencies as junior executives in account management departments dominated by White women. In the following passage, Darius tells Bill about his colleague "Angela." Both Angela and Darius report to White female account supervisors. But while Darius's supervisor is very formal with him ("she pretty much told me what to do and I did it and that was pretty much the extent of our relationship"), Angela, who is White, seems to be the best of friends with her boss:

Darius: [Angela] would go to her house.
Bill: They hung out?
Darius: I'm talking about go to someone's house and hang with them at their house, like come on now!
Bill: Yeah, I would never do that—never even think to do that!
Darius: No, so check this out, one time [Angela]'s talking "blah-blah-blah-you're such a bitch!" And then she gets off the phone, and I'm like "who you talking to?" She was talking to her boss! You would call your own boss "a bitch" jokingly?
Darius: Man, I can't do that.
Bill: Yeah, you can't.
Darius: Just the fact that [Angela] had such a close relationship with [her] boss and I had the complete opposite of that.

This anecdote demonstrates how a male identity may prove advantageous in certain spheres (such as upper management and creative) while also inhibiting affiliation and solidarity in more female spaces, especially when that gender identity intersects with racial difference. In the case of Darius, his Black male identity creates a sense of double alienation from his supervisor through the micropolitics of informal, everyday social relations. Put another way, Darius experienced the feminization of account management as a barrier that opened up exclusive networking opportunities for White women. In the *Mad Men* scene that opens this chapter, this is precisely what Peggy fails to see while arguing with Abe in the bar: that she is both the victim of sexism and the beneficiary of White female privilege. True, Peggy is the lone female copywriter in her office, but not the only woman; the secretarial pool is so thoroughly feminized that it doubles as a (White) female affinity group and on-site social support network. Thus, when Abe reminds her that there are no Black copywriters, he actually understates the case. In Peggy's fictional agency, there are no Blacks *period*, save the janitorial staff who clean the office after hours.

Of course, as Winfrey Harris (2010) points out, Abe and Peggy both miss the experience of women of color, who must confront two intersecting forms of oppression at the same time. We can see a contemporary example of this through the experience of "Dominique," a young woman of color who's worked for two advertising agencies. On one level, the very act of her hiring is living proof that things have changed since the mid-1960s, both for women and for people of color. However, Dominique's account also illustrates how gaining access to the female space of account management comes with strings attached—social ties that tend to benefit, and thereby reproduce, White employees.

While initially drawn to the "hip" agency setting where everyone is young and well dressed, Dominique soon tired of her agency's heavy emphasis on socializing, with frequent and sometimes mandatory happy hours, chatty cliques, and a general culture of "forced cool." It wasn't enough simply to do her job; she was also expected to mix and mingle: "it was very important that you fit in to the environment. It was a really big deal . . . you had to look the part . . . it was very much like a sorority." In fact, Dominique, who doesn't drink, was actually warned by her supervisor that appearing anti-social "could reflect poorly on my review." HR manager Jennifer concurs that socializing is central. She remembers going out every night with her co-workers when she first started out in advertising and says that now she prefers to hire gregarious/popular candidates whom people want to talk to and invite to lunch. "Barbara," also an HR manager, explains that this urge to be social means wanting to work with "people who know each other, look like each other—hang out . . . and that's where the diversity barriers come up." Thus, while Angela may be fully in the habit of presuming rapport with other young, White women and thus perfectly comfortable teasing her boss by calling her "a bitch," Darius and Dominique might be more circumspect, given the structuration of social spheres outside the workplace. For "Betty," an ad agency diversity recruiter, herein lies the rub:

> Social segregation is the problem. So even if you work [in advertising] you're not socializing, and when you go out on Saturday night, to the barbecue or you go to the Hamptons—that's where the deals are done! That's where people get those jobs. It's that social piece that's part of your lifestyle—especially in this business! . . . A lot of people, whether they're Black, Hispanic, or Asian, or Indian, are really not that interested in socially kind of hanging out with the little blonde chick from Connecticut. So what do you do once they're in [advertising]? What you do, what you like, where you summer-vacation, go out—for people of color, it's work!

White Affirmative Action

As a whole, my interviews with HR managers and other agency practitioners suggest that, left to its own devices, the advertising industry tends to reproduce itself by hiring its own. Without external pressure to meet diversity quotas, new employees often mirror the racial make-up of the current staff. This frequently occurs through the commonplace practices of referral hires (where current staff recommend friends for open positions) and hiring for specific teams, rather than for the agency as a whole—a dynamic that tends to privilege subjective notions of "fit" over more concrete evaluations of experience and qualifications.

For "Patricia," such "birds of a feather flock together" homogeneity functions as a kind of insidious common sense that exacerbates racial inequalities beneath our level of awareness: "I don't think people are intentionally hiring non-diverse people, I just don't. But I think they're hiring people like them and we have a lot more White people here that are hiring people that are similar."

All things being equal, like hires like, and euphemisms of "fit" and "chemistry" conceal advertising's structural system of White affirmative action. We can see evidence of this in how teams resist HR's diversity efforts. Patricia describes how it works: even if two out of the three finalists are of color, "the one that's not will be hired—will be looked at more favorably, for whatever reason, when they're all equally qualified." The excuses for such rejections tend to be vague: "doesn't fit" or "something's off, I can't put my finger on it, might be better for a different account." A team at Barbara's agency even rejected an African-American candidate because he "didn't laugh enough." When I tell Jennifer about a study that showed that applicants with "White-sounding" names were 50 percent more likely to get called for interviews than equally qualified applicants with "Black-sounding names" (Bertrand and Mullainathan 2003), she nods and says, "I believe it." But, while some of my informants insist they push back and ask for more objective rationales, Jennifer explains that such interventions can be tricky:

> It's a weird thing to talk about because you don't want to say, "I know you liked Latonya Prince and you liked Cindy Johnson. . . . I think we should move forward with Latonya Prince. If you really liked her, let's hire her—we have enough Cindy Johnsons in the office." But that's a conversation that is not had.

Such self-censorship is understandable, given that raising diversity questions could imply that one's boss is racist. And yet, as Bonilla-Silva (2010) argues, such "individual psychological dispositions"—whether they be explicitly prejudicial or not—are largely irrelevant to the successful reproduction of White privilege (7). Rather, as Royster (2003) explains, the problem is structural, since "personal ties and affiliations as a mechanism for employment referrals, access, and mobility" occur within "persistent patterns of segregation—equivalent to an American apartheid" (179, 184). Sociologists describe this process as a form of embeddedness whereby any given job has a pool of qualified candidates, but "the person who is most likely to be alerted to the opportunity and selected will be the one who has the most efficacious personal, group-based, or institutional contacts, and not necessarily the most skilled person" (28). In other words, getting hired depends not only on what you know, but also who you know, and how. To get ahead requires being in the right place at the right time, and Whites' life chances in advertising are ever increased by their frequent access to these places.

Conclusion

The morning after their argument in the bar, Abe shows up at Peggy's office to give her a story he wrote entitled "Nuremberg on Madison Avenue." Peggy, flattered, walks inside. Moments later, she returns in a rage:

Peggy: If you publish this, I'll lose my job.
Abe: Maybe you're better than this.
Peggy: [Tearing up the paper] I'm not a political person. I don't have to defend myself.
Abe: You're political whether you like it or not.

(Waller and Weiner 2010)

Later that day, Peggy suggests the popular Black singer Harry Belafonte for a Fillmore Auto Parts jingle. Her two White male colleagues gently mock her naïveté, while Don Draper looks on, concerned. Then Peggy, at great professional risk, pushes back, "Well, why *are* we doing business for someone who doesn't hire Negroes?"

Today, under pressure from both the NYCCHR and the Madison Avenue Project, many of my informants are asking similar questions about their own industry: why is advertising so bad at hiring and promoting people of color? Why are there so few women in leadership and creative? *Mad Men* offers some uncomfortable answers; the show has much to teach us about the present. Tone-deaf tributes to the "good old days" of advertising strike the wrong note precisely because they hit so close to home. Nostalgia works best when its object is long dead and buried, but the ghosts of Madison Avenue live on through race and gender inequalities that continue to reproduce themselves through closed social networks. Asking whether individual men in advertising today still discriminate against individual women will not get us very far towards understanding the structural determinations of gender roles both at work and at home. Nor will looking only at the statistics of attrition fully explain women's processes of self-selection. Since the 1960s, the glass ceiling has been cracked and then broken—but only technically. Sexism now operates with a revolving door. The men are still in power, and the women are always free to leave. Similarly, racism in advertising is less the result of "individual psychological dispositions" than of a system of social segregation that continues to advantage White men. Social norms still privilege male creativity and leadership. Tacit

rules still allow Whites to hire other Whites on the basis of in-group "fit," familiarity, and even friendship. Many of these practices are hard to see. It's only during a *Mad Men* costume party, when women dress up as secretaries and Blacks have no role, that the ghosts come out of the mid-century modern woodwork to remind us just how strange things still are in the present.

Notes

1 I capitalize the terms Black and White throughout this chapter to signal how these terms reference group membership based on, but not strictly limited to, skin color.

2 While conducting fieldwork in New York City during the summer of 2010, I interviewed 11 HR managers and diversity officers representing six large advertising agencies with headquarters in Manhattan. I also spoke to a dozen more in informal and off-the-record settings. All direct quotes are drawn from the formal interviews, granted on the condition of anonymity. Moreover, given the sensitive nature of the subject matter at hand, I have opted to reveal gender and conceal race through the allocation of pseudonyms and have changed other identifying information when and where appropriate. I also interviewed several advertising practitioners working in the disciplines of creative, planning, and account management at other large agencies, and have included relevant quotes from two mid-level professionals at two different agencies (herein referred to as "Male Manager" and "Female Manager"). Other pseudonyms are initially marked in the text with quotation marks (e.g., "Darius"). Pseudonyms are based on the most common first names for females in the United States according to the 1990 U.S. Census. While the female names do suggest the overwhelming gender bias of human resources departments in general and my sample in particular (95 percent female), they also conceal the race/ethnicity of any individual informant (my total sample was approximately 60 percent White—all of whom worked in HR—and 40 percent people of color—most of whom worked on diversity issues, often within HR departments). I conceal race/ethnicity for two reasons. First, I did not ask my informants to self-identify and do not feel comfortable doing so on their behalf. Second, since people of color are in the extreme minority within agencies, too much specificity in this area could make these informants more susceptible to identification and therefore potentially put them at risk of retaliation from colleagues or supervisors.

3 I blurred the employees' faces and removed the agency's name in order to protect the identities of the subjects.

4 Hasan & Partners produced this publicity image and the CLIO Awards ran it, along with similarly themed images, in *Adweek* during February and March of 2011.

5 "The 16 advertising agencies that signed [the] diversity agreement with the NYC Commission on Human Rights in September 2006 are: Arnold Worldwide; Avrett, Free & Ginsberg; BBDO; DDB; Draft New York; Euro RSCG Worldwide; FCB New York; Gotham, Inc.; Grey Direct; Grey Interactive; Kaplan Thaler Group, Ltd; Merkley + Partners; Ogilvy & Mather; PHD USA; Saatchi & Saatchi; and Young & Rubicam" (NYCCHR 2006).

6 To be sure, the gender gap is not limited to advertising. Women in the United States still earn 77 cents on the dollar when compared to men, are only 3 percent of Fortune 500 CEOs and less than a quarter of law partners and politicians (Bennett, Ellison, and Ball 2010). Furthermore, recent sex discrimination lawsuits against companies including the *New York Post*, Toshiba, ESPN, Walmart, and Morgan Stanley suggest that women in the workplace continue to be chronically underpaid and seldom promoted across a variety of sectors.

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19

GOVERNING TASTE: PACKAGED FOODS, INSCRIPTION DEVICES, NUTRITION, AND THE CHILD

Charlene Elliott

The childhood obesity epidemic has prompted various regulatory measures when it comes to marketing food to children—from the industry-driven Children's Food and Beverage Advertising Initiative and San Francisco's ban (in 2010) on toys found in McDonald's Happy Meals, to the World Health Organization's 2010 *Set of Recommendations on the Marketing of Foods and Non-Alcoholic Beverages to Children* (WHO 2010). All of these measures seek to reduce the impact of marketing poorly nutritious foods to children—ostensibly protecting children's health through governing their taste. Such measures generally presume that limiting the *direct* marketing of poorly nutritious foods to children will, in fact, change their consumption practices.

Alongside these literal examples of regulation, however, are other social processes that work to govern children's "taste." This chapter examines how supermarket foods targeted at children offer up a unique space in which to probe the social construction of children's tastes and how they fit within the larger narratives of food and health currently playing out in the public imaginary. Taste, as Alan Hunt observes, is not merely socially constructed but also an object of regulation (1996: 236). Such regulation can be seen in the social norms surrounding table manners and etiquette, in the codification of recipes and techniques found in cookbooks, or—as Mary Douglas (1966) and Claude Lévi-Strauss (1969) pointed out many decades ago—in what a culture actually considers to be food (that is, as both edible and inedible or as the "raw" versus the "cooked"). The social regulation of taste can equally be seen in the popular literature around diets and dieting, in the more politicized narratives surrounding genetically modified foods, organics, or industrialized farming practices, and in journalistic books such as Michael Pollan's *In Defense of Food* (2008) or *Food Rules* (2009) —which pointedly dictate the "rules" for modern eating. According to Pollan's food rules, modern day taste should be governed "on the authority of tradition and common sense" (2008: 13), which will