

The Good, The Bad and The Ugly: How the Television Show *Ugly Betty* Depicts Fashion Magazine Journalists

By Dawn Temples

In the flashy, fast-paced world of fashion journalism, Betty Suarez struggles to prove that what's inside a person is just as important as what they wear. As a budding journalist with a dream job, she exemplifies a fish-out-of-water with her braces, glasses and lack of fashion sense. Determined to work her way up at *MODE* magazine, Suarez tackles any task she's given, from picking up laundry to single-handedly orchestrating a celebrity-baby cover shoot. Successful women at *MODE* are cut-throat and demonstrate many masculine characteristics that female journalists have portrayed in both television and movies of the past. Suarez contemplates throughout the show what sacrifices she's willing to make to become a successful female journalist and eventually reach her goal of starting her own magazine.

In the fall of 2006, ABC-TV launched a new television show, *Ugly Betty*, produced by Salma Hayek. The show, 'Yo soy Betty, la fea,'¹ was already a success as a South American telenovela that was first aired in Colombia, South America in 1999 and began to air in America on the Telemundo network in 2000. The telenovela showed a woman who was intelligent, but not very attractive, who became a secretary at a fashion

design company named Ecomoda. In *Ugly Betty* there is a similar plot, but in this show the lead character goes to work at a top fashion magazine, *MODE*.

The lead character in *Ugly Betty* is Betty Suarez (America Ferrera) a young, naive aspiring journalist. In the first episode, she lands a job with Meade Publications as the assistant to the editor-in-chief at *MODE* magazine, and the audience is brought inside the competitive, fast-paced world of the office that produces a popular fashion magazine. *MODE* is one of the “top five magazines in circulation count.”²

Bradford Meade (Alan Dale) owns Meade Publications, a family business that produces several magazines. Meade handpicks Suarez for the position as assistant to the editor-in-chief of *MODE* so she will work for his son, Daniel Meade (Eric Mabius). She is given the position because she is unattractive and Bradford thinks she is the one assistant that his son will not try to sleep with.

“Magazines are my passion, ever since I was a kid, and I can’t imagine a more amazing place to start my career than Meade Publications.” Suarez says at her interview. “I know most of your magazines inside out.”³

The *MODE* office is full of skinny blonde models, unlike Suarez, who is an average sized Latina American with a lack of style who pays little attention to her appearance. Being stylish and looking great are paramount at *MODE* and Suarez is often the butt of her co-workers’ jokes. For her first day of work at *MODE* Suarez wears a poncho that her father got her as a souvenir from Guadalajara, Mexico and for Halloween her co-worker Marc St. James (Michael Urie) dresses up as Suarez in a similar poncho to mock her.

Despite her lack of fashion sense, Suarez is determined to take full advantage of her position at *MODE* to advance her career in the magazine world. She also discovers throughout the show that the glitzy, glamorous world of *MODE* has a dark underside and that she cannot trust her co-workers to always work in the best interest of the magazine, because there are office politics involved.

The employees at *MODE* interact with each other out of necessity, and most do not have close bonds within the office. These journalists, unlike the close-knit staffs on *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* or *Murphy Brown*, have personal agendas that they consider before the good of the magazine. Unlike these shows in which the journalists become family to each other, many of the journalists on *Ugly Betty* have personal lives and their own family issues that are a priority.

Betty Suarez

Twenty-two-year-old Betty Suarez, a recent graduate of Mid-County College in Flushing, New York,⁴ had two summer internships while attending college at lesser-known magazines.⁵ Working at *MODE* is Suarez's first real job and she aspires to start her own magazine one day.

With large glasses, bushy eyebrows and braces, Suarez does not epitomize high style. She describes herself as “a young, confident, intelligent, hard-working woman” who is determined to do the best job she can and succeed as a fashion journalist. A fish-out-of-water in the flashy, trendy *MODE* environment, she dresses differently from the other women in her office and does not wear much jewelry or makeup.

As assistant to the editor-in-chief, Suarez does not get much journalistic experience. Instead, she balances her boss's dating schedule and picks up his lunch and laundry. However, it is apparent that she wants to be a serious journalist. She realizes she must work her way up the ranks and tackles any journalistic task she can while still accomplishing her duties as an assistant.

In one episode, Suarez is assigned to write a hotel review for the magazine.⁶ She takes the assignment very seriously and works diligently to write an article that covers all of the hotel's amenities, including its restaurant. She hopes by doing well on her first writing assignment that more reporting duties will be given to her and she will move into other departments of the magazine.

Suarez sacrifices a weekend in Atlantic City with her boyfriend to stay in New York and write the review. In the end, her boss Daniel Meade rejects her piece for not being "trendy" enough. "It's good, it's really you Betty. It's really not *MODE*. See, our readers they're not interested in a regular girl point of view, they want something sleek and glamorous. I will print a shorter version though, the name of the hotel and the three-star rating you gave it,"⁷ Meade says.

But *M.Y.W.*⁸, the newest magazine launched by Meade Publications, picks up the piece in its entirety. This magazine targets toward "the regular girl" who is more like Suarez. For a brief time Suarez works for *M.Y.W.* as a writer, which gives her a chance to report and write, something that was limited in her position at *MODE*. But she realizes that her new boss uses Daniel Meade to get a story and that she had alternative motives in befriending and hiring her. Her idol, the successful female journalist Sofia Reyes (Salma Hayek), the editor-in-chief at *M.Y.W.* is a woman who will stop at nothing to get a story

and will cross an ethical line without batting an eye. Suarez returns to *MODE* and her position as Meade's assistant.

Throughout the series, Suarez learns about the world of fashion journalism. She realizes that to be a successful fashion journalist you have to dedicate your life to your career. Being very dedicated to her family, Suarez constantly feels torn between work and home. She feels terrible when she misses her father's birthday to help her boss coordinate two dates in one night to ensure that neither woman discovers his double-booking, but she feels obligated to work overtime to prove her loyalty to Meade.⁹

"Betty is a very loyal daughter and she struggles with the allegiance she has between her new job, which is a big deal for her, and taking care of her dad and her family,"¹⁰ Peter Castro, managing editor of *People en Espanol* said in an ABC special on *The Beauty of Ugly Betty*.

The successful women at Meade Publications have devoted their lives to their careers, and do not have personal or family lives to speak of. This point is illustrated throughout the show, especially in the cases of *MODE* creative director Wilhelmina Slater (Vanessa Williams) and *M.Y.W.* editor-in-chief Sofia Reyes, and is contrasted with Suarez who has a very active role in her family. The contrast leads the audience to wonder whether Suarez will be able to reach her goal of starting her own magazine and still maintain the closeness that she shares with her family.

Wilhelmina Slater

As creative director for *MODE*, Slater is second in command of the magazine. In every episode of the show, it is clear that Slater wants to be the editor-in-chief and will

stop at nothing to obtain the position. A cutthroat, manipulative woman who is very good at her job, she cannot be trusted on a personal level by anyone.

Slater has no real personal life. She is frequently shown flirting and having relationships only with people related to the fashion industry or *MODE*. She has an estranged daughter, Nico whom she sends to boarding school. It is apparent that she has chosen to put her career above her duties as a mother. There is no mention of Nico's father in the show.

Slater conspires to overthrow Daniel Meade as editor-in-chief. She works with Alexis Meade, the estranged child of Bradford Meade, to have Meade thrown in jail. Slater enlists spies throughout the magazine to report to her about what others are doing or saying and even blackmails co-workers to manipulate them.

Her character is very similar to that of Miranda Priestley of the book and movie *The Devil Wears Prada*. Both are fashion celebrities of sorts feared for their power in the world of fashion journalism as well as their harsh ruthlessness. These characteristics project that to be a highly successful female fashion journalist, one has to be callous and sacrifice her personal life. These same characteristics are displayed in Sofia Reyes when she is exposed for manipulating Daniel Meade. Reyes, the editor-in-chief of *M.Y.W.*, is another successful woman working for Meade Publications who perpetuates the image of the hardened successful female journalist who has no ethics when it comes to her powerful career.

Sofia Reyes

Another ambitious female journalist, Sofia Reyes, enters the picture when Meade Publications launches a new magazine that targets “the empowered modern woman.”¹¹ When Daniel Meade meets Reyes at a staff meeting, he thinks she is there to pour coffee for them. Moments later, his father announces that she is the editorial mind behind the new magazine that they are launching, *M.Y.W.*

Suarez informs Daniel Meade that “the *Times* profiled Sofia last month, and that ABC News reported rumors of the magazine launch last week.”¹² Meade admits that he does not pay attention to the news.

Author of a book, Reyes appears to be a successful female writer. She seems to be a genuinely good person when she listens to and supports ideas that Suarez has for *MODE*. Suarez has read Reyes’ book and idolizes her as a journalist.

Reyes befriends Suarez and becomes romantically involved with Daniel Meade. He begins to change his womanizing ways and falls in love with Reyes. The two become engaged, but with the new magazine launch it is obvious that Reyes has not been sincere. The cover story on *M.Y.W.*’s first issue is “From Fling to Ring in 60 Days,” implying that Reyes was just using her relationship with Daniel as material for her story. With the engagement called off, the audience realizes that Reyes is another successful woman journalist who puts her career above her personal relationships.

Daniel Meade

Daniel Meade is the womanizing son of Bradford Meade given the position of *MODE* editor-in-chief because of his parentage. He has no experience in the fashion industry or in the world of journalism. He also admits that he does not follow the news and has no formal journalism training.

A stereotypical rich playboy at the beginning of the show, his character evolves as the show progresses. Protective and smart, Suarez helps him deal with his flaws and insecurities. The two become a team and learn together as the show progresses.

Daniel Meade tries to take control of the magazine, but still constantly falls back on Slater and, in some cases Suarez, to bail him out when it's time to get the magazine to print. He has an active social life and the job he has been given is more of a family obligation than a career. His heart is not completely into being editor-in-chief of *MODE*, but he doesn't want to let his father down.

Meade's womanizing stops when he falls in love with Sofia Reyes, and he seems to have grown up a bit. It is not clear whether he is just trying to impress Reyes and his father as he takes a stronger interest in journalism. But once his and Reyes' relationship ends, he sleeps with his father's lawyer, reverting to his partying and womanizing past.

Daniel Meade makes use of several of Suarez's good ideas to solve editorial problems, which often stops Slater in her tracks as she vies for power surreptitiously. He steps up on several occasions to voice Suarez's ideas for the magazine, but often he receives the credit for her ideas. Because Suarez does not want to be the center of attention, she often gives Meade the credit, humbling herself. Meade respects his assistant and is supportive when *M.Y.W.* offers her a position.

Amanda Tanner and Marc St. James

Amanda Tanner (Becki Newton) and Marc St. James form “the assistants club” with Suarez. The two are friends and often make fun of Suarez together, but when they need something from her they act as if they’re all good friends.

Slater’s assistant and No. 1 spy, St. James eavesdrops on conversations for her and even carries a hidden camera in a ficus tree around the *MODE* office for her in one episode.¹³ St. James does not trust Slater entirely, and is always watching his own back for fear that he’ll be her next victim. True to his friendship with Tanner, he warns her that Slater wants her “out” if she became editor-in-chief, and provides her with tips to keep her job should Slater get the promotion.

St. James is openly gay at *MODE* but still in the closet with his family until his mother, appears on the show. At first he tries to convince her that Suarez is his girlfriend, but later he comes out to her, and she rejects him.

The *MODE* secretary who was sleeping with Daniel Meade before he fell for Reyes, Tanner loves the fashion world and fits right in with the blonde models in the office. When she gets stressed, she eats anything in sight. When Suarez leaves *MODE* to work at *M.Y.W.*, Tanner becomes Daniel’s assistant, and when Suarez returns they share the position for a short time. It’s not long, though, before Tanner returns to the front desk to answer phones as secretary.

Christine McKinney

Suarez does have one friend at *MODE* in fashion designer Christine McKinney (Ashley Jensen). Originally from Scotland, McKinney is a good-hearted, honest person who tries to help Suarez overcome the social problems she faces at *MODE*. McKinney, a street-smart girl, still manages to get sucked into spying for Slater when it means she will get to design a line for New York's fashion week. McKinney delivers a package to the police that results in Bradford Meade's arrest because Slater blackmails her.¹⁴ McKinney tells Suarez the truth about why she was hired as Daniel Meade's assistant.

"Apparently Bradford wanted to hire you. He made Daniel hire you because he didn't want his son to be tempted to sleep with his assistants anymore,"¹⁵ McKinney tells Suarez.

A very talented and driven designer, McKinney is a perfectionist trying to make a name in the fashion world. At *MODE* she is responsible for managing "the closet" where the magazine stores all clothing and accessories.

Suarez Family

The Suarez family lives in Queens, headed by Betty's father Ignacio Suarez (Tony Plana), who admits he's an illegal immigrant from Mexico. His wife has died and he has two daughters, Betty and her older sister Hilda.

Hilda Suarez (Ana Ortiz) was a teenage beauty queen who became pregnant and had a son shortly after high school. Her son Justin Suarez (Mark Indelicato) completes the family as a pre-teen, fashion and drama-loving boy. He is very excited about Betty's job at *MODE* and even lies to get out of school to visit the *MODE* office with Betty.¹⁶

The entire family is very close-knit and supportive, but Hilda has her doubts about the fashion industry. “The fashion world isn’t that great. It’s a bunch of self-serving, shallow tramps who starve themselves and back stab each other for expensive clothes no self-respecting person would be caught dead in,” she warns Justin.¹⁷

Justin’s father Santos (Kevin Alejandro) appears briefly in several episodes. It seems that he wants to have a relationship with his son and that he and Hilda still have feelings for each other, but he is not the best role model and spends much of his time hustling on the street.

Betty’s Beaus

Suarez has a boyfriend when the show begins named Walter (Kevin Sussman), but after starting her job at *MODE* she meets Henry (Christopher Gorham) from accounting and a love triangle begins. Suarez is torn between her feelings for both men throughout the show.

Walter is the assistant manager at an electronics store, and he is Suarez’s first love. Early on, he dumps Suarez for another girl but comes back begging for forgiveness. After this, he is romantic, trying to earn back her trust in any way he can. Once Henry enters the picture it’s clear that Walter and Suarez will likely never be a happy couple again.

Henry often visits Suarez in her office at *MODE* and the two seem to bump into each other all over the building. There is obvious chemistry between them and it seems as though the two will become a couple when Suarez ends her relationship with Walter. Unfortunately, at this point Henry’s ex-girlfriend decides to move to New York from

Arizona so they can work things out. Her name is Charlie and she and Henry get back together, hanging out with Suarez as a friend.

Meade Family

Bradford Meade is the head of the Meade family and Meade Publications. His wife Claire Meade (Judith Light) is an alcoholic who is in and out of rehabilitation programs. The couple had two sons, Alex and Daniel, but when the show began Alex, the eldest son was presumed dead.

This proved not to be the case when Alex reappeared at a *MODE* fashion show during New York fashion week as Alexis (Rebecca Romijn), a transgender female. It seems that while the family thought Alex had died in a skiing accident, he was actually undergoing extensive plastic surgery to become a woman.

The Meade family is very different from the Suarez family. There was always competition between Alex and Daniel growing up as they sought the approval and attention of their father. Revelation of the family secret that Bradford Meade had an affair with the former *MODE* editor-in-chief, and the now-deceased Fey Sommers, is paralleled by the mystery surrounding Sommers' death. Bradford goes to jail for the murder of Sommers. Later Claire Meade turns herself in as the murderer and is arrested.

Media Coverage

While Meade Publications produces magazines, broadcast journalism is shown throughout *Ugly Betty*. The writers often use television news segments, both

entertainment and mainstream news, to advance storylines and transition between them. In several episodes, the show opens with a television news report on what has recently happened, in a way of catching the audience up and bringing them into the “today” story.¹⁸

In the pilot episode, a television news reporter from *Daily News* laid out two of the main storylines for the viewers in a matter of minutes.

“Celebrity-studded funeral services were held today for Fey Sommers, the much loved and hated editor-in-chief of fashion bible *MODE* magazine. It was the bitch slap heard round the world when long time *MODE* Creative Director Wilhelmina Slater was passed over for the top spot in favor of Daniel Meade, the nominally experienced son of Meade Publications owner, Bradford Meade. Can the notorious man-whore translate his talents at bedding women into dressing them?” This TV news report establishes characters and sets the plot for the series.

Print journalism production is a focus throughout the show. Staff meeting discussions often focus on writers and photographers, as well as photo shoots and layouts. There are references to “the book” which is a working mock-up of what the actual magazine will be before it is ready to go to press.¹⁹ One episode focused around Suarez losing the book.

When Daniel and Reyes break up, the tabloid media cover the story extensively with reports in both broadcast and print media vehicles. Real-life celebrity Kathy Griffin appears in one episode²⁰ as an entertainment reporter with the details of this story.

“And speaking of disaster, it’s time for our daily dose of Daniel. Still no sign of recently dumped playboy Daniel Meade. Rumor has it he’s in Brazil licking his wounds,

and anything else that walks by. Meanwhile, his ex, Sofia Reyes, was seen,”²¹ the report trails off as the audience is brought into the real-time plot again.

Later in the episode Daniel Meade returns to the office only to find his picture with Reyes and their breakup (the M.Y.W. premiere issue cover story) on the side of a bus,²² their faces posted on the side of construction sites and the cover story of four glossy magazines on his desk.

Using the idea of a celebrity breakup story monopolizing the media is just one way *Ugly Betty* creators twist real-life stories into fictional storylines.

In another episode, the use of celebrity baby pictures was addressed in a clear rip-off of the “Baby Suri”²³ picture drama involving *Vanity Fair* that happened in the fall of 2006, when the show was first aired on ABC. Celebrities Tim and Chloe (alluding to Tom Cruise and Katie Holmes) give *MODE* magazine an exclusive three-hour window for a photo shoot with their “Baby Chutney”.²⁴ “Tim and Chloe?! *MODE*’s getting the first pictures of Baby Chutney? Shut Up! I mean that’s really exciting!” Suarez tells Bradford Meade when he tells her about the possibility of the spread.

With Daniel Meade not coming into the office, Suarez handles the shoot. Stylist Bruno, who was hired because “he styled Madonna while giving birth,”²⁵ wants to pose the baby in questionable clothing and pour water on her. Suarez fires him.

“For the record, your brilliant cover of Courtney Love leaving rehab in a wheelbarrow of pills was our lowest-selling issue in 17 years, so maybe you’re not the right person for the job,”²⁶ she tells him.

In the same episode, there is also a reference to actress Angelina Jolie. Santos, Justin’s father, meets Daniel Meade for the first time at the Suarez home.

“I saw your picture in the *Post* once, you dated Angelina when she was between boyfriends,”²⁷ he tells Daniel. Here the twisting of real-life celebrity media coverage into the show gives the audience a sense that these characters are real people who have celebrity status.

The creators use real-life media coverage in the storylines to mock the entertainment journalist. The personal celebrity stories that make headlines are not hard news, and in some opinions should not be considered news at all. *Ugly Betty*'s portrayal of the entertainment journalist implies that they are not as important or legitimate as mainstream journalists.

Legitimacy of Fashion Journalism

“Mike Day called and he’s turning down the hotel review assignment. He says he only does serious journalism now,” Suarez tells Daniel Meade.

This dialogue shows that *Ugly Betty* addresses the notion that a fashion magazine like *MODE* is not considered “real” journalism.

“Unbelievable, five years ago he’s writing for an airline magazine, now he’s acting like Katie Couric,” Meade responds.

While people, women especially, have been writing about fashion for decades, fashion journalism still hasn’t achieved complete legitimacy as journalism. To be a successful fashion journalist you do have to constantly research the fashion industry to be a respected authority, as you would with any type of beat reporting. Trends are always changing, but as reporters, fashion journalists have to keep up with new styles at all times.

“He holds fashion to the same standards that any journalist would with a subject, be it politics, economics, or the environment,” journalist Natasha Royt wrote about real-life fashion writer and editor David Livingston in the *Ryerson Review of Journalism*.²⁸

The Anonymous Pack Journalists

Anonymous journalists travel in large groups with cameras flashing at press conferences, parties and fashion week. In one case, dueling press conferences between the Meade brothers²⁹ reveals their competitiveness as they compete to get the most media attention with the juiciest story.³⁰

At a party for Daniel Meade’s first issue as editor-in-chief of *MODE* the anonymous journalists line up to talk to him. “I’ve done 40 interviews already, the first issue must be a home run,” he tells his father.

Bradford tells Daniel that when Alex (Alexis prior to the operation) was introduced as editor-in-chief he showed up in his boxers and “got a picture in almost every newspaper in the country. Circulation went up almost 38%. That is an editor.”

While Bradford may have preferred the publicity stunt that Alex pulled, Daniel’s promotion to editor-in-chief did make for good publicity for *MODE*. The anonymous paparazzi were “falling all over themselves trying to get a quote,” according to Slater who was jealous that they were not after her.

Women at the Top

Women journalists have always been at a disadvantage in the struggle to be a successful reporter and become an editor. They’re often well qualified to do the job, but

they have to overcome the obstacle of being an emotional, female child bearer. Images of successful female journalists are often cut-throat, unsympathetic tyrants who have clawed their way to the top knocking out any man or woman that crossed path along the way.

“The female journalist faces an ongoing dilemma: How to incorporate the masculine traits of journalism essential for success- being aggressive, self-reliant, curious, tough, ambitious, cynical, cocky, unsympathetic- while still being the woman society would like her to be- compassionate, caring, loving, maternal, sympathetic,”³¹ according to author Joe Saltzman.

In the case of Slater, it is often the masculine traits that the audience sees. Yet Slater’s vulnerability comes to the forefront when we see trying to be a better, more nurturing mother to her daughter Nico, from whom she is essentially estranged.

In the episode “Four Thanksgivings and a Funeral” Slater receives last-minute notice from Nico that she is flying home for Thanksgiving. Slater drops her plans and cooks an entire Thanksgiving meal for her daughter. She even calls Martha Stewart for advice on stuffing a bird. Nico arrives and promptly goes to leave to visit friends for the holiday, assuming that her mother has other plans. When she realizes that her mother has made an effort to cook for her she decides to stay and they spend the holiday together.

Such vulnerability is rare for Slater. She is usually ruthless and out only for herself and is not ashamed to admit it. “Thinking about what’s best for you is how we survive in this business,”³² Slater tells Suarez in one episode.

Slater sees her success tied to *MODE*’s success. In the episode “Fey’s Sleigh Ride” trade secrets about magazine spreads are being stolen, and Slater is shown flirting with one known spy from competing *Isabella* magazine³³.

“You are an underhanded bastard, you have no moral compass, are utterly without scruples and will use anyone in your path to get what you want. How can I entice you to work at *MODE*?”³⁴ Slater asks the man seductively.

In this scene, Slater is a very unethical journalist because she’s flirting with a competitor and trying to hire him as a spy. Unethical actions are nothing new for Slater. She always seems to be scheming, trying to get Daniel’s job as editor. Hiring another unethical journalist to work with her is strategy for Slater.

“Twenty years, Marc, no one has done more, worked harder. I have led this magazine, helped make it into the icon that it is today. Nasty, nepotistic son-of-a-bitch gives my job to his son who’s a self-absorbed punk who knows nothing about fashion,” Slater fumes to her assistant.

One female employee at a staff meeting calls Slater “Cruella DeVille.”³⁵ This same comparison to the Disney villainess was used by IMDB³⁶ to describe the character of Miranda Priestley in *The Devil Wears Prada*.

The hardened female fashion journalist who has worked her way up to a successful career seems to be the opposite of the young, naïve, hopeful character Suarez portrays. In *The Devil Wears Prada* the character of Andrea Sachs is very similar to Suarez. These more feminine characters may receive sympathy from audiences, while contrasting the opposite images of the women on top to those just starting out makes for an interesting dichotomy. The audience may imagine that the younger, more feminine women would inevitably turn into Cruella DeVille journalists if they decide to stay in fashion journalism and work their way to the top.

Using Feminine Wiles

The successful character of Sofia Reyes uses her femininity to seduce Daniel Meade to get what she wants on *Ugly Betty* and, unfortunately for him, all she wants is a cover story.

Women journalists have seduced men to get stories in fictional movies and TV shows for years. In *Mr. Deeds*³⁷ female journalist Louise Bennet pursues a courtship with the title character to produce stories about his private life. In *How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days*³⁸ Andie Anderson, a young writer who aspires to write about politics, is assigned to write a story advising women how they can get rid of a man in 10 days.

It's a "do's and don'ts of dating" story. While it's not her dream story she seduces a man just so she can "lose" him for her story. In Reyes's case the premise for her story is the same, but she doesn't have the altruistic goals that Anderson has, and in the end of *How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days* Anderson gives up her job to give love a chance. Reyes, on the other hand, sticks to her hardened image and ditches her relationship to continue advancing her career.

Even in the Superman movies and comic books, Lois Lane uses the exclusive relationship she has with Superman to scoop other reporters. She is given the exclusive because Superman/Clark Kent has feelings for her.

When Reyes and Daniel Meade first meet he does not know that she is a journalist, and she doesn't tell him right away who she is or why she is at Meade Publications. After Daniel discovers who she is, he believes that their relationship is real. Only when *M.Y.W.*'s premiere issue cover story appears on a TV show publicizing the new magazine, does he realize he has been used³⁹.

So What's Next?

This paper covers the first 18 episodes of the first season of *Ugly Betty*. The show is set to begin a second season with the storylines changing and the images of the journalists at *MODE* evolving.

Ugly Betty perpetuates several images of journalists seen in popular culture in the past. Betty Suarez personifies the woman journalist who has hopes of being a successful, serious writer or editor while remaining honest and feminine.

In contrast, Wilhelmina Slater personifies the image of a hardened woman who has given herself over to her career. These two extremes provide polar opposite images of how female journalists enter and end their careers. There is no defined image of a woman journalist that is somewhere in between these extremes portrayed on *Ugly Betty*.

The extreme images of women journalists as being new and naïve, or experienced and hardened, does not just apply to women journalists. In *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* Mary Richards was the young, enthusiastic journalist paired against Lou Grant, the old pro.

The image of the journalist as a manipulator is perpetuated in *Ugly Betty* by Slater's spying as well as Reyes's seduction. Reyes utilizes deceptive tactics to get the story she wants, no matter who she hurts along the way.

Reyes misled and lied to Daniel Meade to make him fall for her. She consciously omits the truth when their relationship begins by not telling him she's working on a "Ring to Fling in 60 Days" cover story.

While these are all classic methods used in undercover reporting, they are not being used on *Ugly Betty* to expose injustice. Instead they're used to test the veracity of the story and to create a scandal to sell more magazines.

With spying taking place in almost every episode, journalism seems exciting yet unethical, and it perpetuates the image that journalists are shady and cannot be trusted.

The *MODE* office is luxurious and exciting, and makes working at *MODE* seem sexy and appealing. Ultimately, Suarez loves her job and sees how journalists can impact the public in a positive way. She is the bright light that is shed on the world of fashion journalism in *Ugly Betty*. The irony of the show is that Suarez really is the most beautiful character in a world of very fake and ugly fashion journalists.

¹ 'Yo soy Betty, la fea' is Spanish for 'I am Betty, the ugly'. The show first aired in the fall of 1999 in Colombia, South America. It won a TP de Oro for Best Soap Opera in Spain in 2002.

² "Trust, Lust and Must", Episode #6, aired November 2, 2006. Daniel Meade uses this to impress Sofia Reyes before he knows who she is. He thinks she's just serving coffee at the meeting to announce the launch of *M.Y.W.* and they are flirting. He tells her his "circulation count" helps him get girls and that he's not trying to brag but "it's in the top five."

³ Pilot, Episode #1, aired September 28, 2006

⁴ "In and Out", Episode #13, aired January 18, 2007, and Resume on www.bettysuarez.com

⁵ "Daily Dermatology Magazine" Summer of 2005 and "Politics & More" Weekly Magazine Summer of 2004, according to resume on www.bettysuarez.com

⁶ "After Hours", Episode #7, aired November 19, 2006.

⁷ "After Hours"

⁸ Weekly magazine that Meade Publications is launching to target the empowered modern woman. The magazine launched in January 2007. "Trust, Lust and Must", Episode #6, aired November 2, 2006.

⁹ Pilot, Episode #1, aired September 28, 2006

¹⁰ KABC- Channel 7 Los Angeles TV Special *The Beauty of Ugly Betty*.

¹¹ “Trust, Lust and Must”, Episode #6, aired November 2, 2006 Bradford announces in the meeting that the new magazine will be launching and who the target audience is.

¹² “Trust, Lust and Must”, Episode #6, aired November 2, 2006

¹³ “Brothers”, Episode # 15, aired February 8, 2007. Slater quits and leaves *MODE*. When she is at home she is bored and has to know what is going on in the office without her. When she sees that the issue will not get out to press on time without her, she returns to the office and saves the issue.

¹⁴ “I’m Coming Out”, Episode #14, aired February 1, 2007

¹⁵ “Pilot”, Episode # 1, aired September 28, 2006

¹⁶ “Fey’s Sleigh Ride”, Episode#4, aired October 19, 2006

¹⁷ “Fey’s Sleigh Ride”, Episode#4, aired October 19, 2006

¹⁸ “Don’t Ask Don’t Tell”, Episode #18, aired March 22, 2007 and “Brothers”, Episode #15, aired February 8, 2007

¹⁹ “Don’t Ask Don’t Tell”, Episode # 18, aired March 22, 2007 Daniel to Alexis

²⁰ “In and Out”, Episode #13, aired January 18, 2007 She is the television anchor for FTV.

²¹ “In and Out”

²² Like Carrie Bradshaw on the HBO show *Sex and the City* she stands on the side of the street in New York and sees her face on a bus. It is an illustration of the celebrity level that some journalists achieve.

²³ Baby Suri was five months old before parents Tom Cruise and Katie Holmes decided to share pictures of the child with the world. They allowed *Vanity Fair* to come to their home to shoot a cover spread of themselves with their new baby. The media had been speculating that the child did not exist due to the lack of pictures prior to the magazine cover release in October 2006.

²⁴ “Lose the Boss”, Episode #9, aired November 23, 2006

²⁵ “Lose the Boss”, Slater tells St. James in the car that Bruno was the best.

²⁶ In response to Bruno telling her, “I have been styling for this magazine, Missy, since before you bought your first pair of orthopedic pumps.” “Lose the Boss”, Episode #9, aired November 23, 2006

²⁷ *The Post* refers to *The Washington Post* “Lose the Boss”, Episode #9, aired November 23, 2006

²⁸ “Print-A-Porter” *Ryerson Review of Journalism*, printed March 1999. “I just regard myself as a journalist. The job is to report things that you have experienced firsthand, whether it be a purse or a personality, and pass it on to a reader in a way that’s accurate and fair and amusing. And if the subject is fashion, that’s a fabulous subject.” David Livingstone, fashion and beauty editor of *Elm Street*.

²⁹ “Brothers”, Episode #15, aired February 8, 2007. Daniel and Alexis each hold a press conference and compete for attention from the reporters.

³⁰ “Brothers”

³¹ “Sob Sisters: The Image of the Female Journalist in Popular Culture” by Joe Saltzman from www.ijpc.org accessed on 3/12/07

³² “Lust, Trust and Must”, Episode #6, aired November 2, 2006

³³ “Fey’s Sleigh Ride”, Episode #4, aired October 19, 2006

³⁴ “Lust Trust and Must”, Episode #6, aired November 2, 2006

³⁵ From the Disney movie *101 Dalmations*, Cruella DeVille is the villainess who tries to steal puppies to make a fur coat.

³⁶ IMDB is a website devoted to TV shows and movies, and in connection with *The Devil Wears Prada*, the site claims that Miranda Priestley is Meryl Streep, doing a po-faced Cruella Deville.

³⁷ Movie starring Adam Sandler, based on 1939 movie *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town*

³⁸ Movie starring Kate Hudson and Matthew McConaughey

³⁹ “Sofia’s Choice” Episode # 12 aired January 11, 2007