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SOC-226 Midterm Media Analysis Paper

The 2012 KFC “She’s a Lady” commercial attempts to teach men and ladies how they are meant to behave towards each other. This commercial seeks to advertise the “code of morals” that is expected from men towards women, such as holding the door, giving up their seat on a crowded bus, and allowing “ladies first.” Any behavior that is less than expected is insolence. KFC perpetuates the idea that this insolence has a large impact on the outlook of a woman’s day; however, women are meant to passively accept this behavior, suppress their reactions, and buy KFC chicken to help them relax.

The “She’s a Lady” KFC commercial is attempting to sell their chicken. They are trying to sell their chicken to the female audience based on the assumption that these women are being mistreated by men, but KFC chicken will treat you right. They are aiming to sell the idea that their chicken is a more suitable replacement for men. These KFC commercial producers are assuming that the prospect of a woman’s day is dependent upon how noble men act towards them and women are the only ones in this world who feel morally obligated to be decent people. This idea is being enforced to the tune of “She’s a Lady” by Tom Jones.

KFC’s choice for their target audience as female is an interesting decision. This is due to the fact that this chicken is equally suitable for men and women. Typically, food that is advertised towards women is under a particular calorie count or low-fat; however, KFC doesn’t advertise anything of the sorts about their chicken. The idea KFC is selling behind their chicken is fairly ridiculous, which is that their chicken has the ability to make women happy enough to forget that they are unsatisfied with the way men treat them. The women KFC portrays are

unable to control the rolling of their eyes towards men. Afterwards, they are able to satisfy themselves with chicken, and then they are finally able to laugh at the rudeness of the men they encounter, instead of passively tolerating them. There seems to be no particular reason why KFC is targeting females in this advertisement.

KFC presents the message to their viewers that men will consistently mistreat females; however, KFC chicken will be there to make them happy and rejuvenate their attitude. This message is portrayed in the form of a main female character consistently rolling her eyes at the men she encounters throughout her day. Her day begins with her male roommate rushing to get to the bathroom before her, while the female stands there with the door closed in her face. The viewers of the ad are meant to assume that the women's bathroom trip is more urgent; however, this isn't a fact. Another interpretation of this scenario is that the man intentionally stole the bathroom from the woman, because of the extremely common fallacy that women take too long in the bathroom. If this interpretation were to be true, it would prove extremely ingrained prejudice on the producers' part. The woman then goes to make herself a breakfast, only to discover her male roommate has left an empty container in the fridge, as if that isn't an accident that a female could also make. According to KFC, it's expected to be a woman's job to clean out the refrigerator. On the woman's commute to work, she then looks around in annoyance at the men around her as they ignore the pregnant female standing in the aisle of the bus, and she begrudgingly decides to give her own seat up for the pregnant mom. Once the woman arrives at work, she is forced to carry the heavy water jug for the water fountain while her male co-workers watch. While this particular female looks at her co-workers in annoyance, many other women make a conscious choice not to rely on a man to do her heavy lifting. KFC producers are making the assumption that any object greater than 15 pounds becomes the obligation of a man, based on

“gentlemanly morals.” At the end of a tiring day, the female heads to the bar to de-stress, only to be rudely interrupted by a man as she goes to order a drink, yet another mistake that doesn’t discriminate based on gender. On her walk home with her female friend, the woman then sees fresh KFC chicken being pulled out of an oven while a narrator states that “...someone knows how to treat you right.” And then suddenly now that she’s had some KFC chicken to eat, the rude men are laughable instead of irritating. As the female then has the door closed in her face by a man, the text “Ladies, you’re welcome,” appears over the door. KFC uses the common misconception that women are tired of being wronged by men as a form of manipulation to emotionally appeal towards their audience.

KFC also presents ethical appeals by presenting the pregnant lady standing on a bus of seated men. Pregnant women have the ability to evoke strong feelings of care and compassion, even in strangers. Pregnant moms are women that are surrendering their body for nine months as a home to nurture another human. Typically, a pregnant woman never has to stand. People are more than happy to give up their place on a crowded bus to allow the mom and her unborn baby to have the comfort of a seat. When the producers decided to have the men on the bus ignore the pregnant woman, they did it with the intention of angering the viewers at the men’s behavior. While I’m sure this occurs, this isn’t a common real-life occurrence. It is simply done in a way to misrepresent men in order to sell their chicken.

The undisguised message that KFC is sending to their viewers is that there are certain expectations of the way men should be treating women. Men are expected to hold doors open for women, allow “ladies first,” and give up their seat for a woman. The producers of the ad let you know that the woman expects these actions by the way she reacts to the men. She will roll her eyes or frown at the men when they don’t behave the way they should. The woman from this

advertisement practically runs into the door, because she expects the man to hold the door for her. While these behaviors are kind and welcome, they shouldn't be expected strictly from men. It shouldn't be an expectation from men to have a set of required behaviors that is considered gentlemanly; however, it *is* a universal expectation that all people, male and female, will conduct themselves in a polite and respectful manner towards strangers and friends alike.

Furthermore, KFC is sending a message about the way a woman should accept this behavior. The woman consistently accepts this behavior in a passive manner. She doesn't speak up nor put the men in their place for being rude. She doesn't retaliate. She simply gives them a dirty look and continues on with her day. She continuously accepts this behavior and accepts that it's going to happen. KFC is conveying the idea that this is the way that a woman should react in response to a male being disrespectful towards her. Much like the fantasy female in the DreamWorldz documentary, the female is there to please the man in any way he sees fit and she doesn't complain.

Additionally, KFC is also sending out the expectation that the outlook of a females' day is dependent upon the way she is treated by the men in her environment. The woman needs a pick-me-up, because her entire day has been ruined by men. They are using these implicit messages to advertise to their viewers that their chicken will satisfy you enough to make you forget how unhappy these situations make you. KFC knows how to treat you, unlike men.

This commercial is comprised mostly of overt messages and contains very minimal implicit messages. However, one implicit message that can be found within this advertisement is the idea that these men don't care or seem to notice how they are treating the females around them. The men are mostly seen looking off into the distance, not making eye contact with the

main female character, or strictly interacting with the other men. The idea that men don't care how they treat women has become a very common misconception. While it could possibly be true that men can sometimes be less perceptive to "hints," it is completely untrue that all men don't care how they treat females. Not once during this commercial did the female speak up to any of these men that she encountered throughout her day, and it becomes difficult for men to notice how they are making a female feel if the female fails to speak about it, as it is vice versa.

The producer of this video has made a very deliberate decision to make all of the men in this commercial seem average and typical. This commercial is comprised majorly of males, and yet every single male cast member looks to be typical. These men are not portrayed as scruffy, intimidating, unclean men. They are not particularly good-looking, have an indistinctive physique, and are generally clean-cut. These men are the people you would see anywhere about your day. This portrayal of men adds to the idea that *all* men will mistreat or be inconsiderate towards the people they encounter throughout their day. The producer made this decision with the intent of enforcing this idea in order to sell their chicken as a way of making females forget about the woes of their day- inflicted upon them by their male counterparts. Additionally, the cast of this advertisement is 100% male, aside from the main character, her friend at KFC, and the pregnant female on the bus. This was done with intent to make the female viewer feel overwhelmed with the amount of male-inflicted disrespect that is thrust upon a female throughout her day. It is also done in an attempt to tell the female viewer to grab all of her female friends and unwind with some KFC chicken. These deliberate production decisions are sending very discrete, yet strong, messages.

It is an awfully widespread delusion that sexism means that something is degrading strictly towards females. One look at the comments section on this video will tell you that. The

comments section consists of users complaining that the video isn't sexist, because it simply portrays a woman being treated badly. Sexism does apply to men, in addition to women. Sexism, in this case, includes the stereotyping based on gender. KFC is stereotyping the ingrained expectation of the way a man should behave towards women, when it should be a universal expectation that all people should be chivalrous.

AD: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VrN4lAonpN8>