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Declaration of Authenticity

I confirm to have conceived and written the thesis in English all by myself. Quotations from other authors and any ideas borrowed and/or passages paraphrased from the works of other authors are all clearly marked within the text or in the footnotes and acknowledgements in the bibliographical references.

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1 Introduction

“A woman as the secretary of state? Never, it can’t be a woman! This position needs to be filled with a man, no woman!” Even though we live in a society that arguably strives for equality, this statement still expresses the opinion of numerous people working and living on planet earth. Sticking to old stereotypes is “[...] comforting [and] save[s] us the trouble of fresh thought [...]” (Paxman 183). Victoria Brescoll and Eric Uhlmann state that many societies still hold on to traditionally patriarchal ideas about men and women (59). These classical roles are described as following in literature: women are “sensitive, emotional and deferring” (Cranny-Francis et al. 143), “unaggressive, shy, intuitive, [...] weak, hysterical, erratic and lacking in self-control” (Johnson 61) and “passive, quiet, sweet, nice, [...] accommodating, beautiful, pretty, or cute” (Lehr 1). Moreover, they are seen as inferior to men (Johnson 5), who “[...] confer a privileged position of power and authority” (Cranny-Francis et al. 14). Women are supposed to deliver children, raise, and care for them (Priess & Hyde 100). Men are described as “exhibit[ing] competitiveness or aggressiveness, [appearing in a] larger physical size, [having] strong spatial skills, and greater range of travel, which help them to locate and compete for potential mates and valuable resources” (Priess & Hyde 100). They are supposed to earn money to care for their wives and children and to succeed in earning enough money. Moreover, they are “expected to prioritize their careers over family responsibilities” (Brescoll & Uhlmann 59).

American TV series tended to reproduce these traditional gender roles of men and women, until recently. As an important part of mass media, they are

“[a] further highly influential factor on the perception of gender (roles) [...]. Since television, literature, radio and other forms of media permanently present gender stereotypes - in which men are depicted as competitive, aggressive and dominant in their jobs, and women as the dependent and emotional gender – we believe them to be true and let our perceptions and expectations be shaped according to these stereotypes” (Priess & Hyde 104).

However, there have been some significant changes in the film and TV industry, producing positive examples such as the series *Grey’s Anatomy*. For the series, a diverse cast has been hired, and emancipated characters were created, including women in powerful positions.

The popular American TV series *Madam Secretary*, which ran from 2014 to 2019 on the TV channel CBS has been chosen for a detailed analysis of gender stereotypes. *Madam Secretary* is an U.S. American TV series created by Barbara Hall. It can be classified as political drama and has a total of 120 episodes divided into six seasons. The series has been chosen for analysis because the TV series is very popular in the United States and attracts audiences from

all over the world. Furthermore, it has been nominated for seven different prizes such as the “TV Guide Award” and the “Humanity Prize” in the years 2014 and 2016.

The analysis will focus on the gender roles of the show, arguing that they offer themselves up to investigate American gender stereotypes, frequenting popular culture more generally.

There will be four main stereotypes investigated in this analysis: “women are emotional and men are stoic,” “men are aggressive and women are passive,” “women are obsessed with their appearance,” and “men are breadwinner and women are homemakers.” To conduct the analysis of gender stereotypes in American popular culture, a qualitative media analysis will be executed. My analysis will focus on gender stereotypes in *Madam Secretary*, specifically in what manner and to what extent these stereotypes come into display. Evidently, an analysis of one series cannot be prorated to American popular culture in general, but it contributes to the existing research on stereotypes in media and offers interesting insights into mainstream ideas about powerful women.

A first evaluation of the series *Madam Secretary* would suggest that similar changes to role distribution as in *Grey’s Anatomy* can be found in the series. In *Grey’s Anatomy*, the role distribution between men and women challenges traditional gender roles, as powerful women take leading roles. Not only men are deployed as deputies, but also women. Some examples of leading female characters in the series are Meredith Grey, Miranda Bailey, Christina Yang, and Callie Torres. Meredith Grey displays the role of the central protagonist of the show.

Within the storyline, she becomes an important female surgical resident, and she is portrayed as equally capable of her profession as men are. Miranda Bailey becomes the first female Chief of Surgery at Grey Sloan Memorial, which is the highest position in the medical field throughout the series. Another female character taking a leading role in the series is Christina Yang. She is a highly skilled cardiothoracic surgeon and is highly determined to become the best in her field. To reach her goals, she prioritizes her career over family, which challenges traditional gender expectations. Addison Montgomery-Shepard is the main neonatal surgeon at the Grey Sloan Memorial. She is portrayed as a strong and independent woman who refuses to be constantly instructed by men, but rather gives instructions to her co-workers. In *Madam Secretary*, Elizabeth McCord, playing the Secretary of the State, displays a similar role as Addison Montgomery-Shepard in *Grey’s Anatomy*. Followingly, I will point out the deviations of *Madam Secretary*’s representations from the old traditional gender stereotypes mentioned at the beginning of the chapter. This is relevant, as numerous teenagers watch *Madam Secretary*, an age-group going through “an important time for gender-role development” (Priess and Hyde 99).

In the first chapter of this master thesis the project will be outlined, and the reader will be introduced to the main research questions, the research methodology and approach. In the second chapter, the research category gender will be discussed, and the main definitions of gender and gender stereotypes will be provided. To be more precise, some basic knowledge about gender such as the difference between sex and gender and the concept of gender performativity will be explained. Furthermore, the current state of the art of research on gender in American popular culture and prototypical stereotypes occurring in American Society will be subject of this part. Within this chapter, common gender stereotypes within the American Society will be defined. There will be four main stereotypes elaborated on in this chapter: “women are emotional and men are stoic,” “men are aggressive and women are passive,” “women are obsessed with their appearance,” and “men are breadwinner and women are homemakers.” These four gender stereotypes cannot be clearly attributed to one specific author, but they can be classified as collective statements, as various people have expressed similar ideas.

Following that, in the third chapter, the first season of *Madam Secretary*, consisting of 22 episodes, each lasting between 42 and 46 minutes, will be analyzed, comparing the show’s representations to the specified gender stereotypes of the previous chapter. This chapter will be subdivided into three parts. First, the main character, Elizabeth McCord will be analyzed followed by a discussion of Henry McCord. An analysis of minor characters such as the president will complete this chapter. In the fourth chapter, male and female roles will be compared with each other and possible similarities and differences in the portrayal of gender will be highlighted. In the fifth chapter, the results of the media analysis of the series will be discussed.

Consequently/in the conclusion, I will outline the potential impact of gender stereotypes presented in the media, as exhibited by the show *Madam Secretary*, on our society. This will aid in offering practical guidance to readers on how to critically evaluate gender stereotypes.

1.1 Research Problem:

This MA thesis aims to contribute to the field of gender and TV studies that critically analyze seemingly progressive content for the stubborn prevalence of gender stereotypes. The main question to be answered in this master thesis is if *Madam Secretary* perpetuates gender stereotypes, and if so, what kind of gender stereotypes. Furthermore, object of the master

thesis will be, to explore, to what extent the identified stereotypes are dominant in the TV series.

A first review of *Madam Secretary* suggests that although the show seems to portray a progressive and multifaceted female individual in the figure of the main lead, it is structured through multiple derogatory gender stereotypes that perpetuate and therefore promote harmful gender roles. Numerous people all over the world watch this specific series. Therefore, the reproduction of gender stereotypes can potentially influence spectators. For example, traditional gender stereotypes could be internalized by men, women and children watching the series. Since the research on gender stereotypes in *Madam Secretary* is still incomplete, this master thesis closes a research gap.

1.2 Main Purpose of the Study, Main Questions, and Hypothesis:

This paper contributes to the research within the field of gender studies. The main purpose of the paper is to explore female and male gender stereotypes in the U.S. American TV series *Madam Secretary*. Therefore, the following questions will be analyzed in this master thesis:

1. Are gender stereotypes still persistent in the U.S. American TV series *Madam Secretary* and if the answer is yes, which stereotypes can be found in the TV series?
2. How do the portrayals of the characters in *Madam Secretary* deviate from the previously defined gender stereotypes?

The hypothesis of this master thesis is, that gender stereotypes are still used and reproduced in the U.S. American TV series *Madam Secretary*. The main focus will be, as mentioned before, on the following four stereotypes: “women are emotional, and men are stoic”, “men are aggressive and women are passive”, “women are obsessed with their appearance” and “men are breadwinner and women are homemakers”. Furthermore, it is hypothesized that these gender stereotypes found in the portrayal of the diverse characters do only partly reproduce the classical male and female gender roles that have been transferred from generation to generation.

1.3 Methods and Research Approach

Qualitative media analysis is taken as systematic approach to analyze the four gender stereotypes within the TV series *Madam Secretary*. With this type of analysis, it is possible to dissect the content of the episodes declared as representatives of demonstrating gender stereotypes within the TV series.

It will be examined how the use of shot type, camera angles, framing, and other visual techniques contribute to the portrayal of gender in films. Particular attention will be paid to how these elements reflect or reinforce prevailing social and cultural attitudes about masculinity and femininity following the theory of Judith Butler about gender representation. As Stuart Hall articulates, “It is worth emphasizing that there is no single or ‘correct’ answer to the question ‘What does this image mean’” (Hall 9), doing a visual analysis never is fully objective, as it is highly influenced by the analyzer’s perception. Hall further speaks about the notion of vision and visibility, firstly being the human capability of one’s eye to notice the world around and secondly, visibility referring to the construction of vision, indicating that vision is shaped by the personal perception of the world around us (Rose 4). For example, this would mean that I experience an action by someone else differently than another person. Therefore, it should be noted, that the analysis of the TV series, even though, the framework of gender following the concept of doing gender by Judith Butler is being used, the analysis is shaped by the perception of the author of this paper. Rose also argues that language and images are entangled, which is why also body language in connection with spoken language will be included in the analysis (Rose 4).

2 Theoretical framework

2.1 The construction of gender

2.1.1 Sex vs gender

Speaking of the construction of gender, first of all the difference between sex and gender needs to be clarified. Anne Cranny-Francis, Wendy Waring, Pam Stavropoulus and Joan Kirby define sex as “two biologically based categories – male and female (Cranny-Francis; Waring; Stavropoulus and Kirby 7). According to Michael Kimmel, “[s]ex’ refers to the biological apparatus, the male and the female—our chromosomal, chemical, anatomical, organization” (Kimmel 9318). Historically, according to Judith Butler’s “the biology-is-destiny formulation” (Butler 8), gender was specified as directly related to the term sex. Stephanie Shields and Elaine Diccio indicate that men and women were seen as “opposite anchors on a unidimensional, bipolar continuum,” which meant that a person could either be feminine or masculine, but not both (Shields & Diccio 492). This view has changed over time and now academics predominantly are of the opinion that gender and sex need to be distinguished (Showalter 3). Nevertheless, Romaine argues that “in popular usage the terms are often used interchangeably” (Romaine 42), which indicates that many people simply are not keen on the difference between sex and gender.

Scholars still have not agreed on a common definition, how gender is constructed and “the way it should be used by scholars and critics” (Showalter 3).

The Oxford English Dictionary (OED) defines the term gender as

“[t]he state of being male or female as expressed by social or cultural distinctions and differences, rather than biological ones; the collective attributes or traits associated with a particular sex or determined as a result of one's sex”.

Kerry Mallan points out that it is challenging to define gender because it “has become increasingly flexible” (Mallan 11). Michael Kimmel displays two differences contrasting the terms sex and gender. Sex, in his sense “varies very little, gender varies enormously” (Kimmel 9831). Furthermore, sex is biologically defined, while gender can be classified as “socially constructed” (Kimmel 9831). Butler in contrast, would define the concept of sex and gender in a different way. Furthermore, “the immutable character of sex is contested, perhaps this construct called ‘sex’ is as culturally constructed as gender; indeed, perhaps it was always

already gender, with the consequence that the distinction between sex and gender turns out to be no distinction at all” (Butler 7).

Gender is defined to be socially and culturally constructed, and as societies and cultures are changing, simultaneously “[the] meaning [of gender] changes not only from context to context but also over time and place” (Romaine 41). At the same time, this indicates that the perception of gender differs amongst cultures and as Kimmel articulates “gender means different things to different people [and] it varies cross-culturally” (Kimmel 9318). He further vocalizes that “[w]hat it means to be a man or a woman varies in different institutional contexts” (Kimmel 9319) and these “different institutional contexts demand and produce different forms of masculinity and femininity” (Kimmel 9319). Moreover, gender “refers to the meanings that are attached to those differences within a culture” (Kimmel 9831), using the terms “masculinity and femininity” (Kimmel 9831) as descriptors.

2.1.2 “Doing” gender and gender performativity

Taking the concept of constructing gender into consideration, “doing gender” and “gender performativity” are two central aspects that need to be evaluated. Judith Butler developed the concept of gender performativity. They call doing gender as “a practice of improvisation within a scene of constraint” (Butler 1 UG). They state:

“one only determines ‘one’s own’ sense of gender to the extent that social norms exist that support and enable the act of claiming gender for oneself. One is dependent on this ‘outside’ to lay claim to what is one’s own” (Butler 7 UG).

Besides Butler, doing gender and gender performativity has been studied by diverse scholars. According to Candace West and Dom Zimmerman “a person’s gender is not simply an aspect of what one is, but, more fundamentally, it is something that one does, and does recurrently, in interaction with others” (West and Zimmerman 140). In alignment with West and Zimmermann, Stephanie Shields and Elaine Diccio state that “[g]ender emerges through social interactions as a negotiated statement of identity; that is, gender is not something that one achieves over the course of development, but rather it is continually practiced in social interactions large and small” (Shields & Diccio 495). Also, Kimmel points out that “[w]e are constantly ‘doing’ gender, performing the activities and exhibiting the traits that are prescribed for us” (Kimmel 9321). Pennington utters that “gender is not a reflection of any inherent traits of males and females, but rather gendering is a process that occurs through performing certain sets of behaviors” (Pennington 35).

Additionally, Butler speaks of more than one “single author[s]” (Butler 1), who “make up one’s own gender” (Butler 1). This indicates that the gender performativity is strongly influenced by the surrounding and visa versa, also the person itself influenced the appearance of gender of others. Additionally, Butler articulates that acting in a specific way results as “a desire for recognition and that it is only through the experience of recognition that any of us becomes constituted as socially viable beings” (Butler 2).

Emphasizing the interdependence of the “I” and the surrounding, Bulter states:

“If I am someone who cannot *be* without *doing*, then the conditions of my doing are, in part, the conditions of my existence. If my doing is dependent on what is done to me or, rather, the ways in which I am done by norms, then the possibility of my persistence as an “I” depends upon my being able to do something with what is done with me” (Butler 3).

Here, Shields and Diccio speak of the importance of “social learning” of children and teenagers shaping their perception of gender and their behavior (Shields and Diccio 495). According to Priess and Hyde, “people [...] organize and remember information according to gender categories and are more likely to attend to and exhibit preferences for activities associated with their own gender” (Priess & Hyde 101). This utterance is in alignment with Shields and Diccio, inferring, that children learn how they should behave according to their gender and followingly developing preferences for areas such as toys, colors and clothes.

Talbot states:

“In dealing with learned kinds of activity, such as linguistic interaction, we can only speak with any certainty about gendered behaviour. Linguistic interaction is obviously behaviour which has been learned, and there is little point in trying to account for it by talking about innate qualities. In societies with sex-exclusive differences in language use, choice from among a range of lexicogrammatical options is part of gender performance. The word ‘choice’ is perhaps not the right one, since the forms for use by women and men are enforced by prescriptive rule. [...] Gender, then, is not biological but psycho-social; it should always be considered in the context of social relations between people” (Talbot 11-12).

Kimmel emphasizes the importance of understanding that doing gender needs to be understood as “an emergent property of interactions” (Kimmel 9321). This means that when speaking of the concept of doing gender the audience needs to be taken into display. Kimmel expresses that “[w]e create and recreate our own gendered identities within the contexts of our interactions with others and within the institutions we inhabit. (Kimmel 9321). Followingly, it is magisterial how each single person behaves on how gender is perceived by oneself and by fellow human beings.

Kessler adds, that if people would recognize “authenticity for gender rests not in a discoverable nature but in someone else’s proclamation, then the power to proclaim something else is available” (Kessler 25). What Kessler wants to make the people aware of is that first of all, “societal transformation” (Kessler 25) would be possible, if people would

understand that gender is constructed by themselves. Therefore, if people construct gender in a different way, perceptions of gender would change. Secondly, also society would change more quickly and “societal transformations would be unlimited” (Kessler 25). Additionally, the perception of gender differs, as situations change and that “[g]ender is, [...], not only a property of individuals, some ‘thing’ one has, but a specific set of behaviors that are produced in specific social situations” (Kimmel 9319). One more dimension of changing the perception of gender is the “change over the course of a person’s life” (Kimmel 9318). Kimmel states that experiencing different stages in life shape our personal perception and also “our expression of gender identity” (Kimmel 9318). Therefore, “doing gender is a lifelong process of performances” (Kimmel 9321). He provides the following examples:

„A young single man defines masculinity differently than will a middle-aged father and an elderly grandfather. Similarly, the meanings of femininity are subject to parallel changes, for example, among prepubescent women, women in child-bearing years, and postmenopausal women, as they are different for women entering the labor market and those retiring from it“ (Kimmel 9318).

Going a little bit further, Cranny-Francis even states that “[e]very trip to a public toilet [demands] that we declare our gender by which door we choose” (Cranny-Francis 1).

2.1.3 Gender and power

Another aspect about the construction of gender pointed out by Romaine, is that “gender is not just about biological and cultural differences; it is also about power” (Romaine 9). Elaine Showalter complements her thought stating that “gender is not only a question of difference, [...] but of power, since in looking at the history of gender relations, we find sexual asymmetry, inequality, and male dominance in every known society” (Showalter 4). She highlights that the differences between men and women and especially the aspects of authority and dominance of both genders within our society. Showalter argues that the male gender is still more dominant which results in structural inequalities affecting all aspects of social interactions. Acker adds that “gender is still present in the processes, practices, images, and ideologies, and distributions of power in the various sectors of social life” (Acker 567). She points out that power relations based on gender influence social and institutional contexts and further influence and shape our perceptions.

In alignment with Acker, Romaine and Showalter, Eagly states that “[p]eople often conform to gender-role norms that are not internalized, because of the considerable power that groups and individuals supportive of these norms have to influence others' behavior through rewards and punishments of both subtle (e.g., nonverbal cues) and more obvious (e.g., monetary

incentives, sexually harassing behavior) varieties” (Eagly 19). In the analysis, it will be looked at how Elizabeth McCord complies to female dress norms, female beauty standards and way of speech. Furthermore, the difference of her behavior to the gender norms will be included.

Connected to TV productions, the relationship between gender and power becomes visible in numerous aspects as for example character portrayals, narrative choices, dialogues and other scopes such as costuming. Taking the first example into display, character portrayals, power is often emphasized through occupation and roles. Who is shown in which role? Are women primarily shown in domestic roles, as for example caregivers and waitresses, while men hold positions of power as CEOs and decision makers? Next, the aligned skills and traits also indicate the status of power of a character. Are women still represented incompetent executing technical tasks, which former were only fulfilled by men? Or the opposite: are men able or unable to care for children? Another aspect of character portrayals of gender roles in media affects the sector of decision-making. In former times, men were predominantly aligned the role of the final decision makers. Now the question that needs to be asked is, if this is still applicable in contemporary TV productions. Another aspect affected by the display of male and female power are narrative choices chosen for media production. Five aspects of narrative choices displaying the relation between gender and power are the male gaze, storylines, conflict and resolution, dialogues and costuming. First of all, the concept of the male gaze refers to the way of constructing media from a heterosexual perspective, suggesting that women are depicted as objects of desires, especially for male viewers. Within this concept of male gaze, it is often questioned whether the focus is laid on female characters more than male. Furthermore, this concept includes if the story focuses on the desires and perspectives of the male characters more than these of the female characters. The gender stereotype that 'women are obsessed with their appearance' could be linked to the concept of the male gaze, suggesting that women prioritize their appearance to conform to societal standards of attractiveness, often defined through the lens of male desire. The analysis reveals that in *Madam Secretary*, Elizabeth McCord is depicted both as an object of desire and as the focal point of the male gaze, yet she consistently rejects being sexualized. Another crucial narrative aspect for illustrating power dynamics involves storyline choices, particularly in examining whether female characters have goals and aspirations independent of their relationships with men. In *Madam Secretary* it is very clear, that Elizabeth McCord is a powerful and ambitious woman, passionately striving for achieving her goals. In the series, she occasionally prioritizes her job over her relationship with Henry McCord, suggesting that

her professional commitments take precedence over their personal relationships. The portrayal of conflict and resolution within the narrative or in the analysis' case series is also one aspect connected with power dynamics. This raises questions regarding the attribution of problem origination and resolution: are men or women depicted as the sources of the conflicts, or are they portrayed as the ones primarily responsible for resolving them? In *Madam Secretary*, Elizabeth McCord as secretary of the state has to deal with uncountable challenging incidents, a testament to her wielded power and authority in navigating complex diplomatic situations. The fourth aspect of narrative choices affecting power relations are dialogues. In this respect, it is meant, if language is used to reinforce gender stereotypes, or not. For example, women are often labeled as 'bossy,' whereas men exhibiting similar behavior are described as 'assertive. Furthermore, stereotypically, men are seen as giving orders, while women are perceived as frequently interrupting others and repeatedly explaining things that have already been said. In terms of costuming, power dynamics can be reflected in the way characters are dressed. Are female characters often dressed in revealing clothing which denudes their bodies while men are depicted in more formal outfits?

2.2 Gender stereotypes

Mary Talbot defines stereotypes the following: “stereotype” usually describes “prescriptions or unstated expectations of behavior, rather than specifically representational practices” (Talbot 472). Cranny-Francis adds: “It is fixed and can’t be changed. It is used to produce multiple copies of the same thing, over and over again” (Cranny-Francis et al. 140). Moreover, she expresses that, “[a] stereotype is a radically reductive way of representing whole communities of people by identifying them with a few key characteristics. Individuals from the group who don’t fit that stereotype are then said to be atypical” (Cranny-Francis et al. 141). In alignment with Cranny-Francis words, Kirchner articulates that “[...] stereotyping is not only a way of classifying people, but also a matter of exclusion and rejection of everyone and everything that is different, which can then quickly result in discrimination and inequality “(Kirchner 20-21).

2.3 Gender stereotypes in media

Kara Hemphill points out that “[i]n popular media, portrayals of masculinity can be just as harmful and fraught with stereotypes as portrayals of femininity” (Hemphill 7). This quote should raise awareness that in these days, even though the TV industry tries reflecting a more diverse range of gender roles for example in Grey’s Anatomy, gender stereotypes are still reproduced in popular media to a certain extent. As a possible reason for this, Allan Johnson for example states that “patriarchy and women’s oppression are rooted in society, not biology, and therefore aren’t inevitable or immutable” (55). Julia Wood states that “[m]edia’s images of women also reflect cultural stereotypes that depart markedly from reality” (Wood 32). Furthermore, “fields like film, television, the music industry and the arts more broadly, are marked by stark, persistent and in many cases worsening inequalities relating to gender, race and ethnicity, class, age and disability” (Conor, Gill & Taylor 1). As already mentioned, most research agrees on four stereotypes that are relevant for my study of Madam Secretary. These are: “women are emotional and men are stoic,” “men are aggressive and women are passive,” “women are obsessed with their appearance,” and “men are breadwinner and women are homemakers.”

2.3.1 “Women are emotional and men are stoic”

The first collective stereotype, that is often reproduced in media productions in the United States, is “women are emotional and men are stoic.” Connell argues that it can be classified as “[a] familiar theme in patriarchal ideology [...] that men are rational while women are emotional” (Connell 164). Johnson adds that “[women are] unaggressive, shy, intuitive, ... weak, hysterical, erratic and lacking in self-control” (Johnson 61). Taking all these utterances into consideration, the question arises, if it is true that men are more likely to hide emotions, when at the same time, women tend to express their emotions to a greater extent. Moreover, considering further that “[e]motion expressions are inherently social in nature— they typically are used as ways to signal one’s needs and desires to others in the environment” (Chaplin 8), we need to ask why women present themselves as more emotional, while men tend to hide their affects. Kara Chaplin studied gender differences in expressing emotions, trying to find possible reasons for the existence of this gender stereotype. For the purpose of structuring her study, she differentiated internalized and externalized emotions. According to her, “girls [...]”

show greater positive and internalizing emotions than boys” (Chaplin 6). Boys on the contrary would “tend to limit emotion displays” (Chaplin 6), except for externalized emotions as for example anger. Chaplin explains the reason for boys for being allowed of showing anger in public as emotional display that this would “be consistent with gender roles [...] of externalizing emotion expressions in boys than girls” [Chaplin 6]. She further states that

“[t]his may support biological and socialization theories that girls start off with biologically based lower arousal and better emotion vocabulary and they are socialized over time to enhance expression of emotion and, in particular, socialized to adopt the female gender role to express more ‘relational’ positive emotions” (Chaplin 6).

This implies that from an early age, girls are encouraged by their parents to express more emotions than boys. Chaplin's statement reinforces the conventional perception of masculinity, which is based on attributes like strength, stoicism, and dominance. In this context, public displays of anger are interpreted as assertive and commanding. Adams, Kuebli, Boylee and Fivush in 1995 and 1989 indicated that parents would use more emotion words in the interaction with their daughters, than they would use with their sons. Therefore, it would be likely that girls learn how to express themselves emotionally better than boys would do in their early childhood. Ross Buck (1977) did a study on the emotions of boys and girls from the age four to six. According to him, as they were growing older, boy's emotional displays decreased whereas emotional displays of girls rose. As a possible explanation for boys showing less emotions than girls, he specified “the lack of overt expression [...] to be due to inhibition caused by social pressures” (Buck 225). Chaplin adds that “biological factors and socialization should lead to increases in girls' expressions of emotions and boys' decreased expressions of emotions over time from infancy into childhood” (Chaplin 6). The findings further suggest that our social environment would permit men to express anger but restricts displays of other emotions like sadness, care, and love. According to Chaplin, boys are generally expected to limit their expression of internalized emotions, which leads to the reinforcement of traditional gender roles. This disparity in emotional expression can contribute to a social structure where boys and men are encouraged only externalize emotions, which are considered typically male, as for example anger, while other forms of emotional expressions are viewed as signs of vulnerability or weakness. In Madam Secretary, Elizabeth McCord and Henry McCord have three children, one boy and two girls. The analysis of individual episodes will include an examination of the characters' relationships with their children, with a particular focus on emotional expression. This will help determine whether patterns similar to those identified by Chaplin are evident.

Another interesting aspect brought up by Chaplin is that also ethnicity has an influence on the expression of emotions (Chaplin 9). She states:

“[g]ender roles for emotion expression and social context factors may be different for children growing up within different socio-economic settings, different cultural backgrounds, different ethnicities, different countries/societies, or in different time periods” (Chaplin 9).

Chaplin brings in the example of girls being taught appearing tough in “working-class or low-income U.S. settings” (Chaplin 9) in order to defend themselves in rough and probably dangerous neighborhoods. Girls growing up with parents with a high-level income living in a wealthy society may not need to be tough to protect themselves. This would mean that biological sex doesn't dictate an individual's emotional range; instead, it's social structures that shape which emotions a person is encouraged or discouraged from expressing. Another point, Chaplin raises is that “different ethnic groups may have different display rules for emotion, and potentially for gender and emotion” (Chaplin 9). Here, Chaplin stresses the different displays of various emotions between different ethnicities. For example, fear seems to be a more acceptable emotion for Caucasian parents than for Hispanic adults, which would, according to Chaplin result in teaching the children to suppress fear as Hispanic parents, whereas this type of emotion would be more accepted by Caucasian parents. In collaboration with Naaila Panjwani, Rajita Sinha and Linda Mayes, Chaplin did a study on specific emotion, to be more precise, happiness, sadness, anger, fear, contempt and embarrassment. Adults African Americans with a low income participated in the study. The results showed that women showed positive emotions such as happiness and contempt more often than male participants. Furthermore, women were more likely to express embarrassment. There were no differences between male and female participants in expressing anger, fear and sadness. The findings of the study suggest that societal expectations, which derivate from traditional gender roles, play a significant role in shaping emotional expressions. As already explained earlier, referring to the traditional gender roles, women are supposed to be more open about their feelings, whereas men should remain stoic and reserved. Following societal expectations, women would therefore tend to express positive emotions like happiness and contempt more frequently than men. This dynamic reflects a long-standing socialization process where gender norms define acceptable behavior and emotional expression. The results of the study showing similar levels of anger, fear and sadness indicate that these emotions are not inherently tied to biological sex, but societal expectations. Another finding indicating that society rather than sex defines emotional displays is that women tended to express embarrassment more often than men. This again can

be linked to the societal acceptance of displaying emotions like vulnerability, which according to the traditional gender roles would be less acceptable for men.

All these studies would indicate that the gender stereotype “women are emotional and men are stoic” could be evaluated as still prevalent in our current society. Eliminating this stereotype from today’s society would require a shift in societal attitudes, enabling men and women to express a full range of emotions without being judged or marginalized.

In *Madam Secretary* instances where the gender stereotype “women are emotional and men are stoic” can be observed, especially when analyzing the way several characters are coping with various situations. For instance, the main character Elizabeth McCord displays emotional intelligence and empathy in different scenes, which would be in alignment with this stereotype. However, in other scenes, she acts stoic and decisive which would challenge the stereotype. Similarly, an examination of the male characters in the series reveals comparable occurrences. Henry McCord and other male characters often display stoic behavior in order to maintain composure which would confirm the stereotype of men being stoic. Nevertheless, they also display emotions such as vulnerability and fear, which would challenge the stereotype.

Overall, the analysis will show that the gender stereotype “women are emotional and men are stoic” is still present in *Madam Secretary*, but at the same time the series actively challenges and refutes this stereotype through multifaceted portrayal of characters.

2.3.2 “Women are obsessed with their appearance”

The second collective stereotype representative for female gender stereotypes appearing in media is “women are obsessed with their appearance.” Taking this stereotype into account, the reasons for this stereotype need to be considered. According to Kate Peirce, media reproduces the traditional picture of women and their roles.

Peirce defines the traditional role as a woman:

“the traditionally socialized teenage girl will have learned, from many and varied sources, that how she looks is more important than what she thinks, that her main goal in life is to find a man to take care of her financially, and that her place will be home with the kids and the cooking and the housework, while his place will be wherever he wants it to be. She will have learned, too, that if she has to work (and it would certainly be better if she didn’t), her job will not be as important as his, it will not pay as much as his, and she will still be in charge of home and kids” (Peirce 1990 491).

As Pierce has pointed out, traditionally it has been expected that women dress nicely and look beautiful to please their husbands. Girls have been taught that, if they would not look nice,

their husbands will leave them and find another, more beautiful wife to fulfill the role as a wife (Peirce 495).

Referring to the traditional picture, not only in relationships, but also in the world of work, it is expected that women care about their appearance. Conventional beliefs about the world of work are generally more progressive, but also more complex. Although women are "allowed" to pursue careers, they are still often expected to maintain a polished appearance. In professional settings, women face scrutiny based on their looks, whether they're workers, clerks, professors, or salespeople. Men, on the other hand, typically don't experience the same level of judgment when it comes to their appearance. The request for women to prioritize their appearance becomes evident when taking a look at dress codes, which are often stricter for women than men.

In *Madam Secretary*, Elizabeth McCord is expected to care for her outer appearance for different reasons. First of all, as the secretary of the state, she represents the country and its image to a certain extent. This at the same time influences diplomatic relations, as appearance can shape perceptions of foreign countries and politicians. Additionally, Elizabeth McCord's attention to her appearance stems from her role as a public figure, subjected to frequent media scrutiny that extends beyond her professional endeavors to encompass her personal life and physical appearance.

Also, media production reinforces the importance of beauty by casting "attractive people as models and actors- and in part through their portrayals of women" (Peirce 495), which at the same time needs to be evaluated critically as images "encourage us to perceive normal bodies and normal physical functions as problems" (Wood 37). Wood utters that in media, women are often portrayed "as sex objects who are usually young, thin beautiful, passive, dependent, and often incompetent and dumb" (Wood 32). Therefore, as in Wood's words, "[f]emale characters devote their primary energies to improving their appearances and taking care of homes and people" (Wood 32).

One reason for the existence of the gender stereotype "women are obsessed with their appearance" might be sexual objectification taking place in the world of TV. To understand why sexual objectification could be understood as a reason for this specific stereotype, first of all it needs to be clarified what sexual objectification in connection to media productions is. In connection to the stereotype "women are obsessed with their appearance," predominantly men's sexual objectification of women will be taken into consideration, as is "a central problem in women's lives" (Zimmerl 250).

A short and precise definition on sexual objectification coming from Martha Nussbaum is: “[sexual objectification is the] reduction to their bodily parts” (Nussbaum 274). Similarly, Laura Mulvey states that “[i]n their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote to-be-looked-at-ness” (837). Nussbaum adds that objectification “is used as a pejorative term, connoting a way of speaking, thinking, and acting that the speaker finds morally or socially objectionable, usually, though not always, in the sexual realm” (249). Moreover, Nussbaum articulates that when executing sexual objectification, “[o]ne is treating as an object what is really not an object, what is, in fact, a human being” (257). Nussbaum defines seven areas of objectification, which can also be found in TV productions.

- “1. Instrumentality: The objectifier treats the object as a tool of his or her purposes.
2. Denial of autonomy: The objectifier treats the object as lacking in autonomy and self-determination.
3. Inertness: The objectifier treats the object as lacking in agency, and perhaps also in activity.
4. Fungibility: The objectifier treats the object as interchangeable (a) with other objects of the same type, and/or (b) with objects of other types.
5. Violability: The objectifier treats the object as lacking in boundary-integrity, as something that it is permissible to break up, smash, break into.
6. Ownership: The objectifier treats the object as something that is owned by another, can be bought or sold, etc.
7. Denial of subjectivity: The objectifier treats the object as something whose experience and feelings (if any) need not be taken into account” (Nussbaum 257).

Connecting the female stereotype “women are obsessed with their appearance” with the concept of sexual objectification by Nussbaum, it could be assumed that the sexual objectification could be identified as a possible reason for women caring so much about their appearance. Statistics on sexual objectification in TV support this idea, showing that 45.5% of young female characters in primetime TV programs in the United States (Smith et al., 2012) are portrayed in a sexualized way, and many of these programs are also shown on German TV.

Marika Skowronski, Robert Busching, and Barbara Krahé highlight another dimension of sexual objectification. They state that “[w]omen gradually internalize this observer perspective on themselves, valuing their body for its correspondence with the society’s current appearance ideal (Skowronski, Buschnis and Krahé 118). This process is defined as self-objectification, “manifested at the cognitive level by women’s tendency to value appearance over competence, and at the behavioral level through persistent body surveillance, defined as habitually monitoring one’s body” (Skowronski, Buschnis and Krahé 118). What needs to be evaluated critically is that self-objectification can have negative effects on the

psychological well-being as it triggers a negative body image, an abnormal eating behavior and more psychological illnesses as for example depressions. Nathan Heflick, Jamie Goldenberg, Douglas Cooper and Elisa Puvia argue that beauty is interconnected with the “woman’s worth and their physical appearance” (573). Therefore, the gap between the actual appearance and the ideal from society, which, as already mentioned, might differ in various aspects as for example culture or country a woman is living in, can result in a reduced feeling of worthiness. As outlined in this section of the subchapter, the concept of sexual objectification and self-objectification can be seen as a possible reason for the gender stereotype “women are obsessed with their appearance.”

In *Madam Secretary*, sexual objectification can be identified in several contexts, especially concerning politics and diplomacy. Especially in media, Elizabeth McCord often gets portrayed in a way which could be classified as sexual objectified, meaning that the medium of representation often highlights her outer appearance, whereas the focus should be laid on her professional qualifications and political actions. Media coverage within the series often represents Elizabeth as object of fascination instead of focusing on her capabilities as Secretary of State. Another context within the series where sexual objectification becomes visual is the interaction with foreign dignitaries. There are several instances in the series when Madam Secretary interacts with officials from other countries, in which women and men are not equally positioned in society. This leads to undermining her authority and further seeing her more as a token representative instead of an equal partner in conversations and negotiations. One more context where sexual objectification becomes visible in *Madam Secretary* is at work. Not too often, but definitely from time to time, Elizabeth has to endure inappropriate comments or behavior from male colleagues and even superiors such as the president.

Similar to the concepts of sexual objectification and self-objectification is Kimmel’s concept of emphasized femininity. Kimmel describes his concept as the following:

“Emphasized femininity exaggerates gender difference as a strategy of ‘adaptation to men’s power’ stressing empathy and nurturance; ‘real’ womanhood is described as ‘fascinating’ and women are advised that they can wrap men around their fingers by knowing and playing by the ‘rules’” (Kimmel 9319).

Defining emphasized femininity with his words, Kimmel stresses that women have specific abilities typical for the female gender as for example empathy and nurturance. According to him, women can apply these abilities in so as to enforce their volition towards men. This would suggest that women gain power and power over men through beauty. What needs to be critically evaluated about this statement is that there is no universal beauty standard, but the

established understanding of beauty varies very much between cultures, countries and individuals. To be more precise, in some countries, as for example in Africa, it might be defined as beautiful, if a woman is well nurtured and therefore is seen as beautiful, whereas in the western society, many women have the wish of being thin and skinny because they feel that this is desired by men. Nevertheless, beauty might be a false promise of power as the idea of beauty guaranteeing power is often only an illusion. It is uncontroversial that in some situations, such as job interviews, beauty can be seen as beneficial as chances for getting the desired position are estimated higher by some when dressing and putting on makeup a certain way. Without doubt, this often remains an illusion and in the least cases leads to acquaintance of a job and in further respect to real power or respect.

Whereas *Madam Secretary* primarily focuses on Elizabeth McCord's professional and political endeavors, some aspects of emphasized femininity can still be observed in the TV series. Referring to appearance and presentation, Elizabeth predominantly makes typical professional clothing choices, but there still are some instances where she prefers a more feminine clothing style as for example for family gatherings or dates with her husband Henry. Here, it can be observed that she enjoys these breakouts of her professional clothing style in her private life in the series. At the same time, the portrayal of Elizabeth contradicts the concept of emphasized femininity, as she is portrayed as highly qualified and active agent displaying skills and intelligence.

2.3.3 “Men are aggressive and women are passive”

Another collective gender stereotype in American Culture is “men are aggressive and women are passive.”

Alice Eagly described the reason for male aggressiveness the following:

“For example, because aggressive is an abstraction about social behavior, knowledge that aggressiveness is ascribed to men more than women and thought more desirable in men suggests that men behave more aggressively than women when gender roles are salient” (Eagly 17).

According to Julia Wood, “[...] men are portrayed as active, adventurous, powerful, sexually aggressive and largely uninvolved in human relationships” (Wood 32). Additionally, she states that men “receive rewards from others for their ‘masculine’ accomplishments” (Wood 32) for aggressive behavior and actions such as participating in exciting activities.

Furthermore, Wood adds that women on the contrary are often portrayed as “passive, dependent on men, and enmeshed in relationships or housework” (Wood 33). Taking Wood's

description of the male and female gender into display, it can be derived that she sees the two genders as oppositional, having different roles and above all, diverse character traits.

Likewise, Susan Lehr articulates that “[women are] passive, quiet, sweet, nice, ...

accommodating, beautiful, pretty, or cute” (Lehr 1), emphasizing the classical female role.

Also, Johnson adds that women are portrayed as “unaggressive, shy, intuitive, [...] weak, hysterical, erratic and lacking in self-control” (Johnson 61). In the analysis of Madam

Secretary of the thesis, it will be looked at how the protagonist and also minor characters like her husband Henry McCord refute or reinforce this stereotype, as especially Elizabeth takes a leading role within the government and has a leading position.

Another aspect which needs to be considered is that especially in former times, men were portrayed through the concept of hegemonic masculinity. Raeywn Connell defines hegemonic masculinity as “the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women” (Connell 77).

Similar to Connell, Michael Kimmel describes hegemonic masculinity in the United States as a “normative constellation of attitudes, traits, and behaviors that became the standard against which all other masculinities are measured and against which individual men measure the success of their gender accomplishments” (Kimmel 139). Connell connects male aggression with the concept of hegemonic masculinity stating “[h]egemonic masculinity establishes its hegemony partly by its claim to embody the power of reason, and thus represent the interest of the whole society; it is a mistake to identify hegemonic masculinity purely with physical aggression” (Connell, 164). Also, John Beynon connects power with the concept of hegemonic masculinity stating that hegemonic masculinity “is established either through consensual negotiation or through power and achievement” (Beynon 16). Various authors provide differing descriptions of hegemonic masculinity, but they generally converge on certain key attributes: heterosexual, white, belonging to the middle or upper class, aged 20 to 30, strong, and tall (Connell, 1987; Kimmel, 1996; Brown, 1999). Another aspect defined by Connell is the relationship of men and women within the concept of hegemonic masculinity.

He states:

“[h]egemonic masculinity is always constructed in relation to various subordinate masculinities as well as in relation to women...There is no femininity that is hegemonic in the sense that the dominant form of masculinity is hegemonic among men” (Connell 183).

Connell would therefore assert that women and showing female traits need to be excluded from the concept of hegemonic masculinity. Nevertheless, this paper argues that women can

be included in the concept of hegemonic masculinities, taking the main character Elizabeth McCord, the secretary of the state as example. She can be partly analyzed through the lens of hegemonic masculinity, not in spite of the classical physical characteristics of hegemonic masculinity, but because of the courage she shows and the impact she makes. She works in a men-dominated environment and in specific situations she displays traits which would typically be associated with the concept of hegemonic masculinity. Typical traits Elizabeth shows are assertiveness, confidence and decisiveness. This helps her succeeding in her profession as the secretary of the state working in a male-dominated environment. Another aspect why Elizabeth McCord could be analyzed through the lens of hegemonic masculinity is that she is a highly-ranked official, exercising power and authority. In the TV show, she is displayed as powerful and successful, which challenges the concept of hegemonic masculinity by demonstrating that also a woman can excel in a traditionally male-dominated role.

Considering the concept of hegemonic masculinity and politics, the question emerges, if it is necessary for women to show assertiveness, confidence and decisiveness and toughness to succeed. This will also be part of the analysis following in the next chapter.

There is another concept of manhood closely related to the concept of hegemonic masculinity. This concept is called homophobia, which is basically the fear of men of being perceived as homosexual. Homosexual in this sense is classified as negative, as it deviates from the traditional gender role of a man. Therefore, showing aggressiveness would counteract the fact of being perceived as weak, which at the same time prohibits being perceived as homosexual. The theory of homophobia can be seen as an explanation for why some men might express aggressiveness. This is because aggression can be a way to counteract the fear of being perceived as homosexual.

In connection to media, Clark McCauley, Krishna Thangavelu and Paul Rozin did a study on the portrayal of men on prime-time television. They concluded, that especially in prime-time TV shows and series, men are depicted as aggressive and independent. With Henry McCord being a loving and soft-hearted family father, caring about the feelings and well-being of his family and friends, he clearly contradicts the findings of McCauley, Thangavelu and Rozin. The president then again, would match the description of the authors of the study in some aspects whereas, similar to Henry McCord refutes the portrayal of classical manhood as described in the results of the study. For example, the president is often depicted as strict decision maker, taking authority and deciding without deference to others. Contradicting the results of their study, he also shows facets of vulnerability and struggles.

2.3.4 “Men are breadwinners and women are homemakers”.

The last gender stereotype frequently reproduced in TV production is “men are breadwinners and women are homemakers”. According to Eagly, “[t]he distinctive communal content of the female stereotype is assumed to derive primarily from the domestic role (Eagly 20).

Moreover, television “depicts men as serious confident, competent, powerful, and in high-status ‘positions” (Wood 32). Peirce adds here speaking of women, “that her main goal in life is to find a man to take care of her financially, and that her place will be home with the kids and the cooking and the housework, while his place will be wherever he wants it to be” (Peirce 491). Adding to this, “[s]he will have learned, too, that if she has to work (and it would certainly be better if she didn't), her job will not be as important as his, it will not pay as much as his, and she will still be in charge of home and kids” (Peirce 491). Another interesting statement about the stereotype “men are breadwinners and women are homemakers” was uttered by Wood saying that “[p]rime-time television favorably portrays pretty, nurturing, other-focused women” (Wood 32). She further articulates that “[w]hen someone is shown taking care of a child, ‘It is’ usually the mother, not the father. This perpetuates a negative stereotype of men as uncaring and uninvolved in family life” (Wood 32), when at the same time, “media portray women who work outside of the home, their career lives typically receive little or no attention” (Wood 35). Another aspect about the female character shown on TV uttered by Wood is that

“[a]lthough these characters have titles such as lawyer or doctor, they are shown predominantly in their roles as homemakers, mothers, and wives. We see them involved in caring conversations with family and friends and doing things for others, all of which never seem to conflict with their professional responsibilities” (Wood 35).

Another statement about the division of gender roles formulated by Wood is “he’s always glad to come home” (Wood, 1994, 35). Here, Woods is referring to the situation when a man, probably hungry and exhausted, comes home from work. Then, the woman at home is supposed to have cooked dinner and have tidied up the house to please her husband. Women are supposed to be “superwomen” (Wood 35) and to manage all the housework “without her getting a hair out of place or being late to a conference” (Wood 35). Also, Kimmel’s statement

“[i]n a typical academic career, a scholar completes a Ph.D. about six to seven years after the BA, roughly by age 30, and then begins a career as an Assistant Professor with six more years to earn tenure and promotion. This is usually the most intense academic work period of a scholar’s life, and also the most likely childbearing years for professional women. The tenure clock is thus timed to a man’s rhythms—not just any man, but one with a wife to relieve him of family obligations as he establishes his credentials” (Kimmel 9320).

indicates a similar approach to the role distributions of men and women. This quote also indicates the structural and organizational problems women have to face in the world of work. There is no doubt that women, if they would like to have kids, only have a specific time frame, until a woman's fertility diminishes. Therefore, women might have the wish to start a family at an earlier point than men do. Therefore, women typically stay home for a specific time. Connecting this thought to the utterance of Kimmel, women bearing a child at the age of 30 would then only have finished the bachelor before going on maternity leave. This would further mean that they would not have worked as a doctor so far, including not earning any money which would make them dependent on a man or family.

Carrie Lynn Reinhard, Christopher Olsen and Susan Kahlenberg add here that media focuses "on reifying traditional gender roles rather than breaking down boundaries and expanding more fluid and open identities" (Reinhard; Olsen and Kahlenberg 9) by "reinforc[ing] feminine-only traits while male characters exhibit masculine traits" (Reinhard; Olsen and Kahlenberg 9).

Both main characters of *Madam Secretary*, Elizabeth McCord and her husband Henry McCord challenge this stereotype in a certain way. First of all, Elizabeth acquires a highly ranked position in politics as Secretary of State, indicating that being the homemaker is not defined as her primary role in the series. Instead, she pursues a demanding career with a high workload. This would suggest that Henry McCord is the homemaker of them, but in the series, it appears that both share the household and raising the kids to almost equal parts. Henry works as a theology professor and national security expert, but also takes a major role in the education of their three children. In the series, Henry McCord is portrayed as a caring and supportive family father who supports his wife and family. Throughout the series, there are several instances where Elizabeth McCord is called away from home for work on short notice, even while she's engaged in activities like household chores or helping her children with their studies. Whenever Henry McCord is not at work, he readily takes over these responsibilities, allowing Elizabeth to leave for her job without hesitation. Therefore, it could be said that the McCords have a balanced family dynamics where they share parenting and household responsibilities. Henry McCord further challenges the gender stereotype of being solely the breadwinner as he provides emotional support for Elizabeth and supports her in any situation. This nurturing and at the same time supportive behavior deviates clearly from the traditional gender stereotype of men just being responsible for the family income. Furthermore, Henry is a caring father who was always an open ear for his children. If one of

the two daughters or his son requires mental support, he always makes an effort to reschedule his appointments or delay his current activities to be there for them, which again refutes the gender stereotype for men of being “just” breadwinners in a family, however, it demonstrates that men could also take on the role of homemaker within the family. Comparing the jobs of Elizabeth and Henry McCord, Elizabeth earns a higher income, as her job is paid better and she works more hours. This further refutes the stereotype that men are breadwinners and women are homemakers. The next aspect contradicting this stereotype is that Elizabeth is depicted as an active agent, making important decisions. This distinctively contradicts the stereotype of women being passive householders. In this sense, Elizabeth McCord rather takes the male role as a breadwinner, demonstrating her agency and leadership skills. Challenging this stereotype, Elizabeth McCord can be seen as a role model for many women aspiring to challenge traditional gender roles and not being afraid of taking the leap.

3 Analysis of the four gender stereotypes

As already explained previously, this analysis focuses exclusively on the first season of *Madam Secretary*, as it revolves around the themes of power, family, and ethics, challenging gender stereotypes as Elizabeth McCord is appointed the Secretary of State. To provide context for the series, a brief overview of the season will be presented.

At the beginning of season one, Elizabeth McCord, a former CIA analyst and college professor, is introduced. She unexpectedly is appointed the position of Secretary of State of the United States as her predecessor dies unexpectedly in a plane crash, which, as will be revealed later in the series, was murder. Throughout the first season, she grows into her new role as the Secretary of State, and within this process, she must face several challenges, not only concerning the formal aspects of her job but also challenges such as sexual objectification and gender bias. Additionally, she grapples with balancing the demands of motherhood and family life with her new career as Secretary of State. Elizabeth works in close collaboration with President Conrad Dalton, who deeply values her independent thinking and ethical approach. As support, Elizabeth is backed up by her caring husband, Henry McCord, Chief of Staff Nadine Tolliver, press coordinator Daisy Grant, speechwriter Matt Mahoney, and personal assistant Blake Moran. This core team assists Elizabeth in navigating the country through complex national and international crises.

One of the primary stories in the first season of *Madam Secretary* is the mysterious plane crash that caused the death of Elizabeth McCord's predecessor, Secretary of State Vincent Marsh. As she is unsure whom to trust, Elizabeth collaborates closely with her husband Henry, a professor and former Marine, to solve the case of the death of Vincent. Together, they uncover a conspiracy, including corruption and secret operations within the U.S. government. These covert operations within the government alienate Elizabeth in the sense of questioning the loyalty of everyone within her team except for her husband, but she finally manages to find trust again as soon as she has resolved the secret operations.

Throughout the season, Elizabeth has to handle several international incidents, for example, a conflict with Iran, including a nuclear deal, a hazardous hostage affair in Syria, and, additionally, a diplomatic conflict with Russia. Elizabeth's approach to resolving these international incidents, causing major threats to the U.S., is characterized by great empathy and moral integrity. She consistently adheres to her ideals and remains unwavering in her principles. Not only her team but also negotiation partners from foreign countries are shown to appreciate this quality. Throughout the season, she often clashes with Russell Jackson,

White House Chief of Staff, as she remains steadfast towards her principles and is not willing to take any detours to reach her or the country's goals.

Within the series, Elizabeth not only has to manage complex incidents in her job but also within her marriage and her life as a mother of three children, all in their teens. She appears to be a warm-hearted and fully dedicated mother but sometimes struggles managing her full-time-job as Secretary of State of the United States and her family life. For example, there are several incidents when Elizabeth has planned an activity with the whole family, consisting of Henry, her two daughters Stephanie and Alison, and her son Jason, but then gets called away to an urgent problem at work, for example, the hostage situation in Syria. Nevertheless, her family and especially her husband Henry show great understanding for such situations as they know what her job requests.

Season one ends with Elizabeth facing new difficulties both as mother of a family and Secretary of State, provoking tension in how the story continues so that the audience wants to start watching season two right away.

3.1 “Women are emotional and men are stoic” in *Madam Secretary*

The first scene chosen to analyze the stereotype “women are emotional and men are stoic” in *Madam Secretary* occurs in the 4th Episode of Season 1. The episode revolves around and highly delicate international crisis involving the dispute over the Henkashu Islands between China and Japan. In this specific scene, Elizabeth informs Russell about her efforts in resolving the crisis and her achievement of finding an agreement, and her success in averting a catastrophe. To provide some additional context, the Henkashu Island are uninhabited, rocky islands located east of China and both lands, China and Japan, claim territorial ownership. The tension between the countries is high, as a natural gas deposit, which would offer a strategical and economical advantage, has been found there.

Elizabeth: Oh, hey. Hey, Russell.

Russell: I have a budget meeting.

Elizabeth: It's just gonna take a sec. It's about the Henkashu Islands.

Russell: Remind me.

Elizabeth: Four uninhabited rocky outcroppings in the East China Sea.

Russell: Right. China and Japan both claim ownership in a dispute going back generations, which picked up steam once it became clear that there's natural gas deposits underneath them.

Two weeks ago, China sent a reconnaissance plane over the Islands, Japan scrambled an F-15, they buzzed each other, and the Japanese pilot had to ditch. You called an emergency summit to try to avoid an escalation.

Elizabeth: You read my memo.

Russell: I did.

Elizabeth: And you have photographic memory.

Russell: I do.

Elizabeth: That's impressive.

Russell: I'm told.

Elizabeth: Well, speaking of impressive...(chuckles) I got both sides to agree that neither lays claim to the Islands and they divide the natural resources. We're still working out some of the details, but it means that by this afternoon we could have a treaty.

Russell: Fine. I'll have to put us there for the signing ceremony.

Elizabeth: Fine? My... Fine? Really? Because my staff and I have been up for four days straight trying to avert World War III, and that's what we get? We get "fine"? It's like... God, I'm so sorry. I mean, we've... It's been a really...It's been a really long four days, and I am totally sleep-deprived and hopped-up on coffee. I actually feel sick. (exhales)

Russell: Your predecessor and I had developed a shorthand. "Fine"... means "thank you for not screwing up". It's high praise. Take it. (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 4, 01:28-02:53)

Russell's response "Fine" (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 4, 2:14-2:15) evokes feelings of disregard and defiance in Elizabeth. It triggers an emotional outburst as Elizabeth feels unappreciated enough for her hard work and also the strenuous night, she and her staff endured to ease the conflict. Russell's answer to the report about her accomplishments might seem cold and uninterested, which would fortify the stereotype of men being stoic.

Nevertheless, as the series progresses, it becomes evident that it is Russell's natural course of action is not to show emotions, but rather to appear pragmatic and businesslike. In response to Russell's remark, Elizabeth has an emotional outburst, recounting her strenuous attempts to resolve the crisis which led to a final success. Her apology and mentioning of feeling unwell indicates vulnerability, which also reinforces the idea of women being more emotionally expressive. She displays her emotions openly, which highlights the emotional expressiveness often associated with women.

Some moments later in the conversation, Russell explains to Elizabeth that ““Fine”... means “thank you for not screwing up”. It's high praise” (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 4, 2:46-2:54) was an expression of appraisal that he and Elizabeth’s predecessor had developed. Therefore, Russell might seem stoic, but from his point of view this utterance is highly positive and appreciative.

This scene both reinforces and challenges the stereotype that “women are emotional and men are stoic” at the same time. Elizabeth’s emotional outburst, as she feels unappreciated for her hard work, indicates a confirmation of the stereotype of women being emotional. Due to working extremely hard previously, Elizabeth’s exhaustion might amplify her emotions. The scene further highlights the high emotional toll, Elizabeth’s job takes on her. Extremely high pressure to function and accomplish results further elevate the pressure laid on the Secretary of State. At the same time, Russell’s initial reply to her report appears stoic. However, he later explains that the simple “Fine” was actually meant as a high, which indicates that he was not merely stoic, but also capable of showing emotions of appreciation, even if his way of expressing conformation differs from common expectations. The scene highlights the different communication styles of men and women. While Elizabeth interprets Russell’s “Fine” (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 4, 2:14-2:15) as dismissal of her hard work, his intention is to praise Elizabeth, but in a pragmatic and seemingly cold manner. Furthermore, the brevity of his utterance indicates a confirmation of the stereotype of men being stoic, even though he might evaluate it as appreciation. Due to their different personalities, Elizabeth and Russell tend to argue numerous times throughout the series. The scene also suggests that women and men differ in showing praise and giving approval.

The next scene taken for analyzing incidents of examples for the stereotype “women are emotional and men are stoic” appears in Episode 7 of Season 1. To give a little background of the scene, Henry is working for the CIA again, and his contact person in the CIA is a woman slightly younger than him. He meets her several times in a secret meeting room and a few times at a coffee shop, where they discuss the current operation while having a coffee. Stevie observes one of their meetings and wrongly assumes that her dad, Henry McCord is unfaithful towards her mum and is having an affair with the unknown woman. This misunderstanding deeply upsets her and creates tension in the family, as Stevie appears enraged because of the thought that her dad is betraying her mum. In the scene chosen for analysis, Henry and Elizabeth are sitting in their bed in the evening and they are discussing how to cope with the

situation of Stephanie thinking that Henry is having an affair. Henry is very sensitive about the situation and seems deeply affected and hurt by his daughter questioning his loyalty towards her mum.

The wording of the scene is the following:

Henry. What are we gonna do about Stevie? That's it, I can't stand the thought of her thinking I would cheat on you.

Elizabeth: I know, but now there's something bigger at stake.

Henry: I-I've got to go talk to her.

Elizabeth: I think she needs to hear it from me. (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 7, 41:31-41:45)

First of all, Henry starts addressing the issue of Stevie doubting his integrity by articulating: “What are we gonna do about Stevie? That's it, I can't stand the thought of her thinking I would cheat on you. (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 7, 4:31-4:37). It becomes evident that the thought that Stevie thinks that Henry would have an affair affects him deeply in a negative way, which refutes the stereotype of men being stoic.

Elizabeth reacts understandingly as she recognizes how much the situation affects Henry, but nevertheless brings up the fact that there is something bigger at stake. This statement has a deeper meaning that the secret operation between Henry and the CIA must not be uncovered, even if it might cause difficulties within the family. Then, Henry articulates “I-I've got to go talk to her” (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 7, 4:39-4:42). This utterance highlights his protective behavior, wanting his daughter to find out the truth and his urge to rectify the situation. Nevertheless, Elizabeth denies his request of talking to his daughter, explaining that she believes it would be necessary that their daughter hears from her that Henry would not be cheating on her. This highlights Elizabeth's emotional intelligence and ability to negotiate between two parties, an ability she also profits from immensely in her job as Secretary of State.

Especially at the beginning of the conversation, Henry seems desperate and unaware of how the situation could possibly be solved. Both are sitting in their bed, with Henry's hand wrapped around Elizabeth's body. Before he starts speaking, he takes off his glasses with his right hand. During his first utterance, he is looking to the ceiling, as if he would ask God for advice. When uttering “I can't stand the thought of her thinking I would cheat on you”

(Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 7, 4:33-4:37), Henry leans to the front, folds both hands and leans his chin on them. He is now looking down, seeming even more desperate and sad about his daughter believing he would be unfaithful towards Elizabeth. He clearly shows signs of physical stress such as pacing and a tense posture. When articulating “I-I’ve got to go talk to her” (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 7, 4:39-4:42) he opens his hands again quickly and uses them to underline the urgency of his plan to talk to her. Nevertheless, Elizabeth changes his plans and tells him, that she thought it would be more important that she talked to Stevie. Contradicting the stereotype of women getting emotional, Elizabeth remains calm throughout the whole conversation. Also, her body language reflects her calmness, as she sits upright, focusing her gaze on her husband Henry. She keeps eye contact to Henry and speaks in a calm and understanding tone.

Henry’s tension and distressed posture indicate emotional consternation, which clearly contradict the stereotype of men being stoic. As contradiction, Elizabeth’s calm and very controlled body language and her well-considerate answers towards Henry’s utterances reflect her emotional intelligence and indicate her acting deliberated and not impulsive, which again contradicts the stereotype of woman being emotional.

Comparing both characters in the scene, Elizabeth is acting rational and calm, whereas Henry is following his intuition and gets emotionally enraged by the thought of his daughter doubting his integrity. In the scene, the stereotype “women are emotional and men are stoic” cannot be evaluated as applicable. If one of the characters could have to be evaluated as emotional, in this specific scene, it would be Henry and not Elizabeth, who remains calm and objective.

The third scene chosen to analyze the stereotype “women are emotional and men are stoic” appears in Episode 15 of Season 1. The scene shows Elizabeth and Henry in their bedroom. Elizabeth is stressed about lying to the mother whose young boy was killed, indirectly because one of the decisions Elizabeth has made. She feels guilty and uncomfortable, and her husband Henry is showing empathy and giving emotional support, he further reminds Elizabeth that it was not her, but Juliet’s, Elizabeth’s friend, fault that the boy was killed, because she betrayed the country.

Henry: Hey... hey, come here. What... what's wrong?

Elizabeth: I, uh...

Henry: What's wrong?

Elizabeth: I had to lie to that poor woman, right to her face, when I knew full well that the reason her son was killed is because of an op that I signed off on. And I know... I get it...it's part of the job. But it's a part of the job, Henry, that I am never going to get used to.

Henry: That guy died because of Juliet, not because of you.

Elizabeth: Because I trusted Juliet.

Henry: You trusted one of your best friends, yes. You were betrayed, babe. I think you can give yourself a pass for that. Dante classified it as the worst sin of all. He devoted an entire level of hell to its practitioners.

Elizabeth: I just never could get a handle on the "trust no one" part of my job.

Henry: Good. I wouldn't want you to. (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 15, 13:17-14:12)

In the conversation, Henry senses that something is wrong with his wife. Therefore, he asks her to come to him and talk about her struggles she might have. This action of Henry refutes the stereotype of men being stoic. He clearly senses that there is something wrong with Elizabeth, which men who were stoic could not figure out. Also, as Elizabeth does not directly answer, he channels back so that she finally expresses her discomfort and reason for feeling unwell. Elizabeth appears highly emotional in the scene. The emotional burden of the death of the boy, which she blames herself for, is evident. Her words "I had to lie to that poor woman, right to her face, when I knew full well that the reason her son was killed is because of an op that I signed off on"(Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 15, 13:25-14:35) indicate the extent of guilt and discomfort she is feeling. Additionally, she articulates that she is keen on the difficulties and burden, the job entails, but nevertheless points out that she will never be able to cope well with incidents such as the death of the young boy. This again indicates frustration and vulnerability. These two utterances reinforce the stereotype of women being emotional. Her articulation "and I know... I get it...it's part of the job. But it's a part of the job, Henry, that I am never going to get used to" (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 15, 13:35-13:41) suggest that she is very well aware that her profession entails tragedies such as the death of the child, but at the same time reveal her emotional side when she speaks out that she would never get used to it. After Elizabeth expressed her feelings that she was guilty of causing the death of the young boy, Henry states "that guy died because of Juliet, not because of you" (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 15, 13:41-13:43), wanting to comfort her and reflecting her guilt. He tries to logically argue that she does not need to blame herself, but nevertheless, his utterance does not take the burden off from Elizabeth, as she again seeks the

guilt in herself. Now she argues again that it was her fault because she has trusted Juliet. The response of Henry “you trusted one of your best friends, yes. You were betrayed, babe. I think you can give yourself a pass for that. Dante classified it as the worst sin of all. He devoted an entire level of hell to its practitioners” (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 15, 13:44-13:49) shows that he gives his best to console his wife. Also, the next utterance of the Secretary of State “I just never could get a handle on the “trust no one” part of my job” (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 15, 14:00-14:04) represent her emotionality, which sometimes makes her job difficult for her. At the end of the scene, Henry responds to her utterance that she would never get used to the ““trust no one” part of the job” with a simple “good. I wouldn’t want you to” (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 15, 14:06-14:08), revealing that he would not like his wife to be cold and stoic.

This scene refutes and reflects the stereotype of women being emotional and men being stoic at the same time. On the one hand, Elizabeth struggles emotionally over the death of the child, which is clearly evident and emphasizes the stereotype of women being emotional. On the other side is Henry’s reaction and handling of the situation. He argues logically and shows emotional distance to the problem of his wife. He shows empathy and compassion with his wife, trying to comfort her to feel better. Compared to Elizabeth he is showing far less emotions and vulnerability. This could result from not being directly affected by the situation, or also, as the stereotype would suggest from being male. Nevertheless, his emotions can definitely not be classified as “stoic” as it would be assumed in this gender stereotype. His utterance “I think you can give yourself a pass for that” indicates that he is validating her feelings and unlike the stereotype suggests, he acknowledges her feelings. Conclusively, this scene both, reinforces and contradicts the stereotypes of “women being emotional and men being stoic”.

The fourth scene that demonstrates a perfect example for the complexity of Elizabeth McCord’s dual life as wife, as mother of three children and as the Secretary of State appears in Episode 16 of Season 1. The conversation between Henry and Elizabeth resembles the dynamic relationship with special focus on the impact of Elizabeth’s highly demanding profession on the relationship between the two of them. In this specific episode, Elizabeth has to make delicate decisions to tackle an international crisis between the United States and Iran. The USA is currently trying to avert a forthcoming coup. Elizabeth has made the plan to travel to Iran to calm the situation there and has already been signed off by the president.

Nevertheless, Henry is of the opinion that the situation is far too delicate in Iran, and he persists on Elizabeth staying in the US.

The conversation between the two of them is the following:

Elizabeth: I'm glad I don't have to wake you up.

Henry: I don't like the sound of that.

Elizabeth: I've been at the white house.

Henry: Yeah, for quite a while.

Elizabeth: I had to convince the president that the only way out of this little pickle in Iran is to go there.

Henry: Please tell me that you mean for him to go there.

Elizabeth: Henry.

Henry: No. I have always got your back, but going to Iran when there's a coup in the works? No, I'm playing the husband card.

Elizabeth: Babe, listen to me, of this coup moves forward and takes out you know...

Henry: Stop. I know you're gonna say this is what you signed up for, ... There are millions of lives at stake, but I...

Elizabeth: What part of this do you disagree with?

Henry: Okay... There are God knows how many radicals who would love to kill you.

Elizabeth: That's why it's a secret mission. They won't even know I'm there.

Okay, look. The whole point of my going is precisely because of the risk. How else are we going to send the message that we really have nothing to do with this coup?

Henry: So now you admit-- it's risky.

Elizabeth: And sanctioned by the president. You can take it up with him, if you want to.

Henry: Maybe I will.

Elizabeth: Henry. Come on. I'm gonna be okay. I love you. I will be fine (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 16, 16:34-17:52).

In this scene, Elizabeth appears highly emotionally controlled and rational decision-making. She outweighs the risks at stake, being her own life and the safety of the country she is committed to. Her articulation “I had to convince the president that the only way out of this little pickle in Iran is to go there” (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 16, 16:47-16:52) indicates that also the president is insecure, if Elizabeth’s plan would be a safe and worth risk-taking decision and if she would come home safe. Elizabeth is speaking in a low and very

calm voice, arguing logically, why she should go to Iran. At the same time, Henry becomes very emotional and utters “No, I'm playing the husband card” (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 16, 17:01-17:03). His voice sounds immensely fearful, and spectators can clearly sense that he is highly frightened by the fact that he could possibly lose his wife, if her plan did not work. While speaking, he moves towards her, shaking his head in order to reinforce his utterance. Nevertheless, Elizabeth does not give up right away and continues arguing logically why she should definitely go to Iran. She speaks in a calm and low voice and brings up more and more arguments to justify her decision. At one point in the conversation, Henry nearly loses his temper and says: “Stop. I know you're gonna say this is what you signed up for, ... There are millions of lives at stake, but I... (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 16, 17:09-17:12). He is getting really emotional, feeling extreme fear to lose his wife. This emotional way of acting strongly refutes the stereotype of men being stoic. Even though Henry shows a highly emotional response to her plan, Elizabeth keeps trying to convince him and followingly asks him, why he was against her plan. He simply articulates: “Okay... There are God knows how many radicals who would love to kill you” (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 16, 16:14-17:18) and again, the fear in his voice is clearly perceivable. Though, Henry brings up this rather serious reason why her plan would not be a good idea, Elizabeth continues arguing and articulates “That's why it's a secret mission. They won't even know I'm there.

Okay, look. The whole point of my going is precisely because of the risk. How else are we going to send the message that we really have nothing to do with this coup?” (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 16, 17:19-17:33), still wanting to convince Henry that her plan was a good idea. As Henry followingly utters, that she had now agreed that it was risky, she again argues “and sanctioned by the president. You can take it up with him, if you want to” (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 16, 17:34-17:38). Here she now partially gives up, sensing that the attempt of convincing her husband was useless, and leaves the part of convincing Henry that it was a good idea to go, for the president himself. At this point of the conversation, it seems as if Henry would give up trying to accomplish that Elizabeth stays home, simply articulating: “Maybe I will” (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 16, 17:38-17:39). Here, he speaks with a cold voice, indicating the fear for his wife, but also signaling partially giving up convincing his wife. In the end of the conversation, Elizabeth finally speaks in a loving and soft voice, articulating: “Come on. I'm gonna be okay. I love you. I will be fine) (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 16, 16:40-17:52).

This scene predominantly refutes the stereotype “women are emotional and men are stoic”. Elizabeth is showing high emotional control, arguing rationally when trying to convince Henry that she should go to Iran. She focuses on the logical reasons for her travel and places her professional responsibility over her physical well-being. She shows no sign of fear, which seems questionable, as it is a high-risk-mission. Therefore, she is perfectly subverting the stereotype of women being emotional. As contrast, Henry is portrayed as highly emotional, showing fear for his wife openly. He tries convincing her not to go for a long time, even if, in the end, all his efforts end up without any results. His emotional behavior aligns more with traditional female gender being classified for showing emotional expressiveness rather than stoic behavior. This indicates the subversion of the male stereotype of stoicism.

3.2 “Women are obsessed with their appearance” in *Madam Secretary*

The second collective stereotype taken for analysis is women are obsessed with their appearance. Already in the very first episode of season one, Elizabeth McCord defies this stereotype through her actions and behavior. Episode one opens with Elizabeth McCord getting asked by President Conrad Dalton to take the position of Secretary of State in the United States. So far, she has lived a quiet lifestyle on a farm earning horses and making a living as a college professor. After taking the position as Secretary of State, she does not alter her clothing style and primarily appears in trouser suits and her focus is clearly on the new challenges her new job brings rather than her outer appearance. Her outfit choices are strongly criticized by the other staff members right from the beginning of her position as Secretary of State. Nevertheless, at least in most of her appearances, she remains true to herself and does not alter her outfit choices. Nevertheless, some public appearances require a slightly different style, and even though Elizabeth changes her style only reluctantly, it helps to achieve strategic goals in some situations.

In the first episode, three short scenes with one overall topic demonstrate that Elizabeth McCord challenges the stereotype that “women are obsessed with their appearance” and shows the opposite behavior in many scenes. In the first short scene (Madam Secretary 12:30-12:50) Chief of Staff, Russel Jackson briefs Elizabeth McCord that they have recruited a personal stylist for her to manage her wardrobe and styling.

Throughout the whole episode and therefore also in the first short scene, taken for analysis, Elizabeth McCords style can be classified as professional yet understated for the position of

Secretary of the State. Generally, she is wearing neutral colors such as beige, white, and navy blue, which seem to be practical choices. Before meeting her stylist, she disclaims wearing make-up or accessories except for a watch and her wedding band. These choices indicate her approach toward dressing which emphasizes functionality over fashion. To complement her clothing, the Secretary of State primarily wears flat footwear designed for long working hours. This is, however, the one aspect of her wardrobe that is not suitable for a professional clothing style expected of a Secretary of State, and it is later criticized by her stylist as the series progresses. Also, Judith Butler has indicated that a certain dress code is expected in specific aspects of social life. She states, “[n]orms may or may not be explicit, and when they operate as the normalizing principle in social practice, they usually remain implicit, difficult to read, discernible most clearly and dramatically in the effects that they produce” (Butler 41). As in Butler’s quote, in the series, implicitly, a more elegant style would be expected from Elizabeth. Nevertheless, as she has only acquired the position for such a short period of time, she has not yet understood the importance of clothing, styled hair, and wearing make-up.

The wording of the first scene is the following:

Russell Jackson: We got you the name of a stylist, right?

Elizabeth: A stylist?

Russel Jackson: You're going to find it useful. It's a tough transition.

Elizabeth: I-I really don't think it's necessary.

Russel Jackson: It's coming from the top.

Elizabeth: Conrad...? The president wants me to have a stylist?

Russel Jackson: As chief of staff, when I speak, I am generally speaking for the president.

Image is a big part of the job. Don't take it personally. (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 1, 12:30-12:50)

This conversation between Elizabeth McCord clearly shows that it is not Elizabeth herself requesting the engagement of a stylist, but rather the President and his Chief of Staff, Russel Jackson, who have the desire to change her official clothing style. Considered from a meta-perspective, the President himself acts on behalf of the system as it seems formally required by society for a Secretary of State to dress a certain way to emphasize authority, professionalism, and competence. Up to this point in her new job, Elizabeth is wearing a highly professional-looking black suit with a slightly visible light blue blouse underneath. No cut-out is visible, and she further is not wearing any make-up. Elizabeth’s clothing choices are

rather functional than putting the focus on dressing appealingly and definitely not sexy. In the just described scene, Russel Jackson indicates that her style does not meet the look desired for the position of Secretary of State, who is appearing publicly and representing the country on a national and international level. What is outstanding in this conversation is that Elizabeth herself is surprised by the indication of Russell that she needs to change her clothing style as her way of styling is suitable for the job. She has already had a job in a public position, as a professor at college, before, but has never occupied a representative role in service of the state. Nevertheless, in this first scene, she refutes the collaboration with a personal stylist, saying “I don’t really think it’s necessary” (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 1, 12:36-12:38). Also, the backchanneling “Conrad...the president wants me to have a stylist?” (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 1, 12:41-12:44) by Elizabeth indicates her doubting the necessity of a stylist in her job. The statement “one does not ‘do’ one’s gender alone”, articulated by Butler, fits perfectly in this context, as Elizabeth is in some way expected to dress and be a “specific” kind of woman (Butler 1) and dress as required.

In the scene, it seems as if Russell Connell is aware of the certainty that Elizabeth does not understand why a stylist would be a suitable addition to her team as he says “You’re going to find it useful. It’s a tough transition” (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 1, 12:32-12:35). By that he refers to her transition from being a college professor to a public-facing state representative. Another indication that a certain dress code is expected of Elizabeth is Russell saying, “Image is a big part of the job” (Madam Secretary, Episode 1, Season 1, 12:48-12:50). Image, in this sense, refers to the public appearance of Elizabeth McCord. Russell implies here that beyond classical skills such as strategic thinking, the ability to negotiate, and political knowledge, the Secretary of State also needs to pay attention to personal presentation and media portrayal, as the perception of others can influence negotiation outcomes. This indicates that societal expectations regarding appearance do often differ for men and women, especially in politics. It seems as in politics, especially women are judged more than men on their physical appearance with special focus on clothing, hairstyle and make-up, whereas men are predominantly assessed based on their competence, authority and strategic thinking, rather than for their aesthetic appearance. One more aspect it is not socially expected from men to wear any make-up or jewelry in political settings. Elizabeth McCord is encouraged to change her style into a more traditional feminine appearance. This could mean wearing feminine tailored suits combined with decent make-up and a necklace or bracelet. Therefore, this scene indicates that it is not the Secretary herself who is obsessed with her appearance, but society. Moreover, it is a systemic norm that she is asked to conform to, as her job requires her to

make specific clothing and make-up decisions. This scene also indicates the different expectations for male and female political characters. A male Secretary of State would most likely not face pressure to change his clothing style, wear make-up or dress elegantly. The portrayed focus on the outer appearance of women in politics indicates additional time consumption, which takes energy and time.

Coming to the vocal aspects of the scene, both parties of the conversation speak in a calm and clear voice throughout the whole conversation. Elizabeth's surprise about the fact that Conrad wants her to get advice from a stylist is further indicated by the pitch of her voice, as it raises in the end. This especially is the case for the two utterances "A Stylist?" (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 1, 12:32-12:34) and the second one "Conrad...the president wants me to have a stylist?" (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 1, 12:41-12:44). In the middle of the conversation, when Elizabeth says, "I don't really think it's necessary" (Madam Secretary, Episode 1, Season 1 12:36-12:38) her voice is assertive, demonstrating her belief that she would be capable of taking responsibility for her own styling.

Elizabeth expresses the discomfort she feels in this scene by avoiding eye contact with Russel Jackson but looking at the ground and further packing her documents. This also indicates that she senses contemplation and her authority being compromised by asserting her inability to style herself. She also shakes her head when she utters, "Conrad...the president wants me to have a stylist?" (Madam Secretary, Episode 1, Season 1, 12:41-12:44), expressing disbelief and insecurity about the situation. Replying "You're going to find it useful. It's a tough transition" (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 1, 12:32-12:35), Russel Jackson slightly shakes his head as if he believes that Elizabeth's styling does not reflect his perception of professional clothing for women and therefore he wants her to have a stylist. Next when telling Elizabeth "It's coming from the top" (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 1, 12:38-12:40), he shrugs his shoulders, making clear that it is not his decision to make. This might seem like a power play to the audience, but the fact that Elizabeth and Conrad are good friends' offside professional life and have a strong interpersonal connection, suggests that this decision exclusively applies to the professional sphere. This gesture appears to have an apologetic function, as he does not want Elizabeth to be enraged because of the message he has delivered in favor of the president. When articulating the final statement in the conversation, "As chief of staff, when I speak, I am generally speaking for the president. Image is a big part of the job. Don't take it personally" (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 1, 12:30-12:50), Russell is already walking out the door and looking down on his phone, and Elizabeth follows him, so they are not talking face to face any longer. Turning around and looking at the phone while

speaking to the Secretary of State also indicates that the conversation is terminated for Russell Jackson, and he does not leave any room for discussion. This first scene demonstrates the contradiction of the stereotype “women are obsessed with their appearance” as it is evident that Elizabeth does not want to take the offer of a personal stylist, even though, as she finds out and later will be very clear about, has no chance, but collaborate with Roxanne Majidi, her future stylist. Furthermore, the issue of lookism, coming up in the 1970s, covering the topic of the outer appearance is addressed. It which means that women have to endure being looked at in much more extensive way than men. Men only seem to have to appear professional, being simply dressed without any additional make-up or accessories, when it is expected from women to appear professional and feminine by appearing with make-up and prettily dressed. They must not look masculine, because that could threaten the other sex.

The second short scene, closely connected to the first scene, is when Connell briefs Elizabeth about the employment of her personal stylist. In this scene, Matt Mahon, the personal assistant of Madam Secretary, introduces her to a woman called Roxanne Majidi, who should take the position of stylist. Roxanne appears as a strong, competent, and professionally dressed woman, suitable for her role as a stylist for the Secretary of State. Throughout the series, she is wearing high heels, minimal but classy accessories like delicate jewelry, simple earrings, and sometimes handbags or briefcases. Most of the time, the colors of her clothes are neutral, but she also incorporates soft pastel or deep jewel tones into her wardrobe. If she is wearing patterns, they are kept minimal and not too glamorous. Roxanne’s business suits are tailored in black, grey, or navy blue. Her business suits typically consist of a basic blouse combined with blazers and skirts or trousers. The skirts she usually chooses for her outfits can be typified as pencil skirts. To round up her flawless appearance, Roxanne Majidi is always wearing a neat and well-maintained hairstyle. She favors wearing her hair straight down, slightly waved, or pulled back in a ponytail or low bun. In the scene taken for analysis, Roxanne appears in an outfit that perfectly matches her professional appearance throughout the whole series. As a base layer, Roxanne is wearing a red dress with a slender stripe of white above her chest. A grey cloak complements her outfit. In this scene, it is not possible to determine which shoes she is wearing, as the camera perspective focuses on the upper bodies of the characters only. Roxanne has put on decent make-up with an understated lip gloss. Her hair falls off her shoulders slightly wavy, and she does not wear any additional accessories in her hair. To complete her look, she is wearing a ring, which looks like a wedding band and two golden bracelets on the left hand. Assessed according to her appearance, Roxanne Majidi

exemplifies the ideal business style suited to her role in politics, which is neither too stringent nor denuded. Nevertheless, it is fashionable and fancy to a certain degree, which seems to be expected from women in politics. At this point, Elizabeth McCord is still not, at least according to the President and her stylist, adequately dressed, meaning not feminine and not polished enough, for the high position she acquires within the office. This would also indicate a problem of class. It gives the impression that the political leaders inclusive the staff would be superior towards the normal folk. She is wearing a basic, slightly pink blouse with a straight black suit, which is neither tight nor too appealing. Her hair is falling off her shoulders, slightly wavy, but this hairstyle rather looks messy than professional. Elizabeth is not wearing any make-up and no eye-catching jewelry except for a small black necklace and her wedding ring.

The wording of the second scene chosen is the following:

Matt Mahon: Madam secretary?

Elizabeth McCord: Yeah? This is Roxanne Majidi,

Matt Mahon: The latest addition to our staff. I see.

Elizabeth: In what capacity?

Roxanne Majidi: I was sent by the chief of staff. Mr. Jackson says I'm to be your personal appearance specialist.

Elizabeth: Okay, I have no idea what that means.

Roxanne Majidi: Your stylist.

Elizabeth: Oh. (laughs) Well, I-I'm sure that you're Very good at what you do. But, um, I don't need a stylist.

Roxanne Majidi: Madam Secretary, I just do as I'm told. But I was sent by the chief of staff. He was pretty insistent. The way he conveyed it to me, you don't have a choice in the matter.

Elizabeth: See, here's the problem. I've never met a situation where I don't have a choice in the matter.

Matt Mahon: Well... You know, why don't we find another time for you to swing by? It's a very busy day here. (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 1, 23:15-23:58)

In the conversation between Elizabeth McCord, Roxanne Majidi, and Matt Mahon, it becomes evident that Elizabeth is not pleased with the president's decision to hire Roxanne as her style advisor. Her reactions to Roxanne stating she was her stylist, "Well, I-I'm sure that you're very good at what you do. But um, I don't need a stylist" (Madam Secretary, Season 1,

Episode 1, 23:28-23:35) expresses that she does not want to be patronized and told how she should look. The president and especially Connell Jackson are clearly not content with her look in a role as powerful woman. Her reactions and the resistance against the request for accepting a personal stylist therefore seems like a rebellion against gender norms and having to style a specific way. In her former job for the CIA, she has never had to think about her styling and now continues dressing the same way. As already mentioned, her styling always looked polished and capable, while focusing on functionality and professionalism. Therefore, getting assigned her own stylist seems surprising at first and spectators of the series get the impression that Elizabeth feels infantilized by the decision of the president to provide her with a styling expert. The first part of her statement she articulates in a soft and understanding voice, whereas the second part is expressed authoritative, as Elizabeth wants to make her point clear and does not want to leave any room for discussion. Answering the statement articulated by Elizabeth, Roxanne tries to explain herself and states “Madam secretary, I just do as I’m told. But I was sent by the chief of staff. He was pretty insistent. The way he conveyed it to me, you don’t have a choice in the matter” (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 1, 23:35-23:46). She speaks in a very clear, but certain voice, trying to ease the situation and secure a good collaboration with Elizabeth McCord. Nevertheless, it seems as if Elizabeth feels attacked in some way, as she would have been insulted for her personal way of styling. As Butler articulates “gender norms are *reproduced*, they are invoked and cited by bodily practices that also have the capacity to alter norms in the course of their citation” (Butler 52), in this scene, it seems as if a certain style is expected by Elizabeth. As the president has given directions to hire Roxanne, this style has not been implemented by Elizabeth yet. Therefore, she counters, “See, here’s the problem. I’ve never met a situation where I don’t have a choice in the matter” (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 1, 23:47-23:54). With this statement, she expresses clear that she does not appreciate being told what to wear, how to style her hair or how to apply her makeup. As in the statement before, she highlights that she believes that she does not need a stylist to assist her, because she thinks she would be able to style herself professionally. Here again, Elizabeth speaks in a very clear and, at the same time, authoritative voice, giving the impression that she would in no case take the help of a personal stylist. In this scene, Elizabeth is determined to shield her self-esteem, body image, and overall well-being from external pressures. She does feel the need to adhere to the “appearance of gender in its idealized dimensions” (Butler 52) as Butler would state it. Furthermore, Butler states, “[i]f we take the field of the human for granted, then we fail to think critically and ethically about the consequential ways that the human is being produced,

reproduced, and deproduced” (Butler 35). In this scene, Elizabeth tries opposing letting others determine her styling, but instead persuading the others to accept her individual way of styling. As the series progresses, Elizabeth is not able to enforce her volition, but she consequently listens to her direct boss, who would be the president. To ease the situation, Matt Mahon interferes by stating “Well... You know, why don't we find another time for you to swing by? It's a very busy day here. (Madam Secretary, Episode 1, Season 1, 23:55-23:59). When uttering this, Matt speaks with a very low and calm voice, trying to convince Roxanne that it would be better to delay the conversation between the two of them to a later point in time.

Coming to the body language visible in the scene, Elizabeth appears highly confident at the beginning. As she walks into the room with Blake Moran, her posture is straight, exuding confidence and a commanding presence. Meeting Roxanne and getting told that she was her personal stylist, she shakes her head, demonstrating that she is in no need for being advised by an extra stylist. As she is saying, “Well, I-I’m sure that you’re very good at what you do. But um, I don’t need a stylist.” (Madam Secretary, Episode 1, Season 1, 23:28-23:35), she demonstratively turns her back to Roxanne Majidi, walks over to the teapot and gets some tea, she once again highlights her disbelief in the necessity for a stylist. When Roxanne followingly expresses that it seemed as if she had no choice, but accept her as her personal stylist, she is currently walking into the other direction, but then stops immediately to turn around to express her disapproval of this directive. As she speaks, she is standing in an upright and highly confident position again and uses her right hand to underline her utterance “See, here's the problem. I've never met a situation where I don't have a choice in the matter” (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 1, 23:47-23:54). When Matt interferes and puts his hand softly on Roxanne’s back to indicate to come with him, Elizabeth McCord slightly shakes her head and then smiles, as if she would have won the argumentation between the two of them.

In this scene, two aspects can be observed clearly. On the one side, there is the president and the whole team, wanting Elizabeth to collaborate with a styling expert, and on the other side, Elizabeth McCord, who wants to refuse the order from the top and continue styling herself. In this scene, it is obvious that the Secretary of State does not believe that it is necessary to hire an additional staff member concerned with her wardrobe, make-up, and hair styling. This further indicates that, at this point, she is not aware of the significance of the outer appearance as Secretary of State, especially in public appearances. She prefers applying very little make-up, a simple way of clothing, and strict and little work hairstyles. Followingly, this little scene

definitely indicates that Elizabeth strictly refutes the stereotype that “women are obsessed with their appearance”.

In the third short scene chosen for analysis with a special focus on the gender stereotype “women are obsessed with their appearance,” Jay is informing Elizabeth McCord about the fact that the Times, the local newspaper, has convinced the parents of the two hostages to give an interview the next day. To avoid this, Elizabeth wants to make a public statement and clarify the situation. After the previous two scenes when her staff members have strongly advised changing her look and taking the offer of a personal assistant, Elizabeth McCord finally understands the importance of her public appearance as Secretary of State. The press conference aims to attract public attention to the hostage situation and, at the same time pressure the two countries, the United States of America and Syria, to work out a plan so that the two American teenagers, who a Syrian radical group has taken hostage, come home safely. These teenagers were taken hostage on a humanitarian mission in Syria. Syria demands the release of political prisoners from America to free the teenagers. To buy more time, Elizabeth first authorizes negotiations with the captors and, at the same time, directs the CIA to locate the hostages and potentially rescue them if needed secretly. In the scene, Elizabeth asks how bad the situation seems to be. As her team indicates that the situation is highly delicate, and Elizabeth now understands the importance of her outward appearance, she wants to exploit any possible advantage. Therefore, to dress adequately for the press conference, Elizabeth requests the help of the personal stylist, Roxanne Majidi.

Elizabeth: The Times got the Coles to make a statement?

Blake Moran: No, the Times got them to give a two-hour interview. (sighs)

Elizabeth: What did you say?

Jay Whitman: I said no comment. And say a lot of things at an elevated level.

Daisy Grant: But when are they going to run it?

Jay Whitman: Tomorrow.

Elizabeth: Oh. Buried in the back?

Jay Whitman: Depends on how big of a news day it is.

Elizabeth: Is that personal image consultant still in the building?

Matt Mahon: Yeah, she's got an office on the second floor.

Elizabeth: Tell her I want to see her right away. (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 1, 36:55-37:25).

When Elizabeth asks, “Buried in the back?” (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 1, 37:13-37:12), it becomes evident that for her, the situation seems quite hopeless. Jay then indicates that this depends on the situation. This is when Elizabeth realizes the importance of taking any possible benefits, and therefore, she asks, “Is that personal image consultant still in the building?” (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 1, 37:18-37:22) which is an indicator for her gathering the understanding for the importance of hair, make-up, and styling in her job as Secretary of State. After Matt Mahon has told her that she got an office on the second floor, she utters, “Tell her I want to see her right away” (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 1, 37:23-37:25). When saying this, her pitch is definite and certain, as if she wanted to stress that every detail mattered in such a delicate situation.

At the beginning of the scene, Blake Moran rushes into the room with a concerned face, seeming highly nervous. He straightly walks to the chair in front of Elizabeth McCord’s desk and leans on it. He speaks with a nervous voice, and it is evident that the news he must communicate to Elizabeth and the other staff members does not appeal to him. When Elizabeth channels back, “And what did you say?” (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 1, 37:04-37:05) in a designated voice, Blake answers her question in the same pitch, which gives the impression that he is in fight mode. When Daisy asks: “But when are they going to run it” (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 1, 37:10-37:11), his posture and gestures change as he answers, “Tomorrow” (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 1, 37:12). He lowers his head in despair and his posture changes from strong and willing to fight to weak and defeated, as he realizes that the goal, canceling the interview of the Times with the Coles, is highly sensitive and difficult to achieve. Like Blake, at the beginning of the scene, Elizabeth’s posture is strong, and in readiness for facing the news, Blake will introduce. When saying, “Oh. Buried in the back?” (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 1, 37:12-37:13), Elizabeth sits down as if the news would shock her and lowers her head as Blake does. Followingly, Elizabeth thinks intensely about what could be done to ease the situation. Meanwhile, she cocks her head to the left side and meanwhile remembers the importance of her outer appearance. Then she utters: “Is that personal image consultant still in the building?” (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 1, 37:18-37:22). When Matt answers that she has an office on the second floor, she instructs him to tell her she wants to see her that very moment, she uses her hand to emphasize the importance of her direction.

In the third scene, the utterance of Elizabeth McCord's "Is that personal image consultant still in the building?" (Madam Secretary, Episode 1, Season 1, 37:18-37:22) can be linked to the concept of gender performativity by Butler, who states that "[o]ne is always 'doing' with or for another, even if the other is only imaginary" (Butler 1), because in this specific scene, Elizabeth wants to dress adequately for the public event to make a good impression. This could also be seen as an instrument for achieving the goal of this episode, which is releasing the two teenagers and bringing them home safely. With this statement, Elizabeth's actions are in alignment with the statement by Butler: "If I have no desire to be recognized within a certain set of norms, then it follows that my sense of survival depends upon escaping the clutch of those norms by which recognition is conferred" (Butler 3). Butler expresses that recognition is depending on adhering to the social rules and norms and this is exactly, what Elizabeth shows here. She is not free to make a decision, as she requests the stylist to advise her about her public appearance. Therefore, she has to adhere to social norms, in this case being styled in a specific way.

This scene shows that dressing in a specific way and adhering to the dress code can be beneficial in certain situations. As Butler and Foucault stress, appearance also give access to power, meaning, if you play by the rules, it can be highly beneficial. Otherwise, also if you do not play by the rules, it might be disadvantageous for reaching your goals. Nevertheless, it still refutes the gender stereotype that "women are obsessed with their appearance," as Elizabeth only requests her stylist as a means of appearing more professional during the press conference and not really requesting her styling tips regarding her private life. It can be clearly recognized that Elizabeth would prefer dressing simply and professionally as in former times when working for the CIA.

In the next scene, which is closely linked to the previously analyzed, Elizabeth is walking on the streets with several news reporters, always accompanied by her two bodyguards. In this scene, the Secretary of State answers a few questions asked by the reporters about her new position without going into detail about any highly sensitive information concerning her work. Different from the previous scenes, Elizabeth's look has changed drastically. This indicates that she has had a meeting with her stylist, as already foreshadowed in the scene before. In this scene at the end of episode one, Elizabeth is wearing an elegant red dress combined with a red coat with golden buttons. Her hair is falling down her shoulders, and a small watch completes her outfit.

In this specific scene, the interviewers do not address her change of look directly by talking about everyday topics with Elizabeth:

(people talking excitedly)

Reporters: Hi. Congratulations on your new position.

Elizabeth: Thank you. Where are you guys from?

Reporters: We're from Minnesota.

Elizabeth: Ah, the land of 10,000 lakes, right? But it's actually more like 15,000.

Reporters: Yes, ma'am. Can we get our picture taken together?

Elizabeth: Actually, that's fine. That'd be great.

Reporters: Thank you.

Bodyguard: I need you to step back.

Elizabeth: Good? Good?

Reporters: Okay. Thank you!

Elizabeth: Enjoy your stay.

Reporters: Madam... Madam Secretary! (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 1, 37:25-38:25).

Nevertheless, on the next day, Elizabeth McCord's change of style is all over the media. This means that the show addresses that while everyone stereotypes women as being concerned about how they look, even if they do not, society judges women by how they look. In this scene, Elizabeth is coming down the stairs when Henry, Jason, and Allison are preparing food in the kitchen and simultaneously listening to the news on TV. There are three different news reporters, all fascinated and enthusiastic about Elizabeth's change of style, calling it a sensation.

The first sequence on TV shows her public appearance when she is wearing the red dress with the red coat and followingly different reporters, giving their opinion about the style change of the Secretary of State (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 1, 37:56-38:25). As first response to her grand appearance, a talking round is shown, where a reporter utters: "The response to Secretary McCord's look has been positive, most people saying... she's showing a little bit of leg." A second woman from the talking round adds: "And it looked like she went and changed her hairstyle, too! I kind of like it" (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 1, 37: 58-38:06).

Then, the setting switches, and a second reporter is talking. He verbalizes: "Issued no

statement. As to why the Secretary felt the need to modernize her look” (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 1, 38:08-38:09). Followingly, a third reporter is shown on TV commenting: “Secretary of state... I can't believe that with everything going on. In the world, this is the news” (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 1, 38:11-38:12). Just as the third reporter finishes talking, Jason starts expressing his surprise at the choice of news that is shown on TV.

The conversation between the family is the following:

Jason: Can't believe there is everything going on in the world, and this is the news. No offense, mum, but a new outfit isn't really a global event.

Elizabeth: Well, I-I guess it is now.

Henry: This is the most you've been in the news since the confirmation hearing.

Elizabeth: Yep. (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 1, 38:12-38:25).

This conversation reveals Jason's difficulty in fully comprehending the significance of his mother's change of style as a major event. Elizabeth's reaction to her son's utterance, “Well, I-I guess it is now” (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 1, 38:18-38:20), entails two different key messages. Firstly, Elizabeth seems astonished by her son's reaction to her outfit and styling changes. Secondly, it seems as if she realizes the importance of her styling even more, as this topic is the subject of so many TV shows, and therefore, she might feel offended by her son's utterance diminishing the importance of it. Followingly, instead of reprimanding his son or commenting on his utterances, Henry simply articulates that this was just the second time in her period as Secretary of State that Elizabeth has been on the news that often. The final word of the scene is a simple “Yep” (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 1, 38:25) coming from Elizabeth. This gives the impression that Elizabeth would feel slightly insecure and hurt about her family, questioning the importance of her change of style. All the sudden attention towards Elizabeth as Secretary of State reflects “the idea that a woman's value is based on her physical appearance, rather than her intelligence, skills, or accomplishments” (Ridgeway & Connell 107). Even though it is not personal but predominantly a choice in favor of her job, it becomes evident that dressing a certain way, and especially Elizabeth changing her look, is pictured as a big sensation within this episode. Whereas the public embraces her style change as a big sensation, the two men, her husband Henry and her son Jason are a little impressed. Especially Jason does not understand why his mother is portrayed constantly in the news because of her outfit change. In this scene, social norms reflected in

gender expectation become visual, as Alice Eagly states, “[m]any of these expectations are normative in the sense that they describe qualities or behavioral tendencies believed to be desirable for each sex (Eagly13). This scene is representative of the desire of people to watch nicely dressed women. Therefore, the style change in Elizabeth is handled as a small sensation as she finally dresses “gender adequately and appealing.” Not only in the sense of objectification but also considering the importance of socialization, Elizabeth getting all the attention from the public needs to be asserted critically, as her style and appearance are valued more than her inner values and especially her qualities as Secretary of State. As Peirce points out, within the socialization process, a girl will learn “that how she looks is more important than what she thinks” (Peirce 491). Therefore, this scene could demonstrate the maturing girl’s hyperbolic importance of beauty and appearance in public. Elizabeth’s appearance further shows that “gender norms are reproduced” (Butler 52), as show casting beauty is rated as one major attribute for a woman.

In the last scene, Elizabeth’s style is classic and pragmatic again. She is wearing a simple mid-blue blouse with a black blazer and simple black trousers. Her hair is falling slightly wavy from her shoulders, and she has not put on any make-up visible to the camera. This suggests that she reserves her more formal attire for public appearances while maintaining a preference for simple, straightforward clothing in her personal life. Analyzing the outfits of the other family members, it becomes clear that the two women are dressed more elegantly than the men. Allison is wearing a nice classic blue dress with a thin belt around her waist. Her hair, slightly wavy, is falling down her shoulders. The shot is filmed from far away, so it is not visible whether Elizabeth’s daughter is wearing make-up or not. Nevertheless, Allison’s arms reveal no bracelet, ring, or watch. Jason, in contrast to Allison, is dressed casually, wearing a basic striped T-shirt, a blue jacket, and blue jeans. Henry is dressed rather simply, as he is wearing black trousers combined with a dark blue shirt. In contrast to the women's elegant attire, both men are dressed in a more casual style. Comparing female and male characters in this scene, it could be concluded that the female characters, even when at home, dress more elegantly than the male characters as women will be judged for their wardrobe, while men have more freedom coming to clothing and styling.

The fifth scene of episode one, revealing Elizabeth’s inner reluctance to accept the style regulations for her position as Secretary of State, is sequenced shortly after the meeting with the king of Swaziland. They are discussing a delicate diplomatic situation, as Elizabeth raises

that the king should elevate the importance of the HIV/Aids epidemic in his country and include this topic in his agenda as it has been before. In this scene, a high tension can be felt, and against the expectations of Madam Secretary and her staff, the king agrees to collaborate and take their advice. The subsequent scene is about the exchange of Elizabeth and the king of Swaziland, foreshadowing that this specific conversation will be embraced as a great sensation in the news.

The wording in the conversation between Madam Secretary, the king of Swaziland, the staff of the king of Swaziland and the staff of Madam Secretary is the following:

Daisy Grant: That exchange with the king is already trending, Madam Secretary. Twitter is blowing up. People love it.

Elizabeth: Well, not everyone is gonna love it. Matt, prepare a statement for tomorrow. We may have to call a press conference.

Matt Mahon: I'm already on it.

Nadine Tolliver: Do you want this to become an issue?

Elizabeth: Yes! I think we've spent enough time on my look.

Dais Grant: World health, education, war on women... How do you want to frame it?

Elizabeth: All of the above.

Jay Whitman: It's a strong message. It'll play well in the polls. Not that I, you know, care about polls.

Blake Moran: Car is waiting for you outside when you're ready. I'll tell security to stand by.

Elizabeth: Thanks, Blake.

Nadine Tolliver: Nice work, madam secretary.

Elizabeth: Thank you. (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 1, 43:18-43:56).

The scene indicates that Elizabeth's proposal to the king of Swaziland to advise on the matter of the HIV/Aids epidemic will be the next news sensation. First, Daisy Grant articulates, "That exchange with the king is already trending, Madam Secretary. Twitter is blowing up. People love it" (Madam Secretary, Episode 1, Season 1, 43:18-43:22), which indicates a potential high media awareness. Followingly, after Elizabeth has given directions to Matt Mahon to prepare a public statement, Nadine Tolliver questions if she had the intention that this meeting receive public attention. As a response, Elizabeth utters: "Yes! I think we've spent enough time on my look" (Madam Secretary, Episode 1, Season 1, 43:30-43:33).

Elizabeth's statement reveals her attitude towards the recently increased public attention about her style. It indicates that the Secretary of State does not want her style to be the primary focus of the media but rather cover political matters.

In this scene, Elizabeth is wearing the same outfit as in the meeting with the king of Swaziland, as it is the subsequent scene. In contrast to her public appearance in the previous scene, when she was talking to the interviewers, she was dressed in a very conservative and formal way. She is wearing a tailored suit consisting of a white, long-arm blouse combined with wide, elegant black trousers. Her hair is pulled up into a bun, with some strands framing her face. In this scene, Elizabeth does not wear a necklace but hanging earrings in the form of small ovals.

Elizabeth wearing discreet jewelry coincides with Jennifer Craik's articulation:

“[w]ith professional and career women constantly struggling to look professional (that is, playing down their femininity and playing up their professional attributes by wearing professional clothes such as suits and business shirts, known as power clothes) while at the same time introducing elements that signal their femininity and soften a too masculine look (e.g., scarves, jewelry, bouffant hairstyles, and high heels – or stilettos for the brave)” (Craik 142-143).

As already mentioned, in contrast to the previous scene, Elizabeth is not styled specifically fashionable but more pragmatic to signal her competence in handling the complexity of foreign relations. She does not seem to be insecure about her outfit choices in any way. Nor does she have trouble accepting criticism about her physical appearance. Elizabeth incorporates the earrings into her look to “signal femininity” (Craik 142) and elevate the elegance of her look. Furthermore, she is wearing decent makeup, which consists of grey eyeshadow, mascara, and a nearly imperceptible lip gloss.

In comparison to Elizabeth, the two other women in this scene are dressed more polished and elegant, embodying professionalism and sophistication. Daisy Grant is wearing a dark blue dress, accentuating her good-looking figure. Around her waist, she is wearing a thin, golden belt, giving her outfit an elegant touch-up. Her hair is tied up with a middle-sized, silver hairgrip into a low bun, and she has attached similar earrings as Elizabeth. Another difference from Elizabeth is that she is wearing a shimmery, dark-blue eyeshadow, whereas Elizabeth's make-up is more decent. Daisy's appearance aligns with her character's image as a capable professional who is always well-dressed, especially during important political meetings and negotiations.

Nadine Toliver, the third woman in the scene, is dressed formally, representing her authoritative character as Chief of Staff of the Secretary of State. She is wearing an elegant,

black dress with the special characteristic that it is shoulder-free but does not show too much cleavage, so it does not seem tarty and is still adequate for such an important official meeting. Like Elizabeth, Nadine has tied up her hair into a low bun. Her eyes are all done with dark eye shadow and black mascara, and her lips are highlighted with flamboyant red lipstick. She is not wearing a necklace, but like the two other women, she is wearing hanging earrings suiting her dress. Additionally, a small brooch is visible on her dress, enhancing the glamour of her style. Comparing the three women, Nadine is styled most striking, followed by Daisy and Elizabeth. Analyzing the appearance of these three women in the episode once again highlights how styling and clothing choices play a highly significant role in the professional world they navigate.

Whereas Elizabeth, Nadine, and Daisy are all wearing an individual outfit, in this scene, the three men, Matt Mahon, Jay Whitman, and Blake Moran, are dressed the same, which could be a coincidence but also previously arranged. They are all fitted into a black suit, combined with a black tie and a white shirt beneath. One difference between Matt, Jay, and Blake is the way they have styled their hair. Suitable to his slightly clumsy and dreamy character, Matt's curly hair does not look as it would have been styled in a specific manner. In contrast to Matt, Jay and Blake have styled back their hair with hair gel, supporting their highly professional appearance.

Divergent from Wood's utterance that "[f]emale characters devote their primary energies to improving their appearances and taking care of homes and people" (Wood 32), in this scene, Elizabeth expresses her position very clearly that she has the strong wish to shift the public attention from her style and outfit towards more important aspects of her political work. With her utterance that her outfit has already been a public issue for too long, she also contradicts the statement of Pierce: "The traditionally socialized teenage girl will have learned, from many and varied sources, that how she looks is more important than what she thinks" (Pierce 491). Elizabeth has been brought up with the knowledge about traditional gender roles, but actively works against this social structure and is constantly bullied for her choice of contradicting the styling expectations in her job. Nevertheless, comparing men and women in this scene, it could be assumed that the women have spent more time styling than the men have, even though this does not necessarily have to be true. In this specific scene, the quote "[f]emale characters typically reinforce feminine-only traits while male characters exhibit masculine traits; thus, these media texts routinely focus on reifying traditional gender roles rather than breaking down boundaries and expanding more fluid and open identities" (Bressler, 9) could be applied, as the female characters appear well-styled, including

accessories, whereas the men's styling is far more simple. This could potentially function as an awareness raise for series spectators to develop consciousness about inequality between genders.

3.3 “Women are homemakers and men are breadwinners”

The third collective stereotype, which will be discussed in this thesis, is “women are homemakers and men are breadwinners.” The subjects of analysis will be predominantly Elizabeth and Henry McCord, as they depict the perfect examples of falsifying the reproduction of this stereotype within the series. In the series, both Elizabeth McCord and Henry McCord are working, and none of them is staying at home with the three kids Stephanie, Alison, and Jason. At first, Henry McCord is working as a professor of Religion at Georgetown University. He is deeply passionate about his academic work and is always willing to help students when they face challenges. As the series progresses, he is recruited by the National Security Agency (NSA) as a consultant for national and international incidents revolving around the themes of religion and radicalization, especially helping the NSA with insights and understanding of religious extremism. Coming to Elizabeth, early in her career, she worked as a Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) analyst specializing in global intelligence and strategy. With the intention to focus on her family, she then left the CIA and started working as a professor of political science at the University of Virginia. When her predecessor was killed, she was asked to take the position of Secretary of State, and she finally agreed. In the final season of the series, she consequently becomes the President of the United States, but as only the first season is analyzed, this will not be part of this paper.

The first short scene taken for analysis appears in the fifth episode of season 1 and offers a playful take on traditional gender roles when at the same time challenging them (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 5, 8:30-9:07). The whole family consisting of Henry, Elizabeth, Jason, Alison, and Stephanie are standing in the kitchen. The three teenagers are cooking dinner, whereas the parents are leaning against the kitchen counter, Henry holding a beer in his hand. The discussion topic of the following scene is Henry's appearance in the news on TV as being in third place for the most handsome marriage partners of political officials. As Stephanie explains to her mother, TMI has created a list of the top ten partners, and Henry has been chosen.

The conversation between Elizabeth, Henry, Alison, Stephanie, and Jason is the following:

Henry: Okay, somebody tell Mom about their day. And make it good.

Stephanie: Why don't you tell mom about your day?

Henry: Oh, no. (shushes)

Stephanie: Mom?

Elizabeth: What?

Stephanie: Did you know that today Dad also made the news?

Henry: Don't tell her everything.

Stephanie: Come on, Dad!

Elizabeth: No, no, no! What happened?

Henry: Apparently... I made some list of famous spouses.

Stephanie: Uh, prettiest spouses. TMI magazine's list of the arm candy top ten: U.S. Government edition.

Elizabeth: Get out!

Stephanie: Dad is number three.

Henry: Well...

Elizabeth: Who's one and two?

Stephanie: Oh, they're both women and they're both former supermodels.

Henry: Yeah, just so you know where the country's priorities lie.

Elizabeth: Aw, I think it's adorable. All right, that was a very good start (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 5, 8:30-9:07).

As Henry directs the children to report about their days, Stephanie enthusiastically starts with “Why don't you tell mom about your day?” (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 5, 8:33-8:35). She speaks with an agitated voice, indicating that she is highly excited about the news she is about to reveal. As a reaction to Stephanie's announcement, Henry acts as if he would not want her to give more details and as if he would be a little bit ashamed. Furthermore, he puts his finger on his mouth and shushes, indicating her to stop speaking. Nevertheless, he does not seem too serious, so Stephanie keeps talking, addressing her mother saying “Did you know that today Dad also made the news? (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 5, 8:37-8:39). During her utterance, her dad puts her hands around her neck for fun as if he would gulp her, but it is evident that he does not do it for real, and in no instance hurts his daughter. Jason is visible in the shot, and he is smiling greatly, as if he, too would evaluate the fact as

highly delighting. After Elizabeth channels back what the great news was, Henry finally reveals that he has made it on the list of famous spouses created by the TMI. Followingly, Stephanie gives more details about Henry being on the news uttering: “Uh, prettiest spouses. TMI magazine's list of the arm candy top ten: U.S. Government edition” (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 5, 8:45-8:52). She speaks in with an exhilarated voice giving the impression that she finds the fact that her dad has made it in the list of top ten prettiest spouses of the U.S. Government highly amusing. Followingly, Elizabeth utters “Get out” (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 5, 8:52-8:53), and slaps Henry slightly on his shoulder as if she cannot believe the news. Henry answers smiling with a simple “Well” (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 5, 8:54) and simultaneously raises his fist ironically as if it would be a big achievement. After Elizabeth asks who was place one and two, Stephanie articulates: “Oh, they're both women and they're both former supermodels (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 5, 8:57-8:59), speaking with an ironic voice, as if it would have been clear that places one and two of the list would be occupied by women. Answering his daughter, Henry utters “Yeah, just so you know where the country's priorities lie (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 5, 8:59-9:01) speaking with a highly ironic voice, indicating his disapproval of society’s superficial values. Elizabeth only answers “Aw, I think it's adorable” (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 5, 9:03-9:05) shortly, as she senses Henry’s discomfort and further changes the topic uttering “All right, that was a very good start” (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 5, 9:06-9:07).

While challenging traditional gender norms by placing Henry on the “arm candy” list, Stephanie’s utterance, “Oh, they're both women and they're both former supermodels (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 5, 8:57-8:59) emphasizes once again that the societal focus is still more on women’s appearance than on their intellectual achievements and professional accomplishments. It further suggests that women’s physical attractiveness is considered more important than men’s. Also, Henry’s “Well” and his raising his fist for fun highlights the irony of the scene, trivializing the fact that he was listed. (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 5, 8:57-8:59). Additionally, Henry’s utterance “Yeah, just so you know where the country's priorities lie (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 5, 8:59-9:01) reflects sarcastic critique about the superficiality of the world’s society. The sequence of spouses in the list reflects that women’s outer appearance seems to be still more important than men’s. Pointing out the absurdity of even being ranked indicates misplaced cultural priorities. Furthermore, speaking with a highly ironic voice indicates that he feels discomfort being placed. Henry

being listed also contradicts traditional gender norms, which would objectify women, but not men. Another interesting aspect of the conversation is the utterance “Get out” (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 5, 8:53-8:54) by Elizabeth. She speaks in an amused voice and slaps him softly on his shoulder. Her reaction to the news indicates her comfort in the relationship between Henry and her and symbolizes that she does not feel threatened in any way by Henry’s objectification. This at the same time contrasts traditional gender norms where predominantly women show physical beauty. The fact that Elizabeth does not feel insecure about her appearance because Henry has been listed and rated in third position once again adverts towards challenging traditional gender norms.

The scene successfully critiques societal values, questioning traditional gender roles and depicting societal priorities. Henry is depicted as an attachment of the Secretary of State, reversing traditional gender roles, where women are often classified as decorative and beautiful appendages of their husbands. This exemplifies that men do not always have to act as breadwinners while women are classified as homemakers. Here, Henry is celebrated for his outer appearance, which typically would be associated with women. Henry being listed positions him in a traditional female role through being judged for his outer appearance. Especially Henry’s oldest daughter, Stephanie appears to be highly delighted by the fact that her dad is the subject of TMI’s list of the most handsome political official husbands and wives.

Another aspect contradicting the stereotype is Elizabeth’s role as a political leader. She is portrayed as a high-achieving Secretary of State, having to make important political decisions. Her role in the series clearly challenges the traditional picture of a woman solely focusing on domestic responsibilities. Henry’s objectification in the sense of being the “attachment” of Elizabeth and Elizabeth’s professional role highlight the flexibility of gender roles within the series and demonstrate a rejection of outdated norms. Through creating a humorous and casual atmosphere, the scene in episode 5 dismantles the stereotype “women are homemakers and men are breadwinners” in an engaging way.

The second short scene taken as an example of reproducing or challenging the gender stereotype “women are homemakers and men are breadwinners” appears in episode 6 in Season 1. As in this scene, interactions between African women facing humanitarian challenges are shown, it illustrates a juxtaposition to the polished political scenes before. In

the series, often political and social themes such as inequities of marginalized groups are included.

In the first shot, a bedraggled house with a cross on the wall is shown. Furthermore, the village where the Africans are living is revealed. It consists of improvised houses made of wooden sticks and planes, and the ground seems dusty. In the second shot of the scene, a woman carrying a small girl and holding the hand of a small boy is coming into the village.

The wording of the scene is the following:

Woman 1: We will be safe now, my darlings.

Woman 2: You are welcome to stay my child, but the militia is not far behind, so I cannot promise you will be safe for long.

Woman 1: God help us. (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 6, 34:41-35:15)

Woman 1, the African woman carrying one girl on her back with a boy holding her hand evokes the impression to be escaping from someone. She looks frightened and constantly looks left and right as if she would fear to be followed. Her utterance “We will be safe now, my darlings” (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 6, 34:54-34:58) indicates that she is running away and by telling her kids that they would be safe, the woman wants to comfort them not being scared anymore. Next, a slightly older woman, supposedly a nun because she is wearing a long light-blue cloth, a nun cap, and a cross around her neck, steps up and tells her, that she is welcome to stay, but she can’t promise her to be safe for long because the military was following her. She speaks with a distinct and clear voice, indicating the seriousness of the current situation. The woman with the two children seems to be slightly disappointed and gives the impression as if her hopes would have been destroyed by the utterance of the nun that the military would be following them. She answers: “God help us” (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 6, 35:11-35:13), as if God was the only one who could solve her desperate situation.

The scene clearly reflects the traditional gender roles where women have stayed at home with the children while it is the father’s responsibility to earn money and take care of the family. As Wood states: “when someone is shown taking care of a child, ‘it is’ usually the mother, not the father. This perpetuates a negative stereotype of men as uncaring and uninvolved in family life” (Wood 32). This traditional gender role distribution is undoubtedly reproduced and reflected in the following scene. The utterance “We will be safe now my darlings”

(Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 6, 34:54-34:58) by the woman with the two children highlights her role as a maternal figure. She tries calming her kids, whereas the tone of her voice reflects uncertainty and disparity. This indicates her anxiety and indisposition, but to protect her children and make them feel safe, she tries to hide her feelings. “You are welcome to stay my child, but the militia is not far behind, so I cannot promise you will be safe for long” spoken by the second woman, reinforces the protective role of women. Nevertheless, indicating that the military is coming for them which is further threatening the life of the woman and her two children, creates a tense feeling. In this scene, the military, often dominated by men, disrupts the peace and safety of women. The final utterance of the scene “God help us” (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 6, 35:11-35:13), spoken by the mother in need, indicates her faith in survival and belief in God to survive this difficult situation.

The characters of both women in the scene are in alignment with the traditional gender roles. They appear as nurturers, protectors, and emotional support for their children. The scene shows that not only in calm and peaceful contexts, but particularly also in situations of danger and poverty the first woman places her children’s well-being over her own and tries to protect them. Nevertheless, in situations filled with war and followingly, lack of agency, it is difficult to perform traditional female roles as nurturer, protector, and emotional support. Another aspect indicative of women’s traditional gender roles is the collective caregiving the second woman is showing towards the first. She is offering help, which can be seen as an act of solidarity. Her decision that the woman and her two children are allowed to stay with the community challenges traditional stereotypes by showing decision-making qualities that would originally be assigned to the male gender. This further suggests that in this scene, in times of war and poverty, and specifically applicable to this scene, roles shift, and different responsibilities are adapted by women.

The third short scene chosen to illustrate the stereotype “women are homemakers and men are breadwinners” is taken from Episode 16 of Season 1. Henry is shown cooking the birthday dinner of Alison. The scene highlights the family dynamic of the McCords, challenging the stereotype “women are homemakers and men are breadwinners,” as Henry is embodying the caretaker role and cooking the birthday dinner for his daughter, while his wife Elizabeth is at work. The conversation between Henry and his middle oldest daughter Alison revolves around family traditions. Alison is well aware of the untraditional family dynamics in her

family which can be seen as a result of her mother's job and Henry adapting to his new responsibilities.

The following scene with Henry and Alison involved appears:

Alison: Mmm! Smells good!

Henry: Hey, happy birthday. (kissing)

Alison: Oh...

Henry: Happy birthday, noodle.

Alison: You're wearing the apron and making pancakes just feels like... normal.

Henry: Yeah, of course I am.

Alison: God, how old was I when I made that?

Henry: Uh... Four. I think Ms. Janey helped you out a little bit, but you did all these letters yourself, which I still contend makes you a genius.

Alison: I think I'm getting a little old for these traditions.

Henry: Well, if we don't keep doing these things then they're not traditions, right?

Alison: I don't know. With mom's insane job and still getting used to school and the move, the security guys outside...

Alison: You wearing the apron and making pancakes just feels like... Normal.

Henry: Come here.

Alison: Things change.

Henry: But not me making pancakes on your birthday.

Alison: Is this what it was like when Mom was in the CIA?

Henry: A little.

Alison: I know that Stevie remembers, but I was only, like, six when she quit. Do you know where she is?

Henry: Yes.

Alison: Tell me. Dad, I'm 16.

Henry: Yes, you are, but the problem with knowing secret things, noodle, is that, then, you know them. And... They have a way of slipping out.

Alison: You're worried about her, aren't you? (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 16, 28:08-29:20).

The scene clearly challenges traditional gender roles, as Henry is cooking the birthday dinner for his daughter. First of all, cooking is traditionally connotated as belonging to the female

gender. Henry is also wearing an apron and executing birthday traditions, which can be classified as domestic duties traditionally performed by women. Secondly, he is showing nurturing behavior by kissing her forehead and calling her the nickname “noodle”. This can be identified as affectionate behavior, which has traditionally also been interconnected with the female role of motherhood.

Alison mentioning her mother’s “insane job” (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 16, 28:35-28:37) is an indication that Elizabeth possesses the role of a breadwinner, which has traditionally been associated with the male gender. Her position as Secretary of State is a primary theme of the scene, as Alison wants her dad to give her more information about her current whereabouts. Nevertheless, Henry is not in the position to reveal neither where his wife currently is, nor what she is doing, and it is evident that he does not feel comfortable letting his daughter down by not giving her more details. Alison appears to have accepted the fact that, the job of her mother needs to be handled discreetly because she has already reached a certain age where she can analyze the situation objectively. Within the conversation, the impression arises that, if she was allowed to, she would be eager to know more details about her mother’s occupation and her operations which are concealed from the public and her family. Elizabeth fulfilling the role of the Secretary of State again contradicts the stereotype of women being homemakers and men being breadwinners of the family.

Another aspect indicative of Henry fulfilling the role of homemaker is his wearing the apron with certainty and implicitness. While wearing an apron is another aspect that has traditionally been associated with the female role as homemaker and classified as a symbol of domesticity, Henry is wearing the apron as if it were any other accessory or piece of clothing. Alison uttering “You’re wearing the apron and making pancakes just feels like... normal” (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 16, 28:14-28:15) highlights the non-traditional family dynamics with Henry fulfilling the role of caregiver while his wife Elizabeth is acquiring the demanding job as Secretary of State. Nevertheless, Alison seems to have accepted the current family situation when expressing that it felt normal. With this utterance, she indicates that she has accepted her dad in the nurturing role because she is old enough to comprehend that he is compensating for and helping his wife.

The scene gives the impression that Henry feels comfort about performing the domestic task of making his daughter a birthday dinner while his wife is at work taking care of the safety affairs of the country. This again can be seen as a contradiction of men being classified as breadwinners. Henry appears to help and support his wife in all matters, and he has accepted

that domestic duties such as cooking a birthday meal for his daughter are part of his range of activities now.

Analyzed from Alison's perspective, the scene shows that she has accepted the non-traditional family dynamics of her family and especially acknowledges her father as a homemaker and emotional support. Moreover, she respects her mother's profession and knows very well about the duties she must perform. The conversation between the teenager and her dad shows that she does not accuse her mother of not being at home on her birthday and being at work instead, but she accepts that her father takes this position for Elizabeth. It does not seem as if she would be disappointed by the situation that her mother cannot attend her daughter's birthday breakfast, but she would rather rate it as normal. Growing up with her mother first working for the CIA, has shaped her understanding of the importance of her job and adapting traditional parenting roles, and therefore, Alison seems pleased with the situation of her father preparing pancakes instead of her mother.

Conclusively, this role highlights the non-traditional family dynamics, and Alison shows great acceptance for her parents. The scene further highlights a modern family dynamic, where roles can be adapted as best suitable for the family with a special focus on the upbringing of children and mutual understanding and support between both adults in the relationship.

The fourth scene taken for analysis for this collective stereotype appears in Season 1 in Episode 16. It has already been chosen for analyzing the gender stereotype "women are emotional and men are stoic". The scene revolves around the fact that Elizabeth wants to go to Iran again to solve an international crisis directly in the country. She evaluates going there as the only chance to find a solution acceptable for both countries. The wording of the scene can be found in the previous chapter.

In the scene, Elizabeth wants to take high risks to travel to Iran. "I had to convince the president that the only way out of this little pickle in Iran is to go there" (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 16, 16:47-16:52), uttered by Elizabeth, indicates that even the president would declare the situation as too dangerous for her to go there. Nevertheless, she remained insistent and conveyed to him that it would be the only and best possibility to solve the crisis if she went there. This is indicative of taking high responsibilities as Secretary of State which would be traditionally associated with the male job as a breadwinner. At the same time, her wanting to go to Iran challenges the stereotype of women being homemakers, as in the case of her going, Henry would have to take this role. As a response to Elizabeth's utterance, that she

would go to Iran, Henry articulates: “No, I’m playing the husband card” (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 16, 17:01-17:03). This clearly shows that Henry does not want Elizabeth to go. Henry is showing typical male behavior, as he wants to protect Elizabeth by telling her to remain at home but also challenges the stereotype by showing emotions such as being concerned. Henry is challenging the stereotype in the sense that he is taking the traditional female role of worrying about his/her partner and being vulnerable. In addition, if Elizabeth went to Iran, he would take the traditional female role of homemaker, as there would be nobody else at home who could fulfill the position at the time, Elizabeth would be in Iran. Elizabeth recognizes Henry’s concerns but acts stubbornly and tries to convince him logically that she must go. As if Henry would have known which argument she would bring forward, to convince him, he expresses: “Stop. I know you’re gonna say this is what you signed up for, ... There are millions of lives at stake, but I ...” (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 16, 17:09-17:12). Elizabeth tries highlighting the importance of her actions using a rational approach instead of getting emotional. This way of argumentation is again traditionally associated with the male gender. Elizabeth still insisting on going, Henry tries conveying her to stay at home by bringing up “Okay... There are God knows how many radicals who would love to kill you” (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 16, 16:14-17:18), highlighting once again the danger of her plan. Here, he takes the typical male protective role, but at the same time challenges it as he shows emotions of fear. Insisting on her idea of going to Iran, Elizabeth brings up the president in the conversation saying: “and sanctioned by the president. You can take it up with him if you want to” (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 16, 17:34-17:38), trying to justify her demand to execute her plan. She does not let Henry convince her and change her plan, which indicates her role as breadwinner and Henry’s role as homemaker and caregiver in this scene.

Elizabeth appears as the breadwinner and protector of the country through her job as Secretary of State. She appears as fierce and strong-minded which would stereotypically be associated with the male role as breadwinner. Also, the upbringing of logical arguments in the argumentation with Henry challenges the female stereotype, as women are traditionally associated with getting and being weak. Moreover, her willingness to take the risk of going to Iran reflects her attitude and sense of duty, showing leadership skills. This again is traditionally associated with the male role as breadwinner. Henry is showing traditional male behavior as he wants to protect Elizabeth and tries to convince her to stay in the USA. At the same time, he appears as a supportive partner showing fear which would traditionally be

associated with the female role as caregiver.

This scene reflects very well the dynamic relationship between Henry and Elizabeth and clearly challenges the stereotype that “women are homemakers and men are breadwinners”.

3.4 “Men are aggressive, and women are passive”

The last gender stereotype taken for analysis is “men are aggressive, and women are passive.” To portray instances of contrasts to this gender stereotype, special focus will be laid again on the two main characters, the Secretary of State, Elizabeth McCord, and her husband, Henry McCord. Elizabeth appears as a highly professional, decision-making Secretary of State, known for being straightforward and taking action rather than drawing back and remaining silent. She often clashes with her male collaboration partners, as she shows a certain degree of stubbornness, mostly unwilling to adapt her opinion or plan. Nevertheless, she appears to be polite and pragmatic, using charm and empathy for the sake of her plans. This would be a first contrast to her male colleagues, who appear rather emotionless and cold. Not only Elizabeth but also President Dalton and Russell Jackson challenge the stereotype in Season 1 of the series. Although they sometimes show aggressive behavior in decision-making processes, they also showcase vulnerability and a similar degree of empathy as Elizabeth does. Another character in Madam Secretary challenging the stereotype is Isabelle Thomsen, a former Central Intelligence Agency operative. She has a similar background as Henry McCord and was also involved in covert operations. Furthermore, she has a deep knowledge of intelligence community and technical knowledge. Her past highly influences her professional behavior and her knowledge how to act in specific situations and her knowledge of protocol. This is also a reason, why Elizabeth consolidates her in high-risk situations concerning her job. Her character followingly refutes the stereotype in most situations, which is the reason why she has been included in the analysis.

The first scene that exemplifies the subversion of the gender stereotype “men are aggressive, and women are passive” appears in Episode 8 of Season 1 of Madam Secretary.

Isabelle: I haven't slept after what you told me.

Elizabeth: Oh, I know the feeling. All right, you're still mad at me.

Isabelle: Of course, I am.

Elizabeth: Well, Juliet believes me.

Isabelle: Juliet has two kids at preschool. I think she wants to see them grow up.

Elizabeth: You know I'm right.

Isabelle: George is dead, Bess. We don't want to be next.

Elizabeth: Then I'll do it alone.

Isabelle: It's not that simple. It was postmarked the day he died.

Elizabeth: George sent you this?

Isabelle: He owed me for a valet a couple months back. Look at this.

Elizabeth: What does that mean?

Isabelle: I don't even know if he wrote it. But I think maybe he wanted me to help you.

Elizabeth: What are you saying?

Isabelle: Juliet's out, but I'm in.

Elizabeth: Good. (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 8, 40:20-41:33).

At the beginning of the conversation, Isabelle expresses her concerns about Elizabeth's plans. This indicates an accordance with the stereotype that women are passive. Understanding Isabelle's fears, but still determined to execute her plan, Elizabeth articulates "You know I'm right" (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 8, 40:42-40:44). Based on this utterance, it is assumed that Elizabeth refutes being passive and spectating the world's happenings without any interference. Isabelle articulating her fears "George is dead, Bess. We don't want to be next (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 8, 40:45-40:48) is indicative of the applicability of the gender stereotype "women are passive." It shows her fear and hesitation to take action, which indicates passivity.

Elizabeth's utterance "Then I'll do it alone" (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 8, 41:00-41:02) clearly subverts the stereotype that women are passive. It presents Elizabeth as an active agent, taking action instead of backing down and giving up. She shows a willingness to act independently and at the same time, this gives the impression of her strength, typically associated with the masculine gender. At the end of the conversation, when Elizabeth has convinced Isabelle that taking action is the right decision, Isabelle consents, saying "Juliet's out, but I'm in" (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 8, 41:21-41:24) this again clearly contradicts that stereotype of female passivity, but signals confidence and determination. Especially at the beginning of the scene, Isabelle signals tension by crossing her arms and nervous gestures with her hands. Her gaze is focused on the ground, and she is preponderantly avoiding eye contact with Elizabeth. In the course of the conversation, as Elizabeth slowly convinces her to collaborate, her body language changes. Her posture becomes more upright

and also her gaze rises. This reflects her reconsideration of the situation and the actions the two women are planning.

Elizabeth appears slightly stiff and conservative at the beginning of the scene, as she might feel left out by Isabelle for wanting to back down. She leans on a chair, looking down most of the time, which indicates her perplexity. In the middle of the conversation, when uttering “Then I’ll do it alone” (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 8, 41:00-41:02), she stands upright, with her gaze focused on Isabelle, signaling high determination. When Isabelle inducts Elizabeth on the clue that George has given her on a conspiracy, her body language softens again. After stating, that Isabelle would help her with her plan, Elizabeth starts smirking, indicating happiness to have an ally.

In the scene, Elizabeth displays a profound determination to investigate George’s death, which clearly indicates that she does not take a passive role in the scene. In contrast to Elizabeth, Isabelle signals fear and insecurity, not wanting Elizabeth to get killed.

Nevertheless, like Elizabeth, she shows a willingness to take action and at the end of the scene, both women agree on taking action. Therefore, this scene clearly shows two women as active agents instead of passive figures. In the scene, Elizabeth’s willingness and determination to solve George’s death by using intellectual intelligence, rather than physical aggression, redefines the stereotype of male aggression. Therefore, her actions show a diverse type of aggression, namely aggression in the sense of decisiveness. It even seems as if, especially the Secretary of State would do whatever it takes to solve the case, which again refutes the stereotype of female passivity.

The next scene chosen as an example of challenging traditional gender expectations is taken from the 13th Episode in Season 1. The scene shows Elizabeth and Joey, a Bahraini official, deeply immersed in a conversation about the release of Hassani prisoners and guaranteeing them immunity. Joey requests exceptional treatment, but Elizabeth rejects his request due to the reason that these Hassanis have strongly violated U.S. regulations and laws. Elizabeth’s empathy helps her understand that Joey speaks on behalf of his father, and she tries to convince him to stand up against his father.

The wording of the scene is the following

Elizabeth: How are you?

Joey: Well, honestly, Lizzie, I'm in a bit of a tight spot. I need you to release the Hassanis and reinstate full immunity immediately.

Elizabeth: Well, I can't reinstate what they were never qualified for.

Joey: They are Bahraini diplomats they cannot be treated like common criminals.

Elizabeth: You see how they treated their maid?

Joey: It was despicable, but this is an exceptional case.

Elizabeth: Really?

Joey: Mm-hmm.

Elizabeth: Royal decree 56? State officials in Bahrain are immune from prosecution for human rights abuses.

Joey: I don't need human rights pointers from a country that imprisons Arabs on an island without legal recourse.

Elizabeth: Okay, forget about royal decree 56. We're in the United States. The Hassanis broke over half a dozen laws, and they're going to pay for it.

Joey: Okay. Fine. Without immunity, your soldiers, your embassy employees may get dragged before Bahraini judges just for annoying our government.

Elizabeth: Now, I know that's not a real threat.

Joey: I am just saying I cannot guarantee there won't be consequences.

Elizabeth: Who's talking here, Joey? You or your father? Come on, you used to rail against his conservative rule.

Joey: I still maintain my own views.

Elizabeth: Then stand up to him.

Joey: Hmm?

Elizabeth: Make him accept our immunity waiver.

Joey: Fine. I will talk to him.

Elizabeth: Thank you. I know that's not easy. How is your father?

Joey: He's old. He's sick. He's nearing the end of his life.

Elizabeth: I'm sorry to hear that.

Joey: Mmm.

Elizabeth: I hope it's not true, but if it is, I take solace in the fact that a progressive, bold new leader will take his place. Hey.

Joey: Hmm?

Elizabeth: Why don't you come over to our house for dinner tonight? Come on, it'll be fun.

We won't talk shop. I promise. I mean, the food's gonna suck, but...

Joey: Listen, I... (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 13, 15:47-17:30).

Right at the beginning of the scene, when Joey utters the request for the release of the Hassanis, Elizabeth argues logically and ethically, refusing to give the prisoners special treatment even though they have strongly violated the laws. When uttering “Okay, forget about royal decree 56. We're in the United States. The Hassanis broke over half a dozen laws, and they're going to pay for it” (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 13, 16:18-16:25) Elizabeth makes her position clear and does not leave any space for argumentation. Here, the Secretary of State clearly challenges the stereotype “women are passive”, as she concisely defines her position and does not step back to make any compromises. Also, when Joey argues “Okay. Fine. Without immunity, your soldiers, your embassy employees may get dragged before Bahraini judges just for annoying our government” (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 13, 16:25-16:33), Elizabeth does not back down and remains steadfast, articulating, that that wasn't a real threat for the United States. Followingly, Joey tries threatening her and simultaneously the whole country by uttering “I am just saying I cannot guarantee there won't be consequences” (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 13, 16:34-16:37). After Joey's utterance, the conversation takes an unpredictable turn, due to Elizabeth bringing up Joey's father by asking if Joey or his father would speak then. By articulating “Who's talking here, Joey? You or your father? Come on, you used to rail against his conservative rule” (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 13, 16:37-16:44) she tries to convince Joey to stand up for himself and not rigidly executing the orders of his father. This also indicates that this scene challenges the stereotype, as Joey is portrayed as passive, while Elizabeth appears as an active and powerful agent. Joey's passivity as a diplomat in this specific conversation may stem from internal family struggles with his father. In the scene, it seems as if Joey only executes the directions of his father instead of deciding on his own, which makes him possess the passive role. She still has the upper hand in the conversation and Joey finally agrees “Fine. I will talk to him” (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 13, 16:54-16:56). After the utterance about his father, Elizabeth's tone immediately changes to more compassionate and understanding. This also indicates Elizabeth's emotional intelligence, which has already often helped her throughout the series manage personal and political difficult situations. Here, the assertiveness in her voice disappears and is substituted by compassion.

At the beginning of the scene, Elizabeth sits down on the couch, while Joey stands in front of her. She underlines her statements by using decent hand gestures. Furthermore, she shakes her head several times as she speaks as if she cannot believe Joey's request. When articulating that she knows that it is no real threat, she takes off her glasses and puts them aside.

Followingly, Joey puts his arms down several times as if he wants to ease the situation. When uttering "Who's talking here, Joey? You or your father? Come on, you used to rail against his conservative rule" (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 13, 16:37-16:44), Elizabeth opens her arms to emphasize her words. When Elizabeth tells Joey to stand up to his father, she simultaneously gets up from the couch and walks towards Joey, trying to convince him to follow his own beliefs instead of adhering to his father's principles. Here, her voice changes and becomes softer, and also Joey's facial expression softens which gives the spectators the impression, that he starts thinking about the truth in Elizabeth's words. As Joey expresses his plan to talk to his father, the tension in the conversation disappears and the atmosphere becomes much more relaxed. Furthermore, the body language of both participants in the conversation becomes softer and the gestures of both get smaller and softer.

This scene subverts the traditional gender stereotype "men are aggressive, and women are passive" by portraying Elizabeth McCord as a commanding and assertive character, while simultaneously showing Joey as emotionally vulnerable and powerless, remaining silent under the regime of his father. Nevertheless, Elizabeth's aggressiveness as a leader is not exaggerated, as women in power are often portrayed as "too aggressive" or "over the top", but she remains highly professional.

The third scene chosen to analyze the stereotype appears in Season 1, Episode 16 (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 16, 16:34-17:52). This scene has already been analyzed to challenge the gender stereotype "men are breadwinners and women are homemakers", and as it illustrates a perfect example also for the fourth stereotype, it will also be part of the analysis with special focus on the aggressiveness and passivity of both genders.

In the conversation between Elizabeth and her husband, she clearly shows a high disposition to risk her life to secure the situation between the USA and Iran. This would be traditionally associated with male aggression instead of being associated with the female gender.

Elizabeth's utterance "I had to convince the president that the only way out of this little pickle in Iran is to go there" (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 16, 16:47-16:52) indicates that in this case, it was Elizabeth's choice and not the decision of the president to go to Iran and

bring herself in a highly delicate situation. Furthermore, the verbalization of her plan to go to the foreign country clearly shows character traits, namely bravery, toughness, and to a particular extent also aggressiveness in the sense of acting instead of staying in her home country. Henry's reaction "Please tell me that you mean for him to go there" (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 16, 16:53-16:55) shows his protective tendencies and his fear that his wife could get hurt. It seems as if Henry would take the traditional stereotypical female passive role, as he is not in a position to help or protect Elizabeth if she goes to Iran. The emotional vulnerability shown by Henry in this scene challenges the gender expectations that men have to be "[...] active, adventurous, powerful, sexually aggressive and largely uninvolved in human relationships" (Wood 32). His protective instincts become visual once again when he articulates "No I'm playing the husband card" (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 16, 17:02-17:03). To a certain extent, this utterance of Henry is in alignment with the stereotype "men are aggressive", as the protective behavior and the harsh and assertive tone of his utterance can be connected to male aggression. Nevertheless, Henry shows great compassion and concern which contradicts the stereotype. Another instance of contradicting the gender stereotype is the utterance of Elizabeth "That's why it's a secret mission. They won't even know I'm there. Okay, look. The whole point of my going is precisely because of the risk. How else are we going to send the message that we really have nothing to do with this coup?" (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 16, 17:19-17:33). Here, Elizabeth argues rationally, employing a logical framework. Although her husband is truly concerned, she insists on going to Iran and tries to find arguments to convince Henry that it is a good idea. She is undoubtedly aware of the risk of going abroad which refutes the stereotype of female passivity. Despite all the arguments, Elizabeth is bringing up, she does not have any chance to convince her husband that going to Iran would be the best option to prohibit the coup. At the end of the conversation, Elizabeth articulates that the mission was sanctioned by the president and that Henry could discuss her mission with him and argue with him as she seems fatigued of trying to retune Henry's opinion (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 16, 17:34-17:38). This utterance resonates with the traditional female gender stereotype "women are passive," as Elizabeth tries emitting to convince Henry to the president. His response to her articulation, "Maybe I will" (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 16, 17:39-17:40) is in alignment with the male gender stereotype of showing aggressiveness, but not in a physical modality, but the aggressiveness is reflected in the tone of his voice, seeming highly enraged. At the end of the conversation, Elizabeth changes the atmosphere by changing her voice to a loving and

understanding tone, while uttering “Henry. Come on. I'm gonna be okay. I love you. I will be fine” (Madam Secretary, Season 1, Episode 16, 17:46-17:52).

The scene challenges the gender stereotype “men are aggressive, and women are passive,” as Elizabeth takes the assertive and brave role showcasing a certain willingness to take the risk the travel to Iran entails, while Henry reacts emotionally and concerned rather than domineering. Nevertheless, Henry’s appearance and utterances are in alignment with the traditional gender stereotype “men are aggressive,” as he shows emotionally driven aggression.

4 Conclusion

This thesis aimed at exploring how traditional stereotypes are reproduced and challenged in the U.S. American TV series *Madam Secretary*. The following research questions have been stated to be answered within the paper:

1. Are gender stereotypes still persistent in the U.S. American TV series *Madam Secretary* and if the answer is yes, which stereotypes can be found in the TV series?
2. How do the portrayals of the characters in *Madam Secretary* deviate from the previously defined gender stereotypes?

In this MA thesis, the four gender stereotypes “women are emotional, and men are stoic,” “men are aggressive and women are passive,” “women are obsessed with their appearance” and “men are breadwinners and women are homemakers” were selected and analyzed within the context of the US American TV series *Madam Secretary*. These stereotypes were chosen as they represent long-prevailing stereotypes in our society. The aim of the paper was not only to investigate, if the stereotypes still exist in popular media, but also how contemporary television challenges and redefines these stereotypes.

The TV series *Madam Secretary* illustrates a particular valuable choice for this study, as it combines two different aspects: the political perspective of Elizabeth as Secretary of State with questions of leadership, diplomacy and power and at the same time the family life focusing on the upbringing of three children and the challenge to combine private and professional lives.

The scenes chosen for analysis are each representative for the four stereotypes taken as basis. They were elected in terms of how they construct, reproduce or challenge the four gender stereotypes. Throughout the paper, these scenes were analyzed combining textual detail, as for example dialogue, gestures and cinematography with the broader context of socio and cultural significance. In the analysis, recurring patterns were found and therefore, the single scenes were not chosen for their level of tension or personal interest, but for the aspect of analytical relevance.

The first stereotype analyzed “women are emotional, and men are stoic,” is both reinforced and challenged by the TV series *Madam Secretary*. In the show, emotional behavior is not tied to gender, but rather to context and situation. Elizabeth uses emotions as expression of

morality and empathy rather than irrationality and weakness. Taken out of context, some of Elizabeth's emotions might seem to be a reinforcement of the stereotype "women are emotional, and men are stoic", but closely analyzed, her emotional reactions in certain situations can be classified as emotional intelligence rather than uncontrolled emotional outbursts. Also, Henry's emotional vulnerability is portrayed as emotional strength and authenticity in the series, contradicting the stereotype "men being stoic". He sometimes expresses feelings of desperation when simultaneously, Elizabeth remains calm and gives him emotional support. This highlights the contradiction of the stereotype and simultaneously again indicates emotional intelligence displayed by both characters.

Overall, the second gender stereotype "women are obsessed with their appearance" is addressed by *Madame Secretary* as a complex interplay between traditional gender stereotypes, societal expectations and professional requirements. All the scenes analyzed within the thesis show an intractable connection between a woman's competence and her appearance in professional life. At the beginning of the series, Elizabeth refuses to adhere to the styling tips and the help of a private stylist. Nevertheless, as the show progresses, she realizes the immense importance of a professional appearance. Elizabeth's inner conflict between her personal preferences – she personally would prefer a more casual and less styled look – and what is expected from her as Secretary of State, becomes evident. The show also highlights the different expectations between the genders: while men can dress relatively simply, women always have to appear polished and perfectly styled in public. This indicates the unequal gender dynamics in professional settings. Elizabeth, confirming with the changes in style but showing a certain amount of reluctance, indicates that on the one hand she challenges the stereotype, as she is clearly not obsessed with her appearance, but at the same time feels pressured to conform to certain styling norms of women in leadership. Nevertheless, this does not signify that she is "obsessed with her appearance", but she rather accepts the significance of appearing in a certain way within her job.

Coming to the third stereotype, the outcome of the analysis has shown that *Madam Secretary* clearly dismantles the stereotype "women are homemakers and men are breadwinners." The scenes analyzed display reverse role distribution and shared domestic responsibilities. Both, Elizabeth and Henry play important roles in the upbringing of their children. Whenever Elizabeth's job requires her attention, Henry takes the role as caregiver and enables his wife to be present in her job. For example, when Elizabeth wants to travel to Iran in the

international Iran crisis, associated with the “breadwinner” role, Henry appears as the concerned partner staying home and caring for the children. This scene demonstrates role fluidity, challenging the rigid rule that men should be breadwinners and women homemakers, as in this scene, Elizabeth appears as the breadwinner, going to Iran. Through the series, Henry plays an active agent in the upbringing of their children. This indicates a cultural shift towards gender equality in family roles, as the show normalizes dual-career caregiving families, meaning both parents work in highly important jobs and are equally responsible for their children. At the same time, the show also features global gender norms, as the scene in Africa with women, persisting traditional gender roles, are shown. This would indicate that the United States feature a progressive view on gender politics, while countries in the global South are demonstrated as far behind coming to gender politics. However, in the scene with the African women, they demonstrate solidarity in crisis and female resilience, suggesting powerful support for each other between women.

The gender stereotype that “men are aggressive, and women are passive” is consistently subverted in Season 1 of the TV series *Madam Secretary*. Women, especially the main character, Elizabeth McCord, are depicted as assertive, pragmatic, and highly intelligent people who take action instead of remaining passive. Throughout the series, she displays great determination and bravery and furthermore shows immense leadership competence. She refutes the stereotype of women being passive without appearing negatively aggressive. In the series, the expression ‘aggression’ is redefined by distinguishing between physical aggression and intellectual assertiveness. Elizabeth predominantly shows intellectual assertiveness rather than physical aggression, but this also refutes the stereotype of women being passive. Male characters, such as Henry McCord and Joey, show high emotional vulnerability, challenging the notion that men always have to be strong and dominant, which could be associated with the stereotype of men being aggressive.

Another finding of the analysis is that the stereotype of “men being aggressive and women being passive” is outdated and simplified. Rather, aggressiveness and passivity are situational, as both genders display moments of both.

The overall conclusion of the paper is that one out of four gender stereotypes analyzed in the paper, namely “women are emotional, and men are stoic” is still partly reproduced in the series, whereas the three other stereotypes “men are aggressive and women are passive,” “women are obsessed with their appearance” and “men are breadwinner and women are

homemakers” are questioned or reversed throughout the first Season of the series. *Madam Secretary* suggests that empathy, intelligence, assertiveness, and vulnerability coexist across both genders, showcasing a more prevailing representation of gender dynamics. The show promotes a progressive narrative of gender roles, indicating a shift and ongoing transformation in society. It indicates a redefinition of emotional expressions, caregiving, cooperation and physical appearance, normalizing alternative views on femininity and masculinity. Throughout the series, the complexity of traditional stereotypes is highlighted and simultaneously, they are being challenged and reinterpreted.

As *Madam Secretary* is only one of numerous political dramas on TV, future research could examine other political dramas and compare and contrast them with this series.

Concludingly, *Madam Secretary* can be understood as important milestone for challenging and reinterpreting traditional gender stereotypes, as it redefines partnership, leadership, appearance and emotions.

5 Bibliography

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6 Appendix

6.1 Abstract English

Gender roles and stereotypes, especially those rooted in traditional beliefs, are evolving in our society. As our society changes, so do media and TV productions. However, the question remains whether they alter their portrayal of gender roles. Or is the portrayal of men and women far behind the current development? This thesis examines the depiction of gender stereotypes through a media analysis of the U.S. television series *Madam Secretary*. *Madam Secretary* serves as an ideal case study because its main character, Elizabeth McCord, holds a position of power and defies traditional gender stereotypes in her role. The four stereotypes being explored are “women are emotional, and men are stoic,” “men are aggressive, and women are passive”, “women are obsessed with their appearance,” and “men are breadwinners, and women are homemakers”. The paper hypothesizes that the portrayal of the main characters of the series, in some scenes, reinforces gender stereotypes to a certain degree. However, most scenes challenge these stereotypes, demonstrating that women can embrace traditionally male roles and that men can embrace traditionally female roles. This paper makes an empirical contribution to gender studies, particularly to the roles of men and women in TV.

6.2 Abstract German

Geschlechterrollen und -vorurteile, besonders jene, die tief in den traditionellen Überzeugungen verankert sind, entwickeln sich in unserer Gesellschaft weiter. So wie sich unsere Gesellschaft verändert, verändert sich auch der Bereich Medien und Fernsehen. Demnach stellt sich auch die Frage, ob sich mit der Gesellschaft auch die Darstellung der Geschlechterrollen verändert. Oder ist die Darstellung dieser Rollen noch immer weit den aktuellen Entwicklungen zurück? Die Arbeit behandelt die Darstellung von Geschlechtervorurteilen anhand einer Medienanalyse von der U.S. amerikanischen Fernsehserie *Madam Secretary*. *Madam Secretary* stellt dabei das perfekte Beispiel dar, da Elizabeth McCord, die Hauptfigur der Serie, eine machtvolle Position hat und immer wieder die traditionellen Geschlechtervorurteile widerlegt. Die vier Geschlechtervorurteile, welche für die Analyse herangenommen wurden, sind: „Frauen sind emotional, und Männer sind kalt“, „Männer sind aggressiv, und Frauen sind passiv“, „Frauen sind besessen von ihrem Aussehen“ und „Männer sind Ernährer, und Frauen sind Hausfrauen“. In der Arbeit wird hypothetisiert, dass die Darstellung von der Hauptfigur, in manchen Szenen, die Geschlechtervorurteile reproduziert. Jedoch widerlegen die überwiegenden Szenen diese und es wird gezeigt, dass Frauen traditionelle männliche Rollen einnehmen können und Männer traditionell weibliche. Diese Masterarbeit leistet einen empirischen Beitrag zur Erforschung von Geschlechterrollen und Geschlechtervorurteilen, insbesondere zu den Rollen von Frauen und Männern im Fernsehen.