

Everything's Important, Except for Our Future

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It has been stated many times before that propaganda and subliminal messages fed to us through TV can alter and change the way we think. Although many people find this topic unrealistic, and even might feel it's a conspiracy theory, we might want to take a closer look at what messages we are really projecting. Many of us can look back on our childhood and recall many positive reinforcements. It is hard to remember how many times we were told we were the future, but are we doing that to our younger generation? It is easy to say that we motivate our own younger family members. However, social media, propaganda, and TV are doing the same. Kavanaugh (1986) says, "[o]ur social myths, our economic gospels and our revelation system of television, advertising and printed matter are a formation system, educating us towards certain values, attitudes and modes of behavior" (Buying Ourselves section) This could not be truer; we, the adult community, are setting standards and allowing standards to be set for our children. In the commercial for Sprint (2013), "At Sprint Everything's Important," teens are comically portrayed in a very unrealistic manner, but it is convincing enough to leave us adults wondering how broad our youth's mentality really is. Our youth is being patronized and underestimated, and we, adults, are in return not being supportive to encourage their confidence.

The Sprint (2013) commercial is very simplistic; it begins with a yellow screen, "Sprint Honors Lizzy and Kim's call" featuring James Earl Jones and Malcolm McDowell. These two men are dressed in suits and are center of focus with nothing but stools and a black background. As they begin to speak narratively, the first impression given is a serious one, set by the imagery, tone, and their voices alone. As the commercial progresses, it becomes comical as the dialog between them is very much juvenile and mindless. They have a dialog about how "hot" a certain boy named Ryan is and continue to repetitively gush about this Ryan's good looks in a purely

slang based language. Their facial expressions are very serious but the mannerisms used are very suiting to the girly conversation continuing between them. Malcolm McDowell has his arms crossed but has a sassy sway as he says, “Obvy! He’s amaze-balls! He’s like the hottest hottie who’s ever hottied!” James Earl Jones holds a straight posture, with one exception, his hands are curled out like a gushing teen, and he continuously moves them to express how “hot” Ryan is. The conversation goes back and forth in a dialog consisting of slang such as “totes McGoats, cray cray, McHotterson, and adorbs.” The commercial ends with another yellow screen and a narrative voice saying, In honor of everything you do.”

This commercial is disparaging of teens, despite its goal. Sprint would like to deliver the message that no matter what your conversations consist of, no matter how extensive your talks or texts may be, they care about and honor you. What they are really saying is, no matter how mindless and time consuming your teenaged kids conversations are, we have reliable plans that won’t leave you broke. The irony of this commercial is that it is so adult made, it has close to no reflection of the truth to how our youth really converse, speak or even what slang terms they use. We are portraying them so poorly and negatively in this commercial, and fail to see how far from reality we adults are. This commercial leaves a little reel of tape in our minds, leaving us with a long lasting impression that teenaged girls do in fact use this speech and also indeed do repetitively say the same things over and over. What is going unnoticed is that we are also leaving this same reel of tape in our children and teenagers’ minds. It is a fact that teenagers are very impressionable, and by having a commercial like this, we are consequently building a mold for what we expect them to be and how we expect them to act. In an article, “Jesus Is a Brand of Jeans,” Kilbourne (2006) states, “[o]n this deeper level, rampant commercialism undermines our physical and psychological health, our environment and our civic life, and creates a toxic society”

(Substitute Stories section). We are allowing for commercialism to undermine the people of tomorrow, and as Kilbourne stated, creating a toxic society.

Additionally, this ad sets up a negative model for our young people. While many of us laugh when watching this commercial, that is the problem. We don't notice or fix something unless we see it for what it really is. The comic relief used in this commercial makes it so passive that it nearly goes unseen. What is not unseen is our reaction to the commercial, and for many of us with younger family members watching us laugh at this type of behavior we are giving them a guideline for what we find acceptable and likeable. Just because this group of people, 10-17 year olds, may not all be considered children, does not mean they still are not continuously looking up to us and trying to please us. Unknowingly, the commercial is aiding us to create a mold of stupidity for our younger family members. We are showing them that this mindless conversation is likeable and completely acceptable, and we are silently telling them it is ok to be brain-dead because it is funny.

This leaves our future generation in a small mold that is easy to fill, but what happens once this mold is set? Years later, these young children and teens, the ones these commercials are targeted toward, are the ones on whom we will be relying to clean our teeth, do our taxes, and check our hearts. They are the people of tomorrow. We are limiting them in a passive and quiet manner. This one commercial is not single handedly ruining our future, but this commercial is one of many spewing the same image to our kids. Not only are we patronizing our youth, but also we are being convinced to not have faith in tomorrow or the people of tomorrow. If we continue to ignore this subliminal brainwash, we are unfortunately leaving the aspirations of many children and teens to go unheard and unnoticed.

We must all keep in mind that it is not solely Sprint, or commercials in general, it is not

TV shows or music, or any type of propaganda doing this to us and our adolescents. We adults are in control. An advertisement can only go so far and do so much, but it is we who indoctrinate our youth. We must continue to be supportive, not just of those we love but those around us of all ages. It is vital to remember that these young faces will be the ones who guide and help us through our older age. We must view commercials as simply that, commercials, and be thoughtful when it comes to what messages we accept and pass on.

References

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