

# A Multimodal Analysis Using an Exemplar from Japanese Television Advertising

*A multimodal analysis is used to investigate for the presence of situated meanings of **uchi/soto** in Japanese advertising. The analysis supports the proposition that discourses of gendered relations of **uchi/soto** may be found in contemporary Japanese television advertising. The article argues that relations of **uchi/soto** provide a unique window into Japanese consumption behavior. I advocate for multimodal critical discourse analysis as a preferred methodology and theoretical framework for multimodal advertising research applications. I discuss social and economic implications of reproducing gendered relations of **uchi/soto** in advertising and offer suggestions for future research on situated meanings.*

**Keywords:** Advertising, cultural praxis, gendered relations, Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MDCA), situated meaning.

## Introduction

*Uchi/soto* (inside/outside) relations have been extensively studied in contemporary Japanese society (Backnik, 1994a). Their role is illustrated in a variety of Japanese social contexts including the organization of gender, hierarchical social relations, family businesses, and intercompany business transactions. *Uchi/soto* functions as a type of situated meaning or cultural praxis. A central research question is whether these types of situated meanings, previously identified in real-life settings and using standard ethnographic methods, are revealed and can be detected in fictional popular culture artifacts, such as contemporary consumer advertising. This study examines the role of *uchi/soto* relations in Japanese consumer consumption contexts, as revealed by a single, exemplar television commercial for a food product. In this setting, the role of constructed situated meanings, such as *uchi/soto*, potentially becomes quite powerful in shaping societal role expectations. This is especially true given the stealth nature of advertising as a carrier of ideological meanings (Appadurai, 1996). The social and economic implications of such gender modeling for contemporary Japan are considerable (Pesek 2014).

The research methodology employed in this study draws its roots from the seminal work of Barthes (1977) on image and text. It also employs more recent developments in multimodal critical discourse analysis (MDCA) by Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996/2006). The paper addresses deficiencies in contemporary content analysis and semiotic analyses, both frequently employed in academic marketing literature.

The paper proceeds as follows. First, we review the role of situated meanings of *uchi/soto* in contemporary Japanese society. Second, we discuss the criteria and selection process for an exemplar example of Japanese television advertising *most likely* to reveal the presence of *uchi/soto* modeling in a fictionalized consumption context. Third, we discuss the state of the art in MCDA and its suitability as a

preferred methodology and theoretical framework for multimodal research applications such as contemporary television or web-based advertising. Fourth, we investigate whether our exemplar subject, the *Yamaki* television commercial, supports the proposition that *uchi/soto* relations are revealed in contemporary Japanese advertising. Finally, we discuss social and economic implications of this finding for the role of gender relations in Japan and offer suggestions for future research on situated meanings in advertising.

### **Situated Meaning: *Uchi/Soto* (Inside/Outside) in Contemporary Japan**

*Uchi/soto* expressions are used in Japan to communicate inside/outside contexts. Quinn calls for further research on the role of *uchi/soto* expressions since the concept addresses a wide range of Japanese life that is routinely symbolized as inside or outside (Quinn, 1994). *Uchi/soto* coordinates are a vital window into Japanese concept of self, society and language (Backnik and Quinn 1994). The concept has crossed disciplinary boundaries of linguistics, anthropology, sociology and comparative literature. The indexical relations manifest in *uchi/soto* distinctions have been studied in a number of settings, including the organization of gender, hierarchy, family and family businesses (Quinn, 1994).

*Uchi* expressions signify a world that is enclosed, at home, family, shared, familiar, informal, private, experienced directly, known, sacred, and primary. *Soto* expressions indicate a world that is at work, open, non-family, formal, not shared, unfamiliar, public, observed, profane, and secondary. These inside/outside coordinates are critical to understanding the role of self and society in Japan (Backnik 1994b). For the Japanese, inside/outside is a basic scale along which relationships can be indexed via varying degrees of more or less. Indeed, virtually any type of relation can be mapped in relation to this scale including, bowing, gift giving, politeness or formality in speech, social space, choice of dress, or topic of conversation. In Japan, much socio-cultural information is keyed implicitly through language use. For English speaking cultures, semantic or referential meaning may play more of a role in focusing on culture as an accumulation of lexical, or general knowledge (the “what” of culture). For the Japanese, pragmatic meaning may be coded in more subtle, complex ways. Pragmatic meaning focuses on establishing connotation through cultural practices that are learned, and carried on through a process of doing (the “how” of culture). Indeed, tacit knowledge has affected the daily life of the Japanese consumer and Japanese culture throughout history (Minowa 2012). This study employs a multimodal critical discourse analysis (see Kress and Van Leeuwen, 1996/2006) to detect the presence of *uchi/soto* relations in a proto-typical Japanese family as illustrated by unpacking an exemplar television commercial for a popular Japanese food product.

### **Exemplar Television Commercial - *Yamaki***

We should not expect to see evidence of situated meanings, such as *uchi/soto*, in all forms of advertising. For example, informational advertising that follows a

lecture format, with an off-camera announcer listing the attributes or benefits of the product would not afford an opportunity to reveal much about cultural praxis. Similarly, business to business or institutional advertising could be expected to focus more on informational appeals rather than featuring situated meanings. One would expect that product category plays an important role in whether cultural context, such as family roles and gendered behavior, it given a privileged part in how the product is presented to a prospective consumer. Parkin, for example, has provided extensive documentation that food product advertising has promoted food in distinctly gendered terms (Parkin 2007). Food advertising has historically exhibited themes that associate shopping and cooking with women. Female heads of household have been shown serving food to demonstrate love for their families. Food advertising has facilitated and reinforced the belief that kitchen work was women's work, even as women's participation in the labor force has increased. Advertisers have promoted that using their products would give a woman a happy marriage and healthy family. Advertising has also assured women that by buying and making the right foods, a woman could help her family achieve social status and maintain its racial or ethnic identity. Tanaka has shown that Japanese slice-of-life television commercials represent a hyper-ritualized version of cultural reality and can serve as fertile ground to examine cultural praxis (Tanaka, 1994).

With these criteria in mind, the author examined a database of 1,334 digitalized Japanese television commercials from a diverse array of product categories from the popular advertising research web site *Adforum.com*. The goal was to identify candidates *most likely* to be capable of revealing the existence of situated meanings. After identifying a subset of suitable food sector candidate ads that met the above criteria, the *Yamaki* television commercial (more fully described below) was chosen.

### **Methodology: Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA)**

There is a long tradition of semiotic analyses of print advertising in the academic advertising literature e.g. Williamson (1978); for television advertising, there is not (Parkin 2007). It is difficult to justify this methodological asymmetry on grounds other than operational challenges of bringing semiotic analysis to a fleeting image. However, in recent years there has been a growing interest in researching the visual, especially in technology-driven multimodal media (Rose 2012). Work in multimodal media has been pioneered by researchers such as Forceville (1996), who examined the role of metaphors in advertisements, cartoons, and film. But even Forceville, whose work focused on cognitive metaphor theory, was mainly concerned with the static image in print advertisements and billboards. The marketing literature has a long tradition of publishing content analyses of television commercials, addressing such issues as how participants are represented and what they are represented as doing, and their gender and ethnic/racial profiles (Murray and Murray 1996). Content analyses have typically focused on breaking down the holistic communication into its

1 constituent parts before reassembling the pieces. Improvements in computer  
 2 content analyses software have helped speed up the process of analyzing the pieces  
 3 but have not changed the fundamental nature of the approach (Neuendorf, 2002).

4 Recent developments in multimodal methods of studying popular television  
 5 and film offer improved methodologies for close interrogations of multimodal  
 6 media such as television commercials (Kress and Van Leeuwen 1996/2006;  
 7 Machin and Mayr 2012). In particular, Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis  
 8 (MCDA) has become a useful methodology to address the tension between the  
 9 functional/social institutional processes of the advertising industry on one hand,  
 10 and the systemic part of semiosis at the level of the individual ad. MCDA has been  
 11 employed to reveal dominant ideologies hidden in many forms of multimodal  
 12 media (Machin 2016). One of the advantages of MCDA over traditional content  
 13 analysis is that the former is multimodal and addresses how meaning is done  
 14 through complex combinations of different types of semiotic resources. For a  
 15 television commercial these include the language text of the audio, the visual  
 16 images in a sequence of cuts, the color symbolism of the mise-en-scene, and more  
 17 holistic, multidimensional representations, including situated meanings, such as  
 18 *uchi/soto*. MCDA also incorporates the contributions of sociolinguistics  
 19 multimodal work in Interactional Analysis (Scollon and Scollon, 2004). Close  
 20 readings of television commercials can draw upon the work of Interaction  
 21 Analysis (IA), such as Norris (2004), who has investigated the interplay of  
 22 different semiotic resources such as gestures, posture and proximity in real-life  
 23 environments. MCDA represents a shift in emphasis among language studies  
 24 scholars from language as a site of meaning making to emphasize the interlocking  
 25 role of all semiotic resources.

26 MCDA is not only an emerging field in its own right but operates as an  
 27 approach that better locates the sign as motivated and having a particular form.  
 28 MCDA also has the potential to reveal its roots in institutional ideologies, such as  
 29 the advertising industry, that frames social roles and expectations. One important  
 30 theoretical contribution of MCDA is the concept of affordances, the idea that  
 31 different semiotic resources embedded in media, in the context of critical discourse  
 32 analysis (CDA) can be strategically employed for specific ideological purposes.  
 33 We will show that situated meanings, such as *uchi/soto*, have the potential to  
 34 operate as holistic affordances, or complexes of semiotic resources to frame and  
 35 prescribe family roles and expectations. In MCDA, the still image can function as  
 36 a mode, but the concept of affordances allows us to skip the focus on mode and  
 37 instead fix our attention on the hidden motivation of affordances.

38 Images, such as the still of a television commercial, can symbolize and depict  
 39 in a way that language cannot (Machin 2016). Symbols in language do not  
 40 resemble what they refer to, but signify through conventions. In the case of an  
 41 image, interpretation does not have to be learned in the form of a code as in  
 42 language (Barthes, 1977). Consistent with Barthes' semiotic approach we privilege  
 43 the role of the still image in the close reading of the *Yamaki* television commercial.  
 44 The unique affordance of a still image is that it appears to represent unmediated  
 45 reality for its audience. The still produces an ideological trick of the all-seeing

spectator but hides its means of production (the ideological apparatus of the advertising industry). Sontag (2004) has long written of how advertising campaigns have the power to influence the nature of discourses about the issues they represent. Although our focus is on a singular advertising exemplar, *Yamaki*, the ad can serve in a Foucaultian sense (1972) as a quotation, where discourse is not so much present in any individual communication or text but in the collective force of an accumulation of similar messages from the package food industry. Machin (2016) argues that the promise of MCDA lies in not so much in the grammar of the message but in the integration of the social into the analysis. With that in mind, we will address the following questions in our close reading of the *Yamaki* television commercial:

- What affordances does it bring to the overall representation of women in the situated meaning of *uchi/soto*?
- How does the reproduction of the *uchi/soto* context of the family relationship serve the institution of the advertising industry and what types of ideologies are reproduced in this production?
- How are the images likely to be experienced by viewers who look at them?
- What Barthesian questions are raised about the cultural meanings of the settings or by social interaction analysis?
- How can discourses about the role of womanhood in Japan shape consumption practices in the interests of the dominant ideology and the institutional practices of advertising?
- What special role do situated meanings of *uchi/soto* play at the level of affordances in how discourses are recontextualized to reframe social practice?

For television commercials, the frames exist in a reflective relationship to the storyboard, the architectural design for the complete message system (Wells et al. 1995). Thus, this research studies both textual and visual elements in the *Yamaki* television commercial to reveal latent content of cultural praxis, the situated meaning of *uchi/soto*. Operationally, six still frames (one for each of the six television commercial cuts) and the accompanying text message of the voiceover serve as the focus of the analysis. The exemplar television commercial chosen is from the campaign for the popular, *Yamaki* sauce-flavoring product. The multimodal approach employed here has its origins in the work of Barthes (1977) on image and text, but is also informed by more recent methodological developments of MDCA, such as that of Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996/2006), which focus on the interactions among the semiotic resources and affordances. The research goal is to determine whether situated meanings, such as *uchi/soto* relations, can be found in fictionalized, slice-of-life Japanese television commercials.

## Revealing *Uchi/Soto* Situated Meanings in the *Yamaki* Exemplar

The following television commercial from Japan is for a food product, called *Yamaki* (see appendix). Six frames from the 30 second commercial are presented for a multimodal analysis. The analyses will focus on the interaction of the semiotic resources employed in the television commercial. The six frames represent key moments from all six cuts in the ad. Both original Japanese advertising copy and the English translation are provided. In Japanese, *Mentsuyu-men* means noodles and *tsuyu* means soup. The advertised product is a type of sauce for a noodle dish. *Ichiban* is a key word in the commercial and refers to number one. The *Yamaki* brand serves as an anthropomorphized manifestation of the husband as “hero” character; a common brand personality advertising strategy. Both *Yamaki* and the husband as “hero” are number one/*ichiban*. He is the number one husband and *Yamaki* is the number one market share leader. *Katsuo* is a type of fish and *Dashi* refers to a soup soaked in fish or beef. The family unit consists of a father, mother, and young daughter. The Japanese and English translations of the television commercial audio text follow.

### Yamaki Commercial (Japanese)

**Mother:** Uchino papa wa ichiban zuki. Ichiban dennshade.  
**Father:** Ichiban de naito.  
**Mother:** Kaerunomo ichiban.  
**Daughter:** Mada mizu dashi.  
**Mother:** Ofuro mo yappari  
**Father:** Ichiban de naito.  
**Mother:** Onabemo yappari Katsuo. Ichiban Dashi no mentsuyude.  
**Father:** Ichiban!!  
**Daughter:** Mada namadashi.  
**All:** Ktsuo Ichiban Dashi!!  
**Father:** Mentsuyu wa **YAMAKI**

### Yamaki Commercial (English)

**Mother:** My honey likes to be number one.  
 He gets the train “#1”.  
**Father:** I should be a number one...  
**Mother:** He leaves for home the earliest in his company.  
**Daughter:** The water is not heated yet.  
**Mother:** He wants to be the first person to take a bath, too.  
**Father:** I should be a number one.  
**Mother:** We eat hot pot with MENTSUYU, Katsuo Ichiban Dashi. My honey really likes the word number one.  
**Father:** Number one!!!  
**Daughter:** The food is not cooked yet.  
**All:** Number one with fish soup!!!  
**Father:** MENTSUYU is **YAMAKI**.

## Analysis

The *Yamaki* television commercial opens on the first key frame, a close-up head shot of the husband about to take the #1 (first) train to the office (Figure 1a). The camera lens pulls back to reveal the husband alone at an isolated train station (on track #1 – the price to be paid for being #1 [first] to arrive at the office). In the next frame (figure 1b) we see the dutiful husband leave the office to go directly home. The implied meaning for the viewer is that he is a “good” father (*otoosan*). A good father resists the temptation to play the workaholic company-man in staying late at work (*soto*) at the expense of favoring home (*uchi*). Neither does he sacrifice the needs of the family by going out drinking with the other company-men to after-hours clubs for karaoke. Key frames reveal the affordance of color symbolism to draw a distinction between the coldness of the *soto* context of the office environment and the warmth and playfulness of the *uchi* context of the home environment. This change in the settings’ colors supports a narrative development that shows movement from *soto* to *uchi* environments. Color symbolism is used to connote coldness and warmth. In frame figure 1a, the camera filter produces a cold blue/grey mis-en-scene at the train station. It is early dawn, an image of isolation and quietude, reminiscent of the time just before battle is engaged in a samurai epic. Our “hero” *otoosan*, also does battle on a daily basis at work to provide sustenance and support for his family.

In the second frame (figure 1b), the audience is introduced to the *soto* location of the hero’s office. It is de-saturated of color, leaving a cold black and white frame. The color symbolism connotes an antiseptic work environment, stripped of warmth and humanity. From this remote coolness of the *soto* work environment our male hero leaves (ellipsis suggest the day’s work at the office is complete) to seek refuge in the *uchi* environment of home and family. Once home, color symbolism is used as an affordance in successive television commercial frames as they become gradually warmer in color until, in frame #6 (figure 1f), the screen explodes with vibrant, primary colors of bright yellow (the table cloth) and fire engine red (the father’s shirt). Gone is the *soto* attire of the formal black/grey business suit, to be replaced with the informal/*uchi* attire of the open neck shirt. Interaction analysis reveals a subtle interplay of gestures and posture, signifying warmth and family fun and playfulness; all contributing to enhancing the sense of verisimilitude in this fictional family enjoying an idealized *uchi* setting.

*Uchi* is a place where people can retreat “to be themselves”, free from the constraints of external social obligations. There are several additional semiotic resources employed in this mise-en-scene to connote an *uchi* environment of home. One is the ritual after-work bath. The father, in third frame (figure 1c), can be seen indulging in child-like behavior in the bathtub – complete with floating yellow rubber ducky. The water has been prepared by his daughter. A second semiotic resource is revealed in the relaxed postures and the cozy informal banter of each member of the family unit at the dinner table in frame 6 (figure 1f). *Otoosan* continues to bask in the role of number one (*ichiban*). He is center of attention in the camera (occupying the optical center of the frame) and center of attention in the family. His face grows in size (as the camera zooms in) to dominate the optical center of frame.

The mother (*okaasan*) is associated with the generative *uchi* orientation of facilitating family solidarity. *Okaasan* is the facilitator for her husband and child to enjoy

the benefit of an *uchi*-like atmosphere. She is responsible for ensuring the emotional solidarity of the family. Interaction analysis reveals a number of semiotic resources employed to signify this generative function for the female head of household. For example, *okaasan* will sacrifice her desire to take an early bath until her husband finishes with his. It is tempting from an English-speaking perspective to understand husband/wife relations in terms of Western notions of status hierarchy, or unequal relations of power. Such perspectives are however misleading; no matter what the locus of the situation along the *uchi/soto* continuum, unequal relations exist in the form of *amayakasu/amaeru*. To *amayakasu* another, is to allow the indulgee freedom of expression, to give active love, to allow the other to be sweet or dependent. *Amayakasu/amaeru* functions as a secondary situated meaning is support of *uchi/soto*. Interaction analysis best illustrates its role in *Yamaki*. Note, the husband is quite literally #1; he is first to take a bath, and he is first to sit down to dinner. To *amaeru*, is to be sweet, to accept the indulgence offered by another, and to receive love passively. This dyadic relationship between husband and wife, of giving and receiving indulgence, or dependence, is born and reproduced in relations of hierarchy (Doi, 1973). In the *Yamaki* commercial, father and child are both on the *amaeru* side of the relationship and can enjoy the relaxed atmosphere of a prepared bath (husband) and evening dinner. *Okaasan* endures tension at the level of the individual in the form of *amayakasu* to husband and daughter for the sake of creating meaning at the level of the relationship and family. The mother maintains enough detachment to clean the kitchen (figure 1e), draw the bath (figure 1c) and serve the meal (figure 1f). The mother is responsible to father and daughter for supplying the material objects to make the evening relaxing and engaged. She exhibits a special responsibility towards the father's needs, thus creating an *uchi* atmosphere. Most of her actions towards the husband are characterized by disciplined action – more of *soto* context. The father may behave in *uchi*-like behavior toward the mother. He soaks in her attention and plays out his hierarchical role as #1 to the hilt. At the level of the relationship, the disciplined actions of the mother are juxtaposed to the spontaneous, playful actions of the father. What are the feelings of the mother involved in this juxtaposition of a *soto* relationship in an *uchi* context? These relations create tension and subordination. The wife endures tension at the level of the individual for the sake of creating harmony at the level of the family (Lebra, 1976).

For the husband, at work, he is in a *soto* context, where workers are expected to be self-disciplined. At the office, he is expected to detach himself from his personal feelings and to focus on representing his work group in relation to other groups, such as competitors and customers. Gender relations in Japan do not always easily fit into Western notions of superior, inferior, or hierarchical. From the perspective of individual rights and obligations to have economic and political control, gender relations in Japan are unfair – they subordinate and cause tensions for women. From the perspective of rights to nurture family and self, gender relations are unfair – men are deprived. Thus, the *okaasan* is free to indulge herself in creative activities at home, to spend time nurturing her relationship with her daughter, while the *otoosan* must satisfy himself with the business warrior role and the unfriendly, competitive *soto* context of the work environment. The nature of hierarchy in Japan is that unequal relations take the form *amaeru/amayakasu* and these relations shift positions along an axis ranging from private to public, spontaneity to discipline (*uchi/soto*).



*Figure 1a through 1f. Yamaki Television Commercial.*



*Figure 1a. Yamaki.*



*Figure 1b. Yamaki*



*Figure 1c. Yamaki*



*Figure 1d. Yamaki*



*Figure 1e. Yamaki*



*Figure 1f. Yamaki*

It is possible, for example, for a woman to be on the *amayakasu* side of an *amaeru/amayakasu* relationship in a *soto* situation. If we change the situation in frame six (figure 1f) from a cozy dinner at home (*uchi* context) to dinner at an exclusive restaurant (*soto* context), the husband may take responsibility for directing the proceedings, placing the woman on the *amayakasu* side of the relationship.

In a business setting, position trumps gender when women head corporations or political parties (Bachnik, 1994b). Setting therefore becomes a key semiotic resource to code which patterns of behaviors are expected of each participant in this carefully choreographed dance of relationships. The distinction between public and private places is critical to indexical meaning in Japan, and to decoding the meaning of gender relations. Interaction analysis also reveals a permutation of this flipping of roles in the relationship between father and child. Here - in an *uchi* context - *otoosan* may play the indulging (*amayakasu*) role to the young daughter by permitting her to shine through her cute dependence (*amaeru*). In the television commercial, the daughter takes liberty with her father when she shouts at him (playfully) “the water is not hot yet” and “the food is not cooked yet”. However, the relationship could flip in an instant if the daughter were to violate her ascribed cuteness role by refusing to eat her dinner. Such behavioral transgressions could prompt *otoosan* to shift to a more authoritarian mode - an axial shift in the relationship to a more *soto* dimension. The meaning of *uchi/soto* is constantly changing and can only be grasped in situ.

## Discussion

The close reading of the exemplar *Yamaki* supports our central proposition that situated meanings, such as *uchi/soto* relations, are found and reproduced in fictional but institutionally controlled settings such as commercial television advertising. This is significant because the focus on situated meanings in the literature has been on ethnographically documented real-life settings. We advance the proposition that since television advertising frequently depicts a hyper-realized version of cultural reality, it serves as a fertile ground to examine cultural praxis, including the role of situated meanings, such as *uchi/soto*. Further, we have shown how *uchi/soto* relations, reproduced in institutionally controlled contexts of advertising, may depict highly gendered representations of female heads of households. The representations of gendered relations may appear to be “natural” but given the stealth nature of advertising’s effects on normative behavior, their impact on a broader society may be powerful. The semiotic codes produced and reproduced (through advertising repetition) in the *Yamaki* television advertising campaign are themselves the product of an historically and geographically specific formation or process of representation. Although codes of ‘good homemaker’ purport to represent universal truths, they are historically contingent truths that obscure and maintain power. In this case they are the product of a fictional household relationship circumscribed by gendered relations of *uchi/soto* and *amaeru/amayakasu*.

Marketing is thus actively implicated in the historical process of meaning production and signification when it reproduces situated meanings in fictional contexts such as slice-of-life television commercials. The attractiveness to the advertising industry of trading in semiotic resources, such as situated meanings, should be clear. The situated meanings

provide a convenient short hand to communicate efficiently, piggybacking on widely held cultural assumptions about daily cultural praxis. Like the trading in stereotypes that advertising has historically been implicated in, trading in situated meanings – itself a type of abstract stereotype – offers semiotic affordances to an industry motivated more by easy appearances than by universal truths. One should not conclude from this study that the advertising industry's trading in situated meanings such as *amaeru/amayakasu* is always managerially effective. There is considerable evidence that certain consumer product categories have historically been promoted by the advertising industry in stereotypically gendered ways. Parkin (2007) argues that the food industry is one which has historically clung to outmoded discourses of motherhood. Newer generations of Japanese women may not subscribe to such gendered role expectations. Douglas Holt (2004) writes of the importance of intergenerational “cultural fissures” that may provide the source material for the creation of new mythic or iconic brands. The advertising industry is thus charged with a choice of finding the “new” rather than simply reproducing the “old”.

One important question the present research does not address is how the reproduction of gendered relationships, framed in relations of *uchi/soto* and *amaeru/amayakasu*, are experienced by viewers who look at them. Each of the three fictional roles of mother, father and young daughter depicted in *Yamaki* would presumably interpret the proffered social reality quite differently. Reader Response Theory could perhaps shine some light on these questions (Tyson, 2006).

The study also raises questions of methodology. In the marketing literature content analyses have traditionally been the preferred methodology to examine gendered relations in advertising. It is questionable whether that approach, in breaking down holistic multimodal communications into their constituent parts before reassembling the pieces is sufficiently powerful to reveal the multifaceted interplay of semiotic resources at play in contemporary media. The *Yamaki* ad reveals a complex array of multimodal semiotic resources – language text, still visuals, color symbolism, gestures, interaction proximity, situated meanings, mise-en-scene, lighting, set production, genre – all interacting to produce a proffered “truth” for the television audience. Cultural forms such as contemporary television and newer digital media construct our knowledge of the world. While earlier forms of the image were celebrated for their power to document independent reality, newer methodologies must show greater analytical power in revealing how multimodal media have come to construct reality. The visual grammar of *Yamaki* can only tell us so much. We also need to ask what the medium is used for and by whom? Which social practices are they part of and what societal institutions control their message? Machin's (2016) concept of affordance may play a key role here in de-emphasizing the role of mode – itself an increasingly problematic concept in an era of multimodal and digital media – and focusing more on the motivation of the semiotic resource. In this paper we have seen how institutional players, including the advertising industry, are tasked with the choice of reproducing existing situated meanings or challenging older ones with newer formulations.

It remains an open question to what extent highly gendered constructions of female married roles, institutionally reproduced by the Japanese advertising industry, foster broader macroeconomic economic concerns evidenced by Japan's second decade of economic stagnation. A subfield of economics, coined known as “womanomics” (Pasek 2014) lays a considerable part of the blame for Japan's poor economic performance,

relative to other OECD economies, on the dismal participation rate of married women in senior positions in corporate Japan. Do institutionalized discourses of women's role in popular media culture in Japan, including the advertising industry, exasperate the problem? The exemplar *Yamaki*, in reproducing highly gendered role expectations in *uchi/soto* and *amaeru/amayakasu* relations, whereby woman's role is highly circumscribed within the home, though a singular quotation in a much larger text, questions the role of the Japanese advertising industry in what is clearly a national economic challenge.

### Conclusions and Future Research

Outside of advertising, relations captured by *Uchi/Soto* offers fertile ground for future research in broader business and consumption contexts. It would be interesting to examine the role of *uchi/soto* relations in ethnographic consumption contexts, such as marketplace behavior. One could examine how speakers designate *uchi/soto* distinctions in actual speech situations involving sellers and buyers at a marketplace. Interactional Analysis (Scollon and Scollon, 2004) may offer a promising methodology here. There is a continuing need to develop pragmatist theories that treat meaning as emerging from social action and to analyze cultural patterns as a reflection of hierarchy and material interest (Alexander 2004). Rosenberger suggests that *uchi/soto* relationships are fundamental to understanding the role of gender and hierarchy in business organizations (Rosenberger 1994). Although female employees in Japan are most often depicted as being on the *amaeru* side of the *amayakasu/amaeru* relationship, it would be interesting to further investigate to what extent position in a business organization would trump gender. When females head departments or serve as presidents of companies, do we find evidence that position dominates gender? Japanese businesses' well documented gender issues would appear to be fertile ground for such research (Pesek 2014). The dynamic interplay between indexical relations of *uchi/soto* would seem to challenge Western management concepts of gender, hierarchy, and power, at least in terms of how they play out in a Japanese, and perhaps more broadly, East Asian business context. I have treated *uchi/soto* distinctions in this paper as an intra-cultural concept. It would be interesting however to examine its role as an inter-cultural concept. Does it have explanatory power between Japanese versus Western cultures or even between Japanese and other East Asian or Confucian heritage cultures, such as China and Korea (Bonjin et al. 1999).

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