Argumentative Essay

 Although this commercial is a celebration of technology because Expedia brings families together, rather than promoting understanding Expedia is legitimizing the internal homophobia of the father and idealizing heterocentric values. In this add, technology is portrayed as a way to find and understand your loved ones, but I will argue that the biggest messages are those of internal homophobia and heteronormality.

The commercial ends with a touching speech by the father of one of the brides at a same sex wedding. Talking about his baby girl, he says, “When Jill was born, there was a certain spark in her eye and a glow in her heart that quickly became very apparent to Judy and I. When she got a little older, and all of a sudden that spark that I looked for in your eyes and your heart I didn’t see and it pained us greatly. And all of a sudden, ‘Bam!’ there’s Nikki and that spark is back and we are just so happy that we have our Jill back and now we have Nikki and we love you both.” His daughter, Jill is so surprised and touched by his loving, accepting speech at her wedding to her gorgeous new wife that she hugs her father and through tears she says, “I dreamt of it Dad, I dreamt of it! I mean it! I love you!” Expedia made it all possible. It brought father and daughter together for a beautiful, touching wedding in Beverly Hills!

Thank goodness for the flight to the west coast because this relationship and this moment might not have been possible without Expedia. The commercial starts with the father flipping through an old photo album of his young family. It has muted colors and soft music in the background. He gently caresses his baby daughter’s cheek in the photo saying, “We have a very special relationship, some people don’t understand, but we do. Jill was a VERY good baby, just smiling and bubbling. She was just so cute, oh boy!” The music is soft and there is a calm, comforting cadence in the background. The softness and warmth of the color and music has very nurturing feel.

Then the piano music comes in with deeper notes denoting a serious tone. The focus moves from the baby photos to a close-up of the father’s elderly face with a worried look. He says, “You always have great expectations for your children. My expectations of what Jill’s life was going to be included a husband. Here the camera shows a bronze statue of a muscular male figure in front of a photo of the daughter and her soon to be wife. The definition and color of the male nude statue symbolizes strength and stability. Somewhat hidden behind the statue is the photo of the lesbian couple showing the obvious hierarchy of values. Strong, bold man in the front, two sweet looking women in the back. The father continues to talk, “So when Nicki came to ask permission to marry my little girl, that **startled** me.” The word startled is emphasized in volume and tone indicating the depth of the effect of the women asking for his daughter’s hand in marriage. The camera zooms in on his intense eyes surrounded by wrinkles. It seems almost like this was an unfair thing for his daughter to do to such an ageing man. He said, “I told her, ‘This is not the dream I had for my daughter.’ I didn’t say yes, I didn’t say no.” Why is it about HIS dream? This is the daughter’s special day, her wedding day, her life, but instead this is all about the father dealing with his internal homophobia. Instead it is about a father coming to terms with his daughter not following the path he planed for her future.

As he was leaving on the trip, he said, “Coming out to the wedding from back east, I had some real apprehensions about it. What’s this gonna look like, two girls getting married?” The commercial is making a strong case for how much this father is struggling with his daughter’s sexual identity. He is so worried about what the wedding of two beautiful women in Beverly Hills will look like, but I wonder how of having two men getting married might have changed this commercial. It is easier for most people to accept two beautiful women being together than two men. If he is so worried about his precious baby girl getting married to another girl, just imagine how he would feel about his strong boy getting married to another man! This is just too difficult to imagine that is why the girls are getting married. It is much easier to find your understanding and dig your way through the homophobia when we are talking about beauty and the feminine!

Wait a minute, is the other person accompanying him on the trip from Atlanta to California his son? It wasn’t until after the twentieth time watching the commercial that I realized that his companion on the trip was a woman, presumably his wife. She has short hair and wears more masculine clothes, plaid collared shirts and jeans. This is a huge contrast with the daughter and new wife who were only shown in beautiful white wedding gowns with long flowing hair, looking very feminine. Why was the mother so butch looking while the lesbian wives so feminine? Is it because, once again that it is easier to accept beautiful, feminine women loving each other? Who wouldn’t want to marry them? The mother was also much younger than the father. Is that why it was so much more difficult for him, because of his age? Older people typically are more homophobic? The brides both wore wedding gowns, as did the mother. The only person in a suit was the elderly father. He was the only one with the pants on in the family, is that why he was carrying so much homophobia?

The most shocking line in the commercial is, “You have to make a decision, are you gonna have a daughter that you are going to maintain a very wonderful relationship for the rest of your life, or are you going to loose that child?” After this statement there was a pause and then the violin started. The sound was solemn and sad. “This was the situation I had to come to understand.” Why is this a decision that ANY parent has to make? Shouldn’t parents always love their children unconditionally, regardless of the beauty of the child, regardless of the gender, regardless of the sexual orientation? How can this even be a question that a parent is considering for a moment?

Because of the ability of Expedia to bring father and daughter together “Once we got out to California and we saw how happy they were, all that trepidation just seemed to go away. That was a big turning point. Of course walking Jill down the isle just looking at her she was breathtakingly beautiful. Judy and I were just swelling with emotion.” Once again the beauty of his child somehow made it acceptable that his daughter’s future did not meet his expectations. Her beauty helped him overcome his homophobia.

Just before his tear jerking speech at the end of the commercial, he said, “You come to terms with it.” Wow that is a powerful message for a child that a father has to come to terms with her sexual identity, with who she is. The homophobia in this statement is so cutting and destructive to gay members of our community as well as family members of gay men and women.

The commercial ended when he said, “On the trip, I came over all of the hurdles in the world to get to where I feel I am today.” He hugs his wife and his daughter and the words come across the screen, “Find your understanding.” Then is changes to “Expedia….find yours” Although there is a celebration of technology and a message that Expedia can help us understand each other, the more powerful message in this clip is about being shocked, coming to terms with, overcoming and finding tolerance and acceptance for something so horrible that a father has to seriously consider the choice of ending his relationship with his treasured baby girl. Even this horrible thing, the homosexuality of a child, can be understood because of the technology of Expedia.