Feminism And Tv Commercials Essay, Research Paper

Television commercials to the average person are a form of entertainment. They are also a way for people to see what is being sold out there in the real world. To a critic television commercials are much more than that. Depending what critical approach the critic uses he or she will analyze the television commercials differently.

I decided to challenge myself and instead of using an approach that I knew about I used one that I knew little about. In my discussion of television commercials I focused on using the Feminist critical approach. I will discuss what Feminism is made up of. Then I will discuss and analyze six television commercials.

Feminism has at least four different parts to it. There are the radical feminists, which argue “that women’s oppression is the result of the system of patriarchy, a system of domination in which men as a group have power over women as a group,” (Storey 135). The Marxist feminists who argue that women’s oppression is due to capitalism. The third is the liberal feminism, which does not believe a system like patriarchy or capitalism oppresses women, but that males are prejudice against women. The fourth is the dual systems theory, “women’s oppression derives from their situation within an autonomous system of sex divisions of labor and male supremacy” (Vogel 128).

The first TV commercial is about a woman who is walking out of Taco Bell with a burrito in her hand. It is no ordinary woman she looks skinny and beautiful. Two young men look at her as she comes out of Taco Bell and they comment on how good she looks. This commercial might look harmless to someone who does not care, but to a critic it is not. This commercial shows a very skinny woman walking out of a Taco Bell with a burrito. A woman who sees this and has a low self-esteem could become anorexic or bulimic. Since she might go eat a taco or something at Taco Bell and then when she does not look like the model she might decide to hurt herself to look like the model. This commercial gives women a false perception and could be harmful. Women and men believe that the way the model looks is the norm and if they are not like that they will not be taken serious.

In the next commercial there is a man and a woman taking pictures of their surroundings. The man’s film finishes so the woman grabs a camera and takes the rest of the pictures. The man during the time the woman takes the pictures states in will not match. At the end the pictures have been developed and they are placed on a table forming almost a puzzle. The man places the first pictures and says almost perfect as he places the last picture of the woman. Then the woman places the actual last picture and it is of the man. She then says, “Now it is perfect.” The picture again was in a puzzle format so when she placed the picture it was next to the picture of her. This commercial in little words states that a woman needs a man in order to be perfect. This is not true, but a woman who watches this and has a low self-esteem might believe it is true that she has to be dependent of a man.

The next commercial is about a singer named Wayne Newton. He is singing to a crowd of people at a concert. The women throw their keys of their hotel rooms at him so that he can meet them in their rooms. When the women get to their rooms they find out that they have been robbed. Wayne had been there and he stole their beers. The last shot of the commercial one of the women is shown a lone and hurt looking as if she had been abused and taken advantage of. This commercial shows that it is ok to abuse a woman. Many stupid men could take it that way. That is an unsafe commercial for women.

A TV commercial of an auction is the next commercial. The commercial stars off by two men stealing a hood of a car a brining it to an auction. In the auction there was lots of things being sold. Among those things was a swim shoot. The thing is that the way they show that it seems like the woman is the object for sale. This commercial is degrading to women because it shows women as sexual objects and that they can be taken at any time.

The next commercial shows children running and playing with a woman. This is a commercial for a car made for a mother. The commercial is not bad except for that it shows how society sees women. They see woman as a mother, and a housewife. Of course it also sees a woman as others but they focus on this. This can be a problem because some people can use this as a guide to saying where a woman belongs.

Finally the last commercial focused on, was about a little baby on a table being measured and touched by a nurse. The nurse’s face is not shown to us, so it is not known if is a woman or man. But if the nurse is looked at closely it is a she. Then at towards the end they show a doctor, it is a man. The problem with this commercial is that the doctor is shown to be a man and not a woman. The nurse is not even shown so it is up to the audience’s perception. This shows that the woman is not respected enough to be acknowledged.

The women in these commercials follow a stereotype that the media and our society have set for women. “Betty Friedan charged the advertising industry with perpetuating and exploiting the oppression of women through the use of negative stereotypes” (www.rtvf.unt.edu/people/craig/madave.htm). Friedan is the author of a book called The Feminine Mystique ‘Friedan states in her book that,’

Based on old prejudices disguised in new pseudo-scientific dogmas, (the feminine mystique) defines woman solely in sexual terms, as man’s wife, mother, love object, dishwasher and general server of physical needs, and never in human terms, as a person herself. It glorifies woman’s only purpose as the fulfillment of her “femininity” through sexual passivity, loving service of husband and children, and dependence on man for all decisions in the world outside the home: “man’s world.” (1970, 268).

“One of the most deeply reactionary, and yet insidiously flattering, images which the media present of women, to themselves and to men, is that of beautiful sophisticate, or the sexually alluring” (Gallagher 73). This statement to me tells more about how women are being stereotyped. “Probably greatest concern has centered on images of women in advertising, whose reliance on women, particularly women’s bodies, as sales bait is in universal evidence” (Gallagher 75). To know that the stereotyping is not only in the United States, but that it is universal is disturbing because it shows that we are in a male dominated world.

Despite the mixed perception of women as models, mothers, sex objects, and so on in these commercials the bottom line is that Feminists want the best for the women in this society and around the world. I learned by using the Feminist approach that women in general have it hard. I feel everyone grows up being taught about gender stereotyping since a very early age without really noticing it. We all have to have an open mind and not label people because of their gender. But if we must label or judge someone let it be because of what they have accomplished in life.

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33d