Ethnic Identity in Advertising: A Review and Meta-Analysis

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Ethnic Identity in Advertising: A Review and Meta-Analysis

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The corpus of research on ethnic identity in advertising indicates that (1) ethnic identity influences commonly examined attitudinal and purchase-intention outcomes, and (2) attitudes toward both the actor(s)/model(s) and the ad moderate attitudes toward brands depicted in ethnically resonant ads. Individual studies often differ by measurement type (i.e., single-item measure versus multi-item scale), study design (i.e., experiment versus survey), and diversity of respondent sample. Seemingly, ethnic-identity effects are greater for studies that relied on single-item measures, experimental designs, and more diverse samples. Implications and future research directions are suggested.

KEYWORDS attitudes, ethnic identity, measurement type, meta-analysis, purchase intentions, respondent diversity

Creating distinctive ads that draw and hold viewers’ attention has become increasingly challenging as ad clutter has intensified. Ads with ethnically resonant cues have been effective in breaking through multimedia overload and creating favorable viewer responses. Advertisers embed ads with ethnic cues to create ethnically resonant ads; such ad craft is meant to spark interest in ethnically resonant consumers (i.e., people who embrace their ethnicity) toward the ad and advertised brand (Sierra, Hyman, & Torres, 2009). In particular, consumers cognizant of a firm’s efforts to target their ethnic group are more likely to (1) recall and respond favorably to that firm’s ads (Cui, 1997;
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Whittler & Spira, 2002), and (2) respond more favorably to that firm’s brand (Grier & Brumbaugh, 1999; Sierra et al., 2009). Content-analysis-based studies on ethnic identity-related effects within different ethnic consumer groups (e.g., Asians, Blacks, Hispanics, and Whites) (Chang, 2008; Taylor & Stern, 1997; Whittler, 1991; Wilkes & Valencia, 1989) support these findings and further highlight the value of ethnic identity-based communication strategies in advancing advertising theory and practice.

Ethnic identity—used interchangeably here and in previous research with ethnic identification—is a lasting and robust sense of connection to a social group (Tajfel, 1978) that encompasses self-identification as a group member, a sense of belonging to a group, and favorable attitudes toward one’s group (Phinney, 1990). Because ethnic identity influences consumers’ responses to marketing strategies and shopping behaviors across international borders (e.g., China, Europe, South America, United States), advertising researchers have explored its role within advertising hierarchy-of-effects models (Barnes, Siu, Yu, & Chan, 2009; Davis & Gandy, 1999; Green, 1999; Scremin & Bright, 2006; Sierra et al., 2009; Wolfe, 1991). As geographic markets become ever more culturally and ethnically diverse, advertisers will benefit from promotional stimuli that resonate with targeted consumers; such stimuli enable consumers to identify ethnically with advertising messages and images (Donthu & Cherian, 1992). Hence, understanding what ignites and what explains ethnic identification with ads is essential to marketers (Cui, 1997; Konrad, Ross, & Linnehan, 2006). Our meta-analysis offers a rigorous summary of the literature on ethnic identity in advertising, lending insight to this culturally linked phenomenon.

Despite the prevalence of ethnic cues in ads and the importance of ethnic identification for marketers (e.g., Green, 1999; Whittler & Spira, 2002), research findings about ethnic identity in advertising have, at times, lacked consistency. For example, one study showed that Whites (Blacks) identify more with White (Black) actors than Black (White) actors, respond more favorably to ads with White (Black) actors, and are more likely to buy the advertised brand when White (Black) actors are featured (Whittler, 1989). A different study showed that Chinese consumers found ads with White characters as appealing as ads with multiple Chinese ethnic cues (Appiah & Liu, 2009). Yet another study showed Asians, Blacks, and Hispanics identify most with ads that use Black actors; and Asians, Blacks, Hispanics, and Whites evaluate ads that use Black actors more positively than ads featuring White actors (Appiah, 2001a). These inconsistent findings tend to cloud the role of ethnic identification in advertising and complicate decisions about ad design. (Note: In line with existing research and U.S. Census Bureau classification, the ethnic groups studied are White or Caucasian (not Hispanic), Black or African American (not Hispanic), Hispanic or Latino, and Asian.)

Two possibilities that may explain these inconsistent findings are (1) a mismatch between ethnic-identity effects and one or more constructs typical
to advertising hierarchy-of-effects models, and (2) inter-study methodological artifacts. This first systematic review of the ethnic identity in advertising literature explores these possibilities. Our exposition proceeds as follows. First, we briefly describe the various theoretical frameworks that ground these studies. After we review commonly examined advertising constructs and posit related hypotheses, we suggest potential causes of artifactually tinged findings. Then, we present our sampling procedure, meta-analysis methods, and results. Finally, we recommend avenues for future research.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

A literature search revealed nine theoretical frameworks used previously to explain the effects of ethnic identity in advertising. (Table 1 indicates their application to the 25 empirical studies analyzed here.) Collectively, these frameworks suggest that favorable advertising outcomes may ensue from ethnic identification with ads. They offer insights about enhanced responsiveness to ads that reflect resonant cultural and ethnic-based values, increased trustworthiness of actors of similar ethnicity, fortified self-identity via ethnic differentiation displayed in ads, and improved attitudes toward ads imbued with cues reflecting cultural sensitivity to ethnic minorities. Each framework, which offers unique explanatory power, may be encapsulated and categorized as follows.

Similarity-Based

Accommodation Theory proposes that people generally like other people who share similar traits such as ethnicity (Byrne, 1971), which suggests, for example, that Black viewers will respond favorably to ads with Black actors. In-Group Bias Theory proposes that people favor in-group members, based on some characteristic (Brewer, 1979), more than out-group members. As a result, Hispanics should evaluate Hispanic actors more favorably in ads with Hispanic and Asian actors. Similarity-based frameworks suggest that viewers will be predisposed to ads that contain actors with believed ethnic similarity.

Identification-Based

Distinctiveness Theory posits that a person’s distinctive or unique characteristics are more important to him/her than other local peoples’ common traits (McGuire, 1984). This theory suggests why Hispanics living in a Hispanic-minority-White-majority region are more likely to trust a Hispanic rather than a White actor in ads. Identification Theory suggests that people examine their
**TABLE 1** Overview of Studies Included in Meta-Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Article</th>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Overall Theory</th>
<th>Sample Type</th>
<th>n; Sample Type</th>
<th>Measures; Product Category</th>
<th>Study Type</th>
<th>Media Type</th>
<th>Observed r’s &amp; Reported Relationships PIB</th>
<th>AB</th>
<th>AAD</th>
<th>AM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#1 Muse (1971)</td>
<td>How are ads with only Black models perceived by White audiences?</td>
<td>No frame-work used</td>
<td>Blacks, Whites</td>
<td>233; Undergrads</td>
<td>Single item; Cigarettes, vodka, napkins, beer</td>
<td>Experiment</td>
<td>Print</td>
<td>0.10 x*</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>#2 Bush, Gwinner, &amp; Solomon (1974)</td>
<td>How do White consumers respond to Black models in in-store promotional materials?</td>
<td>No frame-work used</td>
<td>Blacks, Whites</td>
<td>134; Adults</td>
<td>N/A: observation; Bath soap</td>
<td>Experiment</td>
<td>Print (POP)</td>
<td>0.02 x*</td>
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<tr>
<td>#3 Deshpandé et al. (1986)</td>
<td>Do different groups of Hispanics differ in their ethnic identification?</td>
<td>No frame-work used</td>
<td>Hispanics</td>
<td>425; Adults</td>
<td>Single item; Laundry detergent, soap, margarine</td>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>Print</td>
<td>0.11 x*</td>
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<tr>
<td>#4 Pitts, Whalen, O’Keefe, &amp; Murray (1989)</td>
<td>How do Blacks and Whites respond to TV ads with cultural/ethnic cues?</td>
<td>No frame-work used</td>
<td>Blacks, Whites</td>
<td>271; Undergrads</td>
<td>Multi-item; Toothpaste, fast food, soft drinks, cars</td>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>TV</td>
<td>0.23–0.44 x*</td>
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<td>#5 Whittler (1989)</td>
<td>Do race of ad actor (i.e., White versus Black) and viewers’ racial attitudes affect ad evaluations?</td>
<td>No frame-work used</td>
<td>Blacks, Whites</td>
<td>340; Undergrads</td>
<td>Multi-item; Word processor, laundry detergent, cordless telephone, popcorn popper, fruit beverage</td>
<td>Experiment</td>
<td>Print</td>
<td>0.01–0.10 x** x*</td>
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<tr>
<td>#6 Williams &amp; Qualls (1989)</td>
<td>Do middle class Blacks and Whites respond differently to ads featuring celebrity endorsers?</td>
<td>Cultural Script</td>
<td>Blacks, Whites</td>
<td>160; Adults</td>
<td>Single item; Solar energy system, computer, shoes, toothpastes</td>
<td>Experiment</td>
<td>Print</td>
<td>0.22–0.33 x* x* x*</td>
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<tr>
<td>#7 Qualls &amp; Moore (1990)</td>
<td>Does race affect Blacks’ and Whites’ ad evaluations?</td>
<td>In-Group Bias; Polarized Appraisal</td>
<td>Blacks, Whites</td>
<td>211; Adults</td>
<td>Multi-item; Beer</td>
<td>Experiment</td>
<td>TV</td>
<td>0.35–0.36 x* x* x*</td>
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<tr>
<td>#8 Whittler &amp; DiMeo (1991)</td>
<td>What effect does viewer’s prejudice have on simple decision rules when examining ad effectiveness?</td>
<td>Heuristic-Systematic Persuasion Model</td>
<td>Whites</td>
<td>160; Adults</td>
<td>Multi-item; Fur coat, laundry detergent</td>
<td>Experiment</td>
<td>Print</td>
<td>0.08–0.10 x* x*</td>
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<td>#</td>
<td>Study Details</td>
<td>Findings/Questions</td>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>Media</td>
<td>Sample Size</td>
<td>Product Categories</td>
<td>References</td>
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<td>#9</td>
<td>Webster (1992) Do Hispanic groups categorized by sub-cultural ethnic identification search differently for ad information?</td>
<td>No frame-work used Hispanics Adults Single item; N/A: product categories were not specified</td>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>Print, TV</td>
<td>0.15 x^*</td>
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<td>#10</td>
<td>Deshpande &amp; Stayman (1994) Do majority and minority group members respond differently to radio ads with White or Hispanic-named spokespersons?</td>
<td>Distinct-iveness Hispanics, Whites Adults Single item; Laundry detergent</td>
<td>Experiment</td>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>0.27-0.28 x^* x^*</td>
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<td>#11</td>
<td>Koslow et al. (1994) How do Hispanics respond to ethnic language in ads?</td>
<td>Accommodation Hispanics Adults Single item; Soft drink</td>
<td>Experiment</td>
<td>Print</td>
<td>0.27 x^*</td>
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<td>#12</td>
<td>Roslow and Nicholls (1996) Are Hispanics more persuaded by Spanish-language or English-language TV ads?</td>
<td>No frame-work used Hispanics Adults Single item; Cars, soft drinks, phone services, beer, bar soap, detergent</td>
<td>Experiment</td>
<td>TV</td>
<td>0.20 x^*</td>
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<td>#13</td>
<td>Green (1999) Are Hispanic identity, media placement, and race of ad actor(s) related to Blacks' AAD and buying intentions?</td>
<td>Accommodation Blacks Adults Multi-item; Perfume, liquid foundation</td>
<td>Experiment</td>
<td>Print</td>
<td>0.13-0.14 x^* x^* x^*</td>
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<td>#14</td>
<td>Grier &amp; Brumbaugh (1999) What meanings do targeted and non-targeted groups derive from ads?</td>
<td>Distinct-iveness Blacks, Whites 62; MBA students Multi-item; N/A: product categories were not specified</td>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>Print</td>
<td>0.31 x^*</td>
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<td>#15</td>
<td>Aaker, Brumbaugh, &amp; Grier (2000) What effect do ads targeted at one audience have on non-targeted audiences?</td>
<td>Distinct-iveness Blacks, Whites 63; MBA students Multi-item; Soft drink, cable movie service, blue jeans, snack cracker</td>
<td>Experiment</td>
<td>Print</td>
<td>0.25 x^*</td>
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<td>#16</td>
<td>Appiah (2001b) How do White, Black, Hispanic, and Asian-American adolescents respond to ads with Black or White actors?</td>
<td>Distinct-iveness; Identification Asians, Blacks, Hispanics, Whites 349; HS students Single item; Cereal, soup, hot dog wieners</td>
<td>Experiment</td>
<td>Print</td>
<td>0.20 x^*</td>
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<tr>
<td>#17</td>
<td>Appiah (2001a) Does strength of ethnic identity affect Black and White adolescents' responses to print ads with models of different races?</td>
<td>Distinct-iveness; Identification Blacks, Whites 173; HS students Multi-item; Cereal, soup, hot dog wieners</td>
<td>Experiment</td>
<td>Print</td>
<td>0.19 x^*</td>
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<th>Observed r’s &amp; Reported Relationships</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#18 Forehand &amp; Deshpandé (2001)</td>
<td>Does ethnic self-awareness affect consumers’ responses to targeted ads?</td>
<td>Distinctiveness</td>
<td>Asians, Whites</td>
<td>109; Undergrads</td>
<td>Single item; Hair care products, cell phone</td>
<td>Experiment</td>
<td>TV</td>
<td>0.21–0.26 x∗ x∗</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#19 Grier &amp; Deshpandé (2001)</td>
<td>Does social and numeric status of South African consumer affect ad effectiveness?</td>
<td>Distinctiveness</td>
<td>Blacks, Whites</td>
<td>176; Adults</td>
<td>Single item; Soft drink; children's clothes</td>
<td>Experiment</td>
<td>Print</td>
<td>0.14 x∗</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#20 Forehand et al. (2002)</td>
<td>For Whites and Asians, how do ethnic primes and social distinctive-ness affect identity salience and responses to targeted ads?</td>
<td>Distinctiveness</td>
<td>Asians, Whites</td>
<td>384; Undergrads</td>
<td>Single item; Airlines, computer service</td>
<td>Experiment</td>
<td>Print</td>
<td>0.09–0.22 x∗ x∗</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#21 Lee et al. (2002)</td>
<td>How do ethnic minority models in ads affect the evaluations of ethnic minority and ethnic majority consumers?</td>
<td>Distinctiveness</td>
<td>Asians, Whites</td>
<td>178; Undergrads</td>
<td>Single item; Wrist watch, facial tissue</td>
<td>Experiment</td>
<td>Print</td>
<td>0.08–0.45 x∗ x∗ x∗ x∗</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#22 Whittler &amp; Spira (2002)</td>
<td>What effect does race in advertising have on Black viewer message processing and does it function as a peripheral cue?</td>
<td>Elaboration Likelihood Model</td>
<td>Blacks</td>
<td>160; Adults</td>
<td>Multi-item; Cordless telephone, garment bag, liquid laundry detergent</td>
<td>Experiment</td>
<td>Print</td>
<td>0.17–0.48 x∗ x∗</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#23 Dimofte, Forehand, &amp; Deshpandé (2004)</td>
<td>Can ad targeting incongruent with existing ad schemata—based on unusual use of identity cues—affect the salience of self-identification and responses of target consumers?</td>
<td>No frame-work used</td>
<td>Hispanics</td>
<td>82; Adults</td>
<td>Multi-item; Cars</td>
<td>Experiment</td>
<td>TV</td>
<td>0.25–0.28 x∗ x∗</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#24 Martin et al. (2004)</td>
<td>Does consumer self-referencing mediate the effect of ethnicity on ad/brand-related attitudes and intentions to buy the advertised brand?</td>
<td>Distinctiveness</td>
<td>Asians, Whites</td>
<td>122; Undergrads</td>
<td>Multi-item; Green tea, shampoo</td>
<td>Experiment</td>
<td>Print</td>
<td>0.09–0.31 x∗ x∗</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#25 Sierra et al. (2009)</td>
<td>What effect does ethnic identification with print ads, created by the model's apparent ethnicity, have on consumer responses to the ad and brand?</td>
<td>Social Identity</td>
<td>Blacks, Hispanics, Whites</td>
<td>207; Undergrads</td>
<td>Multi-item; Tennis shoes</td>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>Print</td>
<td>0.22–0.54 x∗ x∗</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For reported relationships: *Significant at P < 0.05 level. **Not significant at P < 0.05 level.
similarity with environmental sources and then make similarity judgments (Kelman, 1961), which may, for example, lead to Black viewers identifying more with ads featuring Black actors rather than White actors. Social Identity Theory posits that peoples’ self-concept stems from their social- and self-identity, which in turn contribute to self-image and satisfaction (Tajfel & Turner, 1985). On this view, ads with embedded ethnic cues allow viewers in the targeted ethnic group to differentiate themselves from others, which reinforces their self-identity and uniqueness. Identification-based frameworks suggest viewers that ethnically identify with ads based on some ethnic stimulus (e.g., actor, copy, background design) respond favorably toward such ads.

Information Processing-Based

The Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1996) suggests that attitudinal responses stem from central route (i.e., high elaboration) or peripheral route (i.e., low elaboration) processes. For example, Hispanic viewers may peripherally assess an ad for a Hispanic product with a Hispanic actor but may centrally assess an ad for a Hispanic product with a White actor. The Heuristic-Systematic Persuasion Model posits that message credence is evaluated either heuristically (i.e., casual evaluation) or systematically (i.e., scrutinized evaluation) (Chaiken, 1980). For example, Asian viewers may systematically evaluate ads embedded with Asian cues because they trust an ethnically resonant source. Polarized Appraisal Theory suggests that in-group members will evaluate in-group stimuli less extremely than out-group stimuli (Linville & Jones, 1980), which implies that Hispanics will evaluate an ad with a Black spokesperson more thoroughly than an otherwise identical ad with a Hispanic spokesperson of comparable character. Information processing-based frameworks suggest that viewers’ ability to ethnically identify with some stimuli embedded in an ad influences their evaluation of that ad.

Culture-Based

Cultural Script Theory emphasizes the portrayal of cultural themes and values, distinct to an ethnic group, through social communication (e.g., ads) (Triandis, Marin, Lisansky, & Betancourt, 1984), which suggests that the use of Spanish or Spanglish (i.e., using both English and Spanish within statements or sentences) verbiage in ads may resonate favorably with Hispanic viewers. This framework emphasizes the importance of cultural sensitivity to ethnic group members and suggests that ethnically resonant ads can induce favorable ad-related viewer responses.
Consumer responses to ads embedded with ethnic cues can be traced through hierarchy-of-effects models, which describe how advertising works (e.g., AIDA: awareness $\rightarrow$ interest $\rightarrow$ desire $\rightarrow$ action). Although framework type may vary, the basic model posits an initial cognitive or awareness stage followed by affective response(s) that ultimately lead to behavioral outcomes (Smith, Chen, & Yang, 2008; Vakratsas & Ambler, 1999). Although the effect sizes between antecedent attitudes and behavioral outcomes may be modest, overall support for affective responses to ads is overwhelming (Vakratsas & Ambler). Hence, advertising scholars often examine attitude toward the ad ($A_{AD}$), attitude toward the actor or model ($A_{M}$), attitude toward the brand ($A_{B}$), and intentions to purchase the advertised brand ($P_{IB}$) (e.g., Petty, Cacioppo, & Schumann, 1983).

Unsurprisingly, research on ethnic-identity effects in advertising has focused on similar attitudinal and behavioral constructs (e.g., Sierra et al., 2009). However, the role of ethnic identity within the hierarchy-of-effects model is unclear. Ethnic identity may exert indirect influence through $A_{M}$ or direct influence on $A_{AD}$ and/or $A_{B}$. Given the limited number of published studies, we conducted preliminary regression-based tests on the mechanism by which ethnic identity influences the model. Previously reported findings related to these constructs, along with the hypotheses tested here, are now discussed.

**BASELINE HYPOTHESES**

**Attitude Toward the Ad ($A_{AD}$)**

The literature strongly indicates that viewers’ ethnic identification with an ad and $A_{AD}$ correlate positively (Grier & Brumbaugh, 1999; Sierra et al., 2009). In accord with Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1985), Blacks relative to Whites respond more favorably to ads with Black actors (Pitts, Whalen, O’Keefe, & Murray, 1989; Whittler, 1989), Asians relative to Whites respond more favorably to ads with Asian actors (Forehand, Deshpandé, & Reed, 2002), and Hispanics, based on believed cultural sensitivity of the advertiser, respond favorably to ads embedded with Spanish language (Koslow, Shamdasani, & Touchstone, 1994). Strong Hispanic identifiers respond more favorably than weak Hispanic identifiers to ads in Spanish language media (Deshpandé, Hoyer, & Donthu, 1986); similarly, strong Black identifiers respond more favorably than weak Black identifiers to ads with Black models (Green, 1999). Viewers respond favorably to ads with ethnic cues supportive of their self-concept (Forehand & Deshpandé, 2001; Lee, Fernandez, & Martin, 2002). However, Blacks, Whites, Hispanics, and Asians rate ads with
Black actors more favorably than ads with White actors (Appiah, 2001a). These findings imply the following hypothesis:

\( H_1: \text{Ethnic identification with the ad relates positively to } A_{AD}. \)

**Attitude Toward the Actor or Model (A_M)**

The extant literature suggests that viewers respond more favorably to ethnically resonant models in ads. As posited under Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1985), ads with ethnic cues that match viewers’ self-concept produce more favorable responses to the spokesperson (Forehand & Deshpandé, 2001; Lee et al., 2002). For example, Asians respond more favorably to Asian spokespeople (Forehand, Deshpandé, & Reed, 2002), and strong Black identifiers respond favorably to ethnically resonant celebrity endorsers (Whittler & Spira, 2002; Williams & Qualls, 1989). Also, minority-group members are more likely than majority-group members to trust like-ethnicity spokespeople (Deshpandé & Stayman, 1994). These findings imply the following hypothesis:

\( H_2: \text{Ethnic identification with the ad relates positively to } A_{M}. \)

**Attitude Toward the Brand (A_B)**

Steeped in Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1985), the extant literature suggests that viewers respond favorably to brands featured in ads with resonant ethnic cues or like-ethnicity actors (Deshpandé & Stayman, 1994; Lee et al., 2002). For example, Blacks’ brand evaluations improve for ads with Black actors and worsen for ads with White actors (Qualls & Moore, 1990); similarly, Whites respond less favorably to brands featured in ads with Black actors (Whittler & DiMeo, 1991). For strong Black identifiers, ads featuring Black models elicit favorable brand responses (Whittler & Spira, 2002; Williams & Qualls, 1989). In contrast, greater ethnic salience stemming from minority status leads to less positive brand responses (Grier & Deshpandé, 2001). Based on these findings, the following hypothesis is posited:

\( H_3: \text{Ethnic identification with the ad relates positively to } A_{B}. \)

**Purchase Intentions Toward the Advertised Brand (PI_B)**

In general, Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1985) and the extant literature suggest ethnic identification with the ad relates positively to PI_B. For example, viewers reported a higher PI_B in response to ads with resonant ethnic cues and/or a like-ethnicity actor/model (Lee et al., 2002; Martin, Lee, & Yang, 2004; Sierra et al., 2009; Whittler, 1989). Relative to weak Hispanic
(Black) identifiers, strong Hispanic (Black) identifiers reported a higher $P_{IB}$ in response to ads with Hispanic (Black) ethnic cues (Deshpandé et al., 1986; Green, 1999). These findings imply the following hypothesis:

$H_4$: Ethnic identification with the ad relates positively to $P_{IB}$.

POSSIBLE RESEARCH ARTIFACTS

Although most ethnic identification studies relied on test ads evaluated by subjects in experimental or quasi-experimental settings, differences in method and research context could affect variance homogeneity across studies (Sultan, Farley, & Lehman, 1990). To assess this homogeneity, four source categories were examined: measurement type (single-item measure vs. multi-item scale), study type (survey-based vs. experiment-based), sample type (student or random adult; one vs. two or more ethnic groups), and media type (print vs. television).

Measurement Type

Some arguments suggest that single-item measures tend to reflect attitudinal and complex constructs less reliably, leading to less stable correlations (Peter, 1981). Yet, more recent research suggests that single-item measures, when compared to multi-item scales, provide reliable and valid assessments of concrete, well-accepted constructs, such as attitude toward the ad, attitude toward the brand, and purchase intention (Bergkvist & Rossiter, 2009; Rossiter, 2002; Urban & Hauser, 1993). In addition, single-item measures of procedural knowledge related to job performance (Motowidlo, Crook, Kell, & Naemi, 2009), team identification (Kwon & Trail, 2005), and positivity and negativity toward gambling outcomes (Larsen, Norris, McGraw, Hawkley, & Cacioppo, 2009), have been validated and advocated as superior to their multi-item alternatives. Based on the robust psychometric properties of previously validated single-item scales and various measures of advertising outcomes (e.g., $A_{AD}$, $A_B$, $P_{IB}$) explored in much of the ethnic-identity research to date, ethnic-identity effect size may interact with the use of single-item versus multi-item measures for such outcomes, where effect sizes are more stalwart for single-item measures. Hence, we posit the following hypothesis:

$H_5$: Ethnic-identity effects will be larger in studies based on single-item rather than multi-item ethnic identity measures.

Study Type

To properly construe effect size and explained variance, research type (e.g., descriptive versus causal) should be considered, as methodology may contribute to discrepancies in statistical results (Fern & Monroe, 1996; Salisbury
& Feinberg, 2010). For example, relative to surveys, experiments—by permitted control of extraneous factors that otherwise would interact with studied constructs (Banks, 1965)—can generate larger effect sizes (Peterson, Albaum, & Beltramini, 1985; Wang & Yang, 2008) and imply inter-construct relationships that ultimately prove artifactual (Lynch, 1982). Although the number of potentially interactive extraneous factors is infinite, many of them become known as a research stream matures. Thus, effect sizes may be stronger in experimental studies than survey-based methods. Hence:

$H_6$: Ethnic-identity effects will be larger in experiment-based than survey-based studies.

Sample Type

As answer disparity between student and adult respondent is often apparent, researchers adamantly proclaim that traditional student subjects should be avoided in ad-related experiments (James & Sonner, 2001; Palazón & Delgado, 2009; Soley & Reid, 1983). In ethnic-based (Culhane, Morera, Watson, & Millsap, 2009) and cross-cultural (Broyles, 2009; Watchravesringkan, Yan, & Yurchisin, 2008) research, this generalizability concern pertains. Because effect size may suffer from the use of student samples (Greenberg, 1987; Henry, 2008), as observed for purchase-intention effects in country-of-origin research (Peterson & Jolibert, 1995), the student-as-respondent quandary is exacerbated. Hence, ethnic-identity effects should be larger when adults serve as research subjects. As such, we propose the following hypothesis:

$H_7$: Ethnic-identity effects will be larger in studies based on adult samples rather than student samples.

Prevalent in marketing studies (Gilbride, Allenby, & Brazell, 2006), heterogeneous samples, like those with various ethnic groups (Culhane et al., 2009; Kim & White, 2010), tend to attenuate effect size (Cheung & Chan, 2004), especially in experimental studies (Fern & Monroe, 1996). In addition, two-person versus single-person experimental groups boost manipulation power (Dwyer, 1984). Conversely, homogeneous samples may produce restricted responses due to similar respondent backgrounds, incomplete self-identity, strong need for approval, and unstable group relationships (Calder, Philips, & Tybout, 1981; Sears, 1986). As within-study comparisons of one ethnic group compared to two or more ethnic groups limit the generalizability of findings and possibly experimental power of ethnicity treatments on ad-related responses (Brumbaugh & Grier, 2006), increased heterogeneity in ethnic-identity studies may strengthen their related effect sizes. Hence, we posit the following hypothesis:

$H_8$: Ethnic-identity effects will be larger in studies based on samples of two or more ethnic groups rather than only one ethnic group.
Media Type

As suggested by the Elaboration Likelihood Model, ads with higher-quality arguments, which are readily apparent in television ads (e.g., Beattie & Shovelton, 2005), are more persuasive to highly involved viewers because such arguments are easier to process (Petty & Cacioppo, 1996). If viewers believe ads with ethnic cues are ‘higher-quality directly targeted messages,’ then such ads may trigger positive thoughts and feelings that boost ad attention and awareness, which is consistent with the Heuristic-Systematic Persuasion Model (Chaiken, 1980). In ads for low-involvement products, ethnic identity may create stronger consumer affiliation and bonding with the actor/model or message. Thus, various cognitive and affective mechanisms may trigger ethnic-identity effects in ads for low- and high-involvement consumer products.

With their interactivity (e.g., semantic communication such as body language and spokesperson accent) (Beattie & Shovelton, 2005; Lwin & Wee, 2000) and viewing appeal (e.g., wide angles) (Bellman, Schweda, & Varan, 2009), television ads produce high levels of viewer entertainment (Fam, 2008). As such, television ads often are more effective than print ads in generating favorable ad-related responses (Beattie & Shovelton, 2005; Grass & Wallace, 1974; Hansen, Olsen, & Lundsteen, 2006; Jones, 1998). Hence, we posit that ethnic-identity effects are stronger for television ads compared to print ads because television’s visual, interactive, and auditory cues induce higher-quality thoughts and feelings for ethnically resonant ads.

H09: Ethnic-identity effects will be larger in studies based on television ads rather than print ads.

METHOD

Sampling Frame

Studies that qualified for our meta-analysis examined advertising-related effects of ethnic identification. In most studies, ethnicity was manipulated as an independent variable. Typically, respondents first read a magazine with filler ads and test ads. The test ads were identical in all regards but model ethnicity. Then respondents indicated their attitudes and/or purchase intentions toward the target ads and brands. Many studies assessed ethnic identification with an ethnic-identity or perceived-similarity measure.

Studies for analysis were identified through (1) a keyword search of journal aggregator databases in business, communications, education, and psychology (e.g., ABI/Inform, EBSCO, ERIC, PsycInfo); (2) a search for conference proceedings in Papers First and marketing society web sites (e.g., AMA, SMA); (3) an online search for articles using keywords from uncovered articles; and (4) listserv requests to business and psychology researchers for copies of published or unpublished manuscripts. Excluded studies
examined effects of ethnic identification on non-advertising outcomes, such as political affiliation, psychological assessments, and educational outcomes. Because few studies examined brand-related outcomes—such as brand prestige, brand loyalty, and brand awareness—those constructs were ignored. Ultimately, 25 articles qualified for the meta-analysis (see Table 1).

Characteristics of Studies on Ethnicity and Advertising

The most recurrent research question was response differences among ethnic groups—Blacks, Whites, Hispanics, and Asians—to ads with various ethnic cues. At least one ethnic cue appeared in the test ads for all but two studies. The most common ethnic cues were targeted at Whites, Blacks, and then Hispanics. Test ads depicted only two ethnic groups in 80% of studies, which may inhibit the generalizability of reported findings (Brumbaugh & Grier, 2006). Print or television ads were assessed in 92% of studies. The mean sample size, which ranged from 62 to 648 (excluding an ethnographic study with 13,443 observations), was 236. The samples represented much of the United States: seven were drawn from the Western United States, six from the Southwestern United States, four from the Midwestern United States, and three from the Southeastern United States. Thirteen studies relied on student samples—nine of undergraduate students, two of MBA students, and two of high school students—and twelve studies relied on adult samples. Thus, reported findings reflect responses of a roughly even mix of students and adults located throughout the United States. The majority of studies examined at least one ad-related attitude (i.e., AAD in 20 studies, AM in 10 studies, and AB in nine studies), and eight studies examined PIB.

Regarding the aforementioned theoretical frameworks, eight studies were not grounded in any framework, ten studies relied on Distinctiveness Theory (McGuire, 1984), two studies each relied on Identification Theory (Kelman, 1961), In-Group Bias Theory (Brewer, 1979), and Accommodation Theory (Koslow et al., 1994), and one study each relied on Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1985), Cultural Script Theory (Triandis et al., 1984), Polarized Appraisal Theory (Linville & Jones, 1980), the Elaboration Likelihood Model ( Petty & Cacioppo, 1996), and the Heuristic-Systematic Persuasion Model (Chaiken, 1980). Table 1, which is organized chronologically, shows that (1) the earliest studies tended to lack an underlying theoretical framework, and (2) despite Distinctiveness Theory’s popularity burst roughly a decade ago, there remains no de facto standard framework for ethnic identity research.

RESULTS

The population correlation $\rho$ was estimated by adjusting the observed correlations for sampling error (Hunter & Schmidt, 1990). All correlations reported
in Table 1 were converted from other summary statistics (e.g., \( t, F, \chi^2 \)) using formulae suggested by Hunter and Schmidt (1990), Rosenthal (1991), and Wolf (1986). Because several studies reported multiple correlations with ethnic identity, the mean correlation for each reported outcome was used (Wolf, 1986). Each correlation was weighted by sample size and adjusted for sampling error.

The sample-weighted estimates of ethnic identity's influence on all advertising constructs were medium-sized effects with composite \( r \) ranging from 0.18 to 0.30 (see Table 2). Five studies reported small effect sizes (\( r < 0.10 \)) and none reported large effect sizes (\( r > 0.50 \)). All correlations between ethnic identity and \( A_{AD} \), \( A_M \), \( A_B \), and \( PIB \) were significant (\( p < 0.05 \)), offering support for \( H_1 \) through \( H_4 \). The large file drawer \( N \) estimates of publication bias also support the significance of these ethnic-identity relationships (\( N > 230 \)). Measurement errors may attenuate the estimates of true population parameters (Hunter & Schmidt, 1990). Because estimates of measurement error were unavailable for some studies, correlations were adjusted by artifact distributions. Although all advertising construct \( \rho \) estimates increased after correcting for measurement reliability, the percentage of variance explained by measurement error was small. Jointly, measurement and sampling error accounted for roughly 12% of total meta-analysis variance. Finally, all study effect correlations were adjusted for random effects (Rosenthal & DiMatteo, 2001). Figure 1 shows the adjusted correlation and confidence intervals for all studies displayed as a standard plot.

Homogeneity

Homogeneity tests were conducted for all construct effects using the statistic \( Q \) on the corrected correlations (see Table 2). The results indicate significant heterogeneity for \( A_{AD} \), \( A_M \), \( A_B \), and \( PIB \), which suggests the presence of moderating variables. As a first step, studies with larger variances were eliminated from each correlation set. Unfortunately, stepwise removal of studies with larger variances failed to eliminate the large amount of heterogeneity from study effects.

Regression Analysis of Ethnic-Identity and Advertising Constructs

To better explain shared variance with ethnic identity, regression analysis was conducted on the meta-analytically derived relationships between \( A_{AD} \), \( A_M \), \( A_B \), and \( PIB \). Table 3 shows the squared semi-partial correlations between \( PIB \) and the three ad-related attitudes. After controlling for \( A_{AD} \) and \( A_M \), \( A_B \) accounted for significant incremental variance in \( PIB \). However, after controlling for \( A_M \), \( A_{AD} \) did not account for the incremental variance in \( A_B \). Thus, support for a hierarchy-of-effects within ethnic-identity studies is mixed, and
### TABLE 2 Summary, Ethnic-Identity Effects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>(k^a)</th>
<th>Cume n(^b)</th>
<th>Scale ((\alpha))</th>
<th>Sample Weighted Corrected (P)</th>
<th>Corrected (\rho) 95% Confidence Interval</th>
<th>Total Variance</th>
<th>Sampling Error Variance</th>
<th>File Drawer Analysis(^c)</th>
<th>(Q(df)^d)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A(_D)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4493</td>
<td>0.206</td>
<td>0.195</td>
<td>0.182–0.209</td>
<td>0.053</td>
<td>0.006</td>
<td>1059</td>
<td>161.7 (19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A(_M)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1849</td>
<td>0.192</td>
<td>0.178</td>
<td>0.160–0.196</td>
<td>0.049</td>
<td>0.008</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>41.3 (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A(_B)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1626</td>
<td>0.296</td>
<td>0.277</td>
<td>0.247–0.307</td>
<td>0.071</td>
<td>0.013</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>57.3 (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PIB</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2571</td>
<td>0.178</td>
<td>0.163</td>
<td>0.149–0.178</td>
<td>0.040</td>
<td>0.006</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>172.1 (8)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\)\(k\) = number of correlation coefficients analyzed.

\(^b\)Excludes one large-scale study.

\(^c\)In accord with Hunter and Schmidt (1990), number of missing studies—averaging null findings—needed to reduce \(r\) to non-significant.

\(^d\)Significant at the \(p < 0.05\) level.
AM may moderate the effect of advertising attitudes on brand perceptions. To investigate the influence of AM on the $A_{AD} \rightarrow A_B$ relationship, a series of regressions—with $A_{AD}$, $A_M$, and $A_M \times A_{AD}$ as independent variables and $A_B$ as the dependent variable—were conducted; the presence of $A_M$ moderation was confirmed ($B_M = 0.912$, $t = 52.72$, $p < 0.001$; $B_{AD} = 0.083$, $t = 4.92$, $p < 0.001$; $B_{M \times AD} = 0.346$, $t = 18.06$, $p < 0.001$ [Baron and Kenny, 1986]).

**TABLE 3** Incremental Variance in Advertising Construct Explained by the Advertising Hierarchy-of-Effects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct, IV</th>
<th>$r^2$</th>
<th>Semi-partial Coefficient$^a$</th>
<th>Correlation</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>$T$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$A_B$, $A_{AD}$</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>$A_B(A_M)$</td>
<td>.040</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>0.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$P_{IB}$, $A_B$</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>$P_{IB}(A_{AD}, A_M)$</td>
<td>.338</td>
<td>1.58</td>
<td>2.65</td>
<td>0.01$^b$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$^a$Notation for each effect follows Pedhazur (1997). $A_B(A_M)$ represents the incremental effect on $A_B$ from $A_{AD}$ above and beyond $A_M$. $P_{IB}(A_{AD}, A_M)$ represents the incremental effect on $P_{IB}$ from $A_B$ above and beyond $A_{AD}$ and $A_M$.

$^b$Significant at the $p < 0.05$ level.
Tests of Possible Research Artifacts

To test for artifactual results, studies were first partitioned by moderator type. After evaluating these subgroups for corrected correlations and overall effect sizes, significant differences between them were tested by examining between- and within-group variances (i.e., ANOVA) (Lipsey & Wilson, 2001). The results provide partial support for the set of posited hypotheses; specifically, single-item measures yielded stronger effect sizes than multi-item scales, providing support for H5. Study design (H6) and diversity of ethnic groups studied (H8) help to explain some heterogeneity in AAD, AM, AB, and PIB (see Table 4). Ethnic-identity effect sizes were larger in experiment-based than survey-based studies, offering support for H6. Studies based on respondents from one ethnic group produced lower effect sizes than studies based on respondents from two or more ethnic groups, offering support for H8. There were no significant differences in effect sizes between random adult and student samples or between print ads and television ads; hence, H7 and H9 were rejected.

DISCUSSION

Because consumer identification with marketing stimuli influences decision-making processes (Forehand et al., 2002), ethnic-identity research advances advertising theory and practice (Bhattacharya, Rao, & Glynn, 1995). For example, the meta-analysis shows that ethnic identification with an ad generally enhances AB, AAD, AM, and PI. Specifically, ethnic identity positively
influences elements of the advertising hierarchy-of-effects, producing the largest effect on $A_B$, and the regression analysis of unique variances shows a direct connection between $A_M$ and $A_B$. Hence, advertisers would be shrewd to develop promotional campaigns embedded with stimuli (e.g., ethnic actors, cultural-linked images) meant to prompt viewers’ ethnic identification with their ads; doing so, as the meta-analysis suggests, should lead to favorable ad- and brand-related responses.

Interestingly, the moderation analysis suggests methodological artifacts; for example, ethnic-identity effects are larger in experiment-based than survey-based studies, offering evidence that experimental researchers were able to maintain internal validity and boost statistical power; hence, controlled and spurious-variable-free research settings offer a platform for robust ethnic-identity outcomes. In addition, studies with single-item measures produced stronger effect sizes than studies with multi-item scales, especially with $A_{AD}$. It appears that for definite, well-established constructs like $A_{AD}$, single-item measures are appropriate (Bergkvist & Rossiter, 2009, 2007) and yield stout effects in ethnic-identity studies.

Although researchers debate the merits of student samples, studies with student versus non-student respondents did not differ systematically. A plausible explanation for this non-significant finding is that both younger (e.g., Sierra et al., 2009) and older (e.g., Whittler & Spira, 2002) consumers ethnically identify with promotional stimuli. Hence, advertisers need not exclude either group from their ethnicity-based communicative strategies. By creating greater viewer interest and awareness when compared with print ads, the interactive and visual appeal of television ads should boost their efficacy (e.g., Jones, 1998); yet, ethnic-identity effect size did not differ between print and television ads. This nonsignificant finding may be explained by television viewers opting out of commercials, thereby eliminating their design advantage over print ads.

Research suggests that sample heterogeneity influences effect size (e.g., Fern & Monroe, 1996). Regarding the number of ethnic groups studied, our meta-analysis revealed larger effect sizes for studies with two or more groups rather than one group. As a result, advertisers would benefit from targeting multiple ethnic consumers with ethnic-embedded ads. Exposing viewers to ethnic cues that span multiple ethnicities should lead to favorable advertising outcomes without alienating (e.g., Whittler, 1989) or offending (e.g., Sierra et al., 2009) consumers.

Implications

If consumers are more likely to notice and respond favorably toward an ad if it contains ethnic cues targeting them, then advertisers would benefit from developing ad campaigns with such cues. Hence, to appeal to a targeted ethnic group, advertisers could accentuate same-ethnicity models’ skin color,
facial features, demeanor, verbal expression, and apparel styles. For example, Brazilian ads targeting African-Brazilians could include slogans and argot tailored specifically to this ethnic group (Scremin & Bright, 2006). Likewise, esteemed African-American icons could endorse Black History Month in the United States. Moreover, advertisers could vary actor/model skin tone (e.g., light or dark) in their appeals to ethnically resonant consumers (Watson, Thornton, & Davidson, 2011).

As the popularity and efficacy of animated spokescharacters increases (Heiser, Sierra, & Torres, 2008), their physical traits (e.g., skin color, hairstyles, facial features) may be adapted to targeted ethnic viewers. Although ethnic-identity effects pervade advertising hierarchy-of-effects models, ethnic-identity strategies, when executed effectively, may prove useful for building brands (Karande, 2005). Seeking to capitalize on the ethnic-identity phenomena, advertisers may turn to nontraditional media; here, the interactivity afforded by e-commerce and social media websites is ideal for reaching ethnically resonant consumers. For example, character race (Elias, Appiah, & Gong, 2011), possibly through animated avatars, may spark favorable ethnic-based ad and product-related responses. Also, ethnically creative banner, e-mail, and pop-up promotional strategies may lead to favorable ethnic-identity effects (Becerra & Korgaonkar, 2010).

Aside from offering insight to methodological factors that influence ethnic-identity effect sizes, our research benchmarks size of ethnic-identity effects under a host of study types and conditions. Pinpointing what constitutes a large or small effect size within a study milieu enables research streams to mature and theory to advance (Peterson & Jolibert, 1995). Our results should help researchers identify such effects within an ethnic-identity climate, offering them a comparative rubric for evaluating their own and others’ ethnic-identity studies.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

Our research is not without limitations. Although the 25 articles chosen for the meta-analysis encapsulate researchers’ investigation into ethnic identity effects in advertising, the sample size is relatively small, which may limit the generalizability of the findings (Winer, 1999). As articles exploring ethnic identity effects on non-advertising outcome variables were excluded from the meta-analysis, the sample frame may suffer slightly from selection and publication-type bias; additional research incorporating such articles would increase sample heterogeneity and lend insight into ethnic identity effects across business and non-business settings.

Because ethnic identity significantly influences all stages of hierarchy-of-effects models, future studies should explore the indirect and mediation pathways between advertising and ethnic identity, particularly within different advertising contexts and products. For example, prior research has shown
that product involvement alters consumer elaboration of advertising stimuli (e.g., Petty et al., 1983). Lower-involvement products may be more likely to trigger ethnic identity and associated affective advertising responses. Researchers also should unravel the causal sequence and other complexities of ethnic identity’s cognitive, emotive, and behavioral influences with longitudinal models. Perhaps ethnic identity directly and indirectly influences advertising attitudes or reverse causality from the advertised actor triggers ethnic identity effects.

The relative efficacy of different types of ad cues (e.g., slogans, argot, apparel worn by models) to induce ethnic identification is unknown. Although moderating factors seemingly explain some variance in ethnic-identity effects, further research is needed to answer questions like “Does the tagline or actor’s appearance in an ad create stronger ethnic-identity effects?” and “How might these effects vary across international borders” (e.g., China vs. Europe) (Barnes et al., 2009; Wolfe, 1991). In addition to informing advertising theory, the answers to such questions should suggest effective strategies for advertisers.

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Ethnic Identity in Advertising


