

PORTRAYALS OF RACIAL DIVERSITY IN AMERICAN  
PRIME-TIME TV COMMERCIALS

By

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To my dear family

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Abstract of Thesis Presented to the Graduate School  
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THE PORTRAYALS OF RACIAL DIVERSITY IN AMERICAN PRIME-TIME TV  
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My thesis focuses on prime-time TV commercials, noting the amount and quality of representation of people of color. A content analysis of 312 commercials in prime-time television reveals that while Caucasian continue to be the predominate models in terms of numbers and in types of role they play, the numerical representation of minorities has improved. Nearly half of ads sampled were indicated with cross-racial appearance. And stereotypical association between minorities and certain product category seems to be vague. However, I found that minorities are still more likely than Caucasian to have minor roles and background roles. Some problematic patterns were found in term of setting and cross-racial interaction.

## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

The United States is a very diverse country racially. According to the 2000 census, the United States has 31 ethnic groups with at least one million members each and numerous other ethnicities represented in smaller numbers. Hispanics are the largest minority group in the country, comprising 12.5% of the population in 2000, up from 9% in 1990. About 12.3% of the American people are Black, mainly African American. A third significant minority is the Asian American population (4.2%). Indigenous peoples of the Americas, such as American Indians and Inuit, make up about .9% of the population.

Intermarriage is also changing the face of the United States and the means by which race is measured. Clean divisions between groups can no longer fit people into neat, distinct racial and ethnic categories (Caucasian, African American, Hispanic, Asian or Native American). According to a study done by veteran demographer Barry Edmonston, “by 2050, 21% of the U.S. population will be of mixed racial or ethnic ancestry, up from an estimate of 7% today. And among third-generation Hispanic and Asian Americans, exogamy (defined as marriage outside one's ethnic group or tribe) will be at least 50%” (as cited in Stanfield, 1997). While exogamy remains much less prevalent among African Americans, it has increased significantly from about 1.5% in the 1960s to as much as 10% in 1997 (Stanfield, 1997). These factors underscore the nation's increasing ethnic complexity.

The significance these shifts in racial and ethnic composition are also important when considering the economic impact. A 2002 report on minority buying power released by the Selig Center for Economic Growth at the University of Georgia's Terry College of Business projected spending power of African Americans, Hispanics, Asians and Native Americans will continue growing at a faster rate than that of white households at least through 2010 due to two key

factors. First, projected birth and immigration rates among ethnic and racial minorities are expected to exceed the national average compared to Caucasians. Second, employment opportunities for these groups are projected to improve.

According to the report, by 2010, the combined buying power of African Americans, Asian Americans and Native Americans will exceed \$1.7 trillion, an almost 375% growth compared with the 1990 level of \$454 billion. To be specific, Asian American buying power is estimated at \$397 billion for 2005, with a 240.4% increase since 1990. It's expected to reach \$579 billion nationwide by 2010; Hispanic buying power in California alone for 2005 is an estimated \$202.6 billion. On its own, California's Hispanic buying power exceeds the total buying power (all groups) of 36 of the 50 states; Native American buying power, estimated at \$51.1 billion nationwide for 2005. Native American buying power in West Virginia grew fastest, with a 388.6% increase since 1990 (as cited in Kvicala, 2005). And the buying power of African-American rose 127% in 14 years, from \$318 billion in 1990 to \$723 billion in 2003. By 2009, it is expected to reach \$965 billion according to the University of Georgia's Selig Center for Economic Growth.

"The fast-paced growth of minority buying power demonstrates the increasing economic clout of minority consumers," said Jeff Humphreys, Selig Center director and the report's author. "One implication is that business-to-consumer companies do not necessarily have to look overseas to find booming markets, as there are great opportunities right here in America's multicultural economy" (as cited in Kvicala, 2005). The pace of minority buying power is significant because it offers enormous marketing opportunities for businesses and investors. For advertisers and marketers, determining how to reach these markets and to effectively incorporate them into their brand marketing programs becomes a compulsory course of action.

Advertising and marketing are key aspects of what constitutes media today in the United States and in the rest of the world. Entman and Rojecki (2000) contend they are "indicators of the culture's racial heartbeat" (p.162).

In the United States, over the last 120 years, the role of advertising has changed, particularly as it relates to portrayals of various ethnic and racial minority communities. Before the 1980s, most television advertising was "mass-marketed to a broadly diverse audience through a relatively small number of media outlets" (Coltrane & Messineo, 2000). Since then, advertiser and media firms have emphasized divisions between subpopulations distinguishing them by social class differences, lifestyle differences, and ethnic and cultural differences to maximize the communication and marketing effects (Coltrane & Messineo, 2000).

Carey (1988) argued that media are "directed not toward the extension of messages in space, but toward the maintenance of society in time; not the act of imparting information but the representation of shared beliefs." As such media fulfill a "ritual role" (Carey, 1988) in communication. Television plays an increasingly important role in the "construction of reality and the maintenance of social hierarchy" (Coltrane & Messineo, 2000).

Gerbner's cultivation theory presents television as "not a window on or reflection of the world, but a world in itself" (McQuail & Windahl, 1993, p. 100). He argues that "the mass media cultivate attitudes and values which are already present in a culture: the media maintain and propagate these values amongst members of a culture, thus binding it together" (as cited in Chandler, 1995). Thus, if audiences are repeatedly exposed to certain portrayals of an ethnic group, they may develop corresponding beliefs about the group, either correct or distorted (Bang & Reece, 2003). Furthermore, Bang and Reece (2003) contend advertising that "fails to adequately reflect reality in terms of ethnic representation and its growing integration into the

mainstream culture” may be perceived to be unfair, out of touch, outdated, or not relevant by consumers from all ethnic backgrounds. In this sense, television commercials not only promote consumptions, but also shape images and "sustain group boundaries that come to be taken for granted" (Coltrane & Messineo, 2000).

Apart from enormous commercial benefit by reaching these minority groups with fast-paced growth of spending power, when the potential impact of exposure to television commercials is considered from the perspective cultivation theory, the quality of the ads assumes increasing social significance. “With the close correspondence between commercial imagery and program content, many researchers make the assumption that television advertising is representative of the stereotypes promoted by the medium” (Coltrane & Messineo, 2000). These ideas suggest that is important to analyze how advertisers present racial diversity in television commercial advertising.

My study will empirically examine the portrayal of race and interracial relationships available in prime time TV commercials. Through a systematic content analysis, my study will update the current status of racial-diversity portrayal on prime time TV commercial in United States. In doing so, the authors hope to report the progress of diversity portrayals on prime time television, as well as to advance recommendations for future advertising practice. The implications of these findings will be examined from the perspective of cultivation theory and furthermore provide insights into their possible impact on audience’s self perception also attitude toward minorities.

## CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

### **Cultivation Theory & Racism**

Cultivation theory states that television acts as a socializing agent that creates and cultivates viewers' attitudes more consistent with a media-conjured version of reality than with what actual reality is (Chandler, 1995). It emphasizes the effects of television viewing on the attitudes rather than on the behavior of viewers. Cultivation theory study also focuses on heavy viewers. It asserts that heavy viewers' attitudes are cultivated primarily by what they watch on television. In other words, heavy watching of television cultivates attitudes which are more consistent with the world of television programs than with the everyday world. Primarily, cultivation theory focused on the topic of violence. It contends that "watching television may tend to induce a general mindset about violence in the world, quite apart from any effects it might have in inducing violent behaviors" (Chandler, 1995).

Cultivation theorists are best known for their study of the relationship between television programming and viewer effects, with a particular focus on the topic of violence. However, some studies have considered cultivation theory in the context of other mass media, examining such topics as ethnic groups, gender roles, age groups, and political attitudes. A study by Lubbers, Scheepers and Vergeer (2000) applied cultivation theory to newspaper messages attitudes toward ethnic minorities. Going beyond enjoyment considerations and exploring the social consequences of music usage, Aust, Gibson, Hoffman, Love, Ordman, Pope, Seigler, & Zillmann (1995) found that radical political rap (music video) appeared to motivate white adolescents to support efforts toward racial harmony and to oppose white-supremacy agendas. Aust et al. (1995) argued that the white students sampled viewed oppression as more prevalent in society than they had thought before after they were repeatedly exposed to music stressing the

oppression of African-American people. The finding was in accordance with cultivation theory's premise that, for better or for worse, the mass media influences user's perception of reality, especially those of heavy media users.

Billings and Eastman (2003) argued that cultivation theory underscore the potential impact of total media immersion — a phenomenon that happens with large segments of the American population during the Olympic telecasts. The researchers found that during the Olympic telecasts four-fifths of all athletes mentioned and the top 20 most mentioned names were White. What makes this significant is that the potential impact of embedded biases about race goes beyond sports. Wenner (1989) contends that "utilizing inappropriate stereotypes can have a pernicious impact on ethnic-and gender-related social relations" (as cited in Billings & Eastman, 2003).

Researchers (e.g. Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1982; Gerbner, Gross, Signorielli, & Morgan, 1982; Gross, 1984; Matabane, 1988) contend that "stable and repetitive messages about race can cultivate attitudes and perceptions in audience members that mirror these messages" (as cited in Bang & Reece, 2003), and that interpersonal contact between members of different racial groups, whether in actual reality or media-conjured reality, is a "powerful facilitator" in attitude and social relations (Weigel, Loomis & Soja, 1980). Children are more susceptible to such cultivation effects than adults (Bang & Reece, 2003). Specifically, television has stronger impact on children's expectations and understanding of social roles for different racial minorities. For instance, if a child repeatedly sees a model of his or her own ethnic group playing a minor role or major role, it can lead to somewhat unrealistic self-perceptions. Such cultivation effects will be more salient in the case of children with few opportunities to interact with people from diverse ethnic backgrounds (Li-Vollmer, 2002).

In the context of romantic and marital relationships, cultivation theory suggests that in portraying idealized images of marriage, the media may be cultivating unrealistic beliefs about what romantic and marital relationships should be. Signorielli (1991) argued that “television may be the single most common and pervasive source of conceptions and action related to marriage and intimate personal relationships for large segments of the population” (p.121). Segrin and Nabi (2002) found that there is a relationship between genre-specific television viewing (e.g. romantic programming) and idealized expectations of marriage and intentions to marry. They contend that the media do play a role in "developing and reinforcing beliefs about marriage." Viewing racism as one of cultivation’s indicators (Morgan, 1986), we could infer that exposure to repeated inter-racial romance portrayals or messages on television may influence viewers' attitudes and expectation about inter-racial relationships in accordance with cultivation theory.

### **Racial Representation and Role Portrayal**

In terms of televised portrayals of racial minorities, a body of literature reviewed primarily focused on African Americans. As summarized by Larson (2002), it shows that the black population on television had a stable increase in both TV programming and TV commercials over time. During the fall 1977 season, the black population comprised 10% of TV programming. Similarly in 1978, black appearance time took up 8.5% in TV commercials and 8.3% in TV programming. In 1989, black appearance time showed a stable increasing percent in both TV commercials (9.1%) and programming (17%).

To be specific, in prime time television, the black population also shows an increasing trend from the 1970s to 1990s. According to Greenberg and Brand’s summary (as cited in Mastro & Greenberg, 2000), in terms of their representation in prime time television in 1971, 6% of the prime time characters were African Americans, and African Americans made up of 8% and 11%

of prime time characters in 1980 and 1993, respectively. A more recent content analysis of minority portrayals in 1996 prime-time advertising done by Taylor and Stern (1997) indicated that Blacks were portrayed in 31.8% of all ads with models.

From the bulk of literature review, we can easily see that African Americans' representation on U.S. television shows an "evolution" (Mastro & Greenberg, 2000) across time frames. However, other racial minorities' representations in U.S. TV remain "relatively uncommon" (Mastro & Greenberg, 2000). Henderson and Baldasty's (2003) analysis of prime-time television advertising during the spring 1999 season led them to conclude that "African Americans were the only minority routinely represented in prime-time commercials. Representations of other minority groups were extremely rare (about 1%)."

According to a content analysis conducted by Mastro and Greenberg (2000) on prime-time television during the 1996-1997 television season, African Americans composed of 16% of the main and minor roles in prime time, although their representation in the U.S. population was proportionately less (12% of the census). Hispanics composed only 3% of television portrayals on prime time, though they composed of 11% of the census. The study also found that Asian Americans represented 1% of the TV population relative to their proportion in the U.S. population (4% of the census), and Native Americans' representation was nil.

In addition to concern about under-representation, there has been concern about the role portrayals. While African Americans are generally represented in a "more diverse, equitable manner, and at a rate commensurate to the population," other racial minorities (Asian Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans) still remain underrepresented and, at times, "negatively depicted" (Mastro & Stern, 2003).

Li-Vollmer (2002) found that commercials tended to put Whites on priority by featuring them in different types of commercial and role portrayals. Whites were the only characters in high-status roles and were significantly more likely to be “spokespeople, initiators of action, and problem solvers” relative to racial minorities.

The televised portrayals of racial minorities show an increasing trend, however “subtle racial biases still pervade in the portrayals of these groups” (Li-Vollmer, 2002). Entman and Rojecki (2000) noted, although African Americans achieved a niche in the representation in television advertisements, the sheer frequency increase can not compensate for substantial limitations that exist in the nature and range of African American images in ads. According to Coltrane and Messineo (2000) Commercial images can “contribute to the perpetuation of subtle prejudice against African Americans by exaggerating cultural differences and denying positive emotion.”

Other studies have concluded that people of color are generally portrayed stereotypically (Baptista-Fernandez & Greenberg, 1980). One study of prime-time television ads showed African Americans were featured as dominant characters in only 17% of prime-time ads and the majority of advertisements featured African Americans in subordinate or minor roles (Bristor, Lee, & Hunt, 1995). In addition, African Americans were stereotypically portrayed in roles as athletes (Li-Vollmer, 2002). A separate content analysis conducted by Taylor and Stern (1997) on minority portrayals in 1996 prime-time advertising indicated that Blacks, Asian Americans, and Hispanics were much more frequently represented than in the past (Blacks: 31.8% of all ads with models; Asians: 8.4%; and Hispanics: 8.5%). However, the authors noted that minorities were more likely to be depicted in minor roles relative to Caucasians and stereotyped by being associated with certain product types (e.g., Asian Americans associated with technology-oriented

products). Studies also indicated that the majority of African Americans and Asians depicted typically didn't give orders; Whites were more likely to give orders (Mastro & Stern, 2003).

In summary, although the number of African American characters in prime-time commercials has equaled or even surpassed their real-world representation, the appearance of other racial minority characters also shows a climbing trend in prime time television commercials. However, the racial biases pervade the representation image and roles in ads for all racial minorities.

### **Cross-Racial Interaction and Relationship**

“Interpersonal contact between members of different racial groups is a powerful facilitator of change in attitudes and social relations” (Weigel, Loomis & Soja, 1980). Yet, questions about the quality of cross-racial relations portrayed on television have rarely been raised in past research (Weigel, Loomis & Soja, 1980).

What have been consistent in the literature are findings on the degree of racial integration in advertisement (Green, 1999). As summarized in Green (1999), many researchers suggest that black models play a minor role when featured with whites models in racially integrated settings (e.g., Bristor, Lee, & Hunt 1995; Humphrey & Schuman 1984; Schilinger & Plummer 1972; Wilkes and Valencia 1989). These researchers found that television ads that featured black models were overwhelmingly integrated, and that Blacks played either minor or background roles in the majority of the ads analyzed. Wilkes and Valencia (1989) noted that Blacks were more likely to than not to appear in racially integrated ads, while the proportion of African Americans in TV commercials showed an upward trend. Bristor, Lee and Hunt (1995) found that only 17% of the prime-time network television ads analyzed featured African-Americans as

dominant characters, while the majority of advertisements featured African-Americans in minor roles.

In the study by Weigel, Loomis and Soja (1980), cross-racial relationships on prime time television were found to be “infrequent and relatively formalized when they do occur.” Television's message appears to be that Blacks and Whites can work together, but do not engage in “the same degree of voluntary, individuated, and romantic relationships.” Weigel, Kim, and Frost (1995) compared two similar samples of television content drawn, respectively, from 1978 and 1989. The results of this comparison indicated that the appearance time of black characters on the screen more than doubled in the 1989 sample compared to 1978. In addition, the frequency of cross-racial interactions more than tripled in the 1989 sample. However, relationships between Blacks and Whites on television continued to be portrayed as “cooperative but emotionally detached.”

Though TV commercials have been credited with contributing to “widespread social perceptions [attained] through its framing of fantasy and romantic fulfillment” (Coltrane & Messineo, 2000), even less is known about the nature of the interaction and activities of White characters and characters of color in the mass media (Larson, 2002). It follows then that the study of interracial and cross-cultural unions also are important aspects in understanding the nature of race relationships (Aldridge, 1978). Larson (2002) examined interracial relationships in children's' television commercial, he found that not only did most of these commercials portray diversity in various settings, but they also portrayed interracial communication and interactions. However, in commercials featuring White and AHANA (African American, Hispanic, Asian and Native American) children together, more than 60% of the interactions were “cooperative.”

### **Race, Advertised Products & Setting**

Product association is important while examining the quality of racial portrayals, as “it provides implicit cues regarding the culture worth of the individuals associated with them” (Mastro & Stern, 2003).

According to a study by Henderson and Baldasty (2003), White characters typically were featured dominantly in commercials for expensive items and products associated with the home. On the other hand, racial minority groups were closely tied to low-cost, low-nutrition products (such as fast food and soft drinks, candy, and gum).

Mastro and Stern’s (2003) content found that black characters are typically featured in commercials for financial services or food. Asians are most commonly featured in ads for technology. Hispanics most frequently appeared in commercials for soap or deodorant. And, White characters were seen most in ads for technology and food. However, Native Americans were rarely shown.

Bang and Reece’s (2003) analysis of children in advertising showed that white children dominated ads, while children of color were background characters. Moreover, stereotyping of certain minorities portrayed in children’s television advertising is found in the study. Some current commercials stereotypically portray minorities with a clear association with certain product categories. The researchers found that Blacks were still more likely to be featured in food commercials than any other ethnic group, while at the same time being the least likely to appear in toy commercials.

The setting in which characters were located in commercials also was found to vary significantly by race. Mastro and Stern (2003) found that while both Black and Hispanic

characters were most often located outdoors, Asians were most often found at work and White were most often at home.

### **Gender, Race & TV Commercials**

As Gerbner's cultivation theory presented, TV is "not a window on or reflection of the world, but a world in itself" (McQuail & Windahl, 1993, p. 100). Many studies reveal that media messages do not reflect what the real world is: Far more people of color, disabled people, non-heterosexuals, seniors and poor people exist in the real world than we see on TV or in the movies. Media portrayals of women often leave much to be desired, especially women in advertising.

There has been more research on gender imagery in television programming and advertising that reflects the medium's preoccupation with sex and female beauty than research on race. In general, women characters have been more likely to be shown in the home, with men more likely to be shown outside or in occupational roles (Coltrane & Messineo, 2000). They also suggest that television commercials from the 1990s tend to portray White men as "powerful," white women as "sex objects," African American men as "aggressive," and African American women as "inconsequential."

In conclusion, the review of previous studies about televised racial portrayals indicates both progress and stagnation for racial and ethnic minority representations. While Blacks are generally portrayed in a more diverse manner, and at a rate equal, or even surpassed to their proportion in the population, Asian Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans remain underrepresented and, at times, negatively depicted. Prime-time television advertising reflects some racial diversity, but it is quite limited in nature. On average, studies suggest that racial and ethnic minorities appear most regularly in minor or background roles and group settings. As to

the interaction among different racial groups portrayed on television, people of color tend to be less dominant, and the relationship portrayed in TV commercials between Whites and people of color tends to be formalized and emotionally detached. Thus, the mere increase in the number of one racial minority group is insufficient to truly improve the quality of the representations presented.

### CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Demographic trends of minority groups constantly change as a result of factors such as economics, immigration, and health epidemics. From 2003 to 2007, either the minority population increased or their income level growth changed annually. Yet, the most recent studies about race representation through TV commercials can be only traced to 2003 (e.g., Henderson & Baldasty 2003; Mastro & Stern 2003; Bang & Reece 2003). Moreover, the samples analyzed were even older. Existing studies and their conclusions about race representation on television in U.S. were outdated, compared with fast economic, social development and constantly-changing demographics in today's mass-mediated society. It is both marketers' and academic researchers' job to stay on top of these trends. The intent of this study is to update the current status of racial-diversity portrayal on prime time TV commercials in U.S. by analyzing the 2007 samples.

Previous quantitative studies of race representation in TV commercials have tended to focus primarily on the depictions of African Americans and Whites, or have frequently combined all racial minorities into one category, due to the low visibility of some racial minorities in advertising (Li-Vollmer, 2002). However, my study attempts to avoid a Black and White polarity of race representation by making a concerted effort to draw out separate analyses of all major U.S. racial groups (including African American, Whites, Hispanic, Asian, Native American) to the extent possible. By analyzing not only the frequency in which characters of racial groups appear, but, more importantly, the association of race, gender and products advertised, as well as the nature in which they are depicted, this study proposes to update the current body of research on diversity portrayals in television advertising. Through systematic content analysis, the study will attempt to assess the degree of cross-racial interactions in terms of interdependence, individuation, relative status, and intimate relationship portrayals (Weigel, Loomis & Soja, 1980)

on television. My study will also investigate the settings in which race groups are portrayed in television commercials. Specifically, my study addresses the following research questions:

RQ1: What is the relative visibility assigned to different racial groups in American prime-time TV commercials?

RQ2: What roles are assigned to different racial groups in American prime-time TV commercials?

RQ3: What is the visibility of cross-racial appearance in prime-time American TV commercials?

RQ4: How intimate and multifaceted are cross-racial relationships depicted in American prime-time TV commercials?

RQ5: What are the differences in the types of products featured in American prime-time TV commercials that depict certain racial group or diverse races together?

RQ6: What are the differences in settings in which commercials locate certain different racial group or diverse races together?

RQ7: Are there any associations between gender and race, perceived importance?

RQ8: Are there any associations between the visibility of cross-racial appearances and broadcasting networks or days?

## CHAPTER 4 METHODOLOGY

Content analysis was used as the methodology for this study. Both frequency analysis & ratings of the qualitative aspects of cross-racial interaction (Weigel, Loomis & Soja, 1980) were conducted.

A one week sample of TV commercials from American major networks CBS, Fox during prime time television programs (8-11 p.m. ET) was constructed to represent broadcast TV commercials for 2007. CBS can trace its origins to the creation, on January 27, 1927. It is one of the pioneer broadcasting networks in United States, from its earliest days CBS established a reputation for quality. Prior to the fracturing of the market under cable television, CBS's television network was one of three which dominated broadcasting in the United States (the others were ABC and NBC). While, the groundwork for the launch of the Fox network began in March 1985 with News Corporation's \$250 million purchase of 50% of TCF Holdings, the parent company of the 20th Century Fox movie studio. And Fox has grown from an upstart "netlet" to the highest-rated broadcast network among young adults. CBS as pioneer and Fox as upstart in US broadcasting field should provide an interesting perspective into this study.

### **Inter-Coder Reliability**

One graduate student and one undergraduate student, both in the major of advertising, served as coder. They were extensively trained in commercial outside the actual sample. Both of them coded all sample ads independently, which means each individual ad was coded by both coders. During the week February 18<sup>th</sup> through February 25<sup>th</sup>, during network prime time broadcasting programming, a total of 312 TV commercial were aired. And the number of agreements in units of individual ad between coders was 251. The number of disagreement in units of individual ads between coders was 61. Based on Holsti's (1969) formula, the inter-coder

reliability for this study was 80.4%. In terms of individual variables, inter-coder reliability for the number of characters & racial diversity was 88.2%, for primary type of product or service was 88.6%, for primary settings was 87.9%, for perceived importance of characters was 80.6%, 81.5%, 79.8% (for major role , minor role and background role respectively), for the interdependence ratings was 86.4%, 88.2% respectively (for two rating scales), for individuation ratings was 80.4.5%, 87.1% respectively (for two rating scales), for romance rating was 90.5%.

### **Units of Analyses**

With the expectation to project our study results to the national level, all national commercials were coded including repeated ads (Craig, 1992). The reason why repeated ads were coded each time they ran is that “every exposure to a commercial is an impression” (Larson, 2002). Local commercials, political advertisements, trailers for television shows, movies, and sport events were excluded (Bartsch, Burnetts, Diller, & Rankin-Williams, 2000). As well animations and graphic representations were not included as well.

### **Variables**

Race was determined primarily by “visual signifiers, such as skin color, hair color, and costuming associated with particular ethnic group and by the presence of an accented speaking voice” (Li-Vollmer, 2002). Characters could be coded as White, Black, Asian, Hispanic, Native American, undetermined.

The total number of characters was coded in the ad. For this item, the scale had a maximum of 9, which was used for nine or more people (Bang & Reece, 2003). This rule was used to prevent skewing of data from commercials that had crowd scenes (Wilkes & Valencia 1989); moreover, with crowd scenes, it was impossible to count the actual number of people in the ad. Commercials with more than nine characters were difficult for the coder to accurately count the

number and race of characters. Therefore, those commercials were assessed for the presence of White and AHANA, but the precise number of characters of each race was not noted. In this way commercials that do have racial diversity.

Coders indicated the presence of Whites, African American, Hispanic, and Asian-American characters in each commercial. And number of TV commercials with presence or lack of cross-racial appearance will be coded. To be detail, if two or more people appeared in the ad, coders classified them as either a single or mixed ethnic group; if a single race was represented in the ad (regard less of the number of people), coders indicated from which ethnic group the character(s) came (Bang & Reece, 2003). More importantly, the perceived importance of this individual and his /her relationship to other characters (major role, minor role, background role) in the commercials will be rated (Bang & Reece, 2003). As well the gender for character(s) with major role, minor role, background role was coded as males and females if applicable. Type of product or service advertised was coded. The advertising product categories coded were automobiles, domestic necessity items (e.g., toilet paper, soap, toothpaste, household cleaners), fast food, non-fast food, restaurants & cafes, electronic & technological products (computers, palm pilots, etc.), apparels & accessories, candy and gum, soft drinks, cosmetics, banking & financial services, beer and wine, public service announcements, and athletic shoes & equipments, retail (such as grocery retail, drug store& pharmacies), and others (Baldasty & Henderson, 2003). Advertised products or service users and advertising message receivers were coded as female, male, children under 12 years old, and general audience.

Primary setting was also coded as the primary location where the characters were found (including work, home, other indoors, outdoors, more than one setting, and non-descript). Gender variable was measured to assess whom product category is directed to as target market

and whom advertising message is targeting to. And this variable was coded as females, males, and general.

For the commercials with more than one single racial group, the coders also need to indicate whether inter-racial interaction happen in case of some commercials featuring different spokesmen from different ethnic background for the same product without any interaction. More importantly, the coders need to rate the degree of cross-racial relationship when cross-racial interaction do happen in term of interdependence, individuation, and romance rating scales which focused on theoretically relevant dimensions derived from past race relations research (Weigel, Loomis & Soja, 1980).

The degree of interdependence characterizing an interaction will be assessed by rating (a) the extent to which the participants held common versus independent goals and (b) the extent to which the participants were engaged in a cooperative versus a competitive encounter. Each interaction was rated according to a 5-point response format with higher scores indicating greater interdependence. Other rating scales are devised in an attempt to capture the degree of individuation, relative status characterizing the interaction, in addition, when cross-sex interaction occurred, the coders will rate the degree of romance involved (adjusted from Weigel, Loomis & Soja, 1980).

## CHAPTER 5 RESULTS

During the week February 18<sup>th</sup> through February 25<sup>th</sup>, during network prime time broadcasting programming, a total of 312 TV commercials were aired. Across the 312 commercials coded in this sample, ads with less than 9 human characters were 212 took up 70.2% of all ads sample, ads with an indistinguishable number of characters were 100, took up 29.8% of all ads sample.

### **Relative Racial Visibility**

Analyzed in unit of TV commercials, we found that 63.3% of all ads sample could be observed with Caucasians, 18.3% with African American characters, 3.4% with Asian Americans, 5.1% with Hispanics, and .2% with Native American character, while 3.0% with characters of “undetermined” race. In terms of the number of ads in which they are represented, using the proportionality criterion of segment representation in the U.S. population, black characters were found to be overrepresented in the sample relative to other minority groups, which were somewhat underrepresented, particularly for Hispanics.

Proportionality was also calculated using the number of models rather than the number of ads. Based on the frequency distributions for each ethnic group, there were 571 models with identifiable race out of 589 human characters in the sample commercials. The majority of these characters was Caucasian (n=430, 75.4%), followed by African American (n=89, 15.6%), Hispanic (n= 21, 3.7%), Asian American (n=12, 2.2%), and Native Americans were nearly nil (n=1, .17%). Caucasians and African Americans were overrepresented, whereas Asians and Hispanics were underrepresented, especially Hispanics, and Native Americans were rarely shown in prime time TV commercials. However, there were no significant differences between

the observed distributions and those that might be expected if the U.S. Census proportions were applied to the total (Chi-square=6.8622, df=4, p=.20).

### **Racial Diversity**

Racial diversity is clearly visible in prime-time advertising. As table 5-1 shows, among ads with nine countable human characters or less (n=212, 70.2%), 73.5% were observed with only one racial group, and 26.5% were observed with more than two racial groups. Among ads with an indistinguishable number — defined as a crowd that had 10 or more — human characters (n=100, 29.8%), there were 81.7% of ads were identified with cross-racial appearance, 7.5% without cross-racial appearance, and 10.8% can't be determined whether racial diversity was present or not. To sum up, among all ads sampled, ads with more than two racial groups took up 44.2%, and 55.8% were observed without cross-racial appearance or can't be determined whether cross-racial appearance was present or not.

Table 5-1. Cross racial appearance

	Ads with countable human characters (n=212, 70.2%)	Ads with uncountable human characters (n=100, 29.8%)
Non-cross-racial appearance	73.5%	18.3%
Caucasians only	63.3%	N/A
African Americans only	7.0%	N/A
Asian Americans only	.9%	N/A
Hispanics only	2.5%	N/A
Native Americans only	0	N/A
Cross-racial appearance	26.5%	81.7%

Several other trends are important to note. First, African Americans were the only minority routinely represented in prime-time commercials. Appearances of other minority groups (Asian Americans, 3.4%; Hispanics, 5.1%; Native American, .2%) were still underrepresented compared with their actual population in U.S. (Asian American, 4.3, Hispanic, 14.50%; Native American, .9%). However, these findings show a noticeable increase in representation of

minority groups compared with previous studies in racial visibility. Henderson and Baldasty (2003) found that minority groups (Asian American, Hispanic, Native American) were extremely rare (about 1%).

While 44.6% (n=139) of all advertisements analyzed showed only white people, ads that included minorities seldom reflected such racial segregation.; usually Whites were included as part of the cast. Only in rare instances did people of color make up the entire cast of an advertisement. Cross-racial appearances also occurred at a much higher percentage in ads with uncountable human characters (81.7%) than in ads with countable human characters (26.5%). So when minority groups appeared, they tended to be in a crowd of models, meaning that the presence of minorities as part of the larger group could be seen as less significant.

Despite the growing desire for diversity, members in an individual ethnic group tend to interact among themselves (Allen, 1998). Of all ads included in the study, more than a half of the ads (55.8%) showed single ethnic groups (or can't be determined with racial diversity), featuring Caucasians predominantly. As table 5-2 shows, 44.4% of all ads included in the sample showed only Caucasians. African Americans appeared as a single group in 5.0% percent of all ads, followed by Hispanics in 1.8% of all ads, Asian American in .6% of all ads, while Native Americans never appeared as a single group in prime time TV commercials.

Table 5-2. Single group race\*

	n	%
Caucasians only	123	44.4%
African Americans only	14	5.0%
Asian Americans only	2	.6%
Hispanics only	5	1.8%
Native American	0	0

\*When ads shows only one ethnic group (N=144).

The difference in race representation across ads by broadcast network was also noticeable. Table 5-3 shows the percentages for different networks in which cross-racial and non-cross-racial appearances were observed. A statistically significant difference was found in the appearance of racial diversity in different network (Chi-square=4.42, df=1, p<.05). The FOX network had more commercials with cross-racial appearances (48.0%) compared to CBS where more than half of the ads (60.4%) were without cross-racial appearances. This could suggest that the FOX network's programming attracts a viewer base that is representative of greater cross-racial and cross-ethnic diversity relative to its CBS counterpart. Understanding this fact, the advertisers seeking to appeal to these audiences, tailor their messages to appeal to a more diverse audience.

Table 5-3. Cross-racial appearance by networks

	CBS %	FOX %
Non-cross-racial appearance n=161	60.4	52.0
Cross-racial appearance n=151	39.6	48.0
Total	100	100

Chi-square=4.42 (df=1, p<.05)

Although a statistically significant difference was not found in the appearance of racial diversity by different days of a week (Chi-square=6.03, df=6, n.s.), as table 5-4 shows, the percentages for different days of a week in which cross-racial and non-cross-racial appearances were observed. Non-cross-racial appearances were mostly commonly observed on Tuesday (21.3%) compared with other day, whereas cross-racial appearances were featured most on Saturday (23.6%).

Table 5-4. Cross-racial appearance by days

	Non-cross-racial appearance (n=161, 55.8% of all ads)	Cross-racial appearance (n=151, 44.2% of all ads)
Saturday (Feb. 18th)	18.1%	23.6%
Monday (Feb. 19th)	16.7%	15.9%
Tuesday (Feb. 20th)	21.3%	18.1%
Thursday (Feb. 21 <sup>st</sup> )	13.8%	13.8%
Friday (Feb. 22 <sup>nd</sup> )	8.6%	11.6%
Saturday (Feb. 23 <sup>rd</sup> )	10.6%	8.3%
Sunday (Feb. 24th)	10.9%	8.7%
Total	100%	100%

Chi-square=6.03 (df=6, n.s.)

### Perceived Importance by Race

Regardless of numbers, a more critical issue may be whether different ethnic groups exhibit different levels of perceived importance when they appear in TV commercials. Although African Americans are well represented in television ads, do they tend to appear in more major roles, minor roles, or background roles? Is gender an issue in race portrayals? In this analysis, because the cases of TV commercial featured with Native American were extremely rare, this group was excluded from analysis.

The results showed that Caucasians were found to be featured in major roles more frequently than any other ethnic group (Chi-square = 38.56, df=6,  $p < 0.001$ ). As table 5 shows 84.2% of the ads showing any Caucasian characters showed them in major roles, while comparable figures for African American and Asian American characters were 56.2% and 50.05% respectively. Hispanic models were least likely to be featured in major role (48% of the ads showing Hispanics). Conversely, proportions for minor and background roles demonstrate higher minority representations. When Hispanic models appeared in the ads, 48% of the time they were shown in minor roles, whereas the proportion of Caucasian models set in minor roles were lowest 11.3%, followed by African Americans at 36.8%, and Asian Americans at 44.4%.

Thus in term of perceived importance, minorities were shown with less importance than Caucasian in general, and Hispanic characters were least likely to be shown in major roles but most likely to be shown in minor or background roles.

Table 5-5. Perceived importance of characters

	Caucasian	African American	Asian American	Hispanic
Major role	84.2%	56.2%	50.0%	48.0%
Minor role	11.3	36.8	44.4	48.0
Background role	4.5	7.0	5.6	4.0
Total	100	100	100	100

Chi-square = 38.56 (df=6, p<.0001)

Although there were not statistically significant differences in perceived importance of characters by gender & race, as table 5-6 shows, male models are more likely to feature with major role across the ethnic groups, except in the case of Hispanic. In commercials that featured with Caucasians or African Americans, they assigned the almost same percentage of minor role to male and female, whereas in commercial with Hispanics, females are more likely assigned with minor role than males.

Table 5-6. Perceived importance of characters by gender & race

		Male	Female	p
		%	%	
Caucasian	Major role	10.6	9.0	n.s <sub>1</sub>
	Minor role	5.3	5.3	
	Background role	1.8	1.9	
African American	Major role	5.4	3.7	n.s <sub>2</sub>
	Minor role	4.8	4.8	
	Background role	.8	.5	
Asian American	Major role	1.3	.6	n.s <sub>3</sub>
	Minor role	1.3	1.0	
	Background role	0	.2	
Hispanic	Major role	1.0	1.4	n.s <sub>4</sub>
	Minor role	.6	1.3	
	Background role	.2	0	

1)Chi-square=.48 (df=2, n.s.); 2)Chi-square=1.28 (df=2, n.s.); 3)Chi-square=1.75 (df=2, n.s. )

4)Chi-square=1.73 (df=2, n.s.)

### Cross-Racial Interaction

While we could find that there is a noticeable increase in racial diversity representation through prime time broadcasting networks, what about the quality of racial representations in term of cross-racial interaction? There were only 10.3% of all ads (n=32) were indicated with cross-racial interaction. Due to absence of Caucasian-Native American interaction in sample ads, it was excluded from analysis.

Table 5-7. Comparison of cross-racial interaction

		Black-Caucasian n=21(66.2%)	Caucasian-Asian n=4(10.8%)	Caucasian-Hispanic n=3 (9.2%)	More than two racial groups n=4 (10.8%)
<b>Interdependence ratings</b>					
1) Independent goals- common goals	Mean	3.19	3.29	2.67	3.00
	SD	1.33	1.6	1.37	1.41
2) Competitive-cooperative	Mean	3.46	3.28	2.67	3.57
	SD	1.24	1.60	1.37	1.13
<b>Individuation ratings</b>					
1) Low intimacy-high intimacy	Mean	2.44	2.57	2.17	2.14
	SD	1.10	1.99	1.60	1.21
2) Narrowly defined-multifaceted	Mean	2.37	2.57	2.33	2.14
	SD	1.13	1.99	1.50	.90
<b>Romance rating</b>	Mean	1.07	2.14	1.67	1.14
	SD	.26	1.95	1.63	.38

Table 5-7 shows the means and standard deviation of interaction rating scale by different minority groups' combination. There are no statistically significant differences between groups was not significant using a critical alpha of .05 ( $F(3, 12) = .001, p = .43$ ). Since we only coded a very small sample of racial interaction case in this study, it has very little statistical power to find real effects. The data showed that the quantity of cross-racial interactions featured Caucasians and African Americans (66.2%) far more than any other cross-racial combination. Based on the

comparison of mean scores for interdependence, individuation, and romance ratings, the interaction between Caucasians and Asians showed to be more common-goal oriented, more intimate, and more romantic than other cross-racial interactions. As well across the different racial combinations, the results showed that interdependence ratings were generally higher than individuation ratings and romance rating, which means cross racial relationships are more likely to portrayed as cooperative with common goal in formal situations, however they are emotional-detached, not intimate in individualized occasions.

### **Product Type by Minority Groups**

Previous studies found that minority models were more likely to be featured in ads for certain product category. Table 5-8 shows the percentages with which different ethnic groups were portrayed in prime time television commercials. Because the cases with Native American were rarely shown on TV, so Native American was exclude from further analysis.

A statistically significant difference was found in the representation of different ethnic groups in different product categories during the prime time TV commercials (Chi-Square=87.59, df=65,  $p < .05$ ). Black characters were most commonly depicted in commercials for financial services (17.7%) and food (fast food: 12.1%, non-fast food: 11.4%), which is consistent with the results of previous studies (e.g., Mastro & stern, 2003). Caucasian characters were featured most in commercials for household and domestic products (22.2%) and non-fast food (13.4%). Asians appeared most commonly in ads for household and domestic products (23.8%), followed by ads for automobiles (19.1%), and soft drink, candy & gum (19%). The commercials most frequently featuring Hispanics were for household & domestic products (28%), technological & electronic products and banking & financial service (12.5%, 12.5% respectively). It should be noted that commercials for household and domestic products are no

longer exclusively dominated by Caucasian models, which is contrast to “stereotypical connection between whiteness and cleanliness” (Henderson & Baldasty, 2003).

Table 5-8. Product type by racial groups

	Caucasian	African American	Asian American	Hispanic	Undetermined
	%	%	%	%	%
Soft drink, candy and gum	4.8	5.2	19.0	6.3	0.0
Non-fast food	13.4	11.4	0.0	9.4	5.3
Fast food	8.3	12.1	9.5	6.3	5.3
Restaurant & cafe	2.0	1.8	0.0	6.3	0.0
Apparel & accessories	1.0	1.8	0.0	3.1	0.0
Household product	22.2	14.0	23.8	28.0	15.8
Automobile	11.8	8.8	19.1	6.3	31.6
Technological products	5.0	5.2	0.0	12.5	0.0
Cosmetic	2.3	5.2	0.0	3.1	10.5
Entertainment	2.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
PSA	.5	4.0	0.0	0.0	5.3
Banking and financial service	12.3	17.4	19.0	12.5	15.8
Retail	2.5	5.2	0.0	3.1	5.3
Others	11.6	7.9	9.6	3.1	5.3
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
	n=192	n=56	n=8	n=23	n=17

Chi-square = 87.59 (df=60, p<.05)

### Setting by Minority Groups

Table 8 shows the percentages for different setting in which various ethnic groups were shown. A statistically significant difference was found in their relative representation in different settings (Chi-square=47.92, df=25, p<.01). Caucasians were more likely than any other groups to be seen in the home (29.2% for Caucasians versus for African Americans, 20.2%, Hispanic, 15.6%). Also African American and Asian American characters were featured in ads with multiple setting somewhat more frequently than their Caucasian or Hispanic counterparts. Asian

Americans appeared most frequently in outdoor settings (33.3%), followed by in work setting (23.8%).

Table 5-9. Primary setting by minority groups

	Caucasian	African American	Asian American	Hispanic	Undetermined
	%	%	%	%	%
Work	10.8	14.9	23.8	3.1	5.3
Home	29.2	20.2	0.0	15.6	10.5
Other indoor	8.6	11.4	14.3	9.4	21.1
Outdoors	22.2	20.2	33.3	12.5	36.8
More than one setting	12.8	17.5	19.1	15.6	15.8
Non-descript	16.4	15.8	9.5	43.8	10.5
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
	n=192	n=56	n=8	n=23	n=17

Chi-square = 47.92 (df=25, p<.01)

## CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSION

An average household now watches television for eight hours and 14 minutes a day (Nielsen). But the issue that matters isn't how much we're watching but what we're watching. Exploding options have so fragmented the audience, the mass market that TV used to deliver is disintegrating. These same households now average over 100 channels of programming, according to the Nielsen report. So advertisers today have an economic incentive to seek “relatively small, homogenous” audience (Henderson & Baldasty, 2003).

In terms of the simple presence of minorities, the findings of my study suggest that prime time TV commercials portray a symbolic world of diversity with considerable minority representation. African Americans, in particular, appeared in more commercials than might be expected given their numbers in the general population (12.3%), although appearances of other minority groups (Asian Americans, 3.4%; Hispanics, 5.1%; Native American, .2%) were still underrepresented compared to their actual population in U.S. (Asian American, 4.3, Hispanic, 12.50%; Native American, .9%). It should be noted that the low representation of Hispanics might be due, in part, to coding decisions. While the label “Hispanic” is often used to describe both ethnicity and race, the classification should refer to populations associated with Latin culture. However, as Latin culture also represents groups of various racial origins — Caucasian, African, or Asian, for example — categorizations based purely on visual recognition could easily under-represent Hispanics’ true presence in advertising. Despite this issue, the study showed a noticeable increase in representation of minority groups compared with previous studies in racial visibility. From this aspect, it seems like that advertisers have paid more attention to portray racial diversity by emphasizing the importance of a target market composed with people of color.

As well, another interesting finding is about the progress in the portrayal of minorities by connecting with advertised products or services. The clear connection between minorities' portrayals and certain product categories (i.e., stereotypical connection between whiteness and cleanliness) seems to become vague. For instance, in this study commercials for household and domestic products are no longer exclusively dominated by Caucasian models. Both Asian Americans and Hispanics models have a higher visibility than Caucasian in the commercials for household and domestic products. As well people of color become more and more visible in high-end products such as automobiles. For instance, Asian Americans appeared most commonly in ads for household and domestic products (23.8%), followed by ads for automobiles (19.1%),

Regardless the increase of minorities' representation in TV commercials and improved portrayals of minorities by diminishing the stereotypical connection with advertised products and services, the study also showed some problematic patterns persist. First, certain aspects of numerical representation remain an issue. For instance, when the number of models was analyzed, only African Americans were overrepresented among minority groups. Likewise, when it came to single racial group representation, the study found that minorities were still seldom shown without a Caucasian model in the ads, while Caucasians were much more frequently shown as a single racial group, which is consistent with the results of previous studies (e.g., Bang & Reece, 2003). According to cultivation theory, the under-representation of minorities groups may cultivate a belief that minorities are not "main-stream" enough to appear in TV commercials as the sole group portrayed. In this way, diversity becomes more of an artifact of token representation rather than natural outcome based on realistic interaction between different racial groups.

A second pattern was found in the continued stereotyping of certain minorities portrayed in prime-time TV commercials. Consistent with previous studies, our study found the continued pattern that minorities groups are more likely to be assigned to minor roles or background roles while Caucasians are portrayed most with major roles. According to cultivation theory, predominant portrayals of Caucasian models may alienate minority audience by featuring Caucasians as “superior majority” while featuring minorities as “subordination”. The study also found that Caucasians were more likely to be shown in a home setting than any other racial groups. Asian Americans appeared most frequently in outdoor settings (33.3%), followed by in work settings (23.8%). The absence of portrayals in these settings may contribute to a stereotype that Caucasians have stronger family tie than other racial group while Asian Americans are too busy at their workplaces to have family time at home. This finding reinforces the research results from Bang and Reece (2003).

A third pattern was found in the portrayals of cross-racial interaction. From quantitative representation of minority groups, nearly half of all ads sampled (44.2%) were observed with cross-racial appearances. However, there were only 10.3% (n=32) of all ads indicated a cross-racial interaction. From qualitative aspects of cross-racial interaction, interdependence ratings were generally higher than individuation ratings and romance rating, which means cross-racial relationships are more likely to be portrayed as cooperative with common goal in formal situations, yet emotionally-detached and not intimate on individualized occasions. Although cross-racial appearances were shown more than before, the way how it is portrayed is still limited in nature.

Television programmers and advertisers have “diversified content in cosmetic ways” to deflect criticism of being ignoring minorities groups (Henderson & Baldasty, 2003). From this

study, we find that prime-time television advertising reflects more racial diversity, and did make some progress in minority portrayals by diminishing the stereotypical association between minorities and certain product category. But substantial racial diversity reflected is still quite limited in nature. While people of color are visible in ads, they tend to appear in peripheral roles. That people of color were shown with less importance than Caucasian in general seems to underscore advertisers' very limited interest in diversity. Because advertisers are afraid of alienating or even irritating the Caucasian, the largest population in U.S., by demonstrating "too much" interest in racial diversity. As a consumer-oriented medium, television reflects advertisers' desire to reach upscale and primarily Caucasian audience (Goodale, 1999). Furthermore, "fragmentation of television audiences, driven largely by the tremendous growth of cable television, encourages such segment-related marketing strategies" (Henderson & Baldasty, 2003).

However, given both substantial and growing economic power of minority groups in U.S., this narrow marketing strategy is at best short sighted (Goodman, 1999; Henderson & Baldasty, 2003). Advertisers should pay more attention to reflect a more diverse and positive pictures of racial diversity instead of token representation of minorities, in order to keep tempo with the reality of racial diversity.

## CHAPTER 7 LIMITATIONS

Although this study provides insight into minorities' representations in current prime TV commercials, the picture is far more complex. One limitation of the study involves the fact that only two mainstream broadcasting networks used---FOX & CBS, and a limited ads pool were analyzed. A further study should include ethnic media to see whether there are quantitative and qualitative difference between ethnic media and mainstream media. Given the close link between advertising and television shows, the future research could analyze the nature of racial diversity both on shows and on ads, to see if levels of representation match or, if they do not, how they might differ.

The sample week (February 18-February 24) that we videotaped TV commercials was coincident with the "sweeps" dates of 2007 (February 1 - February 28, 2007) which has been criticized as not representative of typical programming. In view of this, more diversity in minority portrayals may be expected due to "sweeps." Future content analysis in this area should avoid "sweeps" with the hopes that the results could be generalized to reflect the racial representations in prime-time TV commercials around the whole year.

APPENDIX A  
OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS OF KEY VARIABLES

(Bang & Reece, 2003; Henderson & Baldasty, 2003; Weigel, Loomis & Soja, 1980)

**Race:**

Caucasian: relates to a human group having light-colored skin, freckled, especially of European ancestry. There is considerable variety in the hair color of whites, diverse eye colors as well.

African American: a member of an ethnic group in the United States whose ancestors, usually in predominant part, were indigenous to Sub-Saharan Africa. "Black" physical traits (such as hard, sparse hair texture, dark skin pigmentation, thicker lip formation, and/or bigger but under-projected nose shape etc.).

Asian: an Asian American is generally defined as a person of Asian ancestry who was born in or is an immigrant to the United States. Including Indian, Chinese, Vietnam Japanese, etc., commonly black-haired, shorter height compared with western people.

Hispanic: any person, of any racial background, of any country and of any religion who has at least one ancestor from the people of Spain or Spanish-speaking Latin America, whether or not the person has Spanish ancestry. Usually recognized as dark-skinned with black hair and brown or black eyes.

Native American: the indigenous peoples within the territory that is now encompassed by the continental United States, including parts of Alaska down to their descendants in modern times. Physical characteristics that Native Americans have in common include Mongoloid features, coarse, straight black hair, dark eyes, sparse body hair, and a skin color ranging from yellow-brown to reddish brown.

Undetermined: choose this option if the race doesn't fit one of the other categories; for example, people of color whose races are not exactly identifiable, including biracial; or can't tell.

### **Perceived Importance of Characters:**

Major role: a character who is very important to the advertising theme or story line, usually shown in the foreground or shown holding the product.

Minor role: a character who is of average importance to the advertising theme or story line. These people are not difficult to find in the ad while looking at it casually, but they are not spotlighted and do not hold the product.

Background role: a character who is difficult to find in an ad (not likely to be spotted by someone viewing the commercial casually) and is not important to the ad theme or story line.

### **Primary Setting:**

Work: One's place of employment, including a factory, plant, or similar building or complex of buildings where a specific type of business or industry is carried on.

Home: interior of a residential building, including kitchen, bedroom, family room, or garage.

Other Indoor Location: any interior space that can't be classified in one of the previous categories. Includes factories, health clubs, movie theaters, museums, etc.

Outdoors: any backyard, playground, park, forest, beach, road, sidewalk

More Than One Setting: choose this option only if two or more locations appear in the commercial and no one location dominates the commercial; i.e., all or most of the settings have about equal time.

Other: choose this option if the location doesn't fit one of the other categories; for example, when there is no setting or there is an artificial background.

### **Primary Type of Product or Service:**

Soft drinks, candy and gum: Soft drinks are nonalcoholic, flavored, carbonated beverage, usually commercially prepared and sold in bottles or cans. Candy is A rich, sweet confection made with

sugar and often flavored or combined with fruits or nuts. And gum is a sweetened, flavored preparation for chewing, usually made of chicle.

Non-fast food: More nutritious food, usually prepared domestically or more delicately for consumption at home or elsewhere.

Fast food: Inexpensive, less nutritious food, such as hamburgers, fried chicken, pizza, etc., prepared and served quickly for consumption on the premises or elsewhere.

Athletic shoes, wear: Shoes or clothing, especially for a particular use of gym sports or outdoor sports.

Household and domestic products: Products that are used at home, such as cleaners, sponges, soap, etc.

Automobiles: A device or structure for transporting persons or things, including sedan, truck, etc.

Technology products: Such as MP3, camera, TV, Hi-Fi, computer, etc. including corresponding accessories for them.

Cosmetics: A preparation, such as powder or a skin cream, eye shadow, mascara, eyeliner, lipstick, perfume, etc., designed to beautify the body, especially face and hair, by direct application.

Movies, theater: films that can be seen in theaters or videotapes that can be rented or purchased for home viewing.

Clothing: all types of clothing for sports, school, or dressy occasions, including shoes. Also includes fashion accessories and jewelry.

PSA: public service announcements sponsored by a governmental agency or an organization that promotes good health, safety, high-minded behavior, etc.

Other: any product or service that doesn't fit one of the other categories.

APPENDIX B  
CODEBOOK

Commercial ID # \_\_\_\_\_

**2007 American prime-time TV commercials study: portrayals of racial diversity content analysis codebook**

**Instruction:** All national commercials were coded. Once coded, repeated ad frequency was tracked for sampling accuracy. Local commercials, political advertisements, trailers for television shows, movies, and sporting events were excluded, as were animation and graphic representations.

**ONE:** Brand name \_\_\_\_\_

**TWO:** Network (circle one)

- 01: ABC (8-11pm)
- 02: NBC (8-11pm)
- 03: CBS (8-11pm)
- 04: Fox (8-11pm)

**THREE:** Commercial Date of Airing (circle one)

- 01: Sunday, Feb. 18
- 02: Monday, Feb. 19
- 03: Tuesday, Feb 20
- 04: Wednesday, Feb. 21
- 05: Thursday, Feb. 22
- 06: Friday, Feb. 23
- 07: Saturday, Feb. 24

**FOUR:** The number of characters & racial diversity

(For commercials with countable characters, nine characters maximum, please go to item A below. For commercials with more than nine characters total, and no distinctive major role character, please skip to item B below.)

**A: Total number of characters featured in the commercial:** \_\_\_\_ (a number less than nine).

Indicate the number of different races represented by any characters seen in the commercial. Place a 0 in the accompanying space to indicate that the race category was not represented in the commercial.

1. Caucasian: \_\_\_\_\_
2. African American: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Asian: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Hispanic: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Native American: \_\_\_\_\_
6. Indeterminate: \_\_\_\_\_ Explain:

**If more than two racial groups are featured in the commercial, GO TO ITEM FIVE, if only one racial group appears, and please GO TO ITEM NINE directly.**

**B: Difficult or impossible to count** (for commercials with nine or more characters), indicate if racial diversity (appearance of more than two racial groups) is present by circling the appropriate response below:

- 01: Yes, racial diversity could be observed within the group
- 02: No, racial diversity could not be observed within the group
- 03: I can not determine if racial diversity is present within the group.

**Go to question NINE**

**FIVE:** For commercials with presence of more than two racial groups, rate the perceived importance of the respective character(s) according to 1) his/her racial background and 2) his/her perceived relationship to other characters featured in the commercial. *Major role characters* are defined as a character that is very important to the advertising theme or story line, usually shown in the foreground or shown holding the product. *Minor role characters* are those of average importance to the advertising theme or story line. *Background characters* are difficult to find in an ad, not likely to be spotted by someone viewing the commercial casually, and are not important to the ad theme or story line. If there is more than one character from different racial groups (e.g. White and African American) with major role, you should circle all categories that apply. If there are no characters with major roles in the commercial, you should select “not applicable.”

**A: Race of character(s) with a major role in the commercial (circle all that apply):**

- 01: Caucasian(s)

- 02: African American(s)
- 03: Asian(s)
- 04: Hispanic(s)
- 05: Undetermined
- 06: Not applicable

**A-a: Gender of character(s) with a major role in the commercial (circle all that apply)**

- 01: Males
- 02: Females

**B: Race of character(s) with a minor role in the commercial (circle all that apply)**

- 01: Caucasian(s)
- 02: African American(s)
- 03: Asian(s)
- 04: Hispanic(s)
- 05: Undetermined
- 06: Not applicable

**B-b: Gender of character(s) with minor role in the commercial (circle all that apply)**

- 01: Males
- 02: Females

**C: Race of character(s) with a background role in the commercial (circle all that apply)**

- 01: Caucasian(s)
- 02: African American(s)
- 03: Asian(s)
- 04: Hispanic(s)
- 05: Undetermined
- 06: Not applicable

**C-c: Gender of character(s) with background role in the commercial (circle all that apply)**

01: Males

02: Females

**SIX: Is there interaction happening between character(s) of different races featured in the commercial? (Circle the answer Yes or No)**

01: Yes (If Yes, Go To Item **SEVEN**)

02: No (If No, Go To Item **NINE**)

**SEVEN: Please rate the degree of interdependence and individuation according to a 5-point scale from 1 to 5, where 1 indicates a low rating on the interdependence dimension and 5 indicates a high rating.**

**A: Interdependence ratings:** Interdependence characterizes interactions by rating (a) the extent to which the characters held common versus independent goals and (b) the extent to which the characters were engaged in a cooperative versus competitive encounter.

1) Circle the number that best reflects the extent to which the characters featured in the commercial had independent or common goals.

Independent goals    1        2        3        4        5        Common goals

2) Circle the number that best reflects the extent to which the characters featured in the commercial had a competitive or cooperative relationship.

Competitive relationship    1        2        3        4        5        Cooperative relationship

**B: Individuation ratings:** Individuation characterizes interactions by the degree of intimacy demonstrated by characters (high vs. low) in the commercial and by the nature of the relationship displayed (narrow vs. multi-faceted). With regard to the latter, a relationship that is narrowly-defined portrays interactions limited by some degree of formal boundaries (e.g., business and workplace interactions). Multifaceted relationships involve interactions that are more informal or that have been negotiated by the parties in advance (e.g., family relationships, friendships).

1) Circle the number that best reflects the level of intimacy portrayed by the characters featured in the commercial.

Low intimacy    1        2        3        4        5        High intimacy

2) Circle the number that best reflects the relationship between characters featured in the commercial.

Narrowly defined    1        2        3        4        5        Multifaceted

**EIGHT: Rate the level of romantic involvement portrayed when cross-sex interaction occurred in the commercial.**

Low involvement 1      2      3      4      5 High involvement

**NINE: Indicate the primary setting where the characters were located in the commercial (circle one)**

- 01: Work
- 02: Home
- 03: Other indoors
- 04: Outdoors
- 05: More than one setting
- 06: Non-descript

**TEN: Indicate the type of product or service advertised in the commercial (circle one)**

- 01: Soft drinks, candy and gum
- 02: Non-fast food
- 03: Fast food
- 04: Beer & Wine
- 05: Restaurants & Cafes
- 06: Apparel & accessories
- 07: Athletic shoes & equipments
- 08: Household and domestic products (such as toothpaste, soap, household cleaners).
- 09: Automobiles
- 10: Technological & electronic products
- 11: Cosmetics
- 12: Entertainment (Such as movies, theaters)
- 13: Public service announcements
- 14: Banking and financial services
- 15: Retail (such as grocery retail, drug store& pharmacies)
- 16: Other: Specify \_\_\_\_\_

**Eleven:** The product is targeted to\_\_\_\_\_. (Circle one)

- 01: Males
- 02: Females
- 03: Children (12 and under)
- 04: General Users

**Twelve:** The advertising message is directed at \_\_\_\_\_. (Circle one)

- 01: Males
- 02: Females
- 03: Children (12 and under)
- 04: General Audience

**Coder's comments: In the space below please make any additional comments about the commercial or the characters portrayed in the commercials that you believe would assist in the research analysis:**

**Coder's signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Coding date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**THE END**

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## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Bimei Ni was born in Fujian, P.R. China, on May 13, 1983. She received her bachelor's degree of liberal arts in 2005 from Shanghai International Studies University. Right after graduation, she decided to further her study in University of Florida for a master's degree in advertising. After two years of hard work, she will graduate with distinction in the summer of 2007.