

BUCKET IN MY HAND: KFC ADVERTISING, AMERICAN DREAM DISCOURSE,
AND THE HUNGER-OBESITY PARADOX

by

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THESIS ABSTRACT

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As a cornerstone of American identity, the American Dream serves as a hegemonic ideology rooted in myth. This myth centers on an ardent belief in equity despite the existence of systemic racial and economic exclusions, which includes inconsistent access to healthy food resulting in the hunger-obesity paradox. Because fast food plays a leading role in generating this paradox where an individual can be both hungry and obese, this thesis analyzes the 2015 Kentucky Fried Chicken advertising campaign to identify how the campaign perpetuates Dream discourse and understand how that discourse contributes to the hunger-obesity paradox. With the Colonel anchored at the heart of this campaign, the analysis found that he embodies the Dream and acts as a megaphone for Dream discourse. And ultimately, because Dream discourse overlooks and even admonishes low-income people and people of color, the people who most often face hunger and obesity, it contributes to the paradox.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. LITERATURE REVIEW.....	6
The American Dream: An Ideology	6
American Cultural Identity: Advertising, Consumption, and Food.....	10
Race and Class	14
The Hunger-Obesity Paradox	21
III. KENTUCKY FRIED CHICKEN: A SOUTHERN HISTORY.....	29
The Imaginary South.....	29
KFC Then: The Original Recipe and The Colonel	33
KFC Now: The Colonel’s Revival.....	42
IV. ANALYSIS.....	49
V. CONCLUSION	67
APPENDICES	70
A. PRESIDENT OBAMA AND FOOD STAMPS POSTER	70
B. KFC AD ANALYSIS TABLE.....	71
C. 1954 KFC BUCKET IMAGE	79
D. 1970 ALBUM COVER.....	80
REFERENCES CITED.....	81

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A single mom in Philadelphia who grew up in poverty vowed that when she became a parent she would not let her children even taste Chef Boyardee because she depended on it for breakfast, lunch, and dinner as a kid. Now a mother of two, she faces food security challenges because of job instability, limited access to transportation and inadequate food stamp support, and leans on the same inexpensive canned food brand to fill the bellies of her young kids. *A Place at the Table* (Silver bush, Jacobson, Goodman & Harrington, 2012) follows her daily routine, showing how she is unable to give her children a better life than she had because of systemic barriers. This mother has to ride two buses and travel more than an hour one way to shop at a fully stocked grocery store. When her children tell her they are hungry, she forces them to fall asleep every night as if they did something wrong because she has no other option. And although she gets a job working for the Greater Philadelphia Coalition Against Hunger near the end of the documentary, which allows her to help others in similar situations and provides her a more secure income, the wages disqualify her from food assistance and subsidized childcare. But, an ad encourages her to remain hopeful. At one point, the camera zooms in on a poster (see Appendix A) visible from her desk. It is an image of President Obama with a tag line that reads, “He got food stamps as a kid, and look where he is now,” implying that anything is possible despite unmistakable limitations and unearned privileges. The organization’s website still showcases this powerful image, which represents the discursive myth of the American Dream and its complicated connections to food.

Despite its power and influence, the American Dream is fictitious. While many people believe it to be real, it is significant to understand its legacy (Samuel, 2012). The myth of the Dream – that every person is free to pursue their goals as long as they are willing to work hard enough – is built upon a constructed reality that appears absolute and eternal. The Dream garners dominance through its myth, a system of communication that carries meaning assembled by purposive motivations (Barthes, 1972) centered on individualism, agency, and upward mobility. Myths function to naturalize ideology in order to establish cultural beliefs as expressions of actual lived experience, which in this case involves these core tenets – where individualism represents self-reliance, agency constitutes freedom of choice, and upward mobility denotes equitable consumption. As a result of myth, the Dream does not hide the truth but distorts it.

An inaccurate picture of the United States and its opportunities prevails because of this myth, which impedes equity for all. The Dream diverts attention away from the need for structural change, thus serving as a means of condemning those who cannot succeed under the guise of its mythical ideology (Cullen, 2003). Meanwhile, corporations effectively use Dream discourse to promote their capitalist interests. U.S. fast food companies, often held partially responsible for contributing to poor health (Freeman, 2007), actively participate in this pursuit, having spent \$4.6 billion on advertising in 2013, according to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Human existence requires food as a basic necessity, an emblem of identity, and a central component to health. The United States has abundant food but does not fairly distribute it across populations, which aids in the emergence of complex problems

such as hunger and obesity.

The U.S. public commonly understands hunger and obesity as divergent and unrelated. In reality these issues “coexist within the same person and within the same household” (Scheier, 2005, p. 883). This paradox overlaps with the widely accepted notion that those who are food insecure, or those who do not have access to healthy food, are more likely to be obese (Larson & Story, 2009). In addition to having a higher risk of obesity, the hunger-obesity paradox argues, hunger affects food insecure individuals and family units because they experience inconsistent food access and malnutrition (Scheier, 2005). This paradox centers on food choice as the leading cause of hunger and obesity (Dietz, 1995) and leaves out numerous environmental and social factors that also contribute to the complexity of these health issues (Guthman, 2011). These challenges also tend to affect particular groups of people more than others.

Racial and class hierarchies play a complicated role in the hunger-obesity paradox, which this thesis examines in more detail later but can be described briefly here as the simultaneous coexistence of hunger and obesity in one person, household, or community. The fact that hunger and obesity occur most often among low-income people of color (Feeding America, 2015) requires attention, particularly when investigated together with Dream discourse. Socioeconomic status and race cannot be separated from the topic of equity in the United States, particularly the ideological equity represented by the Dream. While the Dream extols prosperity, agency, and individual and collective possibility as equitably attainable, complex inequalities maintain an imbalance of opportunities, where structures of economic and racial

privileges prevail. Unearned advantages and social benefits constitute these privileges, which may be explained and understood differently across individuals and groups, yet the subtle, pervasive perpetuation of the Dream continues to be hegemonic.

While academia acknowledges both the American Dream and the hunger-obesity paradox, scholarship is lacking in the discussion of how they interact. Frequent fast food consumption is often linked to both obesity and hunger (Larson & Story, 2009), and fast food advertising aims to drive profits by ensuring consumption remains high. Often times, people experiencing the hunger-obesity paradox also work multiple jobs and fast food provides large portions, cheap prices and convenience with little to no meal preparation necessary. By perpetuating a hegemonic ideology like the Dream, fast food advertising alleges that equity in the U.S. food system exists while ignoring material proof – the hunger-obesity paradox – that demonstrates otherwise. This thesis argues that because fast food plays a role in generating the hunger-obesity paradox and its advertising content disseminates Dream discourse, the Dream ultimately contributes to the hunger-obesity paradox.

The systemic food inequity here matters because it originates in a discourse – Dream discourse – that feigns equality and has tangible consequences that include poor health for specific unprivileged groups and individuals. Because of the pervasiveness of the Dream, people in the U.S. routinely subscribe to its tenets. This is problematic because the Dream contributes to material consequences that negatively affect the health of those limited by our social and economic system where race and class inequalities abound. As a myth, the Dream inscribes its ideological tenets to

secure credibility despite being inaccurate in a way that can be detrimental to human health. As long as this hegemonic discourse continues to be believed and accepted, it remains vital to dig deeper and challenge the prevailing misconceptions of the Dream.

Focusing on the 2015 Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC) U.S. ad campaign, this thesis discursively analyzes eight online video ads that aired between May 2015 when the campaign launched and February 2016. The ads in this particular campaign are an ideal site to explore the interplay among the Dream, fast food, and the hunger-obesity paradox because they reintroduce KFC's Colonel who embodied the Dream with the aim to sell the unhealthy food that is often instrumental in cultivating the hunger-obesity paradox. By identifying emblems of the nostalgic Imaginary South, discussing whiteness as a leading representation of morality, and connecting access to the Dream through the Colonel, this campaign analysis grounds this thesis by answering the following research questions:

RQ1: How does the 2015 Kentucky Fried Chicken advertising campaign circulate American Dream discourse?

RQ2: How does American Dream discourse contribute to the hunger-obesity paradox?

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Anchored in literature from diverse fields, this thesis draws on and connects the work of historians, sociologists, rhetoricians, and biologists in order to tell an untold story about the Dream and the hunger-obesity paradox by examining a contemporary advertising campaign. As a mythology that has flourished since the United States became a nation, the Dream encompasses widely held notions of not only what success looks like but also core tenets on how to achieve it. With its powerful cultural influence, advertising helps to perpetuate the Dream by reinforcing these tenets through the promotion of consumption, specifically fast food. Meanwhile, the hunger-obesity paradox, a phenomenon that negatively affects the health of many Americans, commonly occurs as a result of racial and class inequities in the food system. This section provides a survey of these topics in order to illuminate an academic narrative that up to this point has not been discussed.

The American Dream: An Ideology

U.S. children are routinely taught to think that they can achieve their every ambition, no matter their economic or racial rank. This is because the United States prides itself on being a meritocracy (Samuel, 2012) where people are rewarded with success because of their combined effort and ability. Under this pretense, people associate many words and concepts with Dream ideology, ranging from self-reliant to entrepreneurial and resourceful to aspirational. Although the Dream continues to change over time and carries varied meanings, it is hegemonic in its power and successful through capitalism. In order to examine the interaction between Dream

discourse and the hunger-obesity paradox, this thesis looks strictly at three core Dream tenets – individualism, agency, and upward mobility – because each has played a leading historical role in the character and development of the U.S. and remains a beacon of American identity. These tenets often work in tandem and, therefore, are difficult to completely separate for definition’s sake, which is further support for why they require nuanced exploration. In this thesis I provide a richer understanding of what role these tenets play in how people perceive hunger and obesity among low-income populations and people of color. Individualism is the first tenet and the cornerstone of the Dream.

Gaining its potency at the genesis of the country, the Dream settled in alongside religious independence and fledgling self-government. Early American history points to the onset and development of the Dream initially through Puritanism and carried on through the Declaration of Independence as well as the work of Benjamin Franklin and Abraham Lincoln (Cullen, 2003). But, it took an outsider’s perspective to most effectively describe the foundation of the Dream – individualism. French political thinker Alexis de Tocqueville coined the term in his 1835 book *Democracy in America*, which he defined as a new ontology, where a person functions independent from society and focuses on personal welfare (1835/1969). Individualism, then, means a person should have little to no dependence on others, whether that is the state or the community. De Tocqueville described the term as self-interest (Cullen, 2003) to recount what he observed as the American doctrine. This way of living continues to be an essential vocation of the Dream that exists with help from capitalism.

Through the adoption of this tenet, capitalism became and endures as the system that cultivates the myth of the Dream in the United States. In such a system, accountability shifts from capitalism itself to the consumers, particularly to satiate its immanent, self-serving need for more and more capital. “Indeed, an ideology of extreme individualism is one of capital’s favourite ways to shift burdens of responsibility away from itself to the individual consumer” (Albritton, 2009, p. 179-180). The Dream functions here to misrepresent capitalism and the persistent desire for acquiring wealth as meaningful and attainable. People seen as needy, weak, and dependent receive blame for any social problems within the system, while economic well-being has been and continues to be a locus of optimism, progress and opportunity disguised by the Dream and bolstered by capitalism (Samuel, 2012). In other words, it is integral to the Dream to be self-supporting.

The second tenet, agency, deepens the personal culpability of individualism. To operate within the Dream, people also accept principles and practices that center on freedom. Central to freedom is agency, or “the idea that individuals have control over the course of their lives. Agency, in turn, lies at the very core of the American Dream, the bedrock premise upon which all else depends” (Cullen, 2003, p. 10). This freedom comes with one caveat – that every individual is not only responsible for his or her actions but also the consequences of those actions (Rogers, 2003; Rosenberg, 1982). This condition also speaks to the importance of self-control and responsibility (Cullen, 2003). Taking personal accountability for all decisions and actions is, therefore, crucial to the tenet of agency and includes not just perpetually fair choices but also the expectation that one is making the *right* choices. Agency is, therefore,

also wrapped up in good citizenship, or the idea that people enact morality on behalf of the nation through this freedom.

Upward mobility, the third and final tenet, illustrates the hopeful social and economic climbing many strive to achieve. Ascending to wealth and affluence by one's own accord is a conviction of the Dream that holds a powerful space in this myth. Here, upward mobility represents the belief that consumption is the great equalizer; that the market is equitable and through the market you will reach the same level as all other consumers. It also promotes the endless cycle of commodification, as success requires additional capital to achieve each new social status. This tenet is critical to the Dream because upward mobility thrives “among the ideological underpinnings of American life” (Aronowitz, 1974, p. 58). The value that is placed on the democracy of goods, therefore, lies deep within American culture:

In a fundamental sense the basic source of the drive toward higher consumption is to be found in the character of our culture. A rising standard of living is one of the major goals of our society. Societies are compared with one another based on the size of their incomes. In the individual sphere people do not expect to live as their parents did, but more comfortably and conveniently. The consumption pattern of the moment is conceived of not as part of a way of life, but only as a temporary adjustment to circumstances. We expect to take the first available chance to change the pattern (Schudson, 1984, p. 223-224).

Active pursuit of greater financial security and the ability to increasingly consume are essential to this tenet, but these desires come with inherent exclusionary flaws.

The valuation of continuously purchasing products, services and experiences, in combination with the notions of self-sufficiency and choice, inherently excludes certain groups of people, specifically people of color and those in low socioeconomic classes, where consistent access to healthy food is concerned. In the

Dream this variance does not exist because everyone has the same degree of opportunity, which is a hegemonic displacement of reality through myth. American cultural identity hinges on this persuasive and ubiquitous falsehood; a falsehood that advertising perpetuates, consumption pursues, and food adopts.

American Cultural Identity: Advertising, Consumption, and Food

If capitalism is the myth-sustaining system, then advertising is the medium that promotes it. Advertising is more than just what it sells. It contains a persuasive and often hidden message that can articulate multiple meanings, from what to value to how to feel. “It is impossible to look at modern advertising without realising that the material object being sold is never enough: this indeed is the crucial cultural quality of its modern forms” (Williams, 2014, p. 73). Ads do not simply contain commodities that are for sale – they also signify (Barthes, 1977), and through them people experience fabricated images and concepts as if they are sincere. The messages within advertisements are constructed to become both real and aspirational for consumers. “It is created image that has the hold on our most vibrant, immediate sense of what *is*, of what matters, of what we must pursue for ourselves” (Bordo, 2003, p. 103). Dream ideals have found a comfortable home within advertising because it offers “a superficial transparency that cloaks persuasive suggestion” (Page, 2006, p. 94) and assures individuals that the ad sponsor maintains similar, widely held beliefs (Schudson, 1984). By promoting the Dream, advertising fortifies the illusory confidence and hope that lives within its tenets.

Not only is advertising perpetuating a capitalistic, mythical system, it holds

parallels to the Dream itself. Like the Dream, advertising often assumes progress and is thoroughly optimistic (Schudson, 1984). Advertising also carries a strong influence because of what it represents in society. “It is a distinctive and central *symbolic* structure. And, strictly as a symbol, the power of advertising may be considerable” (Schudson, 1984, p. 210), as it ultimately influences cultural values through consumption. What a person consumes often illustrates who they believe they are and how they want the world to understand them. “You do not only buy an object: you buy social respect, discrimination, health, beauty, success, power to control your environment” (Williams, 2014, p. 77). Swayed by the Dream-worthy insinuations of ads, people, in many cases, may choose a product based on how it is supposed to distinguish or represent them, where inauthentic Dream messages fundamentally shape their identity.

Individualism, agency, and upward mobility actively persist in advertising content today. These enduring tenets of the Dream are both implicitly and explicitly programmed into modern advertising (Cullen, 2003). Fast food ads engage with such discourse by including messages of autonomy, choice, and implications of success, which align with individualism, agency, and upward mobility. These ads also participate in larger food discourses that predominantly disregard structural restrictions and perpetuate a tone of scapegoating and shaming (Greene, 2015). Food and beverage advertising is subliminal, operating below consumer consciousness, and it is, therefore, not often discussed as an influence on food choice (Nestle, 2013). The fast food industry, specifically, offers large portions and quantities and “prices some items so low that people of all socioeconomic statuses are able to enjoy its fare”

(Rogers, 2003, p. 877), which contributes to the hunger-obesity paradox. Advertising routinely emphasizes indulgence over survival (Bordo, 2003), and when marketing food to low- income populations, this focus quickly becomes complex. When needs cannot met, wants are not an option:

To sell their products, companies appeal to the reasons why people choose to eat one food rather than another. These reasons are numerous, complex, and not always understood, mainly because we select diets within the context of the social, economic, and cultural environment in which we live. When food or money is scarce, people do not have the luxury of choice; for much of the world's population, the first consideration is getting *enough* food to meet biological needs for energy and nutrients (Nestle, 2013, p. 15).

Functioning through its core tenets of individualism, agency and upward mobility, the Dream champions the neoliberal belief that a self-regulating economic and political system with no constraints allows equal access to affluence, power and health. It upholds this notion despite the reality that in 2013, one out of every seven people in America made up the working poor (Reich, 2015), a stratum that proves difficult to leave. In fact, Dream discourse covertly aligns with whiteness and the wealthy class while pretending to be viable for all. One example of this operates in the commercial world of fast food – a sphere that commonly promotes unhealthy eating habits that can lead to the hunger-obesity paradox.

Fast food companies commiserate with Dream discourse by peddling nondiscriminatory access to the meals they sell. Consumption here is again the great equalizer where poor and wealthy alike can participate, and it is also a way to enact identity. “[Consumption] matters because it seriously affects self-identity, being a critical part of the creation and maintenance of a valued sense of self” (Warde, 1994, p. 880). Through the practice of consumption, people cultivate a sense of self in such a

way that cannot be found in other practices (Rosenblatt, 1999). Fast food reinforces equity by circulating Dream discourse through its intentional consistency and branding. The food itself is made the same whether a patron earns a six-figure salary or makes minimum wage; a more expensive experience does not exist. This repeatability of the fast food experience anchors the brands for corporations in this industry. “It is not just that people consume, but that their consumption choices strongly shape and communicate their sense of self in an increasingly commercialized cultural lexicon” (Guptill, Copelton & Lucal, 2013, p. 86). This specific capitalistic language functions effectively through fast food because consumption of fast food provides nearly immediate gratification and stands in for convenience and affordability regardless of one’s race or class.

Communicating through advertising and brand recognition, fast food companies also gravitate toward the Dream for a digestible, unifying message of hope. Because food functions as a major driving force for humanity, from helping people make sense of the world to sustaining life, it also serves as a material and discursive means of establishing personal identity (Greene, 2015; Bisogni, Connors, Devine & Sobal, 2002). One of its central purposes is, therefore, acting as a way to communicate self and connect with others. “[Food] is not only a collection of products that can be used for statistical or nutritional studies. It is also, and at the same time, a system of communication, a body of images, a protocol of usages, situations, and behaviors” (Barthes, 1961/2012, p. 24). Because myriad factors such as culture, religion, and socioeconomic status play a role in how food and identity influence each other (Bisogni et al., 2002), it is noteworthy to understand the impact

that Dream discourse has on health and more specifically, the hunger-obesity paradox. As a food system, fast food regularly influences health and aids in constructing identity.

Fast food conveys rich meaning when consumed. Just as all food does, fast food represents a particular social and cultural environment, all of which is “present in and signified by food” (Barthes, 1961/2012, p. 26). Here, the Dream acts as a common influencer of identity through its mythical notions of equal opportunity and choice. “Freedom explicitly links together consumption and liberty. Consumer choice is deeply implicated in the process of, respectively, creating a reflexive self, constructing a narrative of self, or electing oneself to a shared form of identification” (Warde, 1994, p. 880). As a culinary system, fast food aids in how individuals see themselves and the world (Fischler, 1988) and serves as a recognized sign among community members (Barthes, 1961/2012). But despite common assumptions about consumption practices that are reinforced by the Dream, eating fast food does not ensure equity and can actually be instrumental in causing the hunger-obesity paradox. Race and class dynamics, which impact and reach beyond advertising, consumption, and food, complicate the misconceptions that the U.S. is egalitarian.

Race and Class

Before the Dream emerged, the U.S. already had roots in white supremacy, a doctrine that defends the belief in the “inherent superiority of white Europeans over non- whites” (Jensen, 2005, p. 3-4). The same Declaration of Independence that helped shape the Dream also demanded freedom from English enslavement while building a new nation on slavery (Rogin, 1996). In this way, white supremacy serves

as more than a summary of racial prejudice and also represents a series of political programs (Fields, 1982). By legalizing slavery, authorizing attacks on Native Americans, and restricting citizenship to whites, British settlers in North America established structures invested in whiteness early on (Lipsitz, 1995). This heritage of institutionalized racism indicates that the U.S. has always been historically racialized. One example from 1790 involves Congress passing an act that extended the right to naturalized citizenship to free white immigrants only (Adelman, 2003), most of whom came from northwestern European countries such as England, France, and Germany (Ewing, 2012). These immigrants came to the U.S. seeking the Dream – economic opportunity and hopes of a future filled with freedom, but their version of citizenship created a system that negatively affected the social and political status of those rejected by it.

Because whiteness held the key to citizenship, people deemed as non-white did not have the same rights to voting, jury duty or public office. “Whiteness was not simply a matter of skin color. To be white was to gain the full rewards of American citizenship” (Adelman, 2003, 1:10:44). Millions of people in the U.S. never received the title of citizenship because they were seen as property. As far back as the fifteenth century and up through the nineteenth century, white Europeans enslaved Native Americans on their own land and brought Africans to the U.S., forcing them into slavery (Snyder, 2013). Whiteness became visible and salient, which aided in protecting its power. Across time, these exploited, enslaved people had even less access to the Dream than the southeastern European immigrants

who started coming to the U.S. during the 1800s (Ewing, 2012). When these immigrants first arrived, from places like Italy, Poland, and Russia, they were racially categorized and excluded from the Dream's message of equity too, but they were not bought and sold like chattel. Once seen as non-white, immigrants from southeastern Europe eventually received the coveted distinction of whiteness.

As whiteness began to morph into a pan-ethnic category that allowed inclusion of most Europeans, it became a way to legally and politically distinguish the Africans, Asians and American Indians who were not permitted to have the same type of relations with whites as whites had with one another (Jay, 1998). Policy and popular discourse reinforced these inaccurate delineations as if they were true.

A fictive identity of 'whiteness' appeared in law as an abstraction, and it became actualized in everyday life in many ways. American economic and political life gave different racial groups unequal access to citizenship and property, while cultural practices including wild west shows, minstrel shows, racist images in advertising, and Hollywood films institutionalized racism by uniting ethnically diverse European-American audiences into an imagined community – one called into being through inscribed appeals to the solidarity of white supremacy (Lipsitz, 1995, p. 370).

Because the Dream accompanies whiteness in its discursive journey from history to films to advertising, white America continues to safeguard this whiteness in order to maintain its dominance over people of color in contemporary times (Coates, 2015). And, standard narratives around European immigrants and their social mobility intensified the Dream's connection to whiteness and what it means to be American.

This mobility model cemented the underpinnings of the Dream, where European immigrants generated and believed in the message, "We came here with nothing. We worked hard. We, we pulled ourselves up by our bootstraps"

(Adelman, 2003, 1:23:49). Although offered as proof to the economic equity in America, this sentiment evades the reality that non-whites did not and still do not have access to the same opportunities as whites (Adelman, 2003). In the post-civil rights era of today many people may not describe the U.S. as a white supremacist society, but whiteness maintains a commanding presence in American culture. Components of this self-righteous white culture run alongside the core Dream tenets of individualism, agency, and upward mobility (Katz, 1985). Taken together, these components describe a citizen as self-reliant, independent from society, and personally responsible for their livelihood; all elements that are understood as equivalent to whiteness, and therefore, morality and goodness (deMello, 1998). When whiteness corresponds with positive attributes it maintains social control and creates racial barriers to achieving the Dream.

While the benefits of the mythic Dream only reach a certain worthy few, companies within this system still aim at obtaining money from those otherwise not admitted into it. With profit as its motivation, the fast food industry “specifically targets African Americans and Latinos through race-based marketing and advertising” (Freeman, 2007, p. 2) spending millions of dollars annually (Freeman, 2007; Berg, 2008). As race shifted to being understood as cultural rather than biological, it became a way to stylize consumption (Lury, 1996) and a place to direct tailored messaging. While race operates socially, politically and culturally as an organizing principle (Slocum, 2010), it is altered to fit the demands of capitalism and invoked by advertising to sell products, including fast food. “Race is increasingly represented in consumer culture, at the level of fantasy at least, as a matter of style, something that

can be put on or taken off at will” (Lury, 1996, p. 165). In this way, whiteness remains the desired racial marker while exploiting non- white identities. Advertising may wield race as a way to amass capital, but it also incorporates falsely inclusive and colorblind Dream discourse to capture a broader audience – Americans.

By touting the idea that no determining racial factor exists, the Dream is again reinforcing equity through a disregard for the lived experience of non-whites and low-income people. For instance, colorblindness creates a version of racism that is much subtler than legal segregation and slavery but continues to privilege whiteness by denying its existence. “The doctrine of colorblindness, along with the nineteenth century market vision it endorses, uses and redeploys in the context of equal opportunity very narrow visions of equality and a specific contested vision of the notion of the private sphere. It not only works to legitimize material deprivations, but it also produces a particular ideological regime” (Crenshaw, 1997, p. 287). Erected by colorblindness, the current system produces income inequality at its highest levels in communities of color (Omi & Winant, 2015) by claiming innocence and equity. Augmenting the economic canyon between whites and non-whites, redlining, loan discrimination and predatory lending also persist (Squires, 2015; Badger, 2015). Despite the attempts of colorblindness to theoretically eradicate racial issues alongside erroneous Dream egalitarianism, it fails in a practical sense. Here, unequal access to healthy food serves as an example.

While excessive consumption of fast foods occurs across races and classes, low- income people of color experience the most serious health effects of doing so, which result from structural oppression that includes federal food policies and

targeted advertising (Freeman, 2007). The U.S. federal government does not provide enough public assistance for individuals and families to afford fresh, healthy food and fast food companies often produce race-based marketing to entice consumers to buy, for example (Freeman, 2007). This oppression is rooted in exclusion, where socioeconomic discrimination occurs for those who are low-income and “racism functions as a limiting force that pushes disproportionate costs of participating in an increasingly monetized and profit-driven world onto those who, due to the frictions of *political* distance, cannot reach the variable levers of power that might relieve them of those costs” (Gilmore, 2002, p. 16). The Dream prohibits people of color and low-income people from fully reaching the favorable social, economic, and political outcomes that it claims are equally available to everyone.

Although consensus does not exist among scholars about how race and class function in society, some argue that while they are recurrently linked in the U.S., they are different and should be examined as such. Namely, class can be identified from two perspectives – objective reality and social appearance – where race can only be identified from the perspective of social appearance (Fields, 1982). More specifically, one cannot explain the other. “While inequality is a fundamental dimension of race and racism, race can no more be reduced to an economic matter than it can to a cultural or national one” (Omi & Winant, 2015, p. 67). Because racial and socioeconomic groups are not homogenous and, therefore, encounter unique challenges and experience those challenges differently depending on myriad other factors (Lipsitz, 1995), it is difficult to clearly distinguish how race and class intersect, influence one another, and function separately.

But, evidence strongly suggests that they both can diminish the likelihood of Dream-worthy success because they often act as structural inhibitors.

Despite the fact that it purports otherwise, the Dream cannot be equally achieved because of these racial and socioeconomic denials of actual inclusivity. Feeding America (2015) states that African Americans and Latinos “are disproportionately affected by poverty, food insecurity and unemployment” as compared to their white counterparts. This inequality stems from the disproportionate opportunity to inherit wealth. “The reasons for these [racial] disparities stem almost entirely from the ways in which home ownership gives whites in every class more wealth than their black counterparts with the same incomes, family structures, and work histories” (Lipsitz, 2006, p. 108). The characteristics of poverty are documented as being directly related to poor health (Olson, 1999). Low-income communities also play host to a large number of fast food restaurants, where some African American neighborhoods have two times the amount of fast food options as white neighborhoods (Freeman, 2007). Convenient, unhealthy food participates not only in oppression here but also in identity formation.

The illusion of choice in food consumption is a particularly powerful and entrenched social myth that contributes to food oppression’s perpetuation and invisibility. Dominant ideology places strong value on the vision of society as a meritocracy with each individual placed at the starting line of the race to social and economic success. Many Americans believe that economic mobility depends on individual accomplishment, that success is a reflection of personal fortitude (Freeman, 2007, p. 10).

The Dream serves up individualism, agency, and upward mobility with a side of equity without real substance and social, economic and political nourishment.

Buying decisions may change depending on a consumer’s financial position in

the marketplace. To argue from the perspective of the Dream, issues of equal access do not exist because every person has the capacity to improve his or her own fiscal situation, has the option to select healthy foods if desired and through purchases can obtain equal class status. Reality disagrees. According to Feeding America (2015), more than 49 million people in the U.S. in 2013 were food insecure, an economic and social condition described by the USDA (2014) as limited or uncertain access to adequate food. The fact that food is plentiful while people are hungry only bolsters the myth of the Dream and its ties to hunger and obesity. “Daily abundance of food is one of the main characteristics of our very affluent society. So abundant, in fact, is food that many – perhaps most – Americans find it almost impossible to believe that there are millions among us who do not have access to sufficient food” (Mead, 1971/2012, p. 19). This is exactly the site where the hunger-obesity paradox occurs – within the contradiction that people experience scarcity among bounty (Levenstein, 1993; McMillan, 2012) and throughout Dream discourse that claims equity for all races and classes, particularly in food and health.

The Hunger-Obesity Paradox

Being healthy largely hinges on what one eats. Food is essential for living and, eaten nutritiously in appropriate amounts, builds the foundation for mental and physical health (Albritton, 2009). Popular discourses construct definitions of healthy eating (Guptil, Copelton, & Lucal, 2013) and influence identity formation around these hegemonic notions of health. For example, to be considered a good citizen in the U.S. means consuming a healthy diet and avoiding obesity (Biltekoff, 2013). As a uniquely powerful ideology, the Dream plays an active role in this setting by

reinforcing personal responsibility through individualism and upholding freedom of choice through agency. Good citizenship indicates that achieving the socially accepted definition of health is a moral decision that depends entirely on the person and disregards the structural disadvantages that often impact low-income people and people of color.

The American food system may supply sustenance to millions of people, but it is considerably flawed. Not only does this system affect lives, it also affects people's means of securing the necessities of life (Nestle, 2013), and often unfairly. Although the Dream argues differently, these livelihoods do not extend equally across the U.S. This economic, political and social inequity, seen as both real and imaginary depending on which perspective best bolsters Dream discourse, becomes a focus of negative stereotypes often marked by physical traits. "More than simply an 'expression of social status, physical difference provides a short-hand 'explanation' of the status of the type: 'Fat people are lazy and unmotivated. The poor and unemployed are fat. *Ergo*: they are poor and unemployed because they are passive and lack ambition'" (Coulangeon & Duval, 2015, p. 244). As sub-texts to ideology, stereotypes deepen the diffusion of Dream discourse. Here, typecasting obesity leads to a discussion of the hunger-obesity paradox.

As a contested term, obesity has been explained in myriad ways (Biltekoff, 2013), including as "a condition in which a person's body-fat represents thirty percent or more of their total body weight" (Rogers, 2003, p. 863). It can be rationalized as a consequence of the nation's economic prosperity, but it is difficult for many to fathom that Americans are hungry because of this assumed wealth (Adams, Grummer-Strawn

& Chavez, 2003). Obesity, also referred to as overnutrition, and hunger, also described as undernutrition, appear to be divergent occurrences because the former commonly suggests excessive caloric intake and the latter indicates deficient food availability (Scheier, 2005). The hunger-obesity paradox materializes within the contradiction that hunger and obesity can, and do, occur within the same individual or within the same household. If the Dream's relentless belief in equity were accurate, this paradox would not exist. But it does, and it happens most frequently as a result of food insecurity where income is an important element (Everson, Maty, Lynch & Kaplan, 2002). Despite Dream discourse arguing otherwise, income inequality in the United States is real and growing.

Income inequality works in close collaboration with food insecurity. While 14 percent of all U.S. households were food insecure in 2014, food insecurity affected more than 30 percent of people living below the federal poverty line (United States Department of Agriculture, 2015). In 2006, the USDA replaced the word hunger with food security (Liu Yen, 2012), but no matter which word is used to describe this type of malnutrition, it plays a part in perpetuating obesity. "Not only does hunger exist in America despite obesity, and not only are people frequently both obese and food insecure at the same time, but hunger is actually a key *contributor* to the growing obesity problems among low-income Americans" (Berg, 2008, p. 117). Although it is not the only potential cause of obesity and hunger, multiple factors correlate with financial instability. "The most frequently reported reason for not having enough food or the desired types of foods to eat is not having enough money, food stamps, or other financial sources" (Dinour, Bergen & Yeh, 2007, p. 1958-1959). These include

economic access to nutritious food, episodic food insufficiency, and eating meals on the run because of long work hours. Socioeconomic status and poor health occur in conjunction:

Health correlates more closely with economic class or standard of living than with any other social variable. There are no doubt many reasons for this, but I would suggest that a major one has generally been diet. Those with higher incomes can afford better diets, live in places where better diets are accessible, afford the education to know what a better diet is and afford the time it takes to invest in a better diet. It has been said that Americans are ‘overfed and undernourished’ because they consume so many calories that are relatively devoid of nutrients. While as a generalization this may be true, obesity rates themselves tend to be higher amongst the poor in the United States, and this is at least partly because junk foods are cheap, accessible, convenient and often quasi-addictive (Albritton, 2009, p. 92-93).

Although the Dream conveys mythic equality, the reality for many Americans reveals a systemic unfairness so deep that it reaches their homes, even at mealtime.

For low-income people, breakfast, lunch, and dinner regularly consist of cheap, convenient meals with few nutrients. Being that unhealthy foods tend to be more affordable than fresh, healthier items, people living in poverty do not often choose produce over processed goods. Food items such as fruits and vegetables are important to include in one’s diet because they contain essential vitamins, minerals and fiber and are low in fat, sodium and calories compared to other edibles, but people in lower socioeconomic groups are particularly less likely to consume them (Devine, Connors, Bisogni & Sobal, 1998). This may be due to the need for low-income Americans to spend more of their food budgets – up to 70 percent – on fruits and vegetables than Americans earning more (Berg, 2008), because fresh, high-quality food most often costs more than packaged, processed food (Nestle, 2013; McMillan, 2012). In this case, the Dream tenet of agency depends on financial resources and

therefore, does not carry the same access for all. Claiming individual choice as the ultimate solution, the Dream encourages consumers to think that this accountability will prevent hunger and obesity, “yet it is precisely ‘freedom of choice’ that has incubated these ills” (Patel, 2007, p. 5). Again, this points to the genuine exclusions and limitations low-income individuals experience not just in eating food, but also in buying it.

People living under extreme financial constraints routinely purchase fast food, high in calories and low in nutrients, because it is affordable and convenient to acquire. And, consuming fast food has been found to be the leading contributor to higher levels of obesity (Garcia, Sunil, & Hinojosa, 2012), likely because it is easy to acquire. “The challenge for low-income families in today’s modern food environment is not obtaining enough food, but rather having dependable access to high-quality food” (Ludwig, Blumenthal, & Willett, 2012, p. 2567). When the Dream asserts that people consume the foods they prefer, it fails to admit not only that corporations and governments bear great influence on eating, but also that geography and culture shape these decisions (Guptill, Copelton, & Lucal, 2013). A lack of supermarkets in communities and neighborhoods contributes to the issue of healthy food access, and conversely, dietary choices actually improve with the availability of food stores (Berg, 2008). The hunger-obesity paradox thrives in an environment that provides limited nutrient-rich goods and infinite high-calorie, processed goods.

This paradox directly affects the people living in such environments. Studies show that people who do not have consistent access to healthy food increase their intake of fat to avoid hunger when they cannot afford to buy food (Dietz, 1995). What

is valued in a poverty-stricken home is not whether one ate healthy food but if he or she “got enough to eat” (Tanumihardjo, Anderson, Kaufer-Horwitz, Bode, Emenaker, Haqq, ... Stadler, 2007). Consuming often unhealthy food in large quantities when it is available and then not eating when food is scarce can lead to obesity when that cycle repeats itself. “Obesity may result from an adaptive physiological response to episodic food insecurity, which can lead to binge eating habits when food is plentiful” (Dinour, Bergen & Yeh, 2007, p. 1958). Evidence also shows that “food deprivation may lead to overconsumption of previously restricted foods after the restriction ends” (Adams et al., 2003, p. 1073). By its very nature as a biological process, this occurrence removes considerable responsibility from those struggling with food insecurity (Nisbett, 1972) because it is a means of survival and not a personal choice. Opposing the Dream, this reflects the true absence of agency that exists in cases where people are food insecure.

Consistently fluctuating food access is just one causal factor in the hunger-obesity paradox. It is also common for low-income individuals to work multiple jobs and long hours, which causes mealtime to be rushed, limits time for exercise, and encourages a desire for convenience (Dolnick, 2010; Greene, 2015). Restricted by these income-related factors, people of low socioeconomic status routinely have few incentives to eat healthy and are confined to narrow food options. Even with resources, healthy eating is not easy. For example, coupons may seem to be a straightforward way to save money on groceries, but they regularly provide discounts on packaged foods rather than fresh goods and are, therefore, ineffectual for consistently eating healthfully (McMillan, 2012). It is not just problems in the food

system itself that create roadblocks to healthy eating for people in low socioeconomic classes but also income inequality, expensive healthcare, working conditions (Liu Yen, 2012) and “a population so strapped for time, cash, and know-how that cooking dinner becomes a Herculean task rather than a simple and necessary chore” (McMillan, 2012, p. 237). Dream individualism prevails here by placing value on autonomy, where support from the community, government or others cannot be expected.

Finally, the self-interest and self-sufficiency of individualism cannot acknowledge how other environmental elements contribute to the paradox. For low-income people and people of color, these elements include “access to medical care, long-term and cumulative exposures and presence in certain environments” (Guthman, 2011, p. 97). It is limiting and inaccurate to assume that food and what one eats are the only measures of how healthy a person is, especially because evidence suggests a link between chemicals called obesogens and a predisposition of weight gain (Holtcamp, 2012). Low-income populations often live in neighborhoods with high likelihoods of exposure to obesogens such as pesticides (Guthman, 2011), which can be detrimental not only to maintaining a health weight but also to fertility and other aspects of health. In addition to financial inequalities contributing to obesity through obesogen exposure, racial inequities also contribute. “Even when income is constant, a Black or Latino family who earned between \$35,000 to \$50,000 a year was almost five times as more likely than a white household with the same income to live close to a polluting facility” (Liu Yen, 2012, p. 5). Food and health are complicated and depend on equally complex factors such as access, socioeconomic status, and hegemonic notions

of what it means to be healthy. The Dream offers an alternative to this reality; one that is as intoxicating as it is false.

From individualism to upward mobility, the tenets of the Dream function as core values within a dominant ideology in the United States. Supported by capitalism and perpetuated by advertising, these values influence consumers across class and race, especially where food is concerned. Food upholds great influence because it functions as a foundational means of defining personal identity. The fast food industry couples this notion with Dream ideals in their advertising to entice low-income communities and take advantage of their financial instability and limited healthy food options. Many of these ads are often specifically targeted at those of low socioeconomic status and most commonly at African Americans and Latinos. Thus, it is through such advertising that “the same capitalist food system that produces obesity also produces hunger” (Albritton, 2012, p. 346). It is here that the hunger-obesity paradox comes to life. Following this specific line of reasoning, this thesis explores the 2015 Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC) ad campaign and discusses the geographic, social, and political location where the company first took shape.

CHAPTER III

KENTUCKY FRIED CHICKEN: A SOUTHERN HISTORY

Although KFC has only been in operation since 1930, its story has roots in a place that is much older – the American South. A southeastern region in the U.S. defined by the United States Census Bureau (2015) as stretching from Texas to Kentucky to Delaware, this part of the country carries a rich culture of food and identity like any other region, but it is marred with racial brutality and suffering because it functioned as the locus of American colonial slavery and the Jim Crow segregation that followed. As in the majority of the U.S., whiteness and wealth in the South continues to mean that a person has specific privileges, as described earlier. It is paramount to discuss the history of this area not only because KFC first grew out of a café in the region but also because it is a place that often gets idealized for its renowned charm, as if its supposed easy virtue should be recreated. Unofficially referred to as the Imaginary South, this affectionately described version of the region serves as a profitable nostalgia industry that centers on a longing for a particular past (McPherson, 2003) that can be found in 2015 KFC branding and advertising.

The Imaginary South

Inheriting a reputation that inspires sentimentality, the fascination with the Imaginary South comes from the predominantly white upper class notion that the region contains a solitary, historic purity. Here, hospitality began “as a narrowly defined body of social practices among the antebellum planter classes, but it also exists as a discourse, as a meaning-making story continually told and re-told about the South” (Szczesniul, 2002, p. 127). This utopia boasts a stable economy as a result of

prosperous, capitalistic plantations and happy, complacent slaves. The Imaginary South lives on more as a nostalgic ideology than a geographic area; one aligned with a broader American history that continues to benefit mostly wealthy white individuals (Lipsitz, 1995). Much like the Dream, this mythology represents a narrow, inaccurate, and at times boastful optimistic image that garners meaning through identity. And although it may be an invention, the Imaginary South maintains a steadfast belief in the investment of whiteness and the treasured icons, like Colonel Sanders, that represent it (McPherson, 2003). But, the Imaginary South is not the only account of the region.

As opposed to the positive, boastful imagery of the imagined version, another reading of the South portrays it as a backdrop to U.S. racial tensions often criticized for its legacy of violence. When the Imaginary South stands in for what is real and true, alternative versions can get ignored and then forgotten. A flawed logic ensures that these genuine regional contradictions are never seen simultaneously (Engelhardt, 2011), where different racial histories exist side-by-side but only one can be seen at a time (McPherson, 2003). For example, many white Americans outside of the South believe that their region of the U.S. did not play a role in building the country's racial hierarchy. But, no matter where these people reside, they fail to see and acknowledge that they "imaginatively 'live' in a metaphorical South, even as their relationship to the region has danced between poles of attraction and revulsion" (Hale, 1998, p. 282) because racial inequality is imbedded in American freedom and does not merely occupy the South (Rogin, 1996). This demonstrates that a singular version of the South, described as the Imaginary, has never existed.

In actuality, numerous versions of the region prevail. And this diversity of southern experience would be better understood if seen as “fundamentally connected to, and defined in relation to, the non-South” (McPherson, 2003, p. 2). The nation’s fixation with the Imaginary South also reveals the widespread desire to simultaneously isolate racism and claim blamelessness.

[T]he South’s distinctive experience of loss and tragedy is a dimension of historical experience that America very much needs, a heritage that is far more closely in line with the common lot of mankind than the national legends of opulence and success and innocence (Watts, 2007, p. 8).

Beyond what non-southerners choose to regard as true about the South and their ties to it, local histories often get merged with or deleted from dominant backstories. Just as believing the Imaginary ignores the plurality of the South, subscribing to the tenets of the Dream disregards the inequity of America.

Focusing on just one version of the South inherently excludes the people, experiences, and cultures that do not fit established norms and expectations. It remembers and enshrines “certain Souths and certain southerners while forgetting others” (McPherson, 2003, p. 5) often based on racial and socioeconomic dynamics. Operating as a fictitious locus, the Imaginary South depicts civilized, literate white people treating everyone with decorum and gentility but muffles a legacy abounding in egregious fatalities and brutal enslavement for non-whites. Individuals affected by this intentional exclusion and habitual viciousness relied on food materially as a means of self-definition, comfort, and sometimes, even resistance. Food in the South sparked a means of asserting the self and demonstrating community attitudes. “[S]outhern foodways were ‘one of the earliest vehicles for the expression of culture and identity’ in this country,

particularly for enslaved blacks living in the American South” (Latshaw, 2009, p. 123). Because food provides a way for people to engage with pleasure and struggle (Engelhardt, 2011), it served and continues to serve as a way of reconfirming group identity for southerners (Whitehead, 1992). Particular dishes functioned to unify groups and aided in building fraternity within them.

Chicken was and remains primary fare that bears intense and profound significance in southern identity formation. Although often mistakenly linked to black southern cuisine alone, fried chicken, specifically, represents southern culture as a whole. Fried chicken symbolized community for people living in poverty and for blacks in the South (Ozersky, 2012). These families did not own herds of cattle or a pen full of hogs to feed themselves, but they often had live poultry roaming in their yards. “On Sundays and other special occasions, that kind of family might kill a chicken and cut it up so everyone could have a piece. They would fry it up in lard and season it with spices as they had been taught to do by West African slaves who brought the trick with them from their lost homes” (Ozersky, 2012, p. 22). While the meanings associated with chicken are not interchangeable for every group of southerners, black slaves also depended on it for sustenance. Through the consumption of chicken, they also experienced both subjugation and release.

In general, people tend to rely upon very narrow versions of group identity when food is the topic of conversation. But food and the meanings assigned to it, whether cognitive, oral, or visual, also have an infinitely greater value – the ability to reveal embedded associations that deeply affect individual and group identities. In this way, food can serve as a locus of oppression and liberation. For many African Americans, chicken – whether fried, baked, or broiled or appearing in literature or film – is one such object (Williams-Forsen, 2007, p. 127).

Since the 1830s, Southern cookbooks have featured fried chicken recipes (Egerton,

Egerton & Clayton, 1987). Fried chicken also did not represent the notions of commercial bounty seen more commonly today; instead it was a staple in many poor rural homes (Ozersky, 2012). Now, Americans across races and classes who live both inside and outside of the region consume it. Fast food restaurants prepare it, too, for those wanting the convenience of enjoying fried chicken at a low price without cooking it at home.

Because this deep-rooted, dish-specific food heritage has a rich history, investigating KFC holds value because its 2015 ad campaign invests in the company's own Southern backstory through the Colonel and promotes its central commodity – fried chicken – as though it is inherently American. Capitalizing on strictly positive imagery, KFC merges regional and national narratives that translate to a unifying message of Dream discourse. The fast food chain incorporates Imaginary South nostalgia in its most recent advertisements by constructing each ad around its founder and immortal brand ambassador, a Kentucky Colonel named Harland Sanders who embodied the Dream. This enigmatic, influential man and all that he represents deserve a closer look.

KFC Then: The Original Recipe® and The Colonel

The Colonel, as he was universally known, was not an accidental hero, a man who fell into a moment of history and was made immortal. No, through a mixture of ambition, showmanship, and dogged endurance, along with an intuitive grasp of what was then being called 'mass culture,' he found a way to make himself something bigger than just Harland Sanders and even bigger than a fast-food mogul. More than almost anyone in the hagiographic literature of American business, he truly lived the American Dream.
Josh Ozersky (2012, p. 3)

Harland Sanders not only founded KFC, he also emerged as the brand itself

after crafting his identity around and because of it. Although he is known most commonly as the Colonel, many do not know that Sanders' pre-Colonel personal history – as told in Sanders' autobiography and by KFC executives trying to reestablish his story – speaks to how he was tailor-made to achieve the evasive Dream and to ultimately represent his business as both a person and a product. To start, Harland Sanders grew up in a poor white family, particularly after his father died, which required him to start working as a farmhand in 1900 at 10 years old (Sanders, 1974). From a socioeconomic standpoint, he had more opportunity for upward mobility than his poor black counterparts because of his privileged whiteness. After being fired only one month after his hire date because of laziness Sanders plunged into an intimate and perhaps inadvertent pursuit of the Dream, which requires one's wholehearted investment in hard work. "From the time I lost my first job as a boy I wanted to succeed at doin' good things. I worked hard at it" (Sanders, 1974, p. 11). In alliance with the Dream tenets of individualism and agency, he chose to drop out of school to become self-reliant by earning a wage.

Quitting school early left him with a sixth grade education (Schlosser, 2001; Smith, 2012) but did not hinder his eagerness for taking on roles as a railroad firefighter, streetcar fare collector, a lawyer, and an insurance salesman to earn money (Ozersky, 2012). Already, it is impossible to differentiate between the man and the myth he became. As a benefit of being white, Sanders almost certainly had more work options than a non-white person at the time; an advantage exhibited by his diverse resume. Despite clear structural advantages, people like Sanders are also upheld as examples for being tenacious and resilient under the guise of the Dream. Stepping in

line with this ideology, Sanders did not become disheartened when none of these job titles stuck. In his autobiography, *Life as I Have Known It Has Been "Finger Lickin' Good,"* he wrote, "You might think I was discouraged at this point, but I wasn't. I just believed that any failure I had gave me the opportunity to start over again and try something new" (Sanders, 1974, p. 50). Although it took many years for him to earn the designation, Sanders' racial privilege and characteristic gumption initiated his rise to an internationally recognized icon during an unanticipated car accident.

In the late 1920s a bridge collapsed as Sanders drove over it, causing his car to fall into the creek below (Sanders, 1974). He sustained injuries but did not call a doctor, and instead hitchhiked a ride with a Standard Oil representative, an approach arguably fitting with the determination of the Dream, who he convinced during the journey to let him take over a gas station in Nicholasville, Kentucky (Ozersky, 2012). This anecdote provides clear evidence of how Sanders' whiteness, pluckiness and self-assurance helped him ascend in the ranks, just as the Dream tenet of upward mobility proclaims. That first station closed because of the depression in 1930 but was otherwise successful, according to Sanders' own account, and Standard Oil offered him another location that year in Corbin, Kentucky where aggressive bootleggers convened (Sanders, 1974). Located on the then-busy U.S. Highway 25, Sander's new gas station sat across the road from a competing station with whose owner he had a shoot-out, during which one man even died (Ozersky, 2012). Outside of using firearms to protect his business, Sanders offered free window washing and tire air checks, which patrons in rural Kentucky had not yet seen, to set himself apart from his competition (Sanders, 1974). Because minimal options existed for travelers in the way

of food, he then decided to start selling meals in the back of the station as an additional way to boost business (Whitworth, 1970). He personified the Dream with nearly every decision.

Although he had been experimenting with cooking since he was seven, Sanders was inexperienced at managing a larger food operation. He wrote, “Of course, I didn’t know nothin’ about the restaurant business. I had eaten at boardin’ houses in my railroad days, and all I knowed to do was to put the food out in front of people” (Sanders, 1974, p. 53). But, being excellent at self-promotion, he volunteered with Alcoholics Anonymous and at a local orphanage while in Corbin, KY (Sanders, 1974), which helped him build a saintly, charitable reputation in the communities he sold food. He also stayed busy making a name for his venture by delivering babies with the Works Progress Administration (WPA), often seen as a virtuous task, and even had a child named after him when he saved the lives of the mother and her newborn during labor (Sanders, 1974). Regardless of rumors that he cheated on his first wife (Ozersky, 2012), his hot-temper, and his tendency to swear almost constantly (Whitworth, 1970), Sanders continued on his journey of constructing himself as a revered Dream icon.

Ardently believing in the Dream, whether consciously or not, Sanders said that he lived the mantra: “I can do anything anybody else can do” (Sanders, 1974, p. 48). His autobiography serves as a hardcover ad for himself and, therefore, KFC where he plugs his triumphs as the company creator. In it, Sanders never acknowledges that his race, complimented by his strong-willed nature and confident personality, helped him considerably. For example, he narrates a story in the book about how he could barely afford the \$12 dues to attend the National Restaurant Association conference the first

time he went and had to nearly empty his cash register at the café (Sanders, 1974). From the perspective of the Dream, which touts the notion of personal responsibility for one's livelihood and success, Sanders receives full marks. Once he arrived, he asserts in his autobiography that he had to live off the samples of food from the booths because he could not afford meals (Sanders, 1974). And then, he writes that just five years later his fellow members elected him director of the association (Sanders, 1974), likely as a result of his ability to network, his seemingly tireless drive, and his idealized Dream-worthy work ethic. More than that, he also continued to do well in business because of newfound connections to the association and beyond. The fusion of man and myth grew deliberately stronger.

Because of his success at the café, the governor of Kentucky commissioned Sanders as a colonel for the first time in 1936 (Smith, 2012). He spent four months enlisted in the army after lying to get into the military at age 16, but he never received a military leadership ranking (Sanders, 1974). Instead, Sanders earned the honor of Colonel because he was a prosperous, philanthropic businessman but had not yet adopted his signature white suit and black string tie (Ozersky, 2012). He continued to thrive under the myth of the Dream by embodying its tenets and pursuing new endeavors. Customers loved Sanders' home-cooked meals so much that in 1940 he expanded the station to include not only a café, but also a motel; a place he ultimately called Sanders Court and Café (Ozersky, 2012; Kleber, 1992). During the late 1930s and early 1940s, Sanders opened two other cafés – one in Kentucky and other in North Carolina – as well as a furniture store and a plumbing supply store (Dawson, 2015). He had developed his enduring secret blend of 11 herbs and spices and pressure

cooker method of chicken preparation by 1939, which he claimed took nine years to perfect (Smith, 2012). Always sharing how much effort he expended to reach his goals, Sanders steadily built himself into the Dream.

The governor of Kentucky officially recommissioned Sanders as a colonel in 1949 (Ozersky, 2012; Kleber, 1992). After receiving the title again, he became his own brand inspiration by introducing himself as Colonel Harland Sanders and wearing a pristinely white suit and a black grosgrain ribbon string tie one year later (Ozersky, 2012). According to the Honorary Order of Kentucky Colonels website, receiving a colonel commission “is the highest title of honor bestowed by the Governor of Kentucky” on those individuals who “are unwavering in devotion to faith, family, commonwealth and country, passionate about being compassionate, [and] proud leaders who are gentle but strong in will and commitment.” Sanders decided to dress the part in the early 1950s once he connected with his first business partner and franchisee, Pete Harman (Dawson, 2015). In order to visibly signify this flattering title and the reputable attributes that came with it, Sanders could then build trust with customers and eventually sell more chicken. In addition to the all-white suit and black tie, he also grew a goatee, wore a mustache, and carried a cane (Sanders, 1974). He already had a full head of white hair, but because his whiskers were dark auburn in places, Sanders had his barber bleach them to complete the look (Sanders, 1974; Ozersky, 2012). From that point forward, he promoted his chain with this persona – one that vigorously embraced a definition of whiteness that means pure, moral, and upstanding and employed Dream tenets that secured his growing financial privilege.

Although Sanders failed at opening an airport near the Corbin café and had to

shut down the North Carolina restaurant during WWII rationing, he remained relatively successful during those years and opened the first Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC) franchise in 1952 near Salt Lake City, Utah with Harman (Ozersky, 2012). Because of his audacious self-promotion tactics, racial privilege, and improved socioeconomic status, Sanders confidently attained professional results. But, trouble soon came in the early 1950s when a well-traveled highway junction that ran in front of his café moved, and shortly after that Interstate Route 75 replaced the old U.S. Route 25 as the main highway north to south, bypassing Corbin and causing business to drop significantly (Sanders, 1974; Whitworth, 1970). Convinced he could not recover from these changes, Sanders sold what was left of his business in 1956 for \$75,000 when just a few years earlier he received an offer for \$164,000 (Dawson, 2015; Whitworth, 1970). At 65 years old, he was left without a job or an income. But, he had a plan that would prove lucrative, and as a white Kentucky Colonel he had earned the respect that would help make it possible.

With a few pressure cookers and a bag of his seasoning in the trunk (Whitworth, 1970), Sanders traveled the country by car wearing his signature suit and began to sell his secret fried chicken recipe more widely to restaurant owners (Dawson, 2015). He stopped at restaurants he thought would make a good franchise candidate, begged the owner to cook chicken for the employees, and if they enjoyed the food he volunteered to make the same meal for the restaurant's customers over period of several days (Whitworth, 1970). If the customers were impressed by the food, Sanders would begin franchise negotiations (Whitworth, 1970). His proprietary blend of herbs and spices coupled with his improved way of preparing the chicken

translated into capital as he slowly licensed franchises. Originally frying the chicken in small batches on a hot cast iron skillet, a traditional southern method of preparation, Sanders found that pressure cookers made the dish more flavorful and cut the cooking time from 35 minutes to between seven to nine minutes (Sanders, 1974; Dawson, 2015; Whitworth, 1970; Mueller, 1971). This time saving method allowed for more meals to be produced, which was ultimately more profitable for him and his franchisees. By embodying the Dream, he had a place to re-anchor himself financially.

By the early 1960s KFC was the largest restaurant chain in the U.S. (Schlosser, 2001), and Sanders continued to emerge as more of a mythology than a man. He appeared for the first time on national television in 1963 on the popular game show [*What's My Line?*](#) to increase brand recognition of the then regional chain (Ozersky, 2012). At 73 years old, he wore his head-to-toe white colonel ensemble on the show – complete with browline glasses – as it had already been his promotional costume for more than a decade. Sanders sold KFC the next year for \$2 million to lawyer John Y. Brown, Jr. and stepped into the role of not simply ambassador for but “living image” of the company (Whitworth, 1970; Smith, 2012). He remained actively involved by traveling 200,000 miles a year to market the brand and received a lifetime salary of \$40,000 a year, which eventually increased to \$75,000 by the 1970s (Whitworth, 1970; Mueller, 1971; Ozersky, 2012). Sanders even taste-tested chicken across the country to ensure franchisees had properly prepared his secret, proprietary herbs and spices blend and followed his specialized cooking methods (Whitworth, 1970). These visits ingrained Sanders’ position as the fabled Colonel that people saw and continue to see as synonymous with the KFC

brand and even more, with the Dream.

As a powerful representation, the Colonel symbolizes Dream tenets because the real man, Harland Sanders, embodied them. The distinction between man and myth cannot be clearly made, but there are moments in company history where Sanders the person disagreed publicly with KFC – about gravy. When franchises stopped making gravy the Colonel’s way, and he sampled some at one of his notorious visits, he called it “God-damned slop” in a *New Yorker* interview (Whitworth, 1970). Likely because KFC executives and franchisees saw him as a “moral authority” (Whitworth, 1970) and the company could not function successfully without their public relations mainstay, by 1971 the Colonel had already made amends (Mueller, 1971). With a newly restored relationship between himself and his brand, the Colonel required what he called a “re- Colonelization” process, which meant the company would have to go back to his original food preparation methods (Mueller, 1971) to further establish itself as the leading fried chicken restaurant. Because he was “the whole show” (Whitworth, 1970), KFC surrendered to using his approach and, therefore, also capitalized on his persona.

Nearly to the end of his days, Sanders chased life with vigor whether that meant getting baptized at 78 years old to favor his late-blooming piety or constantly devoting himself to the branded image he created. He actively participated in generating his own folklore, not just in his overtly promotional autobiography, but also in a book he wrote the same year titled *Incredible Colonel*, which tells the story of his born again religious experience. The mythological story of Sanders’ life reaffirms the Dream and gives individuals an identifiable representation of the Dream

to model. Narratives about people like Sanders get told and re-told, not because they are the American standard, but because they are exceptions. As a tenacious white man, Sanders had more exposure to opportunities than people of color or people without his spunk could have had. These very real inequalities exist as part of the Dream, and its discourse ignores these actualities while advertising touts the decisively optimistic messages of individualism, agency, and upward mobility.

KFC Now: The Colonel's Revival

In 1980, less than a decade after Kentucky Fried Chicken reunited with the Colonel, the 90-year-old famous founder passed away (Taylor, 2015). This posed a significant challenge for the company because of the Colonel's ongoing, active involvement with franchises, familiarity with consumers, and overwhelming icon status (Buss, 2015). The company's identity floundered with Sanders' death, because he was not just an advisor and promoter. He was *the* living representation of the brand and the Dream. Six years later, PepsiCo bought KFC (Smith, 2012) and still operates the company under its Yum! Brands umbrella brand today. By 1990, consumer fears began to rise around the health risks associated with fat and cholesterol, pushing KFC to test- market grilled chicken and expand their menu beyond their famous fried version (Ramirez, 1990). As the only national fast food chicken company at that time, KFC also started to see a decline in their earnings, which they attributed to a decrease in customers (Ramirez, 1990). The company struggled without the Colonel. In addition to menu changes, KFC executives responded to the decline just one year later by announcing that the company would be gradually replacing its original name – Kentucky Fried Chicken –with the initials KFC, saying, “The key is to reduce

dependence on the word ‘fried’” (Power, 1991).¹ Moving away from what the Colonel originally called the company because of dietary trends, KFC tried to connect with customers without the aide of a mythological man who had played that role for so long.

Despite the name change, the Colonel’s imagery did remain on the company’s logo as it always had. The Colonel appeared in advertisements as an animated version of himself until 1998 but had otherwise been absent from ads since 1994 (Morrison, 2015) while the company attempted to reach customers in new ways. By 2006, the company unveiled an updated logo that gave the Colonel a red apron to depict his cooking expertise and featured its full name, Kentucky Fried Chicken, after many years without it (Lovan, 2006). In 2015, KFC brought the Colonel to the forefront of its advertising again to realign itself with his southern values, memorialize him for a new generation, and invest in Dream discourse as a promotional tool. Celebrating its 75th anniversary, KFC announced in a [press release](#) on May 19, 2015 that they would be “paying homage to the legacy of Colonel Sanders with a new brand look, voice” after more than two decades of ads without him. Part of a \$185 million multi-year brand overhaul (Maze, 2015), this new campaign aims at engaging younger consumers (Buss, 2015), especially after a 2010 company survey revealed that less than 40 percent of Americans between the ages of 18 and 25 recognized Colonel Harland Sanders as a real person (Ozersky, 2012). The company aims at reviving the mythology of the Colonel by acknowledging his humanness. Channeling Sanders’ real-life over-the-top sales tactics in its tone and voice (Buss, 2015), the campaign

¹ See Sodaro & Malloy (2001), page 105, for an alternative reason for the name change, which remains without citations and, and therefore, was not discussed further in this thesis.

incorporates his image across multiple channels – online, broadcast and in stores in a sentimental, upbeat manner that shares the confidence, hope, *and* exclusion of the Dream.

Positioned to reflect American culture and principles, the campaign kicked off on the KFC Facebook page and YouTube channel the same day as the initial press release with a video ad mimicking a presidential speech. Because an ad always contains messages beyond what product it is selling (Williams, 1978), it is not surprising that less than one week later, the campaign’s first TV commercial aired on Memorial Day (La Monica, 2015), a patriotic holiday that commemorates America’s fallen soldiers with parades, U.S. flags, and picnic lunches. KFC strategically reintroduced not only a longstanding outdoor meal staple – fried chicken – but also their brand’s most cherished American icon – Colonel Sanders. This campaign, which is the work of ad agency Wieden & Kennedy out of its Portland, Oregon office (Ad Age, 2015), features the Colonel front and center. With titles such as *State of the Kentucky Fried Chicken Address* (the kick-off ad), *Bucket in My Hand*, and *Nashville Hot Chicken Strike* the 16-second to one-minute video ads invoke nostalgic content and feature playful impersonations of the real man, but the actor standing in for the Colonel changes. KFC deliberately chose to depict its legacy in this noteworthy way so consumers would be enticed to tune in over and over.

According to KFC Chief Marketing Officer (CMO) Kevin Hochman, the campaign was intended to evolve similar to James Bond where viewers must follow a change in characters (Wohl, 2015), and, therefore, get absorbed in a narrative bigger than selling fried chicken. Former SNL actor Darrell Hammond played the Colonel in

the first set of ad spots, and three months later KFC announced in a [press release](#) that another former SNL cast member, Norm MacDonald would take on the role of the “real” Colonel. One video ad from the campaign found inspiration in a 1967 KFC commercial featuring the actual founder who was hooked up to a lie detector by women trying to get his secret recipe (Wohl, 2015). Titled *Lie Detector*, the more recent ad depicts MacDonald being asked about whether or not he is genuinely the Colonel to stimulate dialogue about the campaign. These intentional ties to the real Sanders likely go unnoticed by KFC’s latest target audience – Millennials – because most were born years after the Colonel died. But these connections achieve one key objective; fusing the man with the myth in a believable Dream narrative.

Introduced in a Super Bowl ad, stand-up comedian Jim Gaffigan had already replaced MacDonald as the Colonel by the beginning of 2016. Gaffigan also stars in the *Nashville Hot Chicken Strike* ad where KFC executives remind him that the Nashville hot chicken is a limited time only meal. He replies, “Well, no more Nashville hot chicken, no more Colonel. I mean, what are you gonna do? It’s not like you can find another Colonel, right?” The camera pans to a wall of the boardroom where a sign that reads “The Next Colonel” hangs above headshots of Tori Spelling, Don Cheadle, Gilbert Gottfried, and a golden retriever, which reinforces the ephemeral nature of an actor’s time playing the Colonel. And although this commercial hints at the idea that the potential next Colonel could be a woman, a black man, or a dog, all three of the actors thus far have matched Harland Sanders’ flesh and blood appearance as white men. This campaign has already garnered criticism, but it is also gaining attention, which implies how powerfully its discourse

engages audiences.

Initially, 80 percent of the public responded positively to the revival of KFC's founder (Watrous, 2015), and already by the end of May 2015, one of the campaign's video ads made it to number three on the viral video chart (Wheaton, 2015). People are tuning in while KFC resolves to attract their attention, no matter the resulting sentiment. According to YUM! Brands Chief Executive Officer Greg Creed, 20 percent of people hated the campaign, but he said he would rather have people react with strong opinions than indifference (Watrous, 2015). Despite this dislike, the KFC YouTube channel alone shows that interest in this campaign continues at the viral level, with the campaign's first online ad having garnered more than seven million views. The company Facebook page also showcases more than a dozen video ads with one million views or more, which illustrates a certain level of engagement from people following KFC on social media. The company's second round of "re-Colonization," as Hochman describes it (Choi, 2016) seems to be piquing curiosity in a way that warrants the investigation this thesis describes.

At the time of this writing, the company's Twitter handle also remains active almost daily with original tweets and replies to or re-tweets of users' tweets. These social media messages tend to focus on the Colonel and include a photo [re-tweet](#) of a baby dressed as Sanders for Halloween and back-and-forth tweets with competitor Popeye's Chicken. Gilbert Gottfried, one of the potential future Colonels, shared his plans to become the next Colonel on a Huffington Post Live podcast, which the media organization tweeted. KFC's official Twitter handle, which acts as the voice of the Colonel, responded with: "All these great comedians going for my job! Strong move

taking it all the way to [@HuffPostLive](#), [@RealGilbert](#). But it'll take more than that!”

Beyond the online banter about Colonel authenticity, KFC also used Twitter to engage users to follow the Colonel’s road trip to New York for his [first appearance](#) on a KFC-sponsored float in the Macy’s 2015 Thanksgiving Day parade using the hash tag #ColonelsRoadTrip to post updates along the route. This avid activity across social media is reminiscent of Sanders’ commitment to travel the country promoting KFC before the Internet existed, and invokes his dedication to the brand as its central character who is more myth than man.

Advertising and social media marketing aside, KFC’s 2015 campaign promotes more than its chicken and much more than its icon. It circulates hegemonic Dream discourse about what it means to be American through the Colonel. By excluding actors who do not fit the white, affluent, and male categories to play the Colonel in their commercials, KFC fortifies the salience of the Dream for a select group of people. The nature of this campaign – switching actors every few months – cunningly but erroneously communicates that the Dream can be achieved by anyone, especially because Sanders himself embodied its tenets. In the press release that initially announced the campaign, Hochman directly addresses not only his personal admiration for the Dream, and therefore, the Colonel, but also speaks directly to those Americans who believe in it as an invitation to dine at KFC.

Colonel Harland Sanders’ iconic legacy and world-famous Original Recipe® chicken are what set Kentucky Fried Chicken apart from the rest. His entrepreneurial spark and unrelenting appreciation for hard work, philanthropy and showmanship (or what he called ‘a little Colonel-ing’) are exemplary of the ‘American Dream.’ We want to remind today’s hardworking folks that his passion, dedication and famous secret blend of 11 herbs and spices are alive and well across our 4,300 restaurants in the US (Hochman, May 2015).

Embedded in the storybook myth of the Colonel, the Dream's tenets of individualism, agency, and upward mobility inhabit the central position in KFC's newest promotional strategy. And so far, the only authorized participants have been financially well-off white men; a limited version of inclusion that the Dream shares.

To encourage consumers to support the KFC brand, the company appeals to Americans by wielding Dream ideals and promising low price points and convenience. Here, fast food meets Dream ideology in the calculated persuasion of advertising. KFC is using the Dream to draw consumers in with the same inspirational illusions that shut out those who do not fit its racial and socioeconomic model for success. Even further, the campaign sells food that commonly lacks nutritional value, and through the Dream it perpetuates the mentality that those experiencing the hunger-obesity paradox are their own scapegoats. This contradiction matters because it is an unexplored, timely, and real site of tension where people who are hungry and obese possess little power against a dominant ideology. To better understand how Dream discourse applied in the 2015 KFC ad campaign contributes to the hunger-obesity paradox, this thesis discursively analyzes a corpus of the company's video advertisements.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS

“I think a dream is just a suggestion to start something out, do something.”
Colonel Harland Sanders

Focused on showcasing the Colonel, KFC’s latest ad campaign launched in 2015 to reestablish him as the fundamental force of their brand and introduce the icon to generations who did not know he actually lived. The campaign melds the Colonel’s personal history with his self-created mythology to draw in consumers and encourage them to embark on a strategic storytelling voyage. Because it is impossible to distinguish between Colonel Harland Sanders the person and Colonel Sanders the brand, the campaign tells his story with tongue-in-cheek humor, Southern nostalgia, and Dream discourse that obfuscates this complexity. The Colonel holds a semiological post that surpasses his persona as KFC’s founder, promoter, and legend where he now acts as a signifier of the Dream itself (Saussure, 1916/1983). Under the pretenses of individualism, agency, and upward mobility, the Colonel promotes his fried chicken meals to all Americans by inviting each person to see him or herself in the Colonel’s prosperous, respected position and to ignore structural inequalities.

By selecting eight of 62 video ads² from this campaign released by KFC between May 2015 and February 2016, my purposive corpus marks the campaign launch, comprises all transitions between actors and includes moments of building intimacy with the audience. I wanted to follow the campaign from the beginning to examine how KFC reintroduced the Colonel in its kickoff ad and to explore the

² See Appendix B for the full list of advertisements from May 2015 to February 2016.

moments of inclusion and exclusion that occurred when the actors playing him changed. Once I identified these ads, I noticed a clear narrative arc as well, one that I will explain in more detail later. This group of ads also incorporates those launched on national holidays – Memorial Day and Labor Day, which is noteworthy because of the ties between the Dream and the cultural identity of those dates for Americans. The Labor Day ad also functioned as one of the campaign’s “Fryerside Chats” where the Colonel appropriates President Franklin Roosevelt’s fireside chats method of building trust with constituents to sell chicken. Lastly, two of the ads diminish the Colonel’s role as himself by portraying him as a college student in one and a business person in the other, which opens up his role to viewers and allows them to imagine themselves as him, the Dream signifier. Taken together, these ads tell a particular story about fast food, Dream discourse, and the hunger-obesity paradox that other ads did not because they left out the Colonel, did not articulate this story as meaningfully or were redundant.

This analysis shows that this selection of eight ads released on Facebook or YouTube creates a distinctly Dream-centered narrative that ultimately contributes to the hunger-obesity paradox. Advertising expresses ideology through power relations by engaging material goods, which in this case is food, in a way that is discursively intangible and emotional. “Products in ads are arguable physical things but they also are referents of feelings. Ads promise to create the feelings they represent, thus the act of buying represents consuming the referent emotion. In this sense, all ads are signs with an ideology that is transparent” (Page, 2006, p. 99). In KFC’s 2015 campaign, the Dream serves as its transparent ideology. Because these particular ads can be

accessed anytime on social media, they inherently target the company's desired demographic, Millennials (Buss, 2015). But the Colonel intends his embodied, ambitious Dream message for everyone and tries to draw in the audience by building intimacy. While that message may be meant for all Americans, it is not an egalitarian one. Because white, affluent people have the benefit of more social, economic, and political privileges, low-income people and people of color face structural limitations. And because the hunger-obesity paradox prevails among those with less privilege, these KFC ads contribute to perpetuating the paradox by insinuating the equitability of Dream discourse.

KFC gives prominence to the Colonel in order to cultivate this problematic ideological program and ultimately make money. In the ads from this campaign that I analyzed, for example, white people play primary characters and are the only people allowed to speak. The Colonel, as the central persona, always leads the conversation with other characters, addresses the audience directly, and holds the most space in dialogue. This demonstrates his constructed authority as both the brand and as Dream signifier. Starting with the first ad launched on May 19, 2015, this corpus includes commercials featuring the three white male actors who have thus far played the Colonel – Darrell Hammond, Norm Macdonald, and most currently, Jim Gaffigan. As the actors in the campaign change, the implication is that anyone could become the Colonel and, therefore, achieve the Dream. But, because the Colonel is typecast as a white, affluent person, the underlying message is that the Dream cannot be accessed unless one fits that model. Being white can also cause consumers of all races to regard the Colonel more positively, because in U.S. society, whiteness is

still often equated with virtuousness (deMello, 1998; Sullivan, 2006). Through this racial advantage the Colonel can more effectively persuade.

As a trusted salesman, the Colonel can convince consumers to pursue the Dream by imitating him. He obtains consumer trust through his own self-assurance, which in-ad tributes exemplify. Every person featured in the ads I analyzed wear a version of his white suit and string tie uniform, and in almost every camera shot, images of Harland Sanders in paintings and photographs and as bobble heads and figurines can be found, showing that the Colonel is not just influential but also omnipotent. In the ads, he touts the title of Kentucky Colonel to imply that he has integrity, honesty, and decency because it is often understood as an honorable designation. By ceaselessly wearing his signature Colonel uniform, having it on display nearby (sometimes in multitudes), or dressing in a variant of the ensemble when the campaign calls for it, he secures his look and persona. Always self-promoting, the Colonel in these ads even wears a lapel pin on his string tie in nearly every ad that is a gold version of his own face and speaks using a southern drawl because it constitutes colloquial charm. Driven by Dream discourse through the Colonel, the campaign also establishes a specific lifestyle appeal that flourishes because of calculated set details. Situated in physical settings evocative of the Imaginary South and also in spaces that are poignantly contemporary, these ads use Dream discourse as a unifying message to bridge historical, cultural, and social differences in an attempt to build the Colonel's relevance with younger audiences and to maintain a relationship with their central consumer base, families with children (Buss, 2015). An intentional blend of past and present finds its place across this

collection of ads whether it is in the Colonel's richly colored mahogany desk and brown leather office chair or the skateboard and backwards hat that he sports on a college campus. These backdrops consistently feature warm, sunny lighting, with the exception of one ad where the Colonel is in bed at night, and weave in elements of American heritage such as the country's flag, baseball diamonds, and the White House. The meals for sale in the ads are also regularly presented on an elegant engraved silver tray, while the serving dishes that carry the food are simple, branded cardboard containers. This juxtaposition of opulence and ordinariness marks the connection that the Colonel wants consumers to take away from his core message. By calling attention to the idea that KFC is affordable, delicious fast food that the Colonel still eats despite his wealth, the commercials remind consumers with the silver tray that KFC helped him to become the Dream.

As the signifier of the Dream, the Colonel uses its discourse in the ad campaign to coax consumers into believing that they have access to the Dream as he did. If consumers buy in to this mythical ideology, it becomes easier for them to disregard its inherent restrictions, which generates continuous tension between ideological optimism and lived disappointment. For a closer look at how these eight ads function to create this cycle of antagonism, I explore them individually and discuss how they connect as a narrative outside of the broader campaign themes described above.

State of Kentucky Fried Chicken Address (May 19, 2015)

In this, the campaign's first ad, Darrell Hammond's Colonel puts on a record with Sanders' face on it and turns to look straight into the camera. He addresses the

audience from his dignified leather desk chair with “Howdy, folks. It’s me, Colonel Sanders,” under the implication that his speech carries the same significance as a president’s state of the union. Declaring that he is back, the Colonel establishes his brand longevity through his sentimental word choice and the anachronistic props around him. Set in what appears to be his personal office, a fairly private space, the commercial shows the Colonel in his signature garb befitting his title – white suit, white collared shirt, black string tie (with Colonel lapel pin) and black browline glasses; eyewear popular in the mid-twentieth century (Fassel, 2013). He also wears two walnut-sized gold diamond rings, which Harland Sanders actually wore in the 1970s (Mueller, 1971). A brass Colonel Harland Sanders nameplate, large KFC-branded bucket of fried chicken, gold ball point pen, and red landline rotary phone rests on his desk as well as two figurines of him, a gold stapler, and a tape dispenser. His cane is there, too, but it is off to the side and hard to see. Most noticeable in the context of how the Colonel aims to position himself here is that he is doing business in analog, sans computer, but as evidenced by uninterrupted gaze and assertive language, his self-confidence in the modern era endures.

As plucky mandolin music plays in the background, the Colonel vocalizes that he has been out of the public eye for enough time that the world has changed significantly, calling attention to the international space station, double-sided tape, and cargo pants as notable advancements. By articulating his historical endurance through observations that seem lagging and old-fashioned, he builds sage-like credibility with viewers. At the same time, the Colonel makes the case that he and his chicken are as great as ever by walking along his office wall of accomplishments as

the camera follows him. A shadowbox containing the Colonel's uniform (cane and all), a gold placard listing his varied Dream-worthy job history, a framed sketch of the Colonel, a giant framed blue ribbon, and three magazine covers with him on the front hang on this wall. It also displays a large framed key, perhaps to a city, a framed photograph of the Colonel shaking hands with an unidentifiable white man, and a Poultry Digest branded mirror. At one point, the Colonel looks into the mirror, which has the words "World's #1 Chicken Salesman" on it, and smiles knowingly. Seconds later he calls attention to his self-appointed top seller status by saying, "...what you don't always seem to have these days is my Kentucky Fried Chicken. Well, I'm here to change that, folks." His over-the-top self-promotion abounds because the Colonel wants America to understand his enviable Dream signifier status after more than 20 years out of the limelight.

After a salute of respect to viewers, the camera zooms out to show eight smiling kids ranging in ages and heights, each playing string instruments and dressed in all white except for the black string ties that match the Colonel. There are four boys and four girls, and they are all light-skinned and seem glad to be in the presence of the Colonel. He does not acknowledge that the group is in his office, instead shouting, "I'm back, America!" and chuckling loudly, which indicates that viewers should focus on him because he is the main event. The ad's final scene depicts the White House behind a thick red banner that runs across the entire screen and includes two graphics that extend beyond the banner – a bucket of KFC chicken inspired by real bucket branding from the 1950s³ with Sanders' face on it and an illustration of Sanders

³ See Appendix C for image example.

holding a red menu and a smaller version of himself as he leans on his cane. Two small screens depicting branded Colonel content also sit inside the banner, one inviting viewers to watch more videos and the other asking viewers to visit the Colonel Hall of fame. Hammond, as the Colonel, stands to the left of the giant illustrated version of Sanders, mimics his pose, and clasps the same red menu and mini Colonel, which again draws ties between the real Sanders and imagined Colonel. This is clearly the introductory ad for many reasons, including his comeback statement and the exposure to his achievement accoutrement, but it also roots the narrative in a particular perspective. Here, the Colonel is constructed as a reliable expert equivalent with that of a U.S. president, and one with whom the audience will become increasingly intimate.

Kentucky Fried Chicken | Phillip (May 25, 2015)

After establishing that he is trustworthy in the first ad, the Colonel now focuses his energy on promoting a particular product, KFC's \$5 Fillup meal, and continues to draw in elements from Sanders' history. Hammond reasserts his role as the Colonel, saying, "Howdy, folks. It's me, Colonel Sanders." This time the audience gets introduced to his acquaintance, Phillip, in a nod to audience inclusivity, as seven kids play mandolins behind them at a tree-lined park. The kids, only two of whom appear to be non-white, still vary in ages and heights, and again, the white-suit-and-black-string-tie- wearing Colonel does not acknowledge them. This self-referential commercial almost mirrors the cover of Sanders' actual 1970 gospel and folk album titled *The Colonel's Mandolin Band for the Glorification of Christ*, down to the Colonel imitation outfits, the grassy, tree-filled background, and the wooden folding

chairs that Phillip and the Colonel sit on in front of the kids⁴. By blending nearly exact imagery from Sanders' life with modern advertising and pricing, this campaign deepens the fusion of the Colonel as man and myth. His authenticity depends more on Dream ideology than historic fact because he created his own folklore that endures across time. And while he signifies the immaterial ideals of the Dream, he grounds his message in the materiality of food.

In this ad, he is again the sole voice and only engages Phillip when he wants to confirm a statement about the bounty of \$5 Fillup meals. The engraved silver tray that symbolizes formal dining more than fast food makes its debut and displays a Fillup that includes three fried chicken tenders, a biscuit, a side of mashed potatoes, a chocolate chip cookie, and a PepsiCo soft drink. This flash of opulence is that simple, but powerful reminder of the Colonel's Dream achievement. He pitches the food by saying, "For \$5 you can fill up your car with gasoline or you could fill up yourself with my \$5 Fillup with finger lickin' good sauce" and goes on to gleefully sing about all the food that comes with the meal. The implication with this line is that a person might be forced to choose between gas or food, and if faced with those financial circumstances, that person should spend their money to feed themselves with KFC, of course. By acknowledging socioeconomic status while peddling Dream discourse with the devoted presence of the Colonel, this ad clearly supports my argument about the hunger-obesity paradox.

Never promising a nutritious meal, the Colonel emphasizes that this food will do the bare minimum by stopping hunger. Low-income people do not

⁴ See Appendix D for album cover and record graphics.

necessarily struggle to obtain enough food, in part because of the pervasive availability of fast food companies like KFC, but instead do not have reliable access to healthy food (Ludwig, Blumenthal, & Willett, 2012). The Colonel uses language that plays a role in perpetuating this very problem; a problem that directly contributes to the hunger-obesity paradox. People affected by this paradox are hungry for nutrients, not for products that stuff their stomachs and can cause obesity. Based on KFC's nutrition calculator that uses a 2,000- calorie daily intake to measure percentages, the meal shown in this ad contains 1,890 calories and 131 percent daily value of total fat. While recommended daily intakes vary depending on factors such as age, gender, and physical activity (United States Department of Agriculture, 2010), this single meal represents nearly a day's worth of calories without provide significant nourishing sustenance, thus contributing to the hunger-obesity paradox.

Kentucky Fried Chicken | The REAL Colonel (August, 17, 2015)

Moving from album cover mimicry and problematic language about food consumption, this ad introduces Norm Macdonald as the Colonel by kicking off with an antennae television set playing the first three seconds of Hammond's *State of Kentucky Fried Chicken Address* as Macdonald responds with, "Hey! That's not the real Colonel Sanders. I'm the real Colonel Sanders!" Set again in the Colonel's personal office, the luxurious mahogany desk and walls and stately brown leather chair are the same as Hammond's, but the décor and layout have changed. Keeping with the theme of swanky and nostalgic, this office now shows his desk with a printing calculator, a new Colonel figurine, a vintage library lamp with glass shade, and a

wood-handled rubber stamp. He has kept the brass Colonel Harland Sanders nameplate as an indication that Macdonald is actually the Colonel. Behind him four clocks with the same chicken design and set to the same time hang in a horizontal line with small gold “Kentucky” placards beneath them. Instead of showing times in various cities across the globe, which is commonly seen in headquarters like KFC that do business internationally, these clocks center Kentucky as the most important location and reinforce the Colonel’s deep influence within this sphere.

A fire burns cozily in his mahogany fireplace, which is another mechanism of building intimacy with the audience because it evokes a welcoming and homey feeling that can increase rapport. The ads are gradually opening the Colonel’s private space to the public to strengthen viewer affinity with him, and this time, one of his white coats hangs on suit stand nearby as if viewers are in his closet. Surrounded by chicken statues, an egg carton display and a painting of Sanders, Macdonald sports the full Colonel ensemble and asserts that he is the real Colonel Sanders with an indifferent shoulder shrug. His declaration and body language do not match, indicating that he wants to be the Colonel but is not sure whether he truly is. This moment creates a brief window where the audience can start to believe that they can emulate the Colonel and experience the Dream too. The Colonel also aims to sell a product, and in this case he introduces the \$20 Family Fillip, a new meal deal, saying, “It’s a treasure chest of delicious home style cookin’ but served in containers not treasure chests (scoffs).” Equating the food with a treasure chest and even displaying it on the engraved silver tray while sneering at the luxury suggests that he wants to appeal to the less self-indulgent masses but ensnare them with lavish desires. As

Hammond leaves the campaign, Macdonald initiates a fresh promotion, and the mandolin bluegrass becomes upbeat brass and percussion music to indicate a shift in actors as well as meal deals.

Kentucky Fried Chicken | Celebrity Colonel (August 24, 2015)

Standing in his same mahogany-laden office wearing just white long underwear and a garter belt that holds up his black socks, Macdonald immediately brings up the notion that there is an imposter Colonel out in the world. As he walks into a closet full of his signature uniform, he dresses himself in it while arguing that not just anybody can pass as the real Colonel. Once fully clothed, he proceeds to sell his \$5 Fillup meal with a single line; that it is “incredibly delicious.” This ad forces intimacy in a surprising way by depicting the Colonel in his underwear and dressing himself. He is alone, too, giving him all speaking authority in the space. Not only grabbing viewer attention, this strategy also attempts to escalate the belief that the Colonel *is* real and has to put on pants like everyone else. It acknowledges his humanness to make him appear more accessible while reminding the audience that he exists in a separate, luxurious social category where fast food gets displayed on elegant silver trays and people own more than a dozen pristine suits. The ongoing conversation about identifying the real Colonel also shows that it is a coveted identity but one that people can obtain if they can adopt the proper Dream-worthy lifestyle. The last scene shows Macdonald looking out the front door of a giant bucket of KFC chicken that sits in a sunny, pastoral setting on a sweeping green field with a white picket fence running across the screen, and a red barn resting in the foreground of a lush horizon of trees. It is as if he lives inside the bucket, which creates fairytale-like

imagery that enriches him as the mythical Dream signifier.

Fryerside Chats with Colonel Sanders | Labor Day (September 7, 2015)

Between May 2015 and February 2016, the Colonel hosts nine fryerside chat ads and in the first, which is not included in this corpus, he mentions that a president once used a similar format to speak with Americans. In this, the third installation of fryerside chats, the Colonel's favorite kind of chicken fryer, the pressure cooker, sits on his desk while he speaks to reveal the pun. Beyond its play-on-words title, this ad echoes the communication tactics used in President Franklin D. Roosevelt's fireside chats. The Colonel aims to form a secure bond with consumers just as Roosevelt did with his constituents via the radio. And, applying this historically effective method (Loviglio, 2005) continues his attempt to deepen his connection with viewers. While Roosevelt's voice and presence reached the living rooms of listeners, the Colonel has the ability to both share his own space – the home office – and connect with consumers wherever they watch these ads. Similar to the intentionally composed speeches given by Roosevelt (Ryfe, 1999), the content in the Colonel's fryerside chats is also thoughtfully manufactured to communicate in an intimate, friendly, and open way (Loviglio, 2005) that fosters trust.

Launched on Labor Day, this ad does not focus on selling a particular product. Instead, the Colonel promotes himself and, therefore, the Dream. Every word of his dialogue contributes to this personalized publicity, and he even places himself on the same level as President Roosevelt. As a fire glows in the fireplace behind him, Macdonald's Colonel says in the ad's full transcription:

Howdy, workin' folks. It's Labor Day. That means you get the day off today, and tomorrow, you can't wear white anymore. Well, that rule does not apply

to me because I've taken neither a day nor my uniform off in almost 125 years (chuckles briefly). Can you imagine?

By mentioning that he has worked every day for more than a century, the Colonel verifies his mythical longevity – because people rarely live that long – and his top spot as Dream signifier. Much the same as in Roosevelt's fireside chats (Loviglio, 2005), this ad creates an in-group for employed viewers and an out-group for the implied idle crowd who could also be watching. Based on his language, it can be assumed that the Colonel accepts members of the in-group because they, like him, either have occupations or are willing to put forth effort to improve. Conversely, the out-group gets associated with laziness and irresponsibility because they represent the antithesis of the Dream. But, what this ad makes clear is that the Colonel maintains how he works the hardest and deserves the moniker of Dream signifier.

Kentucky Fried Chicken | Student Colonel (October 26, 2015)

Fast forward to a contemporary university in this next ad, where Macdonald claims he is not the Colonel. "I'm just an average everyday college student and definitely not Colonel Sanders," he says while donning an attempt at a more youthful version of his usual all-white uniform. Sitting on the concrete steps of a fake school, University of State Tech, the Colonel wears white pants, a white U of State Tech branded hoodie, a white crew neck T-shirt featuring a screen-printed black string tie, and a white backwards baseball hat. Despite his statement about being a student and not the Colonel as well as his clothing and accessories, he clearly retains the persona. Still sporting his signature browline glasses, gold rings, white hair and white goatee, he also has a white backpack slung over both shoulders and sleek white headphones wrapped around his neck, and he holds a red U of State Tech pennant with a white and

black striped skateboard in his lap.

On top of the skateboard rests a small white ceramic chicken and the same engraved silver tray seen across other ads, which shows off what he suggests is an affordable food choice for students, his \$5 Fillup meal. Because he maintains the general appearance and branding of the Colonel, despite contending that he is only a student, the Colonel amplifies his intimacy with the audience. By trying on a new identity, however ludicrous it appears, he invites consumers to explore the Dream identity of the Colonel in a way that almost says, “I am one of you and, therefore, you can be like me.” He strategically poses as a college student to capture the attention of KFC’s target audience, many of whom fall within that age range, Millennials, and ends the commercial inside the same fairytale bucket of chicken as the *Celebrity Colonel* ad to reinforce his mythic status. Next, the Colonel denies his title from a different perspective.

Kentucky Fried Chicken | Business Colonel (November 5, 2015)

Back again as the Colonel, Macdonald pretends to be “an everyday business person” rather than the Colonel. Although alone in a corporate conference room, he appears to have colleagues who may be taking a break based on the open laptops, notes, and files in front of empty seats at the long table. Reinforcing the notion that the Colonel never stops working, this implication also promotes the Dream tenets of individualism, agency, and upward mobility that he embodies. Wearing a short-sleeved white collared button up shirt, black braided suspenders and a gray and black string tie, the Colonel also speaks briskly while making eye contact with the audience and pointing at a flawed line graph using a thin metal rod. The urgency in his voice

matches the words he speaks, “Why, sometimes I'm just too busy to cook dinner. So I just pick up KFC's \$20 Family Fillup with eight pieces of delicious, original recipe chicken.” As another baited role reversal, this scenario articulates a similar message to the *Student Colonel* ad where he deepens intimacy by representing potential audience members. For the third time, he is shown at the end of the ad inside his pastoral, fairytale home, the giant bucket of chicken. Cast as a derivative of himself, the Colonel transcends a single identity, making his own Dream identity more accessible for the actors who play him and the consumers who want to be like him. The implied fluidity in conforming to and obtaining the Colonel’s sought- after identity continues in the campaign as the audience meets the next actor.

Kentucky Fried Chicken | Dream (February 7, 2016)

Aired for the first time during Super Bowl 50, this commercial transitions from Macdonald to Gaffigan in a newly personal and expensively public – considering when it was launched – way. Against a zoomed in backdrop spotlighting huge pieces of saucy fried chicken and equally sizable pickles, Macdonald stands dressed in the Colonel’s uniform, holding the ubiquitous, fancy silver tray with a serving size of the same chicken on top of it and announcing that it is KFC’s newest limited offer – Nashville hot chicken. Suddenly, the scene switches to a screaming Gaffigan who has been woken up in the middle of the night by a dream identical to the Macdonald clip. Here, viewers see the Colonel in bed with his wife, which evokes the ever-increasingly intimate relationship he has been building with consumers throughout the campaign. The goateed and bespectacled Colonel and his wife wear matching pajamas that include long-sleeved white button-up sleep shirts and black

string ties, with the implication that even his partner aspires to emulate him.

The transition from one actor to another occurred in a more jarring way than the first and only other time it has happened, likely to catch the attention of the Super Bowl audience and perpetuate interest for consumers already following the campaign. Similar to the last actor transition, the background music changed from Macdonald's upbeat brass and percussion music to Gaffigan's specific tune— *America the Beautiful* — being played by an orchestra, which gives the audience a small indication that a new Colonel has been selected. This ad is the only one that does not use warm, sunny lighting across scene changes, which makes contextual sense considering it is set at night, but Gaffigan hollering in the darkness is more dramatic than Macdonald saying, “Hey!” when Hammond shows up on his TV. The assertion that Gaffigan is the real Colonel remains the same, though. He says, “Some fake Colonel pretendin' to be me, but I'm me, so only I can introduce KFC's delicious new Nashville hot chicken with the spicy, smoky flavor only available for a limited time by me, Colonel Sanders.” As his wife comforts him with a hug, he sees their wedding photo on her nightstand, but instead of him next to her, it's Macdonald.

Threatened by another Colonel in a more alarming way than before, his face turns ashen as ominous music plays for a beat, and then the scene changes and the Colonel's face smilingly pokes through a wooden cut out board featuring a Nashville cityscape, acoustic guitar, cowboy boots, and flying records. The board is set against hay bales and sits within another countryside backdrop, similar to when the giant bucket of chicken served as the Colonel's home. But, this new setting has sprawling cornfields tucked within green rolling hills, alluding to American agrarianism and

even further, to the country's supposed abundance of food. The narrative arc woven throughout these eight ads ends at this contentious place where illusions of food equity in the U.S. emerge from the dominant Dream discourse that the Colonel signifies. Taken together, the KFC ads analyzed in this corpus resolve to build intimacy and trust with consumers through the Colonel's nostalgia for bygone years, his upscale but comfortable personal spaces, and his self-promoting salesman style, but most importantly, these ads exalt him as the myth who embodies the Dream.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

As a myth centered on individualism, agency, and upward mobility, the American Dream perpetuates a false representation of equality in the U.S. Taken alone, these fallacies are troubling, but coupled with the Dream's hegemonic power and historical influence over American identity, the combination becomes more alarming. When an ideology becomes naturalized, it assumes the position of an absolute and eternal reality (Barthes, 1972). But, its meaning was constructed with particular motivations that often shroud truth or preserve illusions. The Dream enterprises to claim that social, political, and economic equity exist, while simultaneously supporting the very system that obstructs any chance of achieving actual equity. And by diverting attention away from the need for structural change and condemning those who cannot succeed under the guise of its mythical notions, the Dream contributes to complex problems related to food and health and more specifically to the hunger-obesity paradox.

In messaging intended for all Americans, Dream discourse feigns inclusivity to maintain hegemony while reinforcing racial and class barriers to entry. Because Dream discourse overlooks and even admonishes low-income people and people of color, the people who most often face the challenges of hunger and obesity, it contributes to the hunger-obesity paradox. As a result of this paradox, people experience a higher risk of obesity while struggling with hunger, or nutrient deficiency, often because of inconsistent access to healthy food (Scheier, 2005). This material inequity occurs because particular people, commonly those who are white,

affluent or both, possess a majority of the structural advantages, despite Dream discourse asserting otherwise. Advertising plays a role in disseminating this discourse to maintain the Dream's mythic status, and the 2015 Kentucky Fried Chicken advertising campaign is no exception.

Through the Colonel, this campaign circulates Dream discourse. Because the Colonel is a signifier of the Dream and, therefore, acts as its megaphone, everything he says is Dream discourse. As the ads attempt to build the Colonel's intimacy with the audience, they depict him doing more than selling one of KFC's meals. These ads showcase the Colonel as *the* leading authority on all things chicken and, more subtly, every facet of the Dream. The man Harland Sanders lived Dream tenets, from his individualism-inspired decision to quit school and earn money as boy to the agency he enacted every time he chose to self-promote to the socioeconomic upward mobility he accomplished. And while Sanders developed his own mythology and became a signifier of the Dream, the Colonel now invites American consumers to adopt his persona in KFC's 2015 ad campaign. The intermittent change of actors in these commercials both showcases what life as the Dreamy Colonel is like and inspires consumers to believe that anyone can be him; that anyone can embody the Dream.

By investigating a contemporary ad campaign from a well-known American fast food company, this thesis reveals how fast food advertising circulates Dream discourse that contributes to the hunger-obesity paradox. The pervasiveness of the Dream can be problematic for those who do not hold the economic and racial privileges required to achieve it, particularly when access to healthy food is directly

connected to a disparity in who, like the Colonel, holds those privileges. Because it originates in flawed Dream discourse and affects the wellbeing of those excluded from systemic advantages, this inequity matters. It matters to the single mom living in Philadelphia whose story in *A Place at the Table* (2012) shows that inconsistent access to healthy food exists despite the Dream claiming otherwise. And it matters to every American excluded from achieving the Dream because of racial and class boundaries. Lastly, it matters because although President Obama may have actually received food stamps as a kid, Dream discourse distorts the truth to reinforce its message of equity and simplifies the process of achievement to maintain hegemony.

APPENDIX A

PRESIDENT OBAMA AND FOOD STAMPS POSTER

President Obama
got food stamps as a kid –
and look where he is now.

TO FIND OUT IF YOU CAN GET FOOD STAMPS,
CALL THE FOOD STAMP HOTLINE

215-430-0556

GREATER PHILADELPHIA
COALITION AGAINST
HUNGER

APPENDIX B

KFC AD ANALYSIS TABLE

Advertisement Title	Description	Date Posted	Length	# of Views (Rounded Down)	Actor	Where Posted	Main Message	Notes
The State of the Kentucky Fried Chicken Address	Colonel Sanders is back, America! He's back to make sure his Kentucky Fried Chicken® is still as delicious as it ever was. And he made this commercial about it.	5/19/15	:56	7M	Darrell Hammond	YouTube	Things have changed but I'm here to make sure my chicken is as tasty as it ever was - I'm back, America	Shorter version exists on Facebook
<i>No Title</i>	The Colonel is back to make sure his Kentucky Fried Chicken is still delicious. So he made this commercial about it.	5/19/15	:48	1.5M	Darrell Hammond	Facebook	Things have changed but I'm here to make sure my chicken is as tasty as it ever was - I'm back, America	Shorter version of State of Kentucky Fried Chicken Address
Kentucky Fried Chicken America's Favorite Music	Sit back and enjoy the tender, juicy, delicious sounds of the Colonel Harland Sanders Mandolin Band.	5/19/15	:26	448,000	Darrell Hammond	YouTube	The Colonel is back and still loves mandolin music	Shorter version exists on Facebook
Kentucky Fried Chicken Bucket in My Hand	He's back, America!	5/19/15	1:11	1.5M	Darrell Hammond	YouTube	"I need nothing, I've everything I need" -- singing Colonel	Shorter version exists on Facebook
Kentucky Fried Chicken Gasoline Gunfight	Watch Colonel Sanders defend his crew in this play about a thing that really happened.	5/19/15	2:05	455,000	Unknown actor	YouTube	Depicting a true story	Live theater recorded content
<i>No Title</i>	Howdy, folks! Colonel Sanders here with a message about what matters most in life: a bucket of fried chicken.	5/21/15	1:01	886,000	Darrell Hammond	Facebook	"I need nothing, I've everything I need" -- singing Colonel	Shorter version of Bucket in My Hand; song based on "Doughnuts" by the Parenthetical Girls http://songmeanings.com/songs/view/3530822107858810574/ based out of Portland, OR; Untitled Fryerside Chat
<i>No Title</i>	Howdy, folks! Colonel Sanders here with some more of that mandolin music that everyone will always love so much.	5/22/15	:16	1.7M	Darrell Hammond	Facebook	The Colonel is back and still loves mandolin music	Shorter version of America's Favorite Music; Untitled Fryerside Chat
Kentucky Fried Chicken Phillip	The Colonel and his Mandolin Band are back with another tasty tune.	5/25/15	:40	1.4M	Darrell Hammond	YouTube	KFC's \$5 fill-up will fill you up	
Kentucky Fried Chicken Pool	The Colonel is back with a summertime public-pool eating idea.	5/25/15	:26	139,000	Darrell Hammond	YouTube	The best part about summer is KFC's \$5 fillup	

Advertisement Title	Description	Date Posted	Length	# of Views (Rounded Down)	Actor	Where Posted	Main Message	Notes
Kentucky Fried Chicken See What I'm Talkin' About	The Colonel's back with a deal so good your eyes won't believe it until your mouth tastes it.	5/25/15	:24	88,000	Darrell Hammond	YouTube	Lists what's in a summer meal contains (8 pieces of chicken, coleslaw, baked beans with pulled chicken, four biscuits, and a pitcher of lemonade)	
Kentucky Fried Chicken Bucket Deal in My Hand	He's back with a great deal, America!	5/25/15	:46	75,000	Darrell Hammond	YouTube	Lists what's in a summer meal contains (8 pieces of chicken, coleslaw, baked beans with pulled chicken, four biscuits, and a pitcher of lemonade)	
Kentucky Fried Chicken Baseball	The Colonel is back with a baseball game-time eating idea.	5/25/15	:41	191,000	Darrell Hammond	YouTube	Baseball is America's pastime and the summer meal is finger lickin' good	
Kentucky Fried Chicken Phillip (:15)	It's music to your mouth!	5/25/15	:26	112,000	Darrell Hammond	YouTube	\$5 fill-up will fill you up	
Kentucky Fried Chicken Bucket and Beans	Chicken, chicken, chicken, chicken, chicken, chicken and more chicken.	5/25/15	:25	1.1M	Darrell Hammond	YouTube	There's chicken in the bucket and in the baked beans	
No Title	I'm viral, America!	5/25/15	:21	20,000	Darrell Hammond	Facebook	The Colonel went viral (no further explanation)	
Kentucky Fried Chicken Secret FLG Sauce	Dip your chicken in secrets!	5/30/15	:26	81,000	Darrell Hammond	YouTube	The secret herbs and spices recipe is now a secret sauce	
No Title	Hey, America! Colonel Sanders, here. If you're looking for more chicken in your life, do I have a treat for you.	6/1/15	:18	1M	Darrell Hammond	Facebook	There's chicken in the bucket and in the beans	
No Title	Video game technology has finally caught up with Colonel Sanders. Play ColonelQuest at ColonelSanders.com.	6/3/15	:16	588,000	None	Facebook	Play Colonel Quest	
No Title	The real Colonel Sanders was full of surprises. Like the time he surprised an entire courtroom by fighting a client. Play #ColonelQuest or see more weird facts about him at The Hall of Colonels at ColonelSanders.com.	6/26/15	:16	200,000	None	Facebook	Play Colonel Quest, the video game, to learn more about the real man: Harland Sanders	

Advertisement Title	Description	Date Posted	Length	# of Views (Rounded Down)	Actor	Where Posted	Main Message	Notes
Kentucky Fried Chicken Traffic	The Colonel is back with a stuck-in-summer-traffic eating idea.	6/29/15	:42	57,000	Darrell Hammond	YouTube	Eat the summer bucket meal deal while you're stuck in traffic	
Kentucky Fried Chicken Lemonade	The Colonel is back with the biggest business of all: lemonade business.	6/29/15	:26	56,000	Darrell Hammond	YouTube	Get free lemonade when you purchase the summer bucket meal deal	
Kentucky Fried Chicken See What I'm Talkin' About	The Colonel's back with a deal so good your eyes won't believe it until your mouth tastes it.	6/29/15	:27	43,000	Darrell Hammond	YouTube	Lists what's in a summer meal contains (10 pieces of chicken, coleslaw, baked beans with pulled chicken, four biscuits, and a pitcher of lemonade)	
No Title	Finger Lickin' Good™ Sauce: 4 words, 6 syllables, 2 nouns, 1 compound adjective and 11 secret herbs & spices!	7/15/15	:14	616,000	None	Facebook	Taste the new sauce at KFC	No audio; animated GIF
No Title	Every day the sun drops below the horizon I like to pretend that it's dipping into a container of my Finger Lickin' Good™ Sauce with 11 herbs & spices.	7/20/15	:06	7,000	None	Facebook	Taste the new sauce at KFC	No audio; animated GIF
Kentucky Fried Chicken The REAL Colonel	Howdy, folks. It's me, the REAL Colonel Sanders. Lately there's been an imposter Colonel out there pretending to be me. He's done a real fine job at it, but come on— there's only one me, and that's me. So here I am, the REAL Colonel Sanders, back in the saddle to tell you all about my delicious, hand-prepared \$20 Family Fill Up Meal.	8/17/15	:31	1.9M	Darrell Hammond & Norm Macdonald	Facebook	I'm the real Colonel; buy a \$20 family fill-up	
Kentucky Fried Chicken Busy People	You're too busy to cook dinner for your family EVERY night. You're also too busy to read about how busy you are. So watch this instead. It's faster.	8/21/15	:17	782,000	Norm Macdonald	Facebook	You're a parent, I'm a Colonel...we're both busy, so buy a \$20 family fill-up for a convenient meal	

Advertisement Title	Description	Date Posted	Length	# of Views (Rounded Down)	Actor	Where Posted	Main Message	Notes
No Title	No—you aren't seeing double! My \$20 Family Fill Up Meal comes with two large mashed potatoes and gravy! Unless of course you see four large mashed potatoes and gravy, in which case you might want to get your eyes checked out.	8/23/15	:11	80,000	None	Facebook	You get two large sides of mashed potatoes with a \$20 family fill-up	No audio; animated GIF
Kentucky Fried Chicken Celebrity Colonel	Now don't get me wrong, I take it as a compliment when those famous Hollywood actors dress up and pretend to be me, Colonel Sanders. But I'm the only me, so I've come back to dress up and pretend to be me, which isn't really pretending since I'm me for real. I'm not sure that makes sense, but what does make sense is my delicious and bountiful \$5 Fill Up Meal.	8/24/15	:31	1.3M	Norm Macdonald	Facebook	There are Colonel imposters, buy a \$5 fill-up, and I'm the real Colonel	
No Title	The Colonel has something to say about fryers.	8/31/15	:16	4,000	Norm Macdonald	Facebook	Introduces "Fryerside Chats" with a nod to FDR (although not explicitly)	Set up as a "Fryerside Chat" with the title showing in the actual video but not on Facebook
No Title	The Colonel has something to say about economics.	8/31/15	:22	592,000	Norm Macdonald	Facebook	\$5 used to be a day's wages back in my day, but now you can buy a \$5 fill-up for the same price	Set up as a "Fryerside Chat" with the title showing in the actual video but not on Facebook
Fryerside Chats with Colonel Sanders Labor Day	The Colonel has something to say about work.	9/7/15	:20	1.2M	Norm Macdonald	Facebook	You get the day off work and tomorrow can no longer wear white, but that doesn't apply to me because I haven't had a day off in almost 125 years	
No Title	Stop what you're doing and gather 'round. It's time to see what this lucky Colonel got for his 125th birthday!	9/9/15	:25	8,000	None	Facebook	See what the Colonel received for his birthday	Chicken leg-shaped confetti shooter launching confetti (on repeat)

Advertisement Title	Description	Date Posted	Length	# of Views (Rounded Down)	Actor	Where Posted	Main Message	Notes
Fryerside Chats with Colonel Sanders The Colonel's Birthday	The Colonel has something to say about birthdays.	9/9/15	:19	150,000	Norm Macdonald	Facebook	Moisturizer and KFC will keep you looking young	125th birthday commemoration
Fryerside Chats with Colonel Sanders Back to School	The Colonel has something to say about education.	9/14/15	:18	290,000	Norm Macdonald	Facebook	Although I left school to build my fried chicken empire, you should stay in school because it's not as easy as it was a century ago	
Kentucky Fried Chicken Lie Detector	I cannot tell a lie. I am Colonel Sanders. Now, apparently, some of you have been questioning whether or not I'm the real Colonel Sanders. Well, that's just hogwash. So to prove it once and for all, I've put together a small demonstration with something I am calling a "lie detector." As you will see, I have nothing to hide because I am Colonel Sanders.	9/18/15	:48	338,000	Norm Macdonald	Facebook	The \$20 family fill-up is enough food for a family of four, the chicken is made fresh daily, but I may not be the real Colonel Sanders	
Kentucky Fried Chicken HEY LOOK!	HEY, LOOK! IT'S COLONEL SANDERS ON A GIANT CHICKEN! That's right, I've vowed to ride this carousel until every last one of my \$5 Fill Ups is sold. Seeing as how there's an endless supply of \$5 Fill Ups, this was a very foolish vow for me to take. Ah well, you win some and you lose some.	9/23/15	:18	5,000	Norm Macdonald	Facebook	The portions in a \$5 fill-up are giant	
Fryerside Chats with Colonel Sanders Football	The Colonel has something to say about football.	9/27/15	:21	236,000	Norm Macdonald	Facebook	Buy the \$20 family fill-up to eat during the game	
Kentucky Fried Chicken Limousine	I don't care how many people are in your average family of four - my \$20 Family Fill Up will fill all four of 'em right up. In the restaurant biz we call that "a good	9/29/15	:33	244,000	Norm Macdonald	Facebook	The \$20 family fill-up will fill your family up	
Fryerside Chats with Colonel Sanders Abundance	The Colonel has something to say about lunch.	10/1/15	:18	243,000	Norm Macdonald	Facebook	\$5 fill-ups are a bounty of food that comes with a free box	

Advertisement Title	Description	Date Posted	Length	# of Views (Rounded Down)	Actor	Where Posted	Main Message	Notes
Fryerside Chats with Colonel Sanders Kale	The Colonel has something to say about kale. #NationalKaleDay	10/7/16	:28	4,000	Norm Macdonald	Facebook	Buy KFC chicken instead of kale (quail)	
Kentucky Fried Chicken YELL	HOWDY, FOLKS. IT'S TIME FOR ME TO TYPE IN ALL CAPS ABOUT MY \$5 FILL UP MEAL!	10/12/15	:18	276,000	Norm Macdonald	Facebook	Here's what's in a \$5 fill-up	
Fryerside Chats with Colonel Sanders Fried Chicken Fridays	The Colonel has something to say about hashtags.	10/23/15	:26	229,000	Norm Macdonald	Facebook	The hashtag you should care about is #friedchickenfridays	
Kentucky Fried Chicken Student Colonel	Hey students, I am just a student telling students about how great Popcorn Nugget \$5 Fill Ups are for students.	10/26/15	:16	346,000	Norm Macdonald	Facebook	Buy a \$5 fill-up as a college student	"I'm just a regular college student, not the real Colonel."
Kentucky Fried Chicken Student Colonel	Hey students, I am just a student telling students about how great Popcorn Nugget \$5 Fill Ups are for students.	10/26/15	:16	346,000	Norm Macdonald	Facebook	Buy a \$5 fill-up as a college student	"I'm just a regular college student, not the real Colonel."
<i>No Title</i>	You know what they say, folks: "Spring ahead, fall back and pick up one of my freshly prepared in store \$20 Family Fill Ups!" #DaylightSavingTime	11/1/15	:13	5,000	None	Facebook	Daylight Savings is the perfect excuse to buy KFC's \$20 fill-up	The sun has a face; the face of Harland Sanders
Kentucky Fried Chicken Business Colonel	Pick up a \$20 Family Fill Up after a long business day of using that pointer to analyze graphs in meetings.	11/5/15	:16	340,000	Norm Macdonald	Facebook	KFC's \$20 family fill-up is convenient and easy after working a long day at the office	

Advertisement Title	Description	Date Posted	Length	# of Views (Rounded Down)	Actor	Where Posted	Main Message	Notes
Kentucky Fried Chicken Entrance	Somebody once said I look like Santa Claus. Well, I'm not. But I can bring you a Family Fill Up for \$20. Pick up my \$20 Family Fill Up: http://www.kfc.com/menu/promotions/20-family-fill-up	11/27/15	:31	1.1M	Norm Macdonald	Facebook	The Colonel makes chicken the hard way	
<i>No Title</i>	Don't forget to pick up large amounts of food for not a lot of money in my \$5 Fill Up while you're picking up large amounts of electronics for not a lot of money this #BlackFriday.	11/27/15	:14	3,000	None	Facebook	Eat at KFC while you're Black Friday shopping	No audio; combination of video and animated GIF
Kentucky Fried Chicken Gifts	Selflessness around Christmastime is getting a \$20 Family Fill Up FOR YOUR FAMILY instead of just a \$5 Fill Up for yourself.	11/29/15	:31	445,000	Norm Macdonald	Facebook	Gift the \$5 fill-up to family this holiday and give your wife the \$20 family fill-up so she doesn't have to cook	The Colonel is stuck in the chimney like Santa
Kentucky Fried Chicken 12 Days	Not all Christmas songs end in a meal! But this one does! Get my Family Fill Up for \$20.	12/14/15	:16	1.1M	Norm Macdonald	Facebook	The Colonel's true love gave to him a \$20 family fill-up for Christmas	
Kentucky Fried Chicken Won't Stop	Just because I'm stuck in a chimney doesn't mean I won't tell you about my \$5 Fill Up!	12/21/15	:16	386,000	Norm Macdonald	Facebook	Buy the \$5 fill-up	The Colonel is stuck in chimney like Santa
Kentucky Fried Chicken Won't Stop	Just because I'm stuck in a chimney doesn't mean I won't tell you about my \$5 Fill Up!	12/21/15	:16	386,000	Norm Macdonald	Facebook	Buy the \$5 fill-up	The Colonel is stuck in chimney like Santa

Advertisement Title	Description	Date Posted	Length	# of Views (Rounded Down)	Actor	Where Posted	Main Message	Notes
Kentucky Fried Chicken Map	Now you don't have to run around searching for the best Nashville Hot Chicken recipe like I did. Just go to KFC. It's	1/18/16	:31	3.3M	Norm Macdonald	Facebook	KFC sells the best Nashville hot chicken because it's hand-prepared	
<i>No Title</i>	Daym Drops ate some of my Nashville Hot Chicken and talked about it. He's got a pretty sweet gig. Check it out.	1/19/16	3:19	4.7M	None	Facebook	Eat KFC's Nashville hot chicken just like this celeb	Celebrity endorsement; does not appear to be KFC-curated content but endorsed by KFC
<i>No Title</i>	My Nashville Hot Chicken will tickle your mouth's keys.	1/26/16	:16	3.4M	None	Facebook	Try KFC's Nashville hot chicken	
Kentucky Fried Chicken Boardroom	Tired of flying to Nashville every day for lunch? Me too. So I brought legendary Nashville Hot Chicken to every KFC. See how.	1/28/16	:31	1.2M	Norm Macdonald	Facebook	KFC's Nashville hot chicken was developed after the Colonel did research, available for a limited time	
<i>No Title</i>	Straight from Music City to your stomach's turntable.	1/30/16	:16	2.3M	None	Facebook	Buy Nashville hot chicken, a limited time offer	
Kentucky Fried Chicken Nightmare	Well, that's it—I'm officially never going to sleep again. Every time I close my eyes it's some dang nightmare about losing my Nashville Hot Chicken. Not like the good old days when I'd just dream about flying around in a bucket of KFC while people waved and yelled, "Hey, Colonel! How's that chicken today?"	2/6/16	:54	459,000 (YouTube) + 782,000 (Facebook) = 1.2M	Norm Macdonald	YouTube, Facebook	Nashville hot chicken is still available but the offer will end soon	
Kentucky Fried Chicken Dream	Y'all ever have one of those dreams where a man dresses like you and talks like you and lives in your house and sells your delicious Nashville Hot Chicken? Hey, me too!	2/7/16	:31	10.7M	Norm Macdonald & Jim Gaffigan	Facebook	Fake colonel dream; introducing the new Nashville hot chicken limited time offer	

Advertisement Title	Description	Date Posted	Length	# of Views (Rounded Down)	Actor	Where Posted	Main Message	Notes
<i>No Title</i>	Nashville Hot won't really make steam come from your ears. President Johnson is being dramatic	2/15/16	:19	665,000	Jim Gaffigan	Facebook	Celebrate President's Day by eating Nashville hot chicken at KFC	No audio -- animated GIF, not video
<i>No Title</i>	Clearly, from President Jackson's playful look, he's kidding, Nashville Hot isn't that hot. #NashvillePresidentsDay	2/15/16	:29	527,000	Jim Gaffigan	Facebook	Celebrate President's Day by eating Nashville hot chicken at KFC	No audio -- animated GIF, not video
<i>No Title</i>	Nashville Hot isn't as hot as President Polk wants you to believe in this historical document.	2/15/16	:23	910,000	Jim Gaffigan	Facebook	Celebrate President's Day by eating Nashville hot chicken at KFC	No audio -- animated GIF, not video
<i>Kentucky Fried Chicken \$5 Fill Up Colonel</i>	I'm sick and tired of all these commercials out there trying to pass off cheap bags of who-knows- what as a meal. Only	2/21/16	:16	3.3M	Jim Gaffigan	YouTube, Facebook	Anyone (burger joints) can give you a bag of "food" for \$4 but KFC can give you a real homecooked meal for \$5	
<i>No Title</i>	Be like Greg Biffle and make a pit stop at KFC before the #Daytona500 to pick up a platter of my Nashville Hot Chicken.	2/21/16	:08	414,000	None	Facebook	Get a quick meal to-go from the KFC "pit crew"	No audio; animated GIF, not video; celebrity endorsement

APPENDIX C

1954 KFC BUCKET IMAGE⁵



⁵ Photo credit: <http://dollypythonvintage.com/kentucky-fried-bucket/>

APPENDIX D

1970 ALBUM COVER⁶



⁶ *The Colonel's Mandolin Band* produced by Grant Enterprises, Inc. in 1970 on vinyl, LP, album and mono in the U.S. under funk/soul, folk, world and country genres in gospel style

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