

SEXUAL HEALTH

Super Bowl advertisements perpetuate gender stereotypes

During the Super Bowl, a decidedly macho event, several commercials either showed men of a more metrosexual nature or as severely henpecked. And, of course, there can't be a henpecked husband without a henpecking wife. More than the stereotypes themselves, it's the complaints generated by these commercials that reveal the most prominent gender issues of today.

Some feminists take issue with the stereotype of the nagging wife. I agree that isn't flattering, and is often overdone. But I also think there's something wrong when we can't recognize and laugh at our own flaws. Certainly not all wives are overbearing, but some are some of the time.

If we want real equality, women need to be allowed to be traditional or progressive, happy or sad, mean or nice. While some may not have found the humor in the henpecking commercials, I don't think it's fair to expect women to always be portrayed as perfect.

On the other side of the equation is the apparent ambiguity about the American male image. Is the "American man" a tough guy that puts his foot down when it comes to beer and trucks? Or is he

Sex and Sensibility



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a more sensitive, cultured man who uses moisturizer? Or is he simply a spineless wimp at the mercy of his girlfriend?

Just as women have been pursuing recognition of their more professional and business-oriented sides, men are starting to publicly explore their more sensitive sides. Although I have trouble viewing men as "oppressed," I do recognize that they are just as tied to social expectations as women are. So what's the explanation behind advertisements suddenly starting to explore less traditional male roles, especially during the largest sporting event of the year?

Some professionals think it has to do with the economy. More men are staying home without jobs and feeling a little insecure. It's easier for them to feel better when they see other men struggling, too.

Others point to the modern

demographics of the Super Bowl. The audience is now split almost down the middle between men and women. Advertisers no longer have the luxury of catering to a particular kind of viewer. As such, the messages and themes in their commercials tend to be a little less clear-cut. That's wonderful because, even if it's still imperfect, it's another step toward equality in the sports arena.

The KU athletics department not only strives towards that ideal, it's even a little ahead of the curve. There are actually more women's sports at KU than men's, and female fans are encouraged to get involved. Women regularly show up in bleacher photos of big games, and the Union's free game schwag is pretty unisex.

There's still no women's football team but, considering how male-centric sports, especially collegiate sports, have been in the past, KU's embracement of women is another reason I'm proud to be a Jayhawk.

Maybe next year, the Super Bowl advertisers could take a page out of our book.

Lytton is a senior from Kodiak, Alaska in creative writing.

EDITORIAL CARTOON



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