Racial Stereotypes in Television Advertisements and their Effect on the Perception of African

Americans

Kapria D. Ellis

Department of Psychology, University of North Carolina at Greensboro

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Abstract

Previous research has examined stereotypes of various racial and ethnic groups and the media's role contributing and maintaining these stereotypes. Perceptions of various racial and ethnic groups have been examined; however, researchers have not specifically examined other groups' perception of African Americans and do not always include participants from diverse backgrounds. Therefore, this research examined how racial stereotypes in television advertisements impact the way stereotypical personality traits are attributed to African Americans. This study measured 18- to 30- year-old adults and the effect of racial stereotypes in television advertisements and how these stereotypes impact how African Americans are perceived. Participants were shown four ads in total---two social focused ads and two product focused ads with gender and race variables. In this study participants were asked to assign judgements adopted from the Big Five Personality Traits to characters shown in the ads, characters not in the ad, and a group of people. The current study tested whether exposure to television advertisements that display prejudice stereotypes impact an individual's perception of African Americans. Results of the study revealed that social issues ads with a racial focus do not prompt more favorable perceptions of African Americans compared to other types of advertisements (product or social issues ads with a gender focus or product ads with a racial focus). Results also show that positive perceptions are stronger when exposed to positive individual and group representation. These findings emphasize the potential for corporate messages concerning social issues (such as prejudice and discrimination) may potentially create adverse effects on perceptions of African Americans.

Racial Stereotypes in Television Advertisements and their Effect on the Perception of African

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The average American views approximately 714 commercials per week, averaging over

37,000 commercials per year (Bretl & Cantor, 1988). Television consumption has significantly

increased throughout the years and has become the most popular method to display

advertisements (Coltrane & Messineo, 2000). Throughout history, television advertisements have

created stereotypes of different racial and ethnic groups. Positive and negative stereotypes are

prevalent in our society (Lee et al., 2009) and the numerous television advertisements Americans

are exposed to per year subjects them to both stereotypes. Previous research has examined racial

stereotypes in various contexts and found that the media can alter the way people behave, view,

and think about groups. Furthermore, research has shown the media's role in creating and

maintaining negative stereotypical views of African Americans. African Americans are subjected

to racial stereotypes that portray negative attributes to their character, attitudes, and intellect

(Maher et al., 2008; Tamborini et al., 2000). The negative stereotypes and portrayals shown in

the media, specifically television programs and advertisements, can be associated with certain

racial and ethnic groups. (Mastro & Greenberg, 2000; Tukachinsky et al., 2017). Past research

has been conducted to examine stereotypical perceptions that are associated with ethnic groups

and have assessed people's thoughts and feelings based on these depictions. (Lee et al., 2009).

However, previous research has failed to look at how racial stereotypes in television

advertisements impact the way stereotypical personality traits are attributed to African

Americans. This study will measure the effect of stereotyped personality traits and will

investigate whether these stereotypes impact how other racial and ethnic groups perceive African

Americans.

Representation in Media

The cultivation theory suggests that repeated exposure to the media over time can influence beliefs about the real world (Gerbner, 1998). Gerbner (1998) describes television as a centralized system of storytelling that allows commercials, news, drama, and other programs to bring images and messages into everyone's home. People's biases and perceptions are formed by the images and messages shown on television, thus influencing their beliefs and attitudes. Racial stereotypes exist and are prominent as they characterize African Americans and various other racial and ethnic groups. Relatedly, Gorham (1999) used the term racial myths to describe stereotypical perceptions in the media. Gorham emphasized the media's role in promoting these myths by constantly exposing people to language and contextual associations that align with stereotypical viewpoints (Lee et al., 2009).

Representation can be defined in many ways. First, representation can be defined based on numerical representation – how many people from different groups are in different types of media. Today there are 41.1 million African Americans, coupled with individuals who identify as Black or African American in combination with another racial group bring that number to 46.9 million or 14.2% of the total population (United States Census Bureau, 2021). The Hispanic population has grown exceptionally to 62.1 million or 18.7% of the total U.S. population (Census Bureau, 2022). Studies of representation of African American and Latinx people demonstrate mixed results in terms of comparison to the U.S. population. For example, in one study, African Americans were represented by 14.1 percent of the characters in this sample while Hispanics are represented by 1.5 percent (Maher et al., 2008). More recently, Tukachinsky (2017) found that African Americans were represented by 13.1 percent of the characters in their sample of prime-time television programs. Latinos were represented by 2.8 percent of the sample. Although

African American representation is similar to the general population, media consumers are exposed to fewer representations of African American characters compared to characters from other racial or ethnic backgrounds.

Representation can also be defined as how people are portrayed – are people from certain groups portrayed positively or negatively, or in certain roles most of the time? Current research of African American representation in the media reports that subtle, cultural power roles in advertisements reflect negatively on African Americans (Maher et al., 2008). Maher et al. (2008) found that African Americans are significantly underrepresented in children's commercials and that negative stereotyped groups such as African Americans and Hispanics are underrepresented in major roles and overrepresentation in minor roles. The portrayals in these commercials have the potential to cause other races and ethnicities to view African Africans and Hispanics poorly. Dixon and Linz (2000) conducted a content analysis of local news programming in Los Angeles and Orange counties to analyze representations of African Americans. Latinos, and Caucasians as law breakers and law defenders. This study used three indexes to ensure a more comprehensive assessment of the portrayal of African Americans, Latinos, and Caucasians as law breakers and law defenders. Results concluded various findings, including: African Americans and Latinos being more likely than Caucasians to be portrayed as perpetrators of crime on the news, African Americans and Latinos were more likely to be portrayed as perpetrators than police officers while Caucasians were more likely to be portrayed as police officers than as perpetrators, and that African Americans were overrepresented, Latinos were underrepresented and Caucasians were slightly underrepresented as perpetrators on television news. Lastly, results concluded that African Americans were neither overrepresented or unrepresented while Latinos were underrepresented, and Caucasians were overrepresented as

police officers (Dixon & Linz, 2012). The underrepresentation and overrepresentation of certain roles on television can impact the way that people perceive an individual or a group based on what they are constantly shown on television. Representations in the media can attribute to the formation of stereotypes that could be associated with different racial and ethnic groups.

History and Specific Stereotypes of Racial/Ethnic Minorities on Television

During the 1940s and 1950s, African Americans had minimal roles in television, but when they were offered minor roles, they consisted of stereotypical depictions of characters being overweight domestic servants and lazy (Tamborini et al., 2000). During the 1960s to the early 1970s, African Americans acquired more professional and intellectual roles; however, distorted, and stereotypical representations of African Americans remained in television (Tamborini et al., 2000). In the 1980s there were improved images of African Americans that included them being successful professionals and respected authority figures (Tukachinsky et al., 2017). During the 1990s there were mixed representations of African Americans, yet African Americans were still less respected (Tukachinsky et al., 2017; Mastro & Greenberg, 2000).

Previous research has examined specific stereotypes of different racial and ethnic minorities on television and revealed that there are negative stereotypes and portrayals associated with these groups. Mastro and Greenberg (2000) examined portrayals of racial minorities on prime-time television by conducting a systematic content analysis that used a 64-program sample. The sample used coded variables at the program level, at the individual character level, for minority character interaction with other characters, and for length and genre. The results showed that African Americans were found in 16% of the main and minor roles, 18 Latino characters were in major and minor roles, Asian Americans were 1% of the television population, and Native Americans were not represented. Results also found that African

Americans were portrayed more negatively compared to Latino and Caucasian characters. African American were judged as lazy and the least respected and were dressed more provocatively and looked the most disheveled (Mastro & Greenberg, 2000). Tukachinsky et al. (2017) investigated the relationship between television representations of racial and ethnic minorities and their feelings of Latinos and African Americans about their ingroup and Caucasians as the outgroup. This study combined repeated cross-sectional data from public opinion polls and from a content analysis of the regular cast of prime television shows across 12 seasons. Results found that for both Latinos and African Americans, negative representations of one's own group reduced warm feelings towards their ingroup while favorable characterizations aided to warm feelings towards their ingroup (Tukachinsky et al., 2017). The most compelling part of this study were the implications. The results highlight that negative representation in the media could cause identity threat to ethnic minorities and exemplifies the importance of promoting positive media representations and minimizing negative portrayals and stereotypes.

Previous research has also examined race and gender and its relation to occupation and occupational prestige on television. Signorielli (2009) conducted a ten-week content analysis sample of prime- time broadcast between 1997 and 2006 to examine sex and race and its relation to occupations and occupational prestige in prime-time television. This study inspected the major and minor characters and were coded for four variables that were broken down to assess occupation, prestige, age, sex, and race. The results found that racially defined programs shown between 1997 and 2006 differ in distribution of men, women, and people of color as well as that these programs show different variations of occupations and occupational prestige for leading characters (Signorielli, 2009). Specifically, a major finding in the study was that African American and Caucasian women had low professional diversity in both racially diverse and

mostly White programs. However, African American women were the least likely to be cast as professional, had the least amount of diversity, and held the least amount of prestige in the jobs in which they were cast. Low professional jobs were categorized by unknown jobs, not working, or other jobs that were not coded into a category; household and service worker jobs were not considered prestigious.

Gender stereotypes encompass beliefs that certain attributes and characteristics differentiate gender (Ashmore & del Boca, 1981). Historically, advertising has portrayed gender as distinct and predictable where women are overrepresented as product representatives for feminine domestic products (Chu et al., 2015; Bartsch et al., 2000), whereas men are overrepresented as product representatives for more professional and nondomestic products (Bartsch et al., 2000). Racial stereotypes and gender representation in the media have created negative portrayals of African Americans. Potentially causing stereotypical traits to be associated with them and their overall perception.

Racial Stereotypes in Television Advertising

Previous research has been conducted to examine stereotypical perceptions and opinions linked with different racial and ethnic groups using various methods. Maher et al. (2008) conducted a content analysis that examined 155 children's commercials from 4 television networks and 1 cable channel. The commercials were coded for seven variables which included: presence of African Americans, presence of Caucasians, presence of Asians, presence of Hispanics, product category, ethnic interaction, and role portrayed. Results from the product category found significant differences in representation of ethnic stereotypes in the sample. Results found that negative stereotyped groups such as African Americans and Hispanics are overrepresented in restaurant advertisements, while Caucasians and Asians, the positively

stereotypes groups, are much more likely to appear in toy advertisements compared to African Americans and Hispanics. Additionally, results from the role portrayed category found that African Americans and Hispanics are underrepresented in major roles and overrepresented in minor roles. The findings of this study suggest that children's advertising incorporates ethnic stereotypes by using more of the positively stereotyped characters, Asians, and Caucasians, to advertise products of categories that are more sophisticated than food products (Maher et al., 2008). This study exemplifies that African Americans and Hispanics were presented in ways that support popular ethnic stereotypes and suggests that advertising contributes to perpetuating the stereotype that minorities are less important (Maher et al., 2008).

Since the study by Maher et al. (2008) was conducted, a new type of advertisement has emerged that focuses on social issues, rather than a specific product. While product focused advertisements are very common, there has recently been an increase in advertisements that bring awareness to social issues occurring around the world. Procter & Gamble created a new program, "Widen The Screen" to broaden the spectrum of the images, sounds, stories, and people we see and encounter (Procter & Gamble, 2021). The company's ads are an example of the new types of advertisements that are emerging that focus on social issues and change. These advertisements serve to address and combat systematic biases and inequity present in media (Procter & Gamble, 2021). Notably, these ads to not clearly advertise for a product, often just featuring the company's name and logo at the end of the video (e.g., a video with the Windows logo at the end but no computers or software prominently featured in the video). Businesses and brands utilize this new type of advertising because it enhances the chance of creating new connections with consumers through the brand's purposeful choice and use of specific strategies, tactics, and appeals (Brooks et al., 2019). Social issue advertising is relatively new and therefore

understudied. However, these advertisements could have a unique impact on judgements on social groups (e.g., of people based on race/ethnicity, gender, etc.).

Methods to Study Viewers' Racial Stereotypes

Previous studies have primarily used content analysis to understand how people from different racial/ethnic groups (African Americans in particular) and genders are portrayed in media. Another way to study stereotypes and perceptions of people involve asking participants more directly about who they would prefer to befriend or what characteristics people from different groups might have. Aboud et al. (2003) conducted a study that examined various indices of peer relations and the link between peer relations and racial attitudes for elementary school students that differed in race, gender, and grade. The study explored whether racial attitudes were associated with befriending or avoiding classmates (Aboud et al., 2003). The study tested students from a multiracial elementary school that were interviewed twice in the spring of the school year by using structured assessments techniques. A same-race tester was used in the interviews to ensure the child's comfort in selecting friends and expressing their racial attitudes. The first session was to assess the number of companions, friends, and racial attitudes while the second session occurred two weeks later and assessed friendship quality for a same- and- cross race friend. Results found that race was a factor in predicting companions and friends, racial attitude was not a factor in friend selection. Results also found that cross-race friends tended not to be viewed different from same-race friends in fulfilling most friendship functions.

In another study that examined participants' stereotypes of characters from media, Lee et al. (2009), evaluated television viewing and ethnic stereotypes, specifically if college students form stereotypical perceptions of ethnic groups as a result of heavy television consumption. Their study investigated if heavy television viewing and program genre impacts college students'

thoughts about ethnic stereotypes. The study included a self-administered survey that was completed by undergraduate students at two different universities in the United States. The survey assessed college student's television consumption and its impact on ethnic stereotyping. Participants in the study rated their personal perceptions of various ethnic groups using a scale adopted from the Big Five Personality Traits. Participants were asked to rate their personal perceptions of five different ethnic groups using a seven- point sematic differential scale to rate members of each ethic group closer to one or the other bi-polar adjectives. Some of the adjectives included: shy-outgoing, lazy-hardworking, unresponsible- responsible, vengeful-forgiving, etc. The study found participants who were heavy television viewers displayed more negative stereotypes towards ethnic groups and found that participants exhibited more negative stereotypes to positive when analyzing specific personality stereotypes. The results show that heavy television consumption can cause people to have negative stereotypes towards ethnic groups. The results begin to question if racial stereotypes impact viewers interpretation of reality and if the media is responsible for these stereotypes.

Both studies (Aboud et al., 2003; Lee et al., 2009) are similar as they asked participants to assign different personality traits to various racial and ethnic groups. The present study examines whether racial stereotypes in television advertisements impacted various racial and ethnic groups perception of African Americans based on what they saw during the advertisement. The present study used the methods of Lee et al. (2009) study to measure adults' perceptions of personality traits of African Americans based on the characters they see in four advertisements.

The Present Study

The present study assessed whether racial stereotypes in television advertisements had an impact on the way different racial and ethnic groups perceive African Americans. This study examined social issues vs. product focus ads with race/ethnicity and gender categories in television advertisements. This study explored whether these variables had an impact on the perception of African Americans. Race and gender were included to compare across different social categories. Instead of conducting a content analysis, this study varied the advertisements shown to participants and proceeded to measure participants perceptions using a scale adopted from the Big Five Personality Traits. The present study took the approach of Lee et al. (2009) by asking participants to rate their personal perceptions and make personality judgments. The present study also adopted Maher et al., (2008) content analysis method by manipulating variables shown the advertisements. However, this study is assessed how other racial and ethnic groups perceive African Americans based on what they see in the advertisements shown.

The current study had a diverse sample which is a novel contribution to research as it allows the findings to be generalizable across various racial and ethnic groups. The diversity of participants in previous studies has been limited. For example, in Lee et al. (2009), 79% of participants identified as Caucasian. In this study, participants watched two advertisements highlighting social issues two that focused on a specific product. Within each ad type, participants watched one ad that focused on African American characters (of multiple genders) and one ad that focused on female characters (of multiple racial/ethnic backgrounds). Participants were then asked to answer both open-ended and scaled questions to evaluate their perception of the characters shown in the advertisements. This study tested the hypothesis that exposing adults to television advertisements that displayed African Americans in various

contexts will influence how other racial and ethnic groups perceive African Americans based on the characters that are shown in the advertisements, with gender as a comparison case. The second hypothesis tested in this study will investigate whether the type of advertisement (focused on social issues vs. a specific product) is relevant for stereotype formation.

Method

Participants

Participants included 106 adults ranging from 18- to 30 years-old that completed a self-administered survey. There were 37 participants excluded due to failure to fully complete the survey, leaving 69 included participants with complete data to analyze. Of the included participants, 80% ($n = 55$) were female, 13% ($n = 9$) were male, and 6% ($n = 4$) were non-binary. One participant preferred not to respond to the gender question. The largest racial/ethnic group was Caucasian (41%), whereas the remaining participants identified as Black or African American (25%) with (3%) identifying as Hispanic or Latino, Asian (6%), Biracial (1%), and Haitian American (1%) with (9%) identifying as Hispanic or Latino. Ten participants (14%) that did not specify a race or preferred not to respond when inquiring about ethnicity. Participants were recruited via the University of North Carolina at Greensboro's psychology subject pool and received credit as defined by the guidelines of the psychology department. All participants were assured that their responses will be confidential for the present study; no identifying information was collected in the survey.

Materials

Advertisements

The advertisements depicted included 2 variables: social issues vs. product focus and race/ethnicity vs. gender focus. These variables are original to the present study; however, they

were selected a content analysis by Maher et al. (2008), with social vs. product focus added to meet the purpose of the present study. The present study tested these variables to gain insight whether the variables mentioned impacted how different racial and ethnic groups perceive African Americans. I identified four short advertisements on YouTube that included the previously stated variables (see Table 1 for a description of each ad).

Rating Stereotypical Judgements

Participants were asked to rate their personal perceptions of pictures of one African American actor featured in the advertisement, one person from a different group not featured in the ad (i.e., if the African American actor was a man, the person from a different group was a White woman), and groups of African American people (not featured in the ad). Participants rated each picture using a series of scales amended from the Big Five Personality Traits (Lee et al., 2009; Shafer, 1999). For each picture, participants used A 7-point semantic differential scale was used allowing participants to rate person(s) pictured as closer to one or the other of two bipolar adjectives (Lee et al., 2009; Shafer, 1999). The measure included 10 brief markers (Shafer, 1999). The 10 brief markers came from Lee et al. (2009) study which included: Shy- Outgoing, Lazy- Hard working, At ease- Nervous, Vengeful- Forgiving, Unresponsible- Responsible, Headstrong- Gentle, Uncreative- Creative, Quiet- Talkative, Unagitated- Tense, Unartistic- Artistic. For example, for the "shy-outgoing" marker, participants will be asked to provide a rating on a 1 (shy) to 7 (outgoing) scale.

Demographic Questionnaire

All participants completed a demographic questionnaire at the end of the study that asked the participant's age, gender, and race, ethnicity, combined annual family income, and zip code.

The last question of the demographic questionnaire was an open-ended question, allowing the participant to make note or comment anything regarding their responses or the survey.

Procedure

The study was administered on SONA via a Qualtrics link. Once participants clicked on the link, they were directed to complete a consent form. After participants consented to the study, they were prompted to complete the study. Participants were instructed to watch the first advertisement which was embedded into the survey. The four advertisements used were shown in a randomized order. After viewing the first advertisement, participants were instructed to answer an open-ended question that said, "Please watch the following video. It is an advertisement. After you watch the video, please describe the video you watched. Make sure to tell us what you think is being advertised" to ensure that participants actually watched the advertisement. Once this question was completed, participants were shown a character from the advertisement and were told they would be making a series of judgements about the character using the 10 brief markers, such as, "How shy or outgoing is this person? 1 is the most shy, 7 is the most outgoing." Participants were then shown a picture of an individual with opposing gender and race/ethnicity characteristics compared to the character shown in the advertisement. Participants were then asked to make a series of judgements on this individual using the same 10 brief markers. Lastly, participants were shown a group picture consisting of people from the same racial/ethnic group as the character in the advertisement and was asked to rate their perception of the group using the same scale and question as previously stated.

Participants completed the same process for the remaining three advertisements. Once participants completed the last set of questions, they were asked to complete a demographic questionnaire. Following the demographic questionnaire participants were redirected to the last

page of the study that thanked them for their participation and debriefed them on the purpose of the study.

Design

This study used Qualtrics software to assess participant's perceptions of African Americans based on the variables in the four television advertisements. The four advertisements shown were embedded into Qualtrics from YouTube and were presented in a randomized order. Target order was fixed: Participants were first asked about a person in the ad, then a person not in the ad, and then a group of people. To examine stereotypes of individuals, the independent variables were the type of advertisement, the focus of the advertisement, and the target of evaluation and used a 2 (ad type: social issues vs. product focus) x 2 (social category: race/ethnicity vs. gender focus) x 3 (evaluation target: person in ad, person not in ad, group) within-subject design. The dependent variable were participants' ratings of individuals and groups using the 10 brief markers used to measure stereotype judgements.

Hypotheses

I hypothesized that the social issues advertisements would prompt more favorable perceptions of African Americans compared to the product focused advertisements. The four advertisements are broken down into two social categories, race vs. gender. I hypothesized that the advertisements within the race category would elicit favorable perceptions compared to the advertisements within the gender category. As participants were evaluating the individuals in the advertisement, individuals not in the advertisement, and the group, I hypothesized the individuals in the advertisement would receive more negative perceptions. Whereas the individual not in the advertisement would receive more positive perceptions. I speculated that that the favorable and unfavorable perceptions will be contributed by the stereotypes depicted in the advertisements

which will impact participants' thoughts toward ethnic minorities. If the hypotheses are supported this would reveal that racial stereotypes in advertisements can positively alter perceptions towards a racial/ethnic group. Support of our hypotheses will also begin to exhibit the type of advertisements that elicit greater positive and negative stereotypes towards a group. The findings of the present study could reveal an unsupported hypothesis which could show that racial stereotypes in advertisements do not impact perceptions of an individual or group, or negatively impact perceptions of an individual or group.

Results

The analyses investigated the four different advertisements' impact on participants and their perception of African Americans. The present study used a repeated measures ANOVA to answer the primary research question for this study and specifically examined participants' judgments about the characters in the ad (with ad type, social category, and evaluation target) as factors. Here we highlight significant main effects and interactions (see Table 2 for full results). Overall, we observed three significant main effects and a significant three-way interaction. We first review the main effects. For social category, participants provided higher ratings for gender, $M = 5.02$ ($SD = 0.898$) compared to race, $M = 4.70$ ($SD = 1.09$) when analyzing the means for social group (gender vs. race), $F(1,68) = 38.59$, $p < .001$). When examining the means for ad focus (social vs. product) participants had a higher rating for social advertisements, $M = 4.22$ ($SD = 0.68$) compared to product advertisements, $M = 4.02$ ($SD = 1.16$), $F(1,68) = 1.71$, $p > .001$). When analyzing character target (character in the ad, person not in the ad, group of people based on the ad) a significant effect was found, $F(2, 136) = 139.83$, $p < .001$. Because there were three possible evaluation targets, a posthoc comparison test was conducted using p-values from paired samples t-tests with Bonferroni correction to test the four advertisements against each other.

Results reveal that participants gave highest evaluations for the group, $M = 5.32$ ($SD = 0.79$)

followed by the person in the ad, $M = 5.14$ ($SD = 0.83$). Participants had the worst evaluations

for the person not in the ad, $M = 4.12$ ($SD = 0.95$). There was a three-way interaction present

between target group (character in the ad, person not in the ad, group of people based on the ad),

ad focus (social vs. product), social group (gender vs. race), $F(2, 136) = 10.15$, $p < .001$.

Therefore, an analysis of each target group was conducted separately.

Character in the advertisement

When analyzing just the person in the advertisement there was a significant effect of

social group, $F(1, 68) = 33. 45$, p $< .001$ and a significant effect of ad focus, $F(1, 68) = 14.31$, p

$< .001$. There was also a two- way interaction between social group and ad focus, $F(1, 68) =$

17.59, p $< .001$. The two- way interaction was followed up using a posthoc comparison using

Bonferroni correction and found that ad B, ad C, and ad D were higher than ad A (see Table 1).

The results confirm that the two gender-focused ads and the race product ad have higher ratings

compared to race social ad that has lower ratings and stands out as different. Overall participants

rated the person in the advertisement more highly in product and social ads with a gender focus

(gender product: $M = 5.35$ ($SD = 0.668$); gender social: $M = 5.42$ ($SD = 0.681$) and product ads

with a race focus ($M = 5.22$, $SD = 0.693$) compared to social ads with a race focus ($M = 4.59$, SD

$= 0.972$; see Figure 1 for full results). In conclusion, the two gender ads along with the one race

product ad were rated higher compared to the one race social ad.

Person not in the advertisement

When examining the person not in the advertisement there was only a significant effect of

social group (race vs. gender), $F(1, 68) = 14.58$, $p < .001$ (see Figure 2). Participants provided

higher scores for gender-focused ads, $M = 4.30$ ($SD = 0.75$) compared to race-focused ads, $M =$

3.94 ($SD = 1.09$). If the advertisement was about gender, the person from the outgroup is a white male; if the advertisement is about race, the person from the outgroup was either a white male or female.

Group of people based on the advertisement

Analyzing the group picture based on people in the advertisement there were not any significant effects found between social group or ad focus (see Figure 3).

Discussion

The purpose of the current study was to study assess whether racial stereotypes in television advertisements had an impact on the way different racial and ethnic groups perceive African Americans by examining four different advertisements. The findings of the present study reveal that advertisements can impact perceptions of people featured in advertisements. I first hypothesized that social issue ads would elicit higher ratings compared to product focused ads. The results did not support this hypothesis--- suggesting that social issue ads with a racial focus do not prompt more favorable perceptions of African Americans (in fact those ads prompted the lowest ratings of African Americans). The second hypothesis tested whether race ads would elicit favorable perceptions compared to gender ads when evaluating social category. This was unsupported by the results which revealed that gender focused ads generated higher ratings. When analyzing character in the ad and person not in the ad, I hypothesized that the character in the ad would receive more negative evaluations as opposed to person not in the ad. The posthoc comparison test with Bonferroni correction to test the four advertisements against each discovered that the person not in the ad received the worst evaluations. However, the group and character in the ad received the highest ratings from participants. Even though this hypothesis was unsupported the results imply that favorable perceptions are elicited from positive individual

and group representation. All the group pictures in the study included individuals that encompassed a fun and socializing atmosphere. The carefree and positive image of the group could have caused a positive impression which resulted in high and favorable ratings. The current study supports the prevalence of racial stereotypes in television and emphasizes that these stereotypes can influence an individual's perception of a certain group.

Limitations & Future Directions

The present study continues to explain and expand research about media and its perpetuation of creating stereotypes that can negatively affect social groups based on their race. However, there are a few limitations to the study and more directions to explore. Even though the sample was diverse with varying races and ethnicities it was a specific sample due to an undergraduate participant pool. There was an unbalanced gender distribution with more females completing the study compared to men. Another limitation is that participants only saw one advertisement of each category. This raises the question whether if an effect was found did it just from the advertisement or was there another factor involved. The type of advertisement could have some impact on participants judgements toward the character target. Future research could take the current study a step further and examine social comparison of individuals in relation to stereotypes and prejudices within media. We know that media perpetuates both positive and negative stereotypes about certain groups. So future directions of this study could examine how certain racial/ ethnic groups compare themselves to the advertisements that we are consistently exposed to in various ways. Research surrounding this topic would give insight on whether advertisements can alter self-perception and social comparison based on ideals portrayed.

Conclusion

As the world becomes more technologically advanced new streams of media will be created and used by people around the world. We are constantly exposed to various types of media and typically are unaware of the number of advertisements we see and hear every day. Bretl and Cantor (1988) explained that the average American views approximately 714 commercials per week which has increased throughout time due to new streams of media and increase usage on social networking sites (Pew Research Center, 2021). Bretl and Cantor (1988) examined television commercials and their portrayals of gender over time. However, new and highly used social networking sites have been created, thus increasing the number of advertisements we see daily (as many social media sites include advertisements on their platforms to generate revenue). Today around 72% of the of the public uses an aspect of social media (Pew Research Center, 2021). Pew Research Center (2021) noted that social media has become a part of users' everyday routine and noted that U.S. adults use Facebook (70%), Snapchat (59%), Instagram (59%), Twitter (46%), and YouTube (54%) daily. Because many of us use social media every day we are subjected to hundreds or thousands of advertisements such as audio, digital, message, videos, and stories on those platforms.

The consistent increase of usage and viewing of television and media can be damaging consequently forming and maintaining stereotypes and prejudices. We all must realize media's role in the perpetuation of prejudices and stereotypes about different social groups and actively try to rectify this issue as a society. Given that ratings of people were the worst after reviewing social focus (gender vs. race) it is important to consider how and why companies create advertisements regarding race and other societal issues. Are these companies just attempting to improve their brand image or do they care about eliminating harmful stereotypes and perceptions

about specific groups? The unknown could be damaging in terms of people's perceptions of a

certain group which could potentially have adverse effects. Everyone deserves to be heard with

fair and inclusive representation. Companies and businesses should care about the cultivation of

positive perceptions instead of being performative to uplift their image.

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Table 1

Descriptions of ads viewed by participants

	Product focused	**Social issues focused**
One race, multiple genders	An ad for Black Girl Sunscreen. African American actors (multiple genders) are seen applying the sunscreen and socializing outdoors in a group.	A "Widen the Screen" ad for Procter & Gamble to widen the view of the joy, beauty, and the expanse of Black life. African Americans (multiple genders) are conducting their daily life activities.
One gender, multiple race/ethnicity	An ad for Estee Lauder Double Wear foundation. Women actors (multiple races/ethnicities) are seen outside modeling the foundation on their skin.	An ad for Bing. Heroic women (multiple races/ ethnicities) are being recognized for their strength, bravery, and their accomplishments.

Table 2

ANOVA with social category, ad focus, and target of evaluation

Effect	DFn	DFd	*F*	*p*
Social category (gender vs. race)	1	68	38.59	< .001
Ad Focus (social vs. product)	1	68	1.71	.196
Target (in ad, not in ad, group)	2	136	139.83	< .001
Category x Focus	1	68	2.78	.100
Category x Target	2	136	5.88	< .001
Focus x Target	2	136	8.19	< .001
Category x Focus x Target	2	136	10.15	< .001

Person in ad only

Effect	DFn	DFd	*F*	*p*
Social category (gender vs. race)	1	68	33.45	< .001
Ad Focus (social vs. product)	1	68	14.31	< .001
Category x Focus	1	68	17.59	< .001

Person in ad only

Effect	DFn	DFd	*F*	*p*
Social category (gender vs. race)	1	68	14.58	< .001
Ad Focus (social vs. product)	1	68	3.97	.050
Category x Focus	1	68	2.19	.143

Group only

Effect	DFn	DFd	*F*	*p*
Social category (gender vs. race)	1	68	3.19	.078
Ad Focus (social vs. product)	1	68	2.03	.159
Category x Focus	1	68	0.96	.329

Figure 1

This graph shows ratings based on the Person in the ad, divided by social category and ad focus.
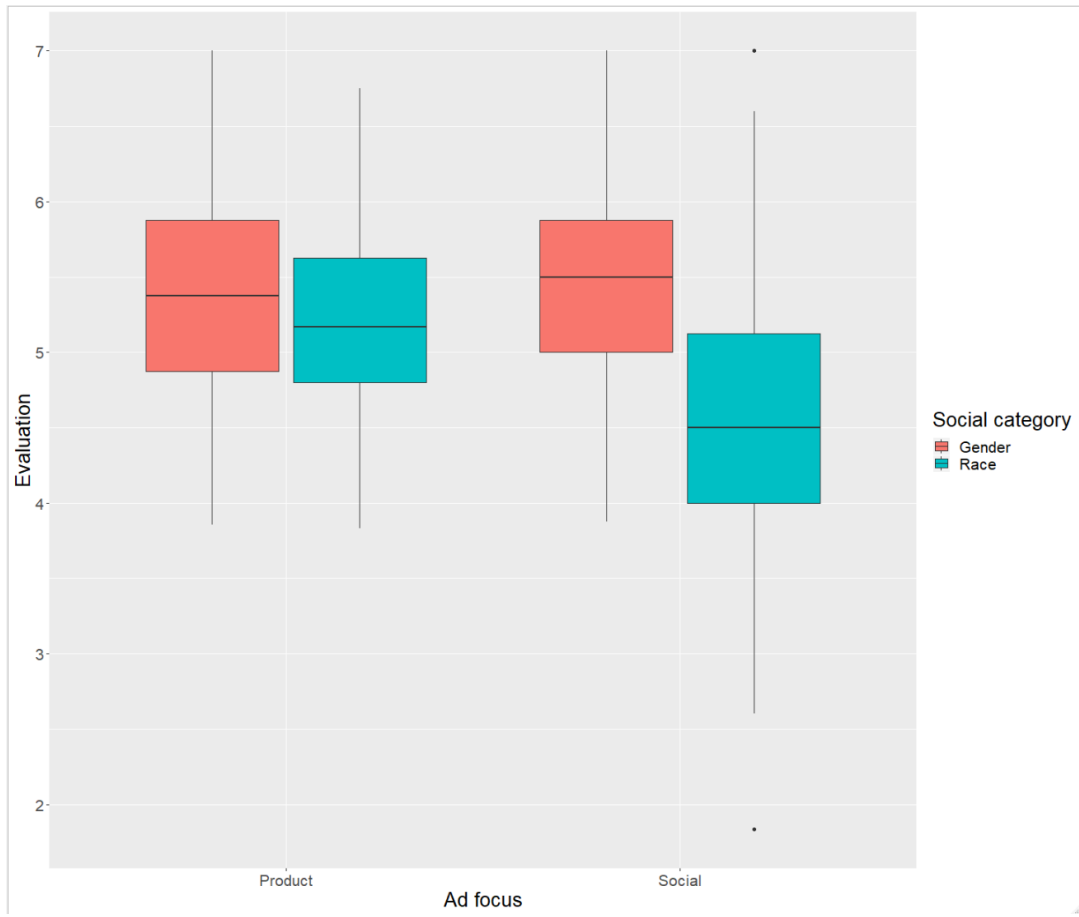
Figure 2

This graph shows ratings based on the Person not in the ad, divided by social category and ad focus.
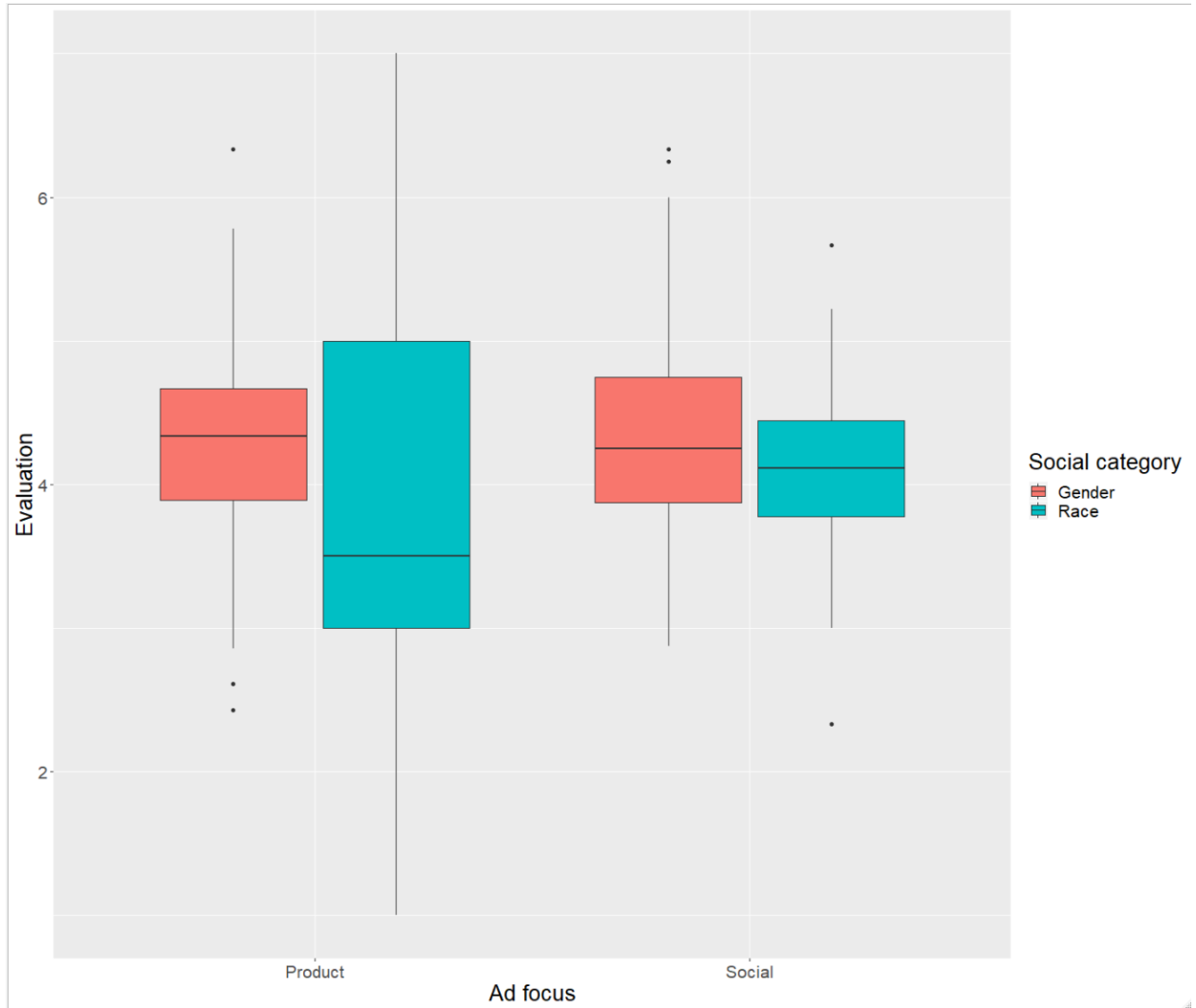
Figure 2

This graph shows rating based on the Group ad, divided by social category and ad focus.