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Effects of Multicultural Advertising Strategies on Consumer Attitudes and Purchase Intentions

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Effects of Multicultural Advertising Strategies on Consumer Attitudes and Purchase Intentions

Linda Dam, PhD

University of Connecticut, 2016

Mixed results in advertising research regarding the effective use of racially congruent spokespersons bring to light a need for a more comprehensive understanding of racial and ethnic influences. Specifically, little research addresses the ways in which perceived social distance – the level of acceptance individuals feel towards people from a different racial background – may impact consumer responses toward advertising spokespersons from different racial groups. The purpose of this study is to investigate whether perceived social distance between consumers and multicultural advertising spokespersons will influence consumer attitudes and purchase intentions. This research also explores whether two concepts related to social distance – consumer social identity and perceived similarity with racially congruent or incongruent advertising spokespersons – will have an impact on consumer decision-making processes. In addition, the study attempts to distinguish the constructs of racial identity and ethnic identity in relation to social identity. Findings demonstrated that racial identity and ethnic identity directly impacted social identity. In addition, perceived similarity was found to positively predict attitudes toward the spokesperson. Results suggest that cross-cultural group relations could help explain the underlying consumer decision-making process, which influences the effectiveness of multicultural advertising practices.

Keywords: consumer attitude, ethnic identity, multicultural marketing, perceived similarity, purchase intention, racial identity, social distance, social identity

Effects of Multicultural Advertising Strategies on Consumer Attitudes and Purchase Intentions

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APPROVAL PAGE

Doctor of Philosophy Dissertation

Effects of Multicultural Advertising Strategies on Consumer Attitudes and Purchase Intentions

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2016

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The multicultural consumer, defined as consumers from various racial categories, is the fastest growing segment in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). The U.S. Census Bureau (2015) reports that from 2000 to 2014, multicultural consumers consisted of 92% of the total population growth. Pew Research Center (2014) projects that by 2065, no racial or ethnic group will be a majority. The advertising industry has strategically targeted this growing multicultural population segment; one that reflects a projected combined spending power of \$3.8 trillion by 2017 (Franklin, 2014). For example, the reported median annual Asian American household income is \$66,000, exceeding the national median income of \$49,000 (Pew Research Center, 2016). According to the Pew Research Center (2016), Asian Americans are the highest earning income racial group and fastest-growing demographic in the U.S., recently surpassing Hispanics as the largest group of new immigrants. However, despite society becoming more multicultural, the advertising voices are still dominated by mainstream marketing strategies such as primarily targeting the dominant racial group (Jamal, 2003).

Despite demographic data indicating a shift towards a more culturally diverse society in the United States, intergroup interactions among various racial groups has not increased, particularly for Caucasians (Chang, Astin, & Kim, 2004). According the Public Religion Research Institute (2013), only five percent of social networks among Caucasians consist of

individuals from a different racial background and for African Americans, 83% of their social network consists of individuals who are of the same racial background. For Hispanics, between one and five individuals in their social networks are Caucasian (Public Religion Research Institute, 2013).

Addressing the increase of multiculturalism, the current study aims to explore how exposure to racially diverse advertisements may impact market research due to intergroup relations. Specifically, the study explores the effects of perceived social distance towards Asians, African Americans, and Caucasians on consumer evaluations of racially diverse advertising spokespersons. The study aims to make a contribution to examine perceived social distance in a marketing communication context and explain the attitudes that consumers of different racial and ethnic identities may hold toward advertising spokespersons and each other. Applying social identity theories as the theoretical framework for this study, this research will also explore whether four related concepts – consumer social identity, consumer ethnic identity, consumer racial identity, and perceived similarity with racially congruent advertising spokespersons – will have an impact on consumer decision-making.

An important objective of the current study is to distinguish the contribution of two related concepts – racial and ethnic identity – that are often used interchangeably in social identity research in the context of multicultural advertising. Past research underscores the importance of separating these two related concepts in social science research (French, Coleman, & DiLorenzo, 2013; Jones, 2010; Quintana, 2007), but little empirical research has attempted to examine them independently. This study intends to measure ethnic identity, racial identity and social identity as continuous variables. By distinguishing one's biological race from racial identity -- as well as one's ethnic origin -- from ethnic identity, it allows for a more conceptually

crisp approach to understanding an individual's social identity or group identity in society and how such identity may influence consumer behavior.

In line with the logic of persuasive communication, the study will examine whether perceived spokesperson trustworthiness, likeability, and expertise will influence consumer attitudes toward the spokespersons and the ad in which they appear in a multicultural context. This research also aims to contribute to the extant literature on intergroup relations and cross-cultural communication by exploring the implications of multicultural marketing strategies. On balance, study findings should help reveal the underlining mechanisms that govern how multicultural ads are processed by various racial groups.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Advertising in a Multicultural Society

The U.S. Census Bureau (2015) reported that the U.S. population is expected to become more racially diverse by 2060. In particular, the Hispanic population will consist of 17.4% of the total U.S. population, followed by the African American population at 13.2% and the Asian American population at 5.8% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). Currently, there are 9.3 million multiracial adults and children in the U.S., comprising approximately 3% of the total population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013).

In recent years, more multicultural advertising campaigns have begun to emerge. For instance, Unilever's *The Dove Hair: Love Your Curls*, promotes the acceptance of all racial hair types (Ciambriello, 2015). Two additional advertisements – an ETRADE commercial featuring a Caucasian and an African American baby as well as Jeep's *4x4ever* utilizing spokespersons from various cultures to promote the brand's history – have both been well-received (Snively, 2016). However, 2013's General Mills' *The Cheerio Effect* – featuring an interracial heterosexual couple and their biracial child – received negative feedback from some for its depiction of multiculturalism. Thus, mixed reviews received from advertisement strategies featuring multicultural spokespersons demonstrate the need to examine intergroup dynamics among consumers and advertisers in a society that is becoming more multicultural.

Market research has reported that multicultural advertising strategies (e.g., racial manipulation in advertisements) can positively influence consumer attitudes toward the spokesperson (Appiah, 2001a; Whittler & Spira, 2002) and purchase intentions (Appiah & Liu, 2009; Morimoto & La Ferle, 2008). Specifically, racially congruent spokespersons were found to increase purchase intentions (Whittler & DiMeo, 1991). Past study findings have also demonstrated that consumers respond more favorably to an advertisement that is perceived to target their racial group, such as an advertisement featuring a spokesperson from the same racial background (e.g., Aaker, Brumbaugh, & Grier, 2000; Bott et al., 2010; Cui, 1997; Morimoto & La Ferle, 2008; Whittler 1991).

Against this backdrop, the relevant theoretical concepts and empirical findings associated with the effects of multicultural advertising on consumers will be reviewed. Specifically, this review will discuss the use of racially congruent advertising spokespersons on consumer attitudes and behaviors, when ethnic identity, racial identity, and perceived similarity of the consumer are taken into account. Based on the relations between perceived similarity between self-identity and others' identity, the study will also examine how consumer social identity and perceived social distance between self and others will interact with their evaluations of multicultural advertising strategies.

Identity Theory and Group Membership

Social Identity. Social identity theory has been extensively applied in the examination of intergroup relations (e.g., Harwood & Roy, 2005; Mastro, 2015; Tajifel & Turner, 1986). This theory posits that group membership – reflected by race, ethnicity, gender, family and social class – helps individuals obtain a sense of belonging (Tajifel & Turner, 1986). Tajfel (1978) defined social identity as an “individual’s self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his

membership of a group together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership” (p. 63). Group identity is one way in which identity is experienced – and can be characterized as how individual identities are possessed by virtue of membership in a group – such as racial or ethnic groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Specifically, individuals make social comparisons among different groups in an attempt to enhance their own group identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

Individuals tend to find positive attributes toward in-groups members and negative attributes toward out-group members in an attempt to strengthen their self-identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). The theory posits that social comparisons are made between in-groups and out-groups – which will enhance one’s self-esteem – particularly for those who socially compare to the in-groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Messick and Mackie (1989) maintained that an individual’s racial identity is an indicator of group membership and identifying with in-group members can increase one’s self-esteem and self-image.

A limitation in past studies addressing group membership in social identity theory involves the lack of distinct conceptualizations for ethnic identity and racial identity (Jones, 2010; Worrell & Gardner-Kitt, 2006). The two related concepts – ethnic identity and racial identity – are often interchangeably used in research (French, Coleman, & DeLorenzo, 2013; Worrell & Gardner-Kitt, 2006). Markus (2008) contends that the two concepts need to be separately examined, however, because racial identity is linked to power differentials between groups and ethnic identity is related to cultural experiences among groups. Quintana (2007) contends that the lack of distinction between the two constructs in social science research results vary in usage of labels, as determined primarily by sample study demographics. For example, racial identity may be used to investigate African Americans in an attempt to examine power

differentials, whereas ethnic identity may be used to investigate Latino and Asian Americans in an attempt to examine cultural experiences (French et al., 2013; Quintana, 2007).

Specific to multicultural advertising studies, ethnic identity is often overlooked or used synonymously with racial identity to predict social identity (Appiah, 2001b; Burton, 2000; Green, 1991). Thus, this study will distinguish these two related concepts – racial identity and ethnic identity – to examine each’s separate influences on an individual’s social identity in the context of consumer attitudes and purchase intentions.

Racial Identity. Under the framework of social identity theory, racial identity is a key determinant for an individual to become affiliated with a particular in-group and separating the individual from the out-groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Racial identity can be conceptualized as the sense of belonging to a group based on race (Helms, 1999). Race can be defined as “an ascribed category of persons with shared genetic, biological, and physical features” (Wakefield & Hudley, 2007, pg. 148). Past research has also highlighted that race should be conceptualized as a social construct (Helms, 2007; Markus, 2008).

In addition, compared to majority group members, minority group members view race more importantly as a social category (Phinney, 1992; Wakefield & Hudley, 2007). For instance, Hagendoorn (1995) maintained that almost all racial groups preferred contact with in-group members than with out-group members, in terms of being marriage partners, neighbors, classmates, etc. Findings from this study also suggested that minority groups conveyed higher intergroup bias, such as having more favorable attitudes toward their own racial group than majority groups, which led to in-group favoritism and more positive social identity with the in-group. In contrast, studies examining racial identity found that Caucasians were less likely to value race as an identifier of group membership because as a majority group, they are potentially

less conscious and mindful of race as a social category (Cui, 1997; Phinney, 1992; Whittler, 1989).

To validate the theoretical assumptions offered above, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Racial identity will be positively related to social identity.

Ethnic Identity. Ethnicity can be defined as “an ascribed or self-identified affiliation typically based on aspects of one’s family heritage, shared language, culture, or nationality” (Wakefield & Hudley, 2007, pg. 148). To embrace ethnic identity is to demonstrate commitment through attitudes and behaviors towards the group membership of an ethnic group (Helms, 2007; Phinney & Alipuria, 1997). In other words, ethnic identity can be seen to encompass how an individual aligns with a particular cultural group amongst the greater society (Meyers, 2015).

While much of the multicultural marketing research has focused on the impact of race on consumer evaluation, the examination of the influence of consumer ethnic identity can demonstrate underlying mechanisms in the evaluation of racial target marketing. Research has pointed out that the strategic use of racially congruent spokespersons could be more effective if cultural cues such as symbols or traditions or cues usually attached to one’s ethnic identity, were used (Appiah & Liu, 2009; Forehand & Deshpande, 2001). In addition, research has found that the ethnic identity of the consumer positively impacted consumer attitudes and purchase intentions (Appiah & Lui, 2009; Morimoto & La Ferle, 2008; Whittler and Spira, 2002). For example, Whittler and Spira (2002) illustrated that African American participants – who indicate a strong ethnic identification with African American culture – were more positively influenced by a product advertisement that featured an African American spokesperson than a Caucasian spokesperson.

As it relates to the formation of social identity, one study examining the relationship between positive media images and intergroup outcomes found that Latinos who were exposed to positive media depictions of Latinos resulted in more favorable evaluations of their in-group members; this favorable evaluation led to an increase in their self-esteem (McKinley, Mastro, & Warber, 2014). Likewise, Rivadeneyra, Ward, and Gordon (2007) found that the self-esteem of Latinos decreased when exposed to an increased amount of mainstream media content that portrayed Latinos as underrepresented and as stereotypically lazy or unintelligent. These studies demonstrate that the increase in ethnic identity leads to greater in-group membership identity, which results in stronger social identity (McKinley et al., 2014; Rivadeneyra et al., 2007).

Past research also suggests that for majority groups, such as Caucasians, racial identity and ethnic identity are not as important to their self-concept as it is for minority groups because Caucasians may not be thinking about their race as much or perceive themselves to be a part of a specific ethnic group (Phinney, 1992; Wakefield & Hudley, 2007; Whittler, 1989). However, Appiah (2001b) found that Caucasians who had a strong ethnic identity found the racially congruent spokesperson to be more similar to themselves in terms of overall lifestyle, cultural background, dress, appearance, and basic values than Caucasians who had weak ethnic identity. Likewise, a study by McKinley, Mastro, and Warber (2014) found that ethnic identity among Caucasian participants had a moderating effect on consumer evaluation of a fictitious athlete, whose race was manipulated to be either Caucasian or Latino. Study findings also show that those who reported stronger ethnic identity indicated more favorable evaluations toward the Caucasian athlete over the Latino athlete. Based on the theory and research reviewed above, the following hypothesis is proposed to further validate the potential effect of ethnic identity on social identity:

H2: Ethnic identity will be positively related to social identity.

In connecting social identity to marketing strategies, a study examining the relationship between social identity and anti-smoking advertisements found that targeted advertisements (i.e., an anti-smoking ad targeting a specific peer group) were related to more positive attitudes toward the ads themselves (Moran & Sussman, 2014). Another study examining product-related social identity in the context of consumer attitudes toward aspirational advertising – such as featuring a product (e.g., luxury items) from a desired social out-group (e.g., wealthy social class) that a consumer seeks to join – found that exposure to these types of advertisements negatively impacted consumer attitudes toward the ad (Dimofte, Goodstein, & Brumbaugh, 2015). These results suggest that when the product featured in an ad is perceived to be associated with an social group more economically opulent than the one to which a consumer belongs, this perception could result in a reduction of self-esteem and lead to less positive consumer attitudes (Dimofte et al., 2015). These findings highlight the findings that validated the thesis of social identity theory, which focuses on group comparisons and how such comparisons create an in-group versus out-group mentality (McKinley et al., 2014). Thus, social identity can be understood as an in-group identity such that consumers who self-identity with the in-group will have more favorable attitudes toward the advertisement.

Expanding further on social identity, Feitosa, Salas, and Salazar (2012) reported that an individual's self-concept – the basis for establishing social identity – can be conveyed by the following three dimensions: categorization (e.g., I see myself as a member of this racial or ethnic group), sense of belonging (e.g., I feel involved with my group), and positive attitudes (e.g., I am happy to be a part of my in-group). Phinney (1992) argues that for minority groups, race is an important self-concept for social identity. Similarly, Wakefield and Hudley (2007) contend that

ethnicity is also an important self-concept among minority groups. While research supports the importance of race and ethnicity to an individual's social identity, these two related concepts are not identical and may need to be separately examined (Helms, 2007; Markus, 2008).

Past social identity research has frequently used the concepts of racial identity and ethnic identity interchangeably (French, Coleman, & DeLorenzo, 2013; Helms, 2007; Worrell & Gardner-Kitt, 2006). However, differences between these two related constructs are evident, when the distinct racial and ethnic attributes to which one ascribes, are examined. For example, an individual's racial identity reflects ascribing to a category based on biological or physical features (Helms, 2007; Wakefield & Hudley, 2007). In contrast, ethnic identity reflects an affiliation based on such attributes as – cultural practices, shared language or shared values – regardless of race (Helms, 2007; Wakefield & Hudley, 2007). Thus, individual can racially identify themselves in a particular race (i.e., African) but ethnically identify themselves with another ethnicity (i.e., American).

Racial identity can impact social identity based on an individual's self-concept and physical features, whereas ethnic identity can impact social identity on the basis of an individual's cultural affiliation (Phinney, 1990). The empirical findings on the relations between social identity and multicultural advertising seem to support our proposed theoretical argument forwarded above, which distinguishes racial identity from ethnic identity. Therefore, it is important to examine racial representations in advertisements in order to understand the intergroup dynamics.

Based on this conceptual distinction and the focus of social identity on in-group vs. out-group comparison, we assume that racial identity and ethnic identity could influence a consumer's social identity. A consumer's social identity, in turn, could have an impact on his/her

attitudes toward the advertising spokesperson from a racial group that may or may not represent the consumer's racial group. To further validate the theoretical linkage between racial identity, ethnic identity and social identity as well as the relationship between social identity and consumer attitudes toward the spokespersons that represent different racial groups, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3: Consumer social identity will be positively related to attitudes toward the advertising spokesperson.

Perceived Similarity

In the marketing context, perceived similarity due to perceived racial congruency between a consumer and an advertising spokesperson has been found to have a positive impact on consumer attitudes and purchase intentions (e.g., Appiah & Lui, 2009; Qualls & Moore, 1990; Simpson, Snuggs, Christiansen, & Simples, 2000; Whittler & DiMeo, 1991). Qualls and Moore's (1990) experimental study manipulated spokesperson race in a television commercial; they found that categorization of an in-group or out-group was based on perceived similarity or racial congruency between the individual consumer's race and the spokesperson's race. Specifically, findings demonstrated that Caucasian participants evaluated Caucasian spokespersons as similar to themselves and evaluated these spokespersons in the television commercial more positively than African American spokespersons. Likewise, Whittler and DiMeo (1991) found that Caucasian participants reported less perceived similarity towards an African American spokesperson – who appeared in a product advertisement – than towards a Caucasian spokesperson. Therefore, racial identity is a characteristic used to determine perceived similarity or dissimilarity between a consumer's self-identity and that of an advertising spokesperson (Whittler, 1989; Whittler & DiMeo, 1991).

In a study examining the impact of ethnic identity on perceived similarity, Appiah and Lui (2009) found that Asian participants reported more perceived similarity with an Asian advertising spokesperson, if the advertisement was embedded with highly visible cultural images (i.e., material objects that are valued by an ethnic group such as Chinese icons). Yet Caucasian participants reported more perceived similarity between self and the Caucasian spokesperson, regardless of whether they were exposed to Caucasian culturally embedded ads (i.e., presence or absence of a cultural cue such as a picture of an American flag).

Past studies also found that perceived similarity between the advertising spokesperson and the consumer was related to advertisement effectiveness (Aaker et al., 2000; Williams & Qualls, 1989); in particular, the strength of perceived similarity between the spokesperson and the consumer is dependent on how salient race is featured in the advertisement (Aaker et al., 2000). Thus, the concept of perceived similarity poses a unique challenge for strategic communication research, as the number of mixed-race individuals is steadily increasing in the U.S. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). For example, the population growth for mixed race individuals is expected to grow from 4.3% in 2014 to 8.2% by 2060 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). This study will examine the relationship of perceived similarity between a consumer and an advertising spokesperson. It will do so from the perspective of how similar an individual perceives the spokesperson is to oneself – in terms of one's self-identity, racial identity and ethnic identity – which contribute to one's social identity. Therefore, the following hypothesis is posited to test how perceived similarity may impact the relationship between social identity and attitudes toward the spokesperson:

H4: Perceived similarity will positively moderate the relationship between a consumer's social identity and attitudes toward the spokesperson.

Social Distance Between Racial Groups and Consumer Evaluation

Social distance theory conceptualizes the perceived “social distance” among racial groups by assessing an individual’s comfort level when interacting with members outside of one’s racial group in various social situations. As perceived social distance is strongly related to individuals’ perceived racial identity (e.g., Hagendoorn, 1995; Hraba, Radloff, & Gray-Ray, 1999; Weaver, 2008; Weaver, 2012), it is reasonable to assume that the influence of perceived social distance on consumer responses to racially congruent spokespersons could be similar to that of perceived racial identity.

Bogardus (1959) defines *social distance* as “the degree of sympathetic understanding that functions between person and person, between person and group, and between groups” (p. 7). For example, a study by Randall and Delbridge (2005) examined the perceived social distance – measured by perceived degree of comfort in accepting an individual from another racial group (ranging from a neighbor to a friend to a marriage partner) – among Latino, African-American, and Caucasian participants. Their findings show that Caucasian participants expressed the lowest perceived social distance towards other Caucasians, relative to other races.

Specifically, the concept of racial identity has been examined in conjunction with social distance theory in the context of race relations. For example, social distance theory was utilized to explain how various racial groups feel towards each other in terms of their social acceptance (Parrillo & Donoghue, 2005; Randall & Delbridge, 2005; Weaver, 2008). A smaller perceived social distance towards a racial group resulted in more positive evaluations of that racial group (Allen, 1975; Parrillo & Donoghue, 2005). This suggests that perceived social distance could potentially be an important factor that helps explain the influence of racially congruent versus

racially incongruent advertising spokespersons on consumer behavior in a multicultural marketing communication context.

Social distance theory has primarily been used to study issues regarding prejudice among racial groups (e.g., Hagendoorn, 1995; Hraba, Radloff, & Gray-Ray, 1999; Weaver, 2008; Weaver, 2012) and attitudes toward different racial groups (Parrillo & Donoghue, 2005). A study by Weinfurt and Moghaddam (2001) reported some unanticipated findings when it examined perceived social distance between English Canadian, French Canadian, Jewish, Indian, Algerian, and Greek participants. These findings show that all participant groups reported being “most willing” to have closer social relations with English Canadians and French Canadians relative to all the other racial or ethnic groups. By implication, minority groups appear to be inclined to reduce their perceived social distance with the majority groups in society.

A study by Weaver (2008) measured perceived social distance between Hispanics, Caucasians, Jews, Asians, and African Americans as well as the perceived prejudice between these racial or ethnic groups. His findings revealed a decline in prejudice between groups in general; however, most of these ethnic or racial groups are still characterized by their self-imposed isolation via differential perceived social distance towards each other (Weaver, 2008). An example of their different comfort levels with having selected ethnic or racial groups as neighbors or relatives involves Asian participants who reported lower perceived social distance towards Caucasians than African Americans (Weaver, 2012). This implies that a minority group, socialized in a majority culture environment, might perceive their social distance to the majority group to be smaller when compared to that of other minority groups in society.

Past research has also examined social identity and perceived social distance in the context of in-group and out-group memberships (e.g., Brewer, Ho, Lee, & Miller, 1987; Jerabek

& DeMan, 1994; Weaver, 2008). For example, Weaver (2008) suggested that perceived social distance among Caucasians remains the smallest towards their in-group or other Caucasians, relative to out-groups or other racial groups such as Asian Americans or African-Americans. A study by Hagendoorn (1995) also confirmed this assumption and reported that almost all racial groups preferred contact with in-group members than with out-group members.

Whittler (1991) examined the impact of prejudice and found that stronger prejudice among Caucasians towards African Americans resulted in a stronger identification with the Caucasian spokesperson than the African American spokesperson. However, the study produced contradictory findings regarding attitudes toward the ad itself, as no difference was found in the attitudes toward the ad featuring either an African American or Caucasian spokesperson among Caucasians with high prejudice towards African Americans (Whittler, 1991).

Research has yet to explore how the social distance concept may impact the multicultural marketing strategy such as the use of advertising spokespersons from racially diverse backgrounds. Based on the relevant empirical evidence reviewed above, it appears that an individual's social identity (or identification with an in-group) may influence his or her perceived social distance towards others who are seen with the same or different social identity. Thus, it is logical to postulate that the less social distance perceived between consumers and a spokesperson, the more positively perceived social distance may interact with consumer attitudes toward the spokesperson. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H5: Perceived social distance will negatively moderate the relationship between social identity and consumer attitudes toward the spokesperson, such that when a perceived social distance is stronger, the relationship between social identity and consumer attitudes toward the spokesperson will be more negative.

Perceived Source Credibility

Multicultural advertising research has found that the use of racially congruent advertising spokespersons increases persuasiveness in campaigns (e.g., Appiah, 2001b; Ferle, 2009; Green, 1999; Lee, Fernandez, & Martin, 2002; Phua, 2014). Studies have found that perceived credibility of the advertising message is associated with perceived source credibility of the spokesperson (Farr, 2007; Friedman & Friedman, 1979). For example, Hoy and Wong (2000) discovered that Caucasian participants rated an advertisement featuring a Caucasian spokesperson to be more credible than an Asian spokesperson, when endorsing a product. Likewise, another study found that perceived source credibility of the racially congruent spokesperson predicted more positive attitudes towards the ad, the brand, and purchase intentions (Stanley et al., 2011). Therefore, perceived source credibility of a spokesperson has been found to positively impact consumer attitudes and purchase intentions when the race of the spokesperson was examined (Goldsmith et al., 2000; Simpson & Kahler, 1986; Stanley et al., 2011; Yoon & Kim, 2016;).

Source credibility is defined as “the extent to which a communicator is perceived to be a source of valid assertions” (Hovland, Janis, & Weiss, 1953, pg. 21). In marketing, source credibility can be operationalized as “the credibility of the endorser, spokesperson, or individual in an advertisement (Stanley et al., 2011, p. 82). Previous source credibility research has found that consumers are more likely to disregard messages from a less credible than a more credible spokesperson (Eagly & Chaiken, 1975). More credible spokespersons have been found to positively influence consumer attitudes than less credible spokespersons (Sternthal, Dholakia, & Leavitt, 1978). Past research (e.g., Farr, 2007; Hovland & Weiss, 1951; Hovland, Janis, & Kelley, 1953; McCroskey & Teven, 1999; McCroskey & Young, 1981; Morimoto & La Ferle,

2008; Stanley et al., 2011) has identified source credibility to be a multidimensional concept that consists of such dimensions as: *likeability*, *trustworthiness*, and *expertise*.

Likeability can be conceptualized as the amount of ‘like’ or amicability the participant displays toward the advertising spokesperson (Clow, James, & Stanley, 2008). Although many studies measure perceived attractiveness as one of the dimensions in perceived source credibility (Ohanian, 1990), recent marketing studies have incorporated “likeability” as a dimension of perceived source credibility instead (e.g., Clow & Baack, 2004; Clow, James & Stanley, 2008; Polegato & Bjerke, 2009; Stanley et al., 2011) and found it to be a stronger predictor of consumer brand attitudes and purchase intentions (Smit, Muers, & Neijens, 2006; Stanley et al., 2011). In a study examining five dimensions of source credibility (i.e., expertise, trust, attractiveness, similarity, liking), Stanley et al., (2011) found likeability to be the most important dimension of source credibility.

Trustworthiness refers to “the degree of confidence in the communicator’s intent to communicate the assertions he considers most valid” (Hovland, Janis, & Kelley, 1953, pg. 21). Perceived trustworthiness of a message source can influence consumer attitudes, when exposed to racially-congruent spokespersons (Deshpande & Stayman, 1994; Morimoto & La Ferle, 2008). For example, Hispanic consumers evaluated a Hispanic spokesperson as more trustworthy, which led to more favorable brand attitudes (Deshpande & Stayman, 1994). Likewise, a study by Morimoto and La Ferle (2008) echoed the same findings such that racially congruent spokespersons yielded more perceived trustworthiness than racially incongruent spokespersons. In another study examining self-congruity between the consumer and the advertised brand, Yoon and Kim (2016) found that perceived trustworthiness of the spokesperson positively predicted attitudes toward the ad and purchase intentions.

Expertise is defined as “the extent to which a communicator is perceived to be a source of valid assertions” (Hovland, Janis, & Kelley, 1953, pg. 21). Past studies have found that favorable attitudes toward the product are enhanced when consumers perceived the spokesperson to be an expert on the advertised product (O’Mahony & Meenaghan, 1998; Stanley et al., 2011; Yoon & Kim, 2016). A study examining source credibility and racial congruency in print advertisements conducted by Stanley et al. (2011) also reported that the spokesperson expertise – as a dimension of source credibility – positively predicted attitudes toward the ad itself.

Based on this body of theory and research, positive relationships have been ascertained between perceived spokesperson credibility, consumer attitudes and behaviors (MacKenzie & Lutz, 1989; Pornipitakan, 2004; Stanley et al., 2011; Yoon & Kim, 2016). However, additional studies are needed to fully examine these relationships in the context of multicultural advertising. One study that did examine the effects of perceived source credibility on racially congruent spokespersons found that Asian Americans perceived the Asian American spokesperson as more credible (Morimoto, 2012). To test the assumption that each dimension of perceived source credibility of the spokesperson will have a positive relationship with consumer attitudes toward the ad, the following hypotheses are proposed.

H6a: Perceived spokesperson trustworthiness will be positively related to consumer attitudes toward the ad.

H6b: Perceived spokesperson likeability will be positively related to consumer attitudes toward the ad.

H6c: Perceived spokesperson expertise will be positively related to consumer attitudes toward the ad.

Source Credibility and Consumer Attitudes and Purchase Intentions

Past research has also examined the effect of perceived source credibility associated with advertising spokespersons on consumer attitudes (La Ferle & Choi, 2005; MacKenzie & Lutz, 1989; Morimoto & La Ferle, 2008; Pornpitakpan, 2004) and behaviors (Goldsmith, Lafferty, & Newell, 2000; Stanley, Clow, & James, 2011). For example, two marketing studies examined the relationships between impact of perceived spokesperson credibility on attitudes toward print ads, a brand, and purchase behaviors (Clow, James, & Stanely, 2008; Stanley et al., 2011). Findings show that the three dimensions of perceived spokesperson credibility (i.e., expertise, attractiveness, liking) had a significant direct impact on attitudes toward the ad, which directly influenced attitudes toward the brand; attitudes toward the brand also had an effect on purchase intentions.

Furthermore, while attitudes toward the brand have traditionally been utilized as a measure of advertising effectiveness (Lutz, MacKenzie, & Belch, 1981; MacKenzie, Lutz, & Belch, 1986), attitudes toward the product have also been found to predict purchase intentions (e.g., Clow et al., 2008; Iacobucci, Calder, Malthouse, & Duhachek, 1999; Lee & Shin, 2014; Posavac, Sanbonmatsu, Seo, & Iacobucci, 2014; Stanley et al., 2011). For example, in a seminal study examining four alternative models of advertising effectiveness, MacKenzie et al (1986) found that attitudes toward the ad predicted attitudes toward the brand, which in turn predicted intentions to purchase the brand.

Therefore, in the current study, the advertising effects will also be assessed by whether attitudes toward the spokesperson will impact 1) attitudes toward the advertisement, 2) attitudes toward the product, and 3) purchase intentions. In addition, the impact of consumer attitudes toward the ad and consumer attitudes toward the product on purchase intentions will also be

explored. The following hypotheses are proposed to validate these empirical findings in the current study context:

H7a: Attitudes toward the spokesperson will be positively related to attitudes toward the ad.

H7b: Attitudes toward the spokesperson will be positively related to purchase intentions.

H7c: Attitudes toward the spokesperson will be positively related to attitudes toward the product.

H8a: Attitudes toward the ad will be positively related to purchase intentions.

H8b: Attitudes toward the ad will be positively related to attitudes toward the product.

H8c: Attitudes toward the product will be positively related to purchase intentions.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

Undergraduate students from communication courses at a large Northeastern university were the population for this study. Upon approval for the study protocol from the IRB at the university, recruitment of the sample began. Undergraduate students ages 18 and over from all gender, racial, and ethnic groups were invited to participate in the study. They were offered extra course credit for partaking in the research task. Prior to engaging in the research task, participants were required to indicate informed consent, after responding to the recruitment invitation posted by the instructors on the course website and reviewing a consent form linked to the website. Data collection was hosted by an Internet-based survey system, Qualtrics. A quasi-experimental research design was adopted to test the proposed hypotheses and research question.

Participants

The minimum number of participants required for an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) determined by a priori power analysis (Gpower: Faul & Erfelder, 1992) to detect a moderate effect size ($= .25$) at a probability level of 0.05 is 251 participants. The moderate effect size for the sample was targeted based on the information from a meta-analysis that examines similar constructs (Sierra, Hyman, & Heiser, 2012).

A total of 350 undergraduate students from communication courses at a large Northeastern University completed the study. Forty-seven cases were deleted for participants

who failed the manipulation checks, resulting in 303 valid cases. The sample consisted of 55.4% of male participants ($n = 168$) and 44.6% of female participants ($n = 135$). In addition, 64.4% of participants were Caucasian ($n = 195$), followed by 16.8% Asian ($n = 51$), 8.6% Hispanic ($n = 26$), 4.3% two or more races ($n = 13$), 3.0% African American ($n = 9$), 1.3%, other categories ($n = 4$), 0.7% American Indian or Alaskan ($n = 2$), and 0.3% Native Hawaiian ($n = 1$). The average age of participants was 19.39 ($SD = 1.15$).

In order to examine racial congruency between the participant and the spokesperson, Caucasian-only sample ($N = 195$) was used as the final sample. The Caucasian-only sample consisted of 59.5% of male participants ($n = 116$) and 40.5% of female participants ($n = 79$). The average age of the Caucasian-only sample was 19.46 ($SD = 1.15$).

Stimulus

There were three study conditions for the experiment, each featuring one male spokesperson from a different racial group in a mock print ad – including a Caucasian, an African American and an Asian spokesperson in their mid-twenties – that promotes an automobile. These three spokespersons had the appearance of being similar in age and physical attractiveness. They were also presented with identical attire (i.e., suit), facial expression and body position in the print car ad. The car featured in the ad is an automobile model that is highly popular among young adults in terms of style and price; the brand identification of the car is removed from the ad in order to control consumer bias or preference toward the brand. The following ad copy is used in the print ad: *You have to drive it to believe it*. The three mock ads are shown in Appendix 1.

Procedure

Once participants have completed the informed consent process online and accessed the study site that hosts the research material, they were randomly assigned to one of three study conditions – featuring an Asian, Caucasian, or African American as the spokesperson – for a new car ad. Participants first answered a set of measurement items that assessed their age, gender, race, ethnicity, racial identity, ethnic identity, social identity and household income.

Following that, participants responded to a control measure that assessed perceived physical attractiveness of the spokesperson. Afterwards, participants were instructed to envision themselves as a young professional (who graduated from college a year ago) and are in the market for a new and affordable car. Following that, they reviewed the mock car ad on the next screen. After reviewing the mock ad, participants were asked to evaluate the perceived trustworthiness, likeability and expertise of the male spokesperson appearing in mock car ad that they had reviewed.

They then responded to the last set of measures. These measurement items assessed the following variables: perceived similarity between self and the spokesperson, perceived social distance towards the racial group affiliated with the spokesperson, attitudes toward the spokesperson, attitudes toward the ad, attitudes toward the product, and product purchase intentions.

Manipulation Checks

Five measurement items were utilized to conduct the manipulation checks of the stimulus. These items ask the participant about the following features of the ad: 1) product 2) spokesperson (or not), and 3) race of spokesperson. Identification of the product consisted of identifying the advertisement product as a car, when given the choice of selecting 1) a car, 2) a

boat, or 3) a motorcycle. Identification of the spokesperson consisted of identifying the presence of a spokesperson, when given the choice of selecting 1) yes, 2) no, or 3) I don't remember.

Identification of spokesperson race consisted of three "Yes/No" questions regarding the race of the spokesperson, when asked the following: "Does the car ad spokesperson appear to be 1) Caucasian, 2) Asian, 3) African American?"

Measures

The operational definitions of all the variables tested in the research hypotheses and research question are described below.

Ethnic Identity. The variable describes an individual's commitment based on attitudes and behaviors towards group membership of their ethnic group (Helms, 2007). Measures for this variable were adapted from a 10-item subscale – the Ethnic Pride and Belonging – of the Ethnic Identity Scale (Valk & Karu, 2001); they were gauged on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree"(1) to "Strongly Agree" (7). These 10 items include: *I am proud of my ethnic group membership; Being conscious of my ethnic background increases my feelings of confidence; I respect the traditions of my ethnic group; I am greatly interested in the history of my ethnic group; I feel a stronger inner connection with my ethnic group; I enjoy taking part in events of my ethnic group; I am conscious of my ethnic background and of what it means to me; I feel good about my ethnic background; Knowing the history of my ethnic group teaches me to value and understand my fellow ethnic group members and also myself better; I take pride in achievements of my fellow ethnic group members.* The Cronbach's alpha reported by Valk and Karu (2001) was .86.

Racial Identity. The variable indicates an individual's sense of belonging to a group based on race (Helms, 2007). Measurement items for this variable were adapted from the same

Ethnic Identity scale (Valk & Karu, 2001). These items were worded to be parallel to the items used to assess ethnic identity and were assessed on a 7-point Likert-type scale, ranging from “Strongly Disagree”(1) to “Strongly Agree” (7). These 10 items include the following items: *I am proud of my racial group membership; Being conscious of my racial background increases my feelings of confidence; I respect the traditions of my racial group; I am greatly interested in the history of my racial group; I feel a stronger inner connection with my racial group; I enjoy taking part in events of my racial group; I am conscious of my racial background and of what it means to me; I feel good about my racial background; Knowing the history of my racial group teaches me to value and understand my fellow racial group members and also myself better; I take pride in achievements of my fellow racial group members.*

Perceived Similarity. This variable reflects the perceived degree of similarity between the participant and the advertisement spokesperson. It was measured by 6 items adapted from Whittler (1989) – on a 7- point Likert-type scale – ranging from “Strongly disagree” (1) to “Strongly Agree” (7). These items consisted of the following: *The advertisement spokesperson is like someone from my close circle of friends; The advertisement spokesperson is like someone from my larger social network; The advertisement spokesperson is like someone from my peer group; The advertisement spokesperson is like someone from my ethnic group; The advertisement spokesperson is like someone from my racial group; and The advertisement spokesperson is someone like myself (i.e., young adult).* Cronbach’s alpha reliability across all participants for this scale was .81 as reported by a previous study (Lin & Dam, 2015).

Social Distance. This construct demonstrates the perceived social distance between the participant and the racial group affiliated with the spokesperson appearing in the mock print ad. Twelve measurement items adopted from Lin (2014) were used to measure such perception – on

a 7-point scale – ranging from “totally comfortable” (7) to “totally uncomfortable” (1).

Participants were asked to report how comfortable they feel in interacting with individuals associated with the spokesperson’s racial group in different social situations, with the following statement: “Please indicate your comfort level in interacting with someone – who appears to be from the same racial group like the spokesperson in the ad – in the following situations.”

Examples of these situations include the following: *having an individual from this racial group to my next-door neighbor; teaming up with an individual from this racial group in my workgroup; having an individual from this racial group to be my relative through marriage; conversing with an individual from this racial group on my street; reporting to an individual from this racial group as my supervisor; and bonding with an individual from this racial group as a friend.* The variables were recoded such that higher values reflected greater social distance. The reliabilities associated with perceived social distance across all participants toward the three racial groups from a preliminary study conducted by Lin and Dam (2015) were as follows: Asian ($\alpha = .96$), African Americans ($\alpha = .95$) and Caucasians ($\alpha = .97$).

Source Trustworthiness. This variable illustrates perceived trust in the spokesperson. It was measured by five items adopted from Ohanian’s Celebrity Endorser-Credibility scale (1990), on a semantic differential scale. They include the following adjective pairs:

Undependable/Dependable, Dishonest/Honest, Unreliable/Reliable, Insincere/Sincere, and Untrustworthy/Trustworthy. The Cronbach’s alpha reported by Ohanian (1990) was .86.

Source Likeability. This concept assesses how likeable the spokesperson in the mock ad is perceived to be. It was reflected by the five items adopted from Clow, James, and Stanley (2008) on a semantic differential scale. These items encompass the conceptual dimensions below: *Unlikable/likeable, unpleasing/pleasing, unfriendly/friendly, unapproachable/*

approachable, and unagreeable/agreeable. The Cronbach's alpha reported by Clow et al. (2008) was .80.

Source Expertise. This concept reflects the perceived ability of the spokesperson in the mock car ad. Five items adopted from Ohanian (1990) were measured on a semantic differential scale. These items include the following adjective pairs: *Not an expert/Expert*, *Inexperienced/Experienced*, *Unknowledgeable/ Knowledgeable*, *Unqualified/Qualified*, and *Unskilled/Skilled*. The Cronbach's alpha reported by Ohanian (1990) was .89.

Social Identity. The variable describes the self-concept one gains, based on awareness and value attached to one's group membership (e.g., race, ethnicity, gender). It was measured by eight items adapted from the Social and Personal Identities (SIPI) scale (Cronbach's alpha = .79) – by Nario-Redmond, Biernat, Eidelman, and Palenske (2004) – on a 7-point scale (ranging from “Not at all important to who I am” to “Extremely important to who I am”). The 8 items include the following: *The similarity I share with others in my groups; My family nationality or nationalities; The places where I have lived; My gender group; The color of my skin; My being a citizen of my country; The memberships I have in various groups; and My sense of belonging to my own racial group.*”

Attitudes toward the Spokesperson. Attitudes toward the advertisement spokesperson were measured using 4 items ($\alpha = .86$) from past research (Appiah, 2001a; Ohanian, 1990; Clow et al., 2008) on a semantic differential scale. These items asked participants to indicate their attitude toward the spokesperson with the following criteria: *unrelatable/relatable*, *reserved/outgoing*, *unsociable/sociable*, and *insincere/sincere*.

Attitudes toward the Product. Nine semantic differential items from past research (Park & Park, 2013; Lee & Shin, 2014) were adapted to measure participant attitude towards the

automobile. The items contain the following conceptual dimensions: *needed/not needed*; *beneficial/ not beneficial*; *useful/ not useful*; *valuable/ not valuable*; *interesting/ not interesting*; *likable/ dislikable*; *good/ bad*; *favorable/ unfavorable*; *with a high quality/ with a low quality*.

The reliability reported by Park and Park (2013) for these nine items combined is .98.

Attitudes toward the advertisement. Appiah's (1991b) 7- item semantic differential scale was used to examine attitudes toward the advertisement. Participants responded to the following adjective pairs: *bad/good*; *dislike/like*; *boring/interesting*; *negative/positive*; *useless/useful*; *worthless/valuable*; *poor/outstanding*; *not appealing/appealing*; *not attractive/attractive*; and *not likeable/likeable*. The reliability reported by Appiah (1991) for these seven items is .94.

Purchase intentions. Belch's (1981) 3-item semantic differential scale was used to examine purchase intentions. Participants responded to the questions about whether they would consider purchasing a car from the featured spokesperson condition via these three conceptual dimensions: *Likely/ unlikely*, *probable/ improbable* and *possible/ impossible*. The Cronbach's α reported by Belch (1981) is .92.

Demographic Characteristics. Participant gender ("1" = male; "0" = female) and age (fill in) were asked. Annual family/household income was asked via the following question: "Which of the following best describes the annual income of your family/household?" Annual income scaled ranged from "\$50,000 or less" to "\$100,000 or more."

Participants were also asked to specify their biological race via the following categories: White, Black or African American, Hispanic/Latino, Asian, Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander, American Indian or Alaskan Native, two or more races, or Other (fill in). Participant ethnicity was measured by questions developed by Umana-Taylor, Yazedijian, and Bamaca-Gomez (2004). An introduction to the participant was presented first, before they were asked to

identity their ethnicity as follows: *“The U.S. is made up of people of various ethnicities. Ethnicity refers to cultural traditions, beliefs, and behaviors that are passed down through generations. Some examples of the ethnicities that people may identify with are Mexican, Cuban, Nicaraguan, Chinese, Taiwanese, Filipino, Jamaican, African American, Haitian, Italian, Irish, and German. In addition, some people may identify with more than one ethnicity. When you are answering the following questions, we’d like you to think about what YOU consider your ethnicity to be. Please write what you consider to be your ethnicity and refer to this ethnicity as you answer the questions below.”*

Control Measure

Spokesperson physical attractiveness was measured as a control measure. Ohanian (1990) defines attractiveness as the perceived attractiveness of the spokesperson based on physical attributes. Physical attractiveness has been validated as an important indicator of advertising effectiveness (Chao, Wuhler, & Werani, 2005). Five items adopted from Ohanian (1990) were assessed on a 7-point semantic differential scale. These items include the following:

Unattractive/Attractive, Not classy/Classy, Ugly/Beautiful, Plain/Elegant, and Not Sexy/Sexy.

The Cronbach’s alpha reported by Ohanian (1990) is .90.

To examine spokesperson physical attractiveness across the three conditions among Caucasian participants ($N = 195$), a one-way ANOVA was conducted. Levene’s tests for equality of variance for spokesperson attractiveness was not significant, demonstrating that group variances across conditions were equal. However, the one-way ANOVA revealed statistically significant differences for physical attractiveness of the spokesperson, $F(2, 191) = 6.63, p \leq .001$. Post hoc comparisons using Tukey HSD test indicated that while the mean scores for the Caucasian spokesperson ($M = 5.66, SD = .87$) and the African American spokesperson ($M =$

5.60, $SD = .86$) were not significantly different, both mean scores were significantly greater than the mean score for the Asian spokesperson ($M = 5.07$, $SD = .93$). These results suggest that participants rated the Asian spokesperson as less physically attractive – relative to both the Caucasian and African American spokespersons – both were perceived as equally physically attractive.

Manipulation Checks

To check the effectiveness of the racial manipulations used in this study, Chi-square tests analyzed whether the advertisement featured a car, a spokesperson, and a Caucasian (or African American or Asian spokesperson). Specifically, the Chi-square tests revealed the following results:

Identification of the Product. All study participants, with the exception of one case, were able to correctly identify the product in the advertisement as a car when given the choice of selecting from 1) car, 2) boat, and 3) bicycle. The one case that incorrectly identified the product was removed from further analyses. Specifically, 99.7% of participants ($N = 345$) correctly identified the product, $\chi^2 (1, n = 346) = .0029, p = .999$.

Identification of the Spokesperson. In terms of identifying whether a spokesperson was featured in the advertisement, two participants reported “I don’t remember” and thirty-four participants reported that the advertisement did not feature a spokesperson. The data associated with these thirty-six cases were removed from further analyses. Specifically, 90.2% of participants ($N = 312$) correctly identified that a spokesperson was featured in the advertisement, $\chi^2 (1, n = 312) = .150, p = .999$.

Race of Spokesperson. Results from testing the three items identifying the spokesperson race suggested that spokesperson race manipulation was effective. Specifically, 93% of

participants in the Caucasian spokesperson condition ($n = 107$) correctly identified the spokesperson as Caucasian, $\chi^2 (1, n = 107) = .0070, p = .999$. Similarly, 96.5% of participants in the Asian spokesperson condition ($n = 110$) correctly identified the spokesperson as Asian, $\chi^2 (1, n = 110) = .035, p = .999$. Likewise, 96.7% of participants in the African American spokesperson condition ($n = 119$) correctly identified the spokesperson as African American, $\chi^2 (1, n = 119) = .033, p = .999$.

After removing the cases that failed the manipulation checks, the final number of participants ($N = 303$) for each of the experimental conditions are as follows: Caucasian spokesperson condition ($n = 97$), African American spokesperson condition ($n = 105$), and Asian spokesperson condition ($n = 101$). In order to measure racial congruency between the participant and the spokesperson, Caucasian-only sample ($N = 195$) was used as the final sample. The final number of Caucasian participants ($N = 195$) for each of the experimental conditions are as follows: Caucasian spokesperson condition ($n = 67$), African American spokesperson condition ($n = 68$), and Asian spokesperson condition ($n = 60$).

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The chapter reports the statistical results for validating the structure of the measurement scales and screening the measurement scale reliability. It also presents descriptive statistics for concepts tested in the research hypotheses. This is followed by describing the ANCOVA results, generated from testing the eight research hypotheses.

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted to validate the conceptual dimensions associated with the variables tested in the study. The principal component factor analysis, using a varimax rotation was used to explore the factor structure of the following 12 variables: racial identity, ethnic identity, social identity, perceived similarity, perceived social distance, perceived spokesperson likeability, perceived spokesperson trustworthiness, perceived spokesperson expertise, attitudes toward the spokesperson, attitudes toward the ad, attitudes toward the product, and purchase intentions.

For identity measures, all 10 items for racial identity loaded onto one factor ($\alpha = .94$) with an eigenvalue of 6.38 and accounted for 63.78% of the variance. As for the ethnic identity construct, all 10 items loaded onto one factor ($\alpha = .96$) with an eigenvalue of 7.21 and accounted for 72.13% of the variance. With the concept of social identity, its eight measurement items loaded onto one factor ($\alpha = .85$) with an eigenvalue of 3.87 and accounted for 48.31% of the variance.

The six measurement items for the concept of perceived similarity showed that one of the items had very high correlation ($r = .80$) with several other items. After removing this item, a single factor emerged from the EFA ($\alpha = .76$), with an eigenvalue of 2.72 and accounted for 54.38% of the variance. To improve the inter-item reliability, one item was deleted to yield a Cronbach's $\alpha = .80$. The following items were removed from the scale: *The advertisement spokesperson is someone from my ethnic group*; and *The advertisement spokesperson is like someone from my racial group*. The final perceived similarity scale consisted of the following four items: 1) *The advertisement spokesperson is like someone from my close circle of friends*; 2) *The advertisement spokesperson is like someone from my larger social network*; 3) *The advertisement spokesperson is like someone from my peer group*; and 4) *The advertisement spokesperson is someone like myself (i.e., young adult)*.

The 12-item social distance measure loaded onto one factor ($\alpha = .97$), with an eigenvalue of 9.18 and accounted for 76.51% of the variance.

All perceived credibility measures were found to each load onto a separate single factor. The five items for trustworthiness loaded onto one factor ($\alpha = .95$) and generated an eigenvalue of 4.11; the factor accounted for 82.11% of the variance. For the likeability variable, all 5 items loaded onto one factor ($\alpha = .92$) and generated an eigenvalue of 3.75; the model accounted for 74.99% of the variance. All five measurement items for the expertise variable also loaded onto one factor ($\alpha = .96$) and generated an eigenvalue of 4.32; the equation accounted for 86.44% of the variance.

All consumer evaluation measures were also found to load onto one factor. The 4-item scale that measured attitudes toward the spokesperson loaded onto one factor ($\alpha = .85$) with an eigenvalue of 2.75 and accounted for 68.77% of the variance. Likewise, the 10 items assessing

attitudes toward the ad loaded onto one factor ($\alpha = .96$) with an eigenvalue of 7.44 and accounted for 74.42% of the variance. The 9 items that gauged attitudes toward the product also loaded onto one factor ($\alpha = .95$) with an eigenvalue of 6.35 and accounted for 70.53% of the variance. Lastly, the three items measuring purchase intentions also loaded onto one factor ($\alpha = .93$) with an eigenvalue of 2.62 and accounted for 87.23% of the variance.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted in AMOS, using maximum likelihood model estimation. The CFA results indicated a good model fit for the three identity variables. The 10-item measures for racial identity resulted in a good model fit ($\chi^2(23) = 28.42, p = .20$; CFI = .996, RMSEA = .035), so did the 10-item measures for ethnic identity ($\chi^2(23) = 38.67, p \leq .05$; CFI = .991, RMSEA = .059). Likewise, the eight item measures for social identity generated a good model fit ($\chi^2(12) = 17.23, p = .14$, CFI = .990, RMSEA = .048).

The moderating variables also demonstrated good model fits. Perceived similarity indicated that the five item measurement resulted in a good model fit ($\chi^2(3) = 6.38, p = .173$; CFI = .992, RMSEA = .055) and social distance indicated the 12-item measurement resulted in a good model fit ($\chi^2(28) = 54.99, p \leq .01$; CFI = .99, RMSEA = .07).

In regards to perceived spokesperson credibility measures, the five-item measurement for trustworthiness had a good model fit ($\chi^2(4) = 5.76, p = .22$; CFI = .998, RMSEA = .048), the five-item measurement for likeability resulted in a good model fit ($\chi^2(2) = 2.74, p = .254$; CFI = .999, RMSEA = .044). The five-item measurement for expertise also resulted in a good model fit ($\chi^2(4) = 5.68, p = .22$; CFI = .99, RMSEA = .047).

As two out of three items evaluating consumer purchase intentions were highly correlated ($r = .93$ or higher), only one item from this measure – “*How unlikely/likely are you to purchase*

the car that appears in the ad?” – was kept as a single-item criterion variable. The two items deleted were: “*How improbable/probable are you to purchase the car in the ad?*” and “*How impossible/possible are you to purchase the car in the ad?*”

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for the 12 key variables among the Caucasian-only sample. All variables were measured on a 7-point scale. In the Caucasian spokesperson experimental condition, the mean values of the key variables demonstrate that ethnic identity ($M = 5.22$, $SD = .99$) is moderately high, whereas the mean scores for racial identity ($M = 4.83$, $SD = 1.01$), social identity ($M = 4.71$, $SD = .94$) and perceived similarity ($M = 4.63$, $SD = .98$) are moderate. The mean values for social distance ($M = 2.05$, $SD = 0.90$) were low, suggesting low social distance towards Caucasians. Social distance was recoded such that higher values reflected greater social distance. In terms of spokesperson credibility, the mean values for trustworthiness ($M = 4.49$, $SD = .83$), likeability ($M = 4.79$, $SD = .83$), and expertise ($M = 4.44$, $SD = 1.05$) all appeared to be in the moderate range. Attitudes toward the spokesperson ($M = 4.58$, $SD = .75$), attitudes toward the ad ($M = 4.32$, $SD = .99$), and attitudes toward the product ($M = 4.47$, $SD = 1.05$) all had moderate mean value scores. Lastly, purchase intentions ($M = 3.55$, $SD = 1.64$) revealed a low moderate mean value.

In the African American spokesperson experimental condition ($n = 68$), while the mean value is moderately high for ethnic identity ($M = 5.30$, $SD = 1.18$), they were moderate for racial identity ($M = 4.85$, $SD = 1.13$), social identity ($M = 4.62$, $SD = 1.00$) and perceived similarity ($M = 4.40$, $SD = 1.07$). The mean values for social distance ($M = 2.06$, $SD = .97$) was low, suggesting low social distance towards racial groups affiliated with the African American spokesperson among Caucasian participants. Social distance was recoded such that higher values

reflected greater social distance. In terms of spokesperson credibility, the mean values for trustworthiness ($M = 4.95$, $SD = 1.18$), likeability ($M = 5.18$, $SD = 1.12$), and expertise ($M = 4.92$, $SD = 1.16$) were all moderate. Attitudes toward the spokesperson ($M = 5.03$, $SD = 1.14$) also demonstrated moderately high mean values. Attitudes toward the ad ($M = 4.75$, $SD = 1.20$), attitudes toward the product ($M = 4.58$, $SD = 1.26$), and purchase intentions ($M = 4.07$, $SD = 1.66$) all had moderate mean scores.

In the Asian spokesperson experimental condition ($n = 60$), while the mean values for racial identity ($M = 5.14$, $SD = 1.03$) and ethnic identity ($M = 5.29$, $SD = 1.13$) were moderately high, they were moderate for social identity ($M = 4.79$, $SD = .92$) and low moderate for perceived similarity ($M = 3.85$, $SD = 1.20$). The mean value for social distance ($M = 2.25$, $SD = 1.11$) was low, suggesting less social distance towards racial groups affiliated with the Asian spokesperson among Caucasian participants. Social distance was recoded such that higher values reflected greater social distance. In terms of spokesperson credibility, the mean values for trustworthiness ($M = 4.78$, $SD = .80$), likeability ($M = 4.85$, $SD = .83$), and expertise ($M = 4.71$, $SD = 1.10$) were all moderate. Attitudes toward the spokesperson ($M = 4.56$, $SD = .95$), attitudes toward the ad ($M = 4.32$, $SD = 1.09$), attitudes toward the product ($M = 4.69$, $SD = .97$), and purchase intentions ($M = 4.11$, $SD = 1.55$) all had moderate mean scores as well.

Homogeneity Across Experimental Conditions

The ANOVA procedure was utilized to ascertain the homogeneity of variance across experimental conditions on categorical and interval-level variables. No significant differences among the three experimental groups were found for sex ($F(2, 192) = 1.10$, $p = .34$), age ($F(2, 189) = .412$, $p = .66$), sex ($F(2, 192) = 1.10$, $p = .34$), annual income of family/household ($F(2, 191) = .685$, $p = .51$), racial identity ($F(2, 294) = 1.69$, $p = .19$), ethnic identity ($F(2, 190) = .112$,

$p = .89$), and social identity ($F(2, 184) = .486, p = .62$). In addition, Levene's tests for equality of variance for variables revealed that sex, age, annual income of family/household, racial identity, ethnic identity, and social identity were not significant, demonstrating that group variances across experimental conditions are equal.

Research Hypotheses

To test H1 and H2 (see Table 3), a one-way between-subjects analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted to assess the relations between social identity, racial identity and ethnic identity across the three study conditions, which featured three multicultural spokespersons. Results show that the main effect for experimental conditions was not significant, $F(2, 179) = .45, p = .64$. Racial identity had a significant main effect ($F(1, 179) = 8.99, p \leq .01$), providing support to H1, which postulates that racial identity will significantly impact social identity. Likewise, ethnic identity had a significant main effect on social identity ($F(1, 179) = 10.22, p \leq .01$), supporting H2, which presumes ethnic identity to significantly influence social identity.

The ANCOVA results for testing H3-H5 (see Table 4), which examined attitudes toward the spokesperson, indicated a significant main effect for experimental conditions, $F(2, 172) = 6.935, p \leq .001$. A post-hoc test, using the Bonferroni procedure, was conducted and found that Caucasian participants in the African American spokesperson condition ($M = 5.07$) had significantly more positive attitudes toward the spokesperson than the Asian spokesperson condition ($M = 4.51$) and the Caucasian spokesperson condition ($M = 4.66$), in that order. There was no significant difference between the Caucasian spokesperson and Asian spokesperson conditions.

However, the main effect for consumer social identity on attitudes toward the spokesperson was not significant ($F(1, 172) = 1.54, p = .22$). Thus, H5 is not supported. Interaction effects for social distance ($F(1, 172) = .018, p = .90$) was also not significant, invalidating H5, which posit a significant moderating effect of perceived social distance on the relationship between consumer social identity and attitudes toward the spokesperson, respectively. The main effect for perceived social distance, ($F(1, 272) = .746, p = .39$) was also not significant.

Hypothesis 4 predicts that perceived similarity will be a positive moderator between perceived social identity and attitudes toward the spokesperson. However, perceived similarity and social identity were not found to significantly correlate with each other ($r = .10, p = .20$) (see Table 2). Thus, hypothesis 4 is not supported. However, the main effect for perceived similarity ($F(1, 172) = 11.59, p \leq .001$) was significant.

An ANCOVA procedure tested H6a-c and H7a (see Table 5). Results demonstrate that the main effects for experimental condition ($F(2, 181) = .74, p = .48$), perceived trustworthiness ($F(1, 181) = 1.5, p = .22$), and perceived likeability ($F(1, 181) = .76, p = .38$), were not statistically significant. Hypotheses 6a and 6b, which proposed a positive influence of perceived trustworthiness and likability of the spokesperson on consumer attitudes toward the ad, are thus not supported. Perceived spokesperson expertise, however, had a significant main effect on consumer attitudes toward the ad ($F(1, 181) = 25.9, p \leq .001$), validating H6c, which postulates a positive relationship between spokesperson expertise and consumer attitude toward the ad. Similarly, attitudes toward the spokesperson also had a main effect on consumer attitudes toward the ad ($F(1, 181) = 4.33, p \leq .05$), confirming H7a, which predicts attitude toward the spokesperson and the ad will be positively related.

The ANCOVA procedure that tested H7c (see Table 6), which examined the relationships between attitudes toward the spokesperson and the ad produced a significant main effect for the experimental condition on attitudes toward the product ($F(2, 184) = 3.12, p \leq .05$). A Bonferroni post-hoc test revealed that participants in the Asian spokesperson condition ($M = 4.79$) had significantly more positive attitudes toward the product than participants in the African American spokesperson condition ($M = 4.38$). No significant differences were found between the Asian spokesperson and Caucasian spokesperson conditions or between the Caucasian spokesperson and African American spokesperson conditions. The main effect tested by H7c, which hypothesizes that attitudes toward the spokesperson and the product will be positively related, was also statistically significant and supported H8b, ($F(1, 184) = 7.28, p \leq .01$). In addition, attitudes toward the advertisement was found to have a significant main effect on attitudes toward the product ($F(1, 184) = 40.08, p \leq .001$), confirming H8b, which speculates that attitudes toward the ad and the product are significantly related.

ANCOVA results for testing H7b, H8a and H8c (see Table 7) indicated that the main effects for experimental condition ($F(2, 183) = 1.52, p = .22$ and attitudes toward the spokesperson ($F(1, 183) = .13, p = .72$) were not statistically significant. Therefore, H7b, which proposed a positive relationship between attitudes toward the spokesperson and purchase intentions, is not supported. Attitudes toward the ad ($F(1, 183) = 10.14, p \leq .01$) produced a main effect on purchase intentions, supporting H8a, which presupposes a significant relation between attitudes toward the ad and purchase intentions. Likewise, attitudes toward the product had a main effect on purchase intentions ($F(1, 183) = 22.07, p \leq .001$), validating H8c, which presumes a significant relationship between attitudes toward the product and purchase intentions.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The current study is the first to test multicultural advertising effects by integrating several bodies of theoretical literature. These theories include social identity theory and social distance theory, which make up the conceptual framework for the research. Based on this conceptual framework, the study explores intergroup relations in the context of multicultural advertising strategies by examining the impact of exposure to advertising spokespersons of three different races on consumer attitudes and behaviors. Specifically, this study attempts to examine how an individual's social identity – a sense of belonging that can be obtained through group membership into categories such as race and ethnicity (Tajifel, 1978; Taijfel & Turner, 1986) – is influenced by an individual's racial identity and ethnic identity. It also explores the influence of perceived social influence (Bagozzi & Lee, 2002; Kelman, 1958, 1961) – a concept widely examined in the sociology literature – to help explain how such psychological distance along with perceived social identity may determine the integration between individuals of multiracial backgrounds in a marketing context.

While research on social identity (French et al., 2013; Worrell & Gardner-Kitt, 2006) and multicultural advertising (Appiah, 2001b; Burton, 2000; Green, 1991) have examined the influence of racial and ethnic identity on group membership, these two concepts were seldom treated as two separate variables and hence their potential conceptual differences were also

overlooked. An important contribution of the current study is that it successfully distinguished the racial and ethnic identity as related but separate conceptual dimensions, in contrast to past research that has treated these two concepts as interchangeable or synonymous (Appiah, 2001b; Burton, 2000; French, Coleman, & DeLorenzo, 2013; Green, 1991). The present study also applied the social distance construct outside of examining racial bias between groups to determine what role it could play in a multicultural marketing context.

Findings from this study demonstrated that racial identity positively predicted one's social identity, such that greater racial identity was related to greater social identity. Hence, the more an individual reported belonging to a group based on their race and becoming affiliated with a particular category (Helms, 1999; Phinney, 1990; Wakefield & Hudley, 2007), the greater their self-concept resulting in greater social identity (Tajifel, 1978; Tajifel & Turner, 1986). Likewise, findings also showed that an individual's ethnic identity positively predicted their social identity, such that an individual's commitment to a particular cultural group (Meyers, 2015) predicted their social identity.

The current study found that while racial identity and ethnic identity separately and partially predicted one's social identity, there was no significant interaction effect between them on social identity. Hence, these results established racial identity and ethnic identity as two conceptually distinct concepts that are related to social identity, instead of interchangeable concepts related to social identity (e.g., Messick & Mackie, 1989; McKinley et al., 2014; Rivadeneyra, Ward, & Gordon, 2007; Tajifel, 1981; Tajifel & Turner, 1986). These results thus provided previously unavailable insight into social identity theory via measuring racial identity and ethnic identity and demonstrating their unique and significant contributions to social identity.

More importantly, an individual's racial identity is not the same as his/her ethnic identity or social identity. In particular, racial identity is a social construct, which is prescribed via physically and/or socially prescribed (Helms, 2007; Markus, 2008; Wakefield & Hudley, 2007). Ethnic identity, however, reflects a personal choice of one's cultural affiliation/values (Helms, 2007; Phinney & Alipuria, 1997; Meyers, 2015). As such, both racial identity and ethnic identity contribute to an individual's social identity, but social identity is also determined by other social and environmental factors such as peers, media and popular culture (Tajifel, 1981; Tajifel & Turner, 1986; Umana-Taylor, Yazedjian, & Bamaca-Gomez, 2004). This social identity could have an influence on an individual's perception of others from different racial and/or ethnic backgrounds.

Past studies on perceived racial congruency between consumers and advertising spokespersons found that such congruency was positively related to attitudes toward the spokesperson and attitudes toward the advertisements (Aaker, Brumbaugh, & Grier, 2000; Morimoto & La Ferle, 2008; Phua, 2012; Whittler, 1991; Whittler, 2002). The current study utilized a Caucasian-only sample and found that attitudes toward the African American spokesperson was the most positive, relative to both the Caucasian and Asian American spokespersons. This was evidenced by the lack of statistical significant differences in attitudes toward the spokesperson or attitudes toward the ad were found between the Asian and Caucasian spokesperson groups.

This surprising finding is similar to that of a study by David, Morrison, Johnson, and Ross (2002). David and his colleagues maintained that the favorable attitudes toward the African American spokespersons could be an artifact of the prevalence of African Americans in the entertainment industry. For example, Denzel Washington was named the top entertainer of

Hollywood and Beyonce Knowles was voted the top selling music artist in the world (Top 101 News, 2015). Hence, it would not be surprising that popular African American celebrities, including famous athletes, could potentially influence consumer attitudes.

Similarly, Appiah (2001) found preference for an ad featuring an African American spokesperson over an ad featuring a Caucasian spokesperson among Caucasian and African American participants, in a study that examined the impact of ethnic identification with one's own ethnic group on the overall ratings of the ads. Likewise, the Caucasian-only sample in this current study reported a moderately high level of perceived ethnic identity but indicated significantly more positive attitudes toward the African American spokesperson than the Caucasian or Asian spokespersons. A plausible explanation for this finding could be attributed to the social desirability factor among participants who wish to appear unprejudiced towards racially diverse advertisements (Brunel, Tietje, & Greenwald, 2004; Petty, Fleming & White, 1999).

In addition, an alternative explanation could be that as an individual's social identity may not be strongly tied to his or her racial or ethnic identity in contemporary American multicultural society, it is likely that study participants evaluated the spokesperson without necessarily being prejudiced by any preconceived racial bias. This shrinking or diminished social bias could be moderated by a lack of low perceived social distance between the multicultural millennial generation consumers.

To further our understanding of the effectiveness of racial congruence between consumers and advertising spokespersons as a marketing strategy targeting the millennial generation, this research investigated the moderating role of perceived social distance. This was the first effort to explore the moderating effects of perceived social distance in a marketing

context. As the concept of social distance reflects the perceived level of comfort in accepting an individual from another racial group, it could be an important factor in explaining multicultural advertising effects above and beyond the ethnic identity, racial identity and social identity factors. Social distance theory proposes that individuals have greater social distance towards individuals of different races (Borgardus, 1959; Parrillo & Donoghue, 2005; Randall & Delbridge, 2005; Weaver, 2008). For example, Caucasians should have less perceived social distance towards other Caucasians than individuals from other races.

However, a surprising finding in this study is that no significant differences emerged in perceived social distance among the three experimental conditions, which featured a Caucasian, an African American, or Asian advertising spokesperson. The unexpected finding associated with perceived social distance could be explained by the population trends associated with the millennial generation. According to Pew Research Center (2010), approximately 85% of the millennial generation (i.e., teens and those in their twenties) approved of interracial marriages, compared to only 55% among individuals 50-to-64-years-old who reported the same. Approximately 12% of newly married couples in 2013 consisted of individuals from different racial backgrounds (Pew Research Center, 2015). Multiracial births have also risen – from 1% in 1970 – to 10% in 2013 (Pew Research Center, 2015).

Furthermore, Pew Research Center (2010) also reported that 54% of all millennials, regardless of race, reported having friends of a different racial background. In a national study that examined millennials and racial bias – conducted by MTV Strategic Insights and David Binder Research (2014) – 91% believed in equal treatment for all individuals regardless of racial background and 72% reported racial equality is more evident in their millennial generation than older generations. Bouie (2016) contends that the millennial generation believes in racial

“colorblindness,” with 73% proposing that society could improve if race was ignored.

Specifically, Bouie (2016) argues that while millennials may be racially sensitive to the diverse societal landscape, they may not fully comprehend race relations in society today. For example, the Marist College Institute for Public Opinion (2015) reported that 58% of all respondents in a national poll conveyed that race relations in the U.S. were worse than they were a year ago, due to current racial tensions in society (Myers, 2015). Therefore, perceived social distance could be an artifact of race relation beliefs that differ between the millennial generation and their proceeding generations. For instance, past research has conceptualized race as a social construct, suggesting that as social attitudes change, attitudes toward race will also change (Markus, 2008).

Of equal importance as a factor in explaining the impact of multicultural advertising is the concept of perceived similarity between the consumer and spokesperson. Past research found that perceived similarity between oneself and others is based on racial identity (Whittler, 1989; Whittler & DiMeo, 1991). Perceived similarity has been proven to have a positive impact on consumer evaluation, such that perceived racial congruency between a consumer and spokesperson lead to more positive attitudes (e.g., Appiah & Lui, 2009; Qualls & Moore, 1990; Simpson, Snuggs, Christiansen, & Simples, 2000; Whittler & DiMeo, 1991). For example, one study found that Caucasian participants reported more perceived similarity towards a Caucasian spokesperson – who appeared in a product advertisement – than towards an African American spokesperson (Whittler & DiMeo, 1991). Results from this study also indicated that as perceived similarity had a significant impact on attitudes toward the spokesperson, greater perceived similarity predicted more positive attitudes toward the spokesperson. These findings not only confirm past multicultural research that examined perceived similarity, but also suggest that exposure to an advertisement featuring a racially congruent spokesperson can positively

influence consumer attitudes and behaviors. Applying this knowledge to the current marketing landscape, incorporating diversity into promotional materials could potentially facilitate more positive consumer attitudes and greater purchase intentions among the multicultural consumer.

Current findings also indicate that the Asian spokesperson was perceived to be less physically attractive than either the Caucasian or African American spokesperson. No significant differences were found for the physical attractiveness level between the Caucasian and African American spokesperson. A plausible explanation for this finding could be the under-representation of Asian males in advertising, popular culture and in mass media (Schug, Alt, Lu, Gosin, & Fay, 2015; Wilkins, Chan, & Kaiser, 2011). Schug et al (2015) contend that the perceptions of Asian men are negatively impacted by their cultural invisibility in mass media, such that the few available depictions of Asian males are often racially stereotyped. These stereotypes of Asian males could reflect a lack in masculinity and physical attractiveness (Mok, 1999, Wilkins et al., 2011).

In a study examining perceived physical attractiveness, Wilken et al (2011) found that Asians as a racial group, regardless of gender, are perceived to be significantly more feminine than Caucasians and African Americans; this feminine trait is a characteristic that is primarily attractive in women but not in men. Thus, societal stereotypical perceptions of Asian males as feminine could partially explain why both the Caucasian and African American spokespersons were perceived to be more physically attractive among participants. More specifically, past research has found that physical attractiveness and ideals of beauty differ across cultures and are unique to different societal locations (Englis, Solomon, & Ashmore, 1994; Frith, Shaw, & Cheng, 2005; Xie, & Zhang, 2013). Hence, it is possible that Asian males with more feminine

characteristics are less attractive to American consumers, as American culture is highly masculine in nature (Kimmel, 2008).

Marketing research has suggested that perceived physical attractiveness of the spokesperson is an important indicator of source credibility (Clow, James, & Sisk, 2011; Ohanian, 1990). In addition, other pertinent dimensions of perceived credibility include expertise, likeability, and trustworthiness (Hovland, 1952, Ohanian, 1990). In terms of the influence of perceived credibility of the spokesperson in consumer attitudes, study results are consistent with past research which found that the expertise dimension of perceived credibility positively influenced attitudes toward the ad (O'Mahony & Meenaghan, 1998; Simpson & Kahler, 1986; Stanley et al., 2011; Yoon & Kim, 2016). These results are consistent with findings that demonstrate the positive relationship between perceived spokesperson credibility and attitudes toward the ad (e.g., Goldsmith et al., 2000; Morimoto & Ferle, 2008; Pornipitakan, 2004).

Even though perceived expertise was found to positively influence attitudes toward the ad, there was no significant difference found among the three experimental conditions. The positive relationship between perceived spokesperson expertise and positive attitudes toward the ad existed was not discriminated across the three multicultural spokespersons. Kenton (1989) proposes that judgments about spokesperson expertise could include indicators such as age, position of leadership, and social background (i.e., perceived similarity in status, values, interests, and needs). Hence, a potential explanation for the lack of difference among the three experimental conditions could include the possibility that participants were unable to make a valid evaluation of the level of perceived expertise, based on the lack of visual expertise indicators. Due to the fact that each of the spokespersons were identically dressed in a suit and

had similar facial expressions, age and gender, the experimental manipulation could have potentially resulted in similar perceived expertise regardless of spokesperson race.

While perceived expertise was found to positively impact attitudes toward the ad in this current study, neither perceived trustworthiness nor likeability of the spokesperson significantly predicted attitudes toward the ad. The lack of these significant relationships is consistent with past findings from a study conducted by Stanley, Clow, and James (2011) examining source credibility and consumer evaluations of print advertisements. Stanley et al. (2011) did not find perceived trustworthiness to be related to attitudes toward the ad, when examining the relationship between race and gender congruency in print advertisements. Therefore, perceived trustworthiness could potentially be a less significant dimension of spokesperson credibility than previously found. Similarly, in a study examining the relationship between credibility and visual cues (i.e. race and gender) of salespersons, Jones, Moore, Stanaland, and Wyatt (1998) failed to find support for the assumption that trustworthiness was a predictor of purchase intentions. Jones et al (1998) contended that trustworthiness can not be determined from an initial exposure to an advertisement whereas perceived expertise could be established by immediate visual characteristics such as the gender or race of the salesperson. These results also suggest that across multicultural spokespersons in this study, there was no discrimination in trustworthiness among diverse spokespersons.

Findings revealed that attitudes toward the spokesperson and the ad were positively related to attitudes toward the product, which in turn predicted consumer purchase intentions. Specifically, as consumers reported more positive attitudes toward the spokesperson, they also reported more positive attitudes toward the product. Likewise, attitudes toward the ad positively predicted attitudes toward the product. In addition, the study found that greater liking of the

product was related to greater intentions to purchase the product. These findings are aligned with past research that found support for positive relationships between these measures of consumer effectiveness (e.g., Iacobucci, Calder, Malthouse, & Duhachek, 1999; Lafferty & Goldsmith, 2004; Lee & Shin, 2014; Lutz, MacKenzie, & Belch, 1981; MacKenzie, Lutz, & Belch, 1986; Posavac, Sanbonmatsu, Seo, & Iacobucci, 2014).

An interesting aspect of this finding is that the Caucasian-only sample exposed to the Asian spokespersons reported more positive attitudes toward the product than the Caucasian-only sample who were exposed to the Caucasian and African American advertising spokespersons. A possible explanation for this finding could be that Asian Americans have been overwhelmingly represented in technology product ads in print (e.g., cars, stereo speakers, electronics, computers), which may evoke the “model minority” stereotype about Asian Americans. This stereotype could project an image of Asian Americans as technically competent members of society who have a strong work ethic and outstanding analytical skills (Cohen, 1992; Taylor & Lee, 1994; Taylor & Stern, 1997). In a content analysis of magazine advertisements, Taylor and Lee (1994) found that 75.4% of print ads featuring Asian models in the sample were for technology-based products (i.e., computers, automobiles, electronics), compared to 34.8% of print ads featuring African American models.

Furthermore, a content analysis examining the relationship between product category and stereotypes with 1,300 prime time television commercial found that Asians were disproportionately represented in products associated with stereotypical characteristics such as affluence and business settings (Taylor & Stern, 1997). These findings suggest that general “model minority” stereotypes of Asian Americans were reflected in marketing campaigns (Taylor & Lee, 1994; Taylor & Stern, 1997). Results also suggest that advertisers perceive Asian

American spokespersons to be successful at endorsing technology-based products. For example, a study by Cohen (1992) found that Asian spokespersons represented in a high-technology engineering product advertisement garnered more favorable consumer attitudes toward the product than Caucasian spokespersons. Thus, the stereotypical portrayal of Asian Americans spokespersons as the “model minority” – who are seen as affluent, technically competent, and highly educated – could potentially impact consumer attitudes toward technology-oriented products such as a car.

Implications for Multicultural Advertising

This is the first study to examine the relationships among the influence of racial and ethnic identity on social identity and the impact of social distance and perceived similarity on consumer attitudes and purchase intentions in an attempt to gain a better understanding of the impact of multicultural advertising. Past research has separately examined the effects of multicultural advertising on consumer evaluations of advertisements featuring spokespersons of various racial backgrounds (Appiah, 2001a; Appiah & Liu, 2009; Whittler & Spira, 2002; Morimoto & La Ferle, 2008), the influence of intergroup relations through social identity (Harwood & Roy, 2005; Mastro, 2015; Tajifel & Turner, 1986), and perceived social distance among various racial groups (Parrillo & Donoghue, 2005; Randall & Delbridge, 2005; Weaver, 2008).

Given the growth of the multicultural consumer (Franklin, 2014), research addressing both the effectiveness of the multicultural advertisement and the inter relationships among various racial groups is much needed. This study provides important implications for multicultural research by focusing on how intergroup relations may influence consumer evaluation when exposed to advertisements featuring various racial and ethnic backgrounds. By integrating

several different theoretical traditions and bridging the empirical gaps on multiculturalism research in the marketing literature, this study provided valuable contributions to help guide future research in the growing multicultural marketing environment.

In particular, this study expanded advertising spokesperson credibility research by examining the relationships between exposure to multicultural advertisements and consumer attitudes – toward the spokesperson, the ad, and the product – and purchase intentions. The examination of these key consumer variables provide practical implications for marketing companies and advertisers who are attempting to reach the multicultural consumer, which is a demographic segment that is not only projected to have a combined spending power of \$3.8 trillion by 2017 (Franklin, 2014) but also currently represent 38% of the U.S. population and totaling more than 120 million people combined (Nielsen, 2015). Pew Research Center (2016) reported that the reported median annual household income for Asian Americans is \$66,000 in 2013, far exceeding the national median annual household income of \$49,000. This is another indication of the shifting demographic buying power as a result of demographic trends.

Previous research has indicated that the reluctance to employ multicultural advertising strategies stems from concerns over unfavorable marketing effectiveness among the majority consumers, particularly when they're exposed to multicultural advertising (Aaker, Brumbaugh, & Grier, 2000). However, the findings from the current study demonstrated that exposure to the African American spokesperson resulted in more positive attitudes toward the spokesperson with a Caucasian-only sample. These findings demonstrate that Caucasians appear to be receptive to multicultural advertisements featuring spokespersons from a different racial background. Results will benefit marketing companies by the realization that exposure to multicultural advertisements will not negatively impact consumer effectiveness among the market majority.

By examining the intergroup relations via multicultural advertising, this study helps increase the knowledge that could assist marketing companies and advertisers to better understand the effect of multicultural advertising strategies and the potential to present racially-diverse spokesperson in advertising campaigns. In particular, the millennial generation participants have offered us a good glimpse into the values and attitudes of a group of emerging adults whose social identity has been influenced by their socialization in an increasingly multiracial and multicultural environment.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

With the population growth of minority racial groups, research addressing the effectiveness of multicultural advertising is an important topic in marketing communication research. As consumers become more heavily bombarded with an overabundance of advertising messages, marketers need to understand the process of effective advertising strategies in order to best influence consumers (Yilmaz, Telci, Bodur, & Iscioglu, 2011). This study examined the relationship between exposure to multicultural spokespersons and the impact this exposure has on consumer attitudes and purchase intentions. The current research findings provided new and additional theoretical explanations to explain the effectiveness of multicultural advertising strategies, which found that the use of racially-targeted ads increased the persuasiveness of the campaign of consumers from the targeted racial group (e.g., Appiah, 2001a; Ferle, 2009; Green, 1999). Results from this study suggest that the utilization of multicultural advertising will influence consumer attitudes and behaviors across the board because multicultural marketing strategies will be received as more reflective of the on-going demographic changes in our society.

Limitations.

The current study has several limitations that are worth noting. First, convenience sampling of undergraduate students at a large Northeastern University provided a racial

participant sample consisting of primarily Caucasian participants (64.4%). Second, in order to examine racial congruency between participants and the spokesperson, a Caucasian-only sample was used. Because of the nature of examining multicultural advertising, expanding the study to include more racially diverse participants could reveal more depth in the unique contributions of an individual's racial identity and ethnic identity to social identity. A more racially balanced sample could also help us better understand how these relationships impact consumer attitudes and behaviors across the board. In addition, because convenience sampling was used, findings from this study might be not entirely generalizable to other types of consumers and demographics.

Third, the research attempted to control the level of physical attractiveness of the spokesperson by utilizing three spokespersons with a presumed similar level of physical attractiveness. Past credibility research in advertising has proven that spokesperson physical attractiveness is an important indicator of product evaluation (Joseph, 1982, Kahle & Homer, 1985). However, participants found the Asian spokesperson to be the least physically attractive, compared to the Caucasian and African American spokespersons. No statistical differences were found between the Caucasian and African American spokespersons who were both evaluated as being more physically attractive than the Asian spokesperson. Given that it is difficult to “control” the highly subjective perceptions about physical attractiveness (Eberghardt, Dasgupta, & Banasynski, 2003; Wilkens, Chan, & Kaiser, 2011), this concept was utilized as an independent variable and did not negatively impact the study results.

Fourth, the notion of social desirability, a possible mechanism for adjusting responses in an attempt to appear unbiased toward the difference races in the current study setting could have an influence on the study results. For example, participants could have rated the racially

incongruent spokesperson with more favorable attitudes in order to appear unprejudiced towards multicultural ads (Brunel, Tietje, & Greenwald, 2004; Petty, Fleming & White, 1999). This potential moderating factor was not measured in the current study but could have been measured in such a way that it could minimize a potential sensitization effect on the participants.

Therefore including measurement items at the end of the survey for social desirability and racial demographics of one's social network (e.g., "How many friends do you currently have who are Caucasian, Asian or African American or Hispanic?ell I) could potentially provide additional insight into the attitudes toward racially diverse ads and enhance our understanding of intergroup relations in a marketing context.

Future Research

The current study demonstrated findings that an individual's racial and ethnic identity can influence their attitudes as consumers. While the study's sample consisted of a Caucasian-only sample, study findings are still valuable to multicultural advertising literature. Future studies could improve on the current study design by generating an equal number of Asian, African American, and Caucasian participants for each of the experimental conditions. Incorporating three additional experimental conditions to include female spokespersons could also help shed light into the effects of gender.

Furthermore, while the current study measured the perceived social distance towards interacting with someone who appears from the same racial group like the spokesperson in the advertisement, the study could also benefit from measuring perceived social distance towards the advertising spokesperson directly. This can provide further insight into the effects of perceived similarity and social distance specific to the relations between the spokesperson and the consumer.

While the current study measured the perceived physical attractiveness of the advertising spokesperson based on the measures commonly adopted in the advertising source credibility literature, future studies could also consider examining additional dimensions of physical attractiveness in order to delve deeper into the influences of communicative competence. For instance, utilizing McCroskey and McCain's (1974) three dimensions of attraction scale that measures task attraction, social attraction, and physical attraction could provide further insight into the effectiveness of the spokesperson. By gaining an understanding of how the communicative competence of the spokesperson may be influenced by the three dimensions of attractiveness beyond physical attractiveness, advertising companies may be able to better calibrate their marketing efforts when selecting an effective spokesperson.

Past studies have found the influence of gender on advertising attitudes, as males and females process advertisements differently (Ghavami & Peplau, 2012; Wolin, 2003). In the context of social identity theory, gender differences could be influenced by the sex of the spokesperson. It would be very interesting to examine the impact of gender and race in multicultural advertising to see if an interaction will emerge. In addition, the examination of gender can also provide another indicator of social identity useful in help us gain a deeper understanding of the underlying effects of social identity. According to social identity theory, in addition to racial and ethnic identity, group membership can be reflected by one's gender (Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

Lastly, as multicultural advertising research that examined the relationships between exposure to racially congruent spokespersons and consumer evaluations (e.g., Appiah, 2001; Appiah & Liu, 2009; Deshpande & Stayman, 1994; Lee, Fernandez, & Martin, 2002; Martin, Lee, & Yang, 2004; Phua, 2014) has produced inconsistent and inconclusive preliminary results,

additional research on the effects of multicultural advertising campaign is needed. Research addressing perceived social distance between individuals with various racial, ethnic, and social identities could provide valuable information for advertisers who attempt to improve the effectiveness of multicultural advertising in an increasingly multicultural society. In particular, future studies could include additional racial groups such as Hispanics, in order to compare the potential impact that perceived social distance may have on social identity in multicultural advertising strategies.

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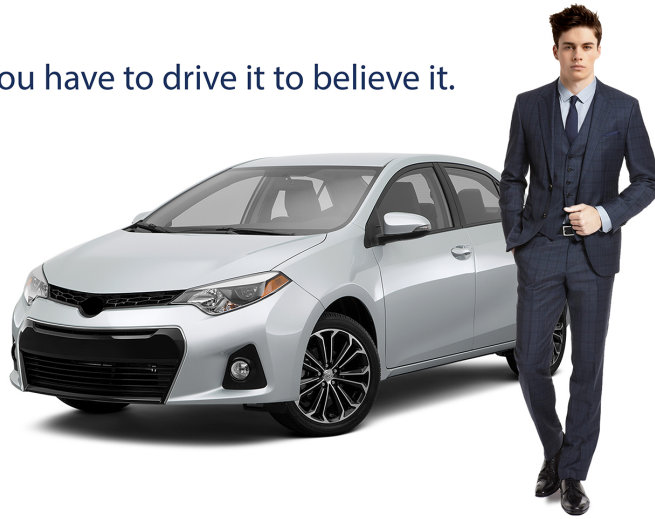
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APPENDIX A – Research Stimulus

You have to drive it to believe it.



You have to drive it to believe it.



You have to drive it to believe it.

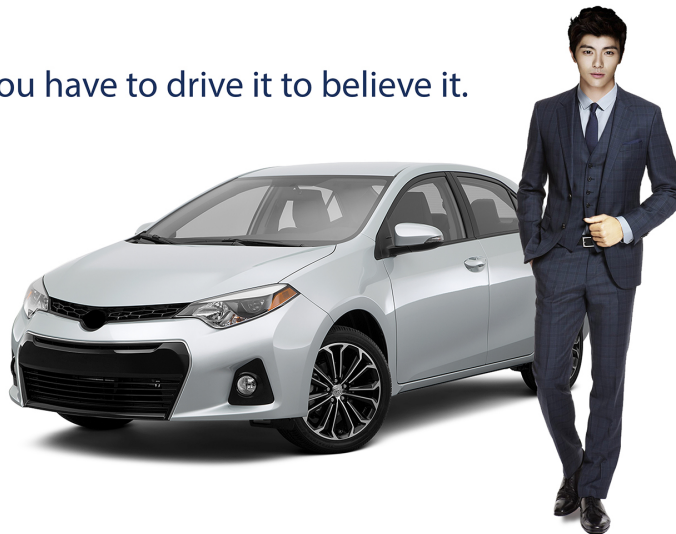


Table 1 – Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive Statistics				
	Caucasian Spokesperson (<i>n</i> = 67)	African American Spokesperson (<i>n</i> = 68)	Asian Spokesperson (<i>n</i> = 60)	Total (<i>N</i> = 195)
Racial Identity	<i>M</i> = 4.83 (1.01)	<i>M</i> = 4.85 (1.13)	<i>M</i> = 5.14 (1.03)	<i>M</i> = 4.93 (1.07)
Ethnic Identity	<i>M</i> = 5.22 (0.99)	<i>M</i> = 5.30 (1.18)	<i>M</i> = 5.29 (1.13)	<i>M</i> = 5.27 (1.09)
Social Identity	<i>M</i> = 4.71 (0.94)	<i>M</i> = 4.62 (1.00)	<i>M</i> = 4.79 (0.92)	<i>M</i> = 4.70 (0.95)
Perceived Similarity	<i>M</i> = 4.63 (0.98)	<i>M</i> = 4.40 (1.07)	<i>M</i> = 3.85 (1.20)	<i>M</i> = 4.31 (1.13)
Social Distance¹	<i>M</i> = 2.05 (0.90)	<i>M</i> = 2.06 (0.97)	<i>M</i> = 2.25 (1.11)	<i>M</i> = 2.12 (0.99)
Trustworthiness	<i>M</i> = 4.49 (0.81)	<i>M</i> = 4.95 (1.18)	<i>M</i> = 4.78 (0.80)	<i>M</i> = 4.74 (0.97)
Likeability	<i>M</i> = 4.79 (0.83)	<i>M</i> = 5.18 (1.12)	<i>M</i> = 4.85 (0.83)	<i>M</i> = 4.94 (0.95)
Expertise	<i>M</i> = 4.44 (1.05)	<i>M</i> = 4.92 (1.16)	<i>M</i> = 4.71 (1.10)	<i>M</i> = 4.69 (1.12)
Spokesperson Attitudes	<i>M</i> = 4.58 (0.75)	<i>M</i> = 5.03 (1.14)	<i>M</i> = 4.56 (0.95)	<i>M</i> = 4.73 (0.98)
Ad Attitudes	<i>M</i> = 4.32 (0.99)	<i>M</i> = 4.75 (1.20)	<i>M</i> = 4.32 (1.09)	<i>M</i> = 4.47 (1.11)
Product Attitudes	<i>M</i> = 4.47 (1.05)	<i>M</i> = 4.58 (1.26)	<i>M</i> = 4.69 (0.97)	<i>M</i> = 4.47 (1.10)
Purchase Intentions	<i>M</i> = 3.55 (1.64)	<i>M</i> = 4.07 (1.66)	<i>M</i> = 4.11 (1.55)	<i>M</i> = 3.90 (1.63)

Note: ¹ – Social Distance was recoded such that higher values reflected greater social distance.

Table 2 – Pearson Correlations Table

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Racial Identity	--											
2. Ethnic Identity	.71**	--										
3. Social Identity	.47**	.47**	--									
4. Perceived Similarity	.03	.10	.10	--								
5. Social Distance¹	-.12	-.22**	-.16**	-.20**	--							
6. Trustworthiness	.13	.20**	.14	.22**	-.30**	--						
7. Likeability	.02	.20**	.22**	.30**	-.45**	.76**	--					
8. Expertise	.02	.15*	.12	.29**	-.26**	.73**	.72**	--				
9. Spokesperson Attitude	.11	.18*	.17*	.32**	-.36**	.76**	.78**	.65**	--			
10. Ad Attitudes	-.01	.09	-.01	.29**	-.19*	.62**	.61**	.67**	.62**	--		
11. Product Attitude	-.03	.08	.16*	.14	-.13*	.55**	.54**	.51**	.46**	.58**	--	
12. Purchase Intentions	-.08	.05	.02	.10	-.02	.44*	.39**	.50**	.31**	.47**	.52**	--

Note: ¹ – Social Distance was recoded such that higher values reflected greater social distance.

Table 3

Table 3 ANCOVA: Social Identity, Racial Identity, Ethnic Identity

Independent variables	Dependent variable	F(df)	Partial η^2
(A) Racial Identity	Social Identity	8.99 (1, 179)**	.05
(B) Ethnic Identity		10.22 (1, 179)**	.05
(C) Conditions		.448 (2, 179)	.00

$p < .05$, *1 $p < .01$, ** $p < .001$ ***

Table 4

Table 4 ANCOVA: Social Identity, Perceived Similarity, Social Distance, and Attitudes toward the Spokesperson

Independent variables	Dependent variable	F(df)	Partial η^2
(A) Conditions	Attitudes toward Spokesperson	6.94 (2, 172)***	.08
(B) Social Identity		1.54 (1, 172)	.01
(C) Perceived Similarity		11.59 (1, 172)***	.06
(D) Social Distance ¹		.746 (1, 172)	.00
(E) B x D		.018 (1, 172)	.00

Note: ¹ – Social Distance was recoded such that higher values reflected greater social distance.
 $p < .05$, * $p < .01$, ** $p < .001$ ***

Table 5

Table 5 ANCOVA: Spokesperson Credibility and Attitudes toward the Ad

Independent variables	Dependent variable	F(df)	Partial η^2
(A) Conditions	Attitudes toward Ad	.737 (2, 181)	.01
(B) Trust		1.50 (1, 181)	.01
(C) Likeability		.764 (1, 181)	.00
(D) Expertise		25.90 (1, 181)***	.13
(E) Attitudes toward Spokesperson		4.33 (1, 181)*	.02

$p < .05$, * $p < .01$, ** $p < .001$ ***

Table 6

Table 6 ANCOVA: Attitudes toward Product, Ad, and Spokesperson

Independent variables	Dependent variable	F(df)	Partial η^2
(A) Conditions	Attitudes toward Product	3.12 (2, 184)*	.03
(B) Spokesperson Attitudes		7.28 (1, 184)**	.04
(C) Ad Attitudes		40.08 (1, 184)***	.18

$p < .05$, *1 $p < .01$, ** $p < .001$ ***

Table 7

Table 7 ANCOVA: Purchase Intentions, Attitudes toward Product, Ad, and Spokesperson

Independent variables	Dependent variable	F(df)	Partial η^2
(A) Conditions	Purchase Intentions	1.52 (2, 183)	.02
(B) Spokesperson Attitudes		.125 (1, 183)	.00
(C) Ad Attitudes		10.14 (1, 183)**	.05
(D) Product Attitudes		22.07 (1, 183)***	.11

$p < .05$, * $p < .01$, ** $p < .001$ ***