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**THE EFFECT OF RACIAL IDENTIFICATION AND MASCULINITY ON  
EVALUATIONS OF ADVERTISING MODELS**

A Thesis in

Media Studies

by

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## Abstract

This study seeks to explore the role that racial identification, masculinity, and the race of an advertisement's model plays in an individual's reaction to an advertisement. It aims to reveal the unique effect that these measures of self-concept have on consumer preferences such as product evaluation, purchase intention, attitude toward the ad, and attitude toward the model.

The role of self-concept in ad processing has been given little attention in past advertising research, with researchers opting to focus more on concepts such as message appeals and message content. However, research involving the self not only investigates a significant factor in consumer response but also is easily obtainable via self-reports, and should thus be given more attention in the field of advertising. Individuals vary immensely in their self-image; it is through research where we can determine how the differences in these aspects of self affect how consumers respond to advertised images.

As predicted, Black participants who were exposed to an ad with a Black model demonstrated a more positive attitude toward the ad, higher self-image congruity, higher purchase intention and more positive attitude toward the model than those who were exposed to the White model. However, tests of responses of White participants did not yield similar results; Whites maintained a more positive attitude toward the ad featuring the Black model, and did not show preference for either the Black or the White model with regard to self-image congruity, purchase intention, and attitude toward the model.

Furthermore, the interaction of masculinity and the race of the model yielded a significant interaction for Whites such that those high in masculinity showed a higher purchase intention when exposed to the White model, whereas those lower in masculinity exhibited a strong

purchase intention for the product when presented with a Black model. No other effects of masculinity on the dependent variables were significant. However, the interaction of masculinity with the race of the model suggests that further research may uncover a deeper relationship between the effects of race and masculinity on reactions to advertisements.

# ***Table of Contents***

Acknowledgements.....	viii
Introduction.....	1
Literature Review.....	7
Masculinity in America.....	7
Masculinity in Advertising .....	8
Racial Identity.....	11
History of Racial Identity.....	11
Historical Portrayals of Minorities in the Media .....	13
Racial Stereotyping.....	13
White Identity .....	15
Black Identity.....	18
Hip-Hop as Black Culture.....	19
Black Masculinity .....	21
Theoretical Framework.....	26
Explaining Self-Concept.....	26
Self-Image Congruity.....	26
In-Group Bias Theory .....	27
Elaboration Likelihood Model.....	28
Effects Literature .....	28

Effects of Black Identity on Image Congruity .....	28
Effects of White Identity on Image Congruity .....	29
Strength of Racial Identification.....	30
Hypotheses .....	31
Method .....	36
Sample.....	36
Stimulus Materials .....	36
Variables and Measures .....	37
Questionnaire Administration.....	38
Data Analysis Techniques.....	38
Results.....	40
Reliability and Factor Structure of Measures .....	40
Main Hypotheses .....	40
Research Questions.....	41
Discussion.....	43
Limitations and Future Research .....	47
References.....	49
Appendix A.....	52
Multiethnic Identity Measure.....	52
Appendix B.....	54

Multicultural Masculinity Ideology Scale .....	54
Appendix C .....	56
Muscoli Advertisements .....	56
Appendix D .....	58
Dependent Measures of Attitude Toward the Ad, Self-Image Congruity, Purchase Intention and Attitude toward the Model .....	58

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## ***Introduction***

This study seeks to explore the role that racial identification, masculinity, and the race of an advertisement's model plays in an individual's reaction to an advertisement. It aims to reveal the unique effect that these measures of self-concept have on consumer preferences such as product evaluation, purchase intention, attitude toward the ad, and attitude toward the model.

While a great deal of attention has been placed on the lack of diversity in prime-time television, the field of advertising has been granted relatively little attention by those opposed to the stereotypical portrayals within its field (Henderson & Baldasty, 2003). This is a bit of an eye-opener given advertising's prominence within televised programming (up to 25% of prime-time content), as well as public vows from civil rights leaders such as Kwesi Mfume, former president of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), to fight advertising that does not reflect diversity and balance. Nonetheless, the portrayals within advertising have not been given the due attention they deserve.

Research into the relationship between advertising and its viewers operates under the premise that these commercials have a strong effect on impressionable youth and that the majority of these beliefs will be taken into adulthood (MacKinnon, 2003). It is difficult to dispute that advertising reflects social trends and tendencies – it is a strong indication of what is broadcast in the media in general (Reichert & Carpenter, 2004).

The role of self in ad processing has also not been given much attention in past ad research, with researchers opting to focus more on concepts such as message appeals and message content (Chang, 2002). However, research involving the self not only investigates a

significant factor in consumer response but also is easily obtainable via self-reports, and should thus be given more attention in the field of advertising. Individuals vary immensely in their self-images (Chang, 2006). However, it is through research where we can determine how the differences in these aspects of self affect how consumers respond to advertised images.

One of the important aspects of self-image discussed within this paper is the construct of gender roles and more specifically, masculinity. Masculinity and femininity were originally thought to be one-dimensional traits that reflected polar opposites on a continuum. These two traits correlated with biological sex (males were considered masculine, while females were considered feminine) and were constrained by stereotypically “correct” behavior, as deemed by society (Stern, 1988). However, psychoanalysis of masculinity shows that masculinity is an ideal rather than a reality. Men and women are multifaceted and complex and do not accurately represent the unidimensional ideals of past constructions of masculinity (MacKinnon, 2003).

While masculinity is typified by many positive characteristics that are sources of pride and strength for men, it also contains qualities that have placed limitations on those who abide by it (NOMAS, 2008). The stereotypical ideals of masculinity have led to detrimental behavior such as isolation from children, denial of feelings, lack of intimate relationships, competitiveness, belligerence, and preoccupation with work and success. By rejecting the stereotypical norm that supports the idea of patriarchy and male superiority, it is possible that men may avoid some of these pitfalls and in turn become more happy and fulfilled individuals (NOMAS, 2008)

In advertising literature, the variance between people regarding the constructs of masculinity and femininity explains the sizeable discrepancy in the way that message recipients respond to gender-related information. Also, by measuring these concepts, we also have the

ability to ascertain differences on both an individual as well as a societal level. Thus, as a central facet of the human self-image, this study chooses to focus on how one's own perception of masculinity affects reactions to advertisements.

In particular, the depictions of minority masculinities in the media are typically low in diversity (Jhally, 1999; Stern, 1999). African-American men face a particularly complex ordeal of navigating through the construct of masculinity, which signifies them as the dominant gender, while also understanding the consequences of being Black, which qualifies them as a minority in both quantitative as well as hierarchal purposes within dominant society. It was first suggested in the early 1980s that the intersection of race and gender could make minority men particularly vulnerable to gender role conflict (Wester, et al 2006). Ten years later, Stillson, O'Neil and Owen (1991) indeed revealed a relationship between race and vulnerability to GRC.

Black men also deal with the intersection of two sets of gender roles, Euro-American or mainstream, and African-American (Wester, et al, 2006). By conforming to one set of gender roles, the other set of roles are likely compromised, whereas institutional racism may not allow full achievement of either set. The conundrum created by this intersection is magnified when taking into account the lopsided portrayals and overrepresentation of Black men in mainstream media as hypermasculine, violent, aggressive, and hypersexual (Jhally, 1999; Dixon & Linz, 2000; Brown, 2005; Hurt, 2006; Jackson, 2006). Because of the tendency to misrepresent minorities by stereotyping, (Thomas & Treiber, 2000; Henderson & Baldasty, 2003; Mastro & Stern, 2003; Taylor, Lee & Stern, 1995), issues of diversity within the media are important. In the case of the narrowcasting of cultural masculinity, scholars argue that the representations may be somewhat self-serving; outgroup members may look at the media representations of a particular minority and make inferences about the group to improve ingroup self-esteem (Mastro

& Kopacz, 2006). Images of Black masculinity within popular media outlets have, quite frequently, served to either hypermasculinize or demasculinize the Black male (Jackson, 2006). For example, Dixon and Linz (2000) found that in local news programs, Blacks were twice as likely to be portrayed as criminals than Whites, six times as likely to be portrayed as criminals than as officers and overrepresented as criminals, comprising a representation of 37% of perpetrators while being implicated in slightly more than half of those arrested in crime reports. The effect of long-term absorption of these negative images affects cognitive thought to the degree that the negative depictions will cause one to associate a particular activity as being a “Black” activity (see Dixon & Linz, 2000).

This is just one example of a misrepresentation of minority groups within the media. While distortion in the media is not exclusive to members of minority groups, it is particularly detrimental for several reasons. One theory by Taylor, Lee, and Stern (1995) was the expectancy theory. This theory explicates the influence of negative expectations on the psyche by positing that to the degree that these advertisements reinforce negative expectations, they affect social reality. An example of this would be the idea that because of the overrepresentation of African-Americans as athletes or entertainers (see Molloseau, 2006; also Stern, 1999), Black children may in turn believe that they are destined for an athletic or entertainment career, and focus on that in lieu of other academic-based yet more commonly achieved careers.

Another reason to further examine the creation and perpetuation of Black masculinity lies in the belief that media participates in the commodification of Blackness and Black identity. The struggles continue to exist concerning the shifting concept of Black identity, the manner in which “Blackness” is defined, and by whom the definitions are derived, particularly as it relates to in-group vs. outgroup constructions (Means-Coleman, 2003). The images of the Black man have

historically been managed by the mainstream culture (Brown, 2005; Oates, 2007; Jackson, 2006). As found in Hurt (2006), Jackson Katz referred to the media proprietors as the “White men in suits, making decisions” on the business of advertising.

Jackson (1997) claims that African American men are xenophobic and have no intentions of letting outsiders define them and what they should be. For Black men concerned about their portrayal in advertising, this poses a problem. As rapper Chuck D said, advertising decision makers “think they can put manhood in a bottle, and then show the bottle in advertising” (Hurt, 2006). This misconception leaves skeptics wondering whether advertisers are more focused on potential revenue than on the potentially damaging social effects that their depictions may have on those who consume them and who are similarly represented within it.

In an increased effort to maintain awareness of diverse representation and portrayals, advertisers can obviously ill-afford to lose sight of their goal of generating revenue and interest in a particular brand. From a business perspective, the increased ethnic awareness of the minority market has created appealing opportunities for corporations (Cui, 2001). The Selig Center for Economic Growth at the University of Georgia noted that in 2007, the combined purchasing power of African-Americans, Asians, and Native Americans stood at \$1.4 trillion, nearly tripling its 1990 figure of \$452 billion (Humphreys, 2007). By this time, the African-American market will hold 61% of this buying power, equating to a figure around \$1.1 trillion. Additionally, its 166 percent increase from the years 1990 to 2007 surpasses that of the 124 percent increase in White buying power as well as the 134 percent increase in total buying power for all ethnic groups. As its buying power increases at a rate exceeding that of the general population, the importance of focusing on African-American images within advertising also becomes heightened.

In some ways, marketers seem to be devoting more efforts to their minority markets. At least half of the *Fortune 1000* companies have established some type of ethnic marketing program (Brill, 1994). In 2004, marketers spent \$1.8 billion on advertising, promotions, and event sponsorships geared toward African-American consumers (Bailey, 2006). However, a closer look at overall spending may prove those efforts to be misleading. Of the \$190 billion spent annually on media nationwide, only \$2.5 billion (1.3%) is aimed specifically at ethnic consumers, statistics indicative of a general disregard for minority consumers as a whole (Schreiber, 1998; Henderson & Baldasty, 2003).

Aside from garnering revenue from these groups, advertisers must also possess a social responsibility to represent its consumers in a manner that is lucrative as well as respectable and constructive in nature. The advertising field needs to undergo transformations to ensure that it seeks to abandon low-diversity images that perpetuate detrimental stereotypes while making sure not to alienate its consumers. This study intends to aid advertisers in those efforts by examining the micro-level effects of the intersection between self-masculinity (high perceived masculinity vs. low perceived masculinity), and racial self-identification (high racial identification vs. low racial identification) in viewer's evaluation of advertisements.

## ***Literature Review***

### ***Masculinity in America***

Some of the earliest constructions of American masculinity came nearly a decade after the Declaration of Independence. The monumental document was also instrumental in ushering in a new paradigm (Kimmel, 2006). This new paradigm was ripe with democratic principles and financial liberties. Along with this dawning of a new era for the country came the ideal of the Self-Made Man (Kimmel, 2006). Equipped to compete, entrepreneurially aggressive, and ready to make moves, the Self-Made Man was eager to distinguish American masculinity from that of its female population (Kimmel, 2006).

Around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the country was experiencing a transition toward more diversity. Minorities, women, and homosexuals were creating an influx in the workforce. Also, a shift toward industrialization meant there were less “Self-Made Men” and more subservience. The decrease in Self-Made Men meant that men would have to strategize to reclaim that lost sense of masculinity. Many men, desperate to cling to some form of masculinity, adopted intolerant attitudes toward females, minorities, and foreigners under the premise that, by denying these others, they can maintain their gender identity (Kimmel, 2006). Some of these same prejudices are maintained to date, as females and minorities have both been victims of narrowcasting.

Another way men sought to maintain their masculinity was to live the experiences vicariously. Men became more engaged in heroic stories, Wild West novels, and the athletic efforts of baseball and football players (Kimmel, 2006). These staples of violence and athletics remain integral in defining American masculinity.

Violent masculinity is also acknowledged as a social custom of masculinity (Jhally, 1999). Dr. Michael Eric Dyson claims that the concept of violent masculinity remains “at the heart of the American identity” (Hurt, 2006). As Dyson explains, the image of the “preoccupational Jesse James, the outlaw, the rebel...” is ingrained in the American outlook on masculinity (Hurt, 2006).

America’s current ideal of masculinity resembles that of a “hypermasculine, hyperaggressive nation,” according to cultural critic Byron Hurt (2006). He contests that society creates and then feeds the public a sensationalized form of hypermasculinity. These portrayals of hypermasculinity, characteristic of American culture, are images depicted not only in the dominant culture, but in other forms of masculinity (Brown, 2005; Henry, 2003, Jhally, 1999).

### ***Masculinity in Advertising***

Early gender research generated in the 1960s and 1970s comparing the roles of men and women in advertisements offers an abundance of media images espousing ideals of a separate, unequal cultural environment between the two genders. Men were portrayed as dominant, independent figures free to take on various roles and rankings in society, while women were constrained mainly to domestic roles. For example, research has found men to be

- portrayed in more independent roles than women;
- employed in more diverse occupations (whereas women were mainly projected as housewives);
- far more likely to advertise cars, alcohol, business products (while women used mostly to promote household products);
- more likely to be shown outside (women were usually inside, in domestic settings)

- more likely to be shown as authority figures, or used as voice-overs, etc. (Fejes in Craig (ed.), 1992).

As a result of such male-dominated advertising, women were seen by many men as “generic non-men” who often acted in stereotypical manner. (Stern, 1999). Goffman’s *Gender Advertisements* (1976) was a ground-breaking content analysis of various “gender display” themes. In his work, Goffman noted masculine-based themes such as “the ritualization of subordination” and “licensed withdrawal” by women in advertisements, ideals that support earlier findings of male dominance (Stern, 1999).

In the decade to follow, gender-based advertising research continued to challenge male-normed culture via the analysis of gender role portrayals of women; however, women were, as objects of research, viewed as a fairly homogeneous group, giving no regard to demographics such as age, ethnicity, sexual preference, and other characteristics (Stern, 1999). A critical trend that emerged from this era of advertising research was that of androcentric (male-dominated) versus gynocentric (female-dominated) themes. Analysis of advertising and other forms of media reinforced the pervasiveness of masculine themes in advertised media. Additionally, analysis of marketing literature suggested that themes of control, aggression, competition, and dominance were reinforced in the language of war (“marketing warfare”) and sexual domination (“penetrating the target market”). (Hirschman 1991).

When compared to televised depictions of gender, advertising depictions of gender are often much more obvious in its sexual stereotypes (Fejes, 1992). This is because the nature of advertising is such that it permits the freedom to depict the model in a more sexual light based on

the fact that products tend to be more gender-specific (Fejes, 1992). The understanding here is that a product that is primarily a female product would allow the advertiser to push the sexual envelope, by using explicitly sexual, masculine stereotypes to sell the product, and vice versa for a male product.

The 1990s yielded a change in the way men were represented in advertising. Men were portrayed more during this era as objects of disdain; this occurred at times at the mercy of women (MacKinnon, 2003). While this territory was previously unexplored in the world of advertising, some attribute this shift to the constant need for advertising to maintain audience attention (MacKinnon, 2003). By showing males in less traditional roles, advertising is able to cater to the multiple views of masculinity possessed by its audiences.

Current research on masculinity and gender supports the subcultural approach, which is based on the belief that various cultural biases, life experiences, and methods of comprehension will affect the way people interpret messages (Register, 1975). It is understood to be a social construct that is created and reinforced by social and cultural factors (Jackson, 1997). Most behavior typically assigned to a particular gender is learned rather than congenital; we can consider scientific theories that identify “natural” gender differences as the cause of these assignments to be merely the result of these cultural constructs (Craig, 1992). Based on this knowledge, text and images in advertising can be classified as masculine or feminine based on gender differences in language, customs, and expectations that will not only influence what each gender will read, but also how they will interpret it (Stern, 1999).

## ***Racial Identity***

### ***History of Racial Identity***

In comparison to the long-standing gender classification of people as either men or women, the constructs of racial identity, Whiteness, and Blackness have a significantly less lengthy history. The term “race” originally referred to one’s ethnic group (e.g. French, Irish, etc.) (Kennedy, et al, 2005). However, by the signing of the U.S. Constitution in 1787, the definition was altered to denote a person’s skin color and blood; this reinforced White supremacist motives by creating social and economical hierarchies. “White people” were believed to be superior and worthy of freedom; “Black people” were judged on a spectrum of childlike to animalistic; and “Red people” were perceived as savages needing to be acculturated (Kennedy, et al, 2005).

From the period of these racial constructions throughout most of U.S. history, White has been considered the culturally privileged race. However, around the time of the Civil Rights Movements of the 1950s and 60s, Whiteness began to develop associations with racism and White supremacy; thus, as White society deemed it taboo to discuss the concept of Whiteness, the ideals of White privilege and Whiteness in general waned as topics of discussion (Kennedy, et al, 2005).

In more recent years, researchers have developed other means of measuring racial identity. Mills (1998) identifies seven possibilities for racial identification, briefly explained as follows:

- Because one’s ethnic background is not typically known upon first encounter, *bodily appearance* is the first method of making inferences toward the racial identity of a person. This has also been used as a scientific method, where

membership was based on traits such as skin color, skull structure, and hair, in the eras preceding genetics.

- In this increasingly diverse society, *ancestry* is often used a determinant of racial identity. American society has historically substantiated ancestry as both an adequate and, at times, necessary component of race, particularly for Blacks and Whites.
- Racial identity can be analyzed not only by ancestry, but also one's *self-awareness of ancestry*. This specifically deals with accurate knowledge of one's own background.
- Because bodily appearance is often used as a marker of racial identity, *public awareness of ancestry* is also a factor in racial identity. The emphasis of a public, societal awareness can be explained through the looking-glass self theory that society shapes one's identity.
- Classic racial theory has seen *culture* as a subsidiary of biological race, such that its inclusion as a determinant of racial identity would be in vain. However, non-realist theories see culture as adaptable and flexible, such that the varying degrees of which people associate with a particular culture will affect racial identification.
- The criterion of *experience* is an ambiguous, yet necessary inclusion as a determinant of race. In America, we perceive Whiteness to be associated with the idea of privilege and institutionalized racism (McIntosh, 1989), while Blackness is linked with the experience of racial oppression.
- *Subjective identification*, which is what a person sees oneself as, has a significant impact on racial identification. Factors such as culture or experience may lead a

person to feel that they align with a particular racial identity, despite what ancestry, bodily appearance, or other fixed criteria may suggest.

While the aforementioned elements are not the sole criteria scholars have used to determine racial identification, they do appear to be the most comprehensive as well as the most significant determinants.

### ***Historical Portrayals of Minorities in the Media***

Dating back to the 1930's, Pettigrew (1965) found that African-American portrayals in the media have historically been confined to three main roles: the entertainer, the athlete, and the servant.

Some researchers have found that in instances when minorities are featured in advertised material, they are frequently portrayed in minor roles while infrequently portrayed in major roles within the advertisement (Taylor, Lee, & Stern, 1995), suggesting the practice of tokenism – that is, the inclusion of minorities for the sake of inclusion.

### ***Racial Stereotyping***

According to research involving stereotypes, the frequent activation of a stereotype increases the chance that this information will be used in ensuing judgments (Dixon & Azocar, 2007). Moreover, the more these stereotypes are applied to out-group as opposed to in-group judgments, the greater the likelihood will be that they will be used in future evaluations.

The far-reaching influence of media plays a significant role in shaping stereotypes and prejudices as it relates to social cognitive theory. Social cognitive theory asserts that people will use social cues as schematic reference points for appropriate behavior and representation. This implies that in certain instances, consumers can and will acquire knowledge based on what they see in the media (Bandura, 1986, Bandura, 2002, Mastro & Stern, 2003).

With all of the focus on perceivably negative images of Blackness in the media, the underlying assumption is that by adding enough positive representations of Blackness, we will solve the problem of misrepresentation in advertising and other media. This assumption has an inherent flaw, one that Rodman (2006) explained using the example of *The Cosby Show*.

Airing from 1984 to 1992 and featuring the Huxtable family, an upper-middle class Black family living in a Brooklyn brownstone, *The Cosby Show* was different from prior depictions of Blacks on television, as it sought to “recode” Blackness, providing “positive” images that would invalidate distorted images of stereotypical and ghettoized Black life (Hunt, 2005). Overall, the Huxtables provided an image of the Black family who “made it” (Hunt, 2005).

However, according to Rodman, the popularity of *The Cosby Show* may have served to mislead White America about how accurate a representation of Black America the Huxtables actually were. The appearance of financial and emotional stability in the Huxtable household may be used by some to suggest that the socioeconomic disparities between White and Black America have reduced or are non-existent, while further implying that if such disparities do exist, it is for lack of rising to Huxtablean standards. Says John Fiske in reference to *The Cosby Show*:

Such representations can have quite different political circulations in White and Black America. Whereas for whites, the Huxtables’ success could demonstrate the death of racism, for many African Americans, it offered a rare affirmative and inspiring image: precisely those features that enabled whites to deny racism allowed Blacks some hope that they might prosper despite it (Fiske, 2005).

The primary issue in this case, Rodman concludes, is the lack of a wide range of representations of Blackness similar to that of Whites. One show should not be expected to be the sole torchbearer as a representation of Black America, and without variety, any program is liable to be viewed as such.

## ***White Identity***

The definitions of Whiteness and white identity used in this research are based in part on Mills' aforementioned model for racial identification, which emphasizes awareness of ancestry, culture, experience, and subjective identification, among other aspects. This research is patterned much like that of Martin, et al. (1996) in that the researcher is primarily interested in the concept of white identity as it relates to those who view themselves as and are seen by the public as White, regardless of ethnic sub-culture (i.e., French, Irish, etc.)

The concept of White racial identity or self-labeling has been given relatively little attention in comparison to the exploration of other racial identities. Some feel that this lack of attention is indicative of the historical position of power in which Whites have held in the United States (Martin, et al, 1996). As the dominant identity within our society, Americans code White identity, or Whiteness as it is referred to frequently in literature, as an invisible norm or standard against which every other cultural identity must be measured up to (Butterworth, 2007; Calhoun, 2005). However, critical scholars and theorists have noted the importance of bringing the invisible White identity to light, citing the significance of uncovering the symbolic associations and influences of Whiteness (Martin et al, 1996). Said Coco Fusco (1988):

To ignore white ethnicity is to redouble its hegemony by naturalizing it. Without specifically addressing white ethnicity, there can be no critical evaluation of the construction of the other. (Fusco, 1988, p. 7)

Prior research measuring racial self-labeling preferences for white college students has suggested a desire for ambiguity over more specific labels of Whiteness. Participants were given seven labels of racial identity (White, Caucasian, White American, European-American, Euro-American, Anglo, and WASP) and asked to define and rate their preference for each term. The empirical results showed that the terms that were most preferred (White and Caucasian) were

also the least definable by the participants, while the labels that were most easily and accurately defined (WASP and Anglo) were the least preferred (Martin et al, 1996).

A gripe regarding the vague definitions of Whiteness is the freedom it allows Whites in identity negotiation as opposed to minorities, who are often only marginally successful in racial identity negotiation due to biological factors or physical appearance (Tatum, 1997). By maintaining an ambiguous conceptualization of Whiteness, Whites are given the opportunity to construct their identities in varying and sometimes contradictory fashions, resulting in tension, negotiations, and inconsistencies in ideations of Whiteness (Calhoun, 2005; Jackson, 1999).

One criticism of the construction of Whiteness can be found in an analysis of media coverage of the 1998 home run race with Mark McGwire and Sammy Sosa. During the 1998 Major League Baseball season, both players had career years and were on pace to break the long-standing league record of 61 home runs. The national sports media watched intently as both sluggers moved closer to the record, and public perceptions of both were created in large part by media portrayals of McGwire, a White American of European Descent and Sosa, a Dominican-born man currently living in the United States. According to Butterworth (2007), the media helped reinforce heroism and achievement as a White attribute via McGwire while suggesting Sosa's gracious and unassuming persona as the ideal for ethnic minorities. He argues that the heroism of McGwire was constructed using three methods: admiration/fascination with his size and strength, suggesting McGwire as the rightful favorite, and by typecasting Sosa through racial representation.

While both men were strong, muscular men, images of power and girth were abundant in reference to McGwire. The 6'5, 250-pound "Godzilla" was referred to as a prototypical home

run champion. Throughout the home run race, “Big Mac” was adorned with compliments and admiration of his strength while being compared to fictional and human heroes of American lore such as Paul Bunyan, Charles Atlas, Casey at the Bat, and Babe Ruth. However, Butterworth noted that such imagery of Sosa, who although not as big as McGwire was still 6 feet tall and 230 pounds, was difficult to find. He noted quotes referring to McGwire as “larger than life, while Sosa is merely big” and describing Sosa as “powerful and compact,” (p. 234) which arguably reduces his physique.

Adding to the heroic portrayal of McGwire was the tendency of sportswriters to position him as the favorite to win the home run race. McGwire’s pursuit of the race was documented as early as spring training by some reporters, and as the season wore on, Sosa was often referred to or implicated as a sidekick to what would inevitably be McGwire’s breaking of the home run record. Some reporters identified Sosa as the pre-determined runner-up, referring to him using names such as “Sammy Sequel,” terms such as “underdog” and “upstart,” (p. 236) and associating him with second-banana figures like Ed McMahon, Barney Rubble, or Al Gore. Other writers insinuated that Sosa intentionally created his subordinate status, suggesting he deliberately assumed the roles of the “happy-to-be-here guy” and a “slyly funny second banana” while making reference to his identification of McGwire as “the man.” (Butterworth, 2007, p. 236).

Butterworth’s last argument regarding sportswriter’s heroic construction of Whiteness via McGwire was based on media’s frequent references to Sosa’s heritage. It was most commonly through Sosa’s Dominican heritage and humble upbringings that he was introduced to the wider audience whom he had captured during the home run race. Moreover, the mention of Sosa’s modest background was primarily used in stark contrast to the physically imposing persona

created for McGwire. Descriptions of McGwire as a “mastodon” and “Popeye” were met respectively on the other end of the spectrum with Sosa portrayals as a “relatively unknown slugger for the Dominican Republic” and a “self-deprecating Dominican.” (Butterworth, 2007, p. 237). Frequent references to Sosa as Dominican reasserted the ethnic difference between him and McGwire while also promoting the “happy-to-be-here” Sosa persona by retelling a common story of America as a land of success for immigrants. Butterworth argues that while McGwire was championed as a great American, Sosa was a pawn used to reaffirm American greatness.

Butterworth (2007) noted:

As the season progressed, the image became complete: McGwire as the archetypal American hero, his racial identity never mentioned, the fact of his whiteness taken for granted; and Sosa as the grateful, darkskinned buddy just happy to be along for the ride...Audiences were invited to view McGwire as an exemplar of American character and to view Sosa as the latest demonstration of the desire to be an American in the first place (p. 238).

### ***Black Identity***

As noted earlier during the introduction (see Wester, et al, 2006), Blacks must deal with the intersection of two sets of gender roles, those of the mainstream (often Euro-American) as well as standards derived from African-American culture. The conundrum of this dual identity was discussed in detail by DuBois (1897), who established the theory of Double Consciousness. This theory proposed that Blacks struggled with a dual consciousness: that of an American, and that of an African in America.

He does not wish to Africanize America, for America has too much to teach the world and Africa; he does not wish to bleach his Negro blood in a flood of white Americanism, for he believes--foolishly, perhaps, but fervently-- that Negro blood has yet a message for the world. He simply wishes to make it possible for a man

to be both a Negro and an American without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without losing the opportunity of self-development (DuBois, 1897).

In more recent research regarding Black Identity, the acknowledgement of a Double Consciousness by Blacks in America necessitates some forms of identity negotiation. In instances where certain elements of Black identity are deemed unacceptable by the mainstream, Blacks are faced with the idea of having to lean more heavily toward American standards of conduct or risk lack of acceptance by the dominant group. Likewise, when entering a predominantly Black setting, some elements of mainstream identity may be abandoned in favor of mannerisms deemed as more “Black.” One method employed by Blacks to manage their racial identity is code-switching. Code-switching is defined as “the use of two or more linguistic varieties in the same conversation or interaction” (Scotton & Ury, 1977). For Blacks, the two languages being exchanged are Standard English and Black English, an exchange necessitated primarily due to the negative stigma the Black English receives (Koch, Gross & Kolts, 2001).

### ***Hip-Hop as Black Culture***

To members at the foundation of the community, hip-hop is strongly linked to Black cultural expression (McLeod, 1999). Considered by many to be a creation of the underclass, rap combines the joy found within the spirits of Blacks with the pains stemming from centuries of oppression (Armstrong, 2004).

The essence of hip-hop culture is typified by rap music. In its truest form, rap preserves the cultural tradition of the West Africans, whose elaborate speech represented their verbal skill and oral community (Armstrong, 2004). Rhythmic speaking patterns have always been a

prominent part of African culture dating back to the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries as well as Black culture in America (Smitherman, 1977); in the words of Houston Baker, “Rap is Black life” (Armstrong, 2004). From this oral heritage grew a language that both represented Blacks’ American heritage as well as their African tradition. Called Black English, it has been defined as “Euro-American speech with an Afro-American meaning, nuance, tone, and gesture” (Smitherman, 1977). As a language, it is methodical and rule-governed, as it differs from Standard English primarily in pronunciation and grammar. Many linguists consider it to be a full-fledged language, although some within the dominant culture view it as an inferior language.

It stands to reason that because of its seemingly everlasting link to the Black community, the elements of hip-hop are often considered authentically Black. This has resulted in the habitual reinforcement of hip-hop culture as reflecting the Black experience. A problematic component of the expectations of hip-hop culture on Blacks is what McLeod refers to as the Gender-Sexual dimension. Within the male-dominated realm of hip-hop, a premium has been placed on the appearance of masculinity, or seeming “hard.” Any deviation from this perceived behavior suggests femininity or being “soft” (McLeod, 1999). This hypermasculinity is typified by an urban style, rebellious attitude, and an aggressive stance, and has developed primarily due to the vast permeation of hip-hop culture into the Black community (Henry, 2002). Some traits associated with hypermasculinity include toughness, strength, promiscuity, financial prowess, being a “playa” or pimp, being in control, and the domination of other men and people (Hurt, 2006).

Another dimension of hip-hop which has caused conflict among Blacks due to its repeated depiction is the social-locational dimension. This dimension reinforces predominantly Black inner cities, commonly known as “the street,” as the authentic location of Black activity

(McLeod, 1999). The elements of rap have developed from an urban background which is symbolized by extreme poverty, violence, serious drug use, and other forms of deviance (Armstrong, 2004).

### ***Black Masculinity***

Generally speaking, the images of Black masculinity in media are very limited in their diversity (Jhally, 1999). According to Dr. Mark Anthony Neal, the mainstream media gatekeepers will only allow certain examples of masculinity to permeate through to the public (Hurt, 2006). Again, with respect to social identity theory, the depictions of Black masculinity may act as a tool to improve sentiment about mainstream masculinity by limiting the scope of Black masculinity to historically stereotypical images (Mastro & Stern, 2003).

One of the longstanding controversies involving portrayals of minorities in the media is that its images and depictions have been controlled by the popular media and not the member of which the images represent. This is the sentiment often associated with the limited images of Black masculinity in the media; members of the Black community give pause to the idea that the media portrayals of Black men are largely controlled by White men (Jackson, 2006). The tenuousness concerning these constructions is that many of these media outlets are self-identifying themselves as the voices of staples of Black masculinity, such as hip-hop, when in reality the people in control are cashing in on the widespread popularity of hip-hop, but do not have any other ties to the culture (Hurt, 2006).

The trepidation of White control over Black images is undoubtedly enhanced in part by the terse history of White domination of Black throughout slavery and post-slavery periods leading up to the civil rights movement and beyond. Oates (2007) examined the commodification

of Black male bodies during the process leading up to the NFL Draft. Each year scores of the top NFL prospects are invited to the Senior Bowl, where they are measured, prodded and visually inspected and observed by league scouts, general managers and other personnel. The process has provided significant discomfort for the players, who at times were only partially clothed. Described by players as a “meat market” (Duffey, 2002), the process was described as a necessary evil by one NFL general manager:

It’s a livestock show, and it’s dehumanizing, but it’s necessary . . . If we’re going to pay a kid a lot of money to play football, we have a right to find out as much as we can. If we’re going to buy ’em, we ought to see what we’re buying. (Duffey, 2002).

The blatant transformation of these players into commodities by a contingency of predominantly White, affluent men places Black men in positions of erotic gaze traditionally reserved for women, argues Oates. By asserting their right to gawk and marvel at the physical gifts of young Black players, the NFL general managers reassert their dominance in the male hierarchy over Black men while serving to dehumanize the Black male by reducing him to a commodity. The entire process is potentially detrimental to Black masculinity not only due to the admitted demasculization of Black men, but also by the control and subsequent commodification of an NFL population comprised of roughly two-thirds Black men (Oates, 2007).

Similar discord from the Black community regarding mainstream disregard for Black masculinity stems in part because of the ambiguity as to who the images are intended to cater to. Hazel Carby critiques the mainstream media construction of Black masculinity in her book, *Race Men* (Nakayama, 2000). The race man is social construction by mainstream media as a representation of Black masculinity. It is a symbol of an increase in socioeconomic status and diplomatic acculturation into mainstream society for the Black man (Brown, 2005). This

perceived upgrade is done at the cost of abandoning African identifications. She asserts that the construction of the race man exemplifies different ideals for White populations than for Blacks (Nakayama, 2000). She claims that while the race man assuages the “psychological healing of white men damaged by postmodern life,” in terms of black masculinity, the race man is poised to muzzle Black women, while serving the dominant culture, not the Black community (Nakayama, 2000).

A particular type of black masculinity that has developed in the last two decades is that of the hip-hop black masculinity (Brown, 2005; Henry, 2002). According to rap pioneer Doug E. Fresh, hip-hop “brought masculinity back into the game” (Hurt, 2006). Defined primarily as embodying an urban style, a rebellious attitude, and an aggressive stance, this type of masculinity has developed mainly due to the vast permeation of the hip-hop culture into the Black community (Henry, 2002).

Many traits associated with masculinity in hip-hop culture include toughness, strength, promiscuity, financial prowess, being a “playa” or pimp, being in control, and the domination of other men and people (Hurt, 2006). The style of hair, masculine posture, and unafraid character of hip-hop are representative of Black manhood in general (Jackson, 1997).

The embrace of the hip-hop style has created even more struggle for Black men who live the lifestyle. In embracing Black masculine behavior, Black men are assuming the authority to define themselves (Jackson, 1997; Brown, 2005). This is seen as a defiant challenge to mainstream society, as its ideals directly contrast that of the American hegemonic masculinity employed by the dominant culture (Jackson, 1997).

Many wonder why Black men would embrace the lifestyle, essentially making an uphill struggle even more difficult. Generally speaking, Black men who do not exemplify some of the aforementioned traits of hip-hop Black masculinity are labeled with derogatory and demasculinizing terms such as soft, weak, chump, homosexual or other feminine allusions (Hurt, 2006). The desire not to be classified as such within their community marginally explains the overwhelming conformity to these standards.

However, the reality remains that the dominant society dictates that part of manhood consists of dominance, power, and control (Hurt, 2006). However, within the Black community, a general lack of social mobility exists. However, one of the few things every Black man does have control over is his outer appearance (Brown, 2005). In hegemonic society which is America, Black men use their bodies to acquire power as well as respect (Brown, 2005).

Jhally claims that Black masculinity and hip-hop culture is not far removed from the rest of American culture (Hurt, 2006). The objectification of female bodies is a staple of not just Black masculinity but all masculinity (Hurt, 2006). With its self-conquering concepts of manhood, Hurt (2006) asserts that hip-hop Black masculinity is “pure Americana. Hip-hop is trapped in a box.”

An example of a man that has come under fire for his embrace of hip-hop culture is NBA star Allen Iverson. In June 2001, Iverson and his wife endured a domestic dispute that ultimately resulted in a warrant for Iverson’s arrest. Camera crews swarmed the Iverson residence, and Iverson was charged with 14 offenses. The incident was heavily covered in the media despite the fact that there were no allegations of harm to Iverson’s wife, questions about an alleged

apartment trespass by other residents of the complex, and inconsistency in witness testimonial. The case eventually got thrown out, with a mixed reaction in public opinion (Brown, 2005).

In his analysis, Brown (2005) notes ways in which the media constructed Allen Iverson to fulfill stereotypes of Black masculinity of being hostile, angry, violent, and sexually voracious. The media constructed this image by repeating the allegations, specifically that Iverson threw his nude wife out of the house, and was brandishing a gun. By repeating these allegations so frequently, the general public was conditioned to interpret it as truth. The emphasis on the fact that she was naked adds to the image of Black men being hypersexual, while the gun allegation, as well as the media's frequent referral to an overturned jail sentence over a bowling alley brawl, lends itself to violent stereotypes of Black masculinity (Brown, 2005).

In essence, Black masculinity represents a cultural struggle between the values of the dominant culture and the values of hip-hop culture (Brown, 2005). It symbolizes a dual struggle of Black men to form their own identity; by embracing hip-hop culture, Black men are also rejecting standards of conduct imposed by the dominant class (Brown, 2005). This posture serves the purpose of reaffirming the degree of power and influence Black men do have in constructing their own identity.

Researchers have emphasized the importance of not only clearly defining Black manhood, but to establish what the construction implies about its constructors, Black men (Jackson, 1997). No current literature tackles the Black man as an individual but rather a collective body in the context of White America. Thus, this research will focus at a micro-level on individual factors that affect Black men during ad processing.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Explaining Self-Concept**

Because they are typically well-developed and frequently activated, self-concepts serve as significant frames of reference as people engage in cognitive thought (Chang, 2002). As self-concept relates to advertising, it is an important factor in understanding the way consumers make choices based on the symbolic meanings associated with a brand (Jamal & Goode, 2001). Self-concept is a cognitive structure that is often associated with strong attitudes and behaviors. The effect of self-concept is very critical in predicting responses to advertised messages. This is because the nature of responses has been found to be directly proportional to the congruency of the advertised message to one's ideal self-image; the more congruent an ad is to an individual's ideal self-image, the more positive the response will be to the advertised brand (Chang, 2002).

Multiple theories have been conceived with regard to self-concept (see Hawkins, et al., 1995; Mehta, 1999; Schiffman & Kanuk, 2000; Jamal & Goode, 2001):

- *Actual self*, which involves how one sees himself or herself
- *Ideal self*, which involves how one desires to see himself or herself
- *Social self*, which involves how one feels others see him/her
- *Ideal social self*, which involves how one would like others to see him/her

### **Self-Image Congruity**

Self-concepts are closely aligned with personality based on the idea that individuals tend to buy brands whose personalities and images align most closely to one's own self-image (Jamal & Goode, 2001). This is because the process of consumption and consumer behavior is assumed to reinforce or maintain self-concepts (Chang, 2002). By choosing products that align closely to

their ideal self-images while snubbing products that do not match the prototypical image, consumers strive to increase self-satisfaction. This results in what is commonly known as self-image congruity (Jamal & Goode, 2001).

Self-image congruity has been shown to have an effect on consumer brand preferences, product evaluations, and purchase intentions, among other things (Whittler, 1989; Jamal & Goode, 2001; Chang, 2002). It has also been shown to have effects as it relates to the actor within an advertisement. Whittler (1989) found that while overall, Blacks viewed themselves as more similar to a Black actor than a White actor, high-identification Blacks were able to identify more strongly with the Black actor than low-identification Blacks.

Additionally, personality traits that are considered self-descriptive are more frequently activated and thus more accessible. This is noteworthy because when taking into account the fact that judgments are based on information available at the time of message processing, the foundation from which judgments are formed is likely to be comprised of readily accessible ideals (Chang, 2006).

### ***In-Group Bias Theory***

Another theory that relates consumer product evaluation to self-concept is the in-group bias theory (IGBT) (Brewer, 1979). According to this theory, stereotypical ideals of in-group versus out-group membership subsequently result in assessments of which in-group members are viewed more favorably than out-group members. The IGBT posits that members of a particular group will favor in-group members more favorably than they would out-group members (Qualls & Moore, 1990). For example, Whites will respond to another White actor more favorably than they would to a Black actor, and Blacks will respond more favorably to other Black actors than

they would to Whites. This differs slightly from the theory of self-image congruity in that the IGBT deals directly with in-group and out-group members, while self-image congruity can be applied to the intangible aspects of advertising, such as the brand or the context of an ad.

### ***Elaboration Likelihood Model***

The Elaboration Likelihood Model provides a framework from which we can predict cognitive processes for consumers (Perloff, 2003). In situations of low cognition where the recipient has no desire or need to process information, subjects use peripheral cues to form beliefs. Researchers have found that racially-specific cues are more appealing to minority consumers than non-specific cues (Pitts, Whalen, O'Keefe and Murray, 1989). As the race of the actor is the most salient cue, it is no surprise that Blacks prefer ads and programming featuring Blacks, display a better recall of an advertisement's content, and exhibit a more positive effect toward the advertisements and its actors (Mastro & Stern, 2003; Whittler, 1989). Additionally, Whittler & Spira (2002) found via the Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986), Black individuals use race as a peripheral cue to form in-group and out-group biases in advertising such that those who identify more highly with Black identity are more likely to form favorable product evaluations if the model is Black.

### ***Effects Literature***

#### ***Effects of Black Identity on Image Congruity***

The combined effect of the race of an advertisement's viewer and the race of a model within an ad has been consistently shown to have an effect on consumer responses. Past studies have found that Black consumers react more favorably to, believe they are more similar to, and can identify more with Black models as opposed to White models, while also exhibiting higher purchase

intention and recall ability (see Williams, Qualls & Grier, 1995; Qualls & Moore, 1990, Whittler, 1989; Schlinger & Plummer, 1972; Choudhury & Schmid, 1974).

Several moderators have been found to influence the effect that a viewer's race has on their reaction to advertised material. Schlinger and Plummer (1972) found that the degree to which Blacks respond favorably is slightly more intense amongst Blacks of low-income and education level.

Additionally, prior research has suggested that strength of racial identification has also been shown to have an effect on Black individuals' reactions to advertisements. Although Black individuals on the whole viewed themselves as more similar to Black models than White ones, higher-identification Blacks were able to identify more strongly with the Black model than lower-identification Blacks (Whittler, 1989; Williams, Qualls, & Grier, 1995). Conversely, Blacks of low-identification showed no difference in ability to relate to a White or Black model (Whittler, 1989).

### ***Effects of White Identity on Image Congruity***

Similarly, prior research has found that Whites also respond more favorably and are more likely to purchase items advertised by Whites as opposed to Blacks (Schlenger and Plummer, Whittler & DiMeo, 1991). Schlenger and Plummer (1972) noted that Whites perceived the Black-cast commercial as "less professional" than the White one, a subtle indicator of potential prejudice or bias by Whites against the Black out-group.

Other studies, however, have provided evidence that White consumers react equally to ads featuring Black models and White models (Solomon, Bush, and Hair, 1976). In a different study, Whittler (1989) also found that Whites responded similarly to Black and White models.

### ***Strength of Racial Identification***

Amongst Blacks, ethnic identification has been shown to affect purchase behavior as well as media usage (Appiah, 2001). Whittler (1989) found that Black college students who identified more with Black culture showed a higher preference for Black models in advertising than Blacks of a lower cultural identification.

The salience of race to the viewer may also be mediated by ethnic identification (Whittler, 1989). For instance, for Blacks of particularly high ethnic identification, a Black actor in an advertisement would serve as a positive cue, whereas for Whites who are highly ethnic, it may serve as a negative cue. Whereas a viewer's ethnicity has been shown to have effects on their interpretation of an ad, the measurement of ethnic identity provides a continuum that will help determine how aligned one is with his or her ethnicity with the hopes of providing more insight as to how it affects interpretation.

## ***Hypotheses***

There are numerous theoretical frameworks that attempt to predict how viewers will respond to advertised images. A significant premise in this body of research incorporates the theory of self-image congruity, which states that consumers will maintain more positive evaluations and are more likely to purchase brands which are believed to be more closely aligned with their self-image (Whittler, 2002; Jamal & Goode, 2001; Chang, 2002). This theory has been supported by prior research linking self-image congruity to increased consumer brand preferences, product evaluation and purchase intention for Whites and Blacks (Whittler & DiMeo, 1991; Whittler, 1989, 1991).

Self-image congruity has also been shown to have effects as it relates to the actor within an advertisement. Whittler (1989) found that Blacks overall viewed themselves as more similar to a Black actor than a White actor. Based on our knowledge of self-image congruity as it relates to advertising, the researcher posits:

*H1: Black individuals exposed to the advertisement featuring the Black model will have a more positive attitude toward the ad, greater self-image congruity, higher purchase intention, and more positive attitude toward the model than Black individuals exposed to the advertisement featuring the White model.*

Also of concern to the researcher is how White individuals react to ads featuring White models as opposed to ads featuring Black models. Some researchers have found that White

individuals react similarly to White and Black models with regard to purchase intention and attitude toward the ad (see Whittler, 1989), while others have found that White individuals react more favorably and were more likely to purchase products endorsed by White models as opposed to Black (see Schlinger & Plummer, 1972; Whittler & DiMeo, 1991). However, other prior studies determined that Whites do not view themselves as more similar to the White actor than the Black actor (Whittler, 1989). Given the contradictory evidence, the researcher offers:

*RQ1: Will White individuals exposed to the advertisement featuring the White model have a more positive attitude toward the ad, greater self-image congruity, higher purchase intention, and more positive attitude toward the model than White individuals exposed to the advertisement featuring the Black model?*

Strength of racial identification has also been shown to have an effect on Black individuals' reactions to advertisements. Whittler (1989) showed that although Black individuals on the whole viewed themselves as more similar to Black models than White ones, higher-identification Blacks were able to identify more strongly with the Black actor than lower-identification Blacks. Additionally, Whittler (2002) found that via the Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986), Black individuals use race as a peripheral cue to form in-group and out-group biases in advertising such that those who identify more highly with Black identity are more likely to form favorable product evaluations if the model is Black. Based on these findings, the researcher posits:

*H2: When exposed to the Black model advertisement, Black individuals who identify highly with Black culture will have a more positive attitude toward the ad, greater self-image congruity, higher purchase intention and more positive attitude toward the model than Black individuals who identify poorly with Black culture.*

While prior research has explored the effects of Black identity in reactions to ads featuring Black versus White models, few studies have explored the effect of racial identity on White individuals' reactions to these same ads. Past research has compared the reaction of Whites as it relates to level of prejudice and tolerance (high tolerance-low tolerance e.g. Whittler, 1991). The current study seeks to add to the body of research by examining how racial identity of Black and White individuals affects their reactions to both the Black and the White advertisement models.

*RQ2: How will an individual's level of racial identity interact with the race of the models in the advertisement?*

As a significant aspect of self-image, masculinity deserves attention when analyzing the effects of reactions to male ad models. Thus, the researcher is also interested in whether an individual's level of masculinity will cause them to react differently to advertisements based on

the race of the model. One potential theory may stem from the idea that those who exhibit a high masculinity may harbor sexist views toward women. These individuals may be more inclined to hold prejudiced views, thus resulting in an in-group preference and out-group bias. Under this theory, White individuals of high masculinity will favor White models over Blacks, while Black men of high masculinity will favor Black models over White. Thus, the researcher posits:

*RQ3: Will individuals high in masculinity react differently to advertisements with Black models as opposed to White models?*

Another aspect that deserves attention is the effect of one's masculinity as it applies to the race of the models in the ads. This is particularly relevant because of the atypical nature in which Black masculinity is portrayed in the ad (professional and business-like as opposed to non-occupational and hypermasculine), and the tendency of Blacks highly identified with hip-hop urban culture to marginalize and denounce alternative images of Black masculinity (Hurt, 2006). Little attention has been given to the influence of the reaction between an individual's racial identity and their masculinity as it relates to the context in which the masculinity is portrayed, yet exploration like this may very well be necessary in order to devise effective ways in which advertisers can diversify images of media, particularly those of minorities.

*RQ4: How will one's masculinity and racial identity, and the race of the model, have an effect on their reaction to the advertisement?*



## ***Method***

### ***Sample***

The participants for this study were undergraduate students from Penn State University, primarily between the ages of 18 and 25. The subjects selected for analysis self-identified as either Black/African-American or White/Caucasian; results from students who categorized themselves as multiethnic were not considered during this study. All of the subjects who participated in the study did so strictly on a voluntary basis.

### ***Stimulus Materials***

The stimulus materials used consisted of three ads, an Infiniti car ad and two faux watch ads. Every respondent was first presented with the Infiniti car ad and asked to answer questions designed to assess their attitude toward the ad, self-image congruity, and purchase intention. The participants were then exposed to one of the two faux watch ads for a fictional brand called Muscoli.

The two ads were visually identical in nearly every aspect – a close-up of the watch, brand name, and logo were placed in the lower left corner; the body and the context of the advertisement were virtually identical (see appendix C). The manipulation of the stimulus was the race of the ad model; participants in condition A saw a Muscoli watch ad with a Black male model, and participants in condition B saw a Muscoli watch as with a White model.

The context of the ad was chosen particularly for its uniqueness as it relates to images of Black masculinity. The ad featured a male model in a business suit and tie and standing in an office corridor. The portrayal of Black men in situations implying achieved occupation, profession, and education are scarce within mainstream media. This holds even truer for images

of young Black men, most of whom are primarily cast as athletes or members of the hip-hop community (Brown, 2005; Henry, 2002; Hurt, 2006).

### ***Variables and Measures***

Participants answered a total of 50 preliminary questions to assess the independent variables of racial identity and masculinity. In order to evaluate the subjects' racial identity, the researcher used the 15-item Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM). Originated by Phinney (1992), the MEIM has been used in dozens of studies to assess the racial identity of adolescents from diverse groups. It has shown good reliability with consistency, yielding alphas above .80 across a number of diverse groups and ages. In order to evaluate the subjects' masculinity, the researcher used the 35-item Multicultural Masculinity Ideology Scale (MMIS). Originated by Doss and Hopkins (1998), the psychometric properties of the MMIS were established using principal components analysis, convergent validity tests, and internal-consistency and test-retest reliability. Results indicate that the MMIS can be useful for examining a variety of research questions relating to culture and masculinity.

The participants were then exposed to the stimulus materials and asked to answer a total of 24 questions designed to assess the dependent variables (attitude toward the ad, self-image congruity, purchase intention, and attitude toward the ad model). There were 13 items designed to assess attitude toward the ad (Kamp & MacInnis, 1995; Homer, 1995; Bruner, 1995, 1998); three items designed to assess source likeability (Tripp, Jensen, & Carlson; 1994); three items designed to assess purchase intention (Baker & Churchill, 1977); and five items designed to assess self-image congruity (Sirgy, et al., 1997) (see appendix D).

## ***Questionnaire Administration***

The questionnaire and stimulus items were administered via pen/pencil and paper booklet.

Participants were instructed to follow written directions and turn the booklet in upon completion

## ***Data Analysis Techniques***

The design of the experiment was a 2 X 2 X 2 factorial design, with the factors being race of the model (Black vs. White), racial identification (high vs. low), and masculinity (high vs. low). The “high” and “low” for both racial identification and masculinity were defined using a median split of the mean scores obtained from each measure. Scores that were above the median were considered high, and scores that fell below the median were considered low.

H1 was analyzed via a t-test to compare the results of Black individuals exposed to the Black ad model versus Black individuals exposed to the White ad model. RQ1 was analyzed via t-test to compare the results of White individuals exposed to the White model versus White individuals exposed to the Black model.

H2 was analyzed via a t-test to compare the results of Black individuals of higher racial identification who were exposed to the Black model versus Black individuals of lower racial identification who were exposed to the Black model.

To analyze RQ2, the researcher conducted a 2 x 2 MANOVA to examine main effects in a 2-way interaction between the individuals’ racial identification and the race of the model. RQ3 was analyzed via t-test to compare the reactions of higher-masculinity individuals exposed to the White model versus higher-masculinity individuals exposed to the Black model. Finally, RQ4

was analyzed via a 2 x 2 x 2 MANOVA to examine the main effects in a 3-way interaction between racial identity, masculinity, and race of the model.

## **Results**

### **Reliability and Factor Structure of Measures**

For the 12-item Multiethnic Masculinity Scale (MEIM), Cronbach's Alpha = .91, while analysis of the 35-item Multicultural Masculinity Ideology Scale reported Cronbach's Alpha = .78. Cronbach's Alpha for the dependent variables = .94 for the 12 items measuring participants' attitude toward the ad, = .95 for the five items measuring ad self-image congruity, = .84 for the three items measuring purchase intention of the Muscoli brand, and = .89 for the four items measuring participants' source likeability.

### **Main Hypotheses**

As predicted in Hypothesis 1, an independent sample t-test revealed that Black participants who were exposed to the ad with the Black model demonstrated a more positive attitude toward the ad ( $M=5.85$ ,  $SD=.74$ ) than those exposed to the White model ( $M=4.68$ ,  $SD=1.44$ ),  $t(35)=3.17$ ,  $p<.01$ . Black participants who viewed the Black model also displayed higher self-image congruity ( $M= 4.36$  vs.  $2.98$ ,  $t(35)=2.67$ ,  $p<.01$ ) higher purchase intention ( $M= 5.35$  vs.  $4.12$ ,  $t(35)=2.53$ ,  $p<.0$ ) and more positive attitude toward the model ( $M= 5.85$  vs.  $4.58$ ,  $t(35)=3.89$ ,  $p<.001$ ) than those who were exposed to the White model. Holm's Bonferroni post hoc analysis was conducted as a more stringent measurement of significance for the multiple t-tests; all t-tests were significant after this analysis.

Hypothesis 2 was analyzed via t-test; the data analyzed did not support the hypothesis. No significant relationship was found between Black participants' strength of racial identification and the dependent variables of attitude toward the ad, self-image congruity, purchase intention, and attitude toward the model.

## **Research Questions**

With respect to RQ1, an independent sample t-test found no significance as it relates to White participants' self-image congruity, purchase intention, and attitude toward the model when seeing the White model as opposed to the Black model. However, the results did find that Whites showed a more positive attitude toward the ad when exposed to the Black model as opposed to the White model ( $M= 4.72$   $SD=1.13$  for Black model,  $M=3.97$ ,  $SD=.90$  for White model,  $t(42)=2.47$ ,  $p<.01$ ).

RQ2 was analyzed using a 2 (high racial identification vs. low racial identification) X 2 (Black ad model vs. White ad model) multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) to examine how participants' ethnicity and ethnic identification affected their attitude toward the ad, self-image congruity, purchase intention and attitude toward the model based on their own race and the race of the model. This analysis revealed a significant effect for the MEIM score, Wilks'  $\Lambda=.95$ ,  $F(77)=5.67$ ,  $p<.001$ , partial  $\eta^2=.24$ , and the race of the model, Wilks'  $\Lambda=.82$ ,  $F(77)=3.69$ ,  $p<.01$ , partial  $\eta^2=.18$ , but no significance was found for the Racial Identification-Race of the Model interaction. The univariate analysis of the Racial Identification-Race of Model interaction yielded an effect on self-image congruity approaching significance,  $F(76)=3.25$ ,  $p=.076$ , partial  $\eta^2=.04$ .

RQ3 was analyzed via t-test. No significant relationship was found between an individual's masculinity, the race of the model in the ad, and the dependent variables (attitude toward the ad, self-image congruity, purchase intention, and attitude toward the model).

RQ4 was analyzed via a 2 (high ethnic identification vs. low ethnic identification) X 2 (high masculinity vs. low masculinity) X 2 (Black ad model vs. White ad model) MANOVA.

The results of the multivariate analysis found no significant interaction effects for any of the independent variables. The univariate analysis revealed a significant effect of Masculinity-Race of Model on purchase intention. Additionally, the interaction of Masculinity-Racial Identification yielded a significant effect on attitude toward the ad as well as an effect approaching significance on attitude toward the model,  $F(72)=4.37, p<.05$ , partial  $\eta^2=.057$  and  $F(72)=3.7, p=.059$  partial  $\eta^2=.049$ .

## ***Discussion***

This research adds to the body of knowledge on the effects of racial identity and masculinity by measuring the interaction of both on ad evaluations. Additionally, the research seeks to understand how these two interact in the presence of an atypical context (a Black man in a suit and tie being atypical to the hypermasculine hip-hop masculinity in which Black men are frequently are portrayed). It is hoped that the results of this study can be applied to advertising practices to increase diversity of images while maintaining appeal. Advertisers must possess a social responsibility to represent its consumers in a manner which is lucrative as well as respectable and constructive in nature. The advertising field needs to undergo transformations to ensure that it does not alienate its consumers while at the same time abandon low-diversity images which perpetuate detrimental stereotypes.

Blacks who were exposed to the ad with the Black model held a more positive attitude toward the ad, higher self-image congruity, higher purchase intention, and a more positive attitude toward the model than Blacks exposed to the White model. A similar race-based in-group bias did not hold true for Whites; Whites exhibited a more positive attitude toward the ad featuring the Black model than that of the White model, and showed no preference for either model in terms of self-image congruity, purchase intention, and attitude toward the model. The results show some support for the theory of self-image congruity. Blacks saw themselves as more like the Black model, and thus held more positive attitudes toward the Black model, while Whites did not perceive themselves as congruent to the White model, and therefore did not show preference to the White model.

Another potential explanation for these results may be the salience of race for Blacks as opposed to that of Whites. Blacks' absolute scores were significantly higher on the racial identity scale than those of Whites; on a 7-point scale, the Black participants had a mean racial identification of 6.01, while the mean racial identification of the White participants was 4.45. The strength of racial identification within the Black sample suggests that Blacks' ethnicity was a significant component of their overall identity.

Additionally, the salience of race while evaluating this stimulus may have been further intensified for Black participants due to their surrounding environment. As students at a predominantly White university, the racial "otherness" of the Black participants was consistently reinforced in their typical environment. In the same environment, conversely, salience of race and racial heuristic processing for Whites is less likely because of the racially homogenous surroundings and lack of a racial out-group reference point for reinforcement of racial difference.

The open-ended portion of the questionnaire lends credence to this notion. After being exposed to the ad, respondents were asked to name the first, second, and third thoughts that came to mind when viewing this ad. Analysis of these comments showed that Black participants made reference to the model's race nearly three times (eleven) as many as the White participants (four). Additionally, all four references to race made by White participants occurred after being exposed to the Black model. These open-ended findings suggest that race was a salient cue for Blacks in when presented with either a Black or a White model, while race was a salient cue for Whites only in instances in which they were faced with a racial "other."

H2 showed no significant interaction between the strength of racial identification for the Black participants and the race of the model. A likely explanation for this lack of significance is

the overall high ethnic identification of Blacks who participated in this study. As noted earlier, the mean racial identification score for Blacks was just above a 6.0 on a 7-point scale, signifying a strong ethnic identity overall. It is arguable that the effect of racial identity on Blacks with the lowest racial identification scores (about a 5.0 out of 7) and Blacks with the highest racial identification scores (7 out of 7) is negligible; both scores suggest a strong ethnic affiliation, likely yielding similar effects regarding attitudes toward race in advertisements.

RQ2 showed no significant interaction between strength of racial identification for the White participants and the race of the model. The lack of significance may be partially explained by the aforementioned theories of salience of race for Whites. Analysis of White racial identification scores showed that the White participants did show more variance in racial identification than the Black participants. However, because this hypothesis specifically refers to Whites who saw the White model only, the activation of those affiliations may not have been triggered by exposure to a member of their racial in-group.

RQ3 did not yield a significant interaction with regard to masculinity and race of the model on the dependent variables (more positive attitude toward the model, higher self-image congruity, higher purchase intention, and more positive attitude toward the model). Any potential relationships between race and masculinity are still emerging and are undefined. However, the relatively small size of the sample made discovery of interactions a cumbersome task. It is also plausible that the effects from interaction of masculinity and race of the model may vary depending on other theories of self-concept and motivational theory. For instance, a male who is high in masculinity may prefer a Black model over a White model because the hypermasculinized, stereotypical Black male in many media outlets more closely represents his *actual self*, or the characteristics that embody him, while a male who is low in masculinity may

favor a Black male for those very same reasons because it represents his *ideal self*, or who he would like to be. While both have positive attitudes toward this portrayal of Black masculinity, one sees the Black male as a similar representation of self, while the other views the Black male as a masculine icon or standard of which he must live up to.

RQ4 did not yield a significant effect of racial identity, masculinity, and race of the model on attitude toward the ad, self-image congruity, purchase intention and attitude toward the model. Again, the lack of significance may be in part because of the small sample size; however, univariate analysis did show a significant effect of Masculinity-Race of the model on purchase intention of Whites such that those lower in masculinity showed a higher purchase intention when exposed to the Black model, and Whites higher in masculinity showed a higher purchase intention when exposed to the White model. This reaction could potentially point to the Black model being a perceived threat to masculinity. Historically, some White men have taken some extreme measures to demasculinize, commodify, and nullify the Black man. As noted earlier in the text, some scholars attribute these actions to the perceived threat of Black masculinity or masculine dominance. This theory posits that images of Black masculinity might be more threatening to more masculine Whites, whereas such a threat may not be of importance to Whites in which masculinity is not a central aspect of identity.

## ***Limitations and Future Research***

There are some limitations to the research methods employed during this thesis. First, the sample used for this research may have affected reactions to the model's race in the advertisements. All of the participants in the thesis were students at Penn State-University Park campus, a predominantly White campus. Because the Black participants inhabited an environment where they were often the racial "other," race may have been a more salient factor for Blacks than Whites. The data suggests that this indeed may be the case, as Blacks overall exhibited a higher racial identity than Whites.

The size of the sample is also a limitation; while multiple interactions were approaching significance, the size of the participant pool (after elimination of several questionnaires due to multiethnicity or failure to complete the questionnaire) was relatively small. Thus, significance was difficult to achieve at some levels. Additionally, a larger and more broad-based sample may yield wider ranging responses as it relates to racial and masculine identification.

The actual assessment of the advertisement by the participants is partially limited by the nature of the ad's presentation. Participants do not view the ad as they normally would within the context of a magazine or a newspaper; rather, as a component of an academic questionnaire, participant's assessments of advertised material may be slightly affected.

The threat of social expectancy theory is also a limitation. After answering questions about racial identification and masculinity, it is possible that some participants may have reasoned the purpose of the study and tailored their answers accordingly.

Although this study chose to specifically focus on Black and White men and their reactions to advertised portrayals of Black and White masculinity, further research can broaden the scope of knowledge by including other ethnicities in similar studies examining race and masculinity in advertising. As stated in the research, ethnic minorities hold an increasingly larger stake in the consumer market; thus, market researchers seeking to target these audiences must know how to effectively communicate with these audiences.

Another possibility for future research may opt to include women in studies of race and masculinity. As noted in earlier in the literature review, the concept of masculinity is not, by definition, gender-specific. The concept of racial identification is most certainly not constrained by gender. Thus, the effects of self-concepts such as racial identification and masculinity/femininity should be given appropriate attention as it relates to women's attitudes toward advertised content.

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# Appendix A

## Multiethnic Identity Measure

Please circle the number that best indicates how much you agree with the following statements.

*Strongly Agree*

*Strongly Disagree*

1. I have spent time trying to find out more about my ethnic group, such as its history, traditions and customs.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. I am active in organizations or social groups that include mostly members of my own ethnic group.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. I have a clear sense of my ethnic background and what it means for me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. I think a lot about how my life will be affected by my ethnic group membership.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. I am happy that I am a member of the ethnic group I belong to.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. I have a strong sense of belonging to my own ethnic group.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. I understand pretty well what my ethnic group membership means to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. In order to learn more about my ethnic background, I have often talked to other people about my ethnic group.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. I have a lot of pride in my ethnic group.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. I participate in cultural practices of my own group, such as special food, music or customs.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. I feel a strong attachment towards my own ethnic group.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. I feel good about my cultural or ethnic background.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Black/African-American

White/Caucasian

Other

13. My ethnicity is	1	2	3
14. My father's ethnicity is:	1	2	3
15. My mother's ethnicity is:	1	2	3

## Appendix B

### Multicultural Masculinity Ideology Scale

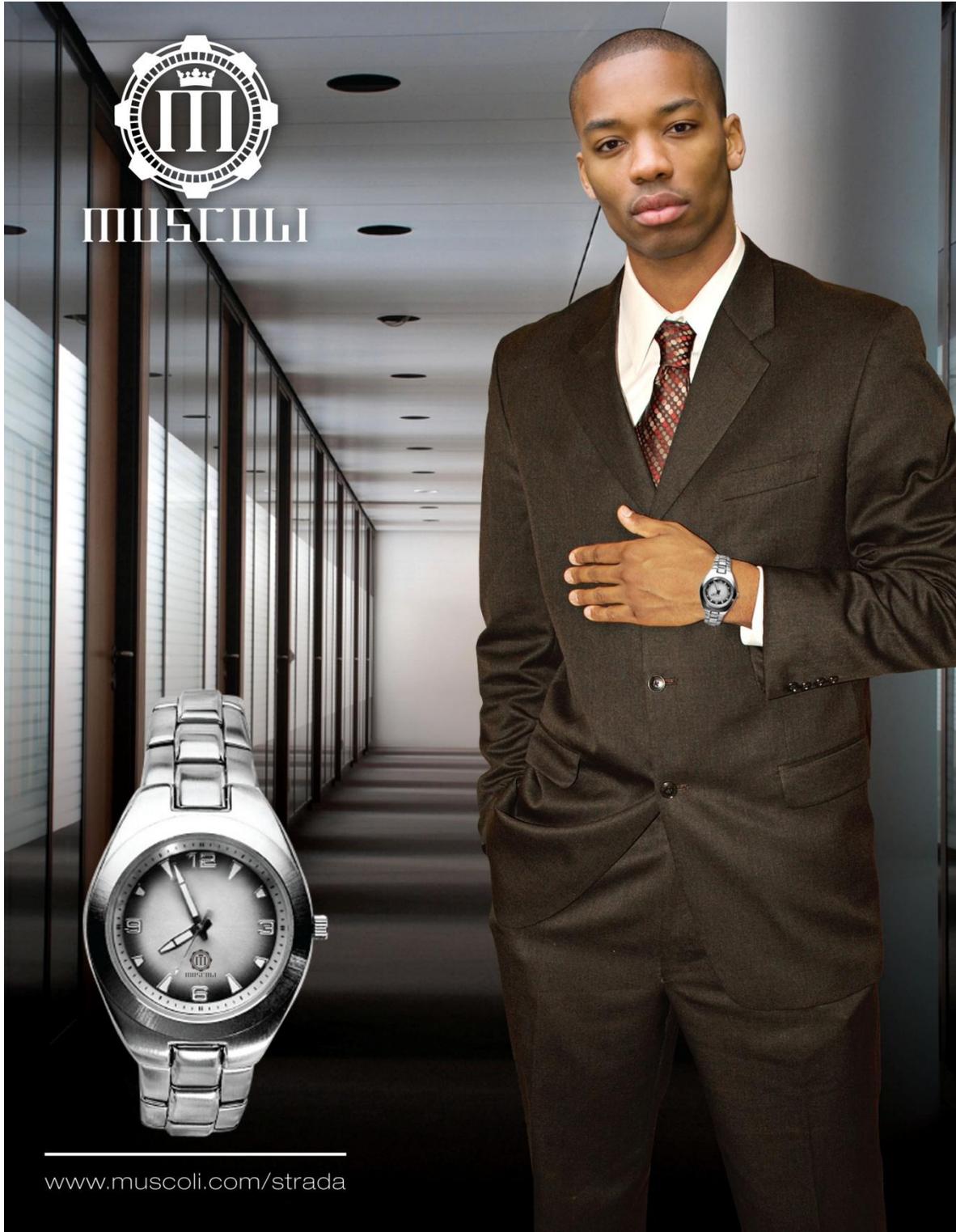
Please circle the number that best indicates how much you agree with the following statements.

	<i>Strongly Agree</i>				<i>Strongly Disagree</i>		
16. Guys should be courteous to women	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17. A guy should let people know how he feels.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18. A guy should not have male friends who are homosexual.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
19. A guy should prove his masculinity by having sex with a lot of people.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
20. Guys should not try to solve problems by fighting.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
21. Providing for his family should be a man's main goal in life.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
22. Male friends should not show affection to each other.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
23. A guy should look for a date who has a good personality rather than one who is really good looking.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
24. Guys should have a positive attitude towards life and not let things get them down.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
25. A guy should be confident in everything he does.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
26. In a relationship, guys should have sexual intercourse as often as possible.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
27. To be a guy, you've got to be tough.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
28. Strong anger is a natural emotion for guys to show.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
29. A guy should have long-term goals for his life.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
30. A guy should not show affection to those he loves.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
31. A guy should put his best foot forward in every part of his life.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

32. Courage should not be a necessary part of being a guy.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
33. Being a virgin should not be an embarrassment to a guy.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
34. Even if a guy is not rich, he should try to look that way.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
35. A guy should always have a woman he is dating.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
36. Guys should not cry even when something really bad happens.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
37. A guy doesn't have to be aggressive to get what he wants out of life	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
38. In a relationship, guys should have sexual intercourse before having oral sex.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
39. A man should not always have to protect his family.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
40. The best way a man can care for his family is to get the highest paying job he can.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
41. Guys should be competitive.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
42. A guy should have sexual intercourse only in emotionally committed relationships.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
43. Even when things get really difficult, a guy should keep trying.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
44. A guy should not look for danger just for the thrill of it.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
45. Being athletic or good at a sport should be important for a guy.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
46. A guy should have sexual intercourse as early as he can in his life.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
47. Showing emotion is not a sign of weakness in a guy.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
48. A guy should take risks to reach his goals.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
49. For a guy, sexual intercourse should not be the goal of making out.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
50. A guy should be independent and not get too attached to others.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

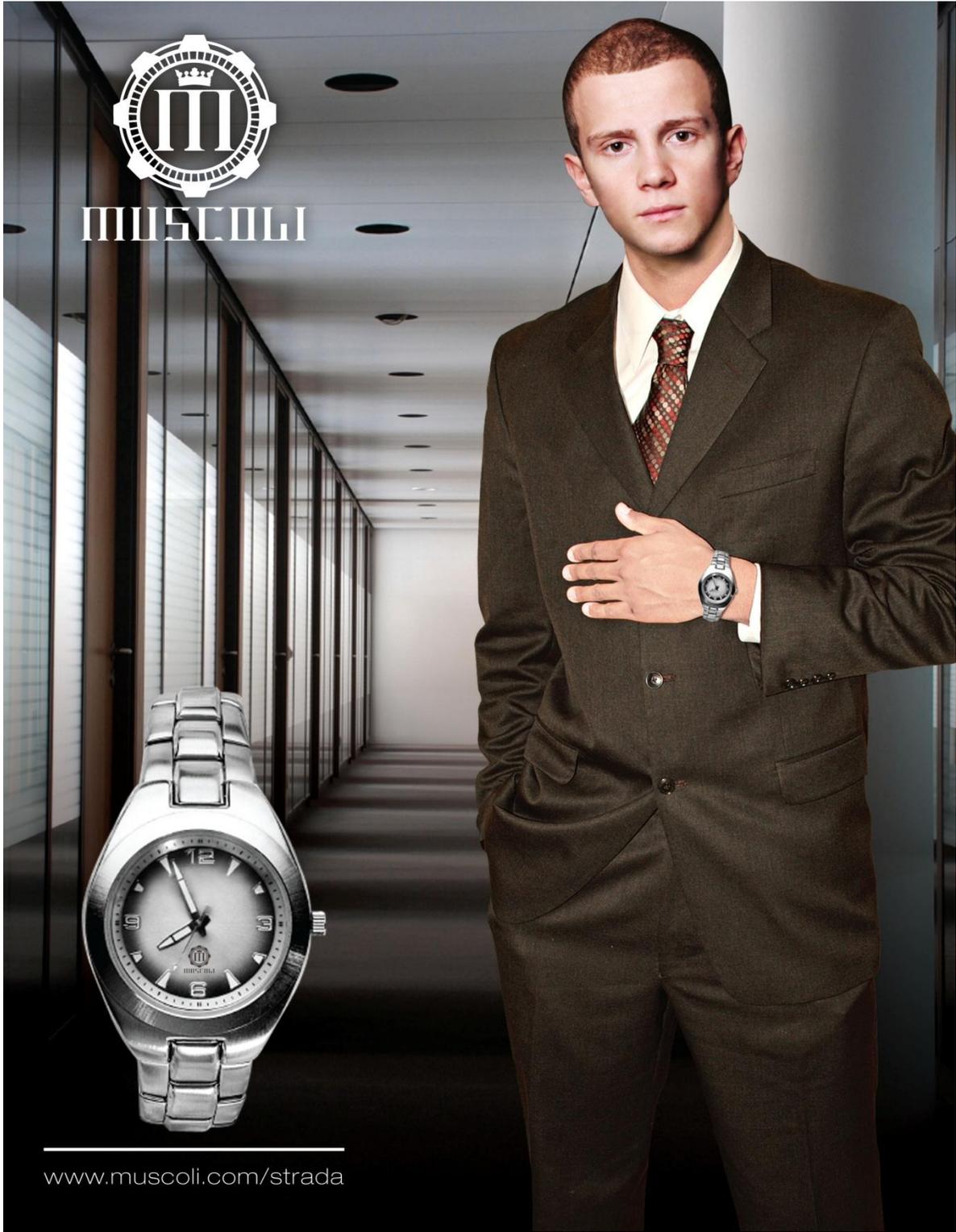
## Appendix C

### Muscoli Advertisements



The advertisement features a man in a dark brown suit, white shirt, and patterned tie, standing in a modern office hallway. He is wearing a silver Muscoli watch on his left wrist. In the bottom left corner, a large, detailed image of the same watch is shown. The watch has a silver metal link bracelet, a white dial with black numerals, and a crown on the right side. The Muscoli logo is visible on the dial. In the top left corner, the Muscoli logo is displayed above the brand name "MUSCOLI" in a stylized, white, serif font. The background is a long, brightly lit hallway with glass walls and recessed ceiling lights.

[www.muscoli.com/strada](http://www.muscoli.com/strada)



[www.muscoli.com/strada](http://www.muscoli.com/strada)

## **Appendix D**

### **Dependent Measures of Attitude Toward the Ad, Self-Image Congruity, Purchase Intention and Attitude toward the Model**

**1. Please list any thoughts (up to three) that crossed your mind while viewing the advertisement ONLY. State your thoughts as concisely as possible.... a word or phrase is sufficient. Ignore spelling, grammar, and punctuation. There are no right or wrong answers.**

First thought: \_\_\_\_\_

Second thought: \_\_\_\_\_

Third thought: \_\_\_\_\_

**2. Please indicate your overall attitude regarding the Muscoli watch advertisement by circling the appropriate number on each line:**

- |    |                     |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |                 |
|----|---------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|-----------------|
| a. | Not at all positive | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Very positive   |
| b. | Did not like at all | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Liked very much |
| c. | Bad                 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Good            |
| d. | Stale               | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Fresh           |
| e. | Tasteless           | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Tasteful        |
| f. | Unappealing         | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Appealing       |
| g. | Unbelievable        | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Believable      |

- h. Boring                    1        2        3        4        5        6        7    Interesting
- i. Unconvincing           1        2        3        4        5        6        7    Convincing
- j. Typical                    1        2        3        4        5        6        7    Atypical
- k. Unfavorable            1        2        3        4        5        6        7    Favorable
- l. Inappropriate          1        2        3        4        5        6        7    Appropriate

**3. Based on the advertisement you just viewed, please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements by circling the appropriate number after each item.**

Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Agree
a. The image portrayed in the Muscoli watch ad is consistent with how I see myself.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
b. The Muscoli brand reflects who I am.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
c. People similar to me should wear Muscoli.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
d. The Muscoli brand is very much like me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
e. The Muscoli brand is a mirror image of me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

**4. Based on the advertisement you just viewed, please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements by circling the appropriate number after each item.**

No, definitely not

Yes, definitely



Vita  
Curtis Johnson

Curtis Johnson came to Penn State University after completing his undergraduate degree in Broadcast Journalism at Hampton University. His Master's curriculum at Penn State University is in Media Studies with an emphasis on strategic communications and public relations. Since he began his studies at Penn State, he has undertaken several work experiences in public relations, including work as a market researcher for C-NET, a local government access network in State College, PA; a public relations intern with the Washington Wizards NBA franchise in Washington, D.C.; and an intern for Edelman, a prominent public relations firm in Washington, D.C. He is interested in pursuing a career in public relations and communications and is specifically interested in the portrayals of minorities in targeted communications.