

"Natural Male Enhancement": A Semiological Approach To Enzyte's Marketing Scheme

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## Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
About the Product.....	5
Semiotics Introduced.....	7
Waiting for the “Right Time”.....	10
The Market for Erectile Dysfunction Support.....	12
Erectile Dysfunction and Dysfunctional Relationships.....	13
The Pressure to Be a “Man”.....	15
The Semiotics behind Smilin’ Bob.....	16
Conclusion.....	21
Bibliography.....	22

## Introduction

In today's vein and superficial age, aging trends and the growing popularity of lifestyle drugs means a larger market for "fountain of youth" pharmaceuticals and surgeries such as Viagra, Botox, breast augmentations, and liposuction (Kahn 7). It is no secret that American women have become increasingly determined to appear younger than they are; wrinkle-free faces, youthful-looking blonde hair, petite toned bodies, and a radiant tan seem more common than ever. These efforts to remain young and beautiful often stem from the images seen daily of television and film characters, as well as seemingly-ordinary Americans, paying high prices to do the same. While it is easy to look at middle-aged women and see their efforts, it is a bit more difficult to recognize them in men. This is because the social pressures most men feel often focus on monetary achievements, an executive-level career, and a strong educational background. But another important aspect of a "successful" man is his strong sex life.

The average American sees more than 600 advertisements each day (American Academy of Pediatrics 2565). These commercials, posters, pictures and jingles are riddled with information mirroring our own social norms and practices. However, these conveyed messages can be so camouflaged that the typical audience understands the message without realizing it is there. A viewer is exposed to the advertiser's strategies, yet only realizes the general message being presented. While a multitude of research papers, theses, and market surveys have been conducted to study the negative effects the media has on young women's self-esteem and self-satisfaction, studies on young to middle-aged men are few and far between.

According to a 2007 study done by the Social and Behavioral Sciences Unit in Bangladesh, "Men stated that 'sex power' was the most potent asset in men's lives. Money is necessary. However, [it] become valueless if men are sexually incapable. Sex power cannot be

achieved like money, education or a job. Rather, good sexual power is a divine capital and a blessing of human life” (Kahn 3). Presently, both men and women have pornography to base their sexual power expectations on. With pornography vastly available on the internet, many men use these photographs and videos as examples of what they believe they should look and act like. With a larger than typical male size and a longer than standard sexual duration being the focus in male-dominated pornography, it is no surprise that men feel a sociological pressure to live up to those media ideals. And of course, most men cannot naturally meet or exceed those expectations. The Kahn study mentions, “in order to feel like a sexually powerful man, many men want to have a good sized and shaped penis, as well as be able to sexually perform for an ideal amount of time. Most men aim to perform for 20 to 30 minutes,” and few men are satisfied with the size, shape, and action of their penis (Kahn 5). While it is natural to find flaws with your own body or appearance, and it may be innate for men to seek a powerful position in the bedroom, the vast number of television shows, pornography websites, and seemingly innocent advertisements focusing on a male-dominated sexual lifestyle must play a part in this newly discussed male pressure to be all things “masculine.”

Enzyte, an herbal remedy that claims to increase blood flow to male genitalia and boost size and performance, is the latest in a long line of potions and devices that capitalize on men's insecurities about their masculine performance abilities. While similar pharmaceuticals such as Viagra, Levitra, and Cialis boast an FDA approval, Enzyte remains a “dietary supplement,” which avoids the otherwise necessary FDA approval for market penetration (Enzyte). While its blue pill is strikingly similar to Viagra's, Enzyte's price is lower and the stated possible side-effects seem less detrimental. And of course, the commercials are memorable. In fact, Enzyte may be the first to break out of internet advertisements and men's magazines and into primetime

television spots. For that, says Mark Blumenthal, executive director of the American Botanical Council in Austin, “Enzyte can probably thank Viagra. Since Viagra, the first pill to treat impotence, came on the market in 1998, he says, ‘we’re getting used to the idea of marketing products for improving male performance’” (Dieser). With over 150 million men experiencing erectile dysfunction (ED) symptoms, it is time to take note. Impotence currently has such a hushed yet prevalent reputation that it is important to examine the marketing tools and messages that erectile dysfunction products (specifically Enzyte) use on television. We also must reveal what audience they are targeting and why.

By looking in depth at the symbolism, innuendos, advertising strategies, and market research of Enzyte, I will examine how Enzyte chooses to “speak” to its audience. Using Semiology, I will show how Enzyte incorporates the extremely sensitive topic of erectile dysfunction into a more carefree and blissful advertising scheme. I will further this study by briefly describing the symbols in popular Enzyte television commercials which narrate embarrassing judgments men with ED seem to experience. Using market research studies, I will explain the market for this product and why exactly men feel a pressure to “perform” for their sexual partners. I will also cover in-depth the societal demands men experience to be what the media describes as masculine. Finally, I will conclude by expanding my findings to support my thesis statement that Enzyte uses its semiological marketing strategy not only to boost product sales, but to open a dialogue about erectile dysfunction, as well.

### **About the Product**

At only \$40.00 for a month’s supply, Enzyte’s online homepage states:

Enzyte is trusted by over five million users and is the number one selling supplement in the world for natural male enhancement! For 5 solid years, Enzyte has been the number

one selling supplement for natural male enhancement--satisfying the sex life of men everywhere! Enzyte is the original once-daily tablet for natural male enhancement that has endowed millions of men with firmer, stronger, fuller-feeling erections. Taken just once a day, Enzyte is not situation specific; it helps increase blood flow all day and all night. With Enzyte, you're ready for action 24/7! (Enzyte)

That is quite a loaded promise for an herbal remedy, so what are the ingredients to back it up?

According to Enzyte.com, the primary ingredients in each blue pill are Ginkgo Biloba, Saw Palmetto, Korean Ginseng, and L-Arginine (Enzyte). Ginkgo Biloba is said to increase blood-flow through capillaries which is beneficial to sexual function in men (Castaneda 608). While this sounds like an ideal herb for impotence, large doses are known to cause convulsion and bleeding, and may be harmful to people with liver or kidney trouble (Impotence Natural Remedies). Saw Palmetto is used to treat prostate health problems which may be common in Enzyte consumers. Korean Ginseng promotes health and longevity and is thought to lead to enhanced sexual stamina. L-Arginine is an amino acid shown to improve erections (Castaneda 608). It may also create gastrointestinal problems, worsen asthma, lower blood pressure and change levels of electrolytes in the body. It can increase the risk of bleeding, as well (Impotence Natural Remedies). While there are serious concerns with each herb mentioned, it seems that the primary ingredients in Enzyte should hold their promises of increased blood flow and sexual stamina, based on their apparently effective history.

While some of these herbs, such as Ginkgo Biloba, have been used for centuries, modern clinical trials are lacking. Enzyte's own website features an "Independent Customer Study" consisting of a mailed questionnaire along with a sample of the product to 70 random men. This study claims that the most improved men estimated a circumference and length of their erect penis grew by a total of four inches (Enzyte). Medical professionals are not so sure. Urologist Kenneth Goldberg countered:

It makes no sense medically. There's no way that increasing blood flow to the penis, as Enzyte claims to do, will actually increase its size. Unfortunately, guys are just preoccupied with the thought that their penises are small. They have all kinds of psychological issues over it. It's very easy to play on that weakness. (Castaneda 610)

Dr. Goldberg does a great job of explaining exactly why products like Enzyte sell. In a time like this, sex sells, and advertisements are going to reflect that. While that of course means revealing outfits, promiscuous behaviors, and Playboy-like bodies are at an all-time popularity high, it means insecurities regarding sexuality are on the rise, as well. The semiotics used in Enzyte's television commercials manages to incorporate both major themes of this generation's sexuality.

### **Semiotics Introduced**

Semiotics or "semiology," as defined by Ferdinand de Saussure, is "A science that studies the life and signs within society... it would be a part of social psychology and consequently of general psychology" (Saussure). The then new idea to study media and symbols meant life's daily messages could be decoded, which led to advertisements finally being analyzed.

In 1915, French linguist Ferdinand de Saussure published his book A Course in General Linguistics to help explain his ideas on modern semiotic analysis. He called this science "semiology." According to Saussure, semiology was primarily concerned with language and grammar; it was the idea of connecting a "concept" to a "sound-image." "Sound-image" and "concept" were then given the synonyms "signifier" and "signified." The process begins with recognizing the sound each letter makes. For example, the letter "t" makes a "tah" sound. A signifier is simply explained with the letters T-R-E-E. Seeing the word "tree" automatically makes one think of the large leafy plants (the signified). "Tree" connecting to that particular

visual is exactly what semiology was to Saussure. He stated that these relationships between signifiers and signified were strictly arbitrary, meaning there is no rule stating one must find a particular relationship between the two. A signifier and signified finally connected in what Saussure called a “sign.”

A pragmatist from the United States, Charles Peirce, held similar views on semiology but called it “semiotics.” “He [Peirce] wrote that a sign is something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity” (Peirce). Peirce established messages we receive as “signs,” just as Saussure did. According to Peirce, our understanding of signs is extremely important because messages are constantly surrounding us. Comprehending the messages gives the receiver the ability to make guided decisions. While Peirce had the more popular name for the science of understanding messages, Saussure still held the more common ideas. Yet, neither scientist’s ideas made their way to America too soon after they became popular in Europe. A major lead in the European popularization was a French philosopher and semiotician named Roland Barthes. Barthes wrote a book called Mythologies which revealed how bourgeois society used signs to pick apart the messages being delivered in advertisements for anything from wine to clothing (Barthes). His work helped the European, and eventually American, societies realize how important and vast semiology is in one’s daily life.

Both connotative and denotative definitions play a role in decoding advertisements. The connotative meanings of words are the cultural definitions that accumulate over time. These meanings can vary person to person, based on the individual’s personal experiences and memories, or on a broader scale, society to society. The denotative meaning is a dictionary definition, one that does not differ depending on the individual. To illustrate how connotative and denotative meanings are constructed Barthes analyzed a magazine advertisement for a brand of

pasta. His noticing of the red and green colors and fresh produce represents what he calls an “Italian-ness”. This essence is culturally specific and therefore connotative. The denotative meaning of the work is simply the high quality of the pasta (Arnold 256).

Syntagmatic and paradigmatic analysis is important to clarify the events in any narrative story in an advertisement. A general narrative pattern follows a standard order, usually leading to a successful and happy ending. Syntagmatic analysis maps out the process that leads to that ending. Detailed descriptions of each sub point “uncover the morphology of the narrative text” (Berger 22). For example, in a murder mystery a group of acquaintances meet for a social event. One by one, each character drifts away and then returns. The social evening continues as usual until finally one member of the group is found dead. Accusations point at each person until a clue is eventually found to solve the mystery. Paradigmatic analysis concentrates on the narrative’s oppositions and patterns rather than its chronological order. This analysis reveals social binaries in the message, which are opposite signs connected by one theme or topic. For example, rich and poor are connected by the idea of wealth. These revelations are important because as Saussure said, none of the signs studied would have a true meaning if they could not be contrasted and connected over a particular theme.

A common way to enable an audience to relate to an advertisement is intertextuality. Intertextuality reflects on separate recognizable texts to create humor, nostalgia, and even an unconscious sense of familiarity with the “reader” and advertisement. One form of intertextuality, parodies of genre, puts a spin on the plots of popular styles of writing and entertainment to create all three of those emotions.

Codes are another strategy found in media techniques. They can simply be described as the societal norms of the audience because they are learned and engrained during one’s life and

therefore differ because of social status, geographical location, economic status, education, etc. The audience only knows what signifier stands for which concept because it is learned naturally. “Codes are difficult to see because of their characteristics—they are all-pervasive, specific, clear-cut, which makes them almost invisible. They inform almost every aspect of our existence” (Berger 32).

Even the direction a video camera pans or how close the lens zooms creates a signifier with a typical signified for the audience. Although commercials and advertisements for television do not typically last long, much information can be perceived by the one, two, or three changed camera angles in a 30 second spot. While each of the aforementioned semiological techniques plays an important role in a successful television advertisement, they each must be combined and showcased correctly to market the advertised product to the intended consumer.

### **Waiting for the “Right Time”**

ED television commercials are featured frequently during televised sports. This is not only in hopes that men will see the commercial and purchase the product, but also to help them realize that ED is a somewhat common issue for middle-aged men and that it does not need to be a shameful topic of conversation. In fact, David Pernock, senior vice President for GlaxoSmithKline (GSK), “explicitly stated that ED commercials linked to National Football League (NFL) games is a strategy to help men talk openly to their doctors about erectile dysfunction without feeling awkward” (Dieser). Furthermore, pharmaceutical companies use sports to subconsciously relay a message of erectile performance and male sexual power. For example, GSK and Bayer Pharmaceuticals paid the NFL six million dollars to sign a sponsorship deal which gave GSK and Bayer exclusive rights to market the ED drug Levitra to an estimated

120 million viewers (Dieser). These advertisements took advantage of the programming surrounding their time spot by using American football to emphasize that Levitra is a more stellar performer than Viagra because it helps users achieve erections faster and has longer staying power (Dieser).

To understand the semiotics of sexual activity in ED commercials one simply has to pay special attention to the commercials airing on television during sporting events such as Nascar, Football, and golf, as well as programs commonly watched by men, such as ESPN, CNN, and Comedy Central. One Viagra advertisement uses phallic imagery, which has NASCAR driver Mark Martin revving his race car's engine as the camera view reveals the engine's pistons pounding up and down, symbolic of sexual stamina and power. A second Viagra commercial narrates "Remember the one who couldn't resist a little mischief" while a middle-aged man dreamingly gazes at racy lingerie in a store window (Dieser). As Rodney Dieser, Ph.D. points out, Enzyte commercials use symbolic phallic imagery to actually mock men with ED (for example, a man holding a limp garden hose with a small stream of water coming out – implying that he has not used Enzyte) and to repeatedly illustrate how Enzyte supposedly helps men develop larger and more powerful penises (e.g., limousines, large golf clubs, and very tall glasses of iced tea). After watching various ED commercials, I find it interesting how blatant the pharmaceutical advertising can be, yet it is still very effective. The topic of erectile dysfunction becomes a bit less serious for those 30 second time spots (and men can secretly take note of the phone number provided at the end of each commercial). There is no denying that the timing of these commercials can aid men who do not feel comfortable with their ED and that drug intervention is important when there is a real medical need.

## **The Market for Erectile Dysfunction Support**

In a market research review entitled, *The World Market for Prescription Drugs To Treat Sexual Dysfunction in Men*, it was calculated by MarketResearch.com, Inc. that “worldwide more than 150 million men are affected by erectile dysfunction (ED) with an additional 35 million men per year experiencing symptoms for the first time” (Health 2). This means that in the year 2010, approximately 280 million men are experiencing symptoms of erectile dysfunction with many of them furtively seeking help. Because less than adequate sexual performance is a private and embarrassing topic for many men, it is hard for market researchers to accurately determine the number of existing cases. However, MarketResearch.com, Inc. estimated 40 million cases in the United States alone in 2002, leading to the United States accounting for more than 45% of the ED drug market (Health 5). This number was plenty large enough to validate a pharmaceutical intervention, leading to over twenty-two erectile dysfunction products waiting for FDA approval in 2003 (Health 6). “The men’s sexual function market is the most dynamic segment within the men’s health industry with revenues increasing at phenomenal rates throughout the forecast period. Growth in both the domestic and international markets was exceptional with continued demand for Viagra in areas such as the United States, Latin America, and Europe. Demographic aging trends and the continued popularity of lifestyle drugs will be the primary influence for growth in this market” (Health 8). Being that this market research review was conducted three years ago, it seems the growing market forecast was indeed accurate. Advertisements for impotence medications are just as evident as years before, being featured on television, in magazines and on billboards, and “lifestyle drugs” such as weight-loss supplements and anti-smoking agents seem to be in high-demand.

## **Erectile Dysfunction and Dysfunctional Relationships**

Erectile dysfunction can often damage a man's self-esteem and self-satisfaction to a point of relationship destruction with his partner. It has been reported that not only do men with ED experience a much lower sex life satisfaction rate compared to men without ED symptoms, but they are even less satisfied than men experiencing other sexual dysfunctions (McCabe 2). Men experiencing ED also experience deficits in their relationship satisfaction. A relationship satisfaction decline may likely be due to a lack of confidence in the man which can lead to a lack of communication between the relationship partners and an increased level of conflict (McCabe 2). Other studies have found that men with erectile dysfunction report a decreased level of sexual intimacy, which could very well contribute to the decline in overall relationship satisfaction (Bokhour 3). While most men and women in heterosexual relationships would not say sex is the absolute most important aspect of a relationship, the School of Psychology of Deakin University, Australia found it often plays a role in every aspect of a romantic relationship.

Marita McCabe and her colleagues at the School of Psychology of Deakin University, Australia wanted to look further into the relationships of heterosexual men experiencing erectile dysfunction and their partners. In 2007, McCabe structured an anonymous survey which 40 men (at a mean age of 62.8, with a standard deviation of 12.5) chose to participate in. The survey covered topics related to quality of life, self-esteem, sexual satisfaction, and relationship satisfaction (McCabe 1). After the provided answers were calculated into statistics, "Paired t-tests showed that men with ED reported a significantly higher level of sexual intercourse prior to the onset of their sexual dysfunction compared to their current levels of sexual activity. Partners of men with ED also reported a significantly higher level of sexual intercourse prior to the onset

of ED than what they reported they were currently experiencing, indicating that there had been a decline in the frequency of sexual intercourse following the onset of ED” (McCabe 6). Because sex is considered extremely important by a majority of both men with ED (85.6%) as well as their partners (52.5%), it is not surprising that the results show a decrease in relationship satisfaction (Fisher 3). The man most likely feels embarrassed, useless, or even unworthy of his partner, while the woman may believe she is not as appealing to him as she could be.

While both partners are able to notice some of the negative effects ED has on the relationship, more men than women feel that ED has led to a lesser confidence in life. Men also reported a poorer self-esteem, quality of life, and sexual satisfaction than their partners. Furthermore, men were much less likely than their partners to state that sexual satisfaction does not require a strong erection (McCabe 7). This study’s findings show that in general, ED is much more devastating to the man showing symptoms compared to his partner. These men struggling to regain confidence and pleasure in their relationships end up seeking help in outside sources. Rather than that help stemming from therapists or psychologists, it is often sought out in pharmaceuticals. Male enhancement drugs such as Enzyte are marketed as a miracle solution for the embarrassment, failure, relationship hardships, and suffering self-confidence.

However, the current medical approaches to ED treatment may not address the psychological and relationship factors identified in the McCabe study. The limitations of medical treatments to address the relationship and psychological factors involved in many cases of ED may be largely responsible for the high level of patient frustration and discontinuation with these medical treatments (Althof 21). “These treatments for ED do not address the psychosexual components such as psychological reactions, relationship dynamics and subjective arousal of an individual’s sexual experience” (Althof 21). It is important for health professionals

to aid their patients in developing realistic expectations and assessing the couple's views about the possibility of a return to sexual functioning and sexual relationship (Simkins-Bullock 3).

Enzyte, even if effective, is not a cure-all for erectile dysfunction. Just like Viagra, Levitra, and Cialis, Enzyte does not counteract the mentality that comes with ED symptoms. While a man may be pleased to see positive physical results, he may also be ashamed to need the help of a drug or supplement. Supplement-reliance could lead to a loss of a feeling of control, an inner-thought that the user is weak, and above all, a decline in a sense of masculinity.

### **The Pressure to Be a “Man”**

The pressures that come with age can play a serious role in a successful sexual life. It seems that the more mature a man gets, the greater the monetary expectations that surround him. For example, as a young adult, a man is usually expected to hold a part-time job and support himself monetarily. Once he reaches his mid to late twenties and marries, he is expected to not only provide for himself but for his partner, as well. This exponential growth of responsibility continues through fatherhood and even into retirement. To make matters more stressful, many men begin to lose their physical attractiveness with age. Long-term relationships and marriages may become lackluster, and what used to be an exciting career can later become monotonous. Such stresses are touched on in Kahn's article. “After several years of successful marital sexual life and raising children, a man reported erection problems. Men over 50 years old, dissatisfied and upset with their decreasing sexual desire and power, wanted assurance that this was the normal aging process... Some men perceived this as a disease and reported seeking treatments from doctors. These men took traditional medicines to regain ‘bodily energy’” (Kahn 7). With so many men in the United States struggling to meet what they believe are the expectations of

our society and most importantly our women, it is only logical that they seek both physical and psychological medical help for their emasculating condition.

### **The Semiotics behind Smilin' Bob**

With more than one-third of the observed 600 daily advertisements being seen on television, it seems appropriate to study a sample of television commercials to clarify the mental process we as an American audience go through so many times each day (American Academy of Pediatrics Committee on Communication 2565). A particular set of commercials featuring Enzyte is now infamous for its character Smilin' Bob. Familiarity with the ads makes them an ideal subject for studying advertising strategies used to promote erectile dysfunction products. Enzyte's commercials utilize semiotics to exaggerate the positive effects of being "well-endowed" which eventually coincides with an overwhelming message of the importance of male-domination in the bedroom. Further analysis of the aforementioned leads to what each gender's role is in today's society, as well as a more open dialogue about ED and its negative effects on a romantic relationship.

Around eleven o'clock on Saturday mornings (a golf tournament's weekly time slot), a magic blue pill is featured. At 4:00 PM during poker showdowns and from 7:00 to 9:00 for CNN's evening news, and again at 11:00 PM for each late night talk show, commercials present themselves advertising that magic blue pill. Not Viagra, but Enzyte. Enzyte's natural male enhancement commercials have managed to engrain themselves in every American citizen's memory (which means the creators did their job well), yet it does not seem like every American citizen should be their target audience. In fact, based on the time slots for the advertisements, a

race car featured on the pack of pills and particular signs throughout each commercial, it is the middle-class 40-60 year old, white male that Enzyte is interested in reaching.

Each Enzyte advertisement feature Smilin' Bob and his smiling wife, both looking prim and sleek. A whistling tune, an aloof spirit, and a crowd of impressed women and male friends always accompany Bob. The couple seems to always outshine their peers with both their constant bright smiles and brightly colored clothing. Based on what the American viewer sees, Smilin' Bob and Mrs. Bob are as happy as possible, living an American Dream complete with a white picket fence. All of the above carry that connotative meaning- an American Dreaminess. The denotative meaning shown in each commercial is how well the drug works.

Intertextuality is also relevant in every Enzyte commercial. The hairstyles, accessories, clothing, props, whistle tune, camera pans, even Bob's home blatantly refer back to a suburban-oriented, American family, 1950's sitcom such as "Leave it to Beaver." This is logical considering the male enhancement drug company must be targeting middle-age and older men familiar with the classic show. Creating a 1950's mystique automatically creates a signified sense of nostalgia for the viewer. Even if the man's childhood was not constant smiles, it is probable that he did grow up watching upbeat television shows like the nameless one being depicted in the commercials. This creates a positive emotional reaction to the commercial, possibly leading to an unconscious positive reaction to the product.

A simple code is also constant from one commercial to the next. Smilin' Bob is always wearing pants and a collared shirt while Mrs. Bob always wears her cardigans, skirts, and pearls. Of course this plays on the intertextuality but it also seems to hint at signifier of general authority granted to Bob. A literal take on the saying, "Men wear the pants in the relationship." This could be seen as a subtle metaphor as well.

Video angles and camera movements also reflect each other in each commercial. Both begin with the camera focused on Bob as the narrator introduces him to the viewer. This simply means that the attention is on Bob and his success story. Most of the thirty seconds consist of close-up shots which signify a feeling of intimacy with the character. This makes the commercial more personal and comfortable to watch because as the narrator describes Bob's own problems, the viewer can compare his personal issues to Bob's. The rest of the camera angles are typically full body shots in social situations which shows exactly that- a social relationship. This also can signify that Bob's problem was accepted by his peers, making it even easier for the consumer to feel comfortable.

Syntagmatic analysis is simple in a bowling-themed commercial for Enzyte. According to the narrator, Bob and Mrs. Bob were not happy, then Bob bought Enzyte and he and Mrs. Bob were excited for a change. After a few "short" weeks, the narrator explains that Bob is "on a roll, throwing them hard and straight...prideful of confidence and has made sizeable strides to improve his score" (Enzyte). Bob is seen rolling a bowling ball perfectly down the middle of his bowling lane. This signifier has two signifieds- Bob is getting his life on-track, but his anatomy is fixed, too. Paradigmatic analysis is also simple. There is a binary relationship between a happy state of mind and relationship, and an unhappy state of mind and relationship. Also, for Bob there is a spoken binary between being unconfident before Enzyte and being confident after. One could even say there is a binary between masculinity and femininity because Mrs. Bob is so passive while Bob almost demands attention. Sexual connotations are not only shared verbally but visually as well. For example, Bob accidentally returns another man's bowling shoes and the employees are in awe of how well-endowed Bob's feet really are. This signifier is not only a connotation, but a possible code as well because it has been "learned" that bigger feet means a

bigger “package”. Also, when Bob and his wife are walking toward two male employees, one is pushing his finger in and out of a finger hole in the bowling ball. The signifier is an extremely sexual hand gesture and the signified is simply sexual intercourse. Mrs. Bob, with a smirk, winks at the employees and gets a wink in return, signifying all of the characters’ approval of Bob’s new manliness.

The gardening commercial has a straight-forward syntagmatic analysis, as well. Bob and his wife were unhappy for the same sexual reasons but their yard needed work as well. So, Bob purchased Enzyte and improved his love life with his wife. He also improved the yard with new plants and fountain equipment. The second commercial has just as many signifiers and signified throughout. First, Bob enters the commercial wearing a flannel shirt and pushing a wheel barrow with gardening tools. Both artifacts signify the manly ideals in American society as well as another binary regarding masculinity versus femininity (Bob is outside doing yard work as expected by males, while his wife is inside gossiping). The gardening supplies in the wheel barrow are even more interesting. If one looks in the barrow for a few seconds, two small plants and what looks like a pipe, form a phallic symbol right below Bob’s waist. According to the narrator, Bob has the tools to make “big improvements around the house” (Enzyte). The same sort of sexual innuendos appear just moments later with two clay pots and a watering can on one side of a table and Bob with a tape measurer and basket on the other. Bob’s limp garden hose is merely trickling out a slow stream of water. But once Bob purchases Enzyte, his garden hose is shown working at full watering potential. Bob is now “spouting a whole new line of confidence” (Enzyte). As Bob fixes and “turns on” his new fountain, the narrator reassures the listener that everything is “straightening up” at Bob’s house. The two signifieds here are of course the fountain as well as Bob himself. That illustrates yet another binary- broken versus fixed, even

weak versus strong (regarding Bob before and after his Enzyte). When the camera pans out, the viewer sees Bob's manly neighbor with a polo shirt and football in awe of how high Bob's new fountain can go, and of Bob once again. Bob's wife is seen starry-eyed and chatty.

Semiology is an important analysis to pay attention to when looking at advertisements. Every sound, color, image, and word is used for an extremely specific reason. When an average viewer does try to pay attention to those minute details, he or she is exposed to more societal information than ever expected. Enzyte's advertisements are extremely straight-forward, repetitive, and quite honestly annoying. From a business standpoint, although this might make possible consumers feel degraded or frustrated, I think the pros outweigh the cons. The straight-forward repetitiveness is exactly what gets stuck in the viewer's head. The commercials' whistle tune is constantly in the audience's minds. And although the ads are irritating enough to make you change the channel, the response is still, "Ugh, it's that stupid Enzyte commercial." So...the advertisements have reached their marketing potential. They are catchy and get the point across quite simply and quickly. However, from a societal standpoint I believe the commercials to be a bit too unbalanced in regards to gender roles in society. Does a woman have to be so enthused about her husband's anatomy that she must mindlessly gossip about it to anyone who will listen? Couldn't Mrs. Bob focus on something else for a bit, help with the gardening? And why must Bob always be concentrating on that same topic also? While the scenes may not be realistic for most American couples, the topic has become quite common and concerning. Because of the casual nature of the Enzyte advertisements, erectile dysfunction becomes a bit more casual of a topic itself. When 40-60 year old men experiencing ED see these commercials, a long-awaited relief from sexual embarrassment may settle in.

## Conclusion

Being a woman, erectile dysfunction is a topic I cannot remotely relate to. I have never openly spoken with a man experiencing the symptoms, nor have I chosen to study the subject in the past. Yet for some inexplicable reason, Smilin' Bob pulled me into a world in which an unsatisfactory sex life was not a taboo topic. At first glance, Enzyte's television commercials were simply an obnoxious parody of *Leave it to Beaver*. They are loud, bright, in-your-face, and just plain dirty, which is really why I initially enjoyed them. But after utilizing Saussure's semiotic methods to decode each detail of the advertisements, no matter how minute, I realized Enzyte's marketing is truly genius. Through signs, symbols, and blatant innuendos, Smilin' Bob and his wife show an exciting and enticing ED success story.

Millions of men and couples in the United States have to suffer from ED symptoms each year. Not only do the men feel an increasing societal pressure to be a "man," but the women feel a new distance between them and their partners, too. Sex, such a seemingly small part of one's life, becomes an anchor to drag the relationship and both partners' self-esteem and relationship satisfaction into the ground. Light-hearted commercials like Enzyte's almost create a mockery of the situation. Rather than form a somber tone on the ED topic, Enzyte offers a possible solution. Whether the herbal dietary supplement shows physical results or not, it allows the man and his partner to discuss the options openly. That conversation could then lead to discussing psychological and relationship treatments, and soon, there just might be 150 million more Smilin' Bobs.

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