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## **The Portrayal and Reception of Multiracial Couples and Families in Advertisements**

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*The Portrayal and Reception of Multiracial Couples and Families in Advertisements*

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty of the

Weissman School of Arts and Science

Baruch College, The City University of New York

In partial fulfillment of the Requirements of the Degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS**

In

**CORPORATE COMMUNICATION**

By

Kiran A, Chand

**August 24, 2020**

Under the guidance and approval of the committee,  
and approved by all its members, this thesis

*The Portrayal and Reception of Multiracial Couples and Families in Advertisements*

has been accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the  
Master of Arts in Corporate Communication.

A Virtual Colloquium for the above-named Graduate Student will be held on

August 24, 2020

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Professor Stuart Davis, Advisor 09-01-2020 Date



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Professor PETER HOROWITZ, Reader Date



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Professor Eric Gander, Program Director Date

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## **Abstract**

The goal of the research conducted here is to see the candid ways in which the American people react to the existence of multiracial couples and families. As these families are becoming more commonplace within the population and large companies such as Nestlé, Toyota, Expedia, Progressive, and General Mills have taken note of this. Instead of portraying the typical nuclear family as a backdrop for their products, companies are now demonstrating how their products are part of the everyday life of any and every American by depicting unions amongst white, black, Hispanic, and Asian partners. This normalization is due to the increase of such relationships throughout the last seven decades of the United States' history and is a pattern that is only going to become more prominent. Beginning with the landmark Supreme Court case of *Loving. V. Virginia* in 1967, the multiracial couple and family as a legitimate union was shown as a true representation of a normal American household that operated like any other (Clark, 2017).

Companies are portraying themselves as forward-thinking amongst their longtime challengers in order to secure the patronage of the individuals they show using and purchasing their products or services. In this thesis I aim to see how the general American public views multiracial relationships and families in addition to obtaining the opinions of subjects on the same, as well as their own reception of their relationships' representation through advertisements. I will be doing this through collecting the statistics of the likelihood of certain multiracial relationships, the reasons as to why they are, and responses collected by interview participants that are in or have been in a multiracial relationship. This rhetoric is necessary and must be developed further

amongst corporations so that those who they represent know that they are more than a momentary marketing gimmick.

## **Introduction**

To begin to understand the impact of multiracial couples and individuals in the United States, one must look towards their representation and impact through various forms of media. The portrayals of multiracial individuals, their relationships and their families, particularly in advertisements by large American companies, have become a more noticeable and commonplace occurrence in today's media landscape. The representation created by these specific portrayals has fueled some of the more complex and in-depth rhetoric this country has seen surrounding their presence. The United States has notably been home to families that may have not been formed had it not been for its ever-evolving melting pot environment, and conversations around how mainstream companies with popular products are catering to these families is a necessary conversation.

In the efforts to show their apparent solidarity with a population that shows a significant potential for growth in terms of buying power, major companies are normalizing a previously controversial depiction of the American family by advertising to them. The sheer act of showing a couple or family whose parental figures are more than one race is easily picked up on by consumers who identify with them, who will then either start or continue to identify as buyers of a certain good or product as shown in the commercial. In solidifying the viewers of these commercials, a stronger client base is being formed for companies to continuously cater to and gain profit from.

The majority of Americans exposed to multiracial couples in advertisements see them favorably and do not harbor antagonistic feelings upon seeing them. In fact, large amounts of certain demographics are willing to engage in relationships that traditionally have not been seen as commonplace. The strategy of showing both real and scripted couples through commercials serves as a signal to those represented that their business is welcomed and also shows the rest of the population that these unions are normal and tolerated by brands and companies that are sought out by all. Creating a universal level of relatability has led brands to seeing their sales go up and stakeholder relationships strengthen as others see themselves reflected in the commercials that they come across. With insurance and food companies alike producing commercials with multiracial couples, it is clear that they as key players in their industries are investing in these current and potential customers to set up their families as the next generation of consumers.

For the purposes of this research, the use of the term multiracial will be limited to its definition of composed of, involving, or representing various races. This term is applied to the advertisements that showcase couples and families with members of two different races. This representation through a visual means is uninhibited by stereotypes and creates a space for itself and for its viewers to acknowledge their existence. Viewers of course have the option to move on from continuing to watch a commercial with a multiracial couple or family, but it does not take away from the fact that they were exposed even if momentarily. The use of the term interracial is used within the articles it's found, which describe what is involving, or designed for members of different races. This is the term most used in the research of the relationships that are then seen in the television commercials to be discussed later on.

## **Literature Review**

### ***Growth and Development of Representation***

The purported deception of the outward appearance of people of color has been something that causes anger amongst white communities for quite some time (Lenhardt, 2013). If, for example, a black woman was to reveal she had mixed ancestry after being thought of as white, an air of distrust would be brought upon her and her future interactions with white individuals. The lack of widespread acceptance in the early 20th century would have been cause for hysteria and led to public scrutiny. Such kind of appearance of a mixed-race woman is widely considered to be the standard women of color should meet, what men strive to win over, and what women try to emulate (Slatton, 2012). The way in which the representation has flipped shows that race is something that in time can become much more fluid and subject to the times and the misguided preferences of the general public.

As multiracial relationships grow within the public eye, it is important to note that they are creating a growth that can lead to acceptance and foster a diversified environment (Silva, Campbell and Wright, 2012). Factors such as race, religion, and nationality are what contribute to such relationships being considered intercultural in the first place. The willingness to enter and fully participate in a relationship like this depends on an individual's ability to accept and tolerate their partner's several cultural differences. The truest way this can be achieved is by accepting the positive and the negative of every culture and using them to improve upon an individual relationship instead of using them to alienate oneself from the society that they currently or previously existed in. This new reality that the United States is facing is one that will lend itself to its progress as a nation that claims to be tolerant of all who find themselves within it.

The ever-growing population of interracial Americans is one deserving of its own representation, both at the governmental level and within the media. However, this population is still not immune to a racial hierarchy that approximates certain ethnicities to whiteness. Despite race being a social construct, it is still imperative to give people of different races the respect and representation they deserve. If 20% of America is expected to be the product of interracial unions, the government must see to it that they are rightfully seen in every aspect of life (Lee, Bean, and Sloane, 2003). The remaking of race in America has and is continuing to be undertaken by all races at varying degrees, and none will be deterred in seeking representation that is rightfully deserved.

The impact of the white-centric ideal of beauty has manifested itself in the current representation of successful female artists that constantly seen in media (Slatton, 2012). The running belief that fairer-skinned and fine-featured women are the norm for women of color as those seen predominantly in the media, including advertisements such as Beyonce's L'oreal campaign, direct consumers into a belief system rooted in the idea that only fairer-skinned multiracial women are the standard for beauty. This repeated exposure to a singular kind of beauty with little room for variety leads those of the opposite sex to think that a mate with those features are their goal. Meanwhile, consumers of the same sex are led to believe that there is something inherently wrong with their particular features created by their unique identity. Both outlooks contribute to a problematic lack of diversity in advertising that can only be corrected by including everyone that a brand claims to cater to.

### ***Expansion of Multicultural Relationships within Newer Demographics***

Little surprise is caused when it's stated that Latinos are one of the fastest-growing populations within the United States (Lee and Bean, 2007). Expected to make up one-fourth of the American population by the year 2050, Latinos are a key demographic in every way possible. Their culture and sense of being are elevated throughout a media landscape that includes advertising, film, and television. Instead of being a token demographic, they create a huge potential market for several to get involved in. However, this shared identity of being both Latino and American has to be approached in a manner that is seen as both respectful of one's origins and inclusive as to where they as well as the rest of society can go.

The lack of one particular multiracial union has not been seen in mainstream advertisements yet despite its cultural significance- a relationship between an Asian man and a white woman (Nemoto, 2008). Although foreign-born women can be easily exoticized American society, the idea that having a white wife to serve as a trophy to one's succeeding the American dream is still prevalent. It is thought that one can achieve a status similar to that of a white man's should a man of another race marry a white woman. This supposed golden ticket into American society directly contradicts the ideas that race plays a smaller part than compatibility. This thinking is dated and superficial, allowing one part of society to deem who has an acceptable spouse that then gives them an entryway into something that was previously thought unattainable.

The probability of people of different races entering a marriage together is dependent on whether the individuals were born, according to this study (Lee and Edmonston, 2005). Intermarriage in this study is defined as any marriage between two individuals that do not belong to the same people group. This insight does not exclude members of any race or ethnicity and demonstrates the upwards trend of intermarriage. The rate at which certain groups intermarry or not depend on factors such as education and immigration status. This emphasized the example of

American-born Asians and Hispanics as well as foreign-born blacks and whites being more likely to marry outside of their groups (Lee and Edmonston, 2005). This goes to show how wide and varied the spectrum of intermarriage goes, leading to the diversity that is seen today.

The relationships between black and white individuals has been a subject of study within the Americas and has become well-documented in countries with melting pot cultures such as the United States and Brazil (Osuji, 2014). Both nations in recent years have advertised themselves as places where mixing is accepted and celebrated, letting its citizens and those abroad know that they can all expect tolerance on a surface level. In this work, Osuji describes the cultural shift of the behavior towards interracial marriage in relation to how it was executed in both the United States and Brazil. Due to the influx of immigration from several countries throughout the history of both nations, a dramatic increase in marriages between different groups has created a multiracial identification that is much more complex and accepted. Formal unions amongst different races have been treated as legitimate by the respective governments in each country. This in turn leads to less public scrutiny and the opportunity to be included in more communities.

### ***Race as One of Many Factors***

Race for some is considered less of a deterrent for entering a multiracial relationship and plays a smaller part than the overall compatibility of a couple (Qian, 1997). A traditional reason for intermarrying, or marrying out of one's race, would be to improve one's socioeconomic status. The emphasis on climbing a social ladder is being diminished, as more groups are seeking to marry someone with similar educational backgrounds regardless of how it may affect their relationships. It is still more common for whites to intermarry, first with Asians, and then with Hispanics (Qian, 1997). Though existent, the interracial marriages between whites and African

Americans have the lowest rates. Nevertheless, race and the outward appearance of a relationship are cast aside as reasons to not enter an interracial marriage.

The notion of education being a deciding factor before entering a multiracial relationship is one that continues to be part of the conversation revolving around such unions (Qian and Ruf, 2001). Particularly referring to intermarriages between Asians and whites, it is suggested that the higher level of education achieved can actually weaken attachments to one's own ethnicity in addition to the assumed increase in contact with people of other races. The idea that someone with a higher education marries a white person with less academic accolades as a tradeoff for entry into white America is dismissed herein, as most individuals in general now seek out partners with similar educational backgrounds. This is made possible through the exposure to others in universities and workplaces. As individuals see who can be considered their equal intellectually, the pattern of intermarriage between those who study and work together begins, which is then replicated and produced for the public through different forms of media.

Supporting the idea that those who enter interracial relationships have attained higher levels of education, there has been a proven significant amount of interracial dating amongst college students in addition to the heavily-studied interracial marriages (Firmin and Firebaugh, 2008). The societal and familial opposition still stand, with younger couples being more hesitant to share details of their interracial relationships. The pressures to hide relationships like this are exasperated by the blatant propaganda negatively demonstrating them in what is supposed to be an accepting environment. One example of mass societal rejection brought to light is the ban that Bob Jones University had placed on interracial dating on its campus. The American South's attitude towards race as well as the school's evangelical Christian teachings influenced this decision, which purported that a separation of race was stated in the Bible and they therefore

adhered to what they accepted as their interpretation. This dangerous and public interpretation of scripture as a way of preventing a natural and otherwise accepted form of relationships pushed discriminatory ideals upon young adults who otherwise would have felt safe to openly express their relationships in other areas of American society.

### *Creation of a Unified Culture*

In order to survive the scrutiny that still surrounds some couples in multiracial relationships, a culture of acceptance must be fortified amongst them before facing the society around them (Wong, 2009). While addressing the negativity that interracial couples may face on top of the usual issues couples deal with, there is a point to make when couples are actively addressing the differences they find within themselves as a unit. The lack of acceptance or understanding a couple can feel may be amplified if they cannot mesh both their origins to create a new foundation in the step they are going to take. Creating a culture specifically tailored to those in the relationship and accepting the differences in an interracial or even multiethnic relationship will create a bond and even field for both the exist on. This will not only benefit the couple but also their respective families who could see it as a sign of mutual tolerance and high regard. Such regard can be taken upon the society who will now continuously see a couple tolerant of each other both in real life and portrayed in commercials.

The primary stressors intercultural couples could face together includes their norms, behavior or communication, which is why it's necessary for them to create their own culture (Holzapfel, Randall, Tao, and Iida, 2018). These differences of race, religion, and ethnicity within a relationship are enough to cause instability and tension regardless of what outside perspectives

may add on. They would surely benefit from the methods suggested in the aforementioned articles, which includes creating an interpersonal culture and exposure to others like them.

It is critical to realize that this issue needs to be addressed within the relationship before facing outward and entering the public domain as a couple with already notable differences in order to avoid further stigmatization.

Although not necessarily touched upon in commercials, the stability of multiracial marriages varies amongst different racial combinations (Kuroki, 2017). Those couples and families shown in advertisements are seen as happy, unified households who lead a seamless and seemingly trouble-free life. These families can lead equally if not more stable lives than their same-race counterparts on either end (Kuroki, 2017). Some race combinations may have higher rates of success, such as white men who have Asian biracial children being more likely to be married than other white males that are parents as well. Outside of this race combination is the finding that black women with white biracial children are more likely to get married than other black women that are parents to nonwhite biracial children. Regardless of the actual stability of couples who find themselves in these particular marriages, both are seen in a positive light through commercials created by Toyota and Expedia, respectively.

The integration of multiracial and multiethnic couples in American communities serves as a crucial point in which those in such relationships can reflect how their contemporaries receive them (Iceland and Nelson, 2010). The growing number of biracial and multiracial children could serve to positively cross the line and gain acceptance into other racial groups. As noted by previous authors, the bond created by couples can lead to a sympathetic understanding of where the other has stood in society's eyes for so long. It is then believed that the residential incorporation of mixed couples into newer neighborhoods is a positive outcome. The blending of

racism and ethnicities, despite blurring the identities of those who hold them, will allow families to enter communities with little to no backlash on the basis of race.

### ***Contemporary Experiences of Multiracial Couples in Times of Increased Representation***

The assumption that the United States is colorblind to those in multiracial unions has been documented and elaborated on by those who see the exact opposite play out in its society (Poulsen, 2015). The opposite of this proclaimed color blindness to those in multiracial is well-known, especially to those who have gone through it. The current United States would indicate that the wrongs of the past have been corrected and that any minority of color would be able to live a life free of prejudice. As active members of society, we know this not to be the case for some. Exposure to other interracial couples in the media would prove helpful to those wanting to feel accepted by the reality they exist in. This exposure can assist these couples in seeing themselves in a positive, universal light, rather than being stigmatized and seen as a last resort of advertising. Such exposure normalizes their livelihoods and does not ostracize them further. Exposing the general public to more advertisements such as these would prove beneficial in the attitudes towards interracial relationships and families in order to show the basic human principles that are most common.

Americans in interracial relationships are received and treated by the public with varying degrees of comfort (Yancey, 2007). One constant racial attitude towards marriages between a black male individual and a white female individual is that the white woman is seen to be in danger while in the presence of a black man, which serves to prove that white women are then more likely to face racial hostility than white men who are married. Black masculinity continues to be seen as a threat to white purity, infiltrating it by engaging in relationships with white

women. In other relationships between a white and nonblack, interracial marriage between whites and Asians and Latinos are eye-opening in terms of immigration and the discrimination second- and third generation Americans of color face. In all, these kinds of marriages serve to show those in them what it is that other races are up against, despite the fact that they are still treated differently.

It is difficult to deny the fact that President Barack Obama had a positive impact with how interracial couples and multiracial families are seen by the American public through the media (McClain DaCosta, 2009). His outlier of life experience and perspective were seen as refreshing and unique once he was thrust upon the American public and led to his acceptance as the first president of color. He was portrayed as a welcomed change- educated, multicultural, and well-assimilated to the environments around him. This culture he portrayed is listed in his having an African American wife, an Indonesian-white sister, and a Chinese Canadian brother-in-law. This remarkably mixed and utopian image of several races existing as one large extended family unit is put forth for the American public to absorb and acknowledge. This image thrust upon the media was one to reckon with, signifying that such a reality does in fact exist within the confines of this nation.

As stated previously, it is believed that the further exposure one has to higher education, the more likely one is to attempt to engage in a relationship outside of one's race (Yancey, 2002). It is presumed that men, depending on their geographic region in America, their education and exposure to integrated schools, and religion are more likely to be willing to enter an interracial courtship. For example, it is believed that members of religious congregations adhere to their own or only date within the smaller denominations if they are of the same faith. There is a similar assumption made when believing that those that have accomplished higher levels of

education are more likely to date outside of their race due to whom they may meet through the course of their studies. It has also been suggested that the demonstration of romantic interracial relationships through mass media goes to show that they are seen as something that anyone can engage in regardless of their personal backgrounds. The normalization of interracial relationships that are indeed romantic is something that has been expanded in recent times, allowing for those in them to see themselves represented, no matter what race they may be. This kind of representation that shows these couples in a positive way has been strived for some time and is an indication of an upwards trend in American advertising.

Assimilation into American culture is continuously seen as the gateway to acceptance within the United States (Douglas and Yancey, 2004). Relationships amongst members of different groups are fueling the diversity that the country positively poses to have, lending itself to a large shift in the thinking and attitudes of fellow Americans that are around them. Creating a base culture for all to be a part of is still seen as a form of inclusion. This inclusion means nothing if those who create the diversity are encouraged to actively leave their sense of self and what allows them to enrich society. This is another example of why representation matters and is essential for the continuation of mixed multiple identities. Without them, their importance is diminished and their contributions to American society would go unnoticed and unappreciated.

### **Research Questions**

The basis of this study is to show if Americans truly accept their fellow man whether they are in a multiracial relationship or not. Opposition towards such a union is noted throughout the literature review, in addition to statistics showing the progress Americans have made in

accepting them. The acceptance of these relationships will be answered through the statistics contained within the articles of the literature review, whereas the interview participants will answer on their personal experiences in these relationships as well as how they receive portrayals of their relationships in commercials.

The main questions were of two types. The first dealt with relationship status and characteristics

- a.) how did they operate as a couple
- b.) how did others react to their relationships
- c.) how did their overall backgrounds affect their relationships

The second set were media-specific, specifically addressing

- d.) how they, the target audience, saw multiracial couples in advertisements
- e.) they themselves reacted to a seemingly controversial family-oriented commercial, and
- f.) if they felt represented by advertisements currently seen today

## **Methods**

To begin with this study, I will be looking at the statistics contained within several of the articles included in the literature review. The documentation of the number of multiracial couples and families is crucial to this study, seeing as they represent the audiences that companies are trying to reach through their newer and diversified marketing efforts. Several of these statistics break into which groups accept these kinds of relationships and additionally show when these attitudes began to positively turn towards this acceptance.

In addition to this quantitative information, I will draw on qualitative interviews conducted in 2019 with subjects that have been or are currently in multiracial relationships. Their unique takes

on how their relationships have been perceived by others as well as how they view commercials that mirror their personal experiences prove to be beneficial for companies willing to take in that information, as it shows the power that they as a demographic wield in a diversifying America. All participants who were interviewed in person consented to having their conversations with me recorded and transcribed. They in addition to those interviewed via email agreed to have their responses used in a previous paper exploring qualitative methods and were notified that they would be used in this work as well. Towards the end of the interviews, I showed them what was once considered a controversial Cheerios commercial depicting a biracial family. Their reactions to this commercial were used to gauge just how receptive they were to an multiracial pairing that was not their own.

## **Data Analysis**

### ***Demographic Statistics***

The statistics provided suggest that the rate of multiracial individuals is increasing steadily since the turn of the 21st century. This implies that many have been engaged and continue to be in relationships with someone that is not of their same race or ethnicity. A Gallup poll at the end of 2003 shows that 86 percent of black, 79 percent of Hispanic, and 66 percent of white respondents would accept direct descendants marrying out of their race (Lee, Edmonston 2005). In addition to this, the disapproval of whites towards interracial marriage has decreased from 35 percent in the 1970s to 10 percent in the 2000s. Despite 10 percent still being a significant number of respondents, there is a positive trend occurring due to the continued mixing of races. This is due in part by 8 % of formal marriages and 14 % of cohabiting couples being interracial (Osuji, 2014). When President Obama took office, reaching the highest level of government in

the nation as a mixed-race man, Gallup cited an approval rating for interracial marriages at 75 percent (McClain DaCosta, 2009).

The vast variety of mixed-race couples increased well throughout the last decades of the 20th century. Interracial marriages shot up from 3.2 percent in 1980 to 12 percent in 2013 (Kuroki, 2017). Creating a large part of the multiracial population are Latinos living in the United States, who are estimated to make up one in five of every American by the year 2050 (Lee, Bean, and Sloane, 2003). The extent to which the label of multiracial can be applied shows that there is no longer a cookie-cutter image of what an American should be, and that all deserve to see themselves at all levels of society.

Brands ranging from Calvin Klein to Tide have added the representation of multiracial couples in their advertisements, primarily showing pairings consisting of a black female and a white male. Toyota on the other hand showed the pairing of a white male and Asian female, expanding the visual palate of whoever may have watched, adding another kind of multiracial couple that is the norm in many different American households. A 2015 poll by the Pew Research Center shows that 1 in 6 newlyweds married outside of their race, a distinguished figure when observing previously aired homogenous advertisements (Golden, 2018). Despite the assumption that these couples would immediately be accepted by all and the following backlash they faced have only led to companies standing their ground in who they chose to cast. The thought process of some in modern America is one that is currently being made known to those who feel as if these new portrayals do not align with their ideals and is being countered by the corporations that know societal changes will have a greater impact in the long run (Nair, 2018). Those represented are not going anywhere and will not stop in the face of adversity. Regular

citizens will not shy away from who their families are, and companies are much less going to go back on representing who they feel are their loyal customers.

Despite the progress made in the acceptance of multiracial couples and their families, there is still a deep-rooted anger in American society that is expressed when these commercials come before them. Within the Cheerios commercial, although neither parent is in the same room as the other, the mere suggestion that a black man and a white woman procreated was thought of as unthinkable to some (Killian, 2014). Within this same racial pairing, there is a commercial in which a white man and black woman in a commercial are physically affectionate with each other, yet that particular advertisement did not create waves in the same vein of prejudice that's been well-established. In searching for why these different pairings are considered controversial, it is found that black masculinity and sexuality are seen as threats to a white woman's chastity throughout the history of the United States. Although a black male-white female couple is more common according to the U.S. Census, it is not represented to the extent of its white male-black female counterpart. These deeply ingrained attitudes are difficult for those expressing them to detect within themselves, since they feel that they and their race are being targeted and are therefore the victims of another man's relationship simply due to race.

### ***Qualitative Interviews***

Keeping in mind the findings described previously, the interview participants in various different racial pairings were asked on their perspectives and experiences. The responses to the interview questions are found below, in which the participants discuss how their lives have shaped their participation in multiracial relationships and how it has affected them both as a partner and as an individual.

a.) Participants that engaged in these interviews demonstrated a sense of pride in their mixed identities and the new cultures they developed within their relationships. The female Indian participant noted in her interview: “You know how diverse our grammar school was. When I went to high school with such a large Hispanic population, I was made to feel as the ‘other’ and forced to speak on behalf of all Indians when something in the media pertained to us.” Said participant notably stated that in her relationship with a Jewish, German and Japanese male, they did not see themselves as a variety of races but rather as two people bringing together different cultures.

When asked of her prior relationship with an Ecuadorian/Arab male, the female Polish participant stated: I am hesitant to say that our “differences” are what enriched our relationship... we had our cultural differences, but I dare say that made us more similar than different. The fact that we both had a culture behind the “American culture” was a strong bond we shared. The fact that we were the children of immigrants and not just American was important and a factor to our closeness.

In citing this shared bond, the relationships of both were able to fully immerse themselves without inhibitions as to who they were. Any conflicts arising from their backgrounds were quelled and dealt with in ways unique to the two people involved

b.) The cultures in which the participants grew up played major roles in how they believed they are perceived by the public. Interviewed separately, the female Honduran participant and the black male participant are in a relationship going on six years. The female Honduran participant recognizes that her family has a racist perspective and actively tried to ingrain negative thoughts about black people throughout her upbringing. Both the immediate families of the female Honduran participant and the black male participant have accepted the significant

other of their family members, but the older generations continue to find difficulty in seeing the two come together. The black participant states: “I was raised to not see color....but one negative comment we got was from an older unknown woman in a museum.”

Such an occurrence was not limited to a relationship that happened to include a black person. The female Polish participant states: “Whilst hailing the cab, a stranger yelled to me from a couple of feet away to be careful because the guy I was getting in the cab with might be a rapist.” The blatant, uninvited and antagonistic verbal attacks show how an aforementioned section of the American population is still uncomfortable with mixed-race couples.

c.) The upbringings of all the participants were part of why they approached their relationships the way they did. The female Honduran participant has the black participant fully aware that in coming from a devout Christian family, all holidays must be spent with her family and he is invited to join, but she is not leaving her family’s side to attend someone else’s celebration. The female Indian participant kept her relationship enshrouded by secrecy, coming from a conservative, Hindu-practicing family that would more than likely punish her if they even saw her walking down the street with her partner. The immigrant struggle was something the female Polish participant and her then- Ecuadorian/Arab male partner could relate to on an even level, and the efforts to strive despite the odds brought them together even more.

d.) All participants welcomed the multiracial couples portrayed in advertisements. They are a sign of changed attitudes, and despite opposition, they are unphased because they see regular families doing what they do on a daily basis.

e.) The participants watched the “controversial” Cheerios commercial with a black father, a white mother, and their daughter. It was a typical family setting with a very endearing theme

throughout, yet the pairing itself was attacked by those who viewed them. When asked, the female Polish participant said:

It was a normal Cheerios commercial... As soon as I saw the daughter I realized this was going to be a multiracial couple. If anything it made the commercial feel a little more real... Mom is doing work at the table while dad is resting on the couch. The entire commercial had a very real feel to it. I can't tell you how many times that scene has been played out in my family.

The black male participant supported this sentiment in saying: "I thought it was great, I just wish it wasn't even considered 'controversial' and was just the norm. An interracial couple & their child making a mess. Everyday life." Both the female Indian and Honduran participants thought the commercial was cute and thought it was good for an interracial child to be seen on such a large scale as the smiling face of an American company. This familial setting was relatable to both those in an interracial family and those in a single-race family, such as that of the female Polish participant.

f. All the participants had different reactions to if they feel themselves represented. The female Indian participant cited that stereotypes are often applied to South Asians and that not enough are seen outside in a positive, non-stereotyped matter. The female Polish participant, as a white female, feels like she is overrepresented in the media and sharply notes that white families in advertising serve as a lazy backdrop to put their product against. The female Honduran participant's experience is more varied, considering that she is a fairer-skinned Hispanic woman. She can understand why she is mistaken for white but would rather that Hispanics of deeper skin tones, such as her younger sisters, would be represented more so that they may see something of themselves in those portrayed. The black male participant's response could be one of the most

human and sincere from this research: “I do, because even in all the television shows these days, there’s at least one interracial couple...it shows people that love is deeper than two white people, or two black people ... love is love.” The idea that the focused lens on who dates who needs to broaden its vision is one that all participants agreed on. There is a need to connect on a basic, personal level, not just fall back on what they look like or what their cultures expected of them.

### **Discussion and Preliminary Conclusion**

The hopefulness that this research was approached with was at times dissuaded by the results found. A large amount of people believes that the inclusion of multiracial couples and families in advertisements was simply a marketing trick that was reaching. Attitudes were seen to vary, as some saw certain portrayals of couples and wondered why it just had to include a biracial child or why this advertisement that was not meant for them was being shoved at them. This research aimed to find positive trending information on the growth of multiracial individuals within the United States. This, however, came with there always being a percentage of a poll that did not approve of them. The reasoning behind this could range between racism, xenophobia, classicism, and other forms of discrimination that deserve their research. If this study is to be furthered, I would pursue the exact reasoning behind such opinions and include them with greater detail.

The qualitative responses collected from interview participants show an openness towards receiving images of multiracial individuals through advertisements and eagerness to see all of their identities presented. They serve as a true representation as to why such diversity is needed in something that is simultaneously fleeting and impactful as a commercial. This goes to show that representation used to be so rare that any inclusion was welcomed by all who may fall under an umbrella term like multiracial. The fact that American marketing is seeing the spectrum of its consumers is a sign that soon, advertising efforts cannot unlatch itself from any potential

consumer for an extended period of time. Multiracial Americans are and will continue to be a powerful demographic that will instruct markets on how they should cater to them should a company wish to continue making profits for generations to come.

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