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COMS 100B

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**Carl’s Jr. and Their Buns**

In a world where sex sells many women strive to have bodies that are desired by others so that they too can feel like they are as beautiful as the women in the ads. We constantly see women’s images in advertisements who are all young, skinny, beautiful, and who appear to be flawless in every way and it drives other women crazy trying to keep up with that life style themselves. Where does this vicious cycle come from and why does it push women to try and change the way they look? Well it is because of campaigns and advertisements like the ones Carl’s Jr. puts out which in more recent years have been concentrating more and more on sex and women’s bodies. They use women as sex symbols so that they can seem desirable, and they have they target viewers watching these commercials trying to get them to think that if they eat their food they too can look like the models they feature in there commercials. Carl’s Jr. has been using more and more famous women who are seen as sex symbols to objectify women by making the connection that women’s bodies are desirable to men just as their love for food makes the commercial together seem desirable. Men like hamburgers and women, and the connection between the two is that one is an actual piece of meat while women on the other hand they they look at like a piece of meat.

The Carl’s Jr. commercial talking about buns that are suppose to be freshly backed shows more than just bread. Even though this commercial is meant for the general public, or anyone who eats meat or other items on the menu at Carl’s Jr., the commercial acts as if it is advertising for much more. With the sexually explicit comments that they characters make it is for sure a sexual innuendo, because if the comments were really being made about the “bun” meaning bread then it wouldn’t be as bad, but the fact that the commercial adds in the images of curvy women to suggest that the men are talking about way more then bread makes the commercial on a whole other level of inappropriateness.

The Carl’s Jr. commercial opens up with the a group of women in a yoga class who are whispering to each other while the instructor is teaching. One women whispers to another “So suddenly Todd wants me to get great buns”, which is referring to some significant man in her life, but we aren’t exactly sure who Todd really is, even though the commercial suggest that is her significant other who likes a women with a great butt. After the other woman replies back in a somewhat shocked voice, “He’s a bun guy?” which gives the audience the feeling that they are talking about a women’s backside due to the fact that men typically have different features of women that they tend to find most attractive in a woman. Just as the two women whispering to each other finish that statement you see them go into a the downward dog yoga pose which points theirs butts strait up in the air, giving anyone a good view, especially the camera. The camera focuses in on the backsides of the woman with very toned gluteus maximums, which is the proper term for what the commercial refers to as “buns”. Meanwhile all the women we see in the background of this commercial are all very toned and in shape just as we see most other woman in the media today.

The next part of the commercial is the camera focusing in directly on three women’s butts that are dancing and swaying side to side, one of the women even has their hand on another woman’s butt who is dancing in front of her. You can tell there is a party or a celebration going on in the background because of the loud fast pace music. You can also notice that the woman dancing in the middle is wearing a white dress that is extra fancy. Typically we assume fancy white dresses are wedding dresses, which suggest to the audience that this is a wedding celebration. Right after that we see two men, one older and one younger who are talking. The older man says to the younger man, “Its nice having another guy that likes great buns in the family”. This leads the view to believe that this is the groom and the father of the bride in what is an assumed wedding day celebration. The younger man replies to the older man “Thanks Mike” and the older man replies back, “Call me Dad”, which pretty much tells us that it is a wedding even though we can only assume. Even though we can now see a little bit more of the party along with a four layered cake in the background that look just like a wedding cake would. When the two men finish up what they just said the camera focuses in back on the women who are dancing and we see that even though they are still dancing the woman who is wearing the white dress and is the assumed bride is now holding a hamburger.

Even though the commercial is meant to be talking about the buns on the burger, the burger still doesn’t stand out as much as it should considering that it is meant to be the main point in the commercial. However in the next part of the commercial they show the burger a little more. This scene starts with a man and a woman going up an escalator, they are linked arm and arm, which suggests to the viewer that they are a couple. As they are going up the escalator, the camera focuses in on another woman who is wearing casual but tight jeans and a black tank top that shows off some of the skin from her lower back. From the background you can see lots of tile and open space behind them, and then another man and woman get on the escalator behind the assumed couple, which makes it look like they are at a mall or at least somewhere very public. The man who is in an arms link with the woman is staring strait at the woman in front of him and does a double take as he says, “Wow, great buns”. The camera then focus back on the woman who he is linking arms with him as she gives him the look as if she was trying to say excuse me in disbelieve that he would say that with her right there. The man then continues to finish his sentence as he says, “They are so smooth and round you know?” At this point the camera goes back to the woman who is standing in front of them but it shows her from a different angle so that we can see she too, just like the assumed bride in the clip before, is eating a hamburger. The burger that she is eating is huge and does have a bun that is exactly what they man describes as being smooth and round. This is the first time in the commercial where the camera makes it a point to focus on the actual hamburger and the buns instead of on the backside of a woman, which is what they commercial is meant to be about in the first place.

The final part of the commercial is the narrator, which is the voice of Carl’s Jr. saying “We’ve got great buns, introducing fresh baked buns. Served on six dollar thick burgers, only at Carl’s Jr.” while in the background we can see the buns being baked, cut and served on a big juicy looking hamburger. At this point there is no denying that this commercial is an advertisement for the buns that are sold with the burgers for the fast food chain Carl’s Jr. We also see at the end of the commercial the Carl’s Jr. Logo with the smiling star and the words that say “Eat like you mean it”, which suggests to the viewers that we should be eating big hearty charbroiled hamburgers that have their *great buns* because if we do that then we can have the bodies of the woman they show on their ads with their toned bodies and great butts as well. Or it can suggest more to men that if they eat from Carl’s Jr. then they can have a girl like the ones in the commercial.

The commercial was made this year in 2013, which is a time when both men and women are starting to worry more about health and fitness and not necessarily just being skinny like a model. Now days I hear people say, “healthy is the new skinny”, which means people aren’t worried about being as skinny as they are about being toned and healthy. Part of that being toned means they want to be curvy in all the right places. Yoga, Jazzercise, Zumba, and Crossfit have all been trends people are following to get into shape and get toned to achieve bodies just like the women we see in the Carl’s Jr. commercial, “CrossFit hit the global mainstream with its hellish workouts done in short, intense bursts. But soon most everyone will be chatting about WODs as the brand expands even further next year.”(NY Daily News, 2012). Carl’s Jr. knew what they were doing when they selected the perfectly toned women with bodies that are desired by many women in today’s world to be the ones showing off their bodies in the attempt to try and sell their product. The connection however is what didn’t make sense to me at first, considering you need to eat healthy and train if you want to achieve a body like them, which does not include eating foods that come from Carl’s Jr. or any other fast food restaurant.

I am doing a deconstruction of this commercial so that I can analyze the meanings and doubles meanings that are in this commercial and then talk about why they are there and what it could possibly represent. While doing this deconstruction we need to know what the signifier in this commercial is, which is the buns they are talking about which are actually the hamburger buns. The signified however is the meaning that we take out of the commercial, which is the butts of the women they are showing in the commercial, because of the way the commercial is set up we think they are referring to the women’s butts when they are saying buns. Because of this the commercial is what we call polysemy because it has multiple meanings for the term buns, one of the meanings is the bun for the hamburgers while the other is the term used for the butts of the women they are showing.

The reason Carl’s Jr. has this double meaning is because they are using it as a sexual innuendo because as everyone knows, sex sells, and it sells very well. According to Business News Daily, “The study showed sex is primarily used to sell low-risk products [impulse purchases](http://www.businessnewsdaily.com/2370-impulse-purcahse-survey.html)” (Mulvey, 2012), and anything people would buy at Carl’s Jr. would be an impulse buy because it is inexpensive and something you quickly buy when you are hungry, and you don’t contemplate much before or after if it is a good idea. There are other reasons why it is believed that sex sells, “Whether it sells a product or not, many agree that sex will [attract attention](http://www.marketingprofs.com/articles/2007/2523/marketingprofs-classic-truths-sex-why-getting-your-attention-isnt-always-enough). The problem is that not all the attention is positive” (Kalab, 2012).

The fact that Car’s Jr. uses sexual innuendoes to sell their product does have some strengths but there are also some weaknesses that come from using sex to sell their products. There can be a backfiring effect “For the many products that are not related to sex, using sex to sell them does not work. It can even backfire. A recent University of Wisconsin [study](http://www.thejanedough.com/sexist-godaddy-ads/) shows that audiences view ads 10% less favorably if they use sex to sell un-sexy products” (Kalab, 2012). Personally when I see advertisements with unnecessary amounts of sexual images in it, it makes me think how desperate that company must be to try and attract people’s attention. Its almost as if their product must not be that great if they have to resort to using sex to sell their products instead of talking about the good qualities of their product itself. I am using this deconstruction approach to show what drives consumers to look at these types of advertisements and why they could either be good or bad, as well as to show the meanings that are really behind the sexual innuendos of talking about the *buns* and how that is meant to make viewers feel when they see and here what they commercial has.

Carl’s Jr. has been known in the past to always use very sexy looking women to sell their products and most of them are famous such as: Paris Hilton, Heidi Klum, Jenny McCarthy, Nina Agdal, Padma Lakshmi, Audrina Patridge, Ashley Hartman, Kim Kardashian, Kate Upton and many more. In an article that talked about the nine hottest Carl’s Jr commercial girls of all time it said, “In 2005 Paris Hilton, in the height of her reality TV career, started the Carl’s Jr.’s trend for using hot women to promote their products. The commercial featured Paris washing a Bentley in only a bikini” (Gebhardt, 2013), the article later said this commercial was banned from television, so it then became a big hit YouTube sensation, but it makes you think how racy it must have been for it to have been banned from television before it was ever even aired. The problem with Carl’s Jr. using women to sell their products is that they are using women’s bodies to push the product and make it more desirable for men to both watch the commercials as well as eat the food. By them using this whole sex sells idea they are going too far in showing off women’s bodies for something as simple as eating a hamburger and in the process they are loosing credibility from others, “I realized that I could save cash and create the same flavors by pouring a bottle of barbecue sauce over a bunch of used Band-Aids. Not that our consumership matters to them much. Perhaps you've noticed that Carl's Jr. is not exactly trying to market *towards* the ladies quite as much as they try to market *on* them” (Davies, 2013). Davies is a woman who is clearly a feminist, who believes that women and their bodies should not be exploited to promote a product, because it portrays women in a negative way.

So why would Carl’s Jr. decide to focus this commercial on buns? Well aside from the fact that they have unique buns compared to other fast food restaurants that really are “smooth and round” as said in the commercial men are known to like the butts of women too. According to an article in the Huffington Post *Top 10 Female Body Parts Men Love*, “I bet as soon as you started reading this post you could have guessed that butt was going to be either 1 or 2. What is great though is that butts come in all different shapes and sizes and small petite ones can just be as nice as a Jennifer Lopez shaped one” (Crossland, 2013). In this article butts came in second to a woman’s breasts, which just goes to show that Carl’s Jr. knew how to capture the attention of at least the male viewers. The list from this article was made from a poll of 500 men who said what their favorite part of a female body was. I would have believed this was one of men’s favorite part of a woman’s body even before reading this because I always hear men saying “They are a butt guy” or “they are a breast guy” which breasts are a feature of women that are played up in other advertisements by Carl’s Jr. as well.

The beginning of the commercial where the women are doing yoga, which is a part of what keeps women fit and toned the first woman says “ So suddenly Todd wants me to get great buns”. Me as a viewer thought maybe that was the reason why she was at a yoga class in the first place, maybe she wanted to work out her gluteus maximums more so that Todd, who ever he is to her, wouldn’t think she too had great buns. The pressure now to fit into a certain mold of what a woman is supposed to look like according to the media is so distorted. What we see everywhere now is toned women with hardly any body fat on them and it drive women crazy trying to keep up with that life style otherwise they don’t feel pretty because they don’t look like the women in the ads that are being used as sex symbols. According to an online website called *Women In Advertisements and Body Image, “*There have been numerous studies done on the scope of advertisements and how they depict men and women differently” (“Women In Advertisements and Body Image”). The website goes on to talk about how viewers perceive what they see when women are in advertisements, “It was also found that 28% of female models in television commercials had comments made about their looks, as apposed to male models that were commented on looks only 7% of the time” (“Women In Advertisements and Body Image”). Something even more astonishing is two other statistics that this website gave was, “69% of girls in one study said that magazine models influence their idea of the perfect body shape” and “Exposure to the “ideal” body images has been found to lower women's satisfaction with their own attractiveness” (“Women In Advertisements and Body Image”). This shows me how truly unhappy women can be with their bodies based on what the media tells them about how other women look.

But really what is beauty? It can be whatever you want it to be, there is no definition of what beautiful has to be, it is all determined by what the individual likes. So people shouldn’t put so much attention on what females in the media look like and they should concentrate more on how they feel and whether they are comfortable in their own skin. The way I see it is if you are living a healthy lifestyle then it shouldn’t matter what you look like as long as the individual is comfortable with whom they are. Also in my opinion the real beauty comes from the heart not from what someone looks like on the outside.

Understanding what is really going on in these commercials is important because men should know that they are being drawn to buy certain products by watching these ads that only exploit women because of their idea that sex sells. Not only that but by women playing into the fact that sex sells and allowing the media to use them to exploit their selves makes other women look bad. The underling thing that we should also know while viewing these types of provocative advertisements is that many time they hide the quality of the actual product that is trying to be sold because it is hiding behind a hidden message that has to do with sex, so it distracts the viewer from what is really going on. Above all men and women also need to know that the images they see in these advertisements do not represent how all men and women look or how every man and woman should look for that matter.

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