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# You Are Included: The Effectiveness of Diversity and Representation of Ethnic Minorities in TV Advertising

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You Are Included: The Effectiveness of Diversity and Representation  
of Ethnic Minorities in TV Advertising

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Submitted in Partial Completion of the  
Requirements for Commonwealth Honors in Management

Bridgewater State University

May 8, 2018

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I would also like to give a special thanks to my former supervisor at the Honors Center, Ms. Amy Couto for fostering my growth as an honors student. When working for the honors marketing team, Amy pushed me to develop my marketing skills, and asked thought-provoking questions. During my first semester as a Communications Assistant, I created a campaign called “Humans of Honors.” Amy noticed that most of the students I was featuring on our social media were white women - the dominant demographic for the program. Amy encouraged me to reach out and feature more diverse students. At first, I was uncomfortable with the idea of intentionally finding and featuring students of color, but after investigating underrepresented groups in the program, I realized how I could use my role to provide a voice to these underrepresented groups, and increase their involvement in the program. It was this realization that guided my work with the Honors Program for semesters to come, and made me interested in the topic of diversity, which became my honors thesis.

Thank you to the Honors Program, the Center for Transformative Learning, and the faculty and staff of Bridgewater State University for providing me with outstanding support and numerous opportunities to learn, explore, and achieve. I will be forever grateful for everything this university has given me.

# YOU ARE INCLUDED: THE EFFECTIVENESS OF DIVERSITY AND REPRESENTATION OF ETHNIC MINORITIES IN TV ADVERTISING

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## ABSTRACT

While ethnic diversity in advertising has long been studied, researchers have found conflicting results when studying the attitudes of consumers towards multi-ethnic representation in ads. The purpose of this study is to investigate the effects of using an ethnically diverse or ethnically-specific cast in television advertisements in order to target ethnic minorities. This study seeks to determine if an actor's ethnicity influences the viewer's identification with the ad, depending on the viewer's strength of identification with their ethnic group. Findings demonstrate that people who identify more with their ethnic group tend to identify more with ads that feature a member of their ethnic group. Further, higher identification with an ad correlates with higher behavioral and purchase intent, as well as more positive attitudes towards the advertisement and the brand.

## INTRODUCTION

Multi-ethnic markets in the United States present advertisers with the strategic challenge of reaching diverse audiences. Often times, advertisers will approach this challenge through representing their target demographic in ads in hopes that they will identify stronger with the source and perceive them as more similar (Whittler, 1989). Recent research in the United Kingdom by Lloyds Banking Group found that consumers feel "more favorable towards a brand that reflects diversity in advertisements" and even "expect advertisers to represent diverse aspects of society" (Rogers, 2016). However, many brands fall short of featuring minorities in ads with consistency and accuracy. An industry significantly lacking in diversity within its own workforce, advertisers may be concerned that the portrayal of minorities in ads could be perceived as inauthentic or tokenistic and offensive, doing more harm than good (Rogers, 2016).

Researchers have found conflicting results about attitudes towards ethnically-specific portrayals in ads. Most studies show that Caucasian Americans have a slight, but insignificant

affinity towards Caucasian actors or models, and African Americans have a stronger affinity towards African American actors or models; perceiving them as more similar, better recalling ads, and showing increased purchase intentions (Whittler, 1989). Alternatively, one study by Lee, Edwards, and Ferle (2014) found implicit in-group biases in a time-constrained condition: “African American participants reported more positive attitudes towards ads with Caucasian American models than African American models.” In a time-unconstrained condition, the same study revealed a dissonance with those biases, finding that both Caucasian and African American participants were indifferent to ethnicity, demonstrating a clear difficulty for researchers in understanding how diverse advertisements are really being perceived.

This research aims to more definitively find advertising inclusion preferences by evaluating attitudes and purchase intentions for ethnic minorities when comparing ads which represent a participant’s own ethnicity, other ethnicity, or multiple ethnicities. These results contribute conceptually to the diversity in advertising literature as well as the ethnic identification literature by demonstrating a link between consumer identification with their ethnic group and overall attitude towards the advertisement. These results will also guide practitioners by providing the advertising industry with guidance in authentically targeting and including ethnic minorities in ad campaigns. The end goal is to provide more guidance for advertisers to target multi-ethnic markets while being sensitive to the diverse needs and perceptions of Americans.

First, this study begins with a review of the ethnic identification literature, as well as source similarity, and motivation as part of the hypotheses development. Next, the methodology and procedures for the pre-test and study are explained. The data analysis, results and discussion are then followed by limitations, areas for future research and conclusions.

## LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES

### **Ethnic Identification**

To some, ethnicity is not as static and objective as one's heritage or appearance. According to a review on ethnic identity (Minor-Cooley and Brice, 2007), researchers suggest that individuals have varying levels of identification with their ethnic group, "based on their feelings of belongingness, how one feels in a particular situation, and one's thinking and behaviors based on that group membership" (Hirschman, 1981; Minor, 1992; Rossiter and Chan, 1998; Rotheram and Phinney, 1987; Stayman and Dephandede, 1989). The strength of one's ethnic identification is important because it demonstrates an emotional connection with the ethnic group (Deshpandé and Stayman 1994; Broderick et al. 2011a; Kipnis et al. 2013). According to Zúñiga and Torres (2017) "the stronger an individual's ethnic identification, the stronger the individual's sense of belonging and loyalty toward that ethnic group" (Demangeot et al. 2013; Zúñiga and Torres 2016a, 2016b). How strongly affiliated someone feels with their ethnic group impacts their overall purchasing behavior as well as evaluative judgements of advertisements (Deshpandé, Hoyer, and Donthu 1986; Zúñiga 2015; Broderick et al. 2011b).

As strength of ethnic identification can impact consumer behavior, there are many other important factors related to ethnicity that can impact overall evaluations and purchase likelihood. Because of this, researchers have frequently found disagreement in terms of how to best appeal to diverse ethnic groups using advertising. For instance: research by Cooley, Brice, Becerra, and Chappa (2015) finds that the influence of cosmopolitanism or the "acceptance of other cultures, customs, and preferences in deference to one's own" may make ethnic-specific advertising less of a necessity in diverse markets. The findings suggested the use of standardized multi-ethnic ads

for targeting cosmopolitan markets which desire diversity, and ethnic-specific ads can be used in communities that are less diverse or ethnically dissimilar.

Lee, Edwards, and Ferle (2015) also argue that “society’s growing tolerance and embracing nature of diversity would indicate that racial differences today may be less of a consideration in evaluating ads, particularly for younger audiences.” However, other research suggests that the representation of racial or ethnic differences in advertising is increasingly important to younger audiences (Cooley, et. al, 2015). According to distinctiveness theory, one’s environment can also affect how they identify with certain traits. For example, if someone is an ethnic minority, then their ethnicity is a distinctive trait. Therefore, they may have a stronger level of identification with their ethnicity than someone who belongs to the ethnic majority (Grier and Deshpande, 2001).

Content of the ad can impact minority ethnic groups differently. For instance, Rößner, Kämmerer, and Eisend (2017) found that using humor when portraying ethnic minorities increased positive perceptions of advertisements and reduced views of stereotyping. Another study suggests that showing ethnic minorities in a variety of contexts should decrease stereotypes and increase the effectiveness of the advertisements (Taylor & Costello, 2017). Interestingly, Hazzouri, Main and Carvalho (2017) found that ethnic minorities react negatively towards advertisements that feature other ethnic minority groups. Due to the difficulty in determining exactly how to successfully advertise to ethnic minorities, this study aims to investigate how ethnic identification, identification with the advertisement and consumer perceptions of advertiser motivations can lead to positive behavioral intentions.

## Hypotheses Development

In the United States, the ethnic majority is Caucasian, accounting for approximately 76.9% of the population. Hispanic Americans account for approximately 17.8% of the population, African Americans account for 13.3% of the population, and Asian Americans account for 5.7% (U.S. Census Bureau). Caucasian Americans make up the majority in the US, and research has shown that majority ethnic groups tend to not identify as strongly with their ethnicity as minority ethnic groups (Verkuyten, 2005):

**H1:** On average, Caucasian Americans will identify less with their ethnicity than minority groups of Hispanic, African, and Asian Americans.

A study by Johnson and Grier (2012) on race-stereotyping in advertising found that attitudes, ranging from amusement to anger, varied among viewers depending the strength of one's identification with the ethnic group being portrayed. Identifying with your ethnicity is important and can impact how consumers identify with the brand/ad itself. Consumers can identify with brands, or with brand advertisements, and this can lead to positive behavioral outcomes. Brands can positively benefit from and utilize consumer identification. Consumers who identify with an ad will be more fully committed and loyal to the brand, are more likely to repurchase from them, and generate more positive WOM (Tuskej, Golob & Podnar, 2011; Kim, Han and Park, 2001; Kuenzel & Vaux Halliday, 2008). Hong and Yang (2009) found that identification mediates the influence of organizational reputation on positive WOM. Keh and Xie (2009) found that identification influences commitment and willingness to pay a price premium. Therefore we expect:

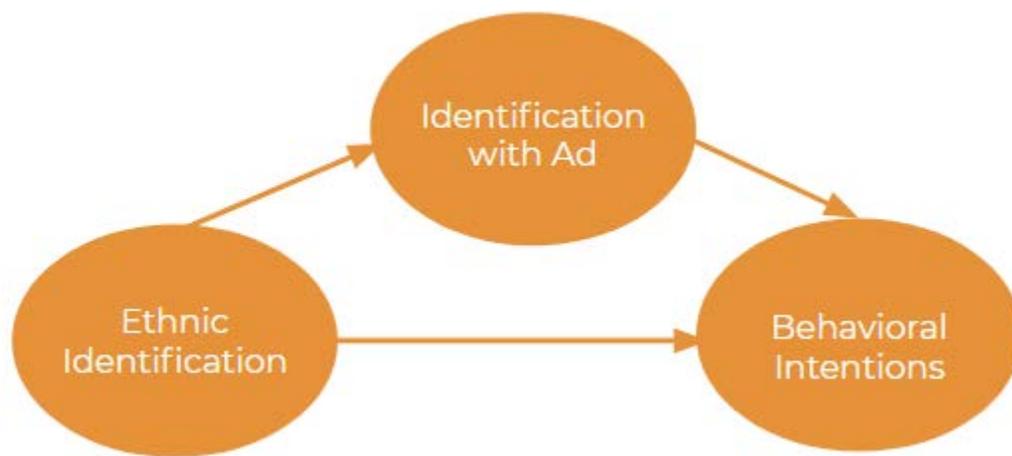
**H2:** Participants who have a stronger level of identification with their ethnicity will have positive behavioral intentions after viewing ads that feature members of their ethnic group.

**H3:** Participants who have a stronger level of identification with their ethnicity will identify more with advertisements that feature members of their ethnic group

Additionally, due to the fact that minorities tend to respond negatively to advertisements featuring other ethnic groups (and not their own) we expect (Hazzouri et al., 2017):

**H4:** Minority groups will identify less with ads featuring ONLY other minority groups. Researchers in advertising and sales have examined the influence of a source's racial congruence on the receiver's purchase intent (e.g. Simpson et al., 2000; Whittler, 1989; Whittler & DiMeo, 1991; Kareklas & Polonsky, 2011), finding positive correlations. The present research seeks to expand on these findings in order to understand if identifying with the overall advertisement, based on the actors being a shared ethnicity, would lead to positive future behavioral intentions.

**H5:** Those who identify strongly with an ad will be more likely to have positive behavioral intentions than those who do not identify strongly with the ad.



## **METHODOLOGY**

The TV advertisements were sourced from TV ad analytics site iSpot.tv. Ads were chosen based upon several criteria to control for many differences that can exist in commercials (e.g., must be 30 seconds in length, prominently feature one ethnicity or multiple ethnicities for the diverse ad, must be from a mainstream brand, must have at least one male and one female actor, and must be positively received. The tone of the ads were either fun and positive or sentimental and sweet.)

### **Pre-Test**

A pre-test was conducted to ensure that none of the ads created polarizing attitudes and that ethnicities were perceived as intended. The pre-test was given to 46 students at a large public university in the northeast in exchange for course extra credit. Participants were shown advertisements that feature actors from one of the following ethnic groups: Caucasian, Hispanic, Asian, and African American and one advertisement with a diverse cast, in order to understand attitudes and purchase intentions. Each participant only saw 3 of the 5 ads to control for viewer fatigue. Participants were asked their ethnicity, overall rating of the advertisements, the predominant ethnic group in each ad, as well as how strongly they identify with any of the actors in the ads.

### *Pre-Test Results*

Every target ethnicity was present in the study, with the majority 66.67% identifying as Caucasian. About 14.58% identified as African American, 6.25% identified as Asian, 6.25% identified as Hispanic, and 6.25% identified as Other. To test if any of the advertisements created polarizing attitudes, we asked participants to rate each advertisement on a five-point likert scale (1 = very positive, 5 = very negative). There was no significant difference between

the attitudes towards any of the ads ( $p > .692$ ) with the exception of the fourth advertisement which was significant ( $F(4) = .564, p = .039$ ). However, when a test of homogeneity of variances was run on the data, that advertisement was the only one that was significant ( $p = .40$ ), thus the uneven group sizes may have caused this result.

Next, we tested whether participants could correctly identify the ethnicity of the actors in the ads. Ad 1 only had African American actors, which was correctly identified by 96% of participants. Ad 3 only had an Asian American cast, which was correctly identified by 92% of participants. Ad 4 only had a Caucasian cast, which was correctly identified by 100% of participants. Ad 5 only had a Hispanic cast, but the results were mixed; 40% of participants thought Asian actors were present in the ad, 12% thought African American actors were present, 68% thought Caucasian actors were present, and 72% correctly identified Hispanics as present in the ad. All participants were also asked to rate the diversity of the advertisements on a five-point semantic scale of Diverse to Not Diverse. Ad 2, which featured a diverse cast, was rated as diverse by 80% of participants.

Participants were asked to identify the intended audience for each ad. The majority of participants (85.6%) responded that each ad was intended for “Any audience” rather than for just one ethnicity. Participants were also asked if they felt the advertisement was intended for people like them, if the actors were an authentic representation of the target market and if they felt the ad represented them, and if they identified with anyone in the ad. Despite recognizing that the advertisements utilized actors from different ethnic groups, there was not a significant difference between the ethnicity of the participants and their level of identification with any of the ads (ad 1:  $p > .183$ , ad 2:  $p > .530$ , ad 3:  $p > .264$ , ad 4:  $p > .495$ , ad 5:  $p > .403$ ).

These results indicate that the advertisements did not create polarizing attitudes, and did not create significant identification with any particular ethnicity, while still allowing for participants to correctly identify the primary ethnicity, with the exception of the latino ad. Based on these results, 3 other latino commercials were pretested by a different group of students from the same university. The 25 participants were able to correctly identify the latino actors (85%) for one of the advertisements, while still not having a significantly different overall assessment of the ad, or a significant identification with it. Therefore, this ad was used for the main study.

## **Measures**

### *Manipulation Check*

Participants were asked what ethnicity was featured most in the advertisement to ensure each ad was viewed as either diverse or only featuring one particular ethnicity. They also rated the diversity of the ad on a scale from diverse to not diverse.

### *Attention Check*

For pages showing the selected advertisements, participants were not allowed to move onto the next page of the survey until 30 seconds (the time of each ad) has passed to ensure each participant has viewed the selected advertisement.

### *Attitudes*

At the beginning of the study, participants rated each of the brands on a five-point likert scale (1 = very negative, 5 = very positive) to measure whether an ad had an effect on the viewer's attitude or if an attitude was pre-existing. After each ad was shown, participants rated their feelings toward the advertisement and their feelings toward the brand.

### *Behavioral and Purchase Intent*

An additional three item, four-point likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 4 = strongly agree) asked about behavioral intent (i.e., “I would like to try the brand advertised,” “I would like to learn more about the brand advertised,” and “I would likely buy from the brand advertised”).

### *Identification with the Advertisement*

A four item, four-point likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 4 = strongly agree) asked about the participant’s level of identification with the advertisement with items adopted from Cooley et al. (2015) and asked about the targeting of the ad (i.e., “I feel the advertisement was intended for people like me”) (Johnson & Grier, 2012), authenticity of the actors (i.e., “The actors in the ad are an authentic representation of the target market”), homophily (i.e., “I identify with one or more of the actors in the ad”), and whether the participant felt represented in the ad (i.e., “I feel I am represented in the ad”).

### *Ethnic Identification*

A nine item, four-point likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 4 = strongly agree), was adopted from Phinney’s (1992) multigroup ethnic identity measure (MEIM) in order to measure the participant’s strength of ethnic identification. Two additional items ask about the participant’s attitude towards their ethnic group’s representation in advertising and media (i.e., “I have a more positive attitude towards brands that feature members of my ethnic group in its advertisements” and “Seeing my race/ethnicity represented in media is important to me”).

### *Open Response*

Several open response questions were included in order to understand thought processes. Questions included perception of advertiser motivations for the advertisements, and what about the advertisement participants most identified with.

## Procedure

This study utilized advertisements that feature actors from one of the following ethnic groups: Caucasian, Hispanic, Asian, and African American. Additionally, there was an advertisement with a diverse cast which featured all four ethnicities. Participants were instructed to watch a series of television advertisements. There were 5 advertisements in total and each participant watched 3, displayed in random order, for a total of at least 150 viewers of each ad. All ads were 30 seconds in length to ensure standardization and each participant will only be expected to view 3 ads for a total of 1.5 minutes of viewing time in order to avoid viewing fatigue.



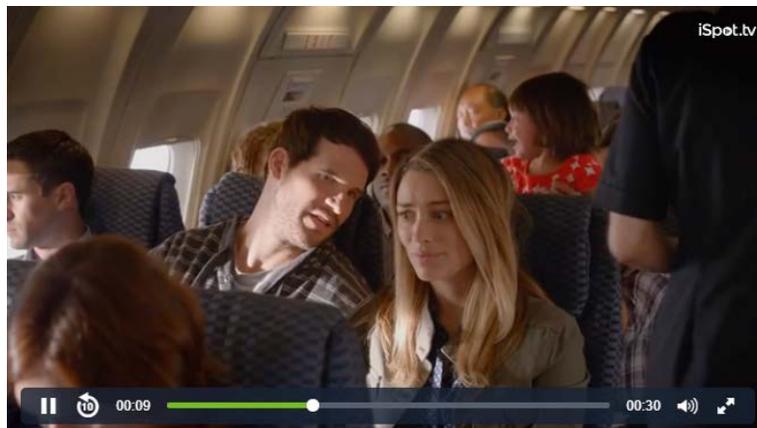
**Figure 1** - Screenshot of Ad 1: Caramel M&M's "Sticky & Square" (2017). Features an African American girl and African American man.



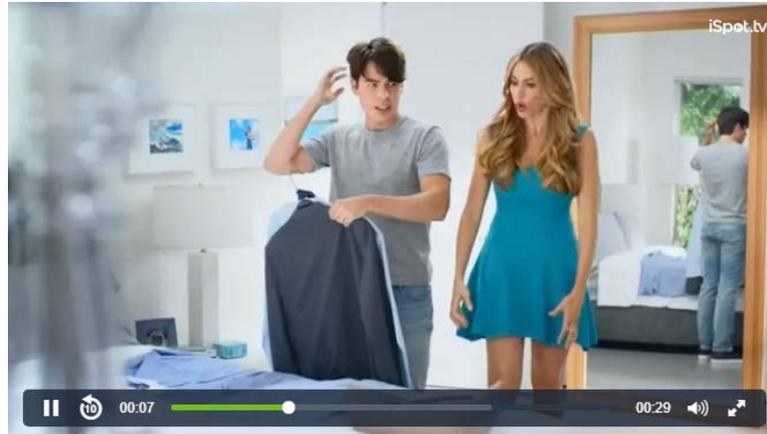
**Figure 2** - Screenshot of Ad 2: General Mills “Genuine” (2017). Features a diverse cast in a montage.



**Figure 3** - Screenshot of Ad 3: Amazon Prime “Lion” (2016). Features a young Asian couple, a baby, and their dog.



**Figure 4** - Screenshot of Ad 4: State Farm “Never” (2014). Features a young Caucasian couple.



**Figure 5** - Screenshot of Ad 5: Head & Shoulders “Mom Knows Best” (2015). Features a young Hispanic man and his mother, played by actress Sofia Vergara.

## RESULTS

### Participants

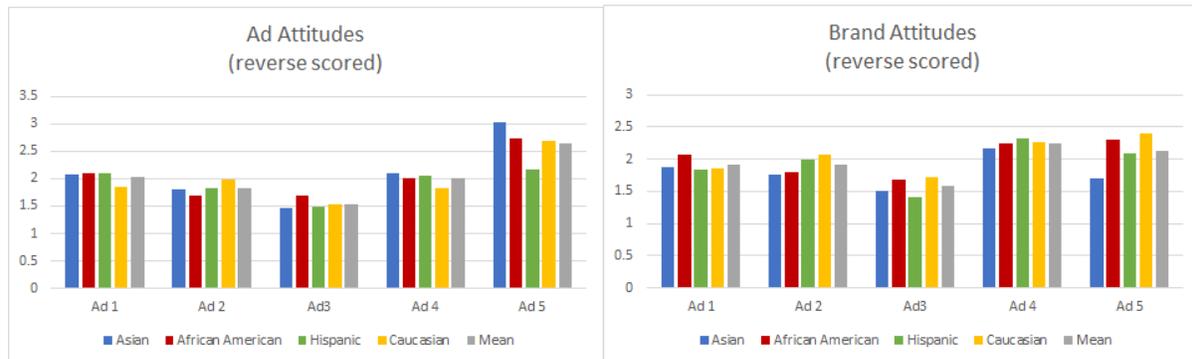
The survey was distributed through Amazon Mechanical Turk and received 439 total responses, 307 of which were approved and compensated for their time. Twenty-one responses were removed for various reasons, including rushing the survey and providing answers that demonstrated a lack of attention, leaving 286 qualified participants.

A quota was set for the study in order to get a fairly equal number of participants for each ethnicity in the study. Out of the 286 participants, 64 (22%) were Asian, 71 (25%) were African American, 63 (22%) were Hispanic, 71 (25%) were Caucasian, and 17 (6%) were another ethnicity. There were slightly more male participants (57%), and participants ranged from 18-65 years old.

### Attitudes

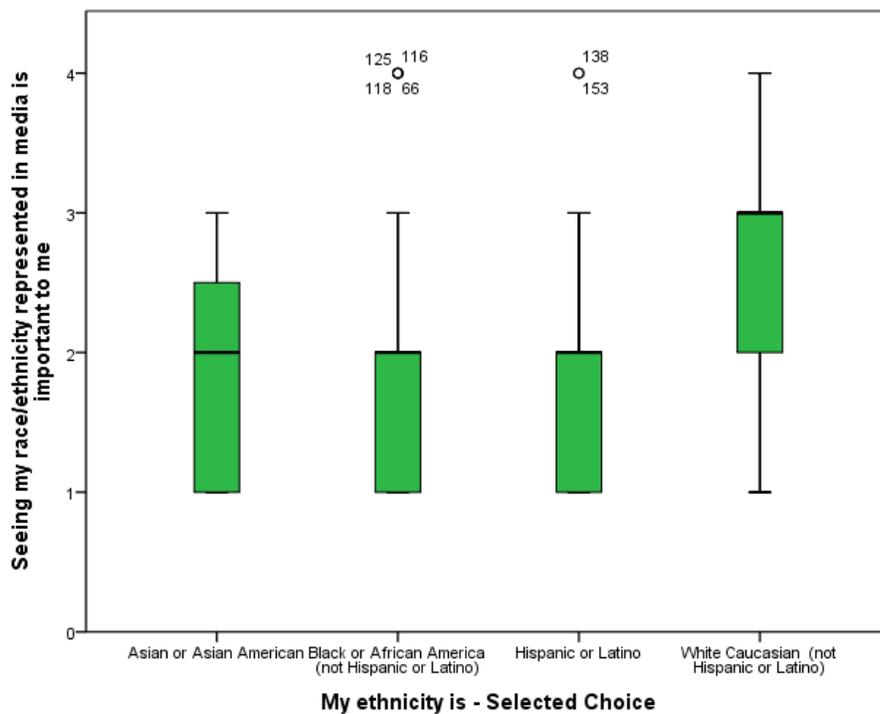
While identification with an advertisement and ethnicity were strongly correlated, attitudes towards the ad and the brand showed less correlation. Ad 5 was the least popular among participants, with the exception of Hispanic American participants, and had the most variation

between ad and brand attitudes. Ad 3 for Amazon Prime was the most popular for all groups, which may have been due to the product. Caucasian Americans also responded more favorably to the Ad 4 in comparison to other groups.

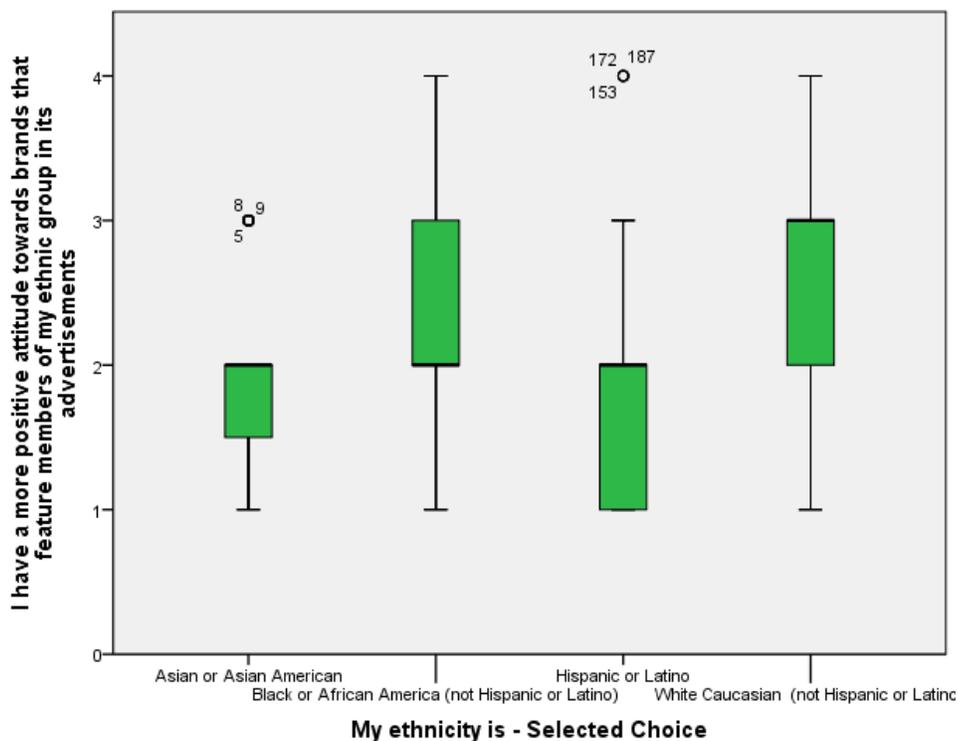


**Figure 6** - Ad attitudes (left) and brand attitudes (right) for each advertisement, grouped by ethnicity.

In response to the statement “Seeing my race/ethnicity represented in media is important to me,” minority participants mostly agreed, averaging at 2.0, while Caucasian participants disagreed, averaging at 3.0. A similar statement regarding the study’s topic, “I have a more positive attitude towards brands that feature members of my ethnic group in its advertisements,” followed the same trend.



**Figure 7** - Box plot showing the average and range of responses to “Seeing my race/ethnicity represented in media is important to me,” grouped by ethnicity. This statement, which mostly pertains to the topic at hand, is included in the strength of identification measure.



**Figure 8** - Box plot showing the average and range of responses to “I have a positive attitude towards brands that feature members of my ethnic group in its advertisements,” grouped by ethnicity. This statement asks participants to explicitly reflect on the topic of the study.

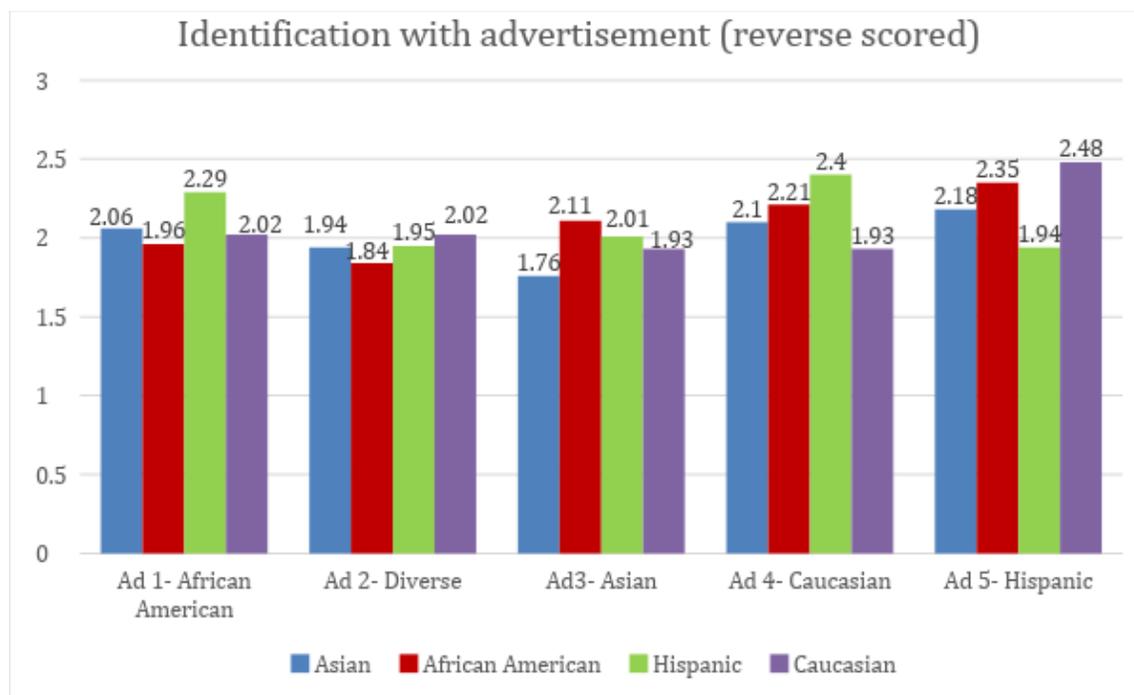
### Identification

There was a significant difference in ethnic identification across ethnicities. Results were reverse scored so the lower the score, the higher the identification. Hypothesis 1 was confirmed: Caucasian participants identified least with their ethnic group, while Asian, African, and Hispanic Americans identified more strongly with their respective groups (see figure 9).

	Mean	t	Sig
Asian	1.86	36.183	.000
African American	1.92	33.011	.000
Hispanic	1.95	37.555	.000
Caucasian	2.42	41.703	.000

**Figure 9** – With a lower score equaling a higher level of identification, this table shows the strength of identification each participating ethnicity has with their ethnic group.

Identification with all advertisements was significant for each ethnic group ( $p=.000$ ). Each ethnic group identified most with an advertisement that featured members of their ethnic group, providing support for H3 and H4. The advertisement featuring a diverse cast had the least variation among participants (variance = .455).

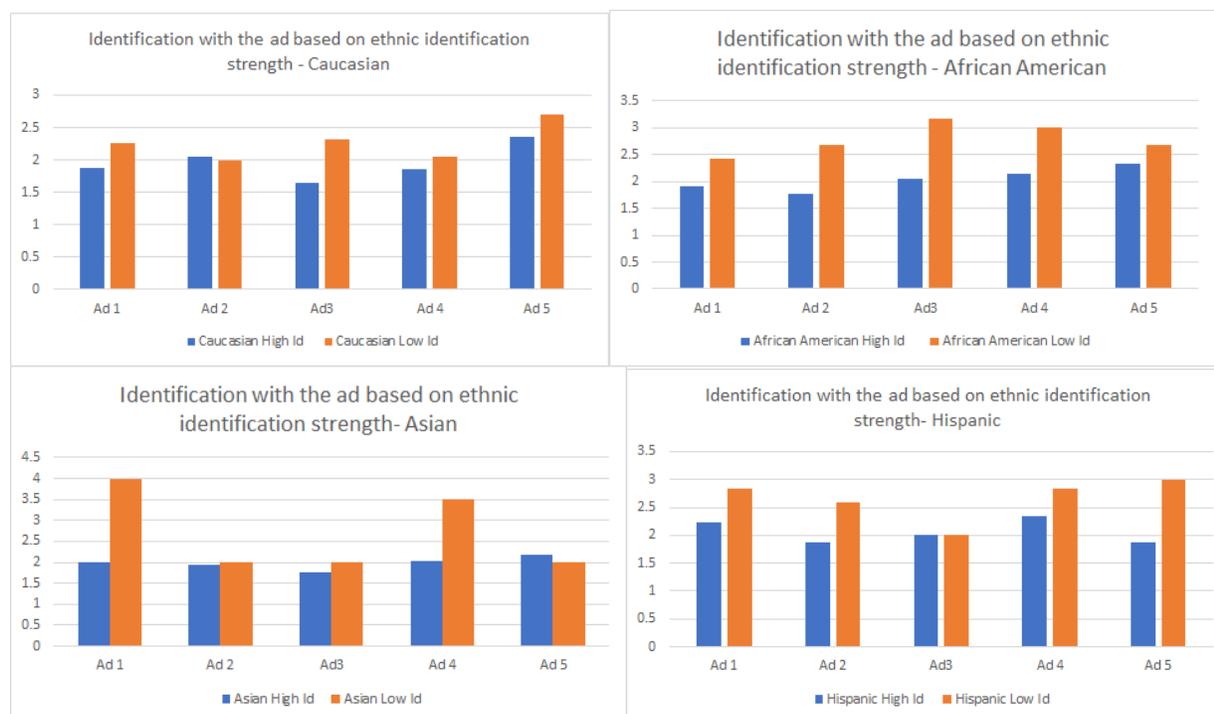


**Figure 10** – This graph shows how strongly participants identified with each advertisement.

When looking at those who strongly identify with their respective ethnicities:

African American participants who strongly identify with their ethnicity responded positively to the advertisements. The lowest (therefore best) rating was for ad 2 which featured a diverse case ( $m=1.53$ ) and this was significant ( $F(1)=16.156, p=.000$ ). Ad 1, which featured an African American cast, was closely rated ( $m=1.69$ ), and also significant ( $F(1)=11.752, p=.001$ ). Asian participants who strongly identified with their ethnicity, identified with ad 3 which featured an Asian cast most ( $m=1.46$ ). An ANOVA shows these results are significant ( $F(1)=11.955, p=.001$ ). Hispanic participants who strongly identified with their ethnicity identified most strongly with ad 5 which featured a Hispanic cast ( $m=1.63, F(1)=8.329, p=.007$ ). These results confirm H3 and H4, specifically that participants who have a stronger level of identification with their ethnicity, identify more with an ad that features members of that particular ethnic group as opposed to other ethnic groups.

Lastly, Caucasian participants who strongly identified with their ethnicity identified most strongly with ad 1 ( $m=1.22$ ,  $F(1)=23.820$ ,  $p=.000$ ) which featured African Americans and ad 3 ( $m=1.27$ ,  $F(1)=5.749$ ,  $p=.022$ ) which featured Asian actors. These results support previous findings showing that the majority ethnicity (Caucasians) are less sensitive to ethnic advertisements.



**Figure 11** – The above graphs show mean scores of identification with each ad from participants with a strong level of ethnic identification (blue) and a weak level of ethnic identification (orange), with a separate graph for each ethnicity. Those who identified strongly with their ethnicity, identified most strongly with the ad that featured a cast of the same ethnicity.

In the open response, we asked what participants identified with most about the ad, and most participants mentioned the product(s) or the theme of the ad, but minority viewers were more likely to mention the race of the actors.

### Ethnic Identification and Behavioral Intentions

When measuring behavioral intentions following the viewing of the ad, there were significant differences based on ethnicity. First, Asian participants had the most positive

behavioral intentions for ad 3 which featured their ethnic group ( $m=1.55$ ), showing support for H2. The same was not true for African Americans who, while being ethnically represented in ad 1, had the most positive behavioral intentions after viewing ads 2 ( $m=1.78$ ) and 3 (1.83). Hispanic participants had the most positive behavioral intentions for ad 3 ( $m=1.57$ ) which featured predominantly Asian actors. The same was true for Caucasian participants (ad 3  $m=1.75$ ). This could be because of the brand featured in ad 3 (Amazon) despite there not being a significant difference in overall brand awareness or preference specified by participants at the beginning of the survey.

These results change when factoring in the level of ethnic identification:

	Asian	African American	Hispanic	Caucasian
Ad 1	1.383	1.680	1.824	1.111
Ad 2	1.579	1.500	1.783	1.571
Ad3	1.397	1.544	1.386	1.166
Ad 4	1.772	1.888	2.136	2.125
Ad 5	1.500	2.160	1.771	1.944

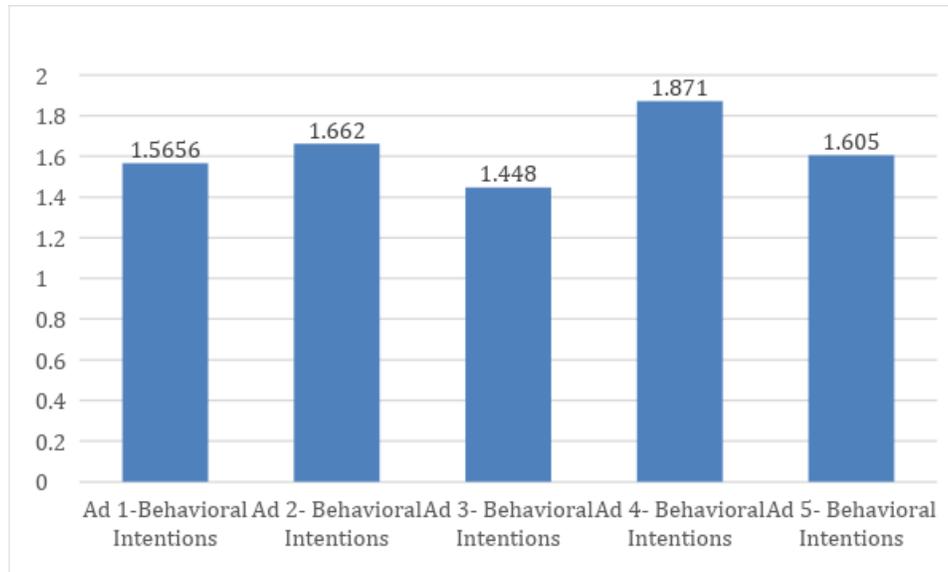
**Figure 12** – Mean scores with strong ethnic identification: Those who identified strongly with their ethnicity, were more likely to have positive behavioral intentions after viewing an ad with a cast of the same ethnicity.

Asian participants scored lowest on ads 1 (which featured an African American cast) and 3 (which featured an Asian cast), yet only ad 1 showed a significant difference between the high and low ethnic identification groups ( $F(1)=17.407$ ,  $p=.000$ ). African American participants scored lowest on ads 2 (diverse cast,  $m=1.5$ ), 3 ( $m=1.54$ ) and 1 (1.68). All three ads showed significant differences in behavioral intentions between those who strongly identified with their

ethnicity and those who did not (ad 1:  $F(1)=7$ ,  $p=.007$ , ad 2:  $F(1)=10.559$ ,  $p=.002$ , ad 3:  $F(1)=14.201$ ,  $p=.000$ ). Hispanic participants scored lowest on ad 3 (which featured an Asian cast,  $m=1.3$ ) and 5 (which featured a Hispanic cast ( $m=1.77$ )). Both were significant (ad 3:  $F(1)=11.101$ ,  $p=.002$ , ad 5:  $F(1)=4.214$ ,  $p=.048$ ). Caucasian participants scored lowest on ads 1 (which featured an African American cast,  $m=1.11$ ) and 3 (which featured an Asian cast,  $m=1.16$ ). Both ads were significant and so was ad 2 which featured a diverse case (ad 1:  $F(1)=14.938$ ,  $p=.000$ , ad 2:  $F(1)=6.025$ ,  $p=.018$ , ad 3:  $F(1)=6.536$ ,  $p=.015$ ).

These results partially support H2, that participants who have a stronger level of identification with their ethnicity will have positive behavioral intentions after viewing ads that feature members of their ethnic group. African American, Asian and Hispanic participants who strongly identify with their ethnicity did have positive behavioral intentions after viewing ads that featured their ethnicity, however they had positive behavioral intentions to other advertisements as well.

Due to this lack of effect, a mediation analysis was run using Process in SPSS to see if identification with the ad mediates the relationship between ethnic identification and behavioral intentions (Hayes, 2018). The findings were significant for all ads (ad 1:  $F(1)=25.6338$ ,  $p=.000$ , ad 2:  $F(1)=164.0415$ ,  $p=.000$ , ad 3:  $F(1)=108.3705$ ,  $p=.000$ , ad 4:  $F(1)=104.6797$ ,  $p=.000$ , ad 5:  $F(1)=168.3224$ ,  $p=.000$ ).



**Figure 13** – Mean behavioral intentions for those who strongly identified with the ad.

Hypothesis 5 states that those who identify strongly with an ad will be more likely to have positive behavioral intentions than those who do not identify strongly with the ad. Those who identified strongly with the ad, did in fact have the lowest (and therefore) most positive behavioral intentions (see figure 10). All 5 ANOVA's for behavioral intentions for those who identify strongly with the ad were significant and H5 was confirmed (Ad1:  $F(1)=64.951$ ,  $p=.000$ , Ad2:  $F(1)=71.291$ ,  $p=.000$ , Ad3:  $F(1)=54.855$ ,  $p=.000$ , Ad4:  $F(1)=63.585$ ,  $p=.000$ , Ad5:  $F(1)=122.467$ ,  $p=.000$ ).

## **DISCUSSION, LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH**

Findings suggest that one's behavior after seeing an advertisement is contingent on the viewer's strength of identification with advertisements featuring their ethnic group. The advertisement with the diverse cast had the most neutral response, which suggests that advertisers may benefit from using multi-ethnic ads to attract a broader audience, but may want to use ethnically-specific ads if trying to expand reach to a particular underrepresented

demographic segment. These results demonstrate that while sometimes, ethnic identification may impact overall positive behavioral intentions, identification with the ad itself is something that needs to be given more attention. This is something that might have been demonstrated with the identification with ad 3 by many participants. Despite the actors being Asian, many groups identified with the ad and felt positively towards Amazon following viewing of the ad. Especially for minority ethnicities, if companies can get consumers to identify with their brand and its advertisements, they are more likely to be successful.

It is less important to Caucasian Americans that their ethnic group is represented in media, which could be indicative of their current oversaturated status, but it also explained by the weakness of their ethnic identity. For minorities, however, representation in the media matters, because minorities tend to have stronger ethnic identities. If representation matters to minorities, it should also matter for brands.

This study did have some potential limitations. Previous studies on racial and ethnic representation in advertisements have used custom-made print advertisements, with different models in each version, but the same content. Since our study used existing television advertisements, there was a risk that participants had already seen the advertisements and formulated their own opinions prior to the study. Each advertisement featured a different brand and product, so variations in attitude and purchase intent could have been influenced by the product rather than the ethnicity of the actors. For example, Ad 3 was for Amazon Prime, and the survey was distributed using Amazon's survey distribution platform Mechanical Turk. So participants were not only likely to have pre-formed opinions about the brand, but they were likely to already be users of their products. On top of product variation, participants could have been influenced by the many other differences in the advertisements that were difficult to

control: humor, tone, theme, music, age, gender, etc. The advertisement for Amazon included a baby and a dog, so viewers could have identified with the adorable pairing instead of the ethnicity of the actors in the ad.

To properly mimic the past studies that used print ads, future research should use custom-made television ads with the same products and content, only swapping out the actors to manipulate ethnicity. Future research should also further investigate the differences in attitudes and expectations of seeing each ethnicity presented in advertising. Overall, it is more important than ever for advertisers to make advertisements that people respond positively towards and that motivate consumers to positively interact with the brand. By showing advertisements that ethnic minorities can identify with, brands will be more successful in reaching these groups and making them feel welcome.

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