

LIVING IN A CUL-DE-SAC

Women's representation and gender identity
in *Desperate Housewives*

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**LIVING IN A CUL-DE-SAC:
Women's representation and gender identity in Desperate Housewives.**

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Median tuottamat representaatiot vaikuttavat paljon siihen, miten ihmiset käsittävät todellisuuden. Tutkimalla representaatioita ja niiden vaikutuksia voidaan tuoda esille ideologiat ja valta-suhteet jotka vaikuttavat representaatioiden takana. Representaatiot eivät siis ole neutraaleja esityksiä, vaan niillä on aina oma näkökulmansa todellisuuteen.

Tämän tutkimuksen tarkoituksena on havainnollistaa naisten representointia mediassa ja tuoda esille sukupuoli-identiteetin rakentumista representaatioissa. Aineistona tutkimuksessa on käytetty tv-sarjan Täydelliset Naiset viittä jaksoa neljänneltä tuotantokaudelta. Sarjan ajankohtaisuus, suosio, laajalevikkisyys sekä naishahmojen runsaus toimivat perusteena aineiston valinnalle. Kriittisen diskurssintutkimuksen avulla tutkin, kuinka naisia representoidaan Täydelliset Naiset tv-sarjassa ja kuinka näiden naisten identiteetit vastaavat perinteisen kotivaimon identiteettiä. Perinteisen kotivaimon määritelmän lähteenä käytin Betty Friedanin Naisellisuuden harhat- teosta.

Analyysin tulokset osoittivat, että Täydellisten Naisten representaatio naisesta ei vastaa modernia naiskäsitystä, vaan tukee vanhanaikaisia normeja, ulkonäköä osittain lukuunottamatta. Tarkastelin representointia erilaisten teemojen kuten äitiyden, vaimouden sekä naisellisuuden kautta ja vertasin Täydellisten Naisten representoitua naista perinteiseen kotivaimoon. Tv-sarjan pintapuolinen modernius kätkee alleen arvostukset ja normit jotka tukevat 1950-luvulle kuuluvaa kotivaimoinstituuttia. Näin naisten identiteetit rakentuvat samalle perustalle kuin perinteisen kotivaimon identiteetti, vaikka naiset elävät täysin eri ajassa. Tällainen naisen representointi tukee olemassaolevia valtasuhteita, mutta rikkoo toisaalta stereotypisiä esityksiä naisista äiteinä ja vaimoina.

Tutkimuksestani on hyötyä kun tarkastellaan muita median tuottamia moderneja naisrepresentaatioita. Tutkimuksen suppeuden vuoksi aihe hyötyisi vielä tarkemmasta diskursiivisesta tutkimuksesta sekä visuaalisten ominaisuuksien lähemmästä tarkastelusta.

Asiasanat: critical discourse analysis, women's representation, gender identity,

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1. INTRODUCTION

Representations are formed through language, the use of which is never neutral. This in turn means that representations are never neutral; in contrast, they affect how people view reality and how social reality is constructed. By representing women in a specific way repeatedly, the representation becomes the accepted form of being a woman. Real women then react to this representation in ways which affect their lives. Language use therefore comes to create inequalities between genders through defining what is normal or common and what is not. In addition, identities are constructed through language, which means that by using language one does not only send out or react to messages but one also constructs oneself. Representations therefore also have an effect on individual and gendered identities. It is hence important to pay close attention to language and reveal the underlying power- relations and assumptions, so that representations which create inequalities and false expectations can be deconstructed.

The media creates powerful representations and therefore has a major role in affecting how people see themselves and reality. The media affects society as well as responding to changes in the society. In the 21st century, the media's role is greater than ever and therefore its representations are also more powerful than ever. Gender is constantly present in the media, and therefore the media has a major role in creating gender norms and stereotypes. TV-series for example present women and men repeatedly in specific ways and offer norms and stereotypes repeatedly to viewers, who are then affected by these representations.

In the 1950s, the media presented women persistently as housewives and therefore also encouraged women to be housewives who devoted their lives to family and home. In the 21st century a typical woman is not presented as a housewife but as an independent career woman. A recent TV-series, *Desperate Housewives*, presents, however, modern women as housewives and therefore combines

these two representations. My interest of study in the TV-series *Desperate Housewives* is the representation of the leading women characters and how their identities correspond to the identity of traditional housewife.

In the first part of this paper, I present the theoretical background of my research and introduce relevant previous studies for my research. In the second part I will clarify my study questions and elaborate on my study method and introduce the data more specifically. Then I will present my analysis and discuss its' results. To conclude I will sum up my research and suggest some further studies.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 Representing women

I begin with the idea that gender identity is constructed through representation in discourse. Language use can never be objective since discourse and representations have power and underneath them lies various ideologies. In this section I will at first introduce my method of critical discourse analysis, and discuss the construction of gender identity. Secondly, I will present feminist media studies. Thirdly, I will present the traditional housewife identity and the central concepts of my study. Finally I will look more into *Desperate Housewives* and present the post-feminist heroine.

2.1.1 Critical discourse analysis and gender identity

Language does not only represent the world, it also creates it by being meaningful. Language constantly stratifies, classifies, categorises and concentrates on certain matters while excluding other matters completely. Language is therefore never objective, in contrast, it is always biased. Representations are formed when discourses, in other words ways of using language, are organised in particular ways (Mäntynen 2008). Each representation always includes a point of view from which it represents the world. On the one hand these representations affect how people see the world. On the other hand, the dominant culture affects which kinds of representations are formed in the first place.

Fairclough (1997:14) states that while each aspect of every text is built upon choices, texts also

represent the world and construct identities. Representations can either reproduce or repeat the society's dominant values and therefore also either support the existing power-relations or deconstruct them. Identities, which are constructed in representations, then reflect the power relations in the society. By selecting certain words and expressions, media texts construct identities in ways which seem natural and which are stabilised according to the genre. These constructed identities change frequently, but because the media represents them according to norms, the variety of these identities depends much on the dominant power relations in the society. The construction of identities is also visible in the interpersonal features of language. Besides language, also other semiotic features should be considered when concentrating on the construction of identities. These features can also be studied with the help of Critical Discourse Analysis. (Fairclough 1997:165-168)

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) considers that beneath representations lie social ideologies, which alter the truth in order to achieve certain goals (Fairclough 1997). These ideologies are included already in the choices of vocabulary and grammar and therefore are always present in the use of language. The critical point of view attempts to uncover the ideological assumptions and the power relations which are invisible to language users (Fairclough 1997:75). By revealing ideologies, equality can be reached.

2.1.2 Feminist Media Studies

Media discourse has a central role in constructing gender as it provides roles for women and men, and gives tools for constructing gendered self (Kauppinen 2008). These roles define how women or men should behave, what is accepted and assumed or abnormal. That is, the media often situates women in the roles of the sweet innocent girl, the loving mother or the beautiful daughter. Feminist Media Studies examines how the world is gendered in the media's production, presentations and receptions. Feminist Media Studies tries to make gender visible in different fields of the media and considers existing power relations. Because the media does not only represent reality, it also affects values, beliefs, social identities and social relations. (Mäkelä 2006 : 15-46)

The relationship between the media's representations of women and real women is problematic because the media's representations do not preserve the existing femininity, on the contrary, the media constructs it. The media's representations do not actually present real women but give norms and roles for women. These norms and roles become part of everyday experiences and therefore they become adopted unconsciously. Instead of these gender roles, which are offered in gender's representations every day, subject positions should be formed; only then individuals can choose

their positions in communication situations and not be judged based on their roles (Mäkelä 2006: 29). The media can either challenge or repeat the stereotypical presumptions of gender which continue the oppression of women (Kauppinen 2008).

When the media repeats stereotypical assumptions of gender, it may end up representing all women or men as being alike. For example, Mulvey (1999: 62) has argued that women in the media are always in a passive role while men are active. This reflects how men have been active in society through the time while women have been forced to be passive. Women in the media are "to-be-looked-at" and therefore an emergence of woman stops the flow of the plot (Mulvey 1999:63). Women are the object of male gaze, either of a male character or a male watcher. Mulvey (1999) also states that the appearance of a woman has an erotic meaning which is the only value of women since they are otherwise passive figures. That is, women's meaning in media narratives is only sexual and does not have anything to do with the plot.

2.2 Traditional housewife identity

In order to research modern housewife identity construction, it is important for me to look into traditional housewife identity. Betty Friedan has researched traditional housewifery thoroughly and because her book *Feminine Mystique* (1967) is a classic, I shall mainly use her research and ideas to support my study. *Feminine mystique* is a central concept when discussing housewifery and women. It is a social phenomena and a belief construction, which was formed during the second world war and its main idea is that women's only duty and goal is to realise their femininity. When *feminine mystique* was at large, all beliefs and attitudes stated that women should be stay-at-home mothers.

For 15 years after the second world war, *feminine mystique* controlled women's lives in America. *Feminine mystique* claimed that women can find fulfilment only in motherhood and wifery. This claim became the centre of life for women and it was supported not only by men but also by the media, education and the dominant culture (Friedan 1967). Girls were brought up from an early age to be feminine in addition to becoming wives and mothers, which meant that they did not have to think about their future. *Feminine Mystique* actually even encouraged women to be ignorant of their individual identities and define themselves through their husbands, that is, to call themselves as "Mrs X". It was generally thought that being intelligent decreases femininity so excessive thinking was not suitable for women. Even the ideal woman represented in women's magazines in the 1960's was young, light hearted, almost a child-like girl, who was happy in the domestic world. Getting a

husband was the only desire of this girl (Friedan 1967: 28-57).

Friedan (1967: 9-27) states that women who worked full-time were seen to be unfeminine and undesirable, and therefore the only real option for girls was to become housewives if they wanted to be "real" feminine women. The *Feminine Mystique* even claimed that real feminine women do not miss having a career. Their profession was housewifery, which made them seem to be equal with their husbands, though they lived in separate spheres of life. The political job of a woman was to help her husband, keep the house respectable and teach the children. Women were then forced to limit their life to the private sphere and adjust to the ideology of the perfect housewife. The process of adjustment was not easy for any women since they had to suppress their own needs.

As women tried to adjust to the role of the housewife, they lost their own individual identities little by little because the role did not include anything that would have required individuality or unique creativity. *Feminine mystique* declined women the opportunity of having a career and competing with men, in other words, women were not to be determined nor ambitious. Friedan also found that advertisement companies tried to make housewives believe that by purchasing certain products they would not only become better housewives but also have individual identities. Housewives also tried to construct individual identities and fill up their lives by having more babies, doing charity, pleasing their husbands, spending more time on chores and controlling their children's life.

Housewife identity came then to be constructed by sexuality and children's and husband's lives (Friedan 1967: 237-249). For traditional housewives, sexuality did not mean looking sexy but it referred to the biological aspect of sexuality. Wives' ability to have babies and produce heirs for men was a crucial part of who they were and the only way to preserve some individuality. Being a mother was then a major part of being a housewife. *Feminine Mystique* emphasised how women find fulfilment from motherhood, so each woman was expected to have children once married. In her research, Friedan (1967:166-190) presented two types of mother figures: a "sacrificing mother" and a "silly mother". The sacrificing mother raised the children so that they were under an emotional power and dependent on their mother, while the mother was in turn dependent on the children. The silly mother was interested in beauty and took several hobby courses to spend her spare time outside the house. Children of some of these housewives became dependent and insecure, but spending too much time on children and monitoring their every movement was the only thing a housewife could do beside chores.

Friedan (1967: 214-236) states that, though on the surface level housewives seemed to be happy

simply doing chores and buying new items for the home, in reality women sought ways to escape their role. The wives were dependent on their husbands in every way and tried to live through them. It was said that women should not ask men to help them to do chores because it would disturb husbands' career. However, doing chores was the only thing they both could do around the house, and the wives wanted to share even something with their husbands. Though the media emphasised that taking care of the household was a valuable way of expressing oneself, the housewives did not find fulfilment from it. Many housewives felt desperation, which they could not express completely, so they tried to get rid of the feeling by having affairs, buying more things, having more hobbies or even by committing suicide (Friedan 1967: 214-249). Housewives experienced identity crisis, despair, frustration and exhaustion, which could be cured only by having their own lives and own individual identities, which the housewife role did not allow.

2.3 Looking at Desperate Housewives

Desperate Housewives has provoked a lot of discussion, even in the White House (Akass 2009). The series, created by Marc Cherry was first aired in 2004 and it immediately raised up topics such as gender norms, women's friendship, women's identity and struggles between work and home. Because of these topics, Desperate Housewives is good target for studying gender identity. The series events are located in Wisteria lane, a cul-de-sac in the 21st century and it presents middle-class housewives in leading roles, while men are only in supporting roles. These modern women who try to keep up the appearance are presented doing desperate things in attempts to protect their love ones. The Finnish translation of the title "Desperate Housewives", "Täydelliset Naiset" reveals well the irony which is present in the series, the housewives try to be perfect but struggle in maintaining perfection and being happy.

2.3.1 The post-feminist heroine

Kaufer-Busch (2009) attempts to discover the source of the unhappiness of modern women by analysing the modern heroine for example in Desperate Housewives. Though values have changed since the 1950's, modern women, who are more likely to be single and educated than married, still suffer from similar symptoms as traditional housewives. Kaufer-Busch (2009) claims that the feminine mystique that once controlled women no longer exists; however, the feminism that emancipated women has now formed a mystique which has created new norms for women. Today's

women feel restricted to a role which feminist mystique has created for them. The role provided by feminist mystique does not give women many options, but urges them to reject traditional gender roles and go to work; in other words, to act "like men". Feminist mystique does not therefore liberate women from restrictions but seems, according to Kaufer-Busch (2009), to create new, firmer norms for modern women.

According to Kaufer-Busch (2009), *Desperate Housewives* tries to bring back to life the feminine mystique and return to the old fashioned gender norms, but fails in it. Kaufer-Busch (2009) claims that *Desperate Housewives* destroys feminine mystique's central ideas of motherhood, monogamy and marriage while it presents post-feminist icons for women. However, already during the 1950's, when feminine mystique was the dominant ideology, housewives had affairs, controlled their children in compulsive ways and felt disappointed in their marriages (Friedan 1967). *Desperate Housewives* does not seem to break free from these actions, instead, it only presents them in this post-feminist time when old myths and prejudices still seem to live strongly. According to Akass (2006), the soap opera genre and post-modern nostalgia give no possibilities for new forms of female subjectivity in *Desperate Housewives*, instead the female characters stick with the patriarchal ideals of love and romance despite any difficulties. The female characters in *Desperate Housewives* are, however, active and leave the men to-be-looked-at (Akass 2006). These women's desire for romantic love supports ideals of feminine mystique but it also depicts the active role of the female characters. *Desperate Housewives* does not therefore break free from the ideals of feminine mystique but just presents them with a post-feminist twist.

Akass (2006:119-128) states that *Desperate Housewives* uncovers our culture's uncertain and inconsistent attitudes towards housewifery. The series well depicts how women cannot find fulfilment either from work or from home but rather struggle between them. Every female character offers a different point of view to femininity and domesticity. All the female characters develop through each season of the series and therefore each of them comes to depict motherhood, housewifery and femininity from many point of views.

2.3.2 Girl talk in *Desperate Housewives*

Because I am concentrating on representations of women in *Desperate Housewives*, it is important for me to consider the language in the series and therefore also to consider women's speech. *Desperate Housewives* situates a woman as an omniscient observer, auditor and narrator through the voice over of Mary Alice Young and therefore also gives women's talk plenty of space without

the strong restrictions, which have constrained women's talk in publicity for centuries. Mary Alice is an omniscient narrator who knows the housewives better than anyone and provides a female perspective for the series. Her female perspective decides what is worth talking about and therefore often leaves male perspectives without consideration. This is how *Desperate Housewives* brings forth women's experiences of every day life and presents how women confess their secrets and troubles and support each other. This does not, however, mean that *Desperate Housewives* should be automatically read as feminist text. Rather, the impact of post-feminism should be considered. (Akass 2006: 169-179)

Women's talk, commonly referred to as "girl talk" (Akass 2006: 208), has been considered a crucial matter in the feminist movement. According to Akass (2006), through talk women confess intimate matters to each other in addition to gossiping, but in the first season of *Desperate Housewives* the female protagonists do not confess their intimate thoughts to each other, instead, they confess others' thoughts (Akass 2006). Akass (2006) argues that the representation of the women's friendship does not support feminist ideas because in order to challenge gendered structures, the women's friendship should be represented as real intimate friendship. In the first seasons, these women keep their secrets to themselves as long as possible in order to seem perfect mothers and wives. However, the series also reflects female identity and experiences by concentrating on women's talk and struggles in life, which reveals the effect of post-feminism.

2.3.3 Title sequence and ideologies

The title sequence of the series presents the characters, context and ideologies of the series. Lancioni (2006) has studied the *Desperate Housewives*' title sequence, which consists of famous works of art which present women and their role through time. She states that the title sequence is post-feminist since all the presented women take control, not matter the context. This post-feminist point of view in the title sequence suggests that the series will also have a post-feminist approach.

In the title sequence, each piece of art is given a twist which presents a different ideology of how women can be active and take power for themselves. This point is important because it sets the tone for the series. Women have a completely different role than they have had in history; they are now in active subject roles instead of being passive objects. The original pieces of art are very serious and well depict how women's oppression has continued for centuries (Lancioni 2006: 129-131). In Hans Memling's famous Renaissance painting Adam and Eve are standing under a tree, but in the title sequence Eve reaches for the apple and huge apple drops and crushes Adam. In the very last

scene of the title sequence, the apple tree emerges again and the snake of paradise is now clearly visible. The snake hovers over the smiling housewives when apples drop to housewives hands. Lancioni (2006) states that this suggests that the old myths still remain. The sequence suggests that the series will take a serio/comic approach to the constructions of gender relationships and women's role in those relationships. Both patriarchy and feminism are central ideological issues in *Desperate Housewives*.

3. QUESTIONS, DATA AND METHOD

3.1 Research question

My research question is how women are represented in the tv-series *Desperate Housewives* and how the modern women's identities relate to the identity of traditional housewife's in *Desperate Housewives*. Because the media is so influential, I think it is important to consider whether "modern" women in the media actually are at all modern or whether they still resemble the traditional housewife. I shall conduct my research by analysing women's representation in *Desperate Housewives* and how the portrayal of women's identity matches with traditional housewife identity as portrayed by Friedan's *Feminine Mystique*.

3.2 Data

Desperate Housewives was chosen as the data for this research because the series is very new, it is still on the air and it has not been researched widely although it has been discussed a lot. The series is also very popular and it is aired around the world, so it influences many people. The series depicts women's lives well because all the leading characters are women. In addition, *Desperate Housewives* provides me the opportunity to include the question of traditional housewife identity into my research because all the women in the series are also housewives, though modern ones. The analysis focuses on the leading ladies, Bree, Susan, Lynette, Gabriel in addition to Edie and Katherine who have also very meaningful roles in my data. I approach these characters through themes instead of analysing them individually, due to the limited length of this study.

In order to study the representation of women in *Desperate Housewives* I have chosen to look into five episodes of the series. These five episodes, *Hello little girl*, *Opening Doors*, *Mother Said*, *The Gun Song* and *Free* are the final five of the season four. I chose these episodes because relevant

themes are well present in them and because they are the newest episodes that I could access for research. In these five episodes, the leading ladies are well presented and their relationships are discussed as well as aspects such motherhood, femininity and wifery. Two of the episode titles also refer to these themes, that is, *Hello little girl* and *Mother said*, which make these episodes even more appropriate for this research. Five episodes provide plenty of data for this kind of study because each episode is approximately 43 minutes long.

3.3 Method

I shall analyse my data using CDA and several concepts which are relevant for my research, that is, feminine mystique, housewifery, motherhood and femininity. By using CDA, ideologies, assumptions and power relations behind the text can be revealed and therefore it is an appropriate research method for analysing gender representations. In addition, CDA can be used to analyse the language and other semiotic features of the data which is important for a study which uses media text as its' data. However, this research is not very wide so not all the semiotic features will be analysed, in contrast the focus will be on the features which have the most effect on the women's representation. It would have been of course possible to select another analysis method but because gender is in question, CDA seemed the most natural choice.

In order to carry out the analysis, the data has to be watched through several times so that themes can be discovered and related parts can be coded. I am looking for how the women are described as mothers, wives and women, how they act and what kind of relationships are presented. CDA will be then used to analyse these findings. Because there are not ready made transcripts of the selected episodes, I will transcribe some important parts in order to be able to present examples of the data and analyse the actual text more closely.

4. ANALYSIS & DISCUSSION

I shall now discuss the results of my analysis and explain with the help of Critical Discourse Analysis how women are presented in *Desperate Housewives* and how the identities of these women compare to the identity of traditional housewives. With the support of my data I will demonstrate how the women in *Desperate Housewives* are actually very similar to the traditional housewives and not as modern as they superficially seem. This chapter has been organised in relevant themes through which the analysis is done. Each theme then includes comparison between

modern women and traditional housewives so that each aspect comes into consideration. First I will discuss how the women are represented as mothers and wives and how their relationships are represented. Secondly I will pay attention to femininity and how it is constructed.

4.1 Being a woman

In the five episodes that I have analysed the leading characters Bree, Lynette, Gabrielle, Susan, Katherine and Edie are all constantly represented as wives or mothers. In episode 15 Mike's mother Adele who has very old fashioned values says "A lady should be a chef in the kitchen, a maid in the living room and a whore in the bedroom." In my analysis it becomes clear that the women consider themselves more as mothers or wives than as individual women. Because women's identities are also based on these roles, they lack in individual identities. Being a woman also clearly means being feminine and in one of the first scenes in the data, Bree is set up as an example when she describes how to act like a real lady and therefore also emphasises the importance of graceful behaviour though the irony is visible(ep. 13, scene 1).

Women in *Desperate Housewives* are wives in several ways. Bree, Susan, Lynette and Gabriel are all wives with husbands and therefore they are also referred to as the wives of the husbands by calling them as "mrs x". Katherine is an ex-wife and therefore unmarried, however, she is marked as the ex-wife through the constant presence of her ex-husband. Even though she is not married and has had relationships after the divorce, her previous marriage still defines her strongly as an ex-wife. This makes Katherine part of the wife discourse. Edie is the only one with no husband nor visible ex-husband. She is left without this wife definition which separates her from the other women. In the episode 15, it becomes clear how the series represents a woman without a husband or stabile relationship.

LYNETTE: I can't believe she was blackmailing you. *p*
SUSAN: I can't believe she made a play for Orson.
GABY: I can. She went after Carlos and Mike and Karl. The only person she hasn't gone after is Tom. *acc*
LYNETTE: Y:et. This woman is out of control.
SUSAN: What are you gonna do?
LYNETTE: No: what are we gonna do?

The housewives are against a woman like Edie and the representation of Edie also supports the division between the housewives and Edie. Edie is seen as drinking, jogging, having a job as realtor, kissing with Bree's husband and wearing revealing clothes. Edie represents a threat and an inappropriate woman for the housewives and therefore the underlying ideology is also revealed. Housewives are represented as ideal women, whereas Edie becomes the sort of woman to avoid.

Being a wife becomes an even more important part of the women's representation. This kind of representation supports traditional values and makes a modern woman with determination and no husband or boyfriend seem like an exception.

While traditional housewives in the 1950s did everything they could to please their husbands, the wives in *Desperate Housewives* do everything they can to get what they want, that is, for example the best education for their children, new clothes and sex. The women are also active in protecting what is theirs. For instance in episode 13 Mike tells Susan that Bree's husband Orson once drove him over.

SUSAN: Well, you can tell me anything. That's what we talked about in all those sessions with the doctor. *p*

MIKE: All right. But if I tell you, you have to promise to let me handle this my own way.

.....

BREE: Who could it be at this hour.

SUSAN: (exhales heavily)

BREE: What on earth?

SUSAN: You are never to come near my family ever again. Do you understand? *ff*

BREE: What are you talking about?

SUSAN: Do you hear me Orson? *ff*

MIKE: Damn it, Susan... I told you to let me handle this.

BREE: Will someone please tell me what's going on?

SUSAN: So you don't know that your husband tried to kill Mike?

Though Mike specifically told Susan that he wants to handle the situation by himself, Susan bursts in to Bree's house and yells at Orson, in an effort to defend her husband and family. This is typical for women in *Desperate Housewives*. They try to protect and defend their husbands and family in every possible way and take power for themselves. Susan says "my family" and therefore clearly states that she protects also her husband, not only children. She places herself at the head of the house with this statement. Susan does not obey Mike's request but wants to handle the situation by herself. She does not aim at pleasing her husband in this situation nor let her husband to do as he would like to. This adds an interesting aspect to the representation of the housewives. Though the traditional values of family and home are emphasised, here a wife acts like a man would stereotypically act. That is to say, she yells, confronts a man, gives commands and acts like she wants without asking permission. In other words, she is being an independent woman who is not afraid to speak her mind. In the 1950s this kind of behaviour was unaccepted from women but men were expected to be active, determined and ambitious, so defending and taking care of their families was also expected from the husbands (Friedan 1967: 58-69).

Though the women do boss around their husbands, are the head of the family and lie to the men,

they nevertheless seem to be very dependent on men in the same ways as traditional housewives were dependent on their husbands. None of the women, except Edie who is not a wife, have real careers in these episodes, so they need the husbands to provide for them. It is stated by Bree that a woman can feel much safer if there is a man in the house, no matter how easily spooked the man is. However, by looking at this statement and the scene where it is stated (ep. 16, scene 12), it becomes clear that the women do not need the husbands for protection. Bree and Katherine are very good at shooting and are not afraid to use guns if necessary. In addition, when Katherine kicks her current man out of the house, she decides to start a catering company because she needs the money (ep 13, scene 2). So the women are not helpless without a man's incomes either. By noticing these two points it cannot be said that the women actually desperately need the men to provide for them or to protect them. The women, however, want the men to be with them and love them so they need them emotionally and therefore by being wives they become dependent on them also in other ways. This supports Akass' (2006) ideas of the women in *Desperate Housewives* questing for romantic love and therefore supporting the patriarchal ideals of love. The housewives are in this way represented as women who need men emotionally and therefore come to act out the feminine mystique ideal; to be stay-at-home mothers.

In the traditional family of the 1950s, the man is the head of the family and woman takes care of the children and this is how today's media often also represents family. As the title sequence of *Desperate Housewives* suggests, in the series the relationship of women and men is not so simple though old ideals are still present (Lancioni 2006). In *Desperate Housewives*, it is the women who are the heads of the house and who decide how to use the money, how to raise the children and when to have sex. The women own all the power around the household so when men come back from work, their power diminishes significantly. This kind of representation of wives and husbands' relationship breaks the norms which are traditionally set for gender relationships. Because the plot is centered on a neighbourhood and therefore in the private sphere of life, women are hardly ever in a position when their power would be less significant than men's. However, when Lynette and Tom go to see a psychologist and are out of the neighbourhood, Lynette is still the one with more power than Tom.

DR. DOLAN: ...Do you love Kayla?.... Lynette? I was talking to you.
LYNETTE: Oh, well..sure, I've been very good to her.
TOM: That wasn't his question. *acc*
LYNETTE: (inhales) Do you have a diploma on your wall, Tom? I don't think so, zip it. *acc*

In this scene (ep. 15, scene 9), there are two men of whom one is Lynette's husband and the other

one is a doctor. They agree and try to get Lynette do something that she would not like to. Lynette is put in a very awkward and difficult situation in which women are often represented as giving in. However, Lynette tells Tom to "zip it" because she does not like the fact that two men are trying to make her feel like a bad mother which she is not. "Zip it" is a very powerful command after which Tom hesitates in his speech turns. This demonstrates how much power Lynette has over her husband. Lynette tries to find a solution which would suit her the best but finally agrees to try what the doctor suggests because the man is a doctor and therefore professional. Though Lynette lost this power struggle she was actively involved and used her power though there were two men against her. This shows how she as a woman has power that may also go above the private sphere because one of the opponents was a doctor who belongs mainly to the public sphere of life. Traditional housewives did not have power outside home, so trying to compete with two men would not have been possible for them. *Feminine Mystique* stated that women should not challenge their husbands so behaving like Lynette was denied from them. Traditional housewives were also expected to please their husband so showing resistance against husband's wishes outside the home would have been unacceptable (Friedan 1967).

It has to be noticed, however, that even though the women's power may have potential to be effective also in the public spheres of life, there are not much evidence of it in the series. The men live all the time in both private and public sphere but the women are only in the private sphere which leads to situation in which they are dependent on men because the men are not restricted to home. This dependency keeps up the old values and myths and reminds of the situation in the 1950's. The potential power in public life does not then have actual meaning and the women are restricted to the private sphere of life. The fact that the women in *Desperate Housewives* are even trying, is, however, important. The traditional housewives did not even attempt to use their power outside the house, instead they simply believed to be equals with their husbands though they lived in different spheres of life. *Feminine Mystique* declined the opportunity to argue and compete with men if the women wanted to preserve their femininity, so women did not dare to even try (Friedan 1967).

The representation of women's and men's relationship in *Desperate Housewives* seems to turn upside down the traditional gender roles. Women's role in the series is very significant, they are in leading roles and they are the ones who are heard the most. They are active and defend their families in addition to doing what they want when they want. The men, however, are in supporting roles, have usually only a few turns to speak up and are bossed around by the wives. It is the men who are kicked out of the house if there is a separation in question and it is the men who lose the

children in divorce. The women are even seen to use physical power towards men (ep.13 scene 4).

CARLOS: Or.. here's a thought...you could get a job.
GABY : Why don't you get a job?
CARLOS: Doing what?
GABY : Put flags on pencils and sell them at the airport. *acc p*
What do I care? Just get out of my kitchen.*f*
(slaps Carlos)
DOG: (growls)
GABY: O:h
What's this about?
CARLOS: I don't know. I guess she doesn't like it when you smack me.
GABY : Oh so now I can't hit my husband in my own house?

There is, however, some comical features in this scene because Gabrielle is so tiny compared to her husband, though he is blind. Gaby does not want to get a job, so she suggests a ridiculous job for her husband and says then "What do I care?" This is a sign that she does not really care where the money comes from as long as she does not have to make it for the family. In addition, after slapping Carlos, she says: "Oh so now I can't hit my husband in my own house?" as if showing that she has the right to do so because it is her house and her husband. This behaviour might support Kaufer-Busch (2009) idea of women acting like men because there is a modern norm created by feminist mystique that encourages active behaviour. However, the women are not seen to reject any other gender norms than being passive. In the above presented scene, Gabrielle replaces herself in a typical place of a woman, that is, in the kitchen. She says "Just get out of my kitchen" which shows that she feels the kitchen is her place. Though the women are active and in leading roles, their activity is still restricted by the roles of mother and wife. Even the traditional housewives were dominant in the households so the representation of the relationships between women and men is quite traditional though in the series women are in leading roles and men only in supporting roles.

4.1.1 Motherhood

MARY-ALICE: It happens the second Sunday of every May.. We celebrate the women who give us life and so much more..The ones who protect us at all costs.. Who have the courage to fight those who would do us harm.. Who put our happiness ahead of their own. But mostly, we celebrate a mother's love which is constant, eternal.

Mary-Alice closes episode 15 by describing mothers in the series. Each mother is presented with her child and even Edie, the only non-stay-at-home-mother, is seen to call her son and leave Wisteria Lane to be with him at the end of the episode. Mary-Alice describes the mothers almost as

saints and the presentations of the women are filled with smiles and warm atmosphere. Taking care of their children is in this way clearly presented as the most important thing in women's life, which also attempts to justify the fact that all the mothers are stay-at-home-mothers. Even Gabrielle who is the only non-mother feels pressure to have children because her husband wants children so badly.

On the other hand, Gabrielle's husband also says that Gabrielle should get a job (ep. 13 scene 4). Being a mother does not then prevent having a job, but it makes it very difficult to have a career because the men do not participate in taking care of the children that much. The struggle between being a mother and having a job is voiced by Bree when Katherine asks her to join the business(ep.13 scene 2). These modern women still find it difficult to combine work and family in balanced way which was also a major problem for women in the 1950s. In order to be a mother and have a career in *Desperate Housewives*, gender norms should be rejected as Kaufer-Busch(2009) argues. This is not, however, widely done in *Desperate Housewives*.

The representation of the women as mothers includes many kinds of mothers. For example, Susan has a teenage girl, Lynette has five young children and Bree has two teenage children who have moved away and a new baby. The common features are that they are stay-at-home-mothers who are devoted to their children and that the women do everything to protect their children despite not acting very motherly at all times or looking like typical mothers.

BREE: ...Oh. Hello Dylan. You look lovely.
KATHERINE: She has a date. With a boy I haven't met yet.
DYLAN: It's just a movie. It's no big deal.
KATHERINE: Be that as it may, it's the, what, third time you've gone out?
I don't even know his name.
DYLAN: Mom, I told you..I'm not ready for you to meet him..When I am you'll know...Good night, mrs. Hodge
BREE: Good night.
Okay.Back to business. How do you feel about Parker House Rolls?
I mean, personally, I think they're played out.
KATHERINE: Actually, Bree, could we pick this up again tomorrow? *p*
BREE: Well, of course. Is everything all right?
KATHERINE: Oh yes. I just need to go spy on my daughter.
BREE: The key is to keep one car between yours and hers at all times. Have fun!

In this example (scene 10, ep.14) motherhood is presented in several ways. First of all, Dylan calls Katherine "mom" marking Katherine as one, and Katherine tries to make Dylan feel guilty because she has not presented her date though she should, because Katherine, as her mother, has the right to know who her daughter dates. Second of all, the unconventional act that intrudes on one's privacy, that is, spying, is justified by the fact that Katherine is a worrying mother. The business meeting is

ended due to motherly responsibilities and Bree even says "The key is to keep one car between yours and hers at all times. Have fun!" which shows that she thinks it is okay to spy on her daughter and that she has also done it quite many times. Bree even encourages the act by saying "have fun". The mothers share the idea that taking care of children is more important than work and that doing something such as spying is okay when there is a child in question.

Though the mothers are presented as saints by Mary-Alice, they use desperate measurements in raising their children, so they are not perfect mothers either. For instance Lynette is presented giving extra cough drops to her children to get some quiet reading time, Susan has been dependent on her daughter's help for years and Katherine even covered up the death of her biological daughter Dylan. The representation of women as mothers does not therefore contain an ideology of the perfect mother who cannot do wrong but it does contain an idea that a woman is very powerful when it comes to being a mother. The women are seen to be responsible for how their children will do later in life and what sort of people they will be. This sense of responsibility makes the women try as hard as they can to be the best mothers. The mother in *Desperate Housewives* dedicates herself to her children and controls them in similar ways than traditional housewives did. However, whereas traditional housewives spent all their energy on chores and children without their husbands' help (Friedan 1967: 28-57), in *Desperate Housewives*, the mothers demand their husbands help. Friedan (1967) presented the two mother figures, the silly mother and sacrificing mother, who represented traditional housewives as mothers. In *Desperate Housewives* the mother-discourse gives room for many kind of mothers and therefore it does not force women into a very restricted role. Trying to be a good mother is seen as an important value but being perfect mother is not expected. In this sense, *Desperate Housewives* does not repeat the stereotypical representation of women as perfect mothers. It does, however, emphasise the importance of being a mother in the same way that the media in the 1950's did.

4.1.2 Friendship between the ladies

The friendships between the women are depicted in many ways and they are obviously very important in the series because they are the only real non-family relationships that these women have. By analysing these relations, more can be said about women's representation and the meaning of these relationships for the women's identities becomes more clear. In Friedan's (1967) study, friendships between the women were not discussed widely because in her research there was no

evidence of that many important friendships between women.

Women in *Desperate Housewives* are seen together in pairs and groups several times. They gossip, confide and share a lot between each other and therefore also support each other in difficult situations. This kind of representation of women's conversation is also very typical because gossiping is seen as something typical for women, not for men. Women are represented as being loyal to each other if friends and they value friendship as much as their marriages. On the surface level, the representation of women's friendship is clearly positive and it encourages relations between women, especially because women understand other mothers and wives better than anyone else. This kind of representation would break gender norms and supports feminist ideals because positive relationships between women have traditionally been depicted only in feminist writings.

EDIE: Hi guys. What's going on?
BREE: I told them everything Edie. About Orson, Benjamin, everything.
EDIE: You did?
LYNETTE: She did. So you can kiss your little blackmail scheme good bye.
EDIE: Well I was only doing it because...
GABY: You were only doing it because you're the devil.
EDIE: Okay. fine. *f* Chew me out and let's get on with it.
SUSAN: It's not like all the other times, Edie...We're done. *p*
EDIE: ...Done?
SUSAN: We're not inviting you to poker, we're not talking to you, we're not even going to wave when you jog by. From now on, you're invisible.
GABY : And we're going to make sure that every woman in five-mail radius knows the kind of crap you pulled. *acc*
LYNETTE: We tried to be your friends but you don't even understand what that word means. So now on we're going to be something you do understand.

The example (ep. 15, scene 10) shows, however, that not all the women are loyal to each other. Neither Edie nor Katherine belong to this group of friends who gather once a week to play poker and therefore when Edie tries to blackmail Bree, she confides to her friends and they together then confront Edie. In addition to real friendship between women, these sorts of shallow friendships are also represented. These shallow friendships are also explained by reasons. Edie is not a real housewife, she sleeps around with others' husbands and dresses provocatively, whereas Katherine has been living on the street now only a short while and keeps to herself very much. It is several times repeated "we're supposed to be friends" to Edie in particular, which shows that the supposed friendship has never existed, but because they are neighbours they are supposed to be friends. The representation of these shallow friendships does not support feminist ideals or break gender norms, instead it shows how women are hurt by other women which does not promote friendships between women.

The basis for the friendship between the women is the fact that they are housewives, mothers and neighbours. They would be otherwise lonely with no support when the husbands are working, so when they are friends with each other, they can get help in desperation. The situation was the same for the traditional housewives, though they did not even know how to voice out their problems. All the women in *Desperate Housewives* have, however, secrets which they try to keep to themselves as long as possible. This decreases the depth of the friendship but it also shows that when these secret reveal themselves, nobody judges their friends because they have their own secrets too. The matter that the women try to keep up the appearance as long as possible signals that the friendships are not after all that meaningful nor deep. In a difficult situation the women in *Desperate Housewives* support each other, but if one can survive without support, the friendship consist purely of gossiping. This kind of representation of women's relationship does support Akass'(2006) arguments of shallow friendships between women and not feminist ideals because the women seem to confess only when necessary.

4.2 Femininity

In *Desperate Housewives* the women are constantly presented in new clothes with shiny hair. Even if something bad happens, like when Bree's car breaks down and she is forced to walk home with a ice statue in a carriage, the women try to preserve their grace and looks. All the women in *Desperate Housewives* are very feminine in appearance, so being a woman means also looking feminine.

As Friedan stated, having a job meant that a woman would become unfeminine in the 1950's America. In the 21st century's *Wisteria Lane*, the women look very feminine and have no ambitious careers. By analysing the women's femininity the underlying ideology of what makes women feminine comes clear. The jobs that these women have include illustrating, throwing parties, cooking, planning flower arrangements and presenting houses. None of these jobs require physical strength, having regular work days or leaving the neighbourhood, and therefore they are also feminine jobs. In episode 15(scene 8), Adele tells Susan that drawing is not a real job but a hobby.

ADELE: Eh-eh..You know it's a shame that Michael has to work so hard. But I guess with all the money troubles you two have been having.

SUSAN: He told you that? Well, we're getting past it.

ADELE: Only because my son is working himself to the bone. You know it wouldn't hurt you to get a job.

SUSAN: I have a job.

ADELE: Oh you mean your little drawing?

...Well it's great for a woman to have a hobby, personally I
 decoupage, but I'm talking about something that pays.
 SUSAN: Children's books pay
 ADELE: Really? How much?
 SUSAN: ...You know, I think, actually, I might have those dough
 hooks...somewhere.
 ADELE: Oh dear, I've insulted you I'm just trying to be helpful.
 SUSAN: No no, it's fine Adele..Mama.

However, Adele does not represent a typical woman in *Desperate Housewives*, in contrast, she is represented as a southern elderly woman with old fashioned values and different ideas of how society works. Adele talks about Susan's work in a way that makes it sound like a hobby by comparing it to her own hobby, decoupage. Her opinions can be considered as old fashioned but they show that Susan's job is not considered to be a career even by Mike's mother. Susan does not seem know how to stand up for herself. She just states "Children's books pay" and instead of continuing, she hides behind kitchen cupboards and tries to look for dough hooks. She is not able to confront her mother-in-law nor justify her job well enough. Femininity is therefore connected to jobs also in *Desperate Housewives*. These jobs do not make the women unfeminine because they support feminine actions and behaviour which is often described as feminine.

Women in *Desperate Housewives* are not, however, weak which is commonly connected to a highly feminine woman. Bree is seen to hit Edie and going to shooting range with Katherine, while Susan is seen to yell at Orson, Lynette stays strong even in prison and Gabriel helps her friend to escape the police. These actions are actively performed and are not traditionally feminine in anyway. However, each of these acts is made wearing high heels, dresses, perfect hair and makeup. There are many contradictory aspects in *Desperate Housewives* which either support or destroy femininity. On the one hand the ladies are almost always in high heels, behaving gracefully and wearing very feminine clothes which was also typical for traditional housewives. On the other hand, they shoot guns, hit, yell and play poker. By looking at the speech, actions and visuality it can be seen that these unfeminine actions are forced in to the femininity discourse by emphasising the feminine looks, speech topics and manners of these women (episode 16 scene 12).

(gun shooting)
 KATHERINE: Bob liked the idea of the onion and white asparagus
 tart. *f*
 BREE: Wonderful! With a little goat cheese.
 KATHERINE: Oh and Lee asked for stuffed mushrooms.
 (gun shooting stops)
 BREE: Those with roasted green beans as our side dishes...
 Nice tight grouping. You are not rusty at all.
 KATHERINE: Thank you. It felt good.

Though Katherine and Bree are shooting, they are still party planning and talking about cooking. They describe the dishes in detail as if showing expertise in the area of cooking, and Katherine states that shooting "felt good" so also feelings are emphasised over the action. These topics can be considered to be feminine, so the actual act of shooting does not seem inappropriate. Being feminine in *Desperate Housewives* means then being feminine in a new way, that is, being feminine does not mean being passive, uneducated nor just to-be-looked-at. *Desperate Housewives* does not therefore reproduce Mulveys' (1999) idea of women having only passive and sexual meaning in media representations. It has to be noted, however, that the series does not either reject gender norms; in contrast, the series emphasises women's femininity while they perform unfeminine actions. That is to say, actions are justified by other feminine features, such as the manners.

The women of *Desperate Housewives* are in many ways quite stereotypes in a sense that they all are slim and feminine. There are no tomboys nor muscular women with short hair and sneakers. The women represent modern ladies as well as they possibly can by wearing high heels, makeup and colourful dresses very often. The visual representation of women repeats therefore many norms and does not represent a woman who would be different from today's beauty ideals. Individual styles are supported by the individualistic 21st century and give room for a few alternations, so not all women should look alike though features like beauty and slimness are valued. Each woman in the series has her own individual style that evolves as the characters life changes. For example Susan's style is more young, comfortable and sexy than Bree's who dresses conservatively and wears pearls. The looks are very important to the women, which is particularly clear when it comes to Gabrielle who is always in high heels if not doing yoga (ep. 13 scene 4)

GABY: (sighs) Fine. One treat. That's it. Those things are expensive. And until your disability kicks in, we have to tighten our belts.
CARLOS: So I guess that means you won't be getting your hair done anymore?
GABY : ...Carlos, remember what my fingers look like? *p*
Just picture the middle one a:ll by itself. *pp*
Besides, you're the one who married me for my looks. *acc*
CARLOS: Well, I'm blind now so as long as you use deodorant I'm good.
GABY : Do you have any idea how selfish you sound right now? *f*
Just because you're blind the world should suffer?
CARLOS: I'm just saying, you know, 300 dollars visits to Mr. Francois...
GABY : Carlos, I'm getting my hair done. End of discussion. *acc ff*

In this scene Gabrielle (Gaby) is very firm and active, she states that because it was Carlos who married her for her looks, there is no discussion of cutting back expenses when it comes to her beauty routines. She uses extra time to describe a "bad" gesture since Carlos cannot see her actually doing it. Gabrielle does not even consider not going to hair salon just because her husband is blind

now because her looks is so important to her. But instead of saying so and admitting it, she says that the world would suffer. Traditional housewives were encouraged to take care of their looks, spend money on beauty products and wear feminine clothes and makeup at all times. Media encouraged already then women to spend time on shopping and dressing up, so the husband's could not prevent them (Friedan 1967: 191-213). Taking care of oneself seems to be as important to women in the 21st century as it was in the 1950s.

The visual representation of the women shows beautiful, fit women who do not look like mothers or typical housewives. A mother in *Desperate Housewives* can look impeccable, sexy, young and wear expensive clothes. Being a mother or housewife does not give a reason for not taking care of ones looks. Looking young, slim and sexy are important values for women in *Desperate Housewives* and they all also try to live up to these values. None of the leading ladies represents a different kind of woman who would not represent today's beauty ideals, so the series does not try to break these norms or ideals, instead, it reproduces them. In the 1950s the beauty ideals were different than now, but also back then women tried to look like an ideal woman for example by wearing their hair in a certain way and toning up. What is also common between them and the the women in *Desperate Housewives*, is that they both make themselves up though they would be just cleaning up the house. Both try to be attractive to the men, so following the beauty ideals also keeps up women's oppression. Though individual style is encouraged today, the basic beauty ideals, that is, being slim, beautiful, fit, and feminine, still remain the same, so the traditional housewives and women in *Desperate Housewives* try to reach a similar kind of beautyideal.

5. CONCLUSION

The purpose of the current study was to present how women are represented in *Desperate Housewives* and show how the seemingly modern women in *Desperate Housewives* actually have quite similar identities as traditional housewives. Though women's representation in the series differs from other TV-series quite much on superficial levels, underneath are still the same conservative and traditional values. The series assumes that every woman wants a husband and a white picket fence. This kind of representation supports the dominant power-relations of the Western society by presenting heterosexual relationships and gender norms as central values (Fairclough 1997:165-168).

Referring back to the presented research question, it can now be said that the women in *Desperate*

Housewives are represented in a way that supports traditional values in many ways, though impacts of the 21st century are also visible. The representation does not repeat today's stereotypes, instead, it challenges them by providing an image of a housewife, who is not an ideal woman today. Keeping Friedan's (1967) study in mind, analysing the episodes revealed how seemingly modern features, are actually very traditional. As wives, women in the 1950's were as bossy and dominant as women in *Desperate Housewives*. As mothers, traditional housewives were very controlling and committed, which describes well also the mothers in *Desperate Housewives*. The women in *Desperate Housewives* are very restricted to their roles as mothers and wives and live according to traditional gender norms though they look like modern women.

By comparing traditional housewives women in *Desperate Housewives*, similarities were found from each theme : first of all, their identities construct similarly through sexuality and domesticity. Secondly, motherhood and wifery define the women dominantly. Thirdly, not even the *Desperate Housewives* can settle just to keep up the appearance and look after the children but they need more to feel like individuals. Fourthly, both's lives are restricted to the private sphere of life which is not enough for them. With the support of the findings it can be said that the represented woman is not a modern woman and that her identity is constructed in the same way as traditional housewife's identity.

Finally, a number of important limitations need to be considered. First, because of the limited length of this paper, the topic could not been studied more widely. The topic would benefit from a deeper discourse analysis, concentrating only on the language of the series. This could be done by paying attention to only one episode instead of picking a few as in the present study. Secondly, because the series is still on air, a comparison between old and new episodes could be done to see if the used language and word choices have changed. It might also be useful to compare the series to another current tv-series, like *Mad Men* which openly situates the characters in the 1950s. Third, the data would benefit from a wider visual analysis since it is a tv- series. Further studies should be done to establish whether the visual representation matches completely the representation created by the language.

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TRANSCRIPTIONS

Episode 13

Susan and Bree are at Susan's home. Bree is packing their things because she and Orson are moving back home after the hurricane.(scene 1)

BREE: (sighs) - that's everything I guéss

SUSAN: Well if you forgot something, you can just come back for it. *acc*
or... you could just not leáve.

BREE: o:h that's so sweet *p*

But our house is liveable again- the downstairs, anyway.. and we have ímposed long enough *pp*

... Besides Mike is coming home tonight and you're gonna need the house to yourséives

SUSAN: Well..before you go I just want to say that- having you here these last few weeks (tearful)

BREE Susan, I'm just going across the street. There's no need to act like a silent-movie heroine.

acc

SUSAN: I know I just... I can't stop now I broke the seal (starts crying)

BREE: Well as much as I appreciate this naked display of emotion you know how this sort of thing makes me uncomfortable. *acc*

SUSAN: I can't help it. My hormones are in overdrive...Didn't you get that way when you were pregnant?

BREE; No, never.

SUSAN: Really? Not even when you heard an acoustic guitar?

BREE: No, never.

SUSAN: Oh, I just can't control myself like that *acc*

BREE: O:h sure you can. *p*

Whenever I feel my emotions getting the best of me I simply picture an empty box.

And I take whatever I'm feeling and put that in the box.

And then, I picture myself putting the box away in a big empty closet and closing the door. Then, if I have time, I go back.. *dec p*

and open the box and deal with the emotion... in private..like a lady.

SUSAN:Thanks. I'm gonna try that

BREE: ---

SUSAN: So you don't think I act like a lady?

(sobs)

BREE:Prove me wrong sweetie..prove me wrong.

Bree is unpacking outside, Katherine comes to talk to her. (scene 2)

KATHERINE: How's the move going? Need an extra pair of hands?

BREE: No thanks we're almost done.

KATHERINE: Okay. Well, I won't get in your way then... Let me just run something by you

I got a call today.. from a couple..who loved our work on the Founder's Ball.
 BREE: Oh, how sweet.
 KATHERINE: Yes..And they wanna hire us to do their anniversary party.
 BREE: Hire us? But we're not a business.
 KATHERINE: We could be. Think about it. We do the exact same thing we did at the Ball only this time we walk away with a big fat cheque.
 BREE: Katherine, need I remind you we nearly came to blows over floral choices?
 KATHERINE: I think it's our creative friction that makes us a great team.
 BREE: I think it's our creative friction that nearly caused me to poison you.
 KATHERINE: All right. Look Bree I'm gonna be honest with you. With Adam out of the house, I really need the money.
 BREE: I sympathise..I do. But I have a new baby and it's really more work than I care to take on right now.
 KATHERINE: I understand...Guess I'll just do it myself then.pp
 BREE: Excuse me? *pp*
 KATHERINE: Now, did you take a picture of those table settings you designed? I'd love to get copies. The couple raved about them.
 BREE: Yeah..sure..You know I don't think it's fair that you should profit from something that I designed.
 KATHERINE: You're right. It would only be fair if I asked you to do this with me which I did and you said no, so on we go...I hope you don't mind if I serve your cinnamon apple crumble.
 BREE: That's a cherished recipe from my grandmother.
 KATHERINE: Well, now it's a cherished recipe from Catering by Katherine.
 BREE: O:h I see what's going on here..This is shameless emotional blackmail.
 KATHERINE: A:nd?
 BREE: And you worked beautifully. I'm in.

Susan tries to new lingerie. She's getting ready for night. Mike is exhausted and troubled by something. (scene 3)

SUSAN: Maternity lingerie..Yeah right...Why don't they just call it what it really is, a pup tent to hid your stretch marks.
 MIKE: (chuckles) Actually, if it's okay, I'm really not in the mood right now. I'm sorry. *p*
 SUSAN: I understand.
 MIKE: Thanks.
 SUSAN: You just don't wanna be crushed under the weight of a repulsive cow. *p*
 MIKE: That's not is.
 SUSAN: No, I get it...Really. I knew this day was coming, I just..didn't know it would be a day when I was so horny.
 MIKE: Honey, I still find you incredibly sexy..it's me. I've just got a lot on my mind right now.
 SUSAN: Oh? What's going on? *pp dec*
 MIKE: - I found out something today.. I didn't wanna tell you but.. *p*
 SUSAN: Well, you can tell me anything. That's what we talked about in all those sessions with the doctor.
 MIKE: All right. But if I tell you, you have to promise to let me handle this my own way.

...

BREE: Who could it be at this hour.
SUSAN: (exhales heavily)
BREE: What on earth?
SUSAN: You are never to come near my family ever again. Do you understand? *ff*
BREE: What are you talking about?
SUSAN: Do you hear me Orson? *ff*
MIKE: Damn it, Susan... I told you to let me handle this.
BREE: Will someone please tell me what's going on?
SUSAN: So you don't know that your husband tried to kill Mike?

Gaby is cleaning up kitchen, Carlos comes in with his eye-dog. (scene 4)

CARLOS: I'm giving her a treat
GABY: Carlos, I said no *f*
DOG: (barks)
GABY: (sighs) Fine. One treat. That's it. Those things are expensive. And until your disability kicks in, we have to tighten our belts.
CARLOS: So I guess that means you won't be getting your hair done anymore?
GABY: ...Carlos, remember what my fingers look like? *p*
Just picture the middle one a:ll by itself. *pp*
Besides, you're the one who married me for my looks. *acc*
CARLOS: Well, I'm blind now so as long as you use deodorant I'm good.
GABY: Do you have any idea how selfish you sound right now? *f*
Just because you're blind the world should suffer?
CARLOS: I'm just saying, you know, 300 dollars visits to Mr. Francois...
GABY: Carlos, I'm getting my hair done. End of discussion. *acc ff*
DOG: (barks)
GABY: What are you barking at? You got your damn treat. *ff*
You know if we really wanna save money you could cut down on those Cuban cigars.
CARLOS: Or.. here's a thought...you could get a job.
GABY: Why don't you get a job?
CARLOS: Doing what?
GABY: Put flags on pencils and sell them at the airport. *acc p*
What do I care? Just get out of my kitchen.*f*
(slaps Carlos)
DOG: (growls)
GABY: O:h
What's this about?
CARLOS: I don't know. I guess she doesn't like it when you smack me.
GABY: Oh so now I can't hit my husband in my own house?

Episode 14

Mrs. McClusky(Karen) comes and interrupts Katherine's and Bree's meeting. Dylan is leaving for a date. (scene 5)

KAREN: He's a big grey cat. So if you could just keep an eye out.
KATHERINE: Of course.
BREE: Actually, Karen, when I'm done here I could go and try to find Toby for you.
acc

KAREN: Thanks Bree. I appreciate that. If you do find him...don't look him in the eye. It angries him up. (leaves)

KATHERINE: That's very nice of you to help her, and it'll take your mind off of everything with Orson too.

BREE: I hope so...Truth is, I miss him. And I'll probably let him come home eventually I just...need to know he understands the gravity of what he did. *p*

KATHERINE: Well, I don't know what he did but be careful...some men say they're going to change and they can't.
(Dylan enters the room)

BREE: ...Oh. Hello Dylan. You look lovely.

KATHERINE: She has a date. With a boy I haven't met yet.

DYLAN: It's just a movie. It's no big deal.

KATHERINE: Be that as it may, it's the, what, third time you've gone out?
I don't even know his name.

DYLAN: Mom, I told you..I'm not ready for you to meet him..When I am you'll know...Good night, mrs. Hodge

BREE: Good night.
Okay.Back to business. How do you feel about Parker House Rolls?
I mean, personally, I think they're played out.

KATHERINE: Actually, Bree, could we pick this up again tomorrow? *p*

BREE: Well, of course. Is everything all right?

KATHERINE: Oh yes. I just need to go spy on my daughter.

BREE: The key is to keep one car between yours and hers at all times. Have fun!

Episode 15

Mike's mother comes for a visit and gives Susan a present. Julie is Susan's daughter, Mike husbands.(scene 7)

SUSAN: Wo:w- It's all recipes.

ADELE: Not just any recipes. Some of these have been in my family since before the war of Northern Aggression.

JULIE : You mean the civil war?

ADELE: I mean what I mean.

SUSAN: Uhm..Well I guess Mike didn't tell you that I'm uh-oh, really not a cook. *pp*

ADELE: Oh, no, he told me...That's why I gave you these recipes. And I'm gonna teach you how to make them, too.

MIKE: Isn't that nice honey?

ADELE: My Meemaw always told me that a lady should be a chef in the kitchen, a maid in the living room and a whore in the bedroom.

SUSAN: Uh-oh hah.

ADELE: And Michael says you've only got one of those covered so I'm gonna help you with the other two..uh excuse me.

Mama (Adele) and Susan are starting to bake. (scene 8)

ADELE: Michael is going to be so happy after a long day at work he can come home to a nice home-cooked southern meal.

SUSAN: Although he also enjoys coming home to sesame chicken from Red panda- uh- and

they deliver.

ADELE: Eh-eh..You know it's a shame that Michael has to work so hard. But I guess with all the money troubles you two have been having.

SUSAN: He told you that? Well, we're getting past it.

ADELE: Only because my son is working himself to the bone. You know it wouldn't hurt you to get a job.

SUSAN: I have a job.

ADELE: Oh you mean your little drawing?

....Well it's great for a woman to have a hobby, personally I decoupage, but I'm talking about something that pays.

SUSAN: Children's books pay

ADELE: Really? How much?

SUSAN:You know, I think, actually, I might have those dough hooks...somewhere.

ADELE: Oh dear, I've insulted you I'm just trying to be helpful.

SUSAN: No no, it's fine Adele..Mama.

Lynette and Tom are at a psychologist(Dr. Dolan) to discuss problems they are having with Tom's daughter Kayla. (scene 9)

LYNETTE: So, we were sort of surprised to get your call. Don't you need to see Kayla a few more times before you report back to us?

DR. DOLAN: Well, before continuing with her, I thought it might be helpful to ask you a few questions.

LYNETTE: Oh, go ahead, shoot.

DR. DOLAN: ...Do you love Kayla?.... Lynette? I was talking to you.

LYNETTE: Oh, well..sure, I've been very good to her.

TOM: That wasn't his question. *acc*

LYNETTE: (inhales) Do you have a diploma on your wall, Tom? I don't think so, zip it. *acc*

DR.DOLAN: Again, uhm. Do you love her?

LYNETTE: Of course I do. As much as I can, given the way she joined our family. It's just..It's complicated.

DR.DOLAN: I understand, The problem is ...Kayla has picked up your ambivalence. And she's become a very angry girl.

TOM: So what do we do?

LYNETTE: O:h god, is this going to be one of those therapy things where she hits me with a foam bat?

DR.DOLAN: There's a bond that develops between an infant and her mother...You and Kayla never formed that bond so what we need to do is recreate it. It's called attachment parenting. A:nd it starts with Kayla being by your side as often as possible.

TOM: That sounds like exactly what they need. I mean, I don't have a diploma or anything but..

DR. DOLAN: I'd really like to give this a try. Whatever keeps you and Kayla close and interacting. Go to the movies, go shopping, maybe take a little trip together just the two of you.

LYNETTE: Could we revisit the foam bat idea for just a second?

TOM: The plan sounds great Doc. Don't worry, I will make sure that they are together constantly (grabs Lynette's tight)

LYNETTE: Ask me if I love Tom right now. Go ahead, I dare you.

Susan, Gaby and Lynette are about to start playing poker. Bree joins them looking anxious and reveals that her baby is actually her daughter Danielle's baby.(scene 10)

SUSAN: O:h my god.
 GABY : And Edie threatened to use that to..
 BREE : Yes,
 LYNETTE: Okay, first of all, you're like the greatest mom ever to wanna protect Danielle like that.
 BREE: Thank you.
 LYNETTE: I can't believe she was blackmailing you. *p*
 SUSAN: I can't believe she made a play for Orson.
 GABY: I can. She went after Carlos and Mike and Karl. The only person she hasn't gone after is Tom. *acc*
 LYNETTE: Y:et. This woman is out of control.
 SUSAN: What are you gonna do?
 LYNETTE: No: what are we gonna do?
 Ladies go out and confront Edie

EDIE: Hi guys. What's going on?
 BREE: I told them everything Edie. About Orson, Benjamin, everything.
 EDIE: You did?
 LYNETTE: She did. So you can kiss your little blackmail scheme good bye.
 EDIE: Well I was only doing it because...
 GABY: You were only doing it because you're the devil.
 EDIE: Okay. fine. *f* Chew me out and let's get on with it.
 SUSAN: It's not like all the other times, Edie... We're done. *p*
 EDIE: ...Done?
 SUSAN: We're not inviting you to poker, we're not talking to you, we're not even going to wave when you jog by. From now on, you're invisible.
 GABY : And we're going to make sure that every woman in five-mail radius knows the kind of
 of
 LYNETTE: We tried to be your friends but you don't even understand what that word means. So now on we're going to be something you do understand.
 EDIE: Guys, wait. Wait. I know I crossed the line this time and I'm uhm..well..I'm sorry
 BREE: Did you hear something?
 LYNETTE: No.
 BREE: Neither did I.

Mary-Alice ends the episode by presenting the women as mothers. (scene 11)

MARY-ALICE: It happens the second Sunday of every May.. We celebrate the women who give us life and so much more..The ones who protect us at all costs.. Who have the courage to fight those who would do us harm.. Who put our happiness ahead of their own. But mostly, we celebrate a mother's love which is constant, eternal.

Episode 16

Bree and Katherine are at the shooting range. (scene 12)

(gun shooting)
 KATHERINE: Bob liked the idea of the onion and white asparagus tart *f*
 BREE: Wonderful! With a little goat cheese.
 KATHERINE: Oh and Lee asked for stuffed mushrooms. (gun shooting stops)

BREE: Those with roasted green beans as our side dishes...
Nice tight grouping. You are not rusty at all.

KATHERINE: Thank you. It felt good.

BREE: Although I always like a trip to the range, is there any particular reason we came here for party planning?

KATHERINE: We:ll, with Adam gone I've just been feeling a little...uneasy lately.

BREE : It's funny how having a man in the house can make you feel safer, no matter how retiring of easily spooked he might be.

KATHERINE: That's true. I just need to feel that if an intruder broke in, I could take care of it. Effectively. *p*

BREE: You really want to be effective. Try hollow points. These rounds you've got punch straight through, but a hollow point blooms on impact, cuts the body to shreds from the inside. *p*

KATHERINE:Sounds exactly like what I need. *p*
Now, let's talk desserts.